

Postcolonial Animals:

An Exploration of Human-Animal Relationships in Literature

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Doctor of Philosophy

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By

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Figure 1: Sue Coe, *It's a Picnic*, 1992, Photo-etching on paper, courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Sue Coe Archive.

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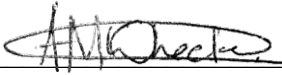
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Keywords

Animal Ethics, Animal Studies, Cormac McCarthy, Deep Ecology, Ecocatastrophe, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Environmental Discourse, Environmental Ethics, Human-Animal Relationships, J.M. Coetzee, Margaret Atwood, Nonhuman, Posthumanism, Ruth Ozeki, Vegetarianism, Veganism, Yann Martel, Zakes Mda

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own independent work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.



Alexandra-Mary Wheeler

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For the animals who've shared their lives with me.

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Introduction

Contemporary criticism seems to be confirming the oft-quoted [Claude] Lévi-Strauss phrase that ‘animals are good to think with’. The question becomes this: What are the methods and parameters of such thought and are the animals invited to the table? If so, are they there as companions with whom we break bread, or are they flesh that is eaten, or do they work within some other modality of, perhaps, wildness? The animal poses for us a range of ontological and epistemological questions that is in part why so much is being written about them.

— R. Nash and R. Broglio, *Configurations*¹

As a child, I had two great passions: books and animals. For me, there was no greater pleasure than being able to escape into the fictional lives of other beings, and since I had a special affinity with animals, it was unsurprising that I particularly enjoyed stories that depicted their lives. Well-known narratives that featured in my early literary life included Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877), Sir James Percy FitzPatrick’s *Jock of the Bushveld* (1907), Richard Adams’s *Watership Down* (1972), and Beatrix Potter’s *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901). These stories formed the basis of many games that we played as children, which amongst other things, involved imagining ourselves as characters from one of these stories. Although these games were heavily reliant on the anthropomorphisation of animals in general — which was also likely influenced by Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) — these later developed into something quite different: playing at being animal. Our games shifted from pretending to be someone else’s anthropomorphised animal characters, to trying to imagine what it might be like to exist in the way that an animal does. This change in focus marked the moment that we were able to conceive of, and acknowledge, the similarities and differences between self and other, more importantly, the animal other.

Although these games did not enjoy the same longevity amongst my peers as those of a more anthropocentric nature², they marked the beginning of my curiosity with the manifold complexities of animal existence. Over time, this interest found expression in a variety of

¹ Nash, Richard, and Ron Broglio. “Introduction”. *Configurations* 14.1–2 (2006): 1–7.

² I suspect that this was because the animal experience is so removed from our own, that without a genuine curiosity about animals or an understanding, however nascent, of a connection between humans and nonhuman life, such interest will inevitably be replaced by more accessible anthropocentric concerns.

pursuits, including an attraction towards the natural sciences. Given how deeply entrenched my interest in animals was from an early age, my decision to pursue literary studies instead of zoology or veterinary science came as something of a surprise. Yet, on closer inspection, there are few disciplines that meditate on the complexities and ethics of engaging with, and representing, subjectivity and otherness quite like literary scholarship.

The Literary Animal

There is little doubt that as topics, animals, animal rights, and the value of animal life, tend to elicit heated debate, often resulting in polarised opinions. Although I encountered many negative reactions when I first posed the idea of working on a project that considered the presence of animals in postmodern, postcolonial literature, one comment that stood out was the claim that if I wanted to make a difference, I should have become a vet. Present in that dismissive statement are two troubling assumptions. The first is that the examination of animal presences in literature is neither a traditionally accepted nor a sufficiently weighty topic within the discipline. The second is that literary study lacks the tangible impact of a discipline like veterinary science: studying literature, in and of itself, does not save animal lives.

In retrospect, the issue of appropriateness betrayed what I now believe to be the underlying objection to my proposed project, which also exposed a more deeply entrenched problem: anthropocentrism. Outside of the biological sciences, objections to the study of animals and the environment, never mind literary animals and literary environments, are not uncommon. Animals and their environments can be particularly difficult areas of study to motivate in light of the continued presence of racism, sexism, religious intolerance and other forms of human oppression or suffering. The continued prioritisation of human interests relegates concerns about animals and the environment to a secondary or even trivial issue if human beings are not directly and negatively affected.

While, medically speaking, it is true that literature will not save lives, it is also a superficial and short-sighted statement because it does not take into account the impact that reading has on our perceptions of the world, and in turn, how these perceptions will affect our actions and interactions. Moreover, it does not consider the efficacy of literature in affecting social change. As Raglon and Scholtmeijer point out, language is important to how we construct

reality and shape our perceptions (“Heading Off the Trail” 248). Therefore, what we read will influence the way we think. Much of what is written into a narrative is there by design, which is especially true of authors whose work engages in societal critique. As such, it is certainly worth considering authorial choices regarding how, as well as what, is being portrayed in a narrative.

Regarding modern fiction, Raban asks, ‘What can the novelist do that no other commentator can?’ (12). This question appears to be answered by Elizabeth Costello in J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999) when she points out the importance of fiction’s ability to harness the imagination to generate an empathetic response, which in turn, allows us to experience, to some extent, someone else’s life. A practical aspect of this lies in the creation of a persona and the type/types of narration used to relay the story. One of modern fiction’s recognisable traits is the emphasis placed on interiority. But how does one write about the life of an animal from the animal’s perspective: i.e. its subjectivity? This is where anthropomorphism has played a crucial role in transforming our predominantly mechanistic perspective on animal life, the basis of which is rooted in the rise of science and scientific discourse in modernity. Although undoubtedly anthropocentric, anthropomorphism does offer an opportunity to give expression to nonhuman subjectivity despite it being tinged with a human frame of reference. In light of the terrible cruelty that mechanistic thinking and mechanomorphism, both of which are widely used in the sciences, have made possible, anthropomorphism enables a more sympathetic, if flawed, engagement with nonhuman others. By utilising anthropomorphism, and/or recognisable and readily acknowledged cross-species relationships, such as those often experienced between humans and their pets, the stories that I remember from my childhood made the animal experience easily accessible, with the human-animal encounter often unfolding as relatable meditations on cross-species connection, friendship and loss. These stories stayed with me because they invited emotional investment, and managed to achieve meaningful, long-term impact by enabling identification with the animal characters while offering different perspectives on the animal experience.

Literary modernism, as Armstrong explains, sought to discredit the ‘sympathetic and sentimental engagement with animals in the aesthetic sphere’ and to ‘dispense with’ or ‘reform’ Romanticism, which it was felt, had become overly sentimental about the nonhuman (134). This shift resulted in a change of focus in human-animal relations offering ‘primal engagements between humans and savage beasts [. . .] or [. . .] the perversion of these vital,

primitive relationships into acts of degraded cruelty towards animals in domestic settings' (Armstrong 134). Prior to the formulation of either ecocriticism or animal studies as paradigms, there was a historically pervasive problem with what was deemed acceptable interpretations of texts and textual representations of animals, or ethical thought about animals, in literature on the whole. Examining the development of the novel, and how this development is significant to understanding why many audiences interpret animal stories in the way that they do, Susan McHugh makes the following pertinent observation:

From the eighteenth century onward, the rise of the novel among English reading publics dovetails with that of identity politics. So it has seemed that novels gain in popularity because they give voice to the individual subject of representation, showing and telling the significance of being human in full. How, then, could animals matter in fiction, except as gauges of its inhuman limits? (*Animal Stories* 1)

McHugh draws attention to the focus on the human condition during the modern period, which was not only a time of scientific advancement in all spheres, but also one of imperialist expansion. The plight of animals was increasingly forced out of the public eye, being replaced with images and narratives of scientific and technological progress. As Armstrong notes, wild animals and livestock bore the brunt of these advancements with wild animals being 'hunted, eradicated, displaced or deprived of their habitats on an unprecedented scale' and livestock species being 'processed in new ways that removed knowledge of their lives and deaths from public consciousness' (142–143). Hunting narratives, such as those associated with Ernest Hemingway, became representative of modern man's domination of the natural world through technology. However, a novel such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1904), which also reflects the domination of man over animal, presents the negative effects of industrialisation on the quality of human life, as well as on the lives of animals. The thing to note here, and to which I will return in due course, is that although neither author is concerned with the suffering of animals per se, how animals live and die is inextricably connected to an anthropocentric worldview regarding the value of animal life.

The question of whether or not animals matter in literature is important when engaging with literary criticism because literature, for the most part, is examined in a largely anthropocentric way. In texts where animals do feature as characters, notable examples include Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and Richard

Adams's *Watership Down*, the tendency is to read the text as an allegorical or metaphorical representation of human concerns. Furthermore, in cases where animals feature strongly as subjects, such as in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), D.H. Lawrence's *St Mawr* (1925) and Ernest Hemingway's *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* (1936) readings usually focus on the actions and experiences of the human characters. The result is that the animals in texts do not function as characters in their own right, governed by their own reasoning and needs. Instead, they either merge with the setting or become a plot device, and when anthropomorphised, function as mirrors for the human condition, and are used to explore difficult social histories through indirect commentary and representation. As such, the examination of animal presences as being representative of animals themselves is rarely 'the focal point of systematic literary study' (McHugh, "Literary Animal Agents" 487).

However, not all anthropomorphised animal characters have to function as substitutes for the human. *Black Beauty* and *Watership Down* represent particularly good examples of the pervasive desire to read animal stories as allegorical. This was something that Adams was quite aware of as being a problem in relation to his work, and although many have persisted in reading *Watership Down* alternatively as an allegory for communism or Christianity, he maintained that the story is in fact about rabbits and their concerns (Brown). Similarly, *Black Beauty*, although often read as a slave allegory, is also an all too familiar story about the commodification of animals. By anthropomorphising the horse, and making him both narrator and focaliser of the narrative, Sewell portrays the extent to which domestic animals are at our mercy. That it is possible to read the novel as a slave allegory is more indicative of how certain aspects of our treatment of animals deemed to be objects/property, are similar to our treatment of humans who become objects/property through practices of enslavement, rather than any suggestion that Sewell was writing such. On this point, Kelly Oliver emphasises that '[t]he man/animal binary is not just any opposition; it is the one used most often to justify violence, not only man's violence to animals, but also man's violence to other people deemed to be like animals' (304–303).

Historically, the animal as a concept, rather than the animal as animal, has occupied a central space in academic thought, art and literature because it poses 'a range of ontological and epistemological questions' (Nash and Broglio 1). In the west, the desire to draw distinctions between the human and the animal can be traced back to the Judeo-Christian biblical book of Genesis, where depending on which interpretation one follows, there appears a mandate to

either dominate or preserve the natural world. As a result, much of the philosophy that underpins humanity's relationship with the nonhuman world, what constitutes the ethical treatment of animals, as well as the treatment of people thought to be like animals, takes its cue from interpretations of Genesis.

The dominion mandate, which remains the most common interpretation, views the nonhuman world as a resource to be used by human beings. The prelapsarian world is presented as having a distinctive hierarchy in which Adam (man) occupies the apex position, Eve (woman), being fashioned from Adam, is subservient to him, and the nonhuman world exists to serve the needs of the human. And yet, the Edenic paradise presents human-nonhuman relations as being largely harmonious. Even Adam's naming of the animals, though it may be read as a tacit display of male dominance and human superiority, indicates an acknowledgement of animal individuals. However, the implied hierarchy firmly positions the nonhuman world, its laws and its needs as secondary to those of the human. This anthropocentric perspective is particularly difficult to alter, not only because it is thought to be ordained by the divine, but also because it requires movement away from an anthropocentric worldview towards a biocentric one, which requires more empathetic engagement and the desire to sometimes put aside human interests for the sake of the nonhuman.

Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology and Animal Rights

The dominion mandate is not the only position reinforcing the human/animal divide. Ecofeminists and those engaging in social ecology believe that the idea of dominating nature has its roots in human beings' desire to dominate one another, which is a position that was put forward by Murray Bookchin (Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* 2). Following this thinking, ecological problems stem from hierarchical and elitist structures found in society, which are designed to exploit people and the nonhuman world. Val Plumwood, a key proponent of ecofeminism, points out that the most destructive western practices regarding nature rely on the 'logical structure of dualism', the 'exclusions of rationalism', and the 'dynamics of [the resulting] self-other relationship', which serve to reduce nature and its associated spheres, such as nonhumans and certain human groups, to instruments (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 142–143). Importantly, in this self-other

relationship — which she describes as the egoist-instrumentalist model — ‘the self erases the other as part of the ethical domain’:

The other appears only as a hindrance to or as a resource for the self’s own needs, and is defined entirely in relation to its ends. Thus such a self does not recognise the other as another self, a distinct centre of agency and resistance, whose needs, goals and intrinsic value place ethical limits on the self and must be considered and respected. (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 145)

Plumwood’s formulation can be equally applied to human and animal others since the welfare of others is only likely to be considered once a person’s or a dominant group’s primary goals, i.e. their concerns of self-interest, have been met (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 144). Even then, there is no guarantee that having met their own needs, that the concerns of other groups, or species, will become important. Although we are cognisant of the serious repercussions of such thinking in relation to our fellow man (the Holocaust and the trans-Atlantic slave trade are two well-known examples), we often fail to see how manifestations of group dominance in terms of class, gender and colonisation have shaped the human relationship to nature in the west. Following Plumwood’s argument, which critiques aspects of the dominion mandate, human relationships with nature are instrumental in that the natural world exists primarily to serve human interests because nature is other to the human:

Instrumentalism involves hyperseparation of the kingdom of means and the kingdom of ends [. . .]. When means and ends are seen as of radically different kinds, as non-continuous and non-contiguous, there are no threatening ambiguities or confusions about which item belongs where, no risk for the master consciousness of finding itself on the wrong side of the boundary, as the eaten instead of the eater, the used instead of the user. A sharp boundary instils the necessary confidence about who is the other, and who is the master for whose wants and needs the universe is conveniently available. It erases too the possibility of identification or sympathy [. . .].’ (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 145–146)

It is crucial that we understand the role and effect of instrumentalist thinking in our societies because it is prominent in many of our daily interactions. It is also the source of many of the injustices that are committed against humans, animals and the environment in the name of human progress.

Subscribers to ecofeminism and social ecology believe that the way to change ecologically exploitative practices is through political and social reform that focusses on breaking down the systems that currently exist, and building societies that do not privilege any group over another. However, the question remains, can progress at the expense of others — human, animal, environment — ever be justified? Connected to this issue is the idea that it is permissible to sacrifice a few for the betterment of many. This idea is central to utilitarian ethics, where it is the overall benefit of the end results that matter, rather than who or what suffered to achieve those results. Although there are many real-world events that could be cited here, I would like to look at one highly relevant example, occurring daily, that demonstrates some of the problems that may arise when instrumentalism is coupled with utilitarian ethics: food production.

Food production is an area of our lives that much of the urbanised populace takes for granted. The commodification of nonhumans makes it unnecessary, even absurd, to consider how they might feel about what is happening to them. Factory farming and the slaughterhouses that ‘process’ (kill) thousands of animals daily, are two examples of how instrumentalism has affected both nonhuman animals and those employed to farm and process them. Here is an instance where the demand for large quantities of inexpensive meat has trumped human, animal and environmental rights. The negative effects of intensive animal farming have been well documented, and yet, it has become so economically viable that it is ethically acceptable because it generates a large food supply to feed the masses. Food production is one of the key areas where human and animal lives intersect, sometimes with catastrophic results for both groups particularly in terms of health³. Additionally, the mass slaughter of these animals is reliant on the availability of minimum wage labour, which helps maintain the low price of meat. The negative effects of instrumentalism are quite obvious in this context, and yet it appears that the substantial reforms required to make life bearable for the animals and labourers involved are not likely to become reality because the economic benefits outweigh them.

The point of having touched on this extraliterary example is to emphasise how difficult it is to move away from both instrumentalism and utilitarian ethics. The use of human and

³ Some prominent examples of life-threatening zoonotic diseases prevalent in intensive farming include avian flu, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease) and the human variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and bovine tuberculosis.

nonhuman others to achieve certain ends, or the notion of sacrificing a few to the benefit of many, cannot simply be done away with because it is so entrenched in our moral, social and economic systems. However, it must be noted that although these structures of oppression exist, there is another factor complicating the potential to bridge the human/animal divide: anthropocentrism.

Deep ecologists believe that anthropocentrism is primarily to blame for the current environmental crisis, with supporters questioning mainstream values, beliefs, and practices in relation to the nonhuman world. Central to deep ecology, as formulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions, is the positioning of humans within the nonhuman world and actioning long-lasting change in our behaviour towards, and perception of, the natural world and its inhabitants. Because deep ecology is both an ideological and social movement, environments along with their inhabitants are thought of as a series of relationships that create an interconnected whole. It is this movement's acknowledgement that global social movements comprise diverse peoples from varied personal and cultural orientations that makes it successful in demonstrating the possibility to respect one another's position if certain broad principles can be agreed to. However, the somewhat idealistic concept of identification with the natural world, which is one of the main tenants of deep ecology, forms the basis for one of its main criticisms, as it does not adequately reflect an understanding of the importance of the recognition of difference.

Whilst both academic and social interest in the use and treatment of animals has moved towards an understanding that gives greater consideration to the animal as animal than has previously been the case, the issue of animal rights and what constitutes fair treatment remains controversial. James Rachels eloquently summarises the ethical dilemma at the heart of many human-animal interactions:

We kill animals for food; we use them as experimental subjects in laboratories; we exploit them as sources of raw materials such as leather and wool; we keep them as work animals [. . .]. These practices are to our advantage, and we intend to continue them. Thus, when we think about what the animals are like, we are motivated to conceive of them in ways that are compatible with treating them in these ways. If animals are conceived as intelligent, sensitive beings, these ways of treating them might seem monstrous. So humans have reason to resist thinking of them as intelligent or sensitive. (129)

Although great strides have been made in repositioning the animal in everyday thought from object to subject — Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1975), Jacques Derrida’s meditation on the animal in “The Animal That Therefore I Am” (2002) and Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) are some of the most influential works on the topic — animals and their needs remain secondary for many people. Rachels’ claim that we do not genuinely intend to change the current utilitarian aspects of our relationship with the nonhuman draws attention to how anthropocentric our thinking about animals really is. By refusing to engage with new, scientifically verified evidence that humans are not uniquely different from other animals, for example Pepperberg’s avian language experiment⁴, and Bartal, Decety and Mason’s experiment showing empathy in rats⁵, many people are able to overcome moral and/or ethical motivations for reviewing the way in which we treat them.

For many, the idea that animals might have rights, is difficult to accept for the very reasons that Rachels points out. If we are to assume that they do have rights, a series of questions emerge regarding which animals have rights, how extensive their rights are, and whether or not their rights should be given the same weight as our own. The reality is that the concept of animal rights places limitations on what may be reasonably done to animals. This in turn brings issues of food production, medical experimentation and ownership under scrutiny. Since animal rights remain a largely contentious issue, there is at least the more palatable concept of animal welfare, which serves to police some of the cruelty that animals are subjected to. Despite the many flaws present in the animal welfare argument, not least of which is its apparent alignment with anthropocentrism, it remains the most widely accepted and enforceable means of preventing unnecessary suffering.

Animal welfare is concerned with how best to ensure an animal’s physical and mental well-being, as well as its ability to perform a full range of natural behaviours. However, there are many instances where it is not possible to accommodate all three aspects, such as in the laboratory or the factory farm, and so compromises need to be made based on what is acceptable to different ‘animal-oriented groups’, which is further ‘complicated by the need to consider legitimate human interests’ (Hewson 497). Animal rights, therefore, presents a

⁴ Pepperberg, Irene. “Cognitive and Communicative Abilities of Grey Parrots”. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 11.3 (2002): 83–87.

⁵ Bartal, Inbal Ben-Ami, Jean Decety, and Peggy Mason. “Helping a cagemate in need: Empathy and pro-social behavior in rats”. *Science* 334.6061 (2011): 1427–1430.

motion to remove the nonhuman animal from the realm of instrumentalism, which means that we would no longer be able to eat, breed, wear or use them for experimentation, labour or entertainment. Given the dominance of human rights and interests, this would be impossible to achieve without a radical reconfiguration of the animal's place in our society.

The Animal Turn

In recent years literature has increasingly represented and engaged with animals as animals, thereby demonstrating a rapidly growing concern/interest not only on the part of individual authors, but also from global audiences. Given the growing awareness of the negative impact that human activity is having on ecology and the environment, this increased engagement should come as little surprise. A number of relatively recent and provocative texts including Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000), Henrietta Rose-Innes's *Nineveh* (2011), Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012) and Ceridwen Dovey's short story collection *Only the Animals* (2014), amongst others, demonstrate concerns about the ethics of eating meat, the potential effects of ecological imbalance, climate change and the animal experience respectively. Although these texts have not been incorporated into this thesis, this small sample of well-known and well-received work serves to show that there is a change in the understanding of our impact on, and relationship with, the nonhuman world, which is becoming of greater concern as human activity becomes increasingly visible in everyday life.

Plumwood notes that '[h]uman relations to nature are not only ethical, but also political', and I would also like to add economic (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 13). As our natural resources become increasingly unfit to sustain life, the 'biospheric means for a healthy life will increasingly be privatised and become the privilege of those who can afford to pay for them' (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 13). It is the coupling of environmental imbalance with economics that Margaret Atwood presents so vividly in her *MaddAddam Trilogy*, in which she juxtaposes the privileged economic and intellectual lives of those living and working in the compounds, connected to mega corporations, and those living and working in the pleeblands. This aspect, present in the texts, evokes the environmental injustices often suffered by lower-income households throughout the industrial world. This issue is also taken up by Ruth Ozeki in *My Year of Meats* (1998), which explores the ethical, environmental and health repercussions of 'cheap meat' on farmers and lower-income families. The central theme here, in terms of environmental critique, is that 'control over and

exploitation of nature contributes to, or is even more strongly linked to, control over and exploitation of human beings' (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 13).

Noting that the exploitation of the environment is often also connected to the exploitation of people, Gary Snyder makes the following comment regarding the connection between human and environmental ethics:

A society that treats its natural surroundings in a harsh and exploitative way will do much the same with 'other' people. Nature and human ethics are not unconnected. The growing expansion of ecological consciousness translates into a deeper understanding of interconnectedness in both nature and history, and a far more sophisticated grasp of cause-and-effect relationships. (21)

Such interconnectedness, or global consciousness, is certainly one of the central concerns of postcolonial ecocritical discourse, which given the long-term, irreversible effects of colonialism accompanied by capitalist expansion, draws attention to the environmental impact of human-human and human-nonhuman interactions in various manifestations. This awareness of interconnection is also reflected in human-animal studies, which focusses 'on how animals figure and are configured in human worlds' emphasising the various points of intersection between humans and animals, which is an important endeavour because '[h]uman worlds are built upon animal lives and deaths, conceptually as well as physically' (Marvin and McHugh 1). My concern is primarily with how these points of intersection are written into the literary space and what such fictional interactions, or lack of interactions, indicate about the changing nature of human-nonhuman relationships. It is partly with Calarco's call to 'think unheard-of thoughts about animals' and for the 'need [for] new languages, new artworks, new histories, even new sciences and philosophies' (6) to be generated in relation to the animal that I have chosen to explore literary representations of the human-animal relationship in the postmodern, postcolonial space at a crucial time in our global environmental history. Although the texts chosen for this study may appear disparate, the selection was made with a particular objective in mind: to demonstrate that the concern with animals, and by extension the 'natural' environment, has become a pertinent and pressing issue reflected in literature transnationally. The authors selected for this study have dealt with topics ranging from animal rights to eco-apocalypse and often appear to be engaging, if not directly with one another, then with the same material either from slightly different perspectives or with a different area of focus. The texts chosen explore key areas of interest,

sharing similarities in terms of their thematic concerns, which include the presence of animals as food, for scientific experimentation, and as companions. In addition to the exploration of global environmental and ethical concerns that are reflected in the texts, I have scrutinised the methods used to represent ‘the animal’ as well as evaluated the success of such methods in delivering commentary about human-animal relationships.

One of the primary areas that is explored, because it is pertinent to all of the texts, is the use of anthropomorphism to describe and represent the experiences of the animal other.

Generally, arguments centred on the use of anthropomorphic language are concerned with representations of what is ostensibly the unknowable subjectivity of animals, how such language colonises both the history and the experiences of the animal subject, and how these representations may often misinterpret animal behaviours. Concerns about animals and animal ethics in the postmodern, postcolonial space have become greatly complex as issues highlighting the interconnections between industry, environmental degradation, conservation, animal rights and human rights draw increased attention. As noted by Clark, ‘[i]n the question of the animal, or rather of animals, ecocriticism finds perhaps its most striking ethical challenge’ because writing about animals is recognisably different from writing about places, ecosystems, landscapes or pollution (*The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* 179). Although this may seem self-evident, by juxtaposing two well-known ethical positions, one from the ecological standpoint and the other from the animal, Clark highlights the extent of this difference:

[E]cology in the strict sense will consider animals only as a group or species, in relation to threats to population size, habitat and so on, and may happily talk of the need of a cull of some species to ‘protect the environment’, an animal ethics will often concern the animal as an individual existence, more in the way in which a person is considered. (*The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* 179)

The point that Clark makes is that, depending on your perspective, humans can assign very different values to animal life. From an ecological perspective, value ‘lies in the ecosystem as a whole, not in the individual’ (Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* 180), but one needs to acknowledge that an animal’s life has value to the animal itself, and that that value is not determined by humans.

The current state of our global environments has made it essential that we extend empathy and respect to the nonhuman world, but how do we translate these concerns into the literary space? Predictably, the tension that exists between the ecological and the animal perspectives has found its way into environmental and animal advocacy literatures. Unlike environmental literature, animal advocacy literature is less concerned with the ‘processes’ of nature and more focussed on human-animal interactions or encounters (Raglon and Scholtmeijer, “Animals are not believers in ecology” 123). Although environmental writing is concerned with life forms and their overall well-being in the broadest sense, the scale of the environment concerned — global, regional, local — can result in a distancing from the individual animal subject, which reinforces the illusion of humans existing outside of the natural world. As Raglon and Scholtmeijer argue, it is ‘by appealing to ecology, [that] we can conveniently dispense with emotions that might suggest other ways of behaving’ (“Animals are not believers in ecology” 124). This statement appears to refer specifically to methods of conservation that focus on restoring ‘balance’ to the environment. Even though the loss of other species should be an emotionally charged issue, since extinction as a direct result of human activity is a tragic and irreversible event, many writers attempting to represent the human threat from the animal perspective face being ‘charge[d] with sentimentality’ (Raglon and Scholtmeijer, “Animals are not believers in ecology” 125). Although ecologically oriented arguments that advocate animal population control through culling, or by trying to return an environment to its indigenous state by exterminating invasive species seem legitimate, such positions do not give enough consideration to the species that created the problem in the first place: human beings. As a result, can it ever really be ethical to take the lives of animals who have managed to adapt to areas that they would never inhabit had it not been for human interference? Furthermore, given how much human activity has changed environments, is it even feasible to claim that we can return these to a more ‘natural’ state or to one that preceded such interference?

A Question of Ethics

What will become apparent during the course of this discussion is that different situations, standards of living or lifestyles do necessitate different approaches to thinking about what it means to be ethical in relation to the nonhuman world. More recent approaches to the environment, as espoused by thinkers such as David Suzuki, emphasise that humans are animals, and like all forms of life are dependent on a healthy biosphere (Plumwood,

Feminism and the Mastery of Nature 6). This interconnection is strongly emphasised in the deep ecology movement, specifically in Arne Naess's work that links humans and humanity to the nonhuman, and in so doing reintegrates humans into the natural world by overtly demonstrating the benefits of a meaningful, long-term approach to ecological thinking for humans and nonhumans alike. As Plumwood observes, the reason that this is so important in the modern, western world is because traditionally, 'dominant strands of western culture' have claimed that humans are only 'minimally and accidentally connected to the earth' (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 6). Clearly it is essential that we change such dualistic thinking so that we might begin to undo the mental and social structures that have enabled the continued exploitation of the nonhuman.

Deep ecology, with its focus on the biotic community, sustainability and the role that individuals play in realising change, is very persuasive because of its apparent veneration of the natural world. But as already mentioned, one of its significant flaws is its desire to collapse distinctions between self and other. Plumwood claims that there needs to be recognition of both continuity and difference in order to adequately undermine current oppressive practices, and replace these with understanding and respect. Recognising and acknowledging similarities as well as differences is important in developing respectful relations generally, and across species specifically.

Of course, it is difficult to balance change with ethics, particularly when technological progress seems unrestrained in its exponential acceleration. The rise of vivisection, urban densification and intensive farming are in many respects merely responses to human needs created by an increase in the global human population and resultant economic forces. Under these circumstances, animals have lost their individuality, partially as a result of their removal from the everyday life of the urbanised population. When you lose sight of the individual and, with it, individual experience, it becomes easier to talk about population control, culling or eradication. Additionally, the removal of most animals from everyday interactions prevents us from understanding the extent of our impact. Although one might make what seem to be ethical choices in an attempt to mitigate the negative influence that we are having on animal life, we are often shielded from witnessing large-scale destruction and suffering, such as that resulting from habitat loss due to housing projects, the suffering of animals used in medical laboratories or the abuse of animals in the farming industries. The reality is that, try as we may, it is impossible to be completely innocent of the cruelties

towards animals and humans taking place in the name of progress, which provide our growing population with the illusion of seemingly endless living space, longevity and food.

Aim and Chapter Breakdown

This thesis explores literature's ability to advocate change in our current relationship with the nonhuman other, specifically the animal other, through modes of representation. This partly involves exploring what the aesthetics of advocacy look like, what problems may be encountered when using an ethicalising approach and whether these can be avoided. It is the fact that natural resources are not endless, coupled with the belief that human beings are a part of, rather than separate from, the natural world, that provide the primary motivations behind this project's argument in favour of a biocentric worldview. With the global environmental crisis in mind, this thesis interrogates what appear to be changes in the representation of the human-animal relationship in contemporary literature. The discussion gives due consideration to the choice of representation of animals and environments in the texts (iconic, fantastic, realistic, symbolic), how this choice affects the way we read human-animal interactions, and the relevance of these fictional encounters within the greater context of the environmental crisis. Since the selected texts examine transnational concerns about animals and the environment across genres, it is also necessary to situate these texts in place and history because each context reflects differences in thinking about the nonhuman. Along with expanding the application of eco/environmental and zoocritical studies, my readings of the narratives will place emphasis on the extent of humanity's connection to, or estrangement from, the animal other, in order to assess the ramifications of our unwillingness to reform our current anthropocentric views and practices. Of course, a genuine shift from an anthropocentric worldview to a biocentric one will have an impact on how societies utilise natural resources, the allocation of land to urbanisation, farming and conservation programmes, what constitutes ethical treatment of humans and nonhumans, and how humans assign value to human and nonhuman life. What should be apparent, is that a biocentric focus means that humans will have to give up the previously held monopoly on rights, ethical treatment, living space and resources.

Opening this discussion of the representation of human-animal relationships in the postmodern, postcolonial literary space, Chapter One titled 'Animal Others: Eco/Zoocriticism, Animal Rights and Anthropomorphism' introduces the key issues

addressed in this thesis and outlines the theoretical framework that is applied to the rest of the project. Commencing with an exploration of how and why the human-animal binary came to be established in the west, and the benefits of maintaining rather than dismantling this binary, this chapter asks and responds to two central questions in relation to the overarching research question: ‘Why would authors wish to write about these relationships or experiences in the first place?’ and ‘What might they hope to achieve by writing about these relationships?’ In order to do this, the first part of the chapter examines the development of eco/zoocriticism and animal studies, which have emerged in response to the environmental crisis, charting the early beginnings of this area in the work of Lawrence Buell, and Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. It then moves into a discussion of how we think about and define terms such as ‘nature’ and ‘natural’, which impact our perception of the value of the nonhuman world. Within this discussion, the usefulness of postcolonial theory as an entry point into thinking about human-animal relationships is introduced, with postcolonial ecocriticism being indicated as important in locating animals in space and time, place and history. The chapter then explores what we mean when we talk about ‘animals’, which extends into a discussion of human and animal rights. Having laid down the theory, and explored some of the areas of contention, the chapter moves into discussions about the representations of the human as animal/animal as human in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999), and the difficulty of adequately representing the animal experience in Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2002), J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, and Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam Trilogy*.

Chapter Two turns to the issue of interspecies relationships. Titled ‘Lovers and Companions: Crossing the Species Boundary’, the chapter examines two texts, which in different ways engage with human-animal relationships in the global south: Zakes Mda’s *The Whale Caller* (2005) and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*. Although the animals that feature in the novels are considered iconic, and are associated with specific environments, they also evoke historical connections and represent physical or mental states of being for the protagonists. Both texts lend themselves to allegorical interpretation — one for the impact of colonisation and the other for cannibalism — but can also be read as direct engagements with animal beings. If one reads the human-animal relationships as exactly that, the texts reveal a wealth of information about the possibilities of transcending the human/animal boundary and what may be achieved in doing so. Mda and Martel present their audiences with human-animal relationships that acknowledge animals as individuals and show an awareness of the exploitation of animals in the name of conservation. By portraying mutually beneficial and

respectful human-animal interactions that also connect the protagonists to their respective pasts, these texts challenge traditional assumptions about the human/animal divide particularly where language and history are concerned. The richly descriptive interactions between the protagonists and the animals are not only representative of multiple human-animal contact zones, but also of the historical presence of animals and how their presence, or absence, is intricately connected to our self-understanding.

Having explored some of the interconnections between human and animal existence, Chapter Three examines what the future might hold should we continue to ignore the impact that we are having on ecology and the environment. This chapter, titled ‘Animal Absences: A Loss for Humanity’, explores novels that engage with eco/environmental catastrophe and extinction in various ways. The chapter explores literary attempts at writing eco/environmental catastrophe and focusses on the successes of Margaret Atwood and Cormac McCarthy in offering accessible and convincing critiques of the real cost of human impact on the planet. Situated in the genre of speculative fiction, Atwood’s *MaddAddam Trilogy* and McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) narrate the end of the Anthropocene. What is most striking about these novels is how their bleak outlook for the future draws attention to human impact rather than detracting from it. This is an achievement, since imagining the end of the world tends to lend itself to a focus on spectacular narratives rather than to the slow, steady decline of global life forms. The novels notably differ in the outcomes that they offer. Within the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* applies ecological arguments for animal population control to the human in order to restore balance to the earth, and *The Road* bears witness to the final moments of a dying planet on which most life will soon cease to exist. Crucially, these novels engage with questions of what it means to be ethical and humane at a time in our global history where we are becoming increasingly estranged from the animal. As such, this chapter examines literature’s ability to evoke compassion for the fate of animals in the face of environmental crisis.

Building on issues related to environmental destruction and species extinction Chapter Four, titled ‘Eating Others: A Discussion of Ethical Vegetarianism’, extends the discussion of animal ethics into the world of animal agriculture. Much of the chapter focusses on the disconnection between the imagined and actual realities of modern-day farming, and the inherent cruelty that has become synonymous with the factory farm, as opposed to the image of the farm as a safe space or haven. The chapter asks and responds to questions regarding

how to eat ethically in a time of abundance, how cultural identities and norms often present challenges to ethically motivated dietary changes, and in what ways authors have engaged with the power dynamics of food production. Starting with J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, the discussion opens by examining food ethics, specifically from the animal perspective, through our ability to empathise with the animals we eat. Through the arguments and experiences of Elizabeth Costello, this section examines the personal cost of making decisions that break with traditionally accepted modes of living with, and relating to, animals. Although Costello's behaviour and personal feelings may seem radical, the discussion gives due consideration to the possibility that behind her seeming hysteria, there may be some truth to her sense that we are all complicit in crimes against the animal other. The chapter then turns to Ruth Ozeki's examination of agricultural economics in *My Year of Meats*, which offers an entry point into the post-industrial American post-pastoral, interrogating the idea of a homogenous American culture and some aspects of western agricultural iconography. Ozeki's novel deconstructs familiar western ideas of family and the farm offering a multitude of perspectives that demonstrate the intersections between human and animal life, and the impact of these points of contact on the well-being of animals, the environment and human beings. The last part of the chapter unpacks what might be the result of these crimes against the nonhuman by looking at Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy*, which offers complex and convincing speculative engagements with issues related to global agricultural ethics. Because Atwood's world is fed on factory farmed animals, with the exception of the endangered animals served at Rarity and the plant-based products that are available, of interest is how she explores issues of welfare in animal agriculture in a hyper-industrialised future.

In the industrialised postcolonial space, representing the intricate relationships between humans and animals has become something of a necessity as we continue to displace those entities with whom, until recently, we shared much of our existence. Although we claim to be the most intelligent lifeforms on the planet, and are seemingly the only species aware of the negative impact that it is having on a global scale, we have not done enough to actively change the course we are on. Additionally, the countless instances of abuse of the nonhuman world and the animal other have reached such proportions that we cannot turn a blind eye without future generations accusing us of barbarism. As Jonathan Foer notes:

[Cruelty is n]ot only the willful causing of unnecessary suffering, but the indifference to it [. . .]. It's often said that nature, 'red in tooth and claw', is cruel [...]. But nature isn't cruel. And neither are the animals in nature that kill and occasionally even torture one another. Cruelty depends on an understanding of cruelty, and the ability to choose against it. Or to choose to ignore it. (*Eating Animals* 53)

It is only through the recognition and acknowledgement of how inherently cruel many societies are towards the nonhuman other that we may begin to redeem ourselves not only in our eyes and those of our future generations, but also in the eyes of animals. By utilising texts that elucidate changing perceptions of how we interact with and treat animals and the environment, this thesis aims to contribute, in no matter how small a way, not only to the literature on and about animals, but also to the lives of animals themselves, in the hope that eventually these may improve. As such, this project concludes by proposing that in trying to imagine or represent animal subjectivities in the literary space we must avoid simplifying or using only one form of representation. Instead, we should blend the discourses of natural science and ethology with imagination and compassion to create a new voice for the animal experience, so that we can access those, as of yet, unheard thoughts about the animal other.

Chapter One

Animal Others:

Eco/Zoocriticism, Animal Rights and Anthropomorphism

[The pigoon's] rules in [. . .] matters [related to death] appear complex: dead farrow are eaten by pregnant mothers to provide more protein for growing infants, but adults, and especially adults of note, are contributed to the general ecosystem.

— M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*⁶

This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals.

— J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*⁷

Humanity's desire to divorce itself from the animal is most evident in its often callous and destructive relationship with the nonhuman world, which is enabled by othering. Arguably, othering is the logical result of traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs combined with Cartesian dualism, however the continued prevalence of this form of thinking suggests a far more entrenched and worrying need to differentiate the human from the nonhuman, not only to maintain the human/animal binary, but to also preserve existing systems of economic and environmental exploitation. The 'fantasy' of human exceptionalism is based on the idea that of all the beings that inhabit the earth, it is humanity alone that exists outside 'a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies' (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 11). However, given the impact of global warming on climates and, therefore, on food security, health, and the general habitability of the Earth, the notion that humans are unaffected by the events that are influencing regional and global ecological systems seems greatly at odds with the evidence. Although often, if erroneously, thought of as a present-day problem, concerns regarding environmental destruction have often been a preoccupation in the literary space and are readily visible in work associated with English and American Romanticism. Blake, Clare, Coleridge, Emerson, Shelley and Wordsworth all demonstrate overt concerns with

⁶ Atwood, M. *MaddAddam*. 2013. London: Virago, 2014, 455

⁷ Coetzee, J.M. *Disgrace*. 1999. London: Vintage, 2000, 74

environmental degradation, as well as the impact of unchecked human expansion on the nonhuman world. Although disquiet about the general state of the global environment is evident in the work of these Romantic writers, particularly in terms of documenting how human settlement and industry often bring detrimental changes to landscapes and fauna, it was from the mid-1990s with the publication of Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) followed by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) that a strong critical interest in literary ecology became apparent. The emergence and acceptance of an eco-critical discourse is demonstrative of how this movement, along with its specific developments in critical thought, reflects highly relevant issues that transcend the often limited purview of specific disciplines, thereby lending itself to interdisciplinary engagement that is possibly better equipped to holistically explore global concerns affecting environments (urban and natural) and environmental stability. Such changes in how we think about, interact with and represent our environments have had long reaching ramifications for how we think about, interact with and represent the nonhuman world, with various schools of thought such as animal studies, human-animal studies, deep ecology, ecofeminism and animal rights emerging in response to different concerns in the same arena.

Of primary interest here is how we choose to acknowledge relationships with those entities with whom we share our environments, and how we then decide to represent those relationships in the literary space. Two questions that immediately arise in relation to this are: 'Why would authors wish to write about these relationships or experiences in the first place?' and 'What might they hope to achieve in doing so?' At the centre of the debate lies the perplexing question of how to represent subjectivities that we cannot know via a shared form of verbal (rather than nonverbal) language. Language itself, which was once believed to be innate only to human beings, has played a central part in arguments that uphold the human/animal divide. The potential for interspecies communication, and what form this might take, comprises part of the discussion around representation in this chapter because research has shown how incorrect some previous thinking about this has been, casting doubt on the veracity of other widely held beliefs about human uniqueness, particularly in terms of sentience and the capacity to form complex social structures.

Animal presences in narratives have generally either been understood as part of the setting of the text, or as symbols used to express and contemplate human concerns, i.e. broadly

speaking criticism has not focussed on animals as animals, so much as it has on the use of animals as literary devices particularly as metaphors for the human experience, e.g. Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980) and Orwell's *Animal Farm*. However, the importance of animals as animals in literary scholarship has gained momentum with the emergence of ecocriticism, animal studies and zoocriticism. With the exception of the biological sciences, animals have been excluded from many areas of scholarship on the grounds that they are beneath scholarly notice, which traditionally deems anthropocentric concerns superior. However, an increased interest in this area appeared with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962).

Predating the work of Buell, and Glotfelty and Fromm by just over 30 years, Carson's work examined the effects of herbicides and pesticides, such as DDT, on bird populations and by extension the potential ramifications for human beings and ecology. Her controversial publication managed to achieve the important objective of raising awareness about humanity's connections with the natural world that, until this point, had been largely dismissed. Carson's work also challenged several modes of thinking including biblical dominionism and mechanomorphism, which is not to say that these had not been challenged before, but arguably that there had never previously been so much evidence to support the necessity for a paradigm shift in human-nonhuman relations.

Central to a discussion of human-nonhuman relations, particularly in terms of the literary representation of animals, is an interrogation of the benefits as well as the shortfalls of literary devices, such as anthropomorphism and mechanomorphism, in achieving something akin to animal consciousness. Alongside the examination of the use of such devices, this chapter provides a brief discussion about the development of eco/environmental and zoocritical discourse. Of importance is how the theoretical issues raised by such movements are being written into the literary space with concerns about the potential results of the continuation of the human/animal binary being strongly evident in the work of Margaret Atwood and J.M. Coetzee. Both authors have produced material that, when read through the lens of eco/zoocriticism, reveals a sustained interest in how the way in which we think about and interact with animals tell us much about ourselves as human beings. Selected material taken from Atwood and Coetzee's texts will also be used to gauge whether literary devices such as anthropomorphism remain relevant and useful given our changing understanding of, and relationships with, nonhuman animals.

Nature, Human Nature and the Formulation of an Ecocritical Discourse

Initially defined by Cheryl Glotfelty as ‘the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment’ (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii) ecocriticism has ‘built on work in other areas including ecofeminism, deep ecology, and certain branches of poststructuralism’ (Wallace and Armbruster, "Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing, and Where To?" 4). An interrogation of the nature/culture binary is essential, particularly during this period of re-evaluation of humanity’s relationship with the nonhuman world, because the way in which we ‘perceive, interact with and ultimately change nature cannot be detached from who we are in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, nationality, and geographical location’ (Gersdorf and Mayer, "Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Defining the Subject of Ecocriticism - an Introduction" 14). As a result of such interconnectedness, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the belief that nature and culture exist as completely separate entities (in vacuums as it were), especially because there is a growing awareness that our conscious experience is influenced by the ‘cultural values, norms, and attitudes that inform the ways in which we see, know, represent, inhabit, and, ultimately, reconstruct nature’ (Gersdorf and Mayer, "Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies" 14). For the purposes of this discussion, it is worth briefly examining what it is that is being considered when we speak about ‘nature’ in the broadest sense, particularly because the existence of often divergent conceptualisations has directly influenced the shape that ecocritical discourse has and may well continue to take. Additionally, when we start breaking ‘nature’ down into its various biological constituencies, what is it that we are talking about when we speak of the various components such as ‘animals’?

In *What is Nature?* (1995), Soper engages with the inherent difficulties in defining the term ‘nature’. Listed within this complex and often blurred area, she identifies concepts linked to the ontology of the natural world, the differentiation of the natural from the artificial, the tension between culture and nature, and the question of human nature. What is evident is that the concept of ‘nature’, which is so readily and easily drawn on when engaging with discussions about the environment, and what differentiates the human from the animal, is entangled in complexities that may not be initially obvious. Within western

thinking, Soper identifies two distinctions regarding the term 'nature': (1) the term is often used to refer to both the natural and the artificial; (2) it is used to differentiate 'between what is dictated by nature and what is humanly instigated (the cultural or conventional)' (37). Based on this, she argues it is evident that the natural and the human are opposed in western thought, which remains an assumption within its philosophical, scientific, moral and aesthetic discourse (Soper 38).

In relation to the development of ecocriticism, Soper's work identifies two particularly important philosophical paradigms within the tradition of modern European thinking about nature: 'nature' as being 'the totality of being', and 'nature' as it relates to 'human nature'. Nature as the 'totality of being' (Soper 22) is a valuable definition, particularly regarding 'contemporary ecological debates because it locates humanity *within*⁸ rather than in opposition to nature' (Gersdorf and Mayer, "Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies" 16).

The advent of the ecological crisis has challenged our understanding of what nature is and has increasingly forced us to scrutinise our relationship with the natural or nonhuman world, specifically in terms of resource management, living space, animals, as well as our responsibility towards the nonhuman world at large. As a movement, ecocriticism had initially focussed on American nature writing, the British Romantics and environmentally oriented nonfiction. However, the ecocritical scope has broadened since its inception to include contemporary fiction that has not previously received ecocritical attention and texts that do not appear to overtly engage with environmental concerns. This may be the result of an increased awareness of, or sensitivity to, representations of environments and how we might read them.

While it may be contentious to speak for or on behalf of the nonhuman world, particularly because this raises questions about should we, or can we, adequately represent or think our way into the experiences and minds of other beings, I feel that such engagement, even if extremely flawed, is a worthwhile pursuit because it provides a space in which to explore our understanding of these relationships and, in some instances, arrive at conclusions that reveal a certain porosity present in the human/animal divide.

⁸ Italics in original.

In terms of its theoretical development, the ecocritical space was initially dominated by the work of Lawrence Buell, and Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm who established the ecocritical field of enquiry. It was Buell's demonstration of the importance of the imagination, particularly in the form of imaginative literature, that went a long way to challenging the nature/culture binary prevalent in western understandings of the nonhuman world (Wright, *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: reading the postcolonial environment* 3). However, given the current rate of globalisation, and I would like to add economic and social interconnectedness, it seems that Glotfelty was correct in thinking that the discipline can easily expand and become increasingly interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international, as this thesis will demonstrate (Wright, *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes* 4).

Showing support for the 'further development of ecocriticism as a methodology that re-examines the history of ideologically, aesthetically, and ethically motivated conceptualisations of nature' it has become necessary, in the face of environmental crisis, to refine Glotfelty's broad definition of ecocriticism in order to reflect some of the nuances that have begun to emerge in this discipline (Gersdorf and Mayer, "Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies" 10–11). Within this expanded ecocritical space, the study of the relationship between literature and the environment has become increasingly informed by other approaches such as bioethics, ecofeminism, postcolonialism and science.

In a discussion that considers the limitations of literary studies to wholly express or accommodate the Green or ecocentric agenda, Dominic Head argues that it is postmodernism's rejection of metanarrative and grand theory that allows for a mode of expression in which previously marginalised voices (such as those present in postcolonial discourse) can be heard. As he points out, the Green movement itself is generally founded on 'a typically postmodernist deprivileging of the human subject' (Head 28) or, rather, a re-privileging of the nonhuman subject, which our premodern ancestors respected, and sometimes worshipped. How postcolonial studies decentre the subject 'is a relative matter, where the colonizer and his discourses are decentred in relation to the colonized' who are no longer marginalised, but 'where the Other is unable (yet) to reclaim its history' (Head 28).

This qualified recentring of the colonised subject is of particular importance as the animal other, as well as what Marisol de la Cadena refers to as ‘earth-beings’ (336), are by their very nature incapable of reclaiming their histories from humanity, at least in terms that we understand. De la Cadena’s anthropological work on Latin America’s indigenous politics emphasises the interconnectivity of human beings with nonhuman entities by focussing on the indigenous-popular movement’s incorporation of animals, plants, water, and landscapes as sentient entities into politics. She argues that indigeneity’s current political emergence challenges the separation of nature and culture and brings nonhumans into the political arena as actors. This has important implications for issues centred on responsibility and respect for the nonhuman, which is likely to have a positive impact on the vision of, and progress towards, a biocentric future.

An example of this congruence between postcolonial and ecological/ecocritical discourse in literature can be found in Huggan and Tiffin’s *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010). This text not only offers postcolonial ecocritical readings, but has also engaged with what they refer to as zoocriticism, which, amongst other things, takes into consideration ‘discourses of speciesism; the use of animals as a basis for human social division; and, [. . .] the metaphorisation and deployment of “animal” as a derogatory term in genocidal and marginalising discourses’ (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 135).

As observed by Huggan and Tiffin, ‘[p]ostcolonialism’s major theoretical concerns: otherness, racism and miscegenation, language, translation [. . .], voice and the problems of speaking of and for others — to name just a few — offer immediate entry points for a re-theorising of the place of animals in relation to human societies’ (*Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 135). A primary goal of postcolonial inquiry — which Wright reminds us, is a discourse that has primarily focussed on literature — is to reclaim the history that preceded colonisation (*Wilderness into Civilized Shapes* 2). The postcolonial framework, therefore, largely focusses on the narratives of marginalised people as told by themselves. However, as indicated earlier, the dominant theoretical concerns associated with postcolonialism offer excellent points of entry for formulating new theories concerning animals and their relation to humans and human societies. Therefore, and more importantly, postcolonial ecocriticism locates animals in space and time, place and history, drawing attention to and acknowledging their

experiences and subjectivities through observation and, sometimes, narration. This is, of course, useful for scholars engaging in the broader interdisciplinary field of animal studies, which focusses on questions pertaining to animality and how representation and cultural constructs influence human-animal relationships, as well as human-animal studies, which focusses specifically on the relationships between humans and animals.

If we are to attempt to dismantle the human/animal binary, there is a longstanding and overarching issue that must be addressed in this discussion of postcolonial animals: humanism. In terms of the Humanist paradigm only human beings can be ‘true subjects’ with ‘real histories’ (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 67), because we are the only species that has a ‘face’; a subjectivity that we can know (in as far as it is possible to know another person) and readily recognise. However, as most of human history, which includes several genocides, has shown, not all humans have been considered worthy of that category, which begs the question, what needs to change in our thinking before we can recognise the subjectivity of the other? Furthermore, once we acknowledge the subjectivity of the other, specifically the animal other, how do we categorise it or speak about it?

Human-animal relations is an area that Haraway has grappled with extensively, with categories used most often in animal rights discourses such as ‘permanent dependents’ (‘lesser humans’), utterly natural (‘nonhuman’), or exactly the same [as humans] (‘humans in fur suits’) all being rejected because, in her opinion, these do not accurately or adequately describe the relationships (*When Species Meet* 67). Her rejection of such categories reflects a rejection of othering as well as anthropocentrism, making way for the use of her proposed term, ‘companion species’, which is somewhat cold and bureaucratic, to express relationships between animate beings, as well as between animate beings and inanimate objects. Haraway takes particular issue with the language used to describe human-pet relationships, specifically the language of the family. Although her interrogation of thought and language in this area is worth examining, I do not wholly agree with her assertion that such language either infantilises the animal or indicates that the person assigned the role of ‘mother/father’ (i.e. caregiver) to the animal harbours desires to be a parent to human offspring. Instead, my sense is that the appropriation of the language of the family in cross-species relationships evokes kinship and, by extension, stewardship/guardianship. Although I am willing to accept that such language has the potential to lead to extreme forms of anthropomorphism, which may have detrimental

effects on the animals concerned, for the most part I am inclined to view such affinity with the other as an overdue recognition of the animal subject.

The Right to be Animal

In the west, our relationship with nonhuman subjectivities has become so complex that in many instances it no longer seems plausible to enforce clear boundaries between the human and the nonhuman animal. Such difficulties are at their most evident when we speak about ‘animals’, and further complicated when we speak about animal rights. This brings us to the rather difficult issue of what constitutes an animal and the question of how we draw distinctions regarding their treatment, both of which are prominent concerns in the literature under examination.

The first and most obvious problem when deciding what it means for animals to have rights centres on the use of the term ‘animal’ itself, which is commonly used not only to refer to a vast multitude of species, but also to behaviours considered to be in opposition to those defined by cultural norms. Simply put, the term ‘animal’ appears to be widely used in reference to nonhuman species and their associated behaviours. However, perhaps the most troubling aspect is how the term came to negatively signify a host of human behaviours, marginalised cultures and aesthetics that were/are in opposition to the dominant culture of any given period, and therefore considered uncivilised. Dunayer attributes this phenomenon simply to the categorisation of animals and their behaviours as being inferior to that of humans, who are often thought to naturally dominate, therefore implying that animals ‘do not warrant equal consideration and respect’, an assumption that owes much of its support in the west to Judeo-Christianity (11). Contemplated through the lens of speciesism, the animal or nonhuman is attributed with negative qualities (whereas humans are attributed with positive ones), which are particularly noticeable when animal metaphors are used in relation to women or certain racial groups (Dunayer 12). This is significant because, as noted by Simons, many ‘western rationales for slavery and genocide have depended on a blurring of the distinctions and identification’ of human groups with nonhuman groups (10).

In her discussion on killing, Haraway points to the work of Derrida, specifically to the logic of sacrifice as being central to our thoughts about what it is permissible to kill. What is relevant is that only human beings can be murdered, animals can be sacrificed because they

are unable to respond in ways that are meaningful to us. She importantly emphasises Derrida's point that according to this logic only humans live in a realm of response, everything else lives in the realm of reaction, and so the value of animal 'sacrifice' can be justified on the basis of the proportional benefits to the human (for food, for medicine, for living space). However, this cannot be applied to the human without losing humanity. Derrida deemed such justification a 'crime of the first order against the animals' because the argument rests on all 'animals' being the same, i.e. that animals all respond in the same way (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 78).

In the postcolonial, postmodern milieu most people from the west would be willing to accept that, for the most part, humans and animals do not greatly differ physically (particularly if they belong to the vertebrate class), i.e. they have the capacity to feel pain, pleasure, hunger, satiety, fear, comfort etc., and that many are sentient and react to environmental stimuli in ways that promote survival. Therefore, if sacrificing the animal is a crime of the first order, as Derrida claims, why is the issue of rights such a difficult and contentious space? It appears that there are a multitude of factors that have contributed to this problem, including religious doctrine and speciesism, both of which will be dealt with shortly, however I am of the opinion that post the advent of Darwinian evolutionary theory and World War Two the real issue concerning the recognition and definition of animal rights actually lies in the question and development of human rights.

For those who had a more secular upbringing, which likely included some exposure to Darwinian evolutionary theory, the concept of an evolutionary process should not come as an affront to our understanding of the development of humankind. Popular representations of the process, such as the ascent of man, misleadingly show species evolution as being a linear process, rather than the more complex process of branching descent/lineages and natural selection, which form the foundations of Darwin's theory. Because of its claim that humankind evolved through this dual process from primates, evolutionary theory continues to be met with hostility in the west particularly from more conservative Judeo-Christian sects that still adhere to the concept of instantaneous creation and human exceptionalism. What appears to be at stake for these groups (which I will examine in more detail in the next section of this chapter) is the superiority of man over the animal (and I mean man not humankind) as decreed by God and enacted through Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis. It follows that if humankind evolved from certain primate groups we must also be

animals; to be sure, intelligent, tool-using beings capable of rational thought and manipulating our environments to suit our needs, but animals all the same. This conclusion therefore precludes Judeo-Christian notions about the God-ordained dominion mandate, and destabilises our sense of what it means to be human in this context.

In the last century, the question of what it means to be human found its most pervasive expression in Nazi Germany, specifically the concentration camps. Whilst there have been many documents over the centuries that have asserted individual rights including the Magna Carta (1215), the English Bill of Rights (1689), the French Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), and the US Constitution and Bill of Rights (1791), it was post World War Two that the treatment of a country's citizens by their government became a legitimate international legal concern, warranting intervention.

The following extract is taken from the preamble to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was promulgated by members of the United Nations in 1948:

[R]ecognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. (United Nations)

What is inescapable here is the phrase 'all members of the human family', which certainly leaves no room for animals in its interpretation and application, once again reasserting human dominance. With the codification of human rights, there was something equally, if not more, remarkable that emerged from the Holocaust: the idea that barbarity, at least towards human beings, cannot be justified, even on the basis of progress. This injunction has had very real implications for several industrial pursuits, which are most evident in the practice of medical science. From this point onwards, it was no longer permissible to use humans for experimentation without substantial evidence that whatever was being tested was unlikely to cause undue harm to the patient.

It should be noted that within modern, scientific and imperialist frameworks the terms 'progress' and 'improvement' constitute primary discourses. For the most part, such progress has consistently come at the expense of the perceived other, whether human or animal. Human rights have increasingly led scientists to adopt animal models in the search for cures to human diseases, which remains a highly contested practice from the perspectives of ethics

and efficacy. But what actually are animal rights and how do these differ from human rights, if at all? This is a difficult question, one which not even the leading thinkers, including Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Carol Adams, Mary Midgley and Stephen Clark, seem to be able to agree on.

Representing the views most often associated with the positivist paradigm in relation to the question of animal rights, Sagan argues that animals such as chimpanzees demonstrate abilities that suggest that they are capable of abstract thought, posing the question as to whether or not to grant rights to nonhuman animals who ‘demonstrated consciousness and mental ingenuity’ (Sagan qtd. in Davis 193). Undeniably anthropocentric in its approach to animal rights, Sagan’s method creates a hierarchy based on how similar an animal is to a human being where the most similar, a chimpanzee, would be ranked at the top and so granted more rights than (following the example used by Sagan) a chicken, which is less similar and so should enjoy fewer, if any, rights. However, theorists such as Vicki Hearne, who, although resistant to animal rights discourse in general because of its literalist anthropomorphism, is particularly against the view espoused by Sagan, because it relies on this anthropocentric scale of similarity with the human to assign privileges to different species (Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* 51). This implies that the more complex an animal is the better it is, and so more deserving of privileges. In effect Sagan’s conceptualisation of animal rights has very little to do with animals themselves and a lot to do with human beings and their perception of them.

According to Simons, ‘a right is a negative entity that implies far more strongly the right to be left from injury, molestation and coercion than it does the right actually to do anything’ (16). In terms of animal rights, Simons’ statement rings true since issues pertaining to animal rights seem far more concerned with mitigating, not preventing, the cruelty inflicted on animals that is so prevalent in the west (factory farming and experimental medicine). What becomes increasingly evident the more closely one examines the differences between animal and human rights is the speciesism which pervades much of our thinking. Everyday thought patterns reveal a distinct privileging of the human over the nonhuman, which unlike Dunayer, Simons does not attribute to superiority or to a hierarchical ranking based on certain abstract notions of similarity such as that proposed by Sagan (speech, higher order thinking, morality), but rather to human beings’ ‘natural affinity’ with one another (17). While this might hold true for many human-nonhuman interactions I would challenge Simons’ idea of

‘natural affinity’, particularly when it comes to human relationships with companion animals, specifically those that we live closely with such as cats and dogs. My point is that I find it difficult, absurd even, to believe that given the choice between saving an unknown human being and a known, beloved companion animal in any number of imagined hypothetical ethical conundrums, a human will actively choose to save the unknown person as a result of ‘natural affinity’ instead of the companion animal. Although Simons is probably correct in thinking that anthropocentrism is visceral in that we relate more easily to creatures that look like us, the shared, often highly emotional connections between humans and their companion animals may result in humans choosing the companion animal over the unknown human in some instances.

Returning to the literary space, it is important, in terms of reading the texts selected for this thesis in relation to the concept of the animal, to emphasise the representation of animals in texts as animals, rather than as metaphors for human experiences, and to examine concepts of natural affinity and human exceptionalism. This is important because it is through this seemingly insistent displacement of the animal that animals in texts lose their animality. Issues of displacement aside, the fact remains that the question of whether or not, or to what extent, an entity has rights certainly affects what is deemed permissible treatment. Around the turn of the twentieth century this was a prominent issue in some works by Mary Shelley and H.G. Wells, and has since found more recent expression in J.M. Coetzee’s controversial post-apartheid novel *Disgrace*, which in part contemplates the negative effects of language, labelling and thinking about an entity as ‘animal’.

Justifying Barbarity

Despite all the evidence indicating that human life is interconnected with the nonhuman or natural world, many maintain the belief in human exceptionalism, asserting that human beings are somehow different from nature, and so capable of harnessing it. In the west, this belief in the human ability to control and utilise the natural world for its own ends has most notably manifested itself in the pursuits of theology, science and medicine, notable early examples of which can be traced back to the work of Saint Augustine, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Such hubris, particularly as it relates to the rise of science, has been the source of much social anxiety which is visible in novels such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), both of which explore the effects of

scientific hubris where the disdain for the laws of nature result in the loss of the human and, in many respects, the humane. As Atwood observes, Wells's novel offers monsters that 'have been produced by the very agency that was seen by many in late Victorian England as the bright, new, shiny salvation of humankind: science' (*In Other Worlds* 154–155). While both novels examine the unforeseeable dangers of meddling with the natural world, Wells's novel goes a step further by condemning the barbarity of vivisection and exploring the suffering of the commonly used vivisected subject: i.e. the sacrificed animal. For many readers of Wells's work, it is not the abject cruelty that Moreau's subjects experience that creates discomfort, rather it is because the subjects themselves embody a collapsed or hybridised human-animal identity: they are human-animals in the most literal sense. It is through Prendick's varied reactions that issues about the acceptability of vivisection are raised. If the subjects are human, which is his initial belief, then vivisection evokes anxieties about personal safety because it objectifies the human, stripping it of choice. However, if the subject is animal, then vivisection and its accompanying horrors are acceptable because the human is not in immediate danger and animals are objects. Ironically, Moreau's experiments reveal the horror of his ambitions to elevate the animal by stripping it of its animality because he lacks empathy for his creations. Even Prendick, who is relieved to know that the Beast People are 'just' animals, finds Moreau's methods and results both unethical and questionable in terms of their supposed benefits. Interestingly, his experience of a collapsed human-animal binary alienates him from his fellow man as his awareness of the similarities between the human and nonhuman destabilises divisions that once generated a sense of safety emanating from the belief that humans are distinctly different from animals. At the heart of Prendick's realisation is the issue that Jeremy Bentham raised in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), '[it] is not, Can they *reason*? Nor Can they *talk*? But, Can they *suffer*?⁹' (Bentham qtd. in Singer, *In Defence of Animals* 5). However, as noted earlier in the discussion of Derrida's logic of sacrifice, even if we recognise the suffering of the animal, it remains permissible to cause such suffering because animals are not human and so cannot 'respond' in the same way as humans. The implication, of course, is that even if we recognise the animal subject, that subject and its desires will remain secondary to the human subject as long as the belief in human exceptionalism persists.

⁹ Italics in original.

Despite the recognisable, shared similarities with the human, the animal, for the most part, remains beyond our understanding. In Wells's narrative it is through the recognition of the differences between the Beast People and human beings, rather than through the similarities, that Prendick briefly forgives his complicity in Moreau's experiments. However, it is their similarity to the human which leads him to conclude that it is unacceptable to cause such suffering in the pursuit of knowledge. Wells gives the subject who suffers at the hands of the vivisector a voice, and that voice is one that has a sense of self and experiences pain in the same way that we do. By using anthropomorphism to expose the horror that science has visited on those who are similar to us in the name of progress, Wells offers us a narrative that challenges the safety of Cartesian dualism and the dominion mandate.

Similarly, both Atwood and Coetzee question the continued permissibility of what amounts to animal abuse in medical science, food production and entertainment. In the west, most arguments point towards religious doctrine as being the foundation that governs much of our interactions with the nonhuman world. For western/westernised cultures this means that the Judeo-Christian belief system informs much thinking about animals and our relationships with them¹⁰, which as Fudge notes, also means that our legislation and institutions are premised on these ideas (*Animal* 13). The creation story, with its implications that humans, made in the image of God, represent the highest of His accomplishments, has some serious ramifications for human-animal relationships:

God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground.' [. . .] God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on earth.' [. . .] So from the soil Yahweh God fashioned all the wild animals and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Gen 1.26–2.19)

The most obvious of these ramifications lies in the granting of humans dominion over the animals, who then exercise this power by giving each a name. Fudge believes that this act

¹⁰ Lynn White Jr.'s article "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" (1967) was instrumental in arguing that Christianity, the 'most anthropocentric religion the world has seen' should be understood as responsible for many environmental catastrophes because of its perception of how we should relate to the nonhuman world (Fudge, *Animal* 14).

indicates that without Adam the animals had no presence or identity, and are inherently powerless (*Animal* 13). Additionally, the dominion mandate has often been understood to sanction the exploitation of the nonhuman if it benefits the human.

In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood explores this act of naming in the biblical creation story and re-enacts it in an industrial-scientific one. In her narrative, science has become the dominant paradigm through which the world is understood, so much so that, for the most part, religion and disciplines related to the humanities have been consigned to the past. The implication is that without spaces that allow for or encourage emotional or empathic responses, such as the arts, our society will lose sight of its ethical and moral responsibilities. Given that *Oryx and Crake* takes place in a world in the midst of ecocatastrophe purely as a result of human enterprise, it is worth noting that she replaces the traditional, anthropocentric religious thinking of the past with modern scientific thought, making science the new anthropocentric, rational religion of the future, and in so doing, points to both the dominion mandate and extreme rationalisation as sources of the ecological crisis. One of the overt instances of this appears in Jimmy's and Crake's interactions with a game called Extinctathon. Its slogan 'Adam named the living animals, MaddAddam names the dead ones', begins by evoking the moment that humanity claimed dominion over the nonhuman world and concludes with the disastrous results of such dominion (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 92). Atwood uses Extinctathon to critique the role that the dominion mandate has played in bringing about ecological collapse. By making the connection overt, Atwood calls for a re-evaluation of our overarching value systems, both scientific and religious, in response to such disasters because they remain detrimentally anthropocentric.

Concerning the treatment of animals, Fudge notes that humans at times 'fear' the animal, which finds expression in a revulsion towards, and rejection of, kinship (*Animal* 8). This reaction appears to be largely attributable to the recognition of our (ab)use of animals, which she argues reveals more about our problem with being human than about any problem with the animal; i.e. we simply do not want to acknowledge the moral challenge that kinship calls for in terms of treatment. The depth and complexity of our relationships with animals is, I think, cleverly revealed when trying to answer Haraway's question: 'whom [do] I touch when I touch a dog?' (*When Species Meet* 7). The dog in question can easily be substituted for any animal (or indeed, following her argument, any animate subject or inanimate object) so that the question might become: 'Whom do I touch when I touch an animal?' Such a question is

not only asking about the subject, but also about the history of the entity, which in turn can be extended to the species, and would include an inventory of interactions (many of which we are likely to shy away from). Taken from this perspective, the idea that we are disgusted by the animal because of the discomfort that we feel when we have to acknowledge both the compassion that we are capable of and the suffering that we inflict on them becomes more concrete. Two of the areas that Fudge directs attention towards in order to illustrate this juxtaposition, and which I would like to expand on (because these speak on multiple levels to Atwood's work), concern the proliferation of the anthropomorphic representation of animals in classic children's literature and, I would like to add, more recent movies and cartoons, and the use of animals in vivisection.

On the one hand, animals are presented as being like us, perhaps even the same as us, while on the other we are told that they are sufficiently unlike us to warrant different treatment but can, however, be used as human substitutes. In children's literature and films specifically, animals are often so anthropomorphised that the human-animal binary becomes blurred. In these formats, characters such as Beatrix Potter's iconic, jacket wearing Peter Rabbit or E.B. White's literate spider, Charlotte, in *Charlotte's Web* (1952) demonstrate some acknowledgement on a social and emotional level of kinship. However, vivisection relies on the notion that although similar to us, animals are sufficiently different to not warrant the same treatment.

Unsurprisingly, arguments for vivisection are strongly premised on the belief in human superiority, which condones a different approach to moral thinking, and certainly does not take into consideration philosophers, like Tom Regan, who posit that an animal's life has its own inherent value to the subject living it. While concepts around the permissibility of vivisection do seem to evoke Derrida's logic of sacrifice rather than Regan's subject of a life, it is in novels such as Richard Adams's *The Plague Dogs* (1977) that we find a return to kinship through anthropomorphism in a text that simultaneously grapples with the abuse inflicted on laboratory animals and the love experienced by pets. Adams's work manages to hold in tension many of the complexities inherent in our relationships with animals, that thinkers like Fudge and Rachels refer to, while providing an answer to Haraway's question, 'whom [do] I touch when I touch a dog?'

Disgrace: The Human Animal

Recent philosophies of alterity demonstrate that the practices of ‘oppression, slavery, and torture are historically inseparable from the question of the animal’ and ultimately demonstrate that ‘our concepts of man, humanity, and inhumanity’ are largely inseparable from our ‘concepts of the animal, animality, and animals’ (Oliver 303). This tension between the human and the animal is evident in J.M. Coetzee’s controversial novel *Disgrace*, which although largely read and understood as an examination of racial power relations in post-apartheid South Africa, is also a meditation on compassion, questioning as it does what it means to be human through a series of human-nonhuman power relations. Through its exploration of what many would consider the realities of early post-apartheid South Africa, it comments ‘strongly on the failure of human sympathy as a consequence of colonialism and apartheid’ (Smit-Marais and Wenzel 209).

Taking refuge from his latest sexual transgressions by travelling from Cape Town to his daughter’s farm in the Eastern Cape, David Lurie finds that Lucy’s home is not the rural sanctuary he had imagined. Instead of an idyllic farm he experiences a place that is quite unforgiving, filled with hostility and potential threats. As noted by Smit-Marais and Wenzel the novel functions as a ‘fictional reworking of the traditional farm novel (*plaasroman*)’ (209), which presents the connection between the farmer and his farm as a ‘timeless icon of national and numinous identity’, a representation that is thoroughly subverted in *Disgrace*, which portrays the farm as a ‘contested space inscribed with a history of violence and dispossession’ (210). This violence, which is easily and readily recognisable in the gender and race relations that exist in the novel, is enacted with particular intensity on the nonhuman entities also present. As is common in many pastoral narratives, *Disgrace* is peppered with several animal presences. However, in this context the animals are often the victims of barbarity, consumption or rejection as exemplified by the dog presences and Petrus’s sheep. What emerges is not so much a commentary about how callous and unsympathetic pastoral life is, but rather a deliberate deconstruction or unravelling of the human/animal binary.

As is to be expected, nature, with its associated dualisms of purity/decline, growth/destruction, and life/death, plays an important part in the pastoral farm novel (Smit-Marais and Wenzel 214). Through its subversion of the *plaasroman* tradition, *Disgrace* manages to capture these dualisms and holds them in tension. Lucy’s farm, or plot as she

prefers to call it, is not a good, safe place, nor is it a corrupt, dangerous place. It is a liminal space, a hybridised space where the possibility for collapsing our understanding of dualisms associated with the farm exists. The violence wrought on Lucy, Lurie and the kennelled dogs during the attack, and the discomfort that pervades the text after the event, serve as a reminder that compassion for the other is at times a psychologically difficult and overwhelming task. Nevertheless, regardless of the personal, historical or political motivations that justify violence in the mind of the perpetrator, the animals in this narrative bear the brunt of these encounters.

Because the brutality present in the text contrasts starkly with expectations of civilised human behaviour, it exposes the human potential for savagery — the animal within as it were. What is of particular interest is how Coetzee uses the powerlessness and abuse of animals to emphasise the power relations between the characters. With few exceptions, Coetzee's text does not overtly represent acts of extreme violence between people, but rather demonstrates the potential for this through acts of violence directed towards animals, specifically domesticated animals, which are as dependent on humans as we are on them. The narrative is filled with animal metaphors which also form part of the human characterisations. When used in relation to men these metaphors reveal an often violent, hyper-sexualised masculinity associated with negative aspects of the animal/the instinctual. Through Lurie's interactions with Melani, Lucy, 'the boy' and the attackers, Coetzee provides glimpses of people giving in to their aggressive and sexual instincts (their id to use the Freudian term), acting out power relations in the form of behaviours associated with territorialism and dominance. In effect what we are seeing is people as they are when released from the cultural constraints that govern behaviour.

Of all the animal presences that appear in the text, dogs are the most prominent. Traditionally, dogs represent qualities that people look for in other humans — 'attentiveness, unconditional love, courage, loyalty so unwavering it persists even in the face of death' (Mangum 35). By representing them as recipients of 'human inflicted captivity, pain or death', Coetzee creates an 'affinity between attitudes toward animal living and dying and human living and dying' (Smit-Marais and Wenzel 215). In her examination of animal rights in South Africa, Pickover notes that within the context of South Africa, the treatment of animals 'has all the hallmarks of apartheid — prejudice, callous disregard for suffering and a misguided sense of supremacy' (141). The reality of this is certainly present in *Disgrace*,

with the shooting of the dogs during the farm attack and the work done at the animal clinic reflecting some of this complexity.

The shooting of the kennelled dogs during the farm attack is a particularly provocative scene in the novel. The breeds that Lucy kennels on her property are largely those traditionally used as guard dogs by whites: animals kept as protection against intruders. Although the killing of the dogs may be read an act of revenge against whites for the historical subjugation of blacks, as Smit-Marais and Wenzel do (215), in this instance the dogs are also an easy target. Being caged, they are unable to defend themselves against the attack and so are easily preyed on and tormented:

With practised ease he brings a cartridge up into the breech, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs' cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slaverling with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a *coup de grâce*.

A hush falls. The remaining three dogs, with nowhere to hide, retreat to the back of the pen, milling about, whining softly.

Taking his time between shots, the man picks them off.
(Coetzee, *Disgrace* 95–96)

What is most striking is the deliberate cruelty apparent in this act. The passage portrays the dogs as having an understanding of what is happening to them. Like condemned men facing an executioner they cannot escape. However, the real horror of the scene lies in the exacting, inhumane and sadistic nature of the shooter; this is not just about killing them, it is also about making them suffer. It appears that the attacker perceives the dogs as representative of, perhaps even synonymous with, whiteness and white power, and so by inflicting as much suffering as possible on the dogs' bodies, he seems to be enacting a personal revenge fantasy for the inhumanity and injustices of apartheid.

In contrast, the animal clinic, where Lurie assists Bev Shaw, is in many respects a place of deliverance from suffering. However, it is initially portrayed as a place of death, a site of execution, particularly for the unwanted township dogs who are euthanised '*because we are too menny*'¹¹ (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 146). By using the phrase from the note left by Jude's eldest

¹¹ Italics in the original.

son in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Coetzee connects these unwanted animals to the unwanted and disposable 'human surplus' of the 'rural working class' (Armstrong 180). The perceived surplus of dogs cannot be supported by the impoverished township community, and so, as with Jude's children, a quick death seems preferable to a life of struggle. Of course, the difference is that the dogs have no say in the matter; they certainly are not the ones claiming to be 'too menny' and have no knowledge of the ramifications thereof. It is the people living in the township who make the choice on their behalf, more likely with their own, rather than the dogs', interests in mind:

The dogs that are brought in suffer from distempers, from broken limbs, from infected bites, from mange, from neglect, benign or malign, from old age, from malnutrition, from intestinal parasites, but most of all from their own fertility. There are simply too many of them. When people bring a dog in they do not say straight out, 'I have brought you this dog to kill,' but that is what is expected: that they will dispose of it, make it disappear, dispatch it to oblivion. (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 142)

Despite these realities, Bev Shaw's brief relationships with the animals who she knows she is going to kill prevent us from thinking of the clinic as a slaughterhouse and more as a place of refuge. Bev's actions appear to be genuinely motivated by compassion, which Lurie equates to a form of love. It is because Bev desires to either end or prevent animal suffering that she turns to euthanasia. Lurie's experiences at the clinic not only offer him a sense of purpose in the isolated, rural community, but also force him to re-examine his views about his relationships with humans and with animals.

Given that most of the animals have been brought there to die, it is initially difficult for Lurie to decide how to shape his relationships with them — specifically with the dogs. Although he feels that it is deceitful to be kind to the animals because he will betray them by participating in their deaths, he also feels ashamed by the thought of not comforting them in their last moments. Because this area is so difficult to negotiate morally, questioning as it does what kindness towards, and responsibility for, the other looks like, Lurie finds himself seeking penance for participating in the dogs' deaths by ensuring that their corpses are at least disposed of in as dignified a manner as possible. His desire to do this is partly motivated by his having witnessed what takes place at the incinerator at Settlers Hospital where he disposes of the corpses:

On his first Monday he left it to [the workmen] to do the incinerating. Rigor mortis had stiffened the corpses overnight. The dead legs caught in the bars of the trolley, and when the trolley came back from its trip to the furnace, the dog would as often as not come riding back too, blackened and grinning, smelling of singed fur, its plastic covering burnt away. After a while the workmen began to beat the bags with the backs of their shovels before loading them, to break the rigid limbs. It was then that he intervened and took over the job himself. (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 144–145)

The workers' lack of empathy towards the dogs is emphasised by the horrific sight of the partially incinerated corpses riding back and forth on the trolley. That the dogs not only suffer the indignity of being an organic surplus, but are also treated as trash once they are dead, is too much for Lurie to stomach. Although, his intervention upon seeing such carelessness seems prompted by his participation in the deaths of these animals, following the attack it may also be the result of his new knowledge of victimhood, of being other. What he might have initially thought of as a service to the community becomes a service both to himself and to the dogs with his newfound understanding of himself as 'a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan*' representing his most overt act of compassion (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 146). While these terms are indicative of social inferiority, a literal fall from grace, it is through Lurie's revulsion when witnessing the mutilation of the dogs' corpses — a sight that leads him to take it upon himself to maintain what little dignity these unwanted, unloved animals have in death — that we see him at his most humane and compassionate.

This is a pivotal moment for Lurie, reflecting a deeper understanding of the indignities of suffering which he is more sensitive to after the farm attack. His desire to honour the lives (the dogs) of those who are deemed worthless, to perform the act of undertaker to those who are uncared for, is a tremendous demonstration of empathy and compassion for the other.

For all this, the last scene in the novel in which Driepoot is euthanised raises questions about the extent of Lurie's transformation. Armstrong argues that the euthanasia of Driepoot is a difficult scene to make sense of given that at this point Lurie has '[awakened] to the suffering of other lives, which has been facilitated by his growing compassion for animals' (185). However, Lurie does not consider adopting the crippled dog. The dog remains other, and perhaps could be read as the embodiment of Lurie's crippled and rejected self, which he would rather relinquish than accept. And yet, perhaps it is in fact a compassionate act:

He can save the young dog, if he wishes, for another week. But a time must come, it cannot be evaded, when he will have to bring him to Bev Shaw in her operating room (perhaps he will carry him in his arms, perhaps he will do that for him) and caress him and brush back the fur so that the needle can find the vein, and whisper to him and support him in the moment when, bewilderingly, his legs buckle; and then, when the soul is out, fold him up and pack him away in his bag, and the next day wheel the bag into the flames and see that it is burnt, burnt up. He will do all that for him when his time comes. It will be little enough, less than little: nothing. (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 219–220)

He acknowledges that he could ‘save’ the dog for another week, which by extension could be another month, year, its life, yet he chooses not to do so, instead he decides to ‘[give] him up’ (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 220). What might look like an act of compassion may also be read as an easy way of terminating a long-term commitment to the other. One might be tempted to view Driepoot’s euthanasia as selfless in so far as Lurie chooses not to save him in order to fulfil his own needs (to live as a companion animal, a crippled one at that), but this selflessness seems suspiciously anthropocentric.

Animalus Anthropomorphicus

The use of anthropomorphism to describe and represent the experiences of the animal other is fraught with difficulties. As discussed by Simons, anthropomorphism ‘signif[ies] the representation of animals as if they were human’ which ‘bring[s] them into a discursive realm in which it is possible to give the illusion that their experience is being reproduced’ (116). The implementation of this literary device raises the question of ‘whether or not anthropomorphic representation is always deeply penetrated by speciesism’ as it could easily be argued that no matter the intention of the author, anthropomorphic narratives always replace the experiences of the nonhuman with those of the human (Simons 116). The term ‘speciesism’, which was coined in 1970 by psychologist and philosopher Richard Ryder, is defined as ‘the widely held belief that the human species is inherently superior to other species and so has rights or privileges that are denied to other sentient animals’ (Ryder). It has also been used to describe ‘the oppressive behaviour, cruelty, prejudice and discrimination that are associated with such a belief. In a more restricted sense, speciesism can refer to such beliefs and behaviours if they are based upon the species-difference alone, as if such a difference is, in itself, a justification’ (Ryder).

The many potential dangers of replacing animal experiences with human ones is concisely captured in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, in which it is explained that the true danger of anthropomorphism lies in the animal as we imagine it, rather than the animal as it is:

Father believed there was another animal even more dangerous than us, and one that was extremely common, too, found on every continent, in every habitat: the redoubtable species *Animalus anthropomorphicus*, the animal as seen through human eyes. We've all met one, perhaps even owned one. It is an animal that is 'cute', 'friendly', 'loving', 'devoted', 'merry', 'understanding'. These animals lie in ambush in every toy store and children's zoo. Countless stories are told of them. They are the pendants of those 'vicious', 'bloodthirsty', 'depraved' animals that inflame the ire of the maniacs I have just mentioned, who vent their spite on them with walking sticks and umbrellas. In both cases we look at an animal and see a mirror. The obsession with putting ourselves at the centre of everything is the bane not only of theologians but also of zoologists. (Martel 31)

Pi offers a succinct evaluation of the problems associated with anthropomorphism, which echoes Simons' point that it replaces the animal experience with the human. Acutely aware of his own use of the device in his interactions with the zoo's animals, Pi is under no illusion that these animals, although apparently tame, are wild, and capable of inflicting terrible injuries or even death:

I would like to say in my own defence that though I may have anthropomorphized the animals till they spoke fluent English, the pheasants complaining in uppity British accents of their tea being cold and the baboons planning their bank robbery getaway in the flat, menacing tones of American gangsters, the fancy was always conscious. I quite deliberately dressed wild animals in tame costumes of my imagination. But I never deluded myself as to the real nature of my playmates. (Martel 34)

While it may be true, for the most part, that Pi believes that he never deludes himself about what he refers to as being 'the real nature' of animals, his feelings of abandonment when Richard Parker — a tiger who becomes his companion — disappears into the Mexican jungle indicate a somewhat different reality, or a change in the position from the one presented earlier in the novel. Questions that arise from Pi's earlier statement concern what the 'real' nature of animals is, and is it possible for us to ever know it? The most obvious interpretation of Pi's statement is simply that all animals should be considered dangerous because we can never know their motivations, and that one should be particularly cautious around wild ones. However, it is this claim that is subsequently challenged through the unlikely, but

nevertheless mutually beneficial, relationship that emerges between himself and Richard Parker.

There is a fair amount of ambiguity present in *Life of Pi*, which necessarily affects how one chooses to interpret this text. At the end of the novel Pi demonstrates his own awareness of this and leaves the decision to the reader to either view the story as the fabrication of a traumatised child, or as one of interspecies dependence. The ‘better story’ (Martel 317), which is the incredible and miraculous narrative of the realisation of interspecies dependencies, can also be read as an ecological metaphor, the value of which will be explored further in Chapter Two. While some might be more inclined to believe that Pi spent his time facing his animal self rather than sharing a lifeboat with a tiger, the narrative is fundamentally about sharing limited resources, thereby enabling coexistence and survival. Martel sets up the potential for two interpretations of the story providing sufficient evidence to support both interpretations. Regardless of how one chooses to interpret the text, there remains an underlying challenge to the human/animal binary and an exploration of the benefits and shortfalls of anthropomorphism.

There are two aspects to the use of anthropomorphism. On the one hand, our desire to give animals human personalities is demonstrative of our affection for animals because it ‘allow[s] them to share a human “life” and our fondness for ourselves in projecting onto them the feelings we deem exclusive to us’ (Soper 84). On the other, we use anthropomorphism to dissociate from our own animality ‘[expressing] our distance from animals by viewing them as the alien embodiment of all that is less truly human (our lower, carnal, more bestial selves), and our distaste for the human insofar as this is irrevocably tied to animality’ (Soper 84). The central problem with anthropomorphism is whether animal experience is the same as or similar to our own. However, what should also be taken into consideration is that this problem is not unique to our relationships with animals:

As Singer emphasizes, there is a real risk of getting things wrong through anthropomorphic projection. But we should remind ourselves that the same problems vex our human relationships. (Nussbaum 354)

Arguments concerning the use of anthropomorphic language largely focus on representations of what is ostensibly the unknowable subjectivity of animals, how such language colonises both the history and the experiences of the animal subject and how these

representations may often misinterpret animal behaviours. A recent real-world example of how detrimental this misattribution can be is evident in concerns over a proliferation of internet videos showing slow lorises enjoying being tickled. According to the UK-based organisation International Animal Rescue, one of the videos shows a slow loris raising its arms in what has been mistaken for happiness. Although such behaviour in human children often implies happiness, behavioural and physiological research done on slow lorises shows that this posture indicates that they are in distress and want to defend themselves ("The Truth about Sonya and Kinako").

However, if we are to completely reject anthropomorphism as a device, would we then be able to 'see' the animal as it were? What other language and psychological constructs are available to us to assist with understanding the subjectivity of the animal other?

Mechanomorphism, which is the obvious alternative to the use of anthropomorphism, utilises mechanical terms to describe living beings; metaphors include the body as machine or the use of technical language that does not reference inner life (Karlsson 110). However, analogies that use mechanical terms in descriptions of animals also come with several shortfalls, including a loss of empathy and compassion for the subject being described. While the notion of human exceptionalism can be traced back to Aristotle, one of its most enduring and far-reaching versions is to be found in Descartes' claim that animals do not have the ability to feel pleasure and pain in the way that humans do:

For Descartes, since the capacity for language was essential to thought, and thought essential to the experience of selfhood, animals were in effect like machines, which might send out behavioural signals of joy or distress, but lacked any corresponding sensibility of the kind possessed by human beings. (Soper 53–54)

For many animals, Cartesian dualism has become the justification for untold horrors and suffering visited upon them. Descartes' claim that animals do not have the capacity to think and, therefore, do not have the capacity to feel pain in the same way that a human being does has underpinned the rationale behind the use of mechanomorphism that continues to mask the harrowing lives that factory farmed and laboratory animals endure. It is specifically in the arenas of food production and biomedical research that mechanomorphic descriptions are deployed in order to maintain emotional distance between humans and animals. It must be

noted that resistance to such abuse in the name of scientific progress has not been overlooked as evidenced in The Brown Dog affair of 1903, which marked the first undercover investigation of animal experimentation by anti-vivisectionists ("The little brown dog"). However, the disheartening reality is that despite the emotive question posed in the inscription¹² that adorns the monument to the brown dog, situated in Battersea Park in London, vivisection has become an industry of its own, supplementing amongst others, the modern medical, pharmacological and food industries. Although mechanomorphism, the equation of animals with machines, is not anthropomorphic, it remains anthropocentric because it maintains human superiority over the animal.

In her examination of the metaphors employed to describe our relationships with animals, Annabelle Sabloff identifies three key types. These are metaphors that present animals as kin, tools or citizens. With the exception of tools/artefacts, which draws on the language of mechanomorphism, kinship and citizenship utilises anthropomorphism to generate feelings of affinity between humans and animals. Sabloff argues that our current modes of thinking do not provide metaphors that actually allow for biocentric relationships that would acknowledge the 'radical otherness of other life forms, that is, their inherent value outside the human ethical domain' (Sabloff qtd. in Fudge, *Animal* 11–12). In this respect Coetzee and Martel have been largely successful in breaking away from an entirely anthropocentric and anthropomorphic approach to writing the animal experience. However, both *Disgrace* and *Life of Pi* make use of the animal as a means to explore human concerns, making the texts more anthropocentric than they may first appear. Yet it is evident that the choice of interpretation will increase or decrease the anthropocentric elements by either bringing the animals sharply into focus as animals, or leaving them functioning as metaphors.

In "What is it Like to be a Bat?" (1974) philosopher Thomas Nagel asserts that animal consciousness is both inaccessible and beyond our capacity for imagination. The problem lies in understanding what constitutes a bat's experience of its own 'batness' and a human's understanding of 'batness', which is difficult to verify because we lack a shared verbal language. But this does not mean that a bat's life is not complex. In fact, Nagel's argument

¹² The inscription reads: 'In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903, after having endured Vivisection extending over more than two months and having been handed from one Vivisector to another till Death came to his Release. Also in Memory of the 232 dogs vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and Women of England, how long shall these things be?' ("The little brown dog").

indicates that it is likely that bats (here representative of all animals) ‘have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own’ (Nagel 440). As Fudge notes, the most distressing aspect of Nagel’s argument is that it implies that comprehension across species is not possible, and that attempts to do so suggest that our relationships with animals, particularly close relationships, such as the ones we have with pets, are either false relationships where the pet functions as a human substitute, or that these relationships lack anything resembling genuine mutual affection.

This problem is directly addressed in J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, which dedicates some of its narrative to exploring the use of the imagination as a tool that enables us to at least partially bridge the gap in experience between self and other. Elizabeth Costello herself, has become one of Coetzee’s most elaborate creations, and is often thought of as being his mouthpiece or alter ego. This understanding has become so accepted that some literary scholars, such as Lucy Graham, claim that through Costello and some of his other female protagonists, Coetzee has managed to achieve a sustained thought experiment in otherness. However, as Graham notes, there are critics, including Oliver Herford and Peter Singer, who have come to view Costello as a distancing device, expressing ‘impatience with [Coetzee’s] apparent reluctance to take a stance himself’ (218). She cites Singer’s view that Coetzee merely uses Costello to ‘criticize the use of reason, or the need to have any clear principles and proscriptions’ without having to commit to any of the thoughts espoused (218). I feel that this apparent conflation of author and character is a little unfair because Costello is not Coetzee, even if she is his creation and perhaps does articulate some of his thoughts. Although I will be engaging more fully with this text in Chapter Four, specifically from the perspective of ethical vegetarianism, it is worth briefly considering it in terms of this discussion of anthropomorphism.

In *The Lives of Animals* Elizabeth Costello delivers two lectures titled *The Philosophers and the Animals* and *The Poets and the Animals* respectively. In the first she speaks directly to Nagel’s ‘bat’ arguing that it is our ability to sympathise ‘that allows us to share at times the being of another’ (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 34). Her argument largely hinges on her capacity as a novelist, which she uses to demonstrate how the human ability to imagine fictitious lives suggests that we are at least capable of imagining the lives of nonhuman animals:

Despite Thomas Nagel, who is probably a good man, despite Thomas Aquinas and René Descartes, with whom I have more difficulty in sympathizing, there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination. [. . .] If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life. (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 35)

However, as Fudge points out, Costello's claim is anthropomorphic, because once again it is the human doing the imagining and interpreting, not the animal. Costello seems aware of this when she states that '[t]here are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it' (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 35). This may be read as a claim that the act of imagining is, as far as we are aware, a uniquely human act, which also gives us the capacity to act humanely, i.e. with compassion towards others. As Fudge explains, being able to relate compassionately 'is an imaginative response to the world. A person who could not imagine themselves into the suffering of another would not feel for or suffer with that person' (*Pets* 66). Although anthropomorphism may detract from the experience as experienced by the animal, there does not seem to be a viable alternative through which to connect to the mind of the nonhuman other. As Nussbaum argues, 'all human descriptions of animal behaviour are in human language [and are] mediated by human experience [it is only] in our own imaginations [that] we experience the inner life of anyone else'¹³, (354–355).

That we are unable to truly understand the nonhuman mind signals one of our many limitations. As Fudge notes:

Humanist humanity is undone when the animal mind is contemplated, either because the animal mind is revealed to be just like the human mind, thus destroying notions of human superiority; or because the animal mind is recognized as being always beyond our understanding, thus revealing how limited that understanding actually is. Whichever way you approach the issue, what is revealed are the frailties of the human. (*Pets* 52)

¹³ Nussbaum's argument for the usefulness of literary representation hinges on how our understanding and interpretation of human behaviours and experiences is as deeply flawed as our understanding and interpretation of animal behaviours and experiences (354–355).

However, in contrast to Nagel, Ralph Acampora argues that there is no need for thought experiments in being another species: ‘it will suffice “merely” to arrive at some comprehension of what it means to *be-with*¹⁴ other individuals of different yet related species, because that experience of “being-with” gives us all the mileage we need for tracking cross-species community’ (27). To acknowledge this interconnection between species as observable fact and not the imaginings of the human mind is at the centre of the research efforts of many animal behavioural scientists, zoologists and primatologists whose work has been crucial in generating more empathetic engagement.

Although we do not share a common spoken language which would allow us to communicate, to claim that animals have no language and so cannot communicate, think or have a sense of selfhood (as Descartes does) is for the most part now considered ridiculous. Studies such as Pepperberg’s avian language experiment and Patterson’s sign language experiment conducted with Koko the gorilla¹⁵, indicate that animals demonstrate the capacity to learn and use something very similar to our languages. Additionally, Janet M. Alger’s and Steven F. Alger’s study on the behaviour of cats in a cat shelter indicates that ‘the otherness of non-human animals is not impenetrable’ (Alger and Alger qtd. in Fudge, *Pets* 58). Because ethnographic research provides ample evidence regarding the importance of non-verbal communication in human interaction, Alger and Alger believe that it is quite possible to extrapolate that animals also use body language as a means to communicate. Furthermore, studies like those done by Patterson and Pepperberg demonstrate the potential for animals to communicate across the species boundary with humans, the reverse of which human beings appear to be unable to easily accomplish, which I would attribute largely to the prevalent belief in human superiority and our inability to ‘listen’. Fudge argues that the acknowledgment that animals have the capacity to communicate gives ‘them a status that is missing in anthropomorphic interpretations’, one where they are ‘communicating beings engaged in world-making alongside humans’ rather than ‘soundless symbols of human desires and human anxieties’ (*Pets* 56). However, having said that, Fudge is quick to state that ‘[w]hat we dismiss as anthropomorphic may not be anthropomorphic at all’:

¹⁴ Italics in the original.

¹⁵ Patterson, Francine G.P., and Ronald H. Cohn. “Language Acquisition by a Lowland Gorilla: Koko’s First Ten Years of Vocabulary Development”. *WORD* 41.2 (1990): 97–143.

[D]ismissing what can be recognized as animals' apparently human-like behaviour as merely evidence of our anthropomorphic tendencies (which are often regarded as sentimental) could be evidence of the 'disavowal' of animals that Wolfe proposed as central to the ways in which our humanity is constructed. It would be dangerous to a concept of the human as utterly distinct and separate from animals if we believed that animals acted like humans. (*Pets* 59)

By conceptualising our recognition of behavioural similarities across species as merely anthropomorphic, and by extension sentimental, we manage to reinforce species difference.

Animals' capacity for empathy has received some attention, particularly in Frans de Waal's *The Age of Empathy* (2009) in which he argues that empathy is not unique to humans.

Importantly, this means that human beings are not the only species that has the ability to imagine what it might be like to be another entity. Many animals, including apes, dogs and rats, display behaviours that strongly suggest that they are also capable of empathy. Such a discovery marks a great step towards dismissing proponents of anthropodenial and mechanomorphism, and favouring those who believe in the complexities of animal sentience and experience. However, it is worth noting that when it comes to expressing ourselves and understanding the world around us, any attempt to articulate the similarities and the differences between humans and animals cannot avoid using 'human terms'; simply put, '[w]e cannot get away from ourselves' (Fudge, *Pet* 59). However, for all its shortfalls, unlike mechanomorphism, anthropomorphism, at the very least, still allows for the recognition and exploration of the experiences of nonhuman animals. Therefore, in texts in which animals can be read as animals, even if anthropomorphised, we might understand the use of such a device as being strategic on the part of the author. When viewed in this way anthropomorphism becomes a gateway to representing animal consciousness and agency, rather than an obstacle, as can be seen in *Life of Pi*, *The Whale Caller* and the *MaddAddam Trilogy*.

Attempting to Write the Animal

Two genres that engage with the possibilities for discourses of otherness, particularly in terms of nonhuman subjectivities, are science fiction and speculative fiction. There is now sufficient evidence and agreement that the Anthropocene has brought with it climatic changes triggered by industry, urbanisation and farming, which have led to the sixth mass extinction. As Vint notes, science fiction, as well as speculative fiction, often draw on real-life historical

and material contexts in presenting interventions ‘in the ongoing struggle to reconfigure human subjectivity, often in ways that transform our destructive relationship with the rest of the natural world’ (16). Many authors of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century science and speculative fiction appear to represent the impending threat of even more animal extinctions and the potential for ecological collapse (Vint 16). This is certainly true of Margaret Atwood’s popular *MaddAddam Trilogy*. *MaddAddam* (2013) is of particular interest here because it outlines potential mutually beneficial future relationships with animals. It is also in this novel that Atwood strongly gestures towards Pepperberg’s ALEX project, which she first introduces in *Oryx and Crake*, by developing the potential for cross-species communication between the human survivors and the pigoon tribe, which results in greater potential for compassion and understanding between the groups.

In *MaddAddam*, Atwood’s pigoons — who have previously been depicted as vicious, hyper-intelligent transgenic pigs — seek assistance from the survivors of Crake’s haemorrhagic fever to ensure the continued survival of both groups. What appears to be an unlikely cross-species relationship — given that both groups are inclined to hunt one another in this post-apocalyptic space — is later revealed to be a mutually beneficial one that not only resolves the threat of the Painballers, but leads to greater cross-species understanding. The pigoon as a physical being occupies a liminal space in Atwood’s texts, being neither human nor completely animal, but a Moreauvian combination of the two. Recognition of the pigoons’ unique subjectivity and the human potential to compassionately engage with the animal other, which could result in some form of cross-species understanding, is most evident in Jimmy’s earlier narrative in *Oryx and Crake*, where he is portrayed as being highly empathetic towards animals, and finds himself at odds with the distasteful distancing behaviours exhibited by the scientific community inhabiting the OrganInc compound. Although meat has become a rare and expensive commodity in Atwood’s world, that is not the case for the residents of this particular compound. The possibility that they are eating the pigoons is troubling not because the animals display sentience, but rather because their transgenic nature makes it tantamount to cannibalism. However, for Jimmy this concern goes beyond the issue of food taboos into the realm of ethical consideration and compassionate identification. He simply does not want to consider eating the pigoons because he thinks of them ‘as creatures much like himself’, at the mercy of others’ decisions (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 27).

Compassion as exhibited by Jimmy and Costello may be perceived as slightly different from that present in Lurie. While Jimmy and Costello display an obvious concern for the plight of animals and recognise their similarities to human beings, Lurie appears to battle with genuinely and respectfully acknowledging the subjectivities of others. Though there might a subtle difference between sympathy/empathy and compassion, and that such distinctions reveal small, but significant shifts in how we perceive and engage with other living beings, for the purposes of this thesis I will not be engaging in-depth with affect theory as it lies slightly outside my scope and would, I feel, detract from my central concerns. However, it is interesting to note that there are theorists who have dedicated time to investigating this particular linguistic issue as vocabulary does limit the possibilities for how one can think about and articulate our relationships in the world in which we exist. An example of this which is relevant to this discussion of anthropomorphism, in so far as it concerns how we think about otherness, is the use of the word ‘sympathy’.

Rather than using sympathy which concerns ‘a common understanding based on shared feelings’, Acampora advocates what he calls symphysis, ‘a common understanding based on shared embodied experience’, as the basis for beginning to understand the experiences of other species (Vint 15). He argues that:

To gain ontological access to the varied life-modes of different animals, one must enter environments not wholly of human making. This means beginning without making the assumption that there is just one world, permitting the possibility of other *Umwelten* — foreign, yet potentially familiar, forms of worldhood. Indeed, starting out this way may itself contribute to the revelation (or even constitution) of other animal worlds. Approaching others as if they are capable of relating or being related to us, in other words, can help enable the cultivation of that very relationship. (Acampora, *Corporal Compassion* 12)

Similarly, speaking specifically about human-pet relationships, Fudge emphasises the need to identify an ethics ‘that does not assume that being like a human is the only possible subject status, but that accepts the animal-ness of the animal’ (*Pets* 65), and uses the imagination to engage more actively with compassion. Central to this is identification, which is in itself problematic since we can only ever truly experience our own lived experiences; the rest we have to image. Fudge notes that ‘[i]n compassion, as in anthropomorphism, I am central to my relationship to the rest of the world’ (*Pets* 67). However, while compassion may reflect the world as perceived by the self, it does not equate all experiences with those of the self. It

is through the recognition that the self is ‘simultaneously different from and yet similar to other beings in the world that compassion works’ (*Pets* 67). Furthermore, as Woodward notes, it is through the recognition of what Derrida observed as being the uniqueness and irreplaceability of a living being ‘that compassion may arise’ (“The Killing (Off) of Animals in Some Southern African Fiction, or ‘Why Does Every Animal Story Have to be Sad?’” 297).

In Summary

I commenced this chapter by briefly tracing the emergence of ecocriticism, touching on animal studies and zoocriticism, with the aim of examining how this area developed from an initial interest in nature writing to a much broader discourse that can be usefully applied to most genres. This served as a theoretical backdrop against which I raised the primary concern of this chapter, which involves the representation of animal subjectivities in the literary context. In order to address the question of whether or not literary devices, such as anthropomorphism, remain relevant and useful in representing these ostensibly unknowable subjectivities I drew on several novels in order to enumerate and evaluate the benefits and shortfalls of such representation. As indicated, animals in literature have traditionally existed as part of the backdrop or setting in a narrative, and in cases where they are positioned as central characters they are then, by and large, understood as being allegorical or metaphorical depictions of anthropocentric concerns. However, in stories that attempt to engage with the representation of animal subjectivity there exists a different problem — how to write about a subjectivity that one can imagine, but never actually know because humans and animals do not share a verbal language. Atwood and Coetzee both explore this problem to various degrees and in differing ways. In *The Lives of Animals*, by using an educated author, Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee, engages with Nagel’s thought experiment, which asserts that animal consciousness is both inaccessible and beyond our imaginative abilities. Drawing on her talents as an author, Costello argues that if one can imagine the life of a fictitious character, then it must be possible to imagine the life of a nonhuman entity. However, her argument also acknowledges that there is always an element of anthropocentrism in any attempt to image the life of a nonhuman animal. She also acknowledges that although anthropomorphic representations might detract from the animal experience, there does not appear to be a viable alternative that still suggests that animals do indeed have personal and private existences. While anthropomorphism admittedly detracts from the experiences of the nonhuman animal — replacing their experiences with our own — when compared to other

modes of representation, such as mechanomorphism, anthropomorphism does, at least, recognise that animals are subjects of a life, and as such must be able to have experiences.

The question of how different human experiences are from those of animals is raised in *Disgrace*, which uses the powerlessness, abuse and the perceived instinctual nature of animals to represent and engage with the power dynamics between the human characters. The text also exposes how the 'animal' subject has been devalued, as well as how beings that are categorised as 'animal', including human beings, are not thought of as having the same inherent value as those entities classified as human.

Taking this discussion into the world of speculative fiction, Atwood offers her readers the troubling concept of human-animal hybrids in the form of her pigoons. Endowing the pigoons with sentience and the capacity for strategic thinking, Atwood condemns both the practice of vivisection, as well as the capitalist means that make it viable. As products of the biomedical research industry, the pigoons demonstrate how Cartesian dualism has stripped animal life of its self-worth, replacing its inherent value with the value assigned to commodities. Her use of anthropomorphism explores the idea that these animals have complex lives, lives that have value within their own social setting.

To conclude, what might be lost through anthropomorphic representation, might be gained through the act of compassionate engagement. At this point in our evolving relationship with animals, it might well be worth foregoing representations that only look at observed behaviours as found in the language of the laboratory, particularly in the case of literary representation, if doing so makes it easier for authors to convince audiences that nonhuman animals are subjects, not objects, of a life that has inherent worth. I propose that in trying to imagine or represent animal subjectivities as coherently as possible, writers should avoid using only one form of representation. Perhaps the blending of observation, imagination and compassion will create a more accessible concept of the animal other, that manages to circumvent the human-animal dichotomy by presenting the complexity of animal existence, even if anthropomorphism is still present.

Chapter 2

Lovers and Companions: Crossing the Species Boundary

He did not call the whales in order to kill them. Eating them would be tantamount to cannibalism. He called them because they gave him joy and he gave them as much in return. And if he could help it, he preferred to call them when he was alone, so as to have intimate moments with them. He was not a showman, but a lover.

— Z. Mda, *The Whale Caller*¹⁶

Eventually I learned to read the signals he was sending me. I found that with his ears, his eyes, his whiskers, his teeth, his tail and his throat, he spoke a simple, forcefully punctuated language that told me what his next move might be.

— Y. Martel, *Life of Pi*¹⁷

Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* challenge the human/animal binary by offering examples of mutual, emotionally connected human-animal relationships. Both narratives depict the potential for humans and animals to have shared experiences despite obvious differences in ontology, means of communication and the environments that they inhabit. What emerges is that many of the often unchallenged divisions between humans and animals, including the capacity for language and the ability to lead complex emotional and social lives, may be far more porous than previously thought. The breakdown of such a seemingly clear division between the human and the animal would necessitate a radical re-evaluation of our relationships with the nonhuman. Although these texts raise complex questions concerning race, national and personal histories, and displacement in the global south, they also pose pertinent questions regarding the human/animal binary, specifically in terms of interspecies communication and whether it would result in a better understanding of, and respect for, the animal other.

In order to respond to the question of whether it is possible to experience genuine cross-species relationships, it is necessary to discuss the benefits to western/westernised

¹⁶ Zakes, Mda. *The Whale Caller*. 2005. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2013, 16.

¹⁷ Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*. 2001. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2003, 207.

societies¹⁸ in maintaining the human/animal binary. What does the act of clinging to this specific categorisation reveal about our societies and ourselves, and why does it appear to remain so important? More interestingly, what would happen if we were to dissolve the categories ‘human’ and ‘animal’? Would it be possible to transcend such limited binaries and become, like Pi or the Whale Caller, more appreciative and respectful of the other and our mutual connections? By interrogating how and why we maintain the human/animal divide, this chapter will engage with these questions while exploring what types of relationships may be possible if we allowed such rigid distinctions, and the limitations that these impose, to collapse.

The Paradox of Human-Animal Relationships

The nonhuman animal occupies a varied and, at times, paradoxical space in relation to the human. Although our modern relationship with animals has undoubtedly been one of abuse and domination, it has also been one of cohabitation and compassion. History shows humans to generally be in a state of indecision about the value of the animal, and this indecision — influenced at different points in our collective history by religion, science, modernisation and the environmental movement — has contributed to an increasingly complicated and dichotomous relationship that has met an impasse with the global ecological crisis.

As an approach to literary scholarship, postcolonial ecocriticism aims to decentre the human subject by situating animals in time, space, place and history. Despite being a necessary and highly relevant global literary project, particularly in this period of the Anthropocene, it is not without its difficulties. These notably include the presence of and ability to know animal subjectivities, and the possibility for meaningful cross-species communication. It is in relation to these two contentious areas that the pet or companion animal offers a meaningful starting point to engaging with cross-species relationships, which are the focus of this chapter.

Although pets are not central to the narratives in *Life of Pi* or *The Whale Caller*, they are nevertheless worth considering because they offer examples of our ability to have meaningful relationships with animals. For the purposes of exploring the human-animal relationships

¹⁸ This is the context in which I am working.

present in these novels, it is worth examining the role of the pet in society, and the value we place on relationships with domesticated animals as opposed to wild ones.

Many pet owners take it for granted that the animals with whom they share their homes are first and foremost animals. Because domestication breeds out natural behaviours in favour of traits that humans find preferable or useful, questions have been raised as to whether pets should be considered ‘real’ animals or if they might be ‘better’ in some respects than wild animals. Despite the curtailing of their animal qualities — ‘wildness and self-sufficiency’ (Fudge, *Pets* 8) — the emotionally connected relationships often exhibited between humans and their pets present an accessible starting point from which to explore the possibility of transcending the human/animal divide, particularly from the perspective of communication. Although the pet might be thought of as an altered animal because of its domesticity, its existence within this liminal space — ‘between the wild animal and the human’ — is why, as Fudge notes, it has become interesting to many academics; anthropologists, literary critics and philosophers amongst them (*Pets* 8).

Concerns about ownership, responsibility and animal rights often emerge in relation to human-pet relationships. Regarding ownership, one of the questions often raised is whether it is possible to own and therefore control an entity that, despite commodification and domestication, remains sentient and has the capacity to behave in undesirable ways. This is particularly interesting because pets have been domesticated and bred so that they barely resemble the wild versions of their species but are still able to harm, and even kill, their owners. Instances of pet aggression draw attention to animal sentience and agency, and to what degree they are able to exercise their agency within the restrictions of the human-pet relationship. Of course, as a result of our own human limitations, it remains difficult to know to what extent animal behaviour is both intentional and conscious although we might acknowledge that they do exhibit signs of being agentic, particularly when they engage with others of their own species. While the potential for animal agency is more readily acknowledged where wild animals are concerned — because they are not tame and are therefore considered unpredictable — it is now generally accepted that animals, whether tame or domesticated, are sentient agents. However, in cases where the pet has transgressed the boundaries of its domestic relationship with humans through displays of aggression, the result is usually euthanasia. These ‘dangerous’ animals are sacrificed to maintain the illusion that humans exist in a controllable environment where we can also dictate animal responses.

Although euthanising dangerous animals has generally been an accepted practice, 2017 saw a public challenge to what has become something of a blanket approach to this issue. The debate erupted when two animal welfare organisations — Soweto Animal Rescue and Advisory Centre (SARAC) and Friends of Rescued Animals (FORA) — based in Johannesburg, South Africa, came head-to-head on social media over the possibility of rehabilitating and homing Jackson, a pit bull terrier involved in the mauling of a young girl. The two most pertinent issues that emerged in this case concerned the age of the victim and the breed of the dog involved. Contrary to expectation, what became evident was that some people did show concern for the well-being of the dog, not only for the child, with questions being raised about what had contributed to the attack. Although the general sentiment was to euthanise the dog, he was instead rehomed with a suitable family, the success of which continues to cause surprise. This in and of itself represents a more nuanced and sympathetic engagement with the animal than has historically been the case in such instances.

The demonisation of various dog breeds is not a new occurrence, the pit bull is merely the most recent example of this trend. In an article titled “Dangerous Dogs by the Decade” (2013), Richard Christian puts this historical issue in perspective by listing a number of breeds that have been branded as problematic just in the last century. However, if one consults Karen Delise’s *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression* (2007) it becomes apparent that this demonisation can be traced back to the American slave trade, with the bloodhound being an early victim of such prejudice. This demonstrates a denial of our socio-historical involvement in creating these animal monsters, a phenomenon that, novels such as *Moby Dick* remind us, is not specific to dogs.

Dangerous animals, both fact — Gordon Grice’s *Deadly Kingdom: The Book of Dangerous Animals* (2010), Michael Tougias’s *When Man is the Prey* (2007), Lamar Underwood’s *Man Eaters: True Tales of Animals Stalking, Mauling, Killing, and Eating Human Prey* (2002) — and fiction — Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), Peter Benchley’s *Jaws* (1974), Stephen King’s *Cujo* (1981) — appear to occupy the popular imagination primarily because they engage our primal fear of being preyed on, and so serve as an unsettling reminder that humans are neither in absolute control of their environments nor at the top of the food chain. The killing of animals perceived as a threat to human life is common practice, especially in cases where they have escaped the confines of artificially

designated territories, e.g. garden enclosures, nature reserves or zoos. But this is also true in cases where humans enter the animal's artificially designated territory. A recent example of this comes from the United States, where a Cincinnati Zoo official shot and killed Harambe, a 17-year-old male gorilla, after a young boy fell into the gorilla's enclosure. Of interest are the various ways that eye-witnesses understood the event, with some people interpreting the animal's behaviour towards the child as aggressive, and others as protective (Shapiro). Harambe's death sparked an international outcry, which brought two important issues to the fore. The first was that given that Harambe was an animal that lived in captivity whose function — if we are to believe what many zoos deem to be their current purpose — was to educate people about the species, and to provide genetic material to prevent extinction, then surely the child's parents must carry some responsibility for what took place. The second, and possibly more important issue, was an acknowledgement that no one could reliably interpret the interactions between the child and the gorilla.

Whereas Jackson's behaviour was never questioned, Harambe's was, and perhaps some of the upset around what took place lies in the recognition of kinship, no matter how unconscious or how small. This returns us to the issue of animal rights and the assignment of rights based on similarities with the human which was raised in Chapter One. Through his physicality alone, Harambe's body situates him in closer proximity to the human, and so deserving of better treatment, than Jackson's. A further difference lies in the value that humans place on different types of animals. Gorillas are Red listed by the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), because they are critically endangered and face a high risk of becoming extinct as a result of human interference (Cawthon Lang). Therefore, Harambe was not only a valuable example of his species, having the potential to be placed in a breeding programme, but also a highly prized asset. The decision to kill him could not have been as simple or as easy as some might be inclined to believe. Unfortunately, because Jackson was a dog, and a member of a 'dangerous breed' at that, he did not hold any rarity value.

Despite both cases being demonstrative of the belief that human life is superior, and so more valuable than an animal's, what also emerged was a very clear challenge to such thinking. In both cases the children and the animals were viewed sympathetically and recognised as being victims. The recognition of the victimhood of the animals serves as an important

acknowledgment of their individual subjectivity and kinship. It also brings into focus issues around stewardship and the responsibilities that this places on humans regarding animals.

What's in a Name?

The two cases discussed involved different types of animals, inhabiting different roles in different settings. Both cases serve as reminders of how animals are at the mercy of humans. However, the repercussions of this disparity in power relations is more obvious in human-pet relations because these animals have come to rely on humans in order to survive. Furthermore, both instances reveal the presence of commodification, which exists in the human-animal relationship. In the postcolonial space, the commodification of animals has been extended beyond the home, farm, laboratory or zoo into the recently established economy of ecotourism, which monetises a region's natural environment and its nonhuman inhabitants. The reality is that in animal husbandry, pet ownership and conservation the animal is at the mercy of a predominantly anthropocentric agenda. The animal does not have a choice, not only because it cannot respond in ways that humans find meaningful, but also because it is refused a sense of self and denied control over its body. In effect, we have enslaved the animal to meet and suit our own needs, a reality that Marjorie Spiegel explores in *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (1988).

The title of Spiegel's work touches on one of the key issues at hand, that such a comparison between human and animal experience is not openly invited or even acceptable. It is 'dreaded' because it collapses the unchallenged boundaries between human and animal, implying that atrocities visited on animals should be viewed with seriousness by appealing to our sense of kinship and exposing the need for reform. Animal enslavement is easily recognised in medical science and more recently in factory farming, both of which rely on the production of results or products for human consumption at the expense of the animal. But what about our seemingly innocuous relationships with pets/companion animals and zoo animals?

What makes human relationships with pets different from most of our relationships with other animals is that we individuate them, and we do this by giving them names. The act of naming not only signals the recognition of a unique individual, but also creates the opportunity for a potentially mutually beneficial interactive space to emerge. By having, to

some extent, acknowledged the presence of an animal subjectivity by providing that subject with a name, we create the possibility for an animal personality to emerge, which is usually anthropomorphised. However, as already discussed, the greatest danger in an over-reliance on anthropomorphism is that it replaces the experiences of animals with that of the human. Yet despite this shortfall, it remains a useful tool for the promotion of compassionate engagement, as Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello demonstrate in *The Lives of Animals*, because it tends to offer the potential for feeling.

What is remarkable in the Jackson and Harambe cases is that the animals had names, and it was through the promotion of the individual identities of each animal that their narratives became significant. By giving the animals identities of their own, the children's narratives were decentred, allowing for the animal to emerge more strongly. Here, then, is a concrete example of Costello's argument against Thomas Nagel's proposition that we cannot imagine our way into the being of an animal. While Nagel is correct in claiming that humans are limited in their ability to comprehend the experiences of animals in their totality, Costello argues that it is our use of the imagination to transcend these physical limitations that enables us to engage compassionately with the other. This compassionate engagement is central to Jackson's and Harambe's stories. Because the animals have names (human names at that), they are granted individual identities, and by giving them individual identities we enable ourselves to imagine what it might be like to be the other, even if that imagining is heavily reliant on anthropomorphism. However, both instances also demonstrate the limitations of the sympathetic imagination, as well as a return to anthropocentric concerns when the other is perceived as threatening.

In "The Animal that Therefore I am (More to Follow)" (2002)¹⁹, Derrida portrays his cat as agentive and responsive to him (Woodward, *The Animal Gaze* 2). What is important about this interaction is the realisation that the cat is not just an 'exemplar of the species', but also a specific 'irreplaceable living being' (Derrida, "The Animal that Therefore I am" 378–379).

¹⁹ Fudge understands the title of Derrida's essay, "The Animal That Therefore I am (More to Follow)", as an invocation of Descartes' view of the human mind (I think therefore I am), but rather than discussing Descartes' 'formulation of the human of humanism', serves to raise doubts about our uniqueness as humans (*Pets* 86). Interestingly, in addition to reviewing Cartesian dualism, Woodward views this essay as reframing the Genesis myth where 'the animal embodies a moral agent who brings the human to awareness of good and evil rather than an unthinking creature who is ultimately responsible, like the Edenic serpent, for human shame (*The Animal Gaze* 2). The 'animal looks back' (Woodward, *The Animal Gaze* 2), therefore, (as Tom Regan asserts) an animal must be a subject of a life.

Derrida's recognition of his cat as an individual subject, unique as any human being, demonstrates the possibility of shifting our thinking about animals from a position of objectification to one of shared subjective experience. This is significant not only because it 'challenges the humanist belief that only humans have the capacity to participate in such acts of acknowledgement of and engagement with other beings', but it also contests Descartes' conceptualisation of the animal as an unthinking, unfeeling machine (Fudge, *Pets* 103).

Another possible explanation for the reaction to the Jackson and Harambe cases may lie in the now generally accepted view that animals are subjects, that their own lives matter to them and that their lived experiences shape their behaviours and personalities. As individuals, these animals were responding to the situations in which they found themselves and that response was not necessarily the result of instinct or training. Therefore, if training or instinct do not sufficiently explain what took place, then what might one postulate was at play?

It appears that these animals may have been thinking and attempting some form of communication with the children (Jackson was possibly defending himself or his territory and Harambe may have been trying to protect the child), rather than purely reacting. Such interactions provide some evidence to dispute Descartes' claim that animals do not have a language, a claim that is central to his reasoning that animals cannot possibly have the cognitive capacity that would surpass that of a machine. Descartes' equation of the animal with machine not only hindered conceptualisations of animal intelligence, but also allowed for the abuse of animals on the basis that they could not feel pain in the same way that humans do. This unfortunate and widely accepted supposition still finds expression today, particularly in areas such as factory farming and medical science. However, what matters here is the issue of cross-species communication and western over-reliance on empirical evidence to validate, and therefore make acceptable, answers to questions about our personal relationships with animals that pet owners may already know: that cross-species communication and meaningful relationships are possible.

The pet or companion animal is perhaps the best example of how humans have managed to create and maintain a largely mutually beneficial relationship²⁰ with specific animals. Here

²⁰ If pet owners behave responsibly towards their pets in terms of providing for their needs, then the animals benefit from having secure food sources and territories, and medical attention as well as companionship.

the blurring of the human-animal boundary, which is often a hallmark of the human-pet relationship, asks us to consider what it means to love. Fudge raises two important questions in relation to this. The first concerns the validity of the experience of love for both humans and animals. If we believe that relationships between humans and animals are relationships between two beings that have subjective experiences, how do we understand what love might mean to each species²¹? As Fudge puts it, ‘what if loving an animal is not a fraudulent version of some other kind of loving? What if, as Marjorie Garber has proposed, “dog love is love”, not simply a representation of, or a rehearsal for, love?’ (*Pets* 40).

Several questions emerge in relation to this question of loving across species. If we acknowledge the subjectivity of the other how do we categorise or speak about it? This problem, in turn, gives rise to concerns about how to label our relationships with other species. How would we change our thinking about human-animal relationships if our love for an animal is to be considered genuine? That is to say that the experience of love takes the form of love as it is expressed in relation to other humans and, therefore, is not an experience that would constitute a displacement of emotions reserved only for the human, but rather represents an authentic experience of platonic, or even erotic (though often illegal), love between species.

Mda’s *The Whale Caller* and Martel’s *Life of Pi* explore the idea of cross-species love either through a recognition of its presence or through a realisation that it is absent. What is crucial in both novels is a recognition that the animal ‘sees’ us, that it can return our gaze. Therefore, the challenge to humanism, which I have already indicated as being present in such an act of acknowledgement, is no longer merely an abstraction, but rather a genuine experience for the focalisers of both novels. That they see the animal, and that the animal sees them, is a reality that neither the *Whale Caller* nor *Pi* take for granted, because it is the animal’s acknowledgement of their existence that enhances their lives.

Giving an animal a name is a significant step towards acknowledging the subjectivity of the other. In terms of pet ownership, such a display of love or acknowledgement on the part of the human does not necessarily mean that this love for the other will be extended to other

²¹ Since this discussion relates to the texts selected for this thesis, this question is limited to interactions between species of vertebrates.

animals because as Fudge, following Shell's argument, concludes 'the pet can be — and usually is — loved as an individual creature, distinct from notions of species or any other category. A pet is a pet first, an animal second' (*Animal* 32). While this may be true in a general sense, for Pi and the Whale Caller it would appear that the acknowledgement of a single animal subjectivity functions as a gateway to acknowledging multiple subjectivities.

The animal protagonists in *The Whale Caller* and *Life of Pi* are not pets, and do not inhabit a space where the boundaries between human and animal are easily collapsed. In Mda's story, Sharisha is a southern right whale who is free to follow natural migratory patterns and in Martel's narrative, Richard Parker is a royal Bengal tiger who has only spent his adult life in captivity. In both of the novels the animals are large, endangered mammals that have become iconic figures for the habitat loss and ecological devastation caused by human activity. From a postcolonial ecocritical standpoint, there appears to be little coincidence in the authors' choice of animal protagonists. The interactions between the Whale Caller and Sharisha, and Pi and Richard Parker, offer readers insight into how limited our understanding of the animal other is. However, also strongly present, is the potential for us to foster cross-species relationships despite these limitations. Through their respective experiences, no matter how tinged with anthropomorphism these might be, the protagonists offer us a glimpse into the lives of these animals while simultaneously drawing attention to how potentially unreliable our interpretation of animal behaviour can be.

The Tragedy of Touch

Touching, both literal and figurative, draws attention to the various points of intersection between human and animal subjectivities. Haraway's question, 'whom [do] I touch when I touch a dog?' (*When Species Meet* 7), encourages consideration of these points of contact between the human and the animal, exposing how human interference with the environment has affected the history of animals particularly in terms of location and population size. Therefore, when we 'touch' an animal, not only are we touching a subjectivity, but also the history of the group to which that subjectivity belongs. Haraway proposes that touch 'ramifies and shapes accountability [. . .] pepper[ing] its partners with attachment sites for world making', which shape various forms of responsibility extending from ourselves towards the animal (*When Species Meet* 36). Haraway's argument seems somewhat idealistic because it frames these points of contact in a positive way, which is particularly difficult to

do when it comes to vivisection (from the perspective of the animal). In her argument she seems to condone such practices as long as the researchers share the subjects' suffering, which she believes involves doing 'the *work*²² of paying attention and making sure that the suffering is minimal, necessary, and consequential²³' (*When Species Meet* 82). Her position, specifically regarding vivisection, seems to endorse the utilitarian idea that the suffering of a few individuals for the benefit of many is permissible if we minimise the suffering experienced.

The concept of touch and the sharing of suffering as espoused by Haraway, nevertheless offer two interesting starting points for addressing some of the concerns raised in *The Whale Caller*. Often described as a magical realist novel centred on an unlikely love triangle between a man, a woman and a whale — a description which oversimplifies this relationship — the narrative offers a critique of the post-apartheid South African environment, the burgeoning business of ecotourism and the shortfalls of modern human-animal relations. These broad concerns are played out in the microcosm of the relationships that the marginalised figure of the Whale Caller develops with other ostracised or objectified members of Hermanus society.

The novel draws on several characteristics associated with the pastoral mode — retreat into the past, idealisation of the rural, love and death — because of its usefulness in the postcolonial space to explore an ecocentric²⁴ agenda (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 84). The Whale Caller, who exists on the periphery of mainstream society as something of a shaman has the ability to communicate with whales using his kelp horn. Mda uses the Whale Caller's ability and imagination to present moments of intersection between human and whale histories, which highlights a number of postcolonial and ecological issues that later frame the novel's critique of the modern tourist town. These include the connection of land with history and identity, and 'ecological understandings of the relationship between human beings, the environment that surrounds them, and the other creatures with whom they share their world' (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 119).

²² Emphasis in original.

²³ This usually implies that the animal's suffering was of some benefit, usually to people.

²⁴ Although the pastoral has historically been associated with anthropocentric and bourgeois concerns, the form is relevant to developing a literary ecological consciousness and its associated aesthetics (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 84).

One of the most significant, and yet easily overlooked, of the Whale Caller's reveries involves the portrayal of the preindustrial age as a period of harmonious relations between the indigenous inhabitants and the animals that occupied the area. Mda appears to be offering his own, South African specific, critique of the trope of the 'Ecological Indian', a stereotypical concept that presents pre-modern Native American cultures (or pre-modern cultures in general) as ecologically sensitive and living in harmony with the nonhuman world (Adamson 31). Such idealisation and stereotyping is present in the Whale Caller's understanding of the Khoikhoi's relationship with the region's migratory whales:

[B]efore there were boats and fishermen and whalers, [he could see] the Khoikhoi of old dancing around a beached whale. Dancing their thanks to Tsiqua, He who Tells His Stories in Heaven, for the bountiful food he occasionally provides for his children by allowing whales to strand themselves. But when there are mass strandings the dance freezes and the laughter in the eyes of the dancers melts into tears that leave stains on the white sands. The weepers harvest the blubber for the oil to fry meat and light lamps. They will ultimately use the rib-bones to construct the skeletons of their huts, and will roof the houses with the baleen. Ear bones will be used as water carrying vessels. Other bones will become furniture. Or even pillows and beds. Nights are slept fervidly inside variable whales that speckle the landscape. But first the weepers will eat the meat until their stomachs run. They will dry some of it in the sun. They cannot finish it though. Most of it will putrefy and fill the shores with a stench. Hence they weep for the waste. (Mda 2–3)

The relationships between humans and animals appear to be based on respect, where the animals' lives and deaths are understood to have a tangible impact on the people who live both with and off them. It is an idealised, almost mythical representation of human-animal relationships where the animal other is not taken for granted, where their deaths provide sustenance, and waste is abhorred and perceived as unnatural. Mda's evocation of the Khoikhoi's seemingly sustainable relationship with the whales sets up the indigenous/colonial binary that sharply contrasts this indigenous history with Hermanus's colonial history during which it gained prominence as a commercial whaling district. Although within the context of the novel this particular binary may seem somewhat convenient and unconvincing in its eco-centredness, its gesture towards better ways of being in the world is worth noting if only because it emphasises different ways of existing alongside animals.

Within the context of human-animal relationships, there are two key areas of concern that make this story worth exploring. The first is its focus on one particularly eccentric human-animal relationship that appears to transgress many western taboos in relation to the animal. The second is its exploration of the value placed on conserving the area's natural beauty largely for the purposes of ecotourism — which results in the 'aestheticization of underdevelopment' (Brennan qtd. in Huggan and Tiffin 111) — and the tension that exists between western and indigenous knowledge systems.

Bryld and Lykke liken the use of whales and dolphins in popular postcolonial, environmental iconography to that of the 'noble savage' found in early modernity. They claim that like the noble savage, 'the dolphin and the whale [. . .] allegedly guide us to insight into the "true and sacred" pleasures of a simple life in harmony with the natural environment' (3). In terms of environmentalist iconography cetaceans, specifically whales and dolphins, have become 'symbols for environmentalist pleas to save the world's ocean ecosystems' from the negative effects of 'pollution, extraction, and catastrophe' (Steinwand 182). As a result, in the west, perceptions of the whale have slowly shifted from thinking of these animals as monstrous or as a technological resource, to an iconic species. It would appear that environmentalists enlisted these animals as icons because they are representative of both a 'radical alterity' and 'kinship' (Steinwand 184), which fosters a desire amongst humans to preserve oceanic ecosystems, the importance of which has returned to centre stage with the global plastics crisis.

In the colonial and patriarchal discourse of early modernity, there exists the 'trinity of others: Woman-Native-Nature' (Bryld and Lykke 7). The colonial quest for new land:

[G]ave rise to constructions of the wild and the savage with the trinity Woman, Native and Nature as central icons. They were cast as wild others: good or evil, challenging or threatening, inherently inferior and lacking, but also capable of producing sublime experiences in the observer. Their opposite emerged as Universal Man, the 'civilized', enlightened self. In contrast to Woman, Native and Nature, he was supposed to carry the 'white man's burden'. (Bryld and Lykke 7)

Part of the 'burden' referred to is the undertaking to 'civilize and modernize the world, and to pursue freedom and happiness by seeking control and mastery over wild others through technoscience, and colonial capitalist power' (Bryld and Lykke 8). This trinity of others is

present in the novel manifesting in the town drunk, Saluni (woman), the displaced, often indigent groups of people, including the Whale Caller (native), and Sharisha/Hermanus (nature). The novel draws attention to these marginalised figures in post-apartheid South Africa, and to the arbitrary separation of human and animal worlds, by reconnecting these indigenous human and animal communities either through music, which functions as a shared language or form of communication, or through rituals that transgress western moral or socially acceptable boundaries. The first indication that such transgressive behaviours are immanent in the text, comes in the form of the Whale Caller himself. Here, Mda takes the tourist bureau-sponsored whale crier, who tells tourists where whales are to be sighted, and juxtaposes this figure and his role against the abilities of the Whale Caller. The key difference between these two entities lies in their relationships with nature. Whereas the whale crier is merely fulfilling his role in the newly established business of ecotourism, the Whale Caller can genuinely communicate with the whales through music, and does so because he feels connected to them. Mda transforms the familiar post-apartheid figure of the whale crier into a 'postmodern South African shaman' (Steinwand 185) whose tragic relationship with Sharisha emphasises the limitations of western understandings of indigenous knowledge and the complexity of animal behaviour.

Since oceans are often understood to represent the border between 'human civilisation' and 'wild nature' (Bryld and Lykke 20), Sharisha's death appears to be the result of the transgression of both artificial (human/animal) and natural (land/sea) boundaries. Through his interactions with the whales, as well as his broader knowledge of human-whale histories, the Whale Caller comes to symbolise the area's indigenous knowledges and traditions as well as its history. However, he is unable to use his shamanic powers to save Sharisha's life. It is during her stranding that he realises how limited his abilities actually are since he cannot conjure powers like those of the Strong Man, from the Ramindjeri clan of the Australian Aborigines, to sing her back to safety. Because the relationship between the Whale Caller and Sharisha ends tragically, partly as a result of his need for her companionship and partly because veterinary/zoological science deems euthanasia preferable to suffering, the narrative re-establishes the division between humans and animals. Despite this, Sharisha's interactions with the Whale Caller represent an important point where two completely different subjectivities meet (touch) and are able to cross the human/animal divide.

The Whale Caller is able to develop a complex and sophisticated relationship with Sharisha through the language of music. Such encounters with the animal other that incorporate ‘songs, chatter, and play’ draw attention to the ‘limits of interspecies communication’ (Steinwand 182). The recognition of such limitations in communication within postcolonial ecology, functions as a starting point from which to foster an acknowledgement and respect for the ‘limits of interspecies understanding’ by likening it to the ‘limits of intercultural understanding’ (Steinwand 182). The Whale Caller’s relationship with Sharisha not only transcends the language barrier, but also the species boundary, venturing as it does into the realm of bestiality, even if unconsummated. In this context, the possibility of romantic love serves an important role in drawing attention to the emotional, even erotic, lives of animals — that it is possible for animals to experience desires that go beyond the instincts associated with survival or procreation. This is a disquieting concept not only because bestiality is taboo in many societies, partly as a result of the belief in human superiority, but also because the existence of human emotional life has been used as one of the distinguishing features of being human (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 194). Additionally, eroticism between humans and animals not only raises serious questions around animal agency and consent, but also collapses the human/animal divide. Despite the many tangible barriers to their relationship, Mda enables the Whale Caller and Sharisha to express their love through a shared form of ecstatic, ritualised dance that connects them through its physical enactment.

Cetaceans seem to fascinate humans because of their liminality and ambiguity, bearing similarities to land mammals but existing in an aquatic environment. It is therefore interesting to consider how the Whale Caller perceives his animal lover. Does he understand her to be completely other, does he view her as kin, or an uncanny mixture of both? There is certainly much anthropomorphic language deployed in his descriptions of her, which is indicative of a genuine empathetic identification and a recognition of her subjectivity (although this subjectivity is filtered through his own understanding of her). He is also the person who names her, providing her with an individual identity that he recognises as such. It is worth noting that his use of anthropomorphism is so extensive and pervasive that upon witnessing her being mated by others of her species, he is given to interpreting the event as rape rather than the mating rituals associated with southern right whales. In effect, the act of mating, that in animals is associated with biological drives and the necessity to procreate, has, as a result of the Whale Caller’s understanding of the whales as active agents, been imbued with the

same meaning as the human equivalent of consensual sex. His interpretation of the scene as rape may also possibly be influenced by his understanding of Sharisha as agentive and monogamous. Because he loves her, and believes that this love is reciprocated, he does not believe that she desires to be with anyone else, including members of her own species, and so views the advances of the male southern rights as unwanted.

While the text demonstrates some of the beneficial changes in perception that whales have experienced through the introduction of ecotourism, it also draws attention to how the monetisation of the natural world can result in a loss of insight into how this economy aids conservation goals. Although the dangers posed to animals, such as whales, through ecotourism and commercial fishing are a far cry from the relentless hunting that used to take place, these are not without problems. The text raises a number of concerns in relation to the human interference that accompanies these industries. A notable scene where such interference does not bode well for the whales depicts Sharisha's return to Hermanus, but instead of being her lively self the Whale Caller is met with what he perceives as her taking 'lethargy and buoyancy to extremes' (Mda 166). In attempting to respond to his horn she reveals a 'gaping wound' that he recognises as having been caused by a ship's propeller (Mda 166). Despite his concern, he is also aware that there exist laws that prohibit 'fishing boats from coming closer than three hundred metres to a whale', but that whales are 'curious people [who] take their nosy selves to the trawlers and even to big passenger liners' (Mda 166). What this knowledge demonstrates is that whales have their own agency and agendas, which often do not take into account the potential dangers that humans pose. It also returns us to the issue of stewardship by highlighting the problem of responsibility towards the animal other. Because we have no method of reliably communicating that something is dangerous to the animal, the onus is on the human to prevent situations that may cause injury or death to humans or animals by generating, implementing and adhering to laws that address these problems. The reality that tourism-based operations, such as boat-based whale watching, may exploit loopholes in these laws in order to increase revenue, thereby putting people and whales at risk, is not missed by the Whale Caller. However, what distresses him most is that by using these loopholes tourists, who have no relationship with these animals, are given the opportunity to touch the whales, and yet he, who knows the whales so well, has never touched one, not even Sharisha at this point, 'except with his spirit — with his horn' (Mda 169). (Later in the novel he does touch her for the first time as the events leading to her death begin to unfold.) The inherent irony is deepened with the realisation that the privilege of

physical touch, which is often a draw card of many activities associated with ecotourism, does not necessarily result in the same, or even more, accountability towards the animal other, than metaphorical touch.

This disconnection between indigenous people and the animals with whom they share their lives emerges again where, by responding to the Whale Caller's horn, Sharisha manages to beach herself during a storm. During the ensuing doomed rescue operation, which is taken over by emergency rescue teams, the Whale Caller is not allowed to assist. Instead, he is told to 'move as far back as possible and not to make any noise, for that will only agitate the stranded whale and make things worse' (Mda 282). The Whale Caller is understandably offended by his removal from the scene but consoles himself with the belief that '[t]hese arrogant people seem to know what they are doing [and] will rescue her' (Mda 282). These western scientists who, though having had no intimate dealings with, or knowledge of, Sharisha as an individual being, are perceived as authorities who can 'speak' on her behalf and make decisions regarding her welfare. Mda is critical of the west's often dismissive stance in relation to indigenous ecological knowledge, which he makes explicit through the scientists' incorrect interpretation of Sharisha's calf's behaviour:

A young southern right is wistfully watching all this activity [. . .]. No one knows where it came from or why it is watching a beached whale. It is just curiosity, a scientist explains. Southern rights are known for their curiosity. But Saluni can see the callosities that the Whale Caller has always been so proud of. The little Three Sisters Hills just like the mother's. It is Sharisha's calf. (Mda 286)

Because the scientists are unaware of the whales' personal lives, they do not understand the behaviour they are witnessing as being that of a distressed calf, not a curious young whale. Here the 'pan-optical knowledge machine of colonialism' (Mukherjee qtd. in Huggan and Tiffin 206) coupled with science, has, in this instance, failed to recognise and acknowledge the complexity of animal life, specifically their emotional life, that people living in close proximity with these animals may be aware of.

What is revealed is that despite the change in attitudes towards whales, they are still very much perceived in an anthropocentric way. Even the euthanasia, gruesome, spectacular and evoking imagery associated with ritualised sacrifice 'is ultimately seen [. . .] in a primarily anthropocentric light' (Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals,*

Environment 199). It is not so much Sharisha's suffering that is of concern, as the perception of Hermanus in the eyes of the international community, and whether the way in which her euthanasia is handled will negatively affect the town's tourism economy. However, the most important aspect of this scene lies in its portrayal of Sharisha as an irreplaceable living being, deeply loved both sexually and spiritually, and having a complex emotional life, even if only one person recognises this. Unlike the strandings of single whales that brought so much joy to the Khoikhoi in the past, this one is a sad affair because the Whale Caller has come to know Sharisha as an individual, and thus her death becomes the death of a companion and a lover.

Despite its more complex portrayal of human-animal connection, it must be noted that Mda's representation might be perceived as both inorganic and somewhat kitsch, because surely all people are capable of loving animals and achieving a spiritual connection with them, not just indigenous shamans. Furthermore, Sharisha's death must matter to both herself and her calf, something which is not explored in any depth, even if there is no significant human other to bear witness. The result is that although the novel does demonstrate connection between indigenous peoples and their environments and, as a result, the presence of indigenous knowledge, it is still a largely anthropocentric narrative that continues to other the animals that it appears to be trying to connect with the indigenous characters.

Communicating Across Species

In the context of these novels, the ability to foster meaningful relations between humans and animals takes place when the human is alienated from the collective human experience. Whether such alienation from our own kind is the result of choice or circumstance is not of particular importance here because I am not primarily concerned with why/how a given situation arose, however, what is important is the desire and necessity to make connections with other living beings. For both Pi and the Whale Caller it is the wish to communicate with the animal other that drives their ardent efforts, although admittedly for different reasons. While the Whale Caller is delighted by the realisation that his kelp horn allows him to communicate with whales and pursue his cross-species love interest, shipwrecked Pi is motivated by the desire to survive in a lifeboat with a tiger. Despite being greatly different in terms of the circumstances that give rise to the need for cross-species communication, the

stories bear similarities in their demonstration of the need for spiritual and emotional connection with the animal other.

Depending on how one chooses to read the novel, *Life of Pi* can be understood as an extraordinary story of courage and survival amongst unlikely companions, an allegory for cannibalism or as a metaphor for the ecological crisis. While the tendency is to read the novel as a psychological adventure story that initially masks the terrible truth that survival under the harshest circumstances entails, I have chosen to read the novel from the perspective of the ‘better story’, the seemingly improbable story, where the animals function as animals (Martel 317). Indeed, Martel opens the novel to at least two interpretations in its closing chapters when Messrs Chiba and Okamoto — investigators from the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport — interrogate Pi about the sinking of the Tsimtsum. The novel closes with an extract from their report, which acknowledges that despite their reservations Pi’s original account of survival still exists within the realm of possibility:

As an aside, story of sole survivor, Mr. Piscine Molitor Patel, Indian citizen, is an astounding story of courage and endurance in the face of extraordinarily difficult and tragic circumstances. In the experience of this investigator, his story is unparalleled in the history of shipwrecks. Very few castaways can claim to have survived so long at sea as Mr. Patel, and none in the company of an adult Bengal tiger. (Martel 319)

Because the narrative actively resists being shoehorned into a single interpretation, some might be given to reading the text through the lens of traumatology, which lends weight to the idea that *Life of Pi* is primarily an allegory for cannibalism. Even the tiger’s name, Richard Parker, though we’re told that it is the result of an administrative error, initially obscures the animal by creating the expectation of a human character. If one chooses to read the novel as an exploration of the effects of trauma, then Richard Parker becomes the divorced survivalist alter-ego of a traumatised child. In order to preserve his understanding of what it means to be human, Pi splits his internalised sense of self in two, which enables him to exist on the boat as both human and animal. Because most of the narrative takes place at sea after the shipwreck, the story demonstrates how our conceptualisations of ethics and morality have little place when it comes to survival. This raises the difficult and challenging question of who is allowed to eat whom in order to survive, and extends this question into our everyday lives. Reading the novel in this way allows for the rationalisation of many of the narrative’s unlikely scenarios, which, along with surviving in a lifeboat with a tiger, include

the existence of a carnivorous island, and the merging of Pi's and Richard Parker's consciousnesses. As unlikely as these scenarios are, they do signal that Pi's internal division is far more complicated than a mere split between acceptable (human/civilised) and unacceptable (animal/barbaric) behaviours. Such a division reveals that what we really fear is being stripped of the fantasy of human exceptionalism by being reduced to a state so base that it disrupts our sense of what it means to be human.

What is problematic about such an interpretation is that it reduces animals to metaphors for those aspects of the human that we are uncomfortable with, and it does not address or account for Pi's profound understanding of the interconnectivity of life. Reading the animals as animals, and not as metaphors, offers an opportunity to engage with the ethical considerations and expectations that kinship poses, which is one of the reasons that Richard Parker's quick disappearance into the Mexican jungle is so upsetting for Pi. That animals play a large role in shaping Pi as an individual is established early in the novel at his father's zoo in Pondicherry. The early part of the novel evokes India's colonial past, of which the concept and building of zoos to display beautiful and exotic animals, largely for the benefit of the colonials, was a part. But his understanding of how we share our lives with animals, an understanding that is similar to that of Lucy's in *Disgrace*, and how we should respect this, is really cultivated by his personal experiences of the unknown or the miracle of life as it manifests in the nonhuman world, which he often thinks of as embodying the human concept of God.

Though tinged with the promise of tragedy, the opening pages of the novel establish Pi as a man who, in spite of everything that he has gone through, has unwavering faith in both the spiritual and the physical (nonhuman) world, the suggestion being that these do not exist as separate spaces, but are intimately connected to one another. Having majored in both theology and zoology he is representative of a unification between religion (spiritual) and science (physical) that breeds a unique understanding of and respect for the world in its entirety, challenging the traditional ideas that divide the human from the animal:

I am not one given to projecting human traits and emotions onto animals, but many a time [. . .] looking up at sloths in repose, I felt I was in the presence of upside-down yogis deep in meditation or hermits deep in prayer, wise beings whose intense imaginative lives were beyond the reach of my scientific probing.

Sometimes I got my majors mixed up. A number of my fellow religious-studies students — muddled agnostics who didn't know which way

was up, who were in the thrall of reason, that fool's gold for the bright — reminded me of the three-toed sloth; and the three toed sloth, such a beautiful example of the miracle of life, reminded me of God. (Martel 4–5)

This passage gently reminds us that, for the most part, animal lives and the animal mind remain inaccessible to humans despite our best efforts to either observe their interactions or theorise about how their internal worlds might work. It also serves to demonstrate how Pi understands the limitations of science and religion, but uses these seemingly opposing disciplines to create a more holistic view of the world. That his peers in religious studies remind him of the enigmatic sloths that he is examining for his zoology thesis, and that in turn the uniqueness of the sloths reminds him that life, and the multitude of forms that it takes, are in themselves miracles, brings us to the concept of God as an embodiment of the miracle of life. God, as Pi understands the concept, is not an entity/entities that can be claimed by one religion (indeed, Pi tries to practise all of the religions that he comes into contact with in Pondicherry), and is not a concept that divides the human from the animal. Rather, God is present in all life. Pi's is a seemingly pantheistic worldview in that he combines religion with scientific practice, showing an ethic of care towards, and reverence for, the nonhuman world early in his life. This worldview enables him to understand that he is not alone during his time at sea, because the animals are as alive as he is, and are capable of responding and interacting with him in complex ways.

Pi's understanding of God as a unifying force manifesting in all living beings provides him with a deep and genuine respect for life that not only enables him to create space for both himself and Richard Parker on the lifeboat, but also to appreciate the sublime despite the terrible circumstances in which he finds himself. That Pi is capable of formulating solutions that accommodate everyone is alluded to early in the novel in his discussion of zoomorphism.

According to Pi, zoomorphism is the animal equivalent of anthropomorphism 'where an animal takes a human being, or another animal, to be one of its kind' (Martel 84). The implication is that animals are highly adaptable and, therefore, able to come to alternative living arrangements with other species that may ensure their survival. Citing a series of unlikely companions, Pi includes the zoo's rhinoceros-and-goat herd, stories of dolphins saving drowning sailors and a truly unusual relationship between a stoat and a rat (Martel 84–85). The inclusion of the relationship fostered between the stoat and rat is particularly interesting because it provides an example of the suspension of the predator-prey dynamic,

but only between one specific stoat and a particular rat. This improbable relationship is reminiscent of some human-pet relationships where we might take on a particular chicken as a pet, but continue to eat other chickens. By opening the text to the possibility of unlikely animal-animal and human-animal relationships, Pi's discussion acts as a precursor to his own unlikely relationship with Richard Parker, which reflects the complexities present when two predators exist with limited resources in a small territory.

One of the problems that Pi faces in sharing a severely limited space with an animal like Richard Parker is a shared language. Unlike the shamanic gift of cetacean communication accorded to the Whale Caller, Pi resorts to far more familiar means to establish a hierarchical relationship with the tiger: training. Through the process of training, Pi and Richard Parker are able to establish territories, but most importantly they create a language comprising mutually understood gestures and noises. It must be pointed out that although Pi does draw on methods associated with training animals in circuses, he also incorporates methods that mimic how animals would naturally communicate, including marking his area with his own urine (Martel 172). What alerts Pi to the possibility that Richard Parker may be amenable to having a relationship with him is his recognition of a particular sound that the tiger makes:

He made a sound, a snort from his nostrils. I pricked up my ears. He did it a second time. I was astonished. *Prusten?*²⁵ [. . .] Prusten is the quietest of tiger calls, a puff through the nose to express friendliness and harmless intentions. Richard Parker did it again, this time with a rolling of the head. He looked exactly as if he were asking me a question. (Martel 163–164)

That Richard Parker expresses a desire to be friends, and that Pi has an extensive knowledge of tiger communication and so is able to interpret the noise as prusten, marks the beginning of the relationship that will keep them alive. Pi's very concrete and practical approach to communicating with Richard Parker is quite different from the Whale Caller's shamanic intuition. Although, their relationship is remarkable in and of itself, Pi is shown to develop his relationship through an empirical approach of trial and error, rather than magic.

Richard Parker provides meaning and structure to life on the boat. It is around training him and providing for his needs that Pi organises his days. As time passes, the tiger, in addition to motivating Pi to continue living under such difficult circumstances, also becomes a

²⁵ Emphasis in text.

companion with whom to share the experiences of existence at sea. Richard Parker becomes recognisable as an individual subjectivity, a someone not a something, an irreplaceable being, at the point when Pi realises that although he had initially ‘scared [him] witless’ he was also able to bring him ‘peace, purpose, [. . .] even wholeness’ (Martel 162). Through their relationship the novel explores shifts in human-animal relations, thereby inviting an examination of our ethical position regarding the animal. As Pi tells us:

[A] part of me was glad about Richard Parker. A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and my tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living. [. . .] It’s the plain truth: without Richard Parker, I wouldn’t be alive today to tell you my story. (Martel 164)

One of the ways in which the text asks us to re-examine our relationships with animals is through the predator-prey dynamic. Although the suspension of more natural and expected forms of predator-prey interaction takes place on the lifeboat — i.e. the tiger could easily eat Pi or Pi could kill and eat the tiger — the less obvious, but no less important, concerns the acquisition of food for both parties. Having been a life-long vegetarian, Pi finds himself having to give up his peaceful ways and learn to kill in order to survive. While his first kill moves him to tears, he quickly transitions into a hunter out of necessity:

You may be astonished that in such a short period of time I could go from weeping over the muffled killing of a flying fish to gleefully bludgeoning to death a dorado. I could explain it by arguing that profiting from a pitiful flying fish’s navigational mistake made me shy and sorrowful, while the excitement of actively capturing a great dorado made me sanguinary and self-assured. But in point of fact the explanation lies elsewhere. It is simple and brutal: a person can get used to anything, even to killing. (Martel 185)

If survival demands that we rethink our ethical relationships with animals (or with one another since even in the story where the animals are animals Pi does resort to cannibalism), then the same must be true of our everyday lives. What is highlighted by Pi’s plight, is not so much a greater appreciation for the food chain, but rather that our relationship with ‘food animals’ is capable of changing. We can adjust our dietary requirements according to what is available, and can be mindful of the lives we take in order to sustain our own.

On the topic of food, an interesting exchange takes place between Pi and Richard Parker at the point where they are both close to death. Pi finds himself able to hear Richard Parker's voice in his head, and the same appears to be true for Richard Parker. Pi first expresses his wish for a variety of vegetarian delicacies and Richard Parker in turn responds with his own carnist desires. During their discussion Pi moves to explore the reputation that tigers have as man-eaters, since he now finds himself in a position to direct the question towards one. The exchange, particularly from Richard Parker's side, does not seem especially unexpected, but what it does do is expose Pi as also being an animal, one who already has, and will continue to commit, his own transgressive acts, including cannibalism. This is significant because the novel points towards this truth from the very beginning, by suggesting that without the structures that allow humans to perform the behaviours or rituals that reinforce the belief in the human/animal divide, we are faced with the reality that the differences we hold onto are seemingly arbitrary since we have the same needs, including living space, food and companionship.

When Pi makes it to the Mexican shore and eventually finds his way to Toronto he returns to his vegetarian lifestyle. No longer having to struggle to survive, he is able to go back to the relatively peaceful existence that abundance allows. Having experienced deprivation to the point of death, the first time that Pi turns on a tap in the Mexican hospital he is shocked by 'its noisy, wasteful, superabundant gush' and faints (Martel 7). This scene brings into focus the overabundance of food and water that many of us living in this modern age are able to access. Pi's experiences at sea reinforce his respect for the nonhuman world, with associations of consideration, attentiveness and appreciation, because all life is miraculous and interconnected, and so deserving of its place in this world, including his own.

It is tempting to read the novel as an ecological allegory, with the sinking of the *Tsimtsum* representing the global environmental crisis and the lifeboat functioning as an ark. Such a reading is worth considering primarily because of the novel's aesthetic of connection and sharing with the nonhuman. Although Armstrong argues that Martel's interest is not in animals per se, but rather in humanist modernity because the novel presents humans as possessing 'a greater capacity for rational inventiveness, adaptability to new circumstances, and mobility' and so are able to triumph over nature (178), it nevertheless demonstrates that we are unable to exist in isolation. The connections between humans, animals and the nonhuman world in the text are myriad and complex, with Pi drawing on what he learnt about

animals and their behaviour in Pondicherry to negotiate his survival during the initial days on the boat. However, as the narrative progresses, life on the boat takes a biocentric slant as Pi begins to actively concern himself not only with Richard Parker's agency and well-being, but also with the lifeforms around them. By situating Pi in this challenging though naturally abundant space, both in terms of food and other lifeforms, Martel repositions humans in the nonhuman world showing us to be part of, rather than separate from, it. Additionally, he challenges the notion of our being apex predators, replacing this idea with the more realistic view of our occupying a space as both predator and prey. From an ecological perspective, the text emphasises the possibility of sustainably sharing resources to ensure the survival of humans and animals. It also draws attention to animals as being individual subjects of a life, with highly complex social structures, desires and needs. Although the text may not be as obviously ecocentric as work like Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy*, *Life of Pi* can still be understood as a contemplation of human-animal relations at a pivotal moment in our global environmental history.

Reading the Warnings

For both Pi and the Whale Caller the loss of their respective animal companions profoundly changes who they are as people. For Pi, Richard Parker's silent disappearance into the Mexican jungle leaves him bereft, not because they would never see each other again, but because there was no closure:

It's important in life to conclude things properly. Only then can you let go. Otherwise you are left with words you should have said but never did, and your heart is heavy with remorse. That bungled goodbye hurts me to this day. I wish so much that I'd had one last look at him in the lifeboat, that I'd provoked him a little, so that I was on his mind. I wish I had said to him then — yes, I know, to a tiger, but still — I wish I had said, 'Richard Parker, it's over. We have survived [. . .] I owe you more gratitude than I can express. I couldn't have done it without you [. . .] Thank you for saving my life. And now go where you must [. . .] Watch out for Man. He is not your friend. But I hope you will remember me as a friend [. . .] You will always be with me, in my heart. [. . .] God be with you.' (Martel 285–286)

While Pi is unable to thank Richard Parker for his companionship through their ordeal, the Whale Caller is left emotionally crippled by the knowledge that he played a role in Sharisha's death. Like Pi, he is never granted the opportunity to gain closure, never afforded the chance to tell Sharisha how much he loves her and values the relationship that they had, and for her

to respond to his good-bye. Importantly, the lack of closure in both instances reinstates the human/animal divide by raising questions around the validity of the experiences. Because no one else is able to reliably confirm the existence of these human-animal relationships it becomes possible to view the animal agencies that have been so prevalent throughout both novels as acts of sentimentalism or wishful thinking on the part of the protagonists. In both cases, these dominant animal presences suddenly disappear from the narratives, returning attention solely to the human protagonists and reasserting the anthropocentric viewpoints because the animal can no longer respond.

Despite our differences, humans and animals have the potential to share positive meaningful experiences that foster an ecocentric view, including companionship, love, nurturing and the recognition of individuals. However, there are several obstacles that make such positive interactions quite difficult. The ability to communicate with the animal other is undoubtedly one of the most cited reasons that humans, particularly those in the west, find the notion of having meaningful relationships with animals problematic. As discussed, this largely stems from dualistic scientific thinking where the animal is thought to have an internal life no more complex than that of a machine. The belief in human exceptionalism and superiority, coupled with rapid industrialisation has brought us to a precarious position where we are undoubtedly responsible for the global collapse of ecosystems, as well as the sixth mass extinction of species.

What enables us to deny that our world is changing as a result of our interference is the fantasy that the world's resources are inexhaustible, and that the nonhuman world can regenerate itself without our having to stem our activities. In effect, many of us are failing to accept responsibility for the problems that our species is creating because this requires a radical change in how we perceive the nonhuman, which is a daunting task. Such change necessitates the re-examination and re-evaluation of the way we think about ourselves in relation to the nonhuman world and how we behave towards it. If it is the responsibility of environmental ethics to respect the 'rich interconnectedness and consider the historical, material, and political bonds between the human and the nonhuman other within their localized manifestations' (Steinwand 185), then perhaps literature might 'lead us to a reassessment of the world, which can, in turn, lead to a reconnection with it [and] to a reactivation of compassion for that which has been deadened by familiarity' (Fudge, *Pets* 69). This is perhaps where the pastoral mode, with its idea 'of a sacred interconnectedness

between human and animal lives — an idea of ancient origin — presents a viable alternative to the crude instrumental rationalism with which animals are treated’, offering a literary space in the postcolonial milieu where we might begin the process of actively re-engaging with an ecocentric perspective (Huggan and Tiffin 110).

Texts like *Life of Pi* and *The Whale Caller* manage to engage with the possibilities that connection presents. By connecting us not only to one another, but also to the animal other, they offer us ways of thinking our way into the being of the other, without relying on academic or scientific engagement to lend weight to the veracity of the experience. It might be said that, in part, what these texts do is draw attention not only to our blindness regarding our impact on the nonhuman world, but also how misguided our conservation efforts often are in terms of taking into account pre-existing human-animal relationships. The texts raise concerns regarding the dismissal of spiritual and indigenous practices in connecting with and understanding the animal other, and demonstrate that the ‘dissociated gaze’, generally associated with the sciences, may not always provide us with a complete, or at times correct, understanding (Bryld and Lykke 4).

These texts show that ‘love is not and cannot be confined to our own species’ and that we must ‘acknowledge our fundamental need for emotional attachment to other animals’ (Huggan and Tiffin 201) by reviewing some of our perceptions of past relationships if we are to live with animals in the present. Although pre-industrialised peoples certainly had a less detrimental impact on ecosystems and had smaller population numbers, there is not much evidence indicating how sustainable or respectful their relationships with the nonhuman world really were. What is more useful and relevant than looking to the past for answers about how to fix our current crisis, is looking to change the way in which we assign value to life. Ultimately, if we resist changing our relationship with the nonhuman world, and fail to connect with the animal other, then like Pi and the Whale Caller, we will have to watch as our animal companions disappear into the mists of time, which will soon augur our own extinction.

Chapter 3

Animal Absences: A Loss for Humanity

Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again.

— C. McCarthy, *The Road*²⁶

[T]he end of a species was taking place before his very eyes. Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species. [. . .] Homo sapiens sapiens, joining the polar bear, the beluga whale, the onager, the burrowing owl, the long, long list.

— M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*²⁷

The twentieth century's overemphasis on the benefits of western science and economic development, coupled with the continued belief in human exceptionalism, have contributed to the global environmental and ecological crisis that we see today. Despite Rachel Carson's widely publicised warnings about the effects of toxicity in the 1960s, and more recent documentaries like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) that explores climate change, and the BBC's *The Blue Planet* (2001) and *Blue Planet II* (2017) that examine global oceanic systems taking into consideration the impact of climate change and plastic pollution, it would appear that there are many who have failed to understand the severity of the effects that human activity is having on the planet. Although evidence of this reality can be felt all around us, manifesting in various forms, from extreme weather to the decline in global species, those of us living in urban environments are shielded from these realities because we do not have daily contact with the nonhuman world. The shielding effect of artificial environments and infrastructure — dams, insulated housing, power supplies, supermarkets — creates the impression that the way humans live is stable and sustainable, and that resources remain plentiful, despite evidence to the contrary. This disjuncture between what we

²⁶McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. 2006. London: Picador, 2010, 306-307.

²⁷Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. 2003. London: Virago, 2013, 401.

experience daily in our manmade environments, and the realities faced by the nonhuman world, which supports these artificial lifestyles at great cost, offers a starting point from which to explore the environmental crisis and why it often remains a difficult topic to engage with and represent in the cultural space.

Buell states that if ‘western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today’s environmental problems, then environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it’ (*The Environmental Imagination 2*). The examination and promotion of more inclusive and less destructive ways of thinking about and living in the world, as well as the dismantling of societal structures of oppression that have contributed to the environmental crisis, have been the aims of deep ecology and ecofeminism since the 1970s. But we do not appear to be making sufficient inroads in changing human behaviour, possibly because the realities of ecocatastrophe and its ramifications are simply too large, frightening and unfathomable a concept, that many attempts to represent these in altered or even apocalyptic landscapes outside of nonfiction often seem absurd or farfetched.

In a 2016 article titled “Amitav Ghosh: Where is the fiction about climate change?”, Ghosh argues that one of the reasons that the severity of climate change is so difficult to portray in fiction is because it represents not only a crisis of the imagination, but also of culture, since it requires us to examine our own complicity in maintaining the structures (cultural, economic and social) that promote it. The carbon economy, along with the economic sectors of agriculture, industry and transport, which are heavily reliant on fossil fuels, are major contributors to climate change. Although these areas show some promise in adopting a low-carbon model, this is unlikely to be implemented at the cost of economic growth or financial profit. Alongside the west’s economic growth/development mandates, there exist cultural and social structures that reinforce current conceptualisations of the world as a pyramidal hierarchy with humans and their needs at the apex. Some of the motivations for this worldview can be traced back to the emergence of monotheisms that situate humans outside of the nonhuman world, and so create the illusion that the nonhuman exists to serve human needs. These cultural, social and economic structures exert enormous pressure on already taxed environments and natural resources, the long-term result of which is likely to be ecological collapse. Ecocatastrophe, which has the potential to manifest in many forms

including climate change, environmental toxicity and large-scale species extinction, is the result of the exploitative practices that are promoted through these structures.

Although the environmental crisis and the possibility of eco/environmental-apocalypse present a new set of real-life challenges, methods used to depict it in art, novels and film are often familiar, drawing on the 'utopian, dystopian and millenarian imaginaries [present in] speculative fiction, disaster films, and biblical texts' (Fiskio 13). Common tropes found in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fictions include climate change, chemical/nuclear disasters and pandemics (natural or artificial), which are often perceived as being presented in spectacular ways and, as a result of such representation, tend to be relegated to the impossible realms of science fiction. Though it may seem difficult to convey the seriousness of the environmental crisis through fiction, authors such as Margaret Atwood and Cormac McCarthy appear to have successfully engaged with environmental apocalypticism and climate change in the literary space, offering compelling cautionary tales that speculate about the future state of the planet given the course that humanity is currently on. Both authors draw on familiar modern phobias regarding diseases and nuclear disaster as means of bringing about the end of the world, and in so doing, evoke anxieties of being at the mercy of unscrupulous governments or corporations. Present in both narratives are concerns about the human and environmental abuse that is propagated, and to some extent endorsed, by the enormous and powerful economic and governmental institutions that influence our lives. Human-nonhuman relationships are central to these narratives as the death of the nonhuman world signals the collapse of the ecosystems that support all life, humans included. Of particular interest is how animals figure in these post-apocalyptic texts and what their absences/presences and hybridity/naturalness indicate about our changing relations with nonhuman others. Although both authors present worlds that have suffered irrevocably from human scientific and technological innovation, the catastrophes themselves and the post-catastrophe worlds are represented in notably different ways.

Drawing on pandemic narratives Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy*, depicts the end of society through the introduction of an artificial virus that kills off a sufficient number of humans to give the nonhuman world the opportunity to rejuvenate, though not in its original, prehuman form. The resulting collapse of modern economic and social structures births a post-apocalyptic egalitarian society built on cross-species cooperation and understanding. In contrast, McCarthy's *The Road* offers little hope for most life forms in a cold and barren wasteland, although, as far as humanity is concerned, its ending suggests that humans may

possibly adapt to these new conditions and potentially reorient their relationship with the nonhuman for the better, though survival in the long-term is uncertain.

The Rise of the Anthropocene

In 2016 the International Geological Congress (IGC) declared that we have entered the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch characterised by human activity and marked by the presence of radioactivity, plastic pollution, high levels of artificial fertilisers in the soil, and the sixth mass extinction of global species (Carrington). What makes this mass extinction so decidedly different from all other global species extinctions, is that human activity is at the heart of the acute environmental changes that have resulted in this large-scale die off.

The Anthropocene marks a drastic change in Earth's history. Ellis states that currently '[o]nly one-quarter of the Earth's ice-free surface now represents natural wilderness' (qtd. in Williams, Zalasiewicz, Haff, Schwägerl, Barnosky and Ellis 197) and, according to Williams et al., 'by measures such as climate change and distribution of pollutants, there is no place on Earth that has not been altered by humans' (197). Williams et al. identify four elements that differentiate what they refer to as the Anthropocene biosphere from previous biospheres, which are worth mentioning because they have manifested as tropes in the literary space. These are the global homogenisation of flora and fauna, the dominance of human production and consumption, the genetic modification of plants and animals, and the rise of technology. Since the industrial revolution and the rapid increase of capitalist economies that accompanied imperialism, there has been a growing emphasis on economic development and consumerist lifestyles. The impact of this on global ecosystems has reached a point where the desires of human beings have become unsustainable, pushing all other living beings to extinction in the fight for resources. Although many economists recognise the precarious situation that we now find ourselves in, economies themselves are unable to internalise what Rockström refers to as 'real Earth costs' associated with industrial societies. He asserts that this inability to understand what is really at stake has led to the greatest threat that economies have faced, because valuing nature goes beyond monetisation. It requires leaving the realm of economics and entering the realm of 'ethics, inclusiveness and justice' (Rockström), which requires a shift in economic thinking from commodification (dominion) to sustainability (stewardship).

Following the emergence of the Environmental and Green movements of the 1960s in response to the first obvious indications of the severity of industrial impact on the environment, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore how detrimental certain human activities have become not only to the world at large, but to us as a species. The Deep Ecology and Ecofeminist movements developed as a reaction to the environmental threat posed by global industrialisation. Although environmental issues are central to both movements, they approach these from different positions that reflect their unique concerns despite having many similarities. Arne Naess, the founder of deep ecology, developed a philosophy of living in the world that sought to challenge the ‘man-in-environment image’ put forward by the Shallow Ecology movement (95). The main difference between deep and shallow ecology lies in the understanding of our relationship with the natural environment at a time of environmental crisis. Whilst the main objective of shallow ecology is to maintain the ‘health and affluence of people in the developed countries’ by focussing on the reduction of pollutants and resource depletion (Naess 95), deep ecology rejects this limited view in favour of a radical examination of anthropocentric values in relation to the environment. Deep ecology may be seen as expanding shallow ecology’s scope in that it extends this movement’s conservation strategies by acknowledging the value of all life and promoting changes in human behaviour towards the nonhuman world. Naess’s formulation of deep ecology is primarily an ecosophy, that is to say that it is a ‘philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium’ (Naess 99), whose seven tenets²⁸ can be adapted to suit different realities in different locations in both under- and over-developed countries. Interestingly, Naess’s conceptualisation of deep ecology rests on a recognition of sameness in relation to other living beings. His ‘gestalt ontology’ involves the conception of subjects as being ‘constituted by their relations to larger wholes which shape and define the individuals within them’ (Diehm 27). Further, Naess places emphasis on self-realisation as being the result of identification with others: ‘*through* the wider Self every living being is intimately connected, and *from this* intimacy follows the capacity of identification’²⁹ (Naess qtd. in Diehm 28). Although one might be tempted to perceive followers of deep ecology as attempting to achieve an unrealistically utopian relationship with the nonhuman world born out of a

²⁸ Deep ecology’s seven tenets are: 1. Rejection of the ‘man-in-environment’ image in favour of the relational, total-field image; 2. Biospherical egalitarianism; 3. Principles of diversity and of symbiosis; 4. Anti-class posture; 5. Fight against pollution and resource depletion; 6. Complexity, not complication; 7. Local autonomy and decentralisation.

²⁹ Emphasis in text.

recognition of similarity, it nevertheless offers a detailed model for how we might reconfigure our relationships with the nonhuman.

Taking a slightly different position, ecofeminism proposes an end to all forms of oppression because no attempt ‘to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature’ (Gaard 1). Ecofeminists therefore strive to dismantle this oppression and subsequent structures by promoting an interconnected sense of self that makes ‘moral decisions on the basis of an ethic of responsibilities or care’ (Gaard 2). Though some groups like social ecologists maintain that hierarchies are thought to be the foundations of all forms of oppression, ‘ecofeminists believe that hierarchy takes place as a result of the self/other opposition’ (Gaard 3). As Plumwood argues, deep ecology fails to ‘question the structures of rational egoism’ creating a situation where the promotion of responsible behaviour relies on an ‘extension of egoism [. . .] allow[ing] for a wider set of concerns while continuing to allow the self to operate on the fuel of self-interest’ (Plumwood qtd. in Deinhem 27) rather than engaging with the interests of others. Plumwood’s statement seems to imply that although deep ecology wishes to connect humans with the nonhuman, the motivation for doing so remains anthropocentric rather than biocentric, and so fails to address the existing patriarchal systems of oppression that have contributed towards the environmental crisis. As a result, from the ecofeminist perspective, deep ecology falls short in promoting genuine biocentrism, despite its efforts to do so. One of the key features of ecofeminism is its recognition of, and respect for difference, as opposed to sameness, which means that there is also a recognition and respect for the interests of others that are not the same as, or even similar to, one’s own (Diehm 32–33). Despite this difference, deep ecology and ecofeminism are not incompatible and provide useful ways of challenging and sometimes replacing anthropocentric thought and practices in favour of biocentric ones. What is evident in both movements is the emphasis placed on humans existing within a greater community of beings that is influenced not only by the ebb and flow of the natural environment (seasonal changes, natural disasters and natural fluctuations in animal populations), but also by human influence (oil spills, industry, warfare).

The Anthropocene has ramifications, not only for society in general, but also for cultural production, the most obvious being how to represent the events that we are experiencing and to what ends? Although literature and art, generally, can be representative of the real world, during this period of unprecedented change is it actually possible to create anything that

would be considered ‘realistic’ given that many current events seem like the product of fiction. Indeed, in his article Ghosh notes that when extreme weather, which is often a product of climate change, but not always, features in fiction, it lends itself to being thought of as a ‘contrivance of last resort [. . .] a situation of [. . .] extreme improbability’ (“Amitav Ghosh: Where is the Fiction about Climate Change?”). As Clark notes:

The major irony of the Anthropocene is that, although named as that era in the planet’s natural history in which humanity becomes a decisive geological and climatological force, it manifests itself to us primarily through the natural becoming, as it were, dangerously out of bounds, in extreme or unprecedented weather events, ecosystems being simplified, die-back, or collapse. (“Nature, Post Nature” 79)

In effect, what the Anthropocene proves is how dependant humans are on the natural world, and that it is not something that can be controlled, although that is what we tend to believe. And therein lies the difficulty with representing the Anthropocene — that scientific fact seems like science fiction.

Common images associated with narratives about the end-times, be it an eco-apocalypse or a nuclear holocaust, include barren/degraded landscapes and flooded cities. Incidentally, the desert and jungle/sea are environments that often appear in science fiction narratives about extraterrestrial planets, showing that we seem to imagine worlds in extremes. This may suggest that unconsciously we fear the ramifications both of having too much, and too little, on our ability to survive. If the natural world is overly abundant, though initially Edenic, we fear that we may struggle to control it in ways that benefit our species. Similarly, if natural resources are scarce, we may not be able to harness what is available to ensure our survival.

Many of the images found in apocalyptic narratives bear similarities to real-life droughts, floods and wars, and yet when they appear in fiction they often seem fantastic, spectacular or over the top. However, despite our deeply-rooted unconscious fears regarding our survival, our perception of apocalyptic narratives as unlikely to happen in the real-world seems to indicate an inability to grasp the truth of what is taking place — it is simply so terrifying that we cannot accept that it is already, really happening. This then, represents part of the imaginative crisis that Buell and Ghosh refer to. It is not so much that we cannot imagine it, draw it or write it, but rather that we cannot believe it, and so cannot imagine living in sufficiently different ways that might change the course that we are on. Our inability to

believe what is taking place is preventing us from making the necessary changes, if not to halt it, to at least mitigate the problem by creating new biocentric ways of living. Various forms of disbelief are a serious barrier to overcoming the human-animal divide and accepting our place within the nonhuman world. But how do we overcome this barrier and engage even the most resistant in a conversation about events that not only threaten our species, but the entire world as we know it?

Writing the Eco/Environmental-Apocalypse

In terms of location, many eco/environmental catastrophe narratives in popular culture are set in the general location of North America, but more often in America specifically, suggesting that this is the site where these events are likely to originate. There are several contributing economic, cultural, and technological factors that have resulted in this focus, including the current dominance and influence of the American film industry and the continued presence of America as a superpower in the west. Though it might appear that America has something of a monopoly on ecologically oriented disaster narratives, part of the reason for this may lie in its dual occupation of both abuser and saviour of the environment. Along with being the birthplace of the environmental movement in the 1960s, American literature has historically reflected a preoccupation with ‘country and wilderness as setting, theme, and value in contradistinction to society and the urban’ (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 33), which is reflected in well-known literary works including Henry Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854) and William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942). However, the question remains why, in a discussion about postcolonial animals, environmental abuses and global environmental catastrophe should there be a focus on texts written by North American authors?

Furthermore, why should we examine narratives set in the future, and not just any future at that, but more specifically, a post-apocalyptic one?

In this context, the answer appears to lie in scientific/technological progress. America is, as Buell points out, ‘the world’s biggest technological power’, which makes examining its environmentally oriented cultural products a worthwhile pursuit, because we can expect to find the ‘pathologies that bedevil society at large and some of the alternative paths that it might consider’ (*The Environmental Imagination* 2). This is true of work by both Atwood and McCarthy who draw on some of the more prominent anxieties arising out of modernity’s quest for progress, particularly in the areas of science and technology. These include, but are

not limited to, biotechnology, increased mechanisation, pollution and weaponry. They also draw on many existing social anxieties related to these areas: the value of human/animal life, food security, overpopulation and environmental degradation. This has resulted in narratives that, though set in North America, and strongly focussed on the negative impact of human activity on both the human and nonhuman world, remain accessible to a wider audience because of the familiarity of the topics.

As Buell notes, there is a ‘pastoral logic that undergirds environmental apocalypse, which rests on the appeal to the moral superiority of an antecedent state of existence when humankind was not at war with nature in the way that prevails now’ (*The Environmental Imagination* 300–301). Through their grim representation of the state of the planet, texts like the *MaddAddam Trilogy* and *The Road* seem to reflect a desire to return to Arcadia/Eden, to a time when human-nonhuman relations were perceived to be harmonious, as well as to the periods of discovery and frontier when the nonhuman world seemed endless. This apparent nostalgia is what Buell refers to as the ‘doubleness of American pastoral ideology’ in which ‘activist appeals to nostalgia, [accomplish] their interventions by [invoking] actual green worlds about to be lost’ (*The Environmental Imagination* 301). However, it must be noted that Atwood and McCarthy take this a step further by presenting worlds that are already lost, making the nostalgic elements in the texts even more poignant. Their particular critique of the environmental crisis is not necessarily concerned with how to prevent immanent disaster, but rather with who and what will survive it and how.

Both authors make use of forms of speculative fiction to voice their concerns in relation to the imminent environmental catastrophe, part of which explores the impact of climate change. Unlike science fiction that engages with worlds or events that are unlikely or impossible, speculative fiction creates fictional works that hypothesise how problems faced in the present may play out in the future, making it a useful genre to imaginatively explore the environmental crisis. According to Atwood, climate change, which threatens habitats and the functioning of current ecosystems, does not just involve changes in the climate, but rather affects everything about the world that we know (“It’s Not Climate Change: It’s Everything Change”). In contrast to Ghosh’s point that fiction about climate change is perceived as unrealistic because it challenges the boundaries of probability, Atwood claims that climate change is doing exactly that, and so fiction that explores the possible outcomes of these

changes should be given due consideration (“It’s Not Climate Change: It’s Everything Change”).

Climate fiction (cli-fi), which is generally thought of as a sub-genre of speculative fiction, of which *The Road* offers an excellent example, attempts to take ‘climate predictions to their logical conclusions’ (Tonn). By drawing attention to the likelihood that Earth will no longer look or function in ways that we understand, it has become important to explore texts that represent our world in drastically different ways from those that we are familiar with.

Unstable environments necessarily require a re-examination of human-nonhuman relations because in such instances it becomes obvious that humans do not have as much control over the nonhuman world as was once believed. The Anthropocene and the ensuing environmental crisis have disrupted boundaries between the human and nonhuman with radical environmentalist arguments and environmental issues importantly destabilising the ‘basic distinctions between science and politics, nature and culture, fact and value [. . .] mark[ing] a shift in human self-conceptions (Latour qtd. in Clark, “Nature, Post Nature” 80). Texts that attempt to explore this change in human self-conception particularly as it relates to the nonhuman, and which are post-pastoral in their representations, in so far as they successfully suggest ‘a collapse of the human/nature divide while being aware of the problematics involved’ (Gifford 26), alert us not only to the impending destruction of our global ecosystems, but also to how tenuous our existence is should we fail to heed the warnings.

Rather than providing broad impersonal narratives of extinction, ecosystemic collapse, climate change and nuclear winters, Atwood and McCarthy personalise catastrophe, offering accounts of survival that explore hope and resilience, as well as despair, under difficult circumstances. While McCarthy’s work utilises eschatological imagery to portray a dying planet, Atwood’s world draws on narratives of wilderness and survival, teeming with natural and genetically modified life post-pandemic. Despite the presentation of humans as destroyers of nature, though admittedly Atwood also presents them as environmental saviours, the texts’ post-apocalyptic worlds open new spaces for humans to redeem themselves, if not in the eyes of animals, at least in terms of the planet, through a heightened awareness of interconnection similar to that reflected in movements like deep ecology and ecofeminism.

This awareness takes various forms, but is most explicit in the representations of degraded environments, altered animals and a greater understanding of human reliance on the biosphere, despite scientific advancements that allow us to harness much of the natural environment to our advantage. Issues regarding this type of interconnection and the ripple effect of environmental toxicity resulting from the use of poisons, such as DDT, which were brought into focus in Carson's *Silent Spring*, have also found a multitude of expressions in fiction including narratives about nuclear disasters, water and air pollutants, and food scarcity or poisoning. The threat of toxification has a long history stretching back to late antiquity (Buell, "Toxic Discourse" 641), with narratives that reflect fears about toxification being representative of what Buell refers to as toxic discourse. Within environmental discourse, toxic discourse 'challenges traditional understandings of what counts as an environmentalist movement or ethos' because it 'insists on the interdependence of ecocentric and anthropocentric values', making environmentalist concerns as these relate to 'human and social health more central and salient' than in the past, in order to underscore the importance of the environmental movement (Buell, "Toxic Discourse" 639–640). This brings the continued prioritisation of human concerns into focus. It should not be necessary to validate the environmental movement on the basis that humans are also negatively affected, but it appears to be difficult to motivate for change in human behaviour towards the environment without it. The overt engagement with human concerns in relation to the environment is useful in so far as it reinforces arguments that connect humans with other animals by demonstrating that a healthy environment benefits everyone. Nevertheless, such a shift does detract from the overwhelmingly destructive relationship that humans have with the nonhuman. Moving the focus from the nonhuman onto the human has the potential to exacerbate the existing environmental problem, because it may be understood to endorse the view that as long as humans are not affected, then there is no problem. Furthermore, such thinking reinforces the human/animal binary by placing animals and their concerns in a secondary position, and hinders the development of empathetic engagement by suggesting that their lives and well-being are of lesser/little importance.

Though Atwood and McCarthy draw on toxic discourse in their representations of degraded environments, they do not fall into the trap of suggesting that environmental concerns are only relevant if human needs are negatively affected. Regardless of their representational differences, the texts importantly situate humans in the nonhuman world, challenging ideas and representations that suggest we are 'isolated from, [and] elevated above, the lives of

other species' (McHugh, "Being Out of Time: Animal Gods in Contemporary Extinction Fictions" 13).

MaddAddam in Paradise

Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy* comprising *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*, narrates the end of the Anthropocene from the perspectives of witnesses to, and survivors of, a pandemic. Although I will touch on some aspects that are important to reading the trilogy as a whole, I would like to focus more attention on ecocatastrophe as it is portrayed in *Oryx and Crake*.

Unlike many well-known narratives that are sensitive to various forms of eco/environmental catastrophe, such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and films like Cornel Wilde's *No Blade of Grass* (1970) and Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), Atwood's catastrophe is orchestrated to prevent the environmental apocalypse that it pre-empt. Evocative of the Holocaust in terms of the state's abuse of its citizenry, Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy* explores methods of individual and group resistance to economic institutions associated with big oil, big pharma and the arms trade. Against this backdrop of corporate America's environmental and human rights abuses, she presents a world on the verge of ecocatastrophe, where the most obvious solution to the inevitable global ecosystemic collapse is to cull humanity.

Postmodern and ecocentric in its approach, the *MaddAddam Trilogy* contains many of the anxieties raised in modernist texts, including those related to technology and surveillance found in George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and the rise of science and concerns about scientific hubris reflected in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau*. The representation of science and technology as destructive rather than progressive forces, and the trilogy's polyphonic narrative structure, create an intricate and detailed end-time scenario in which human survivors, Crakers and naturally occurring/bioengineered animals negotiate a shared existence to navigate this new world.

A contributing aspect to the development and unveiling of the lead-up to the pandemic and resultant post-apocalyptic world that should not be overlooked is the trilogy's changing method of narration. This starts off with a single male narrator, then shifts (in the second

novel) to a multiple perspective female point of view and ends (in the third novel) with a more inclusive narrative that contains male/female and human/Craker voices. The changing modes of narration could be read as indicative both of a slow progression towards a greater understanding of the complexities of pre- and post-pandemic life as additional voices become heard, and to the trilogy's gradual movement away from a patriarchal voice to a more inclusive representation, which is in line with its potential to be understood as drawing on some aspects of ecofeminist theory.

Oryx and Crake, which is the first novel in the series, is a survival tale bearing similarities to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) and, of course, *Frankenstein*. Like *The Last Man*, Atwood's world is simultaneously familiar and different from our current world. In it, Jimmy narrates the events preceding the pandemic through flashbacks, while interacting with the posthuman Crakers and bioengineered fauna. By using him as both narrator and focaliser, Atwood not only creates the impression that he is the sole human survivor, but also offers a first-hand, personal, male account of the pre-pandemic world as an environmentally compromised, high-tech, and economically and socially divided space, with corporations 'locked into murderous competition for hegemony' in the burgeoning industry of genetic engineering (Ingersoll 164). There is certainly an element of the entropic and of the corrupt in the social fabric present in the novel, but where this becomes most evident is in the dealings of the big pharmaceutical corporations that are maintaining their profitability by simultaneously engineering diseases and their cures. As a scientist employed by one of these large corporations, Crake is aware of the precariousness of life on Earth, a fact which he reveals to Jimmy:

I've seen the latest confidential Corps demographic reports. As a species we're in deep trouble, worse than anyone's saying. They're afraid to release the stats because people might just give up, but take it from me, we're running out of space-time. Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply *for everyone*³⁰. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 347)

Crake's disclosure touches on one of the most contentious real-world issues related to the environmental crisis: human overpopulation. With our current population estimated at 7.7

³⁰ Emphasis in the text.

billion, Atwood's vision of a world so overpopulated that not even the affluent and influential are able to secure food for themselves does not seem farfetched (Worldometers). In addition to the pressure being placed on the environment by the human population, all of the naturally occurring ecosystems are severely altered, suffering not only from the effects of global warming, climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer, but also from a host of bioengineered or hybridised plants and animals, which appear to be better suited to this environment, thriving where the naturally occurring species are or are in the process of becoming extinct.

Atwood's ecology evokes many postcolonial environmental problems that have emerged as a result of invasive species and their negative impact on indigenous fauna and flora. Similar to the current real-world issues being faced globally as a result of the introduction of nonindigenous species, Atwood's genetically engineered animals have either been introduced into the ecosystems by design (bobkittens) or by accident (green rabbits and rakunks). However, at the point where the narrative commences, these new life forms, including the Crakers, have successfully populated the post-apocalyptic environment and, in some instances, have eradicated more familiar domesticated species. These new animals are not the product of nature, but of science, and many were created to fulfil distinct purposes. However, despite being engineered as fit-for-purpose beings, their potential to revert to more natural behaviours and physicalities in this new unregulated and unmonitored environment makes them unpredictable and a potential threat to what is left of the naturally occurring species, including humans. The eradication of species that have historically lived alongside humans in the post-apocalyptic space (dogs and pigs), and their replacement with animals that are similar (wolvogs and pigoons), but do not have the same historical relationship with humans, implies that inter- and cross-species relationships will necessarily need to be renegotiated and reconfigured.

Part of this renegotiation and reconfiguration necessitates a better understanding of human and animal needs, one of the greatest barriers to which is language. Language, and fears about its disappearance, feature prominently in the trilogy, notably in Jimmy's word lists, Alex the parrot's acquisition of language, and the capacity for cross-species communication that is characteristic of the Crakers. The current inability or unwillingness, for the most part, to meaningfully communicate across species presents an enormous challenge to the recognition of sameness and difference, and to the development of respect. Therefore, it is

unsurprising that in a series focussed on environmental concerns, and by extension human-nonhuman relations, language is a dominant issue.

Within postcolonial studies, the loss of language has been historically connected to the loss of culture and identity. In imagining a post-apocalyptic world Atwood draws attention to the loss of human cultures and identities that would take place were our societies to be almost instantaneously obliterated. Given the circumstances in which Jimmy finds himself — an unwitting co-conspirator in mass murder, and witness to and participant in Crake's murder-suicide — his word lists, erotic fantasies and memories of a world that has disappeared may be understood as a desire to retain his identity. However, in this new space he has also become the custodian of a history that only he is aware of, and by listing words and returning to his memories, it appears that he is not only re-membering³¹, in the dual sense that he is trying to reconstitute his world — in terms of who was in it and what role they played — and himself, but is also holding onto what is often believed to be one of the cornerstones of human civilisation: language.

One of Jimmy's early and prominent memories in this regard is of watching old instructional CD-ROMs of a talking parrot. Drawing on Dr Pepperberg's 30-year avian language experiment of which Alex, an African grey parrot named using the acronym for the experiment, was the subject, Atwood challenges the communication barrier, and connects the human to the nonhuman through language. The connection that Jimmy feels to Alex is born out of a recognition of his own frustrations being articulated by the parrot:

He liked the part where Alex invented a new word — *cork-nut*³², for almond — and, best of all, the part where Alex got fed up with the blue-triangle and yellow-square exercise and said, *I'm going away now. No, Alex, you come back here! Which is the blue triangle – no, the blue triangle?* But Alex was out the door. Five stars for Alex. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 61–62)

This paragraph draws attention to two areas which are worth discussing in relation to language and the human/animal divide. The first is that Alex does not mimic his handler. The second is his act of autonomy. Alex's ability to coin his own terms — here he uses 'cork-nut'

³¹ Barbara Myerhoff defined 're-membering' as a particular type of recollection used to '[call] attention to the reaggregation of members, the figures who belong to one's life story' (Russell and Carey 23).

³² All italics in this quotation are in the original.

for almond — is indicative of his ability to use language creatively, which was previously thought to be only a human trait. He is also able to discern the difference between colours and shapes, and is able to complete an exercise commonly seen performed by toddlers. Although these experiments should be considered grossly inaccurate in assessing any animal's intelligence because of their anthropocentric orientation, the idea that Alex is intelligent is reinforced when, tired of performing this repetitive exercise, he displays decision-making capabilities, demonstrating these in his unwillingness to complete the task and choosing to walk away. This act portrays him as autonomous, suggesting that up until now he has been something of a willing participant, perhaps because he was unaware that he theoretically had a choice. Jimmy empathises with Alex's frustration at being required to perform repetitive tasks and, like Alex, wishes to leave the trappings of his own life. As Armstrong notes, Alex becomes symbolic of 'both entrapment and escape' (192), however, he is also, in a very real sense, an important symbol of animal sentience and agency.

Perhaps because they straddle the human/animal divide the Crakers are gifted with the ability to communicate across species, making the birth of the human-Craker hybrids symbolic of potentially more harmonious relations between species. Ironically, Atwood's vision of a human perfectly suited to living in harmony both with and in the nonhuman world is a creature that is more animal than human. Her engagement with the controversies associated with the genetic modification of animals for economic purposes, notably embodied by the pigoons and ChickieNobs, segues into the even more contested arena of human bioengineering. Having understood how dire humanity's situation is as a result of human activity, Crake's Paradise Project is his attempt to create what he imagines to be the perfect human, a being that can live harmoniously with the nonhuman instead of seemingly at odds with it. Consequently, the Crakers may be understood as an inversion of Dr Moreau's Beast People. Rather than humanising animals, as Moreau does, Crake animalises people, with the Crakers' humanity lying in the very fact that they are not human and as a result, are seemingly more attuned to, and respectful of, the nonhuman.

Jimmy's decision to finally lead the Crakers out of Paradise once JUVE has run its course symbolises a 'new convergence of humans and ecosystems' (Rozelle 62), which concludes Crake's vision of a reconciliation between humans and nature, and is reinforced by the Crakers' ability to communicate across species. This emphasises the trilogy's post-humanist and post-pastoral position by suggesting that this new dawn of humankind may bring with it a

better understanding of the nonhuman through a shared language that could ultimately result in more inclusive and respectful relationships. However, it also mocks Crake's fascist vision, because the Crakers are not that different from humans in terms of the need for meaning, which suggests that they might not be that different in other ways too, and so there is a chance that history may repeat itself.

Traditionally, hybrids are used in literature to elicit apprehension, suspicion and unease about governance and the nature of humankind. Atwood's are no exception, with her hybrids drawing attention to, and becoming symbolic of, a breakdown in the human/animal divide. By making this divide porous, she challenges some of the existing ideas about human exceptionalism, including language, complex social structures and ritual practices. Her bioengineered fauna are simultaneously fantastic and frightening, with the pigeons taking centre stage as a result of their intelligence and heightened ability to problem-solve and strategise, making them a threat to the human survivors in ways that most animals are not.

The potential threat posed by the hyper-intelligent pigeons is first suggested in Jimmy's childhood interactions with them at OrganInc Farms. In one particular interaction Jimmy becomes acutely aware of the sentience of these beings bred as hosts for transplantable, human-tissue organs:

He especially liked the small pigeons, twelve to a sow and lined up in a row, guzzling milk. Pigeonlets. They were cute. But the adults were slightly frightening, with their runny noses and tiny, white-lashed pink eyes. They glanced up at him as if they saw him, really saw him, and might have plans for him later. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 29–30)

This encounter between Jimmy and the pigeons prefigures a moment later in the novel where he finds himself being hunted by them. Throughout the trilogy the pigeons play a complex role as animal antagonists because they are in direct competition with the survivors for resources, and have developed complex social structures that include rituals such as funeral rites, suggesting that they have an understanding of death, something that animals are not thought to possess. Like Alex, their display of intelligence and understanding forces the surviving humans to rethink their relationships with the nonhuman because they are not so different from themselves.

Atwood's depiction of a power hungry, ethically questionable attitude towards bioengineering is not as improbable as some may wish to believe. As Haraway notes, in 1997 at the Transgenic Animals in Agriculture conference, one of the presenters spoke about animals as "bioreactors", which could be manipulated without moral limit' (*When Species Meet* 155), suggesting that animals are excluded from moral consideration. This is an idea that is articulated by some of Atwood's scientists who reduce the genetic modification of living animals to an 'after hour-hours hobby': 'There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God' (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 57). This callous approach to the lives of animals is generally associated with the language of empirical science, particularly its use of mechanomorphism to describe observable animal behaviours, rather than possibly attributing an internal mental world to animals through anthropomorphism, because this cannot be concretely observed. However, other contributing factors to this callousness include Judeo-Christianity's dominion mandate, but more importantly in this instance, to Darwinian evolutionary theory.

Darwin's work had a marked influence on human-animal relations. As Fudge notes:

In this work he argued that the new discoveries being made by geologists about the age of the earth meant that new ways of understanding the living creatures on the planet were needed. The creation narrative of the Bible was no longer credible, as the earth was much older than any arithmetical analysis of the Scriptures could propose, and what Darwin put forward instead of the Christian creation myth was the theory of evolution. The outcome of this theory was a world in which nature was never static, in which creatures (and he included human beings in this) were not created in their final state, but had evolved to become what they now were, and would, by implication, continue to evolve. (*Animal* 18)

From an evolutionary perspective, the variety of life forms that exist developed in response to environments rather than the previously held belief that an external force created everything exactly as it is (instantaneous creation). Importantly, evolutionary theory challenged the human/animal divide by querying its existence. The Judeo-Christian belief that humans were created in God's image and given dominion over creation was called into question by the idea that humans were actually created from animals, and that no animal was superior, their development was merely a reflection of an ability to adapt to fill niche areas. Although this may have fostered ideas around similarities between humans and animals, and led to

metaphors of extended family, it also had an unforeseen consequence in the post-modern age as a result of its proposal of natural selection.

According to Buell, Darwinian evolutionary theory's process of natural selection, which implies that species are 'malleable and improvable', has been appropriated by the biological sciences in the field of genetic engineering, with its process of artificial selection (*The Environmental Imagination* 284). This appropriation has had negative consequences for animals because it suggests that it is possible to 'improve' or 'manipulate' living beings to suit a particular, often anthropocentric, purpose. The pigeons and other biologically manipulated animals act as reminders of the perils stemming from the objectification and commodification that form part of the exploitative realities that are enabled, and to some extent even encouraged, by the capitalist consumerism that marks the Anthropocene.

Unlike the scientists of modern classic science fiction, Atwood's scientists are not only participants in medical and technological advancements, but are also presented more complexly as both bio-saboteurs and environmental messiahs. Reflecting ecofeminist proposals of how best to mitigate the environmental crisis, the trilogy emphasises the continued presence of cultural, economic and social structures that led to such a crisis in the first place. However, it also reflects deep ecology's concerns with how to change human relationships to the nonhuman using various forms of identification, and the effects of human over population. Given that change is unlikely, Atwood's environmental satire imagines that an environmental messiah will save the world and put in place measures in an attempt to ensure that the very structures that resulted in the crisis will not be resurrected. As a result, the trilogy turns 'the anthropocentric sense of holocaust against itself' by suggesting that 'a world purged of humans [. . .] would not be so apocalyptic [. . .] because wildness in some form would be sure to endure' (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 304).

The *MaddAddam Trilogy* takes the prospect of eco/environmental apocalypse past the point of disaster, where humans must learn to live alongside the nonhuman world or face certain death. That being said, it is unclear why Crake, with the help of the MaddAddamites, chooses to bioengineer a new human race that will replace the one decimated by JUVE. Perhaps his reasoning is based on Darwinian evolutionary theory from the perspective that if humans had previously developed to fill a niche, then there is a chance that they will emerge again, and with them, the same structures that led to the environmental crisis.

By engineering humans in a way that he feels is best suited to preserving ecology, Crake seems to believe that he is improving, or even fixing, an unforeseen error in nature's selection of preferential traits. Like Moreau and Frankenstein, he believes that he has the power to harness and improve nature, but is later proved incorrect as the Crakers, like most of the bioengineered animals, start exhibiting the behaviours and traits that had been removed, including a sense of personal history, rudimentary art and an emergent religion. This seems to suggest that despite human interference, nature will ultimately reassert itself and continue 'after the demise of human culture, [but] it will not be the same nature that existed before the appearance of humans' (Gersdorf and Mayer, "Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies" 13). Although the *MaddAddam Trilogy* closes by presenting a post-apocalyptic world in which the natural world is beginning to reassert itself and more harmonious relations between humans and nonhumans are emerging, it also ominously suggests that without the generational transfer of history from the pre-pandemic space into this new world, there is a risk that the environmental crisis has only been averted for a time.

The Road to Nowhere

Far bleaker in its outlook than the *MaddAddam Trilogy*, *The Road* portrays the world after an unspecified cataclysm has transformed the landscape into a wasteland, resulting in the collapse of human civilisation. The narrative follows a nameless father and son as they travel along a road, apparently in search of somewhere that has been left unaffected by the event, or is, at least, not as inhospitable as where they currently are. Although their southward journey may draw on the 'westward journey of the pioneers of the prototypical American frontier narrative' (Hestetun 96), here there is no frontier, there is no escape from civilisation into wilderness, because neither of these exist as we currently understand them. The sunless and birdless sky, desolate landscape, crumbling buildings and remnants of post-cataclysm carnage are evocative of the post-bomb landscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This, and the description that accompanies the moment that the event takes place, '[a] long shear of light and then a series of low concussions' (McCarthy 54), suggest that the cataclysm may have been nuclear in origin³³.

³³ However, some critics such as Frye read this description as possibly indicating a meteor strike or asteroid impact (Hestetun 102).

As Buell notes, the invention of nuclear weaponry in the early part of the twentieth century created an environment where society was ‘forced to confront more seriously than ever before the possibility of the imminent end of life as we know it’ (*The Environmental Imagination* 284). Emerging as an important text about the impact of climate change, McCarthy’s novel not only resurrects the old spectre of nuclear winter at a time when fears of nuclear holocaust have been superseded by fears of eco/environmental-apocalypse, but does so in a way that reflects current environmental concerns — such as species extinction, altered landscapes and food shortages — by being sensitive to the representation of immediate post-nuclear environments. One of the reasons that *The Road* is a disturbing tale lies in its descriptions of a dying planet, implying that this event is global rather than localised, and is therefore inescapable. Post-pastoral in its approach to representing eco/environmental-apocalypse, particularly in its contemplation of the place of humans within the nonhuman world, McCarthy draws attention to our relationships with nature and its inhabitants by situating his characters in a world almost entirely void of life.

Along with American frontier narratives, the story also draws on the popular trope of the American road-trip narrative exemplified by novels such as Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road* (1957) and Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974), but unlike the exciting and hopeful adventures usually associated with such novels, McCarthy’s focalisers do not travel through America desiring adventure, but rather because they need to survive. As noted by Hestetun ‘this journey [. . .] is undertaken not on wheels, but on foot; the ultimate goal is not adventure, but survival; and chance encounters on the road induce not excitement, but fear. [. . .] the road itself takes on new significance, as it no longer signals freedom and endless possibility, but rather a condition of life in a disrupted world’ (96). The road is a dangerous place to travel because it leaves those who follow it exposed to the elements and at the mercy of other survivors, many of whom have resorted to cannibalism as a means of sustenance. As a result, every encounter with other people becomes potentially threatening, since taboos placed on cannibalism no longer apply, and with the decimation of most life forms human beings now prey on one another.

Consumption, as Vint points out, is ‘one of the most important sites of the human-animal encounter (24). By collapsing the boundary between what we should and should not consume, i.e. animals or species other than ourselves, McCarthy not only raises issues about

meat eating in general, which is linked to climate change, but also to our philosophical understanding of the difference between carnivorism and cannibalism. Quoting Carol Adams, Fudge emphasises ‘that in the process of eating “we re-position the animal from subject to object by making ourselves the subjects in meat-eating”’, which is further aided by the linguistic distinctions employed between animals and the meat that they are transformed into (*Animal* 36). However, in *The Road* humans occupy space as both the subject and the object of meat eating, making interhuman relationships difficult to negotiate as there is uncertainty about which position is being occupied at any given point.

Here Derrida’s logic of sacrifice is subverted, because it becomes permissible in this world to kill humans as well as animals, making concerns about what constitutes murder, and the immorality of it, null and void. The subversion of expected human-animal food relationships turn common scenes of carnivorism into scenes of barbarism. McCarthy increases the horror of the cannibalistic act in two ways: by depicting humans extending the shelf life of their food supply by dismembering their victims while keeping them alive (cutting and cauterising so as to extend the life span of the individual and freshness of the meat) and by equating the female body to a factory capable of producing food (milk and young).

It appears that some of cannibals have created what seems to be a social group outside of which all other humans are objectified, and so occupy the position of prey. This process of othering makes it possible for them to inflict suffering on their food source because, in terms of this social structure, these people do not belong to their group, and so are exempt from being treated in the same way. The horror lies not only in the eating of our own species, but in the torture and hopelessness experienced by the victims. These victims have no chance of survival because they now occupy the same position as ‘food animals’ — they are there to sustain the cannibalistic survivors.

Evoking images of the Holocaust, the absence of human survivors is strongly felt through the presence of their personal belongings, leading the father and son to ask, if silently, what happened to these people. In one particularly harrowing scene they come across a house, the cellar of which is being used to house people destined for consumption: ‘They stood in the doorway. Piled in a window in one corner of the room was a great heap of clothing. Clothes and shoes. Belts. Coats. Blankets and old sleeping bags’ (McCarthy 113). Later in the narrative it becomes apparent that what they had seen were the belongings of people who

more than likely had already been consumed, as well as of those awaiting the same fate, a horrific realisation made more palpable by the sheer quantity of belongings, suggesting that this has been going on for some time.

In this context, with humans being the obvious food source, the narrative creates a strong link between women and food, because the female body is capable of producing renewable sources of food. When father and son come upon 'a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit' (McCarthy 212) the scene, though evocative of rabbits or lambs on spits, becomes repulsive because it is not an animal. This particular instance is made all the more distressing because father and son had recently encountered a trio on the road, one of whom was a pregnant woman, implying that this blackened corpse was previously the child in utero.

The concept of breeding our own to consume our own not only evokes the deeply rooted taboos of cannibalism but, more troublingly, also infanticide. Perhaps what is so terrible about the exploration of infanticide within McCarthy's novel is that it not only suggests a breakdown in the moral and ethical fabric of society, but strongly reinforces the idea that the demise of our species will be by our own hand, which is what is currently happening as a result of the environmental crisis. Importantly, both scenes portray an absence of those traits that we believe make us different from other animals, depicting our species as having been transformed into a monstrous race, actively pursuing, procreating and consuming our own. It is a state so lacking in empathy and compassion, that it cannot even be considered 'animal' in the most derogatory sense.

McCarthy explores those aspects of humanity that we associate with being human, and by extension humane, which are often used to uphold the human/animal divide: civilisation and compassion. However, *The Road* presents humans overtly engaging in terrible acts of cruelty towards one another that in their pre-meditation go far beyond what animals seem capable of, particularly in terms of their brutality and ruthlessness. Therefore, one of the pervasive issues that emerges in the text concerns how to exercise compassion when faced with such dire circumstances.

The question of compassion, and what forms compassionate engagement should take, are primarily explored through the figure of the son. Throughout the text the young boy, born at

the time of the cataclysm, shows compassion towards other travellers on the road, even though he is aware that his altruism may lead to his death. The ability for humans to remain compassionate even when faced with their own deaths, was a notable feature in some of the personal stories relayed by survivors of the Holocaust (Jacobs). Such stories bear testimony to the possibility that human beings can transcend the immediate difficulties of their individual, personal situations and reach out to other living beings that find themselves in the same/similar circumstances. This act allows them to maintain a sense of community, hope and their humanity, even in the face of the most hopeless of situations.

The son's behaviour contrasts with the father's behaviour towards other survivors, which initially appears to be lacking in compassion, and the behaviour of the cannibals. The father's primary concern is to keep himself and his son alive whilst retaining some of their humanity. His need to hold on to what he believes makes us human, even when faced with difficult conditions, is evident in his unwillingness to become a cannibal, reflecting a 'profound belief in the need for moral order' (Arnold qtd. in Hestetun 104). However, in order to ward off starvation he believes that he cannot share their limited resources. Additionally, he cannot risk helping others for fear that they may rob or eat them, which results in a difficult moral balancing act:

They came upon him shuffling along the road before them, dragging one leg slightly and stopping from time to time to stand stooped and uncertain before setting out again.

[. . .]

They followed him a good ways [. . .] finally he just sat in the road and did not get up again. He was as burntlooking as the country, his clothing scorched and black. One of his eyes was burnt shut and his hair was but a nitty wig of ash upon his blackened skull. [. . .] The boy kept looking back. Papa? he whispered.

What is wrong with the man?

He's been struck by lightning.

Cant we help him? Papa?

No. We cant help him.

The boy kept pulling at his coat. Papa? he said.

Stop it.

Cant we help him Papa?

No. We cant help him. There's nothing to be done for him.

(McCarthy 50–51)³⁴

³⁴ Punctuation as per the novel.

This scene is particularly notable because it is quite different from most of the interactions with other survivors. Far from being a threat, this man appears to be dying, and the son's pleas for assistance on his behalf mark the first expression of his desire to help others. It is a memorable scene because it portrays compassion in a world that is both foreign and callous. It appears that, for the son, the issue of whether or not the man is dying is not of concern. What is important is can or will they help him in whatever way possible.

As noted by Hestetun, the son 'born after the disaster and with no knowledge of the pre-disaster world other than what his father has told him, is pure, innocent, and untainted by whatever may have been the cause of the present state' of the planet (105). While Hestetun argues for the understanding the figure of the son as almost messianic, with the possibility of human redemption and the triumph of morality symbolised in their 'carrying the fire', these incidents can also be understood in less of a mythopoeic or religious sense, and more of a personal and environmental one.

The novel presents a personalised tale of catastrophe, and not only explores the environments and acts that enable survival, but also the personal losses and ways of coping in a world that is clearly coming to an end. The father's belief in the possibility of a future for humankind that does not include cannibalism is what gives him hope to continue on what otherwise appears to be a futile and meaningless journey. However, for the father to ensure their survival, all other survivors must be perceived as both other and predatory. Here McCarthy not only sets up what may be perceived as an exploration of food politics, but also the human confronting an environment over which there is no control. This brings human-nonhuman relationships sharply into focus, because in this world not only are there few resources, but the structures that created the impression of control over the natural world are gone. It is against this scarcity that the question of what makes us human is raised.

Importantly, the text is filled with minor spelling errors and punctuation omissions which in part signal the erosion of civilisation. However, and perhaps more importantly, because this has also featured in the other texts explored in thesis, these errors are also indicative of the deterioration of one of the key abilities that has been used to differentiate humans from animals: language. Therefore, as the ability to communicate meaningfully lessens, so too does our status (even if fictional) above animals. However, as evidenced in the figure of the son, and the family who adopts him at the end of the novel, the text does not represent all

humans as innately cruel, selfish and sadistic. Rather, it suggests that the behaviours and capabilities which we thought essential to our humanity, such as civilisation and language, are not the most important aspects of our species. Rather humanity lies in our ability to empathise, nurture and connect with others, the very behaviours that many other species also sometimes exhibit.

Although nothing in the narrative suggests that the catastrophe was avoidable, there remains a pervasive sense that we did not truly understand or appreciate the fragility of life on Earth. The father comes to the realisation that he and his son are bearing witness to the end of the world that he knew, a reality that is echoed in the last pages of the novel that mourn the loss of a world that can never be restored. Not only is this loss portrayed in the landscape, but it is most noticeable in the lack of animals.

Animals are present mostly through their absence, existing as images, remains or spaces in the text. The complete destruction of the ecosystem and resultant isolation of humans from other animals reinforces the text's exploration of the interconnectedness of being. McCarthy seems to suggest that our humanity lies in our ability to connect to others, particularly in our potential to show compassion. As a result, the novel seems to advocate for changes in human behaviour in relation to the environment by imagining the irretrievable loss of our current world, including most of the life forms with whom we share it. What is clear is that *The Road* firmly situates humans in the nonhuman world by demonstrating interconnection through loss. By removing most of the nonhuman world from the narrative, but leaving humans, the catastrophic consequences of climate change, food scarcity and extinction are given new weight.

What Does the Future Hold?

The future oriented, environmentally conscious, speculative fiction of Atwood and McCarthy serves to explore what many might deem the logical conclusion of the continued unchecked impact that our industrialised economies are having on the planet. Both novels portray a bleak outlook for the future of the world as we know it if we are unwilling to accept the negative influence that our current global industrial and development mandates are having on the nonhuman world. Although different in their approach to the environmental crisis, Atwood and McCarthy call for their respective audiences to contemplate what it means for us

to live in an age dominated by the activities of human beings. Their environmental satires instil a sense of anxiety about the future of the world, and our future as a species, because ecological catastrophe, in whatever form it takes, means that Earth is likely to undergo dramatic changes.

Central to the texts is an underlying criticism of the continued exploitation of the nonhuman by the human for the purposes of economic development in all forms, a phenomenon that gained global momentum with imperial expansion. The development of the natural environment generally implies the destruction of animals and their habitats in order to make way for agriculture, industry and housing. As Berger observes ‘animals in modernity appear to be perpetually “disappearing”, paradoxically becoming ever more present in inverse proportion to their erasure from everyday human lives’ (McHugh, “Being Out of Time” 4). Whilst the increasing numbers of animal absences in our environments are reflected in the work of both authors, McCarthy’s novel draws attention to this erasure by greatly emphasising animal absence, so much so that animals are, for the most part, only present as remains, memories or in books. The decreasing numbers of animals in the environment should be read as indicative of ecological collapse, signalling almost certain death for humans as well.

One of the most important things that both authors do is draw attention to the role that compassion and empathy play in changing our relationships with the nonhuman, as well as with one another. One of the striking differences between the texts is the absence or presence of other species, and how the authors use these absences/presences to emphasise ecological interconnections in order to accomplish their calls to action. The texts suggest that the environmental crisis not only implies that the uniqueness of individual living beings and the Earth is at stake, but that their survival depends on our ability to identify and compassionately engage with the nonhuman. Like Shelley, Orwell and Wells, Atwood and McCarthy present the exploitative and monstrous side of humanity, but balance this by also presenting engagements with the nonhuman, and in McCarthy’s case the human, that reflect empathy and compassion.

In the age of the Anthropocene cultural representations of the environmental crisis have become greatly important because never has the negative impact of industrialisation been so great and with it the need to imagine other less destructive ways of living in the world.

However, it must be noted that writing fictional accounts of the human exploitation of the nonhuman is a difficult task, particularly in terms of how best to present nonhuman presences or subjectivities. Perhaps the success of these novels lies in choosing to narrate the stories from a predominantly anthropocentric perspective, rather than from the perspectives of animals. This has enabled the authors to direct the readers' attention towards the issue of environmental crisis, and its potential outcomes, without unnecessarily complicating the texts with issues related to the appropriateness and ability to narrate lives about which we have a limited understanding.

The texts can be read as examples of the post-pastoral tradition particularly because they collapse the human/animal divide while showing an awareness of the problems in doing so, particularly as these relate to food consumption, food politics, species interests and bioethics. Animals in these texts function both literally as animals, and symbolically as expressions of human fears and desires, and are used to express the increasing complexity of human-animal relationships as we come to realise that in many respects, animals are not so different from us. The right for humans, animals and other nonhumans to be protected from the exploitative practices of humans is raised by both authors, with neither presenting a solution, so much as a hypothesis, of what would likely be the devastating consequences if we are to continue prioritising human concerns and promoting self-interest at the expense of the nonhuman world.

By setting their narratives in the future, there is an indication that there is still time to redefine and reshape our relationship with the natural world before it is completely lost. However, we must not lose sight of the urgent need for this reform. Atwood and McCarthy appear to draw on the deep ecology and ecofeminist movements in order to imagine new ways of living in worlds that have suffered catastrophes. Their engagements reveal the possibility for change in human behaviour towards the nonhuman through a more formal, or overt, recognition of the interconnectedness of being. Whilst the *MaddAddam Trilogy* concludes with a vision of a post-apocalyptic egalitarian society built on cross-species cooperation and respect, *The Road* suggests that humans may be redeemed of their sins against the environment by being given a chance to start again, though in the context of the novel it is questionable whether this is really possible post-catastrophe. These calls for a biocentric ethic of sharing reflect a focus on both species difference and sameness,

challenging the human/animal divide and contributing towards a greater respect for the roles that different species play within the environment.

Chapter 4

Eating Others: A Discussion of Ethical Vegetarianism

And for Adam himself, the Names of the Animals were the first words he spoke — the first moment of Human language. In this cosmic instant, Adam claims his Human soul. To Name is — we hope — to greet; to draw another towards one's self. [. . .] Adam's first act towards the Animals was thus one of loving-kindness and kinship, for Man in his unfallen state was not yet a carnivore.

— M. Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*³⁵

Stepping into the slaughterhouse was like walking through an invisible wall into hell. Sight, sound, smell — every sense I thought I owned, that was mine, the slaughterhouse stripped from me, overpowered and assaulted. Steam hissed, metal screeched against metal, clanging and clamoring, splitting the ear, relentless. Chains, pulleys, iron hooks, whipped around us with unbelievable speed, and as far as the eye could see, conveyors snaked into the distance, heaped with skinned heads and steaming hearts.

— R. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*³⁶

Although a call for change in our relationships with animals, and what this necessitates, has been central to the discussion throughout this thesis, this chapter examines literary engagements with one of the most difficult areas that undoubtedly requires reform: food production. What we eat, and how we eat it, extends far beyond the mechanics and logistics of production. For many cultures, eating is as much about the transference of culture as it is sustenance and could be considered more a reflection of a culture's history than of personal taste. The omission of foods, such as beef and pork, as part of religious observances in Hindu and Jewish practice respectively (or meat entirely, as is customary in Jainism), or their inclusion, such as cat and dog, common meats eaten in the east but rarely found in the west, often reflect cultural norms and taboos about what is permissible to eat. The distinction we make between animals we think of as food and those considered to be companions is porous and often culturally specific. But what companion animals reveal is that the existence of food restrictions may be based on similar ideas of who/what is part of the family, the distinction is

³⁵ Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. 2009. London: Virago, 2013, 15.

³⁶ Ozeki, Ruth. *My Year of Meats*. 1998. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2013, 330.

made on the ‘basis of closeness. What appears natural — that certain animals appear on menus and others don’t — may actually be based upon some more deep-seated understanding of how we live with animals’ (Fudge *Animal*, 34). What is evident, is that eating is a diverse and culturally complex act, making a discussion about eating animals highly contentious and fraught with difficulty. However, given our current global environmental crisis, it is not a discussion that one can or should avoid, and writers such as Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki have brought attention to the issue by offering cogent and compelling arguments for a change in how we perceive the animals that we eat.

Animal agriculture has, and continues to have, an enormous impact on the environment. Concerns regarding food economics/politics and the bioengineering necessary to make it possible to feed vast numbers of people, are areas that have far reaching consequences for those involved with, or interested in, bioethics and the environment. With the accelerated growth of the human population since the industrial revolution, food security has become a concern that has led to ethically questionable scientific innovations³⁷ and farming practices (e.g. factory/industrial farming) as the need for food rises and the demand for agricultural land competes with requirements for housing and conservation. Whether we are utilising land for grazing or for crops, such practices are taking their toll globally. The recent Amazonian fires are one example of the impact of farming on the environment, having been attributed to wide-spread logging and use of fire to clear portions of this iconic forest for crops and grazing. These fires have had detrimental consequences for biodiversity, climate change and the health of the indigenous people still living in the area (Webb), and the negative impact of such farming-related practices on the Amazon is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.

Modern farming represents a site where the dominion versus stewardship debate seems to be evident. As Plumwood notes:

Our failure to situate dominant forms of human society ecologically is matched by our failure to situate non-humans ethically, as the plight of non-human species continues to worsen. Rationalised intensive agriculture not only inflicts intolerable living conditions on animals, but increasingly requires

³⁷ For an extensive analysis of the relationship between bioengineering and farming please see Wheale, Peter and Ruth McNally, eds. *The Bio-Revolution: Cornucopia or Pandora’s Box?* London: Pluto Press, 1990. Print.

massive slaughtering events to stem the disease outbreaks its conditions foster. On the wild side too, primate researchers speak of an ‘animal holocaust’ [...] If even the largest and most closely related animal species are not spared extinction in the wild, what ultimate hope is there for the rest of nature? (*Environmental Culture 2*)

Plumwood raises several important issues about factory/industrial farming, including the ethical treatment of animals, their living conditions, and the increase of diseases resulting from these environments — concerns tackled either directly or indirectly in the texts under study in this chapter. She points out that intensive agriculture or factory farming is not only cruel, but has resulted in health problems for both animals and humans — an area that Atwood and Ozeki pay attention to. These industrialised farming practices have also resulted in undesirable behaviours in farmed animals, including cannibalism (pigs and chickens) and feather plucking (chickens), which are the consequences of keeping these animals in overpopulated, unnatural conditions. Additionally, Plumwood notes that some researchers have described the mass extinction of wild animals during the Anthropocene as an ‘animal holocaust’. Whilst Plumwood is specifically referring to the killing of the great apes, as described by primatologists, the Holocaust analogy has also been used to describe factory/industrial farming, with its accompanying large-scale slaughterhouses capable of continuously killing and dismembering thousands of animals daily. This analogy is often met with disapproval as it has been argued that it trivialises the experience of the Holocaust. However, Coetzee and Charles Patterson — who respectively authored *The Lives of Animals* and *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (2002) — have explored the use of this analogy and associated concerns. While there remain objections, largely from those who are proponents of human superiority, but also from those for whom the event is understandably connected to great trauma, it is becoming increasingly difficult not to acknowledge some of the similarities, particularly in terms of a lack of compassion and respect for otherness. The Holocaust analogy may be considered useful, not as a direct result of the comparison itself, since atrocities cannot and should not be compared, but rather because the similarities that become apparent through such comparisons often invoke empathetic responses. However, it could be argued that such responses are being elicited through a form of emotional manipulation, rather than a genuine understanding of, and empathetic engagement with, the plight of animals.

Within the space of food production, the choice of a vegetarian diet, when not followed for reasons of health or religion, often reflects concerns about ethics and morality in relation to animals. Even for those who deem animals an unnecessary ethical obstacle in progressing human interests, food production marks one of the more obvious and unavoidable intersections between human and animal life. It is the site where the lives of animals have a direct impact on the lives of humans, and where speciesism is played out in both implicit and explicit ways. It is also a space where moral awareness depends on the recognition of animals as sentient individuals, and where the sympathetic imagination could be usefully exercised to better foster empathetic engagement. However, given the nature of animal agriculture, the inherent violence of slaughterhouses, and the immense pressure that workers, often low-paid and abused themselves, are under to process large numbers of animals daily, it is unsurprising that in this industry there is a lack of sympathy towards animals generally, not to mention other species that are farmed or exploited en masse.

As previously discussed, Coetzee explores the usefulness of the sympathetic imagination, and its limits, in *The Lives of Animals*. Although Elizabeth Costello puts forward an argument for the sympathetic imagination's ability to help with identifying similarities between humans and animals, and thereby facilitating empathy, she simultaneously, and perhaps ironically, demonstrates that even this does not really bridge the gap between entities. Although she argues that it is possible to imagine what it might be like to be an animal, in doing so she inadvertently (although it might be argued that Coetzee does this deliberately) shows that imagining and actually being one are different. Importantly, *The Lives of Animals* shows us that despite our best efforts at sympathetic engagement, particularly as this pertains to the slaughterhouse, we cannot ever truly understand the experience of another being, human or animal. This means that when it comes to engaging with others, we have to acknowledge that our understanding will always be limited. However, regardless of such limitations, we should continue to extend empathy towards other living beings because empathetic engagement often results in conscientious and respectful behaviours towards others and promotes a sense of interconnection.

Although consumption is 'one of the most important sites of the human-animal encounter' (Vint 24), many consumers are unlikely to know much about the lives of 'food animals'. It could be argued that they do not want to know because having such knowledge makes them complicit in activities that they feel they have little influence over. Another reason, and one

which is possibly more common, is that eating animals is part of the ‘natural’ order of life; humans, being apex predators, should not be overly concerned with, or sentimental about, the suffering of beings lower on the food chain, since we are part of the predator-prey dynamic. Whilst shielding many from the horrors of food production, positions such as these should be considered ironic because issues of naturalness and sentimentality are central to the problem. It would not be considered ‘natural’ to farm and consume animals in the ways in which many industrialised nations currently do. Furthermore, it would be absurd to argue that it is natural to use antibiotics to control diseases, and Lutalyse to synchronise oestrous in dairy cows, because these are the products of technological advancement. Both of these examples show that the way we farm animals for meat and dairy is no longer a natural process. Similarly, being accused of sentimentality when it comes to the experiences of ‘food animals’ seems somewhat untruthful, because many of those opposed to current farming practices and the consumption of animals for a variety of reasons, including health, animal suffering and environmental impact, use empirical evidence, rather than purely emotional reasons, to support their positions.

For those concerned about animal ethics, the question of complicity may feel like a heavy burden, one without a readily available solution. To quote Elizabeth Costello, ‘we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing [...] an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them’ (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 21). But are there any tangible solutions to this endless cycle of killing animal others, and if there are, how do we imagine these might work, or how might they come about?

Dying to Feed the Masses

In the short documentary *Glass Walls* (2012), Sir Paul McCartney famously states that ‘[i]f slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian’ (0:03–0:07). McCartney’s statement emphasises an important and ever-present issue in ethical debates about dietary choices: what happened to the meat we eat?

Knowledge of food production and of the inner workings of the slaughterhouse necessarily have an impact on the way in which we justify what we eat. When it comes to animals that we consume, the animal itself disappears and is replaced by the object that we make from it:

in this case food. In the English language, part of the psychological process involved in changing an animal from a living being into food involves the use of words that do not evoke the animal itself, but rather the product, such as beef, poultry, pork and veal rather than cow, chicken, pig and calf. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), Adams uses the term ‘absent referent’ to refer to the physical being that disappears during consumption, thus turning animal bodies into acceptably packaged products. To some extent this has the effect of divorcing the living animal from the dead one that we consume. And in the case of veal or foie gras, the name also hides the specific form of cruelty that the animal had to endure before becoming an expensive and sought-after commodity.

When it comes to concerns about the lives of animals, people often fall into one of two dominant groups: those who advocate for animal welfare and those who advocate for animal rights/animal liberation. Those who advocate for animal welfare may be viewed as the more moderate group, whose concerns are not so much about stopping the exploitation of animals, as they are about reducing the harm caused to animals in the industries in which they are used. Such thinking follows the logic that if animals are to be used by people, then they must be free from unnecessary suffering. To clarify what constitutes unnecessary suffering, the ASPCA provides a list of criteria that should be met when looking after animals. Often referred to as the Five Freedoms, these are the important aspects of animal welfare that are under human control:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor.
2. Freedom from Discomfort
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress
by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.
(“Guiding Principles”)

To some extent, these five freedoms feature in *My Year of Meats*, which explores the American meat industry and uncovers connections between the consumption of animals and human health. Although the existence of such connections may not be new, Ozeki's narrative goes to some length to present the complexity of this issue, avoiding an over simplification that assigns blame for this state of affairs to corporations, farmers or individual choice — although she does demonstrate how these areas are interconnected and contribute to the overall situation — by examining the impact that consumption, and how we consume, has on humans and animals alike. In doing so, she appears to offer a critique of the application of these five freedoms. Even if Ozeki did not consciously intend to offer such a critique, her representation of the realities that one might encounter on a real-life feedlot do, in many respects, speak to the issues raised by the ASPCA. When Jane visits the Dunns' feedlot, she not only witnesses the callous treatment of the cows, but also the use of antibiotics to help curb the spread of disease and Lutalyse to abort unwanted calves. What becomes apparent through Ozeki's descriptions, is that the feedlot is not much better than the 'hell' of the slaughterhouse (Ozeki 330), which draws attention to some of the ethical problems associated with modern farming. One of these is the practice of 'finishing'³⁸. In this case, even though the cows are not being raised in intensive conditions, they are 'finished' in them. From the perspective of suffering, finishing is as stressful for the animals as slaughter, because they spend their last days in cramped and often unhygienic conditions. As Ozeki's text shows, life in the feedlots deprives them of at least four of the five freedoms, since these animals experience discomfort, are unable to express normal behaviours, are at high-risk of contracting diseases and becoming injured and, as a result, experience fear and distress. Jane's experiences at the feedlot demonstrate that despite there being laws that guide the treatment of animals, the application of such guidelines may be loosely interpreted, leaving room for abuse and/or neglect.

In contrast to animal welfare advocates, animal rights activists or animal rightists, are more direct in their vocalisation against the exploitation of animals, often actively exposing cases of abuse and proposing reforms that would remove the animals entirely from such situations. Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello may be understood as belonging more to this group than to the welfare advocates. Though some may find Elizabeth pompous, judgmental and irritating —

³⁸ 'Finishing' is the term used to refer to the period when animals are fed high-calorie diets to achieve optimum growth before slaughter ("Finishing Cattle").

incidentally these are criticisms also commonly directed at vociferous vegetarians/vegans who may be deemed overly critical of their carnist counterparts — the views that she expresses in the *Lives of Animals* are, in some respects, a ‘hard-hitting, and unambiguous condemnation of human treatment of animals’ (Donovan 89), not just in animal agriculture, but across the board.

Taking a more radical position than the animal rightists, but generally considered to be part of the same group, animal liberationists often break the law, risking their own lives and freedoms in order to rescue animals from situations that they deem exploitative. This group often perceive animal welfare laws as weak and ineffectual, supporting the continued exploitation and abuse of animals as long as such abuse and exploitation takes into account, if barely, the physical and mental needs of the animal. These concerns are particularly evident when it comes to intensive animal agriculture, since the environments that these animals inhabit meet the bare minimum in terms of acceptability from the perspective of welfare.

Atwood takes this tension between human consumption and animal welfare to absurd levels in *Oryx and Crake* with the creation of the ChickieNob, a grotesque product of genetic engineering designed as an efficient, low-cost protein source that meets market demands and welfare requirements since it ‘feels no pain’ (238). Because the welfare position may be perceived as leaning more towards maintaining, rather than dismantling, the human/animal binary, since it does little to question the use of animals to benefit humans (as the texts highlight), it is often unable to adequately place pressure on those legal institutions (never mind the illegal ones), like animal laboratories and industrial farming, that require extensive reform. The reason for this largely rests on laws that still privilege the human over the animal making it difficult, and at times impossible, to pursue cases of neglect and abuse. Additionally, when cases are successfully prosecuted, such as the widely publicised illegal dog fighting cases pursued by the South African SPCA between 2016 and 2018 (Ngema 2018), the punishment often seems inadequate³⁹, which suggests that even with the concept of animal welfare, and the emergence of animal rights, the animal other remains an object, a commodity. If these cases represent the harshest punishment faced by those abusing animals in illegal activities, pursuing and successfully prosecuting animal abuse in legal industries,

³⁹ For lesser offences, such as keeping an animal chained without access to water and denying veterinary attention, offenders received a R200.00 fine or 60 days in prison. For more severe cases, such as severe facial injury and failure to render veterinary attention, offenders received a R6 000.00 fine or 1 year in prison.

such as medical science and farming, that have human interests as their central concern, seems a difficult task.

This reality is notably portrayed in the *MaddAddam Trilogy* which, in terms of scientific and technological progress, depicts animals as organic machines, used and manipulated to serve the needs of society. Specific examples of the fit-for-purpose beings that pepper the narrative include the ChickieNobs, wolvogs and pigoons. However, there also exist a myriad of genetically modified animals designed with no particular purpose in mind, such as snats and rakunks, whose existence is the Moreauvian product of unfettered advancement and a lack of respect for animal life.

Interestingly, the inhabitants of Atwood's world appear to be so focussed on the pursuit of capitalist technological progress, that many are blind to the possibility of such progress being turned against them. However, Jimmy does recognise this possibility, acknowledging that scientific progress at any cost could quickly result in a complete collapse of whatever ethical standards remain, even in areas pertaining to the human: 'He wasn't paying close attention, he was worrying about the ChickieNobs and the wolvogs. Why it is he feels some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed? How much is too much, how far is too far?' (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 242). In this moment, Jimmy appears to intuit that the genetically modified animals forewarn the potential for human bioengineering, because if there are no taboos, no rules guiding ethical behaviour, and, therefore, no limits, then the possibilities are indeed endless. Jimmy's insight into the question of ethics in a hyper-industrialised world, where companies chase profitability at great cost to both the human and nonhuman, strongly resonates with what can be found in the real-world of the laboratory and animal agriculture today.

The belief that there is nothing unnatural or immoral about killing animals has, up until recently, led to a failure in reforming human-animal relationships, particularly where livestock are concerned. The reality is that many people are not privy to the lives and deaths of the animals that they consume, which also makes it possible to deny the terrible cruelty that accompanies farming today. That we do not see, and therefore do not have the experience of being seen by the animal, makes it possible for consumers to make flippant remarks about the animals that they eat. Perhaps it is worth noting that in the majority of industrialised nations most people are removed from the processes of food production and

are, therefore, also unable to recognise that the meat they eat was not only once a living being, but also had experiences and emotions of its own. Despite this disjunction, many of us have felt compassion towards animals, generally mammals, most often as a result of our exposure to pets or service animals. So why, then, are we able to ignore the suffering of ‘food animals’, but are often upset if other species are treated similarly?

Perhaps the answer lies in the slow cultural indoctrination and resultant desensitisation, partly justified by religious teachings, that begins when we are children and most susceptible to being shaped in terms of our perceptions of the world. Part of this indoctrination establishes a human/animal binary that, amongst other things, allows us to eat animals without questioning the moral implications of doing so. Even so, most children’s first reactions to finding out that the meat on their plate was once a living being is generally one of revulsion. This visceral reaction on the part of the child is slowly undermined by dominant cultural views that positively reinforce omnivorism as being a mainstream and acceptable practice, which it is in the west. Atwood illustrates a moment of connection between the food consumed and the living animal in one of Jimmy’s earliest memories of the burning of animal carcasses as part of a disease prevention programme:

At the bonfire Jimmy was anxious about the animals, because they were being burned and surely that would hurt them. No, his father told him. The animals were dead. They were like steaks and sausages, only they still had their skins on.

And their heads, thought Jimmy. Steaks didn’t have heads. The heads made a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes. (*Oryx and Crake* 20)

What upsets him is that the animals have eyes and can see him, or so he imagines, witnessing what is taking place. In a bid to reassure his son, Jimmy’s father equates the dead animals to the food products made from them, explaining that what he is seeing is no different from cooking a steak or sausage, and so he should not be distressed by the situation, an explanation that Jimmy does not find particularly comforting. The exchange allows child Jimmy to make the traumatic connection between the food he eats and the living animal, a realisation that will be echoed in his adulthood when he realises that the ChickieNobs are to be used for fast food. It is Jimmy’s experience of being seen, albeit by dead animals, that marks the beginning of his awareness of the lives of ‘food animals’ and an understanding, even if superficial, of otherness. For those who work directly with these animals, and so are aware of what their

lives entail — the farmers, the transporters and the slaughterhouse workers — the negative impact that bearing witness to the realities of certain types of farming has on their own lives, means that one has to acknowledge what takes place in these facilities and put forward reforms that will mitigate desensitisation and abuse.

As R.G. Frey discusses in *Rights, Killing and Suffering* (1983) the arguments put forward by animal welfare which challenge the ethics of eating meat — namely the violation of moral rights, killing, and the infliction of pain and suffering, which, incidentally, feature prominently in discussions of the treatment of human beings — have not managed to convince many people that actually eating animals is wrong (ix). According to Frey, it is the continued idea that meat eating is acceptable, even desirable in moderation, that has previously stymied the western vegetarian movement. Fudge argues that part of the rationale concerned with how we should relate to animal suffering in the west is the result of our ethical philosophies, particularly those that merge Christian and classical thought found in the work of Thomas Aquinas. As far as Aquinas's theory relates to animals, 'there is no sin in killing animals. In fact, to refuse to eat meat is to spurn the careful provisions which God has made to sustain human life on earth' (Yamamoto qtd. in Fudge, "Two Ethics" 102). This justifies the use of animals on the basis that it is God ordained, which is what continues to be taught in Judeo-Christianity. However, and perhaps contradictory to expectation, given how animals are often viewed as objects, ethics that display empathy for animals are not new in the historical sense. Fudge cites Montaigne's essay "Of cruelty" (1580) as being an early example of a change in ethical thinking about animals. In it, Montaigne argues that sentience, not reason, should be used to indicate whether or not something is worthy of ethical or moral treatment. Additionally, Montaigne's focus on sentience is not sentimental, although one might be tempted to think so initially, 'it is not emotional or anthropomorphic', but rather grounded in whether a being has the 'capacity to feel rather than the capacity to rationalize' (Fudge, "Two Ethics" 104). What this shows is that there is an established history of animal ethics and one of the concerns in that tradition is animal suffering. However, Vint notes that 'despite research that increasingly confirms the cognitive and emotional capacities of animals — and the very evident illustration that, whatever of these capacities they might possess, they prefer not to go to slaughter' (25), the profitability of the meat industry (i.e. the desires of humans) remains more important than the desires of animals. Yet, what is interesting is that in more recent times this concern about animal suffering has found expression in a growing awareness of the lives of 'food animals', and is positively contributing to the rapid rise of the

vegetarian/vegan movement, which has gained in mainstream popularity with challenges like Veganuary, that encourages people to forgo consuming animal products during the month of January, or Meatless Mondays, that encourages a reduction in meat consumption, providing opportunities for people to try these lifestyle changes without the pressure of a full-time commitment.

In the west, our ability to choose what we eat adds an interesting dimension to food ethics. As Foer notes, food ethics, which are often connected to ‘individual biographies and social histories’ are further complicated by the freedom to choose (32), and with that comes questions about cultural awareness and sensitivity. In this context, a person willing to eat anything may ‘appear more socially sensitive than the individual who tries to eat in a way that is good for society’ (Foer 32). But if eating animals in and of itself is not ‘wrong’, as in unnatural or even immoral per se, then what is it that is motivating a global change in how we perceive ‘food animals’?

In order to interrogate what is happening, it is necessary to start with an understanding of what moral or ethical vegetarianism/veganism is and what it desires to achieve. As Frey explains, ‘[i]f vegetarianism is the boycott of meat, then moral vegetarianism is the boycott of meat on the ground that it is wrong to eat meat’ (6). What should be immediately apparent is that being a vegetarian for cultural/religious/health/economic reasons is not motivationally the same as being or becoming a vegetarian for ethical/moral reasons, although there might be some overlap in concerns (health and ethics, for example). In some respects, it is a choice; one that reflects a particular view of what is, and should be, acceptable to a group of people concerned with the lives of animals. The aim is not to necessarily stop people from enjoying or liking meat, but to get them to actively examine why they choose to eat it and to consider the possibility of choosing not to. He also draws attention to how important it is to believe that eating meat is wrong in some respect (if not because the animal suffers, then perhaps because of the environmental impact), because once this has been internalised feelings of guilt are the likely outcome of not upholding the belief, which in turn often bolsters the desire to abstain.

Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki draw attention to the hidden lives of ‘food animals’, particularly the aspects that we would not normally be aware of. In so doing, they expose the ‘gulf between the material basis by which our civilization feeds itself, and the system of meaning through which it understands its relationship to the rest of nature’ (Benton and Redfearn qtd. in Vint

25). Meat consumption, as Vint points out, is a major contributor to the environmental crisis, and it is not coincidental that global warming, climate change and a lack of ‘meat animals’ would feature in fiction that engages with such issues (25), like the *MaddAddam Trilogy*.

Of the texts examined in this chapter, the question of ethical vegetarianism, and its limits, is most obviously reflected in J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, as voiced by Elizabeth Costello. There has been much speculation about how and to what extent Elizabeth represents Coetzee’s personal views (see David Lodge and James Wood (Graham 217–218)), and if she actually articulates his own unpopular beliefs. This particular aspect of Coetzee’s writing is not a central concern in this thesis. For the purposes of this discussion it is not particularly relevant whether it is Coetzee’s personal view that is being articulated, so much as it is the idea/view itself that is important. However, it is worth noting, as Donovan does, that Coetzee’s choice of ‘so unauthoritative a voice [as Costello’s] suggests perhaps a realization of how marginalised and subversive her position [regarding animal ethics] is’ (89). Elizabeth is not an ethical philosopher, nor is she a public figure in the animal rights movement, she is an aging novelist who uses an opportunity to speak at Appleton College to publicly express her personal anxieties about the treatment of animals. That she is not a recognised specialist in this area is indicated early in the novel, when her particular concerns about animals are described as being her ‘hobbyhorse’ (Coetzee, *The Lives* 16), suggesting that the issue is perceived as a preoccupation rather than a serious pursuit. However, based on the content and scope of the lectures that she gives, it would appear that for Elizabeth, the issue of animal lives and how we treat them is of grave importance. That she is not an authority, yet speaks so authoritatively on the issue, may be understood to reflect the behaviours of many who have similar feelings about these topics, and who, like Elizabeth, may be perceived as falling into the trap of sentimentality. When she speaks of ‘food animals’, Elizabeth’s emotionally charged argument highlighting animal suffering unfortunately manages to create a false dichotomy between vegetarians/vegans and carnists. Rather than presenting the complexities of the issue, along with some possible solutions, her argument polarises and alienates her audience because it is absolutist, seemingly condemning everyone, and does not leave space for the possibility that there might be other ways of engaging ethically with this matter.

In her introduction to *The Lives of Animals*, Amy Gutman discusses how some religions connect vegetarianism to compassion for animals, while others connect it to self-identity and the pursuit of human salvation (10). From this standpoint, vegetarianism/veganism can function

as an acknowledgement of connection, or as further indication of humankind's ability to transcend the physical world of the animal. In Elizabeth's case it appears to function as a form of atonement, a way of saving her soul for having been a participant in what she believes is a 'crime of stupefying proportions' (69). The crime to which Elizabeth refers goes far beyond just eating, as she extends her criticism to the hidden worlds of the laboratory, the factory farm and the abattoir, revealing that being an ethical vegetarian/vegan alone, although filled with good intentions, is possibly insufficient to combat the scale of animal abuse in modernity. This is particularly true if such ethics remain within the sphere of personal choice, a lived personal ethic, rather than used to create a large-scale social movement that has as a core concern the treatment of animals across the board. Elizabeth's increasing isolation from her family and society, as a result of her ethical choices, reflects Foer's point that how and what we eat is often a cultural and social issue, and that if you decide to change this, you run the risk of becoming an outcast.

While Elizabeth has wholeheartedly embraced the belief that eating meat is wrong, her family does not share the same belief, with the result that such differences of opinion isolate Elizabeth from everyday social acts that involve eating:

“Aren't the children eating with us?” she asks. “No,” says Norma, “they are eating in the playroom.” “Why?”
 The question is not necessary, since she knows the answer.
 The children are eating separately because Elizabeth does not like to see meat on the table, while Norma refuses to change the children's diet to suit what she calls “your mother's delicate sensibilities.”
 “Why?” asks Elizabeth Costello a second time.
 Norma flashes him an angry glance. He sighs. “Mother,” he says, “the children are having chicken for supper, that's the only reason.” (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 16)

Norma and Elizabeth are depicted as occupying opposing and uncompromising ideological positions on the issue of animals in general, and meat eating in particular, which when considered within the broader context of western society is not unfamiliar. As Wright argues, ‘Elizabeth runs the risk of being silenced not only by other men, but also other women, especially if her convictions are marginal to the dominant set of acceptable standards, and especially by women who have privileged rationality over feeling, as Norma has’ (“A Feminist-Vegetarian” 206). Norma, who holds a PhD in philosophy ‘with a specialism in the philosophy of mind’ (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 17), finds Elizabeth's ‘opinions on

animals, animal consciousness, and ethical relations with animals [. . .] jejune and sentimental’ (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 17). In this space, Norma becomes representative of the type of rational thought traditionally attributed to men, and Elizabeth of its seeming opposite, sentimentality, attributed to women. However, similar to the argument that situates vegetarians/vegans and carnists at opposite ends of a moral continuum, this is also a false dichotomy because, as Atwood’s texts show us, rationality without emotional engagement is a potentially destructive force, since it does away with empathy. Additionally, Elizabeth’s views are supported by evidence drawn from slaughterhouses and laboratories, and so should not be considered irrational or illogical. What we are seeing here is not sentimentality, so much as sentiment, and should be understood in the sense that rational actions and reactions can be born from emotions or feelings, because emotions stir us to action, which could result in tangible change.

From a real-life perspective, the dinner table exchange between Norma and Elizabeth explores how the choice not to eat meat purely for ethical, or spiritually redemptive reasons, is an oddly polarising act, and is often associated with sentimentality. What should not be ignored is the anxiety that food choices have both for those making ethical decisions, as well as for those who may perceive such decisions as an indictment on their lifestyles. Those who wish to defend their carnist values often do so on the basis that it is their personal choice, and fail to acknowledge the impact of culture or socialisation on that choice. However, the recent global Corona virus outbreak, the origins of which have been attributed to Chinese wet markets, and the Amazonian fires, raise the question of whether eating meat should remain only a personal choice, especially if such a choice can have such devastating consequences.

Unfortunately, Costello’s personal approach to the abuses that animals encounter is so isolating that she no longer feels at ease amongst people, which is compounded by her equation of the slaughterhouse to the Nazi death camps:

Is it possible, I ask myself, that all of them are participants in a crime of stupefying proportions? Am I fantasizing it all? I must be mad! Yet everyday I see the evidences. The very people I suspect produce the evidence, exhibit it, offer it to me. Corpses. Fragments of corpses that they have bought for money. ‘It is as if I were to visit friends, and to make some polite remark about the lamp in their living room, and they were to say, “Yes, it’s nice, isn’t it? Polish-Jewish skin it’s made of, we find that’s best, the skins of young

Polish-Jewish virgins.” And then I go to the bathroom and the soap-wrapper says, “Treblinka — 100% human stearate.” (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 69)

What distresses her is not only the similarity in terms of complicity, but also the failure to sympathetically identify with the suffering of the victims, be they human or animal. By not speaking up, speaking out, changing the way in which we interact with the animal other, she feels that we cannot be morally different from those who directly participated in, or maintained their ignorance of the Holocaust. And yet she is also aware that many people, people who are kind and compassionate, her own grandchildren for example, do not experience the world as she does. They have come to terms with the realities of the lives that animals lead, as she puts it, which implies that they either do not see anything morally ambiguous in what is taking place or that they feel powerless to change it. Elizabeth does not believe in subscribing to this type of moral ambiguity, or to complicity through powerlessness, and that is why she finds it so difficult to accept that animals’ lives are not worth more.

Central to *The Lives of Animals* is an argument for the use and value of the sympathetic imagination. Costello seems to feel that by extending its use ‘into the realities of animal lives, [we] might be awakened to an ethical awareness that will lead [. . .] to [the] modif[ication of our] treatment of animals’ (Donovan 90). For Costello, being vegetarian by choice marks only the beginning of acknowledging and changing the thinking that has made the abuse and exploitation of animals possible. However, there are limits to what can be achieved with the sympathetic imagination. By hinging her argument for reform on our capacity to imagine our way into the lives of other animals, Elizabeth does not seem to recognise — and if she does, does not explicitly address it — that we also need to acknowledge that we will never know what it is like to be the other. Whilst the recognition of similarity is an important step towards compassionate engagement, it is equally important to recognise, acknowledge and respect difference in order to avoid inadvertently colonising the subjectivity of the other. Although useful, being able to imagine inhabiting the life of another is necessarily limited by constraints such as experience, language and physicality, and may in some respects fall back on projection, or anthropomorphism, to try to fill in the gaps that the difference in embodied experience creates. This means that whilst the sympathetic imagination is definitely a useful tool, it should be used with an understanding of its

limitations. However, and perhaps more importantly, the imagination is open-ended and the real problems, when it comes to representation, are the limits that we place on it.

Unfortunately, Elizabeth's uncompromising stance on the consumption of 'food animals' can be understood as an over simplification of the issue. Whilst slaughtering animals in the way, and on the scale, that we do is undoubtedly cruel and inhumane, the implication that vegetarianism/veganism is the only way to remedy these ills does not take into account other possible reforms. For many, the pursuit of vegetarianism/veganism may simply be too difficult for a variety of reasons, including cultural and economic (veganism can be expensive both in terms of the purchase of meat substitutes and because it often requires the use of dietary supplements). Since the real issue at hand is animal suffering (and to some extent disease control) rather than animal consumption, if changing the food we eat is not really an option, then perhaps the way we eat (how we farm and slaughter) is. Haraway suggests that movement towards a more egalitarian world requires that we 'learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing' (*When Species Meet* 80), which as Vint points out, is not about 'living in harmony', but reflects a 'more complex politics of how to live as omnivores among herbivores and carnivores, in relations of mutual consumption and mutual dependency, but without reducing some species to objects that can be ruthlessly exploited without ethical dilemma' (28). In "Eating Well" (1991), Derrida explores the inherent complexities of eating others, suggesting that choosing vegetarianism only draws attention to who we should or should not eat. Although he does not dismiss such a choice, he appears to feel that more could be gained if we were to develop respect for, and identify with, the animal other, and in so doing change our perspective about eating and killing overall. Whilst Elizabeth's views reflect the reality of many of our more violent shared experiences with animals, she does not offer any solutions other than vegetarianism. In truth, there may be a number of reasons for this, one of the most obvious being that when faced with such terrible realities the seemingly logical response is to put forward a view reflecting the extreme opposite of those realities. However, in real life, all-or-nothing approaches rarely garner consistent and sustainable support because their appeal/reach is often too limited. Therefore, it is necessary to examine other approaches, such as those put forward by Haraway and Derrida, which could result in long-term and more readily achievable changes in our relationships with 'food animals'.

Shared Existence, Shared Experience

Along with the sympathetic imagination, anthropomorphism is a device commonly used to foster identification with animal others. As discussed, anthropomorphism is always penetrated by speciesism because it represents a human perception of the animal experience rather than the animal experience itself. However, as flawed as anthropomorphism is in representing the animal experience, it does offer a literary mechanism that facilitates compassionate engagement with nonhuman others. One of the most important aspects of anthropomorphism is that it allows us to seek out and recognise similarity, thereby fostering empathy with beings that look very different from ourselves. Because animals are morphologically different from us it is easy to use these obvious visible differences as grounds to deny similarity, which allows us to deny that they have complex existences, similar to our own. Wolfe notes that the denial of speciesism, i.e. the denial of oppression based on species, makes violence towards those considered to be other ethically acceptable:

[The] effectiveness of the discourse of species, when applied to social others of *whatever*⁴⁰ sort, relies upon a prior taking for granted of the institution of speciesism — that is, upon the ethical acceptability of the systematic, institutionalized killing of nonhuman others. (39)

Interestingly, Atwood and Ozeki appear to bypass traditionally anthropomorphic representations of animals, such as those that portray animals conducting themselves as humans would (speaking languages we understand or wearing clothes), by using experiences that are undeniably shared by all animals, e.g. death and birth, to facilitate identification. Through these shared emotional and visceral experiences, both authors create strong connections between their human (Toby and Jane) and nonhuman characters (pigeons and cows) using this recognition of similarity to show points of interconnection.

Ecofeminism emphasises the interconnectedness of being and demonstrates the ripple effect that human activity, specifically patriarchal forms of activity, has had, and continues to have, on humanity and the environment. Historically, the western intellectual tradition has generally prized men, reason, human beings, culture and the mind while simultaneously devaluing women, emotion, animals, nature, and the body (Gaard 5), something which

⁴⁰ Italics in original.

Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki engage with quite overtly. This finds obvious expression in our daily lives in the use of animal metaphors that expose some of the deeply rooted negative gender relations present in western society, such as cow (fat or stupid) and bitch (spiteful or unpleasant). In these instances, it is not necessarily the animals themselves that are perceived negatively, but rather that animals are often used to denote behaviours and/or attributes undesirable in human beings. This is compounded when such metaphors specifically make comparisons between domestic animals and women. On the surface, such comparisons not only evoke images of the home and the tamed, but also the subjugated and even the enslaved. Dunayer concludes that the comparison of women to domestic animals is offensive because such metaphors reveal a perception of women as mindless servants, which in turn is how speciesist attitudes and practices perceive these animals. Therefore, it is speciesism that is at the heart of the problem, because while ‘only some nonhuman-animal pejoratives denigrate women, *all* denigrate nonhuman animals’⁴¹ (Dunayer 16). Animals that are typically used in such metaphors include hens and cows; females of their species farmed for their reproductive capacity and arguably the most exploited in terms of current farming methods.

In our post-industrial society animals have become increasingly commodified — they are, as Plumwood describes them, ‘tradeable bodies’ (*Environmental Culture* 4). The concept of the tradeable body has found expression in various forms including comparisons between human and animal slavery, exploitation and abuse through to food (e.g. feminised proteins — eggs and milk) and food sources. One of the more comprehensive and controversial explorations of gender politics and the consumption of animals was done by Carol Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, in which she argues that the plight of both women and animals is directly linked to the norms and expectations of patriarchal societies, and that compassionate activism (i.e. activism that attempts to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed irrespective of gender, race or species) is the most logical way to remedy this problem. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Atwood (pigeons – transgenic pigs) and Ozeki (cows) give these specific animals prominence in their novels.

As with animals, women have historically been on the receiving end of exploitation and abuse, which is something we see iterated in both the *MaddAddam Trilogy* and in *My Year of Meats*. However, movements like Feminism have focussed on the oppression of women to

⁴¹ Emphasis in text.

the exclusion of other groups facing parallel or related issues. Similarly, animal liberationists and the discourse of animal rights also concerns itself with the oppression of a single group and, in so doing, situates itself firmly ‘in the tradition of single-mindedness so common in Western institutions’ (Gruen 60). Such exclusivity, or disregard for the pain and suffering of others, gives rise to a situation where the very movements attempting to uplift or draw attention to the oppressed groups, which they claim to represent, results in an inability to acknowledge the similarities experienced by these groups for fear that attention will be drawn away from the perceived primary cause. As Gruen explains ‘[s]uch exclusivity not only clouds the expansive nature of oppression, but also hinders the process of undermining such oppression and ultimately liberating all those oppressed’ (60). Although not all forms of oppression are exactly the same, focussing attention on only one specific area can prevent such movements from recognising the interconnectedness of institutions of oppression. Calarco, examines the ramifications of this isolationist approach to politics, particularly the abandonment by progressive leftists ‘who often see animal rights either as a political issue of secondary (or tertiary) importance or as merely a luxury of the bourgeois activist’ (8). This is problematic for a number of reasons including the failure to situate the human within the nonhuman, the recognition of how human economic activity impacts the environment in turn affecting humans, and that animals’ lives matter in their own right. All three of these aspects are raised in various ways in the *MaddAddam Trilogy* and in *My Year of Meats*, both of which may be understood to contain elements of toxic discourse demonstrating how humans affect, and are in turn affected by what happens within our environments, which makes splitting the human from nonhuman all the more difficult.

My Year of Meats engages with the representation of farming in ways that challenge what has become a pastoral myth. Ozeki’s novel demonstrates the intersections between racism, sexism and speciesism, and the negative effects that the American meat industry and meat consumption has had on the lives of animals and people from all walks of life. One of the areas that comes under intense scrutiny is the role of marketing in maintaining both the pastoral myth and the dubious health benefits associated with high levels of meat consumption. Ozeki connects capitalist economic pursuits, in this case represented by BEEF-EX (Beef Export and Trade Syndicate), a company that exports American grown beef, with a decline in compassion for animals, people and the environment by using Jane’s participation in *My American Wife!* as the means to expose these realities. Although the narrative takes place in only two locations, America and Japan, this novel is notable because,

despite the limited number of locations, it still manages to present meat consumption and associated problems, such as the environmental impact and infertility, as a global concern because BEEF-EX is concerned with growing its beef exports. *My Year of Meats* can be read as a food and environmental satire, with much of the humour emerging from Jane's perspective of the events that take place. The programme, *My American Wife!*, is itself fairly humorous because of its unrealistic portrayal of American family life and the nuclear family. This is underscored during the editing of what should have been considered a disastrous first episode of the series, and how the programme is received in Japan by Akiko. Although the first episode, featuring the Flowers, is edited to present a traditional, happy nuclear family, what emerges whilst filming is the husband's infidelity, which leads to a breakdown in family relations. This incident and the resultant careful editing that takes place to preserve the show's mandate highlights one of the persistent concerns in the novel — the power of marketing and the media in shaping our understanding of the world around us, including our perception of food.

Ozeki's subversion of the American pastoral allows for a more realistic portrayal of the post-industrial, post-pastoral space. Pastoral writing, which is generally associated with a 'nostalgic retreat into the past', has the 'imaginative potential for the assertion of a new, and better, world' one that may be more sensitive to the environment (Huggan and Tiffin 84). Yet Ozeki's portrayal of rural America by and large does not reflect a better place, particularly for marginalised groups including people of colour and poor people, livestock and the environment. The farm, that traditionally occupies a seemingly safe, semi-domesticated space that exists between the extremes of urban life and wilderness, becomes a space filled with ecological, economic and health threats, although some of the families that Jane interacts with, such as the Beaudroux's in Askew, appear to thrive, living off the land in unconventional ways, and embodying the liminal space that the pastoral represents.

Ironically, most of the families that Jane interacts with while working on *My American Wife!* challenge both the white, meat-eating, middle class American stereotype and the idea of America as culturally homogenous, which is how the show wishes to present America to its Japanese audience. However, the two families that present a substantial departure from this cookie-cutter family image include the Beaudroux's and Lara and Dyann. These families portray a radically different image of traditional American family life by including

interracialism, multi-nationalism, lesbianism and vegetarianism all of which serve to undermine the image of America as conservative and uniform.

The relationship between Lara and Dyann manages to capture some of the moral and political complexities that can motivate the choice to become an ethical vegetarian. As an interracial, lesbian, vegetarian couple with children, they represent one of the more obvious departures from the stereotypical American nuclear family. Along with the evocation of ecofeminism's connection between various forms of oppression (sexism and racism) and animals, and by extension, an ethic of care, Lara and Dyann reveal the impact that factory farmed meat has had on human reproductive health, which is also explored in Jane's personal narrative.

One of the discoveries they make while trying to conceive is the decline in morphologically normal sperm produced by men today, which has been attributed to the overuse of growth hormones and antibiotics in factory farming. The knowledge they acquire about the impact of food on human health makes them reconsider the way that they, and their future children, eat. Although health consciousness from a dietary perspective does not seem to be as great a concern as the use of tobacco products or, as we have recently experienced, exposure to communicable diseases such as Covid-19, vegetarianism and veganism have seen a growth in interest⁴². John Simons believes that this change in lifestyle has not only been 'motivated by health issues but also by a consciousness that eating meat and fish involves participation in an unacceptable level of cruelty to animals' (11). A reality that many people are becoming increasingly aware of and concerned about.

Like Elizabeth in *The Lives of Animals*, Lara and Dyann have adopted moral or ethical vegetarianism because they abstain from consuming meat not just for health reasons, but also because the American meat industry is 'corrupt, inhumane, and out of control' (Ozeki 212). Yet unlike Elizabeth, they have not become isolated from society, partly because they made this decision together and have chosen to bring up their children as vegetarians, but also perhaps because theirs is a proactive stance aimed at educating others about the problems, rather than alienating them through arrogant grandstanding. Although they do not believe that eating meat in and of itself is 'wrong' in any sense, they do believe that the current methods

⁴² According to the Vegan Society 'interest in "veganism" increased seven fold in the five years between 2014 and 2019, according to Google trends. It now gets almost four times more interest than vegetarian and gluten free searches'.

of farming and the impact that these are having are. Following this logic, and given how prolific industrial farming practices are, eating meat becomes unethical because it supports a destructive, exploitative industry.

In *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, Marjorie Spiegel opens her contentious text with a definition of racism and a definition of speciesism:

racism [. . .], n. 1. a belief that human races have distinctive characteristics that determine their respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others. 2. a policy of enforcing such asserted right. 3. a system of government and society based upon it. — rac'ist, n., adj.

speciesism [. . .], n. 1. a belief that different species of animals are significantly different from one another in their capacities to feel pleasure and pain and live an autonomous existence, usually involving the idea that one's own species has the right to rule and use others. 2. a policy of enforcing such asserted right. 3. a system of government and society based upon it. — spe'cies ist, n., adj. (7)

These definitions are accompanied by two illustrations; '*A slave auction in Virginia, 1861*' and '*The cattle market in Chicago, 1868*', which heavy-handedly demonstrate the similarities between these institutions of oppression. Spiegel argues that if women were not made to be exploited by men, and blacks were not made to be exploited by whites, then animals were not made to be exploited by human beings. Central to her argument is a discussion of how Christianity, the dominion mandate, and social Darwinism came together to produce the right environment for institutions like slavery to emerge. She notes that before the rise of social Darwinism as a means of measuring the progress of a society, an interpretation of his theory that Darwin himself took exception to, the common interpretation of Genesis as being a dominion mandate, placing human beings and their interests above all other life forms, served as 'a justification for the subjugation of both blacks [. . .] and non-human animals' (21).

The role of creation myths in our societies, and how these justify what is morally permissible, is a recurrent theme in the *MaddAddam Trilogy*. In *Oryx & Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* Atwood exposes our ability to superimpose interpretations onto texts, especially if such interpretations are beneficial to progressing human interests, be they economic, political, religious or a combination. Evoking Northrop Frye's course "The Bible as Literature", Atwood explores the use and potential ramifications of rewriting the Judeo-Christian Genesis

narrative with its dominion mandate. Myths and mythmaking are an important aspect of human civilisation and, regardless of whether these stories are considered true, are central to our self-understanding (Atwood, *In Other Worlds* 54). Atwood argues that myths offer answers to many of our commonly posed questions such as: ‘Where did the world come from? Where did people come from? Where did OUR people come from? What is right behaviour?’ (*In Other Worlds* 51–52). By providing answers to these questions, these stories direct and shape our concepts of ethics and morality, as well as our behaviours. In the *MaddAddam Trilogy* she not only offers readers two revisionist creation stories with ecological and scientific leanings, but also ‘shows a self-reflexivity regarding myths that highlights storytelling as the distinguishing characteristic of the nature of humankind’ (Keck 26). One of these is promoted by the green radical group God’s Gardeners led by Adam One, who also function as part of an underground railroad for scientists trying to escape various corporations and the Corpsecorps. The other is born out of Crake’s Paradise project, a ‘techno pagan’ vision (Keck 25) that is adapted into a creation story by Jimmy, who finds himself guardian to the Crakers in the post-pandemic world.

Within this discussion of ‘food animals’, what is interesting to note about both of these revisionist myths is that there is a move towards stewardship, as opposed to dominion, a reintegration of the human/posthuman with the nonhuman and equality between the sexes. Additionally, these creation myths are more biocentric, contain a plurality of Adams and Eves, and generally dispense with evolutionary and patriarchal hierarchies (although not entirely as men, ironically, lead both groups, alerting us to our tendency to demonise hierarchies in general, since in these instances the hierarchies do not contribute towards some form of tyranny so much as they aid the organisation of the groups).

Jimmy invents a post-pandemic Genesis myth for the Crakers which, as a result of Oryx’s initial interactions as teacher to this posthuman race in Paradise, not only overtly and positively (which traditionally has not been the case) connects women with animals and nature, but also to language/knowledge/culture. Furthermore, it situates the Crakers within the natural world by stating that their creator made them from existing materials (coral and mangoes). Although similar to the biblical creation story in which Adam is fashioned from clay, in this version the Crakers’ creation appears to connect them directly with the environment rather than removing them from it. Additionally, all Crakers are made from the same materials, the implication being that there is equality between the sexes, unlike in the

biblical Genesis myth where Eve is made from Adam's rib, and by virtue of being created from him, must be subservient to him. Because there is no indication of a hierarchy between man and woman, or between posthumans and animals in Jimmy's narrative, equality between posthumans and animals is suggested despite their different origins:

Crake made the bones of the Children of Crake out of the coral on the beach, and then he made their flesh out of a mango. But the Children of Oryx hatched out of an egg, a giant egg laid by Oryx herself. Actually she laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words. But the egg full of words hatched first, and the Children of Crake had already been created by then, and they'd eaten up all the words because they were hungry, and so there were no words left over when the second egg hatched out. And that is why the animals can't talk. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 110)

With its warning against over-consumption captured in the description of the devoured words, this version of the creation story reflects ecofeminist concerns, including an ethic of care and a consideration for, and connection with, the environment. Atwood dismantles the familiar Christian grand narrative not only by including this warning, but also by not forming the Crakers in the image of God (in this case Crake), although their genetics reflect what Crake deemed improvements to humanity. Importantly, the Crakers are designed to eat a vegetarian diet, but being neither hunters nor agriculturalists their sustenance comprises 'leaves and grass and roots and a berry or two' (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 358). This addition to the Crakers' multitude of genetic enhancements enables them to live harmoniously with one another and with the nonhuman world. Although the Crakers should be understood as satire, this posthuman race would have less of an impact on the nonhuman world than the strictest vegan. Because their diet is to be found growing naturally, available in the quantities that they need, and they are perfectly suited to their environments, they have no need for housing or farming and so will not utilise land/space in the way that humans currently do. This, of course, is quite ridiculous since no animal world-wide has evolved to live in perfect harmony with the environment, but it does serve to highlight the myriad of ways that humans impact the nonhuman world.

Existing within the same time and space as Crake's fascist and authoritarian exploits, are the more established and seemingly eccentric God's Gardeners. The project of Adam One, an anti-corporate environmentalist figure, the group not only champions a deep ecological vision, but also assists with the escape of those resisting the ethically and morally corrupt

agendas of the mega corporations. The Gardeners locate their organisation in abandoned buildings, converting the roofs into rooftop gardens, the most prominent of which is Edencliff. Although the Gardeners initially appear to be something of an extreme anti-capitalist, ecologically oriented cult, their role in this dystopian world and reasons for living the way they do are, in some respects, the result of the knowledge that they have about the state of the planet as well as what is happening inside the corporations, including the development of new diseases and cures to expand and maintain the market for medical products. Their ecologically oriented spiritual/life teachings use the familiar mode of biblical storytelling, canonising various scientists including, Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey and Rachel Carson and advocating a vegetarian diet, which may be viewed as a return to the vegetarianism of the prelapsarian world, as the most compassionate and ethical given the context. Though the Gardeners seem to be an earnest group of eco-activists, Atwood reveals a fair amount of irony present in their beliefs and good intentions, which is particularly evident in the vegivows (many of the Gardeners return to eating meat) and practices such as slug and snail relocation, which does not really save the animals, but does offer at least the impression of not directly killing them. Of the Eves inhabiting Edencliff, Pilar and Toby (the original and upcoming Eve Six), are women who demonstrate a fair amount of homeopathic knowledge, and may be viewed as evocations of pagan nature goddesses/witches, as Keck notes, or spiritually aware homeopaths with their knowledge of mushroom and bee lore. This also connects them with the animals that they interact with during the narrative, specifically with the liobams and pigeons. Though unable to procreate themselves, both women are associated with the natural cycles of life and death (Keck 35), linking them more closely with the embodied and cyclical experiences of humans and animals. Similar to the Crakers' creation story, the worldview of the God's Gardeners attempts to promote a greater respect for the nonhuman world, whilst maintaining the monotheistic framework used in Judeo-Christianity.

It must be acknowledged that in being a post-pastoral environmental satire, the *MaddAddam Trilogy*, draws attention to capitalist, ecological and religious extremism. Whilst the novels critique and mock the wasteful capitalist lifestyles that are greatly contributing to the environmental crisis, they also poke fun at the green counterculture lifestyles with their anti-fashion fashion, dietary restrictions (veganism) and healthy living mantras. Through an exchange between Ren and Bernice concerning Veena's HelthWyzer vitamin-supplements franchise and its West Coast success, Atwood highlights the hypocrisy of these movements, showing that they are founded on the same capitalist value system that they claim to be

breaking away from. Atwood is as critical of health/environmentally oriented movements as she is of consumer culture, pointing out the shortfalls and short-sightedness of quick-fix solutions to the current crisis. What she shows is that without understanding and commitment to long-term behavioural and economic change there really is no way of mitigating the situation.

You Are Who You Eat

Eating is a necessary part of being alive. In having been incorporated into cultural life, the act has taken on social and symbolic meaning. The idea of eating for sustenance was supplanted by innovations in farming that have led to a year-round abundance of food for those with the means to purchase it. Yet those same innovations have also resulted in immense cruelty towards animals and human beings, countless health problems and environmental degradation. As with many of the inventions that have marked progress in the post-industrial west, animal husbandry has become a particularly contentious area for those concerned with animal ethics, not only because it reduces living beings to commodities, but also because of the knock-on effects that this industry has on humans and the environment. It is one of the industries in which much of what we consider humane in terms of the treatment of people, of animals and of the environment has been lost in pursuit of the bottom line.

The general understanding of what ethical vegetarianism entails is often somewhat narrow in that it does not consider the other beneficial effects that such a position has on society overall. Our food undergoes a long process to become the products purchased in supermarkets, and it is a process that many of us living in cities are simply no longer privy to. The lack of knowledge surrounding this process often allows for the accusation that ethical vegetarianism is merely an act of sentimentality, rather than conscientious objection to systems of oppression. However, in most industrialised nations the pastoral idyll is a myth. Fields of grass have been replaced by feedlots, animals that would live complex social lives in herds, sounders or flocks lead isolated lives in gestation crates or are crammed into cages. They do not see sunlight, except sometimes on the trucks that transport them to their traumatic ends. In such a reality, the animal's death is a release from the atrocities experienced in life. Further, workers labour under such terrible conditions in the slaughterhouses that they lose all compassion for the animals they kill, often participating in horrendous acts of abuse.

Ozeki, in particular, draws attention to the individual suffering not only of animals, but also of people, that this economic reality presents. In her brief, but nevertheless distressing, descriptions of the use of Lutalyse in cattle farming, Ozeki reflects Jane's fears of spontaneously aborting her child with the abortion of the calves. This visceral connection draws the reality of shared bodily experiences between humans and animals sharply into focus. Jane's experience on the feedlot is magnified by her own potential journey into motherhood. In that moment, she strongly empathises with the cows, because, like them, she has the potential to be a mother, but, also like them, this experience may be taken away from her without her consent, and for reasons that she does not understand. Jane's growing knowledge of the general ignorance of farming practices and the impact of these practices on human well-being appears to be mirrored by the cows' ignorance and inability to control their own destinies. It is through this recognition of a real similarity, despite physical difference, that *My Year of Meats* achieves identification and sympathy for the plight of these animals.

In writing this scene, Ozeki draws on the real-world of farming where it is common practice for farmers to use Lutalyse to 'design a reproductive program' for a 'calf crop' (Good), to demonstrate the extent of our lack of empathy for these animals and the impact that these practices have on their well-being. What such practices omit is the impact on the cows themselves. As Dr Good states on his veterinary webpage, it is up to the farmer whether cows falling outside the breeding period or that have recently calved will be culled or bred later. This information is delivered in such an authoritative and matter-of-fact way that initially, one does not question the ethics of what is being done. Ozeki drives home the point that real-life commercial meat production is a scientific process, containing little room for natural biological processes. Therefore, to claim that eating meat is natural, as those who believe in obligatory carnivorism and omnivorism do, when nothing about our current societies or the way in which we produce food is natural, needs to be reconsidered.

A changing global society requires a change in and development of global ethics, and part of that change involves a re-examination of how we feed a growing human population. With reports of cruelty towards animals and human rights abuses in the meat industry on the rise, it is evident that the current systems of food production are inhumane. Additionally, with the rapidly growing human population these institutions are not capable of producing the quantities of food required to sustain us. With the ever-increasing pressure being placed on land resources, not only from farming but also from industry and housing, there is not enough

arable land available. As a result, areas that have previously been designated protected zones or conservancies are coming under threat as the need for farmland increases.

Industrial/factory farming is the outcome of a combination of factors including limited space, higher yield ‘crops’, cost cutting and efficiency. But what so many commercial farmers and consumers of these goods have not taken into account is that this overemphasis on cost reduction in pursuit of profitability has created an unethical, inhumane, environmental catastrophe that has created the right environment for the most virulent diseases to breed and has led to a decline in the health of the people who consume these products.

Returning to the concept of food as cultural expression, but also looking at it as a potential site where we can express our ethics, a different picture of ethical eating begins to emerge. Recounting his grandmother’s survival during World War Two, Foer offers the following discussion that took place between them:

“The worst it got was near the end. A lot of people died right at the end, and I didn’t know if I could make it another day. A farmer, a Russian, God bless him, he saw my condition, and he went into his house and came out with a piece of meat for me.”
 “He saved your life.”
 “I didn’t eat it.”
 “You didn’t eat it?”
 “It was pork. I wouldn’t eat pork.” [. . .]
 “But not even to save your life?”
 “If nothing matters, there’s nothing to save.” (16–17)

The way we live and the food we consume, may be understood as reflections of our value judgements, not only in relation to our cultures, but also where animal lives are concerned. While supporters of anthropocentrism, which often goes hand-in-hand with the dominion mandate, will argue that animals are not like us and are inherently here for our use, those on the other side of the debate, that is to say proponents of biocentrism, ethology and the guardianship/stewardship mandate, claim that we have a choice, and it is by exercising this choice that we show our humanity. Through our choices we demonstrate what matters to us and why. Foer’s example shows that if something matters to you so much that you are willing to give your life for what you believe, you will not change your mind about the correctness of what you are doing regardless of the circumstances you find yourself in. However, it must be acknowledged that when faced with the prospect of starvation, not many people are likely behave in this way. Nevertheless, Foer’s example serves to underscore the potential role of

ethical thinking in our behaviour. The effects of thinking about issues that require an ethical response, such as food production, is certainly an area of consideration for the ethical vegetarian/vegan as it is for any person concerned with dismantling existing systems of oppression. However, when it comes to eating, we should be wary of creating a false dichotomy. Eating ethically does not necessarily require an all or nothing approach. Adopting a vegetarian/vegan diet does not always lead to a reduction in environmental impact or animal suffering, although it might go some way towards doing so.

Each of the texts discussed in this chapter raises issues worth considering in relation to ‘food animals’. Using speculative fiction as her vehicle, Atwood’s often humorous satire explores what a future without many naturally occurring animals may look like, giving special consideration to what food would be consumed, what value animals would have in such a world, and what kinds of ethics would emerge under such circumstances. Coetzee’s metafiction offers a complicated, philosophically dense exploration of the treatment of animals and animal ethics in general, raising questions about the limitations of our ability to empathise. Lastly, Ozeki, using a post-pastoral, documentary style narrative, explores our relationships with food animals, the interconnections between human and animal health, and raises questions about how we might begin to treat human and animal others with respect. These texts contemplate whether our inherently anthropocentric modern societies are capable of living alongside animals in ways that pay more attention to the well-being of the animal other than is currently the case, and whether it is possible for us to modify our behaviours so that human and animal needs can be given due consideration.

Unlike wild animals, endangered species and pets, ‘food animals’ occupy an invisible space in our societies present only as products or as part of a pastoral mythology. As a result, their experiences are hidden from view, and often relegated to the realm of the inconsequential. However, Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki show us how incorrect we are in believing that they are insignificant. We may not see them, but their lives have an impact that has far reaching consequences on our health and well-being. The importance of the lives of ‘food animals’, as revealed by Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki, offer those of us who exist as a removed and ignorant audience, insight into worlds that many of us would perhaps rather not think about. Like the laboratory, the farm and the abattoir have become places shrouded in secrecy, not because we cannot find out, but because we do not want to find out. We reap the benefits of animal suffering without thinking about what it must be like to be the animal who suffers.

But what is also becoming apparent is that this wilful ignorance, or at least the mechanisms that allow it to continue, will have to be reviewed, if not brought to an end. The abuses of the farm are manifesting themselves in unexpected ways. Like Rachel Carson's exposure of the consequences of the use of pesticides, there have been several reports warning of the impact of industrial farming practices on human and animal health⁴³. However, scientific studies often do not have the same emotional impact as either seeing these effects first-hand or reading about them in texts designed to evoke a compassionate response (although it should be acknowledged that some readers may be so habituated to reading about traumatic experiences that these do not strike the necessary chord). Additionally, it is a well-documented psychological phenomenon that even when faced with empirical evidence that should be sufficient motivation to change our behaviour, we often will not. Simply put, facts do not change our behaviours because, ironically, our capacity to reason is limited (Kolbert 2017). Herein lies the importance of literary pursuits. Where many readers might fail to make the emotional connection between the objective world of data and the world of experience, writers like Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki have managed to bridge the gap by employing various literary methods that connect the reader to material that they would likely shy away from in other circumstances. They have effectively created a point of entry for considering difficult cultural, ethical, moral and philosophical issues about our relationship with the animals we eat and the people who farm and kill them. Part of what these texts manage to represent is how systems of privilege and oppression do not exist in isolation. Importantly, these novels situate food ethics within the broader issue of environmental discourse, exploring the effects of our treatment of 'food animals' on ourselves and the world at large. Whether we are considering the plight of people of colour, of women, or of animals, it is difficult to deny that if an androcentric, economically oriented perspective of wealth creation that relies on growing consumer cultures, including food cultures, continues, it will have dire consequences for the future of our planet.

⁴³ See Graham, Jay P., Jessica H. Leibler, Lance B. Price, Joachim M. Otte, Dirk U. Pfeiffer, T. Tiensin, Ellen K. Silbergeld. "The Animal-Human Interface and Infectious Disease in Industrial Food Animal Production: Rethinking Biosecurity and Biocontainment" (2008) and Kirkhorn, Steven R. "Community and environmental health effects of concentrated animal feeding operations" (2002).

Whether or not one agrees with the comparison of the current mass slaughter of animals to the mass slaughter of the Jews in World War Two, or with the abuse of animals to the abuse of women and people of colour in the slave trade, the reality is that in most instances, animal lives, particularly ‘food animals’, remain troubling to contemplate. Generally, the objection to such human-animal comparisons lies in the belief that they trivialise the enormity of the crimes presented by the Holocaust or the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, such statements emphasise the continued problem represented by humanism: that it is the human and the human experience that is of primary importance. Contempt towards likening or even equating the animal experience to that of the human manifests itself in various forms, including objections about what might be deemed ethical in terms of lifestyle choices, food production and eating habits. At the heart of such objections lurks the deeply rooted anxieties about what it means to be human and where we fit in the world. The continued belief in human exceptionalism is a dangerous and pervasive problem that prevents us from understanding our place and impact on the environment, and that we share much of our DNA with the animals and plants that we deny kinship with. What is evident is that without clear divisions between what constitutes the human and the animal it becomes difficult to maintain the structures that have allowed for the economic and environmental exploitation that have become so much a part of modern life. Food ethics should evolve and reflect what is happening in a particular time and place. However, regardless of circumstance, what is important is that we become more aware of who we are eating, why we are eating them, what enabled us to do so and whether what we are doing is ethically acceptable.

Conclusion

Sympathy beyond the confines of man, that is humanity to the lower animals, seems to be one of the latest moral acquisitions ... This virtue [sympathy for the lower animals], one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise incidentally from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings. As soon as this virtue is honoured and practised by some few men, it spreads through instruction and example to the young, and eventually through public opinion.

— C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*⁴⁴

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

— M. Gandhi⁴⁵

Our world is under threat. That much is clear, and we now find ourselves in a position where we can no longer ignore it. This project was initially born out of a deepening personal concern about the vanishing natural world, and with it, the large numbers of life forms that rely on that world for their existence. This reality, in turn, raised questions about what it means to live ethically today. My life-long interest in real and literary animals led to a desire to explore literary representations of human-animal relationships in postmodern, postcolonial fiction with the aim of discussing how portrayals of these relationships have changed, and now reflect a growing concern with our impact on the nonhuman world.

The current mass extinction of fauna and flora, largely the result of human activity, has become such a pressing issue that many species, such as the Baiji, Spix's macaw and Sumatran rhinoceros, now either only exist in captivity or in written, illustrated or photographic material. We are in the midst of documenting the catastrophic impact that we are having on the nonhuman world, and yet, despite all of the scientific evidence indicating that we have already entered a global ecological catastrophe, we still appear unable to fathom the long-term, real-world implications of our actions and what this means for the future of our planet.

⁴⁴ Darwin qtd. in Rachels, James. *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*. 1990. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 164.

⁴⁵ Gandhi qtd. in Singer, Peter. "Moral Progress and Animal Welfare." ABC. ABC, 14 July 2011.

Animal presences in art and literature, whether literal or figurative, realistic or symbolic, have existed in all cultures since time immemorial, demonstrating our connection with, and dependence on, the natural world. The nonhuman is so much part of human self-understanding that it is difficult to think of, and about, ourselves without it. However, our rapidly changing world has led to a necessary re-evaluation of our relationships with the nonhuman, as many environments are irrevocably altered, and species lost, as a result of industrialisation, pollution and climate change.

The emergence of ecocriticism, animal studies and zoocriticism, as new interdisciplinary fields in the postmodern space, suggest that depictions of, or an interest in, human-animal relationships is a relatively new phenomenon. This, of course, is misleading since our relationship with the nonhuman world has always been present, although, perhaps, our dependence on it was briefly obscured by several modern advancements such as industrialisation, rapid development, and medical progress. The rise of the Anthropocene has brought with it unprecedented changes in Earth's history, including global climate change, increased homogenisation of fauna and flora, the dominance of human production and consumption, genetic modification of plants and animals, the rise of technology and the sixth mass extinction of global species. The growing realisation of the extent of this impact, specifically as documented in the sciences, has prompted a global call to action advocating change in our relationships with the nonhuman world, not only to save that world from destruction, but also to ensure our own survival. Given our growing understanding of how interconnected life on Earth really is, one might reasonably expect to see more widespread and radical change in our behaviour towards the nonhuman world that reflects this knowledge of interdependence, and furthers the development of a more sophisticated ethic of care towards nonhuman others. However, questions about animals, and anything connected to them, including consumption, rights, ethics and the environment, often still lead to heated and polarising arguments, which, for the most part, reflect the continued and troubling focus on anthropocentric concerns, often justified in the west using Judeo-Christian teachings, which underpin our legal system and what we believe to be ethically or morally acceptable. This apparent short-termism in how we think about life on this planet seems to be hindering progress towards ethical thinking that is biocentric and action that is more focussed on reducing human impact. Part of the environmental call requires a reimagining of our world, reflecting how we might positively address the current environmental crisis and what might

happen if we choose to ignore it. Clearly at a time when our world is drastically changing, our behaviour towards the nonhuman and what constitutes ethical treatment needs to be reviewed.

One of the more obvious ways in which literature engages with the issue of human-animal relationships is through representation, specifically representational style. As demonstrated in the works selected for this thesis, the range of methods that can be used to represent human-animal relationships, and more broadly, human-nonhuman relationships, is wide and varied. Representation can be a somewhat challenging area to critique because whether an approach achieves a particular goal may often reflect a subjective preference rather than an objective truth. For example, some might find that the complexity of Coetzee's metafiction detracts from the issues that the texts raise, whereas Martel's and Mda's use of magical realism better captures the intricacies of human-animal interactions because these narratives are able to offer representations that are not constrained by realism, and so possibly engage more effectively with cross-species connections. I personally do not feel that one approach is better than the other, although I do tend to think that magical realism, fantasy and speculative fiction offer spaces where there are no limits to how we might envision cross-species connections and, as a result, are able to explore a greater variety of possibilities and outcomes.

Despite the role that personal preference may play, it is still worth considering the effectiveness of aesthetic choice in depicting our relationships with the nonhuman, and how engaging that choice is. At the heart of this discussion was the question of whether literature can foster more compassionate engagement with the animal other, and if so, how does it do this? Moreover, can fiction really promote change in human behaviour towards the nonhuman by engaging audiences in long-term thinking about the potential consequences of the ecological crisis?

What the texts covered in this project show is that the sympathetic imagination plays an important role in thinking about our current relationships with animals, and how these may be improved. What also became evident is that the sympathetic imagination does have its limitations and, therefore, can only take us so far in pursuing a deeper understanding of the animal other or connecting us with the nonhuman world. Coetzee's novels, *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*, offer good examples of sustained engagements with the usefulness of the sympathetic imagination and both appear to come to the conclusion that even if we engage rigorously in this way, as do Elizabeth Costello and David Lurie (eventually), the other will

always remain other because it is impossible to inhabit the mind and body of another being, human or animal. However, these texts go further in their exploration of sympathetic engagement, and show that even when such engagement seems to be at its most developed — noticeably in the relationship that David develops with Driepoot and when Elizabeth equates the systematic slaughter of animals to the Holocaust — real and complex understanding of otherness seems to be lost — Driepoot is euthanised and Elizabeth alienates herself because she ironically seems to demonstrate insufficient sympathy for the trauma associated with the Holocaust experience. Furthermore, what is highlighted is that sympathetic engagement does not exist as an isolated act that should be limited to specific actors or circumstances and, therefore, to be truly sympathetic one needs to look at who/what else is affected by any given situation so that sympathy can also be extended in that direction. However, it must be acknowledged that this is a mammoth task and, perhaps, is not particularly feasible, since it is almost impossible to engage with all others sympathetically all of the time. This issue brings to the fore concerns about how best to address these limitations, if they can be addressed at all.

Our aesthetic and emotional vocabulary is limited because language, and our ability to experience and then express ideas and interpersonal relationships, though creative and innovative, is not infinite. How then, given these restrictions, never mind the restrictions that our physicality presents, do we, or should we, represent connection or disconnection between living beings and the world? Or how do we better represent a shared world?

There is much evidence that many literary representations of animals in the postcolonial and postmodern context are more sensitive and aware of animals as individual entities warranting consideration than some of their modernist counterparts. Take, for example, the far more compassionate relationships depicted between humans and animals in Mda's *The Whale Caller* and Martel's *Life of Pi* as opposed to Hemingway's *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* or Lawrence's *St Mawr*. It may even be possible to say that with the advent of the environmental movement, and the rise of a recognisable ecocritical discourse, that there has been something of a return to some of the ideas and concerns found in English and American Romanticism, including a greater respect for the natural world, issues concerning environmental degradation and the general effects of human enterprise on the environment.

One of the prominent features of Romanticism is its sympathetic and sentimental engagement with animals, which some Modernist texts, as Armstrong discusses, replaced with representations of human-animal relations that depicted the violence and savagery of the cycle of life and, by extension, between all life forms. What emerged from this was an image of human-animal relationships as inherently cruel and competitive, which was reinforced by the Judeo-Christian dominion mandate and the use of Darwinian evolutionary theory to justify and support a species hierarchy. While the human-animal relationship might be thought of as an inherently unequal set of power relations, particularly in the post-industrial space where animals often exist as commodities, such relationships do not preclude ethical consideration.

It is in the relationships between humans and animals, specifically mammals, that the call for stewardship over dominion is strongly felt, perhaps because we recognise that these animals have similar experiences to our own and are, therefore, easier to empathise with and show concern towards, than something seemingly less tangible like the hole in the ozone layer. However, within contemporary ecocentric literature there is an attempt to extend the empathetic response to living beings that do not get as much attention as animals that are generally thought to be cute or iconic, such as molluscs and insects. Although not explored in this thesis⁴⁶, Dovey's *Only the Animals* and Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* encourage us to consider what effect we have on the lives of beings that often do not get our attention, and films like *The Day After Tomorrow* demonstrate imaginative engagement with the ramifications of our ecological impact in a way that emphasises global interconnectedness from the perspective of global warming and extreme weather.

Since the 1960s, there has been a progressive change in our understanding of human-animal relationships, one that reflects a greater appreciation for the nonhuman world as an interconnected web of life, of which humans are very much a part. Ironically, this takes us

⁴⁶ Here, I would like to acknowledge that because I focussed on a very broad theme, rather than on a particular writer or group of texts, the project had to be limited for the purposes of scope and time, and could, therefore, not accommodate all texts or subthemes that may be deemed relevant to a discussion about human-animal relationships. Chapters Two, Three and Four could be expanded into longer, individual projects tackling issues of interspecies companionship, ecocatastrophe and food ethics respectively, or reworked to reflect one particular author's literary engagement, or strategy, in relation to any of the overarching themes present in this thesis. Additionally, there is room to rework these chapters into publishable articles or topical book chapters, or expand the focus from relatively domesticated animals to include material that explores our impact on wild animals, insects, plants, and the health of systems such as the soil, waterways or oceans.

back to premodern and Romantic understandings of interconnection that had been displaced during the modern period. This shift from conquest and domination to stewardship and conservation owes some of its momentum to Rachel Carson's ground-breaking *Silent Spring*, as well as other scientific discoveries that have documented the extent of industrial impact on the Earth, including environmental toxicity, the hole in the ozone layer and global warming. Some of these issues have been taken up by authors such as Atwood and McCarthy who appear to be interested in the environmental crisis and where it might lead us. Whilst neither author proposes any hard and fast solutions, both situate humans within the nonhuman world, and in so doing, emphasise that though we might believe in human exceptionalism, such a belief, importantly, does not position us outside the ebb and flow of natural cycles. In fact, both authors demonstrate that humans are reliant for survival on the same world that we are systemically destroying and from which we set ourselves apart.

One of the issues that became evident during the course of this thesis is that a changing world requires an evolution or adaptation of ethics. Ethics can and should reflect pertinent concerns on a global and local level. In terms of the discussion, the two main areas of focus in relation to ethics were animal cruelty and food production, which also highlighted some of the difficulties encountered when adopting an ethicalising approach including grandstanding, creating false dichotomies and alienating audiences. These areas explored how we understand what constitutes cruelty to animals and whether such cruelty can be justified in the name of human needs and progress. Atwood, Coetzee and Ozeki demonstrate that when we lose sight of animals as individuals, animal suffering seems to be of little consequence. However, what these authors also show is the connection between animal suffering and human suffering, both in terms of the environment and the food chain. What also emerged is that movements such as the vegetarian/vegan movements, though, broadly speaking, certainly the most compassionate where 'food animals' are concerned, represent only one form of ethical engagement in this area. While vegetarianism/veganism represent a more noticeable and obvious behavioural change in response to animal exploitation, particularly where industrial farming is concerned, these may run the risk of creating a false dichotomy regarding the appropriateness of eating animals, suggesting that meat eating is a form of criminality. In reality, to eat ethically should mean that one takes into consideration as many aspects of food production as possible, of which the problems associated with animal agriculture represent only one area. In order to be more effective in combating cruelty, ethical eating needs to move beyond categories of what/who is permissible to eat, and engage in a more

sophisticated ethical debate that might lead to reforms in other connected areas including labour, land and, if it must happen, slaughter (although it should be acknowledged that many of these are positively impacted by choosing vegetarian/vegan lifestyles). What is crucial to note is that whilst individual action, or inaction, really does matter, it does not have as much of an impact as group behavioural change. The aim is to get as many people as possible to reconsider their individual choices, actioning forms of compassionate engagement that facilitate positive change. One of the ways that this may be done is through proactive education that engages with areas like food production through the medium of storytelling.

In arguing for a biocentric, rather than anthropocentric, approach to living in the world, the right to exist becomes one of the cornerstones in addressing the continued problems that anthropocentrism presents for the nonhuman. The right to exist applies as much to the conservation of natural habitats and species as it does to farming. Central to this is accepting our historical and continued role in creating environmental imbalances through colonialist, capitalist and industrial pursuits, and that we cannot rehabilitate or return these environments to a state before the interference of man. Having said that, it is incorrect to think that socialist economic models offer a panacea for our current environmental woes, since these have not proven to be any better for humanity or the environment.

Perhaps a more viable option to the tired capitalist/socialist debate is something along the lines of the model proposed by Kate Raworth in *Doughnut Economics* (2017). By challenging the need for unchecked development and industrialisation, Raworth brings environmental issues to the fore in economic thinking particularly at the points where human rights and nonhuman existence intersect in often environmentally detrimental ways. She argues that our current economic models are not sustainable on a planet in obvious environmental crisis, and so need to change in order to accommodate our new global reality. Although she does not place Earth's resources at the centre of her model, Raworth's insight into how to balance human and nonhuman needs goes a long way towards rethinking how countries might grow and develop their economies using a more environmentally sustainable and positive approach.

Interestingly, during early 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic began to peak, Amsterdam, Holland, announced its plans to 'recover from the crisis, and avoid future ones, by embracing Raworth's theory' (Nugent). The city aims to ensure that all its citizens have access to a good

quality of life while not increasing pressure on planetary resources. Following Amsterdam's decision, other smaller cities and regions have decided to follow suit, including Copenhagen, the Brussels region, Dunedin (New Zealand), Nanaimo (British Columbia), and Portland (Nugent). However, as the first major city to implement Raworth's model it will be interesting to see how Amsterdam tailors it to meet any challenges faced, and to assess its success over a five-year period (this also applies to the other cities and regions attempting to implement the model). What could be beneficial is to compare how the different cities implemented the model and what differences in implementation emerged, if any, as a result of perhaps city size, population, climate, etc. This could provide a good indication of, and some guidance on, how other cities in other regions might implement it. Further, and worth noting in a literary context, the implementation of this new economic model may prompt a different type of city and lifestyle being imagined in fiction with eco-/biocentric leanings in this time of environmental crisis. Rather than the dystopian visions like those we have become familiar with in recent fiction by McCarthy and Atwood, we may see a move towards writing cities that may be thought of as ecologically aware utopias, that in recognisable ways reflect some of the promise for a better future that was once evident in works like Alexander Craig's *Ionia; Land of Wise Men and Fair Women* (1898).

We have to recognise the need to change our behaviour towards the nonhuman in general to save the planet from complete environmental destruction. One of the important areas explored in various ways throughout this thesis is the issue of compassion and how best to cultivate compassionate responses towards the nonhuman. We need to have relationships with the nonhuman, but we also, and perhaps, more importantly, should recognise these relationships as rich interactions that are valid and meaningful for all concerned. As evidenced in *Disgrace*, *Life of Pi*, *The Whale Caller* and the *MaddAddam Trilogy*, human-animal relationships can transform the way in which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world. The moment that the animal stops being just an animal to us, just an object, and starts being a valued entity, is the moment that we have achieved compassionate engagement through recognition of the individual. When we are able to feel that visceral connection and outrage at what is being done to our planet and its inhabitants, and channel this into considered, focussed, meaningful action designed to change the environmental status quo, perhaps we will be able to radically challenge and even transcend the predominantly western binaries that have enabled the destruction of the nonhuman world so far.

Literature, as with art in general, has the potential to reflect that which we desire and that which we fear about ourselves. Reflecting on the duality of human nature may be deemed an important aspect of writing about environments, natural or artificial, in that our behaviour towards the nonhuman, be it animal, plant or landscape, demonstrates our capacity, or lack thereof, for acknowledgement, compassion and understanding. In effect, those qualities that we like to attribute to the human, and which we often believe make us human and differentiate us from animals, are often challenged in provocative ways. By exploring literary representations of human-animal relationships I aimed to uncover whether our interactions with the nonhuman have changed over time, and whether these representations, be they politically correct, magical realist, metafictional or speculative, go further in presenting the complexities of these relationships in the postcolonial, postmodern milieu than has previously been the case. The texts covered in this thesis explored ideas about acceptable behaviour towards nonhuman others, highlighting that our anthropocentric views are often found wanting, both ethically and morally. Indeed, the ethical and moral foundations of western society are being increasingly scrutinised as the environmental crisis worsens. In writing that considers the human relationship with, and impact on, the environment, much of what is currently being produced reflects a broadening concern with the overwhelmingly negative interactions that we have with the nonhuman. Whilst most of the texts examined in this thesis reflect this negative state of affairs, they also demonstrate the possibility for change in our behaviour that would lead to better, more compassionate and biocentric engagement. To quote Haraway, '[s]pecies interdependence is the name of the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect (*When Species Meet*, 19).

That being said, it is difficult to predict where ecocentric literature will or should go with its green politics and sympathetic interconnected aesthetics, and how much of an impact it really has on consumers and high-level decision makers. I would like to believe that the stories that we read as children invariably shape who we become as adults. Reading may not enable anyone to think like a bat, as Nagel tells us, but it certainly makes it possible to image what it might be like to be one, and in so doing, foster an ability to relate in sympathetic ways with the world at large. I feel that it is crucial to nurture this capacity because without it we will see little change in our behaviour towards the nonhuman. Identification is an important part of empathetic engagement and without it we will continue to treat the Earth and its other inhabitants as objects, failing to see the harm we cause. My current sense is that the environmental crisis, compounded by the global disparities in standards of living and our

propensity for short-term thinking specifically where environmental issues are concerned, is such an enormous problem that the narratives currently available barely scratch the surface. It would be interesting to read more fiction that targets adult audiences, a continuation of narratives we may have been familiar with as children, that attempts to represent human-animal relationships and the environmental crisis in areas such as mining, development, sports, or animal agriculture from multiple intertwined human and animal perspectives. Additionally, it would be beneficial to see more ecocentric narratives being told by the global south, particularly because it is these areas that are currently experiencing the greatest drive for development and economic growth, and may be able to envision different worlds from the ones that we are familiar with in the global north. The aim of such work would not only be to draw attention to these areas, but to also show the complexity of human-animal relationships and demonstrate awareness of how false dichotomies often offer simplistic and unsustainable solutions to our current problems. Perhaps such work could do away with words like 'human' and 'animal', collapsing the verbal boundaries we use to distinguish one from the other and uphold the binaries that we continue to rely on to preserve our sense of species exceptionalism, and imagine a world where concepts of self and other are more porous and, perhaps as a result, more empathetic. Regardless of the narrative technique, what should be clear is that we need to avoid simplifying or using only one form of representation and be open to different and even fantastic ways of narrating cross-species relationships. In this way we may be able to better capture the meaningfulness of these relationships without being restricted by our physicality or established narrative modes.

The way in which we understand human-animal relationships is often reflected in our choice of representation because these are the methods most commonly used to disseminate knowledge and experience within, and across, our own communities. Of utmost importance is the need to recognise these relationships as valid, meaningful and rich interactions in which the animal other is an active agent with their own frame of reference and ability to reason, rather than a passive object or commodity. In a very real sense, the animal can occupy the status of friend to the human as much as that of enemy, commodity or rival for resources. Human-animal friendships/positive relationships have the potential to change the way that we understand our place and role as a species in both regional and global ecosystems. Through its critical engagement with authors whose work shows that our relationships with the nonhuman have an impact, positive or negative, on the greater nonhuman community this thesis contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the areas of animal studies and

zoocriticism from the perspective of literature. It is necessary to shift our ethical and moral thinking in relation to the nonhuman, and to represent this shift in our cultural products, because how we think about and interact with the world is reflective of our own intellectual, ethical and moral development as a species, and thus our continued evolution as compassionate, empathetic and responsible beings relies on our acknowledgement and recognition of our relationships with nonhuman others. Storytelling offers us a readily available and accessible space in which to do this, and through it, perhaps, we may be able to positively influence the course of environmental history.

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