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## ***Animal Farm's* Lessons for Literary (and) Animal Studies**

Everybody knows the disappearing animal trick: rabbit goes into the hat, magician waves wand, and presto! The magician displays an empty hat. Simplistic though it sounds, this old act illustrates how literary critics historically have rendered the animal a non-issue. Reading animals as metaphors, always as figures of and for the human, is a process that likewise ends with the human alone on the stage.<sup>1</sup> Now you see the animal in the text, now you don't.

Researchers informed by cross-disciplinary discussions of how animals and animality more actively support the structures of human subjectivity do not necessarily dispel the magic of this method. Since the 1980s, deconstructive literary theory in particular has worked to elaborate the operations of animality at the heart of identity, or, in literary terms, human subjectivity, in modernist narratives. Often animal elements in this approach appear significant to texts only ever in relation to human subjectivity, so that literature seems to reify cultural critic John Berger's infamous claim that "animals are disappearing" in modernity (14). From this standpoint, literature, as both discipline and textual archive, would appear to be working at odds with animal studies, other approaches to the complicated ways in which animals function as social and textual agents.

Animal studies, an emergent field of academic inquiry that promises to supplement natural history with "unnatural" histories of human and animal life,<sup>2</sup> starts from the quite different assumption that the presence of nonhumans is a cultural constant. Focusing on how people make animal selves and others (dis)appear, animal studies therefore aims not to transcend disciplinary thought but rather to open biopolitical perspectives within and across structures of knowledge and feeling. This means that, while the deconstructive approach remains valid, its value remains limited without contextualization amid the richer courses charted from the crossroads of literary animal studies. Interpretive patterns focused on literary representations of animals have been illustrating this point since as early as the 1970s, suggesting far different conclusions about the potentials for nonhuman presences in literary environments.

In this respect, George Orwell's 1946 novel *Animal Farm* provides a curious case study in how ways of reading animals relate to the transformation of literature as a discipline more generally through structuralist and poststructuralist theory. Readers who have studied literature at the secondary-school level since the 1950s certainly are prepared to appreciate *Animal Farm's* allegorical meaning, generally understood as critical of the formation of the Soviet state, if not to note how in this way the novel lends itself to the pedagogical aims of New Criticism. That is, the symbolic values of Orwell's characters not only guide people in learning important events in human history but also ideally sharpen their critical faculties, prompting appreciation for this

novel along with all other literary representations of animals as concealing deeper (read: human) meanings. But doing so also involves studied avoidance of how Orwell's main characters work as farm animals, a critical problem that, as it begins to be addressed in literary discussions, also prompts broader concerns about what exactly happens to a discipline when these patterns of interpreting species begin to change.

Mapping these developing interests in fictional farm animals as animals, this essay briefly compares how the formation of human-animal relations in fictions of meat production provide peculiarly challenges for literary criticism, and with what implications for animal studies as well. Recent critical discussions, for instance, of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) come to strikingly different conclusions about its relevance for animal representation, indicating that the difficulty of reading nonhumans as significant in these environments requires greater attention to the interplay of literary forms along with contents and contexts. To account for the progressive understanding of *Animal Farm* as a novel about animals in literary criticism, I situate the novel alongside other farm animal narratives, including Orwell's own account of the novel's inception, as well as its ensuing film adaptations. This rich animal narrative history begins to explain how literacy, even visual literacy, shapes potentials for animal agency in literature and beyond. Learning how to read this novel therefore suggests some important lessons for developments in (and between) literary and animal studies.

**Animal Subjects: From Dead Meat to Feral Agents.** Part of the difficulty with reading *Animal Farm*'s characters as animals is that farm animals have come to signify the erasure of subjectivity in the stories as well as practices of industrialized meat production. As a shared potential for all kinds of bodies, meat could be understood as deferring or erasing differences, whether human/ animal, subject/ object, etc.<sup>3</sup> Read as a literary symbol, however, it gains a more limited valence, signaling a state to which someone is reduced beyond recognition as a subject. In these contexts, representations of farm animals — rather, of people enmeshed with “what were once referred to as ‘farm’ animals” in meat work (Tiffin 250) — get washed away, not only in seas of blood and gore but also along with people in histories of manufacturing. Thus it could be argued that one of the most powerful ways in which the history of mechanized work profoundly transforms human life is by severing animal stories from these scenes.

Researchers from a broad range of perspectives have shown that systematic animal killing serves a variety of human interests, and more precisely the interests of some human groups against others, creating and reinforcing inequalities based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, and sex.<sup>4</sup> While this complex and emergent picture of industrial meat production as the site of ongoing conflicts in human social representation is important, the ways in which literature becomes involved in these processes beg further questions about how meat production lines (de)form human and animal subjects in modernity.<sup>5</sup> Noting how industrial slaughter facility design — notably Chicago's Union Stockyards — influenced assembly-line techniques later

popularized by Henry Ford,<sup>6</sup> vegetarian-feminist scholar Carol J. Adams claims that social changes follow from material changes. She concludes that there can be no “alternative endings” written into the literary canon, and advocates that like-minded critics work to “eviscerat[e]” the institution of literature, more specifically, to expose how the formal ideal of closure depoliticizes the story of meat (93-94). Alternately foregrounding human and animal agents in slaughterhouse scenes, however, some patterns in literary representation challenge these conclusions by calling attention to the materiality of social forms and processes.

The spectacle of dead and dying animals remains a central feature of exposé-style meat narratives like Eric Schlosser’s 2001 bestseller *Fast Food Nation*, and extends at least a century back to journalist Upton Sinclair’s sensational 1906 novel *The Jungle*. Told from the perspective of a quickly disillusioned Lithuanian immigrant named Jurgis Rudkus, Sinclair’s novel lays bare the filth and misery of the Chicago meatpacking industry, and consumers’ intense, immediate outrage at its revelations led in the same year as its publication to the passage of food safety laws. Less obviously, the infamous public outcry inspired by *The Jungle* illustrates the difficulty of reading any agents in scenes of industrial slaughter, let alone any forms of agency when farm life leads to this end. Although Sinclair wrote with concern for all kinds of lives on the disassembly line, he became embittered by the reforms implemented exclusively for the benefit of consumers, famously reflecting in his autobiography, “I aimed for the public’s heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach” (*Autobiography* 126).

Literary history only provides more justification for Sinclair’s lament by pitting human against animal rights in interpretations of *The Jungle*, obscuring how, even within the limited perspective of this narration, human and animal lives become entangled through mechanized means of disfiguration and killing. So, for instance, Bertolt Brecht cited *The Jungle* as inspirational to his interest in Marxist philosophy, and recycled Sinclair’s anecdote of workers falling into lard vats (and consequently leaving the factory in lard cans) in his 1932 play *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, part of a series themed, “Entry of mankind into the big cities.”<sup>7</sup> Brecht’s play strictly focuses on human tragedies, but its framing within precarious human-animal, urban-industrial transitions begins to explain what else can happen when animals in *The Jungle* become visible as agents of destruction, including their own.

Initially Jurgis, like so many other international tourists, marvels at the “Wheel of Fortune,” the massive and efficient mechanism through which pigs are made to power their own demise, leading critics like Adams to despair of his story in discussions of animal politics.<sup>8</sup> Becoming part of the scene as a meatpacker, however, Jurgis later learns to fear the precariousness of the system when pigs break loose on the factory line. Moreover, the lives of human and pig become mutually threatened, as Philip Armstrong notes, and along the escaping pigs’ desperate lines of flight emerges a fleeting potential for animals to operate as “feral agents,” potentially writing new endings for all creatures deep within scenes of exploitation.<sup>9</sup> Though some still read the “diseased, rotten meat” as the story’s focus, and more specifically the meat as “a metaphor for

the diseased, rotten capitalist system” (Patterson 63), closer attention to these alignments of humans and animals reveals far more complicated textual potentials.

For, at a formal level, these and other uncertain interactions of farm animals and people meeting on the factory floor destabilize the authority of the eyewitness narrative, compromising the separation and elevation of the human subject even within the industry. Offering similar glimpses of how meat animals operate as agents, contemporary meat stories such as Ruth Ozeki’s bestselling 1998 novel *My Year of Meats* and its very different source text, Sue Coe’s 1995 artist’s book *Dead Meat*, likewise use this narrative form against itself, only more deliberately contrasting it with visual forms of representation. Elsewhere I have argued that such competing representational logics allow for the emergence of a range of agential possibilities from the precarious interfaces of bodies, machines, and representational media in the stories of animal lives and deaths from farm to plate, and so prove the most important links between *Animal Farm* and its ensuing narratives, chiefly the 1995 blockbuster film *Babe*.<sup>10</sup> But to elaborate how the technological agency of animals extends both forward to visual media literacy and back to farm narratives, the next section looks more closely at responses to *Animal Farm* in literary discussions, tracing some developments in the novel and its critical history that anchor potentials for animal agency in farm animal narrative.

**Reading Technologies and Agents.** For many viewers and critics, Orwell’s novel — subtitled *A Fairy Story* — suggests a more obvious point of contrast to *Babe*.<sup>11</sup> This may be because these fictions are more alike in their differences from the theriophilic fable tradition; neither strives to ennoble animal nature, elevating it from the silly trappings of human culture, and both focus on the materiality of technology as a narrative force, only with conflicting conclusions.<sup>12</sup> Whereas *Babe* takes a decidedly ambivalent position about the role of visual technologies in the construction as well as regulation of social divisions, including those of labor, gender, sex, and species, Orwell’s *Animal Farm* implicates all technologies as unequivocally serving power. Especially through engagements with the challenges of becoming literate in visual media, these fictions develop the mutual vulnerabilities of farm animals and humans.

Particularly given the tendency to read the novel as a human story, it is intriguing to note how its author writes of its conception. In the preface to the Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, Orwell offers two accounts of its origins, the first of which is:

On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by anyone and which could be easily translated into other languages. (“Author’s Preface” 405)

Colored by this account, the story reads easily as a parable of the 1917 Soviet uprising. *Animal Farm* depicts a violent takeover of a British farm by its animals, a revolution led and later

usurped by the pigs. Human attempts to regain control, rebuffed at first, eventually succeed because a few pigs move into the human farmers' roles and exploit the "stupidity" of the other animals, eventually becoming in every respect indistinguishable from their original oppressors "to the creatures outside" (128). Aided in part by this emphasis on perception and perspective in the final description of pigs transforming into humans, critical attention in recent decades has moved away from historical metaphor in favor of reading this novel as a straightforward animal narrative.

More directly, this approach gains support from Orwell's alternate story of its creation. Evoking the primal scene common to Sigmund Freud's *Little Hans*, Friedrich Nietzsche's fateful collapse, even novels as different as Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Orwell writes that he witnessed a boy beating a carthorse, and then

proceeded to analyze Marx's theory from the animals' point of view. To them it is clear that the concept of a class struggle between humans was pure illusion, since whenever it was necessary to exploit animals, all humans united against them: the true struggle is between animals and humans ("Author's Preface" 406).

For many this passage seems proof that the novel is "really" about animals,<sup>13</sup> if not a means of resolving debate about Orwell's difficulties with publishing a "kind of animal story that would never sell" (Drabble 43).<sup>14</sup> More than any final agreement about its one, true meaning, the precise struggle through which literary history has arrived at what now seems so patently obvious indicates what remains at stake for reading animals in and around disciplinary structures.

The first to argue for the formal significance of this passage was not an animal studies scholar nor an animal rights activist but the novelist and marxist literary critic Raymond Williams, who in a monograph titled *George Orwell* (1971) cites it as evidence against conventional interpretations of the novel as an analogy for the author's final disillusionment with socialist politics. Significantly revising his own argument from over a decade earlier that, if the pigs are "the hypocritical, hating politicians whom Orwell had always attacked" and presented as such in *1984*, then all the other animals must be aligned with the proles as "'monstrous' and not yet 'conscious'" (*Culture* 293), Williams leads the long and difficult shift away from reading *Animal Farm* strictly in terms of human allegory. In the end, for Williams, the difference of the pigs is a difference that matters, one that shows how the metaphor breaks down even within the text, because these animals become both collective exploiters and exploited.

Although he does not elaborate this point, it applies as well to a gaping hole in the plot, namely why there is never even any pretense of liberating the dogs of Animal Farm. Instead, a litter of pups at the start are confiscated from their mother, secreted away while raised by one of the

pigs, and at a pivotal moment in the story unleashed against the other animals at the pig's command. More than simply contradictory, this aspect of the story resists both metaphorical and anthropomorphic projection. These dogs remain dogs, serving not as extensions of anyone's ego or symbols of any people but rather as an irreducible (in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terms) "demonic" or menacing figures nonhuman multiplicity.

That all animals are not created equal, of course, is one of the more deliberate take-away messages of the novel. The newly liberated animals' efforts to learn and to teach each other how to read emphasize that species differences encompass different ranges of abilities, and what is more that not all individuals are interested in or capable of maximizing these potentials. So the pigs can abuse their power simply by writing and then amending the new rules of the farm, their barely literate comrades of other species soon discouraged from (and by) reading their fate in erased and overwritten inscriptions. And in these actions, too, they create equivalences that approximate meat's level, rendering themselves indistinguishable (or their porcine differences imperceptible) from the humans. The flexibility of species differences thereby upsets the foundations of human-animal along with other cross-species equivalencies through which allegorical interpretations might otherwise empty out the collective significance of communications and their breakdowns.

For it is also significant, Williams continues, that the novel becomes "unique among Orwell's books because it contains no Orwell figure, no isolated man who breaks from conformity but is then defeated and reabsorbed," and instead depicts a collectively distributed consciousness-raising that shifts sympathy to the other animals at the end: "What happens is a common, rather than an isolated experience, for all its bitterness; and the whine of ragged nerves, the despair of a lonely trajectory are replaced by an actively communicative tone in the critical narrative" (74). If this emphasis on communication, as both theme and sensation, distinguishes *Animal Farm* in the broader context of meat fictions from *The Jungle* and other exposés that emphasize human individual concerns at the expense of a sense of community, then it also situates the novel more firmly within an under-appreciated literary tradition of barnyard revolts.

**Farm Animal Agency: Precedents and Antecedents.** Orwell's own carthorse-whipping scene also connects his novel back to an important (if also importantly unsung) literary predecessor to *Animal Farm*, that is, Gene Stratton-Porter's novel *The Strike at Shane's: A Prize Story of Indiana* (1893). Stratton-Porter's novel is apparently the first to imagine abused farm animals assembling in opposition to human rule. But it does so to a very different end. Solicited and published by the American Humane Society as (the title page proclaims) "a sequel to *Black Beauty*," this fiction imagines a comparatively tame farm-animal uprising.

Here the whipping occurs within the story, at the beginning, and it prompts the animals to coordinate a more peaceful and temporary work stoppage, which enables the human farmer

and son to be persuaded by wife and sister to abandon the cruel ways of man. Humans are chastened, but not evicted from farm animal life, an aspect that in part begins to explain the ending of *Animal Farm*. In keeping with the patriarchal meat tradition identified by Adams as a hallmark of the literary canon, *The Strike at Shane's* farmer explicitly does not relinquish manful control of the farm. For Stratton-Porter's point is to demonstrate that human dominion exercised with love and kindness is essential to a profitable and godly farm; animal and human welfare are one. In pointed contrast, Orwell imagines power as far more precariously contested by humans and animals via access to technology, an aspect of the fiction that its film adaptations increasingly connect to visual media literacy.

In Orwell's *Animal Farm* the never-completed windmill, the symbol of a technological utopia, fails to deliver the animals from exploitation as workers, and instead becomes the means by which the pigs take the human role of working the animals to death. In the end, what makes pigs indistinguishable from humans is their coterminous dependence on and mystification of technology as a means of production, in relation to which the other animals become broken or naturalized neo-Luddites. Collapsing any spaces between humans and animals, this aspect of the novel lends itself to interpretation as ending any possibility of sustaining species distinctions.<sup>15</sup> However, in the process, visual media become propaganda tools with which pigs, chief among them the boar Napoleon, manifest control over other animals, a trope that bleeds into alternate potentials as it becomes materialized in film.

From the novel's mention of a propagandistic "portrait of Napoleon, in profile, executed by [his henchman] Squealer in white paint" (Orwell 104), both film versions of *Animal Farm* construct increasingly elaborate animal relationships with visual technologies. Joy Batchelor and John Halas's 1954 adaptation (also the first British feature-length animated film, and the first ever to use animation as a medium for serious subjects<sup>16</sup>) imagines the animals becoming visually literate as part of their creation of an animal-centered social order. Upon entering the human household, they recoil in terror from a photograph of their former master Jones, unable to distinguish the real from the representation, until the brave but doomed plow-horse Boxer smashes it. But by the end the pigs have plastered the farm with likenesses they have made of their own leader Napoleon, and through their representations of this pig positioned upright, wearing medals and clothes, begin to enact the anthropomorphic transformation of their kind. This invention of a pig-propaganda machine, together with the altered ending that proposes a second animal revolution against both pigs and people, much more clearly than the novel makes the first *Animal Farm* film's pig Napoleon a stand-in for Josef Stalin (a point underscored by the recent revelation that its production was secretly funded by the CIA).

Yet it is the ways in which this transformation continues through a much more recent film adaptation that suggest again how the novel has always been about reading animals. Although in some ways clearly responding to the success of *Babe* — most obviously by tacking on a frame story of an animatronic "talking" border collie mother and other characters likewise crafted

by Jim Henson's Creature Shop — John Stephenson's 1999 film version of *Animal Farm* imagines animal engagements with visual media as still more actively shaping farm life. At the end, a close-up shot reveals a hoof reaching out to turn on a projector, which then runs a montage in the style of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* only starring the pig Napoleon, who in this scene is also the pig-propaganda film's only viewer. Depicting the pig as clothed and standing upright by this point in the film, this revolutionary image of an animal making, acting in, and watching his own film again is contained by the conflation of literacy with human identification. What this version reinforces nonetheless is that integration with representational technologies means power; only by making themselves into movie meat do pigs become people.

Although with a negative valence, the films underscore a socially transformative potential for technological integration barely glimpsed by Orwell's fiction: What if the windmill had worked? What if the animals integrated machinery, say, to "green" farming for the benefit of all? Through the films' profoundly ambivalent social implications of farm animals and technological literacy, *Animal Farm* as novel and films connect to *Babe*, and more recent fictions like Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), which broaches "pharm" animal subjects as well. Reading such creatures as agents thus offers a way of renewing the relevance of farm animal fictions, allowing for ways of understanding and owning shared responsibilities for the collective transformations of cross-species intimacies in technological environments.

What is important to this discussion is not simply the generic or stylistic difference between these texts, but also the veritable sea change they gauge in the role of technology in production and in utopian thinking. Most radically of all of these narratives, *Babe* assumes panspecies visual media literacy throughout, a fantasy perhaps, but one that disables the human power of self-determination made available through visual technologies. Again this potential might be seen to stem from Orwell's intimation that farm animals, like us, are never just dead meat walking but communicating, even ciphering beings. Reading animals in fictions of revolt consequently involves "necessary failures," ones that move toward a productive critique of the past and modeling future engagements for the common good.<sup>17</sup>

**Lessons for Literature and Animal Studies.** "You'd flunk the test if you said it was about animals," ventured an undergraduate in response to the question: what had they learned about George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in secondary school before they were assigned to read it in college? "Yeah," another chimed in, "You're supposed to say it's about some war or something."

Witnessing this exchange, I became acutely aware of why the premise of this essay might seem to some too hastily to dismiss the importance for Orwell and others of *Animal Farm's* allegorical values. By outlining the vagaries of literary criticism through the novel's interpretive history, my point here is not presume that the Soviet experiment is "over," irrelevant, or in any other

way to be dismissed from discussions of the novel. Quite the contrary, acknowledging it only clarifies how rare and amazing *Animal Farm* has always been for engaging so skillfully with its political moment. But it is no less important to recognize that the novel continues to find ways of moving readers, so many of whom agree that the pigs' betrayal of the loyalty of the plow-horse Boxer, selling him to the knackers and drinking away this blood money, always makes us cry. That said, it is also clear that in our own historical moment, characterized by ahistorical consciousness or, as Frederic Jameson puts it, "nostalgia for nostalgia," it becomes all the more important to consider what is motivating scholars, critics, and even students increasingly to read animals as animals in (of all novels) *Animal Farm*.

Neither simply sacrificed nor gaining significance as "speaking meat,"<sup>18</sup> across the traditions outlined above farm animals emerge as irreducibly social creatures in the interstices of the very representational media like novels that for so long have been seen as crafted only to give voice to human subject-forms. Literary narratives include a still broader range of possibilities, including that meat itself can serve as an agent of protest,<sup>19</sup> and in the few described above more precisely incorporate living meat animals as agents to sketch community formation, reformation, and revolt. As literary forms and theories follow them from the dis-assembly plants originating in nineteenth-century Chicago meatpacking facilities through the tissue culturing laboratories dissembling carnal pleasures free of animal suffering in the twenty-first century, they provide much broader opportunities for thinking through the responsibilities of and for interpreting species.

At the crux of interdisciplinary animal studies research, ways of reading animals become matters of life and death, as relevant to understanding the everyday conditions of companion species as they are to changing the scholarly habits of avoiding them. In this respect, literary history proves most problematic. As a field of knowledge arguably rooted in claims to have special access to textual interpretation, literary studies becomes a special target of concern for scholars in animal studies,<sup>20</sup> in part because precious few literary critics have attempted to account systematically for the seemingly countless animal aspects of texts. Yet dwelling on these deficits risks merely repeating the same old disappearing animal trick.

Reading animals requires more than just recognizing the failures of traditional humanist models that separate and elevate people over all "things" animal. Always written, if not so often read, academic animal research need neither be conceived as free from politics (whatever that might mean) nor as a vehicle to be driven by animal rights or any other agendas. Contributing to a crucible from which linguistic and other representational molds are cast, such work arguably becomes most effective in addressing the problems of species by introducing impurities, starting spits, sparks, fires that break the molds (or at least require refashioning) of humanist discourses. Though by no means exclusive to literary studies, this process becomes visible in discussions that explicitly address: what exactly goes on in acts of reading and writing animals?

### Notes

1. See Erica Fudge, "At the Heart of the Home: An Animal Reading of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*" (in this issue) who explains this complex "humanning" process, whereby animals are "absented in order for humans to be made central," in greater detail.

2. Nigel Rothfels uses this phrasing to clarify the important difference between natural and cultural histories of animals, the former working to situate nonhumans in their "native haunts" and the latter to clarify their positioning in "such human environments as museums, books, circuses, and zoos" (6).

3. Writing about the painter Francis Bacon, philosopher Gilles Deleuze clarifies that meat operates as "zone of indiscernibility" between humans and animals: "Meat is not dead flesh [. . .] Bacon does not say 'Pity the beasts' but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility" (21). Bacon's own famous line follows: "If I go into a butcher shop, I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal" (qtd. in Deleuze 22).

4. Jonathan Burt outlines how, in early twentieth-century Britain, the conflation of "orderly and mechanistic" with "unseen and unheard" slaughterhouse regulations in turn became an instrument of racism, providing a rationale of efficiency for attempts to ban *schechita* and *dabh*, respectively, the Jewish and Muslim methods of slaughter ("Conflicts" 258). He concludes that industrial slaughter practice therefore operates as "one of the constituting elements of our particular social identity" (268). For a case study of how social divisions were reinforced by the industry at the same time in the US, see Jimmy M. Skaggs's analysis of how the 1919 Chicago race riot was fueled by the meat factory owners' decision to recruit black workers, "who were less likely to be union members" than their white counterparts, to stem the tide of organized labor in the industry, and "set back unity and cooperation in the Yards for at least ten years" (118). See also Roger Horowitz's elaboration of the US pork industry's overtly racist, classist, and nativist strategies for "upscaling" sliced bacon consumption in the early twentieth century (68), and its abuse of women sausage-makers that inspired the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission's 1969 banning of sex-based discrimination (99-100).

5. Hilda Kean rightly notes that processes shaping "the modern person" include the centralization and enclosure of animal slaughter from public view, which was well under way in the nineteenth century (27). Comparing the visual economies of animals in film, zoo display, and slaughterhouses in the early twentieth century, Burt extends this claim to consider how these structured acts of seeing also contribute to the formation of "the modern animal" ("Illuminating" 208).

6. Many years later, Ford reflected that he got “the idea” for his famous assembly line factory design “from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers use[d] in dressing beef,” which he understood to be “the first moving line ever installed” (81).

7. Frederic Grab substantiates this point through a direct reference to Sinclair in a 1920 review authored by Brecht, and cites “lifelong friend and co-worker Elizabeth Hauptmann” for the broader perspective on how the play fits in their oeuvre (9). Brecht’s elaboration of this play as “non-Aristotelian drama” intimates how individual roles, scripted by groups pitted against each other in the meatpacking industry, evoke a more profound breakdown in form, in which “certain modes of representation are destroyed by the demonstration of their social function” (qtd. in Grab 13).

8. Marian Scholtmeijer points to Sinclair’s disruption of traditional representational linkages, arguing that it contributes to the further victimization of animals: “The metaphoric use of animals vacillates because it is not grounded in narrative allegiance with the animal” (151).

9. Illuminating his theory of “feral agency,” Armstrong points to this moment in the narrative to argue, “the fates of the human and non-human elements of the system are conjoined; the desperate unpredictability of the animal matches that of the workers, and all are equally vulnerable to the butcher’s knife and the boss’s gun” (137).

10 See my essay “Bringing Up *Babe*,” especially pp. 151-52.

11. Philip Kemp’s review is typical in arguing that *Babe* comes up short against “a much more trenchant farmyard fable, *Animal Farm*” (40).

12. Kenyon-Jones defines theriophily as both a “long classical and Renaissance tradition” and “a philosophical stance which satirizes human pretensions by reminding us of our kinship with animals, and contrasts overweening human folly with animals’ instinctive wisdom” (12).

13. D.B.D. Asker points to this passage as distinguishing “those interested in socialism disinterestedly, and those interested in it from the point of view of power” (65). More recently, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson claims it “astonishing” that such a “revolutionary comment about humans and animals has been effaced from the public record!” (239, n.4), and Helen Tiffin in turn reads as “a classic example of the disappearance of animals as characters in their own right” (252).

14. In a 1944 letter to a Russian literary scholar, Orwell predicts that this “little squib” will prove “so not OK politically that I don’t feel certain in advance that anyone will publish it” (“Letter to Gleb” 96), and wrote to another correspondent after its 1945 publication that the novel was left “lying in type for about a year because the publisher dared not bring it out until the war was over” (“Letter to Frank” 109). Abbot Gleason elaborates that “publishers [were] unwilling to challenge the Russophile sentiments of the English public (and to a degree, government) by

publishing *Animal Farm*" (82). Orwell wrote that he was "surprised by [the novel's] friendly reception," noting too that "the first edition of 6000 copies sold out immediately" ("Letter to Frank" 109).

15. This point extends Giorgio Agamben's argument about the "intimate caesura" of the in/human, which concludes in an Orwellian vein: human "concentration and [presumably panspecies] extermination camps" emerge not in the conventional terms of man's dehumanization of others but rather as "an extreme and monstrous experiment" proceeding from the divisions "between the human and the inhuman, which has ended up dragging the very possibility of the distinction to its ruin" (22).

16. Daniel J. Leab cites Batchelor's own account in *Masters of Animation* to note how the latter "gloried in the fact that 'the medium of animation had never tackled such a subject'" (238), and also details Halas and Batchelor's amazing journey in hiring a few key former Disney staffers and securing clandestine CIA funding to produce their version of *Animal Farm*.

17. Rather than enacting a historic break with modernist sensibilities, as Fredric Jameson explains, these "necessary failures" work to "inscribe the particular postmodern project back into its context, while at the same time reopening the question of the modern itself for reexamination" (*Postmodernism* xvi), a point that in part guides my assumption that *Babe* is a postmodern text.

18. The phrase "speaking meat," a sort of ego-projection of a human moral conscience, is Val Plumwood's, and she uses it to explain self-reflective responses to *Babe* that included the consequent publication of *Babe's Vegetarian Cookbook*. This aspect leads Fudge to conclude that, in contrast to its source novel's emphasis on cross-species "understanding" (*Animal* 87), the film's use of anthropomorphism leads to an "expansion of the empire of the human" (88).

19. This point is informed by Robert McKay's exploration of the possibility for telling a nonhuman-centered story through a simultaneously abject, animal, and "protesting agency" that puts authority under erasure (330). In a reading of Deborah Levy's *Diary of a Steak*, an experimental literary intertext that is narrated from the perspective of a beefsteak infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or "Mad Cow Disease") during the outbreak crisis of 1990s England, McKay argues that the fragmentary form of this narrative, rather than obfuscating its meaning, provides a complex means by which the text renounces "the ability to define the animal" (314).

20. In the opening of *The Animal Estate*, which many see as a landmark text in animal studies, Harriet Ritvo distinguishes her focus on "texts produced by people who dealt with real animals" from "[c]anonical art and literature" as well as "the large literature of fable and fantasy" because, she says, the latter provide little if any reliable evidence of the frequent

human-animal interactions in the nineteenth-century Britain (4). Over a decade later, Christine Kenyon-Jones points to this example in her study of British romantic writing in order to argue for the special value of literary language, particularly metaphor, as “more honest” about its “rhetorical manipulations” than “straightforward” forms of writing (8). In spite of these different assumptions about the value of literariness, both implicitly affirm Steve Baker’s conclusions about the importance of textual and other representations, namely, that “unmediated access to animals” is a fantasy (10).

### *Works Cited*

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