

**Defamiliarization (*Ostranenie*) of Other Animals in
Literary and Visual Narratives**

by

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Defamiliarization (*Ostranenie*) of Other Animals in Literary and Visual Narratives

Koç University

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This thesis is dedicated to all animals living and dying in captivity under human exploitation.

ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the manifestation of arrogant anthropocentrism¹ in contemporary literary and visual media. It explores the enculturation of humans starting from early childhood in the family and the larger society toward a set of norms constructed around human supremacy over nonhuman animals. It utilizes defamiliarization² as a critical method to make nonhuman animals visible who are more often otherized and objectified in the dominant normative culture. It maintains that defamiliarization is needed to deconstruct the physical and epistemic violence toward animals and recognize them as individuals rather than exploitable natural resources who are classified according to their use-value for the human species. Lastly, it draws a trajectory for a non-anthropocentric modality for incorporating animals in visual arts, aiming to contribute to societal and cultural change by challenging human sovereignty and doing justice to animals in literary and artistic representations.

Keywords: Critical animal studies, anthropocentrism, defamiliarization, visual and literary culture, otherization, speciesism, animal representations

¹ The term is coined and defined by Lori Gruen in *Entangled Empathy* (2015)

² Viktor Shklovsky's term, "ostranenie" is mentioned in *Theory of Prose* (1925)

ÖZETÇE

Edebi ve Görsel Anlatılarda Öteki Hayvanların Yabancılaştırılması

Bilge Ece Çizmeci

Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat, Yüksek Lisans

29 Mayıs 2023

Bu tez, kibirli antroposentrizmin³ çağdaş edebi ve görsel mecralardaki tezahürüne odaklanmaktadır. Ailede ve toplumda erken dönem çocukluktan başlayarak insanların, insan olmayan hayvanlardan üstün olması fikri etrafında inşa edilmiş bir dizi norma doğru kültürlenmesini incelemektedir. Hakim olan normatif kültürde çoğunlukla ötekileştirilen ve nesneleştirilen insan olmayan hayvanları görünür kılmak için yabancılaştırmayı⁴ eleştirel bir yöntem olarak kullanmaktadır. Hayvanlara yönelik fiziksel ve epistemik şiddeti yapıbozuma uğratmak ve onları insan türü için kullanım değerleri üzerinden sınıflandırılan doğal kaynaklar olarak görmek yerine birey olarak kabul etmek ve tanımak için yabancılaştırmının gerekli olduğunu savunmaktadır. Son olarak, insan egemenliğine karşı çıkarak, edebi ve sanatsal temsillerde hayvanlara karşı adil olmak ve toplumsal ve kültürel değişime katkıda bulunmayı amaçlayarak hayvanları görsel sanatlara dahil etmek için insan merkezli olmayan bir modalite için bir yörünge çizmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eleştirel hayvan çalışmaları, antroposentrizm, yabancılaştırma, görsel ve edebi kültür, ötekileştirme, türçülük, hayvan temsilleri

³ *Entangled Empathy* (2015) isimli kitabında Lori Gruen tarafından ortaya atılmış ve açıklanmış olan bir kavramdır.

⁴ Yabancılaştırma, original dilinde “ostranenie” Rus teorisyen Viktor Shklovsky’nin *Theory of Prose* (1925) isimli kitapta ortaya attığı bir anlatı yöntemidir.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

On the sixth of February in 2023, at 4.17 a.m. (GMT + 03:00) an earthquake hit Gaziantep, a city in south-central Turkey, affecting numerous cities and causing the death of over 30.000 humans. There is no information regarding the number of animals who died. There is only an approximate number of “livestock” that was “destroyed,” which means that as merchandise, they are useless. Some people who survived struggled to save their dogs and cats from the shambles with all their might. However, it was not only the “pets” but those “others” kept in confinement as “livestock” that lost their lives. Some of them were saved, which appeared in social media as good news; the glimpse of hope inspired people. At the same time, The Meat and Dairy Institution of Turkey stated that they would be taking the cattle (big and small) from cities that were affected by the earthquake. They added that animals that are “mature enough” to be slaughtered are sent to their units to be slaughtered by the institution, while the young and pregnant animals are sent to TİGEM (General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises) to be fed and exploited until it is their time to be slaughtered⁵.

This earthquake is only an example, but it goes to show our apathy toward their lives as individuals. The number of animals in Turkey exploited and killed per year for human consumption is not known either. The latest report about nonhuman animals was made thanks to the efforts of HAKİM (Hayvan Hakları İzleme Komitesi, Animal Rights Monitoring Committee) for 2020. In the report, animals are grouped according to how they were exploited and tortured. For instance, it is stated that 3.413.857 animals were violated through artificial insemination in 2020, and 20 were raped by human beings. The list goes on with the animals tortured in labs during experiments, but some groups do not have a number. “Number of horses, donkeys, and mules who have been tortured by means of being used for carriages and other forms of transportation is not known.”⁶ This form of information regarding the “other” animals escapes our attention due to the

⁵ <https://www.birgun.net/haber/et-ve-sut-kurumu-ndan-deprem-bolgesindeki-ureticiler-icin-aciklama-420811>

⁶ <https://t24.com.tr/haber/turkiye-de-son-bir-yilda-1-milyar-hayvanin-yasam-hakki-gasp-edildi-22-milyon-hayvan-iskence-gordu.944771>

dominant norms of the society we live in and the laws that protect the norms. This is not a problem specific or unique to Turkey.

In times like this, when there is mutual grief and suffering, some of us come to realize that we share something with the animals we do not think of very often. Perhaps it is the mutual vulnerability that is realized or the fact that just like human beings, each of these animals also has a unique life and does not want to die. When animals were rescued, people felt relief and joy. A man who had never cared for cats before adopted the cat who saved him from the shambles by waiting by his side and letting people know someone was below the wreckage. We can see two different motivations here; while the former group of people is happy for the animal, the latter is directly related to personal gain. It is only because the cat saved him that he felt gratitude or found a reason for keeping a cat in his house. This is how animals are positioned in most of human society; they are worthy only as far as they benefit humans.

This thesis provides another way of seeing nonhuman animals, recognizing their existence as individuals. The people who felt happy for the rescued animals might have felt joy when a cow was saved, but how many of them continue to eat the bodies of these animals and keep drinking their milk? Starting in early childhood, we learn to look at all those around us through a human-centered perspective (anthropocentrism), which includes the ability to differentiate between the classes of animals (hierarchy of animals) and treat them accordingly (speciesism). I set out to deconstruct this system of physical and epistemic violence toward nonhuman animals by focusing, respectively, on the role of family and larger society in teaching children arrogant anthropocentrism and how a child receives it, the disappearance of animals and their objectification in fictional narratives which set out to question and criticize the concept of “human,” and lastly, narratives that are constructed to make their readers and viewers challenge otherization of animals and problematize human sovereignty over nonhuman animals.

Viktor Shklovsky’s defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) is a valuable method (Theory of Prose, 1991) because it offers the chance to look at those we learned to disregard, overlook, and our habits in a different light, in an unexpected context.

...life fades into nothingness. Automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war.

(Shklovsky, 1991, p. 5)

Viktor Shklovsky uses defamiliarization as an artistic technique in the chapter “Art as Device,” claiming that art is a tool that can “return sensation to our limbs” by defamiliarizing us from the object which we no longer recognize. According to him, objects and concepts escape our awareness in the mundane flow of life, thus resulting in apathy. Defamiliarization is a method to change one’s accustomed perception to recognize things anew and awaken our senses. As the quotation above shows, Shklovsky makes a strange list of “things” that no longer capture one’s attention. Clothes and furniture are followed by wives and the fear of war. I propose to expand this list and argue that the “things” that he refers to as objects could also include animals. Just like “wives” are objectified to the point of being seen as the equivalent of clothes and furniture, animals too often get lost in the background, reduced to decorative objects rather than being seen as living beings. I thus use Shklovsky’s “automatization” to refer to the normalization of animal abuse and killing and utilize “defamiliarization” as a critical method to make nonhuman animals visible.

In the second chapter, I begin with discussing the enculturation of a human being from childhood to adulthood towards a set of norms that originate from human supremacy and arrogant anthropocentrism, as defined by Lori Gruen⁷. I examine the chapters of *How to Roast A Lamb* (2009), a cookbook by the Greek chef Michael Psilakis where he shares his childhood memories about hunting and slaughtering animals to reveal how violence toward animals is justified. I continue with a food column article by Şemsa Denizsel, a Turkish chef, which also contains a childhood memory of slaughtering an animal, to discuss how this differs from Psilakis’s narrative about animals. Lastly, analysis of the Turkish director Yunus Emre Yalçın’s short documentary *Anima* (2021) contrasts these childhood memories discussed earlier. Yalçın’s film shows a spark of hope in darkness because though he has been as exposed to animal cruelty as Psilakis and Denizsel, he chooses to question the tenets of arrogant anthropocentrism that he has been taught. He shares the stories of many animals with the audience through *Anima*. In this chapter, I suggest that though today children are taught from an early age to see animals as objects or natural resources that exist to serve

⁷ In *Entangled Empathy*, Gruen divides anthropocentrism into two; *inevitable anthropocentrism* is the fact that we are humans and therefore our perspectives are necessarily human. However, this “does not mean that we can’t work to see things from the perspectives of nonhumans” (24). The second sense of anthropocentrism is *arrogant anthropocentrism* and it is “a type of human chauvinism that not only locates humans at the center of everything, but elevates human perspective above all others” (24).

humans as they wish, not every child responds the same. Arrogant anthropocentrism can be deconstructed, and empathy can be cultivated.

In the third chapter, I focus on two works: Valdimar Jóhannsson's feature film *Lamb* (2021) and Edward Albee's play *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* (2005). Although *Lamb* takes place in a rural environment and *The Goat* is set in the city, they share several similarities in how they portray the human/animal hierarchy. In both works, human characters abuse and kill animals, finding different means of "justifying" their violent acts. I first argue that the ongoing normalization of violence toward nonhuman others exemplifies what Lori Gruen calls "arrogant anthropocentrism." I then demonstrate that although Jóhannsson and Albee critique the human/animal divide to a certain extent, by foregrounding a hybrid creature, half human and half lamb in *Lamb* and by dwelling on the question of "bestiality" in *The Goat*, they ultimately center humans in the narrative and fail to estrange the reader from the human supremacist perspective. Consequently, in both works, the nonhuman animals are there, but they are still not fully visible. I analyze these two works from the stance of critical animal studies and abolitionist veganism⁸ to critique how nonhuman animals are trivialized and even nullified, even in narratives that do not have this intention.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on narratives that utilize defamiliarization to benefit nonhuman animals. First, I analyze Augustina Bazterrica's novel *Tender is the Flesh* (2020) which uses humans metaphorically to tell the contemporary reality of nonhuman animals. As the narrative exposes the potential of evil within humans and how normalcy is constructed in a society, it also offers a unique way of defamiliarization. I discuss two vegan advertisements and a short film on reviving compassion towards animals. I compare the narrative choices of these works and question why one of the advertisements was banned. Lastly, I examine the group exhibition *Animal Gaze* (2023) that I curated as part of this thesis. The exhibition is an artistic experiment of how defamiliarization can be used in visual arts for an encounter with animals and a confrontation with our treatment of and perspective toward them.

Over three chapters that bring literary, cinematic, and artistic narratives into a dialogue, this thesis argues that defamiliarization is a tool that is efficient in steering us

⁸ Abolitionist veganism seeks to abolish all animal use and rejects welfarist regulations (such as "humane farming" and "free-range eggs") which continues to embrace and perpetuates the notion that animals can be used by humans.

to encounter animals in a different light that is on the other side of arrogant anthropocentrism. Humans need to be defamiliarized from the tenets they have been taught since early childhood to become aware of and deconstruct the hegemony of humans over animals that they have been born into. Only when this set of norms is de-normalized can we acknowledge how human supremacy functions by otherizing and objectifying animals. We must recognize the singular lives of animals who are otherwise generalized and categorized into pets, prey animals, lab animals, livestock, beasts of burden, and wild animals. I maintain that what stands on the other side of arrogant anthropocentrism is seeing them as individuals with whom we walk this earth and coexist. Reshaping our perception of those who are abstracted as food, transportation, and clothing and exploited in many other ways in the narratives we are exposed to and challenging human supremacy carry a significant role in animal liberation.

Chapter 2: MEMORIES OF SLAUGHTER: FAMILIARIZATION OF VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD

2.1 Introduction

In Mark Mylod's feature film *The Menu* (2022) special guests of Chef Slowik are taken to a private island with a luxury boat and escorted to a restaurant that serves people of a certain caliber only. Setting foot on the island, the guests are shown around by Elsa, maître d'hôtel. The food cooked in the restaurant is made with the ingredients found on the island; they grow the plants, catch fish from the nearby body of water and slaughter the animals they breed. Elsa shows them their smokehouse, which is "in the Nordic tradition" and then explains how special the "meat" of the animals that they cook and serve are:

We use the meat of dairy cows only, which we age for an astonishing 152 days to relax the protein standards. (*The Menu*, 00:07:18)

When two of the guests want to go inside the smokehouse, Elsa lets them go in with a caution; "...but please do not touch our proteins. They're immature" (00:07:33). She then shows them where the staff lives, which resembles a military barrack, but she tells them that they are a "family" and each day they "harvest, ferment, slaughter, marinate, liquefy, spherify, gel." Her vocabulary is scientific and sounds excessively professional. In fact, everything at the restaurant is all too professional. Even when things get out of control, it is planned and not chaotic for the restaurant staff, including the chef; but out of control for the guests and the film viewers.

Welcoming his guests to Hawthorne (the name of the restaurant), Julian Slowik, the chef, summarizes what they will experience there and asks them for one thing only.

Over the next few hours you will ingest fat, salt, sugar, protein, bacteria, fungi, various plants and animals, and at times, entire ecosystems. But I have to beg of you one thing. *Do not eat. Taste*⁹. Savor. Relish. Consider every morsel that you

⁹ Italics mine.

place inside your mouth. Be mindful. But do not eat. Our menu is too precious for that.” (00:15:58 – 00:16:43)

As he decomposes the food for them as protein, fat, and others, he points out that there is an ecosystem behind what they eat. The words “taste” and “savor” have the same etymological root which is “sapor” from Latin. Taste is an intricate word that stands in contrast to eating. While the act of eating relates more to consumption and a natural need for survival, “taste” is associated with aesthetics and beauty. In *Taste*, Giorgio Agamben points out the two senses of taste, and refers to Hegel for taste as the act that is only possible through destruction. In Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, according to Agamben, “taste is opposed to the two theoretical senses, sight and hearing, since a work of art cannot be tasted as such, because taste does not leave its object free and independent, but deals with it in a really practical way, dissolving and consuming it” (Taste, p. 4). For the other definition of taste, he quotes Isidore de Sevilla to elaborate on taste and expose the etymology of the word with its relation to “sapiens”:

The word “sapiens” (wise man) is derived from “sapor” (taste) (*Sapiens dictus a sapore*) for just as the sense of taste is able to discern the flavors (sapore) of different foods, so too is the wise man able to discern objects and their causes since he recognizes each one as distinct and is able to judge them with an instinct for truth. (Agamben, Taste, 2017, p. 4)

As the special guests of Hawthorne, the fictional people of Mark Mylod’s feature film *The Menu* (2022) represent the upper-class clientele, who present themselves as people with finesse. They pride themselves on having the means to afford this luxurious experience which is for the people who have an acquired taste for special dishes, unlike others who would not be able to discern the various ingredients in a dish. While the film mainly criticizes upper-class people, this scene, in particular, exemplifies how human supremacy seeps through the words chosen in food culture. As sapiens, wise men (human beings) eat unlike animals and can judge objects and make conclusions about what carries truth value and what does not. It is we, the species of human beings, who construct truth. In the controlled island of Hawthorne restaurant, the ecosystem is under control, and everything is planned and in order.

Telling the story of a dish is a common practice and even a must when it comes to fine dining. Each recipe has a story that adds a layer to the taste of the dish. In *The Menu*, tasting a dish is not only about discerning the ingredients but also about

remembering. After the appetizers, Chef Slowik tells his guests that “the next course is called ‘memory’ and that is what it’s meant to evoke... a memory” (00:29:41). To the surprise of the guests, the story of this course is a rather grim childhood memory from when he was only seven years old. After he tells them how he stabbed his father in the thigh with kitchen scissors to stop him from strangling his mother, “house-smoked Bresse chicken thigh al pastor” is served to the guests. The dish is plated in an unusual way; the thighs of cooked chickens are stabbed with tiny scissors, referring to the violent childhood memory of the chef. The film shows us how the guests react to this story, and while some find this disconcerting and bizarre, one of them says that “it is a backstory to what makes him a chef artist” (00:31:01). The usage of the word “artist” opens up many paths of discussion about what can be considered art and whether we can consider animals as art materials. However, in this chapter, I focus on how violence towards animals is fictionalized and made into a “fact” of life by adults and explained to children as a teaching among many others which is the outcome of the long tradition of arrogant anthropocentrism that advocates human superiority above all else. Chef Slowik, the backstory of the dish, and the selected scenes of the film are mentioned here to initiate the analysis of another chef’s childhood memories.

Michael Psilakis is an actual chef with a cookbook titled *How to Roast a Lamb* (2009). In the introduction of the book, he explains the importance of food and cooking for him and his family; “...not just for nourishment, but also for the lessons taught and lessons learned between generations” (10). His parents emigrated from Greece to America, and in this book, as part of the recipes representing the Greek food culture, he tells many stories from his childhood and extended family. I focus on parts of his cookbook to analyze the tenets of anthropocentrism he is introduced to as a child, mostly by his father, his role model whom he admires. The power dynamics play a significant role in his relationship with his father. In the smallest institution, the family, his father plays the most powerful role, the patriarch, while Michael Psilakis is the least powerful member of the family as the child. Psilakis himself says that as the firstborn son in a Greek family, he is his father’s heir. I will explore how he is taught as a child where the food he is fed comes from, at an age when he is ready to absorb all information like a sponge. This exploration will reveal how we are taught that some animals are food while others serve other purposes for us humans. This also marks the

beginning of anthropocentrism as the one and only, normative perspective, taught to children by adults.

2.2 *Sacrifice, respect, slaughter*

There is a myriad of teachings that a child comes across as they grow up which have a significant effect on how they see and evaluate the world outside them. These teachings, which come mostly from an adult who is considered a role model or one who has authority over the child, differ depending on the specific culture. Nevertheless, in essence, most of them share the anthropocentric perspective as a given. In the following analysis of the chapters from Michael Psilakis's cookbook, I concentrate on his childhood memories with his father, the person who had the most effect on him. In order to present a coherent analysis, the memories I focus on will exclude other teachings that can be found in the book such as nationalism because cooking is also a way of cherishing and keeping the values of Greek culture alive. Here the focus is on animals and how they are objectified and nullified in the violent but culturally normalized acts of slaughtering and hunting.

Just as Chef Slowik uses chickens metaphorically in the plating of the dish and also for nourishment, for Psilakis lambs, and roasting lambs have a particular meaning. To him, it is a coming-of-age story. In the chapter "a lamb and a goat", Psilakis tells the reader how he was introduced to the fact behind the "food" he had been eating without knowing that it was actually "someone" and not "something". He says, "Somehow, I hadn't yet made the connection between the animals in my yard and the meat that I had eaten all my life. All I knew was that Daddy had brought the farm home" (97). His coming to terms with the "who" behind the "meat" is strange because he accepts his father's justification as a fact of life; animals are in the world so that humans can kill, cook and eat them. They are food, and that is a fact. This fact is related to religion in his case. Psilakis mentions in passing that his family goes to the Greek Orthodox Church and that they do not eat any animal products during Easter except for some; such as shellfish. His relationship with food and eating is here intermingled with religion, what they eat and abstain from eating is dependent on their religious practices. According to most of the Abrahamic religions, nonhuman animals are created by god for humans, and some of them are used for nutrition, while at times they are also sacrificed before being

eaten. However, as a child, Michael is not completely aware of this until the day he sees his “friend” being slaughtered by his own father and even watches the animal die. He is not only a witness but also an accomplice in the slaughtering of the lamb that they raise in their backyard. When his father asks him to go and “catch one”, he thinks that he is joking. Realizing that he is serious, he starts chasing after the lamb and the kid. The way he narrates how the lamb gets murdered belongs to the genre of horror and yet it is the backstory of a recipe called “Roasted Leg of Lamb.”

Finally I caught the lamb by a leg and knocked him down. He was kicking and trying to run away, but I sat down on top of him. As I sat on top of the lamb, watching it struggle to free itself, as if in slow motion my father came up behind me, reached down over my right shoulder with a hunting knife, grabbed the lamb’s head and ears, and, in one swift motion, slit the lamb’s throat. Blood shot out of the lamb like water from a high-pressure hose. The lamb started shaking and convulsing. I could feel an intense heat radiating out of its body, and I felt as though I was burning up. (98)

Witnessing and even feeling the dying moments of a living being, he starts crying “hysterically,”¹⁰ and when his father asks him why he is crying, he says that he killed his *friend* and that he helped him do it. After this, his father explains why he made him do it.

Michael, when Mommy cooks something for us to eat for dinner and it’s something you think you might not like because it’s part of the animal you don’t like the sound of, think before you say you’re not going to eat it. Because when you reject that liver, tongue, or cheeks, you are essentially saying that this animal *gave its life* for nothing – this animal that someone else raised, cared for, and fed died for nothing because you don’t want to eat it. (...) the taking of a life is never something to joke about. When you think about that lamb and *what it gave up for us* so that we could eat, you understand that we killed a living thing,

¹⁰ Hysteria and “hysteric” are terms that comes with a historical background (baggage). In the nineteenth century, it was women who reacted to things excessively and irrationally. This was considered an illness specific to women. In this context, when Michael as a child reacts to the slaughter, and his father explains to him the reason why as an authority figure, as the man of the house, it resonates with the binary oppositions of man as the rational being and women, animals and children as the irrational, inferior ones without necessary knowledge and control over their feelings.

and we must always *respect and honor* the animal by using everything it has to *offer*. (p. 98; my emphasis)

Psilakis tells this story before giving the group of recipes that use “both the luxury and obscure cuts of lamb and goat to show how, in the right hands, all food is beautiful”. He says that he learned from the famous chef Anthony Bourdain that “a true test of great chefs” is how they can “use their talent to cook ... less desirable” cuts of meat. Talent and artistry are expressions we come across often in fine dining. The ability to turn one undesirable “thing” into another, the ability to make something tasty out of death, “raw material” that is the dead body of an animal, is considered as a type of artmaking. Beauty as an aesthetics category is part of this artistry.

After his father’s explanation, Michael does not ask his father why they are killing these animals or how he knows the animal is “sacrificing itself for us” or “offering” its body to us. Instead, he accepts this concept as a piece of truth, as one of the many facts of life. What his father says carries truth value for him; his father’s words are not to be questioned; they come from authority. The words that his father uses such as animals sacrificing themselves for us, offering their bodies to us to nurture us, are the exemplary narratives that speak for the animals without the animals themselves expressing such a thing in reality. Sacrifice and offering also refer to Abrahamic religions, according to which all that is not human is created by god to serve humans. Both men, god, and father, command that animals are the servants of humans. It is the dogma, the “truth” that cannot be questioned. It is the “fact” of life that leaves a prominent mark on Psilakis and his memory.

Psilakis not only accepts this dogma but also names his cookbook “How to Roast a Lamb” and he is able to write down this gory memory, adding the picture of an animal who has been killed, skinned, and hung by the feet in an industrial kitchen. All that remains of the once living animal is a “thing” that looks like an animal and is similar to the images that show the human muscular system. Sterilized, the dead animal body becomes a material for cooking, and the fact that it is the corpse of an animal is neglected and unacknowledged. In the cookbook, there is no picture of a living animal. One of the pictures of the intact animal body is of four killed quails hung by their throats, and another one is of Psilakis’s father holding the fish he had caught. They are all dead and appropriated for aesthetic purposes.

2.3 *Hunting nature, becoming man*

From birth, I was groomed to be the next man of the family, the next patriarch
(...) He taught me how to hunt, garden, fish, and how to kill and skin a goat –
how to provide for a family in the ways he knew. (11)

At the beginning of the book, Psilakis refers to his father as his “hero” and later in a chapter titled “The Hunting Trip” he says that he had been begging his father to take him when he goes hunting with other members of the large family. When one day he finally asks Michael (who is then seven years old) if he wants to come, he is overjoyed. “This invitation meant that – in my father’s eyes and in the eyes of my family - I was becoming a man” (83). This reveals how hunting animals function as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. It is not out of necessity that they kill animals and skin them. It is how nonhuman existence is perceived by humans that define the acts and perpetuates the same system of exploitation. In this understanding, nature is the chaotic zone, ready to be tamed, exploited, hunted down, and organized by man, the authority, and the superior being who brings order to the chaos by taming, slaughtering, and overall dominating. Animals are positioned as objects at the mercy of man, the mighty subject. Their existence as individuals is never recognized. They exist only as objects and instruments for us humans, and each time they are hunted down, slaughtered, and exploited; they are nullified, consumed, exterminated, and turned into objects of human desire; food, clothing, and decorative objects. To return to Hegel, and utilizing his words about tasting, regarding the treatment of animals let me rephrase him; anthropocentrism defines all that is not human as objects, and does not leave them free and independent, but deals with them in a practical way, dissolving, consuming and exploiting them.

Carol J Adams uses the term “absent referent” for the animals who get slaughtered behind closed doors and are then marketed to the consumers in sterile and often misleading (the happy cow illusion) packages. The consumer is so accustomed to the “food” or “beverage” they are eating such as “pork” or “milk” (cow’s milk) or even “chicken wings” that in the daily flow of life, it is not recognized that what they are actually eating is the body of a slaughtered animal or the milk of a cow who had it for her calves in the first place and is being exploited to be killed when she can no longer produce milk. The animals that are exploited and killed are the referents who are absent,

especially in the industrial production. In this case, what if the consumer is aware of this fact? What if they live with these animals and then kill them? Chefs are aware of whom they are cutting and cooking but to them, it is not “whom” but “what” they are cooking. In Psilakis’s narrative, it is revealed to us that he is aware and mindful of the animal that he is cooking and he even considers it an act of respect toward the animal when he manages to turn an unusual part of the animal into one that is “tasty”. One could argue that this is how absent referents are made; by taking the dead body of an animal and making a “tasty dish” out of these corpses of once living creatures. Under the disguise of a narrative such as the one that says animals sacrifice themselves for us, Chef Psilakis finds the slaughtering of farmed animals normal. For him and for the majority of society, it is made into a norm with varying stories that justify the act for them. When normalcy is not questioned, when the anthropocentric perspective is not defamiliarized, it remains as the singular norm, the true perspective.

Jacques Derrida develops the term carnophallogocentrism for the critical deconstruction of subjectivity and in *The Animal that Therefore I am* (2008), he says explicitly that “The animal’s problem is the male. Evil comes to the animal through the male” and it is “warlike, strategic” (104). In an interview between Matthew Calarco and Adams, this term is discussed in relation to how it is in dialogue with Adams’s term “absent referent” because both mention slaughtering and eating animals as acts that perpetuate the dominance of men over animals. In this interview, Calarco explains that Derrida adds “carno” to his existent term “phallogocentrism” because “the subject that is being critiqued in post-humanist thought should be understood not simply as a fully self-present, speaking, masculine subject but also as a quintessentially human, *animal-flesh-eating*¹¹ subject” (Derrida and *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 2016, p. 33). Calarco concludes that when deconstructing subjectivity, Derrida deconstructs carnophallogocentrism which “calls for an intersectional analysis of at least three coordinates in the constitution of subjectivity...” Listing the three coordinates, Calarco defines the last one that is carnivorousism as “the requirement of the literal and symbolic consumption of flesh, a commitment to anthropocentrism, the hierarchal ranking of human subjects over non-human animals”. We can see this discourse in both chapters of

¹¹ Italics not mine, Calarco’s

Psilakis's cookbook; both when he is asked to help his father slaughter a lamb and when he is overjoyed to be finally allowed to join his father during his hunting expedition.

2.4 *Hostilizing animals*

Şemsa Denizsel is another chef who constructs her recipes in dialogue with a backstory, decorating her articles with images of dishes that can be described as aestheticized animal bodies. Her first article for the newspaper Oksijen is titled "I So Cooked That Unreliable Rooster" (2021) and it tells a story from her past which gives the impression that she was a child then. The article starts with the sentence "We slaughtered the rooster..." and continues with her explaining that the three roosters and the fourteen chickens that they have in the henhouse need to be slaughtered at times when they get sick. When recently "the bulkiest of the roosters" falls ill, he gets slaughtered by a man named Arslan who is probably a member of her kitchen. This occurrence reminds her of the day when they (her mother and other members of her family) were visiting someone at their house, and a rooster of that house fell ill. Almost the same event takes place; "the rooster fell ill" and "had to be cooked".

At around ten in the morning, it (the dead rooster) was placed in the middle of the embers drawn from the fire burning in a cast iron pot. It seemed very romantic to me to cook in that fire right there and then. After all, we were living in Istanbul, and I knew the non-electrical stove, but the burning fire... cooking on that fire directly was new to me. And it was romantic, as I said. My interest in cooking and excitement about all that is related to cooking are evident even from then. That day, the meal would not cook. The *poor* rooster cooked for 9 hours and remained like a strap; my *poor* mother was devastated, embarrassed that she *couldn't perform as expected*¹². And of course, on that day I learned that these roosters cannot be trusted.

The gist of the story she tells is that one needs to be prepared when cooking roosters. What she takes from that story is a cooking tip. Denizsel regards animals as mere ingredients, similar to broccoli or tomatoes. Animals are as absent as they could be, and yet she refers to the rooster that appears in the backstory as "poor". She is not unaware of the fact that the rooster was a once living animal but in this case, her justification is

¹² Italics mine

that he was sick and “had to be cooked”. To her reasoning, it is the thing to do; killing and eating an animal when they fall ill.

We can see a parallel with Psilakis’s memory which reveals a teaching of his father; you need to slaughter the animal who is sacrificing itself for you and honor the animal by eating every part of the animal. As a man, you need to face the fact and slaughter the animal. Likewise, Denizsel’s memory uncovers how she revisits a moment from childhood, takes the role of her mother. She remembers this memory as one that reminds her of her mother who is “embarrassed” because she could not perform as the cook of the evening. She uses the adjective “poor” for both the rooster whose flesh is being cooked and her mother. In the instance of her childhood, the animal gets killed and she watches her mother cook the animal which takes too long. Later, she herself is given a rooster who has been slaughtered by a man named Arslan. Having learned her lesson in childhood, she takes precautions so as not to be in the position of her mother.

The lesson she has learned from the past memory is “never to trust a rooster”; an expression that positions the animal, who was slaughtered by humans, as the enemy of the cook, who is also a human. She anthropomorphizes the rooster by calling him “sinister” and in no part of the recipe does she consider the animal as a once-living being, except for when she says the rooster “fell ill”. The rooster is merely an ingredient and even a hostile one. She finishes the recipe with the following:

Rooster meat is not easy to digest, even though it is well-cooked and in pieces. It is not cooked and eaten very often so it is necessary to appreciate it. Oh and the roosters cannot be trusted. You should know this too. No kind of rooster is to be trusted.

The narrative she builds is war-like. She fights the meat that is “more fibrous, more like game meat¹³”. It is as if the animal (flesh of the animal) struggles against the cook. Either dead or alive, when an animal that is expected to be subordinate to the master, the human, is seen as the enemy, as the “bad animal”.

In Denizsel, we can see how her mother is “embarrassed” because she fails to cook the animal as expected. As the master of the kitchen, this time a woman, is expected to cook the animal which is the next step after slaughtering the animal that is not accomplished by her mother. Here we can see the role of women in contrast to men;

¹³ “game meat” means that it is the “meat” (flesh) of an animal that was killed during hunting.

while the former fights the dead body of the animal, the latter slaughters. In the carnophallogocentric order of many binary oppositions such as man vs woman, human vs animal, winner vs loser or conqueror vs conquered, master vs slave; the embodiment of male empowerment by women occurs when women choose to mimic the victor who proves his might through hunting, killing, conquering and possessing. Denizsel follows the same order. Seeing her mother fail in the war against a rooster, Denizsel takes her revenge many years later and successfully cooks the rooster, winning the war. She anthropomorphizes the rooster by giving the animal the negative qualities of “unreliable” and untrustworthy. It is not even the living animal but the flesh of the animal that is “hostilized” by her. What we see as the recurring pattern in two narratives is that both learn from their parents and their relatives how to see and treat animals, especially the ones who are slaughtered by humans.

2.5 *Abstracted animals*

In *Animals and Society*, Margot DeMello shares a compilation of studies on the link between violence to animals and humans. According to the studies, children who harm animals mostly witness their “fathers or other adult figure” harm an animal.

Witnessing a parent’s violence toward another parent is also a causative factor; watching a parent get battered leads a child to harm animals. (...) Children who witnessed abuse to animals or family members may be acting out their traumas, or regaining a sense of power, when abusing an animal. Perhaps it is that violence has become the norm for children such as this, or perhaps their sense of empathy has been disrupted. (2012, p. 186)

In the cases where it is said that the parent is abusing an animal or harming an animal, mostly what is pictured in mind is not a parent taking the insides of a fish out before frying them. In fact, this is a common and familiar practice that is called “cleaning a fish” in the English language. However, if a parent decides to bleed a dog out and “clean” the dog, this would be considered as abusive, absurd, or psychopathic. Killing animals in the name of religion is another area that is left untouched and cannot be open to discussion because it is a part of religious “culture”.

In Turkey, in addition to the other days of the year, during the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), some people from the Muslim population of the country pay for

animals such as steers and sheep in order to either kill (sacrifice) them themselves or pay another person to kill the animal; who is then cooked and eaten by the extended family and also distributed to neighbors as an act of kindness. Every year, newspaper articles appear about the prices of the animals and other details regarding this religious feast. Besides these, recently there has been some articles by specialists in children's psychology cautioning adults not to let children below a certain age see the killing of an animal.

Below is an article published on a hospital's website. In the article, the psychologist lists the possible scenarios:

While instilling in children the love of animals and not harming them, on the one hand, the child's witnessing of slaughter can lead to a serious contradiction in children.

If there is a pet in the child's home, he or she may develop fears about whether it will be sacrificed too. Again, if he or she cannot control this fear, problems such as anxiety and sleep disorders may occur.

Since abstract thinking is weak for the child, they can perceive the story concretely and this situation may seem scary to the child, they may be confused and it may be difficult for them to control their fear. (Barlas, 2013)

The article also states that children's ability to understand abstract concepts starts developing at the age of twelve. The abstract concept mentioned here is not unlike the concept that Psilakis's father builds; the animal is sacrificing itself. Particularly in Islam, sacrificing animals is about feeding those in need. The "story" mentioned in the article is about sacrificing animals to feed those in need, humans. However, slaughtering animals is about continuing the religious practice today, so there is no necessity to kill an animal to feed people. It is a feast that includes slaughtering animals. In the enculturation of a child, before they are instilled with the norm that animals are natural sources at the service of human exploitation, children have a better understanding of the controversy in the actions of adults. They are capable of seeing the horror of it. Therefore, it only makes sense when they are traumatized or ask if their cat or dog will also be killed. After all, they are not born with the concept of speciesism. They do not know yet which animal has which purpose in life, which is also determined by humans. Normalization of violence occurs as they are introduced to the world of

abstractions. In this process, some animals become abstract concepts; they become food, clothing, gift, sacrificial things, decorative objects and many others.

For the advertisement of religious festivals, “family” plays the main role in the visualization of these days. Visual representation of animals in the posters of the Feast of Sacrifice reveals an odd discrepancy. The posters as seen below were taken in 2022 during this religious holiday. These posters can be seen around the city such as at the bus station, on the street, or at a metro station. The first one (fig. 2-1) invites the Muslim community to pay for an animal that will be slaughtered (sacrificed) for the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) for them and distributed to those who need it. “Happiness” (mutluluk in Turkish) is written in capital letters with the largest font, placed right above the animal (“kurban”, the sacrifice) who is encouraged to be slaughtered makes for a controversial image since there is nothing for the animal to be happy about. In the other poster (fig. 2-2), we see a smiling child holding/hugging a sheep with the text behind: “Sacrifice for the orphan” (Yetime Kurban) the message seems clearer. When the animal is slaughtered, they will feed the orphans with dead animal bodies turned into food. The word sacrifice is softer and carries a sense of togetherness and selflessness. It also takes away the act of killing from the picture. The image of the child as an accomplice to the killing (sacrifice) is similar to Psilakis who was also an accomplice in the killing of a lamb whom he earlier considered his friend. The incorporation of children and even orphans in a violent act and its advertisement as a trope to elicit empathy or mitigate violence is both misleading and exploitative of children.



Figure 2-1



Figure 2-2

If what Psilakis experienced as a child was a trauma, the memory of killing that lamb became a specter and followed him. The slaughtering of his friend left such a mark on him that taking the responsibility of being an accomplice of such a violent act with a man whom he considers his “hero”, he could either come to realize and confront that they killed an animal who neither gave consent nor gifted his life; or continue with the norms of the father. As the heir to the patriarch, his father, his hero; he chose the latter. It is such an affective experience that later he chooses to be a chef and to such an extent; he even names the book “How to Roast a Lamb”, with a demarcation from a childhood memory, from the day when the lamb stopped breathing when he could feel the warm body become lifeless, bleeding to death.

2.6 *Apathy or Empathy*

Empathy is also something we are taught to “get over” or grow out of. We learn to quash our caring reactions for others, and our busy lives and immediate preoccupations provide excuses for not developing empathy. (Gruen, p. 82)

In Michael Psilakis’s narrative, it is clear that as a child, he is taught to “grow out of” the empathetic reaction he has shown toward the lamb and later he chooses to take his father’s word for the absolute truth. Conversely, the Turkish director Yusuf Emre Yalçın’s documentary, *Anima* (2021), inspired by the director’s own childhood

memories, demonstrates that not every child accepts the narrative of adults that normalizes the exploitation and slaughtering of animals. *Anima* includes a “mature” content warning at the beginning of the film, with a note next to it: “Contains animal cruelty” written as a disclaimer. This is a generic label put on the films depending on the content but even the label itself reveals how the killing of animals become content for mature viewers. As the mature ones, we must have been through this empathetic period and got over it, as Gruen puts it. In the opening scene in heavy fog and fumes, Yalçın talks to the viewer: “I only remember fragments of memories, dreams, and feelings from my past life. Most of them are of life and death, I couldn’t really understand back then.” What follows is a human crowd covered in fumes, silent at first. The post-apocalyptic atmosphere changes once the camera’s angle widens to reveal that this is a camel wrestling festival taking place in Selçuk, Turkey. This is a cultural event that is similar to the bullfighting “festival” of Spanish culture. It is still considered part of a tradition and not banned, even though animal rights activists are concerned about the camels and the Istanbul Bar Association made an official announcement to the public, criticizing the Turkish law for not banning it, saying they are violent and do not have folkloric roots (2021).

As this is considered a “sport”, there are certain rules to it. One of the rules is athletic integrity; the people who own the camels are expected to respect each other and not pick up a fight. However, in *Anima*, we witness an absurd moment when two sides, owners of two camels start fighting in the arena when the atmosphere gets tense. As in every sports event, there is a commentator whose voice is heard in the arena. When the human fight begins, he makes the following announcement:

Stop the wrestling fellas. Stop the wrestling. Dear police officers! (...) Break up the wrestling (camels) pals, break up the fight. This is not human wrestling!

Shame on you! What a lack of manners! (00:05:49)

“This is not human wrestling” and “Shame on you” are the expressions that reveal how we define what is human and what is against humanity. Is it a humane treatment of camels? What follows after this announcement is the scene which shows a booth that sells camel meat in the form of sausages (sucuk)¹⁴. Is it humane to slaughter the camels,

¹⁴ Against the petition of İzmir Bar Association to ban camel wrestling, Selcuk Representative of Camel Culture and Camel Wrestling Federation, Muammer Kale, made a statement saying that it is a part of culture and if it gets banned, people will turn camels into sausages (sucuk), claiming that this will be the end of camel species (2014).

make sausages out of their flesh, and then sell them at a festival where the live camels are made to fight so that humans can enjoy themselves? There comes an even more absurd scene when the speaker of the festival addresses the press members and says that “camels are slaughtered in Australia: exterminated, killed. As is demonstrated here, we place a lot of importance on them (camels). I kindly urge you to notice this fact” (00:09:15-00:09:23). Honoring, respecting and placing importance on animals; these expressions reappear in the examples discussed so far and each of them included killing the animals.

While humans are considered “civilized”, having certain manners; camels as the instruments of humans are the “animals”, the lower beings, without manners. Camels shall wrest; humans should not.

I remember going to the village on a lovely, sunny day. While my mother and the other women were doing the house chores; as men of the family, we were outside, onto something I hadn’t yet understood entirely. I helped my father dig a small hole. I learned how to hold the shovel, dig the earth, and throw away the soil. I learned these things. Then, a few other men brought a cow behind a small truck.

As the director recounts his childhood memories of the Sacrificial Feast, the camera is seated on the truck and travels with two cows, who are trying to stand still as the vehicle moves in the city. It is almost morning. The following scene is at the entrance of a “livestock market” where people come and buy live animals to slaughter them for the Feast of Sacrifice. The camera stands still for a while, showing the area where animals wait in groups. The scene captures the ordinariness of the day, it is not unlike any other day, and yet we hear the sound of animals, their existence breaks the commonness of the moment. It is a day when they are bought, brought to the garden of a house, fed for the day and killed when the time comes. Is this a common day for the animals?

A man yells the price of his animals, and we are inside the area where animals wait. One of the cows is lying down, the sun is up, and shines on them. A man, he probably owns the cows, enters the scene from the left side, walks to the cows and with the long stick he holds in his hand, hits the cow who has been lying down to make her stand up. She stands up, he walks away to the right. In the meantime we see people looking around, or more correctly, browsing, as if in a clothing shop. A man grabs the back of a goat, checking the animal. As the audience we are left with the unbearable

moments, to confront what animals are being exposed to, and how they are made into “objects” at the mercy of humans. It is difficult to see it when another man drags a steer by the rope as the steer refuses to go with him, tugging the rope.

It is the most unbearable when we witness how two men struggle to keep the steer who is trying to escape, resisting them while his head is covered with a sack. What follows the struggle is a bigger resistance from the animal which ends with the killing of him. As the audience, we see him before he is cut and bled to death, then we hear him only as the scene goes black. Blood is not shown because there is no need to show the carnage, we the audience know what happens next. The director continues telling his childhood memory as we are faced with the blackened screen:

While I was standing there alive with my little body, that majestic animal was lying motionless on the ground. I remember making up an excuse and leaving. Then, I was called back to have my forehead painted with the sacrificial blood. The sun is about to rise. I become aware of my body. I feel as if my limbs are redundant. I don't know where to put my hands and my feet. It is so weird to be myself.

In an interview I conducted with the director (email correspondence, 17 April, 2023), it came to my attention that he shares a childhood memory very similar to Michael Psilakis's; one that is between father and son. What changes the two narratives is the choice of the child; to accept the word of the father as truth or question it.

My father always took an active part in the slaughter of sacrifices. You don't know how to describe it with the mind of a child, especially when the act of killing comes from someone you love and feel safe and comfortable with. Because it doesn't match the image in your eyes. The father figure as one who shelters and protects his child shifts to one who cuts the throat of a creature or skins a creature. Adding the mixed feelings of such a shifting father figure to the process of learning and defining new phenomena as a child; to me, it feels likely that this experience became a traumatic event and had a negative impact on my perspective towards life. When I look at it in the long term, these experiences definitely had an effect on my being vegan (Yusuf Emre Yalçın).

In another interview (Postane, 2023), when asked about the psychological hardship behind shooting scenes that include animal cruelty, Yalçın states that though it was difficult to shoot those scenes, it was something he got accustomed to as a child.

For instance, Kurban Bayramı (the feast of sacrifice) is something that I have seen since I was a child, and yes it was always very difficult to watch all that but actually it is also something that I am used to. Or maybe it was something I normalized, I couldn't admit to myself how brutal it was...it wasn't as if I was shocked to see for the first time ever.

Both in Psilakis and Yalçın's memories, there is a breaking point when they face the act of killing. After that, familiarization with violence nestles in the consciousness as a part of life, as the normal that repeats itself every day. However, it is not something that can be suppressed easily. Psilakis cannot forget the day he helped his father kill his friend, and he does not show any remorse. That memory is one of the constituents of his personality, he becomes a chef and writes recipes that have body parts as ingredients. Şemsa Denizsel, similarly, does not show any grief over the rooster who was killed. She even titles the article in a revengeful manner toward the rooster. However, she calls the rooster "poor" when after a long time the body of the animal is still not cooked, as if she feels sorry for the flesh. These two instances demonstrate that as adults, they no longer respond to violence toward animals and even find satisfaction in cooking the dead animals. On the other hand, even though he has witnessed the killing of an animal as a child, *Anima*'s director Yusuf Emre Yalçın does not accept this as "normal" and becomes vegan. Getting accustomed to violence by witnessing it repetitively does not stop him from seeing the brutality and cruelty of the acts. The ending of *Anima* includes long shots of the rural area in Dersim, Turkey. We see the sheep, goats, chickens and roosters and only hear the wind and these animals. After showing the treatment of animals in three different locations that are all in the rural areas in Turkey, the film ends with animals speaking rather than humans speaking on their behalf. I think that is what makes the change; letting them speak in their own language and listening to them even if we may not make true sense of what they might be saying.

2.7 Conclusion: Respecting Animal Life

Here in New York City, we are so removed from the origins of our food that to see the animal in its natural habitat is to learn a new respect for the food we eat and the people with whom we share our food. The food is more special because

we know where it came from, and the respect that we show for it – by cooking it well, by enjoying it, and by gaining nutrition and life from the animal that gave its life – are part of the Greek culture that most of us don't get a chance to experience. (Psilakis, 2009, p. 82)

No animal confirms man, either positively or negatively. The animal can be killed and eaten so that its energy is added to that which the hunter already possesses. The animal can be tamed so that it supplies and works for the peasant. But always its lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man. (...) A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* and not by a *but*. (Berger, 1992, pp. 5-7)

These statements come from two people from different professions. Michael Psilakis is a chef, and John Berger a well-known art critic. Nevertheless, both share the same cliché of pastoral romanticism comparing the urban and the rural environments. I have taken these excerpts to summarize the arrogant anthropocentrism as it is manifested in both. Psilakis has taken the teaching of his father as a heritage; animals are creatures who sacrifice themselves for human consumption. Moreover, he claims that in the city people are strangers to their food and are not respectful to animals. In a very similar fashion, John Berger romanticizes the long tradition of animal exploitation with no regard to animal life and subjectivity; the urban stranger is so disconnected from nature that they do not understand the peasant. What he posits here is arrogant anthropocentrism; it is the subject that is always human, the mighty creature who categorizes and controls all else on earth and can justify this simply by being human, the superior. He totally ignores the existence of animals as individual beings by suggesting that nonhuman animals do not respond and “lack” a common language. I argue that it is clear that both these narratives only repeat the anthropocentric system of animal exploitation and human supremacy. In the short documentary *Anima*, we see animals in four different rural environments, and in each of them we witness how they are treated. In the film we see them respond and we hear them when they resist. We hear their language, and it is only when we stop seeing a “lack”, assuming that human language is

a “common” one, that we will be on the same level with them. Respecting animals requires paying attention to them regardless of a culture that deems them mere objects for humans. It requires seeing them not as natural sources but as individuals who experience many feelings including joy, friendship, anger, fear and pain. Lastly, it requires remembering the empathy we once had before we were taught to be apathetic about them, and cultivating that empathy which urges us to help them, and let them be at the same time.

Chapter 3: HUMANS, HYBRIDS AND OTHER ANIMALS

3.1 *Killing of Ewe and “Others”*

*Lamb*¹⁵ (2021) is a psychological thriller and fantasy drama, and it could arguably be considered a modern Icelandic family saga. Also known as family sagas, Icelandic sagas narrate the feuds of farmers in Iceland, which reflect the values of Iceland’s rural society, taking place during the settlement of Iceland around 900 AD until the 11th century (Rowe). At first sight, *Lamb* is about a farmer couple, Maria and Ingvar, living in an isolated house, traumatized by losing their only child. The first climax of the film is when ewe, one of the sheep the couple raises, gives birth to a hybrid lamb, who is then named after their deceased child Ada by the couple and taken from Ewe¹⁶. *Lamb* questions the morality of *stealing from nature* in the context of stealing the half human half lamb baby of a ewe¹⁷. Because the Icelandic original title of the film means “animal,” the film is not particularly about a specific lamb but about the ambiguous line between what is considered “human” as opposed to “animal.” Although the hybrid baby Ada is at the center of the story, the film is filled with other nonhybrid animals that are assigned specific roles. I analyze *Lamb* to disclose the manifestation of speciesism and anthropocentrism. I argue that exploitation begins with one party claiming superiority over another. Through this claim, the former assumes the right to exploit, harm, violate, and oppress the latter. In that sense, though *Lamb* proposes motherhood as a shared experience between humans and animals which signals the individuality of animals, it sets a limit to animal exploitation. Thus, it perpetuates the human supremacist outlook by failing to recognize the individuality of other sheep raised and exploited by the couple.

¹⁵ *Dýrið*, the original title of the film, means “The Animal” in Icelandic but was translated as “Lamb” for the English speaking audience.

¹⁶ I will refer to her as Ewe.

¹⁷ A female sheep is called a “ewe”.

3.1.1 *Hybridity and Strange Kinship*

On a bright morning in Iceland, Maria is reading a book whilst having breakfast. There is a glass of milk, toasts on a plate and coffee on the table. The cat comes, meows and goes away. Maria gets up, leaves her book face down, and goes to another room. The audience is left with this static scene for a while. What first draws attention is a picture on the fridge with a question mark magnet on it. The picture is of a hybrid creature on its knees. We can see that it has the head of an animal but the rest of it seems like a human body. It is posed on all fours, like sheep or pig. Right next to this image, there is a brochure on which the word “Opið” (“open” in English) is written. On the wall we have a framed picture of an isolated house in a vast field that could be the house Maria and her husband Ingvar live in. There is another picture attached on top of the frame; a person dressed in traditional Icelandic clothes.



Figure 3-1: *Lamb*. Dir. Valdimar Jóhannsson 00.16.14

This scene foreshadows the birth of Ada, a hybrid lamb, and initiates the questioning of the tenuous line between the definitions of human and animal. As the story unfolds and two murders are committed, the question mark placed onto the picture reveals that *Lamb* inquires to what extent the human exploitation of animals can be accepted.

In this scene (Fig. 3-1), what is on the foreground is Maria's breakfast. She is consuming food that is derived from animals.¹⁸ In the background, on the refrigerator, are several leaflets and posters. One of them shows a hybrid creature on all fours and another has the word "open" (Opið) inscribed on it. When seen together, the image and the inscription suggest whether there could be an "opening," rather than a rigid boundary, between the human and the animal. The images thus suggest the possibility of a human-animal coexistence without human exceptionalism.¹⁹ *Lamb* uses many other images and characters that foreground the entanglement of humans and animals as hybrid formations. There are several scenes in the film where Ada, the sheep and Ingvar look at their own reflection. In the first scenes of *Lamb*, as the audience is getting familiarized about the routine of Maria and Ingvar, Ingvar looks at his reflection on the sheep's water bucket. As he looks, two sheep start drinking from the bucket and as they drink, his reflection becomes ambiguous. The scene reveals the fascination of humans of their own kind and the discrimination of all that is not human by referring to Narcissus who was in love with his own reflection. Ingvar's reflection is distorted once animals enter the frame, suggesting the non-unity of "human" as a higher being. Number tags of the sheep, in contrast to Ingvar's reflection, remind the audience of the human supremacy and domination of nonhumans. Following the same notion, human babies are given names, while animal babies are given numbers. They are made into masses, while human beings are considered individuals.

Martin Heidegger theorizes that there is an "abyss" between human and animal and Giorgio Agamben uses the word "hiatus" (The Open, 2003, p. 92) referring to the central emptiness within man separating man and animal. As Kelly Oliver explains, unlike them, Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that it is the fold between two sides of the natural world, the relationship between *notes* and *melody* (19). Notes and melody are significant terms because in *Lamb* right after these scenes of reflections on the water, Ingvar sits at his desk in the barn and tries to compose music. As animals baa near him, he works on musical notes.

¹⁸ For instance, the milk Maria is drinking belongs to an animal who has just given birth and is lactating for her baby.

¹⁹ It is through excluding all that is "animal", the concept of "human" is achieved. I use the term "nonhuman animals" to address the animal within the human, as a reminder.

Ponty differs from the other two philosophers in suggesting that there is a “strange kinship”²⁰ which “neither erases all differences between animals and humans, rendering them identical, nor erases any similarities between them, rendering them radically separate. Rather, ‘strange kinship’ allows for an intimate relation based on shared embodiment without denying differences between life-styles or styles of being” (Oliver, 2007, p. 18).

The strange kinship suggested by Merleau-Ponty is rather problematic in *Lamb* and it results from what Lori Gruen calls “arrogant anthropocentrism.” In *Entangled Empathy*, Gruen argues that empathy is the skill that would help us lessen our arrogance towards animal “others.” In *Lamb*, though Maria and Ingvar share their lives with animals, they have an exploitative relationship with animals which does not include empathy in any form.

3.1.2 Familiarized violence

In the isolated farm of Maria and Ingvar, animals are part of nature and natural resources that are exploited²¹ for the benefit of humans. Though family farms, in contrast to industrial farming sound positive, especially to the people living in cities,²² *Lamb* does not present a warm-hearted family farm to the audience even though it does not show to what end the sheep are bred at this farm. However, details in the film suggest that the sheep are raised to be killed for their flesh, hair, and milk. Starting with domestication, as Alasdair Cochrane notes, the usage of nonhuman animals is always a form of exploitation.

It is all too easy to review agriculture before factory farming with rose-tinted spectacles, and as embodying a system of idyllic and benevolent pastoral care. For it is worth reminding ourselves of the obvious fact that animals have suffered from being used in agriculture ever since they were first domesticated. (Cochrane, 2010, p. 107)

²⁰Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Nature*. 2003

²¹ The first definition of “exploitation” on Cambridge Dictionary can be found as followed; exploitation – noun (good use): the use of something in order to get an advantage from it.

²² It is also a marketing strategy used in dairy and meat industries. Many brands market their products as being “organic” or “free range”. Giving the impression that animals are happy at these farms makes the consumer feel better about buying things derived from animals.

The animals appearing in *Lamb*'s pastoral setting are not exempt from this situation. The pictures on the picture frame (Fig. 1) refer to the fact that this is an old practice, humans have been exploiting animals for many years. Old practices and traditions play a huge role in normalizing the exploitation of animals in the contemporary period.

Humans assign roles and definitions to those around them based on self-interest and animals are the main subjects of this taxonomy and appraisal. In the "pyramidal order" as Nietzsche calls it, man is the measure of all things (86). This anthropocentric order is not a modern concept. It can be traced back to the Great Chain of Being of medieval Christianity. According to this hierarchy, animals are positioned right below humans while plants are lower than animals. As human is created in the image of god, human beings have higher value and all that is below them are at their service. In *Lamb*, this narrative is slightly altered. Animals are still at the service of the humans but there is a limit to the exploitation. The limit is drawn at stealing the child of a mother. Motherhood is what brings humans and animals together. This is the moral message of *Lamb* as a modern Icelandic saga. However, motherhood is merely an exception to the status quo and therefore the message of the film does not critique human supremacy. Because we are so familiarized to animal exploitation, the other animals, the other sheep who are referred to as "livestock" are not recognized. Even when we realize the possibility of an animal's experience of motherhood and find it wrong to steal the baby of that animal, the sheep kept in the barn do not raise an issue. As human beings we steal their right to exist freely without being exploited. Due to their objectification, just like the "things" Shklovsky lists, their existence escape our awareness. They make up the mass of numbers.

3.1.3 *Framing Animals*

Maria's murdering of Ewe is portrayed as a distinctive, exceptional event taking place at a family farm. In contrast to Ada and Ewe, other sheep live on the farm as many other farmed animals do, they provide the couple with livelihood which is possible through the exploitation and killing of them. The uncanny grey atmosphere which pervades throughout the movie does suggest that this is not a "happy farm" but a rather problematic one. On Christmas Eve, Maria looks out the kitchen window with an unsettled expression on her face. As she looks out, Ingvar comes in the frame, takes

something from the kitchen and sits at the table. When Maria turns to the table, she reveals to the viewer what she is carrying; it is the main dish of Christmas and she is holding a plate on which the baked body of an animal rests.

Later on, Ingvar prepares himself breakfast with potatoes and meat. These scenes suggest that the “meat” comes from the sheep they are raising. The details such as the glass of milk Maria is drinking during breakfast (Fig.1) and the wool socks she is wearing go unnoticed because they are considered “normal”, “routine” or “usual”. In *Lamb*, what poses a problem is not that animals are fed and sheltered as resources for humans, but that Ewe gives birth to hybrid Ada who is half human and half lamb. Hybridity blurs the line between human and animal. While it questions the line of exemption and entitlement of humans, it also puts Ada in a limbo. What is the position of Ada now? If they do not take her, Ada is just like the other lambs, simply livestock that is used for milk, clothing and “meat”.²³ It is noteworthy also that after Ada enters Maria and Ingvar’s life, there are two scenes of eating and neither of them include animal bodies being consumed as food in contrast to the previous two scenes mentioned above. If they were to put “meat” on Ada’s plate, it would be cannibalism. Instead, there is pasta and cornflakes.

In *Regarding Animals* (1996), Arnold Arluke and Luke Sanders examine how nonhuman animals are socially structured in the western culture. Their extensive study reveals how even “safer” animals such as dogs can also be a “racing machine” when dogs are bred and used in the context of dog racing (12) As they point out, “sociozoologic systems rank them according to how well they seem to ‘fit in’ and play the roles they are expected to play in society. How well animals seem to know their place and stay in it will determine worth and position on the social ladder” (169). They name the animals who obey the rules as “good animals” while the ones who do not meet the requirements are the bad ones. Ewe becomes a threat when she haunts Maria with the nightmares and her acts of rebellion such as baaing committedly in front of the window when Ada is lying in the crib inside by that same window. Ewe becomes the enemy (the bad animal) when she stops obeying, when she is no longer the tame, domesticized “livestock”.

²³ A more detailed explanation of how sheep in Iceland are used can be found here:
<https://www.iamcountryside.com/sheep/dairy-sheep-consider-icelandic-sheep/>

Peter Singer defines speciesism as “the idea that it is justifiable to give preference to beings simply on the grounds that they are members of the species *Homo sapiens*” (2002, p. 3). Speciesism goes beyond the distinction made between human and animal because humans also classify animals. At the beginning of the film, before any human speech is heard, we are shown how the animals are positioned and placed according to their species. As Ada enjoys the full access, other animals have to obey their designated areas of movement except for the cat. We see that the sheep are at the barn, their spaces are specified and limited with wooden fences. They are let out at a certain time for grazing and then they return to the barn, led by Ingvar and Dog.

Dog is not treated like a pet. Unlike the pets in the city, he is there with a mission; to help lead the sheep, be a mediator between the sheep and humans and protect every resident of the farm. He gets killed by Ram Man while trying to protect Ada. We have a scene where Dog looks at the sheep from behind the door-sill and does not enter the barn. We see that there is a border between dog and sheep; their duties are different and so are their places. Dog follows Ingvar from the barn to the house, until the kitchen. We see Dog’s food and water bowls at the entrance of the kitchen and before he can enter, the kitchen door closes on him; this is where the dog border begins. In the kitchen, we see Cat and their food bowl. Species are organized into different categories depending on how much they benefit humans.

Unlike the other sheep, Ada stands out because she is not just a sheep but she carries the physical qualities of a human. However, *Lamb* creates the sense that even though Ada is a hybrid, it is still “unfair” to take the baby of an animal from the. Ewe is portrayed as the determined mother who risks her life to get her child back and Ada as the helpless, innocent child who is stuck in the limbo. She is a child caught up in her fractured existence. She adapts to human life but she does not enjoy dancing with her mother. Addressing to the differentiation Ponty makes, Ada is in between the human notes that the humans are dancing to and the melody of herds of sheep, bleating. When she sees the picture of herds of sheep and she hears them bleating, it is as if her ancestors are calling to her. She looks in the mirror and later in her reflection on a puddle and tries to make sense. She cannot speak but she can understand human language. In between two worlds, she is stuck.

The distinction between Ada and the other lambs is shown from the beginning. Before Ada, another ewe gives birth to two lambs. The next day, Maria tags the lamb

with a number and then disbuds them. Disbudding is a usual practice in animal farms and it means cutting the newly growing horns of a lamb or cattle. When Maria cuts the lamb's horn, they try to escape and wiggle off Maria's arms. The camera shows clearly how the lamb's cut bleeds with a close-up (Fig. 7) and also how Maria does not hesitate. Ada, on the other hand, sleeps in a crib and wears human clothes, sits at the table with them. The film presents us with how things work in human society, especially in the rural scene. Once an animal shows human characteristics, they level up.



Figure 3-2: Lamb. Dir. Valdimar Jóhannsson. 00:16:52

3.1.4 Language, Gaze and Empathy

Unfolding the events in a prologue and three chapters, the director keeps the mystery of the heavy breathing creature until the very end. When Ram Man is finally seen, the sound is matching. The audience realizes that it was Ram Man who enters the barn in the prologue and rapes Ewe on Christmas Eve. Taking Ram Man as the hybrid who both violates the animal (Ewe) and avenges her in the end, he mirrors the audience to show that it is us who both violate the animal by raping Ewe, and avenge Ewe by killing Ingvar.

In the end, Ram-Man is armed with the same gun that Maria used to shoot Ewe. He kills Maria's husband with that same gun and the fact that he shoots Ingvar on the neck is significant. As blood flows off his neck, Ingvar can no longer speak in words but can only make sounds of pain which brings him closer to the animals. Is this how animals and humans become even? Does Ram Man countervail the war between two families by using the same gun and eliminating human language? Language on the metaphorical

level and a hunting gun on the literal, both function as the tools which further otherizes and even eliminates the animal. When Ewe keeps baaing, Maria and Ingvar know that in her language she is claiming her child whom they named as they wished. There are several scenes in which Maria and Ewe look at each other, or in Derridean terms, their *gazes* meet. How does this reciprocal gaze result? It results in Maria screaming at Ewe, telling her to “go away” angrily.

Maria kills Ewe early in the morning as she wakes up to her baaing from outside. She looks at her in the eye before shooting her, she knows what it is like to lose one’s own child but this does not raise empathy in her. She responds aggressively because whatever Ewe must be feeling is less significant than her wants and emotions. While Maria deserves to raise Ada as a human being, Ewe has to accept the situation in silence. When she does not obey and even expresses herself in her own language, she gets killed.



Figure 3-3: *Lamb*. Dir. Valdimar Jóhannsson 00.46.51

3.1.5 *Rebellion, affect and catharsis*

In terms of building affect, *Lamb* puts the audience into a difficult position because each time Maria hurts an animal and does not show remorse, the viewer feels even worse about the animal’s situation. When the newborn lamb tries to escape, but cannot, and bleeds when Maria disbuds her, Maria’s response to the lamb is automatic. Unmoved by the lamb’s pain, Maria rubs their ear and continues with her chores around the barn, unaffected. Unlike Maria, the audience is not used to *seeing* that, let alone *doing* the disbudding. There is no cathartic moment in the film that allows the audience

to feel relief. Likewise, in the scenes where Maria looks at Ewe in the eye (Fig. 3-3), shoots her, drags her by the horn and buries her, the audience is faced with a murder that they find gruesome and unjust. Building up to this scene, we see Ewe running after her child and Maria yelling at her. We are pushed into making a decision on our own as the spectator. The lack of catharsis combined with the ending has the potential to affect the audience into taking action. In an interview made with the director of the film, Jóhannsson says that he was surprised to hear from some people that they “have stopped eating meat” after seeing the film. The fact that he is surprised reveals that he did not have the intention to affect the audience in this way and that the film has moved beyond its director’s aims and perspective.

In the end, when Ingvar can no longer utter words as he is bleeding and also is not able to physically go against Ram Man when he grabs Ada’s hand and takes her away. In human terms, they are even. In this sense, Ram Man puts Ingvar in the position of the animals. When Maria finds Ingvar, all that she can do is accept the situation she is in. Ram Man teaches the couple a lesson and this message is that one shall not take a mother’s child away from her. Ram Man cannot represent nature at large, he is half human after all and thus he reflects the societal norms too.

The shifting moral values of humans lie in the suggestive message of the film; it is acceptable to exploit animals, but only to an extent. The line is drawn at “motherhood”. In the narrative, the only problem is when Maria takes Ada away from her mother. However, the problem begins with keeping them captive, as “livestock”, and breeding them as natural resources and sources of income as if they were lifeless belongings of humans. Ewe is dragged by her horns and then buried underground because she has resisted and did not stay silent. What about the others who are bred and exploited and killed for humans? They are there too but not seen.

3.2 *People Who Matter: Killing of Sylvia*

“Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy” is the third title of Albee’s play. Ellen Gainor comments on the title by saying that it might suggest a reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics* but Albee is more concerned with the meaning of tragedy (Gainor, p. 203). *The Goat* unfolds in a day and takes place in the living room of Stevie and Martin who are a married couple with a gay teenage boy named Billy. Their lives turn into a tragedy

when Martin's "affair" with Sylvia the goat is exposed and it ends with bloodshed. I analyze the play by taking Sylvia the goat and other animals mentioned by Martin as subjects who have been abused by humans. I argue that the play reflects how nature and animals are both romanticized and disparaged by the society. Albee uses "bestiality" to defamiliarize the audience from their own moral codes regarding nature and animals as opposed to their "humanness", specifically in terms of human sexuality. By suggesting that sexuality is merely an instinctive drive that humans share with nonhuman animals, he criticizes western humanism which exempts humans from animals on the basis of human ability to reason. Albee breaks the limits of sexuality with incest and sexual contact with animals, which I will refer to as abuse and rape. I conclude by critiquing the fact that the tragedy does not rest in the abuse of animals by Martin and other humans, but in "arrogant anthropocentrism" which considers nonhuman animals as lesser beings whose lives and experiences are not as valuable and significant as humans'. Thus, violating them is not even considered a crime, a wrongdoing that needs to be justified.

3.2.1 *Getting Away with Rape*

Martin, who claims to be in love with the goat he rapes, protests his colleague Ross's concerns by asking this question;

MARTIN: So that's what it comes down to, eh? ...what we can get away with?

ROSS: Sure.

Martin is a middle-aged architect who has just received an award which is the "architecture's version of the Nobel" as Ross explains it. The play begins when he is getting ready to be interviewed by his old friend Ross's tv program "People Who Matter" which will take place soon. He is very forgetful and cannot focus on the interview. When Ross pushes Martin to spill the beans about his unusual behaviors, he learns about Sylvia the goat. To Martin's surprise, Ross's only concern turns out to be regarding Martin's public image as a famous architect on the rise. For a man who is the youngest to receive such an award and who was also chosen to design a high-budget project, as Ross says, he is at the pinnacle of his career. This is one of the strongest parts of the play because it shows that Martin's raping of Sylvia poses an issue for Martin's

career and public image but not because an animal is being violated. In order not to call it a “rape” or “violation” or something vulgar, he builds a narrative around it and claims that he loves her and she loves him back. “Getting away with” what he has done is significant because an architect who is at the pinnacle of his career could have an affair with a woman but when it is an animal, it becomes unacceptable. That would ruin his public image. Albee shows that the moral values and taboos are built on the supremacy of humans which is evident both in Christianity as mentioned earlier and also the concept of “humanism” stemming from the western enlightenment. According to this perspective, human beings are higher than other beings in the sense that they can use their reasoning and by this power, can comprehend, define and organize life accordingly, for their own benefit. In other words, beneath the moral codes and taboos, lies arrogant anthropocentrism. Albee mocks this morality and encourages the audience to realize that humans are animals as well, and human sexual desire is merely a biological fact, a feature we share with animals.

STEVIE: ...It is about fucking! It is about you being an animal!

MARTIN: (Thinks a moment; quietly) I thought I was...

Martin defends himself by saying that we are all animals but Stevie reminds him about the rules “we stay with our own kind” and calls him a monster for taking advantage of “this creature” (87). As the scene ends, she tells him that he destroyed her and brought her “down to nothing”. These expressions clearly point to her disregard for Sylvia and reflect the anthropocentric view according to which Sylvia is inferior to Martin and Stevie because she is a nonhuman animal. Stevie leaves right after promising that she will bring Martin “down” with her. When she returns dragging the dead body of Sylvia into their home, the tragedy comes to an end. Stevie brings Martin down by killing Sylvia whom he claims to love as much as he loves Stevie. If this is a tragedy, how much more of a tragedy would it be if Sylvia were a human being and not a goat who is considered property by law and society? In that case, killing Sylvia would make Stevie a criminal and she would find herself in jail. However, Stevie commits “an offstage act as passionate and transgressive as that of her husband: a ritualistic murder” (Gainor, pp. 213-214). While Martin cannot get away with raping Sylvia because it is called “bestiality”, Stevie can get away with killing Sylvia very easily. Raping an animal makes human into a beast, something lower than human, a state of being that is looked down on by humans. However, killing an animal suggests superiority and domination.

By killing Sylvia, Stevie puts an end to the problem of being on the level of an animal and regains her superior position as a human.

3.2.2 *Exploiting Nature*

Throughout the play, it is only toward the end that Stevie uses the word “rape”. Until then, Sylvia is referred to as “livestock” and Martin’s raping her is stated as “fucking” her or “having an affair” with her. While Martin uses the pronoun “her”, Stevie always refers to her as “it” and wants Martin to do so. Martin does not see his actions as wrong and explains to his wife Stevie that he realized at some point that “people would think something was wrong, that what I was doing wasn’t...” (65). It is not given in the play how he realizes this and he also cannot finish the sentence because he still cannot see why this is a problematic action. Out of curiosity, he goes to a “therapy place” where people talk about “what they were doing...and with whom” (45). Stevie asks if they bring the animals to the therapy as well. Martin replies, “We weren’t there to talk about them; we were there to talk about ourselves, our... our problems, as they called them” (68). It is true that the problem does not stem from animals but what is the problem that this therapy is expected to solve? The therapy acts as a corrective facility that rehabilitates individuals who do not abide by the rules of human society and commit bestiality. Thus the problem is not about taking advantage of animals but about reminding humans of their humanity as superior, civilized beings.

Martin: And most of them had a problem, had a long history. The man with the pig was a farmboy, and he and his brothers, when they were kids, just ... did it ... naturally; it was what they did ... with the pigs. Or piglets, perhaps; that wasn’t clear. (71)

Martin justifies these acts by saying “naturally” and afterward claims that “no one got hurt.” He is confused. He considers Sylvia as someone, not something, but at the same time, he cannot realize that Sylvia does not have a say in this sexual act. He finds it “natural” that farm boys rape a pig. When Stevie finds his expression “naturally” strange, Martin says, “Maybe it was better than...” and Stevie finishes his sentence with a question, “...than with each other, or their sisters, or their grandmothers?” Martin’s response, “No one got hurt” reveals his perception. He actually does not consider animals as persons. As he explains why each person at the therapy group abuses an

animal, he says each has a reason for what they did. For instance, a man who is “hideously ugly” abuses a goose because no human being would be attracted to him, and the woman who abuses a dog, “had been raped by her father and her brother when she was twelve”. Because these people have issues, they turn to animals and abuse them. Martin tries to prove that he is different from them by saying he loves both Stevie and Sylvia. The other animals do not have names, they are only referred to by the name of their species. The most specifically named animal is the dog whom he calls “German Shepherd” and that is the breed of the dog. It is only the biological classification made by humans and not related to the dog’s personality. On the other hand, Martin names the goat he loves. However, Sylvia is a fantasy, an object of Martin's desire and nothing more. Stevie asks Martin why he calls her Sylvia after learning about the “affair” he is having.

STEVIE: Why do you call her Sylvia, by the way? Did she have a tag, or something?

Or, was it more:

Who is Sylvia,

Fair is she,

That all our goats commend her... (63)

Martin replies her by saying that “it just seemed right,” but he finds her reference to Shakespeare “very good”. Sylvia’s name and hence the second title “Who is Sylvia” refers to Shakespeare’s Silvia from the song in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*.

Shakespeare’s Silvia is both a specific character, reflecting generosity of spirit and faithful love, and a pastoral ideal, the “nymph” to Valentine’s “swain.” The goat Sylvia mirrors her both as a real object of love and desire and as part of a contemporary rural and agricultural idyll, a locale equally remote, fertile, and mythic. (Gainor, p. 208)

While Martin describes Sylvia as this dreamy, naïve and pure being who has a soul, Stevie is aware that he is merely making up a story to convince himself that it is about love (Albee, p. 87).

Martin is a cliché of the modern man who lives in the city and has a country house where he goes sometimes to cleanse the stress of the city. He romanticizes the “country place” which will be their “utopia” (Albee, p. 45) and at the same time he is the successful architect who will destroy nature for the “dream city of the future” (Albee

18). As Ellen Gainor explains in more detail, Martin “violates nature as much through his intimacy with Sylvia as by joining forces with the electronics industry to transform the American heartland, paving over the paradise of the nation’s agricultural center to erect the World City of stone and steel” which signifies a “utopic future to a contemporary capitalist society” (Gainor, p. 209).

When Stevie learns that her husband Martin has been cheating on her with a goat, she is upset, frustrated, and shocked. Her frustration and anger do not derive from her husband’s raping and thus abusing an animal, but rather she is angry because he considers them equals, which is unacceptable. She is also ignorant about animals because as she tries to make sense of the situation, she says “But I’m a human being; I have only two breasts; I walk upright; I give milk only on special occasions; I use the toilet” (52). Apart from the others, she is incorrect because just like humans, animals also give milk only when they give birth. Like the majority of people who live in the city, she falsely assumes that animals give milk as if they were milk machines created for humans. Sylvia’s contempt and disdain stems from the divide between human and nonhuman. Animal is “what” lacks the qualities of the civilized ideal that is called human. Until Stevie uses the word rape and points to her abuse, the argument is about how a human being (a superior kind) could desire a lesser being, an animal. Stevie keeps referring to the smell that comes from Martin, which signifies the brutishness of Sylvia. When Martin approaches her, she yells at him saying that he smells of goat, of shit (106). The disgust she feels at the thought of being on the same level as an animal, a beast, gives her motivation to murder Sylvia. Her disgust is also related to what Julia Kristeva defines as “abject” which is neither subject nor object but rather a liminal thing such as feces, period blood, or a corpse that disturbs “identity, system, order” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). In terms of separating humans from animals, Kristeva says that “by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder” (13). Thus, when Martin equates Stevie with Sylvia through the love he feels for them, Stevie’s identity as a civilized human being gets shattered.

3.2.3 *Guileless, innocent, pure*

The purity of children and animals is another issue in the play. Stevie tells Martin that the words he uses to describe Sylvia (innocent, pure, trusting) also apply to the children. Albee pushes this similarity further when Martin tells his son Billy and his friend Ross about a man who had his baby on his lap and suddenly was “getting hard.” He tells this story to comfort Billy because previously he says that he wants to sleep with everyone. Martin struggles to make his point that the man was not aroused by his own baby, “it wasn’t sexual” he says. Ross finds this sick and asks, “Is there anything you people don’t get off on!?” (105). Martin’s point is that it is natural and not sick. Soon he accepts that it is “wrong” but this is him trying to shut Ross. The story makes Billy curious and he keeps asking if the baby was him and Martin says “Of course not, Billy” but it is almost certain that it is Billy. The dispute ends with Ross explaining that if somebody sees Martin as he takes advantage of Sylvia, it would have dire consequences.

Ross: Do you know there are prison terms for this? Some states they kill you for it? Do you know what they’d *do* to you. The press? Everybody? Down it all comes – your career; your life...everything. (so cold; so rational) For fucking a goat. (108)

Martin is surprised that all his friend cares about is people finding out, and he says “I thought it had to do with love and loss, and it’s only about getting by.”

The tragedy of the play is that human civilization is built on human exceptionalism which is the manifestation of arrogant anthropocentrism. Throughout the entire play, nobody even considers the events from Sylvia’s perspective. She is either a fantasy or an abjected creature. As the human characters refer to her as this or that, and when the play itself is named after Sylvia, she herself is absent until the end. When she is present, she is already dead, slaughtered by Stevie, because Martin equated Stevie’s love to an animal’s.

3.3 *Conclusion: Re-cognizing Animals*

After being perceived several times, objects acquire the status of “recognition.” An object appears before us. We know it’s there but we do not see it... (Shklovsky, p. 6)

Human supremacy has a long history. In that long period of time, trivialization and objectification of animals has seeped into almost every part of human life. Because animals have been perceived as different species which exist in order to serve humans in some way, and because arrogant anthropocentrism is the perspective advocated by media, politics, arts and culture, defamiliarization is a way of breaking this false recognition. In *Lamb*, it is the hybridity of Ada, and in *The Goat*, it is the concept of bestiality that help defamiliarize the audience and lead them to question their moral values as well as the hierarchal system which disregard the existence of nonhuman animals. Both works critically mirror our norms and the speciesism we hold against the animal others. However, *Lamb* suggests that there is a limit to the exploitation of animals hence perpetuates the anthropocentric perspective. In *The Goat*, perception of nature as either a fantasy or a lower realm of beings is criticized but bestiality is not problematized as an act of violence towards Sylvia. I maintain that these works manage to raise attention towards our treatment of nonhuman animals by defamiliarizing the audience from their moral codes and questioning the anthropocentric perspective. However, they do not address human supremacy as the fundamental issue, which enables animals' trivialization as mere objects.

Chapter 4: GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN

The owner of the tannery is always smiling and he feels that when this man observes him, what he's really doing is calculating how many metres of skin he can remove in one piece if he slaughters him, flays him and removes his flesh on the spot. (Bazterrica, p. 8)

Augustina Bazterrica's novel *Tender Is the Flesh* (2020) builds a dystopian world in which humans are bred "as animals for consumption" because the other animals are no longer an option due to a virus that has affected all nonhuman animals. Cannibalism as a motif has a long tradition. It has been utilized by Jonathan Swift in his renowned and controversial essay "A Modest Proposal", originally published in 1729. In the essay, he uses defamiliarization with exaggeration. He suggests eating children in a serious yet satirical manner to draw attention to the fact that Irish people of the period were being exploited by the English. Swift's proposal aimed to address the elephant in the room: "The English were eating the Irish in general... Those who could read such a pamphlet almost by definition had sufficient wealth and social power to be implicated in the oppression. The essay insists that they had better learn to call what they are letting happen by its true name" (Phiddian, p. 618). Though Swift's and Bazterrica's aims are different, both use cannibalism to draw the reader's attention to the problem of exploitation and with the shocking effect of defamiliarization, they achieve this aim. The concept of cannibalism both disturbs and attracts the reader, which is similar to Albee's usage of bestiality in his play *The Goat* which was discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

This chapter builds on the previous chapters by presenting a selection of narratives with animals as the subjects. They go against the grain to defamiliarize their audiences from their daily actions and habits and question accepted norms that position humans at the top of a communal hierarchy, and condemn nonhumans to serving humans. I begin the discussion with how animals can be represented for their benefit with an absence of animals through the analysis of *Tender is the Flesh*. Then I move from the dystopic and bleak but moving narrative to two vegan advertisements by Vegan Friendly and Dustin Brown's short film *Casa de Carne*. I discuss how these visual narratives create affect in

a limited time. Lastly, I will analyze the group exhibition *Animal Gaze* which I curated and participated in as one of the contributing seven artists. I will finish with *Animal Gaze* because it is part of the thesis that puts Shklovsky's defamiliarization into artistic praxis and experiments with the possibility of encountering animals and confronting ourselves in an exhibition. I argue that the contemporary visual and literary narratives explored in this chapter utilize defamiliarization to steer the audiences to encounter the other animals and confront themselves.

4.1 *Special Meat, the New Normal*

In discussing animal labor, Dinesh Wadiwel explains how the free time of animals has been abolished due to animal agriculture under capitalism and calls this "the capital's dream";

...the whole of the social world of animals has been subsumed into production, so that free time for animals has become nonsensical, instead, all time is the time of production." (Wadiwel, *The Working Day: Animals, Capitalism, and Surplus Time*, 2020)

This dream can be realized under one condition: stripping animals of their individuality, nullifying their existence as individuals with their own interests, and otherizing them. So long as they are seen as lower and other than human, their exploitation is justifiable in an anthropocentric culture. The capital's dream is realized in *Tender is the Flesh* but with a twist. This time, it is humans who have no free time, no vocal cords, no freedom, and no individuality. In other words, humans embody animal existence to expose the system of otherization and how it is naturalized in society.

In *Tender is the Flesh*, animals are made extinct by humans because of a virus that affects all animals and thus prevents human consumers from exploiting them. Humans replace animals as not only animal protein providers but they are used in every industry that animals in this day and age are being exploited for. In Bazterrica's dystopia, humans are the new lab animals and leather materials. Bazterrica's dystopia tells the reality of today's animals by using humans instead of animals. I argue that this is a revolutionary method because animals have often been used as metaphors to tell the story of humans. Bazterrica does the opposite and uses a human story as an allegory for animal exploitation. The story contains human animals only, and it is with the same

strategies that humans are made to become the new animal protein providers, the “other” ones who will be exploited. The same strategies are used to naturalize cannibalism; through animalizing some humans, making human flesh eating sound crucial by stating that there is no other way to stay healthy, and lastly by legalizing the process and banning words such as cannibalism and expressions that would suggest the horror of cannibalism.

In *The Open* (2003), Giorgio Agamben asserts that as human beings, we have created the notion of “human” as opposed to all that is considered “animal,” which is the lower being in the hierarchy that we built. It is an anthropological machine that relentlessly reproduces the “human” as the ideal subject compared to which all that is not human are treated poorly because they are not human or human enough. Bazterrica’s novel presents the reader with a new world that runs on this principle but without nonhuman animals. Cannibalism is the new normal and some animalized humans are bred to be exploited by other humans. We can see that the humans who are specifically bred to be consumed and exploited are the ones who do not fit the definition of the human, as Agamben explains. Because it is not even legally allowed to call them “human,” their exploitation and mass killing are justified in their nonhumanness.

The novel’s protagonist, Marcos, says that cannibalism is “naturalized”. Due to the contagious virus found in nonhuman animals that transmits to humans, all nonhuman animals, including pets and “livestock”, have been exterminated at some point before the novel begins. The storyline follows Marcos, the manager of the Krieg Processing Plant, who cannot bring himself to accept cannibalism as the new normal. He visits special and significant (wealthy) customers such as Senor Urami, the tannery owner, and Urlet, a wealthy man who hunts humans (they are referred to as ‘heads’) as a hobby for entertainment with his other wealthy friends. In the meantime, Marcos lives alone because, after the death of their son Leo, their relationship worsens and his wife Cecilia decides to live with her mother for an uncertain period. Following Marcos’s routine, we learn how various industries function and how the new animals (humans) are treated. The novel openly describes each process in a disturbingly detailed way. Exposing the details about animal exploitation through humans is clever because it keeps the reader on a cliffhanger. Would readers be motivated to finish the novel if all of the horrible things happened to animals instead? Would they be surprised? Would animal cruelty

raise curiosity? If not, is it because we expect these things to happen to nonhuman animals but not to us?

4.1.1 Automatization and disassociation

The naturalization of cannibalism strikes a chord because it shows how far humans can go when enabled. Though people hesitate to eat their own kind at first, as the system settles in with its new terms and labels, they get used to it.

Before long, people began to ask for front or hind trotters, using the cuts of pork to refer to upper and lower extremities. The industry took this as a permission and started to label products with these euphemisms that nullified all horror (18). Among the leading chapters are Spanel, Ency and Manzanillo who represent the different human responses to the new normal, cannibalism. Spanel, the woman butcher, is the first butcher to reopen her shop after all the butchers were closed due to the virus. She is described as a cold-blooded person. “The only thing she can do is slice meat and she does this with the coolness of a surgeon. (...) For Spanel, touching, chopping, grinding, processing, deboning, cutting up what was once breathing, is an automatic task, but it’s done with precision”(18). Automatization and disassociation are crucial elements at the processing plant too. Manzanillo who works as a saw operator at the plant, stays “sane” by keeping his distance from the once living animal; human or nonhuman. The story of Ency, another saw operator at the processing plant, discloses what happens when these elements are no longer functioning. He is called Ency because he reads whenever he has time and since he is an avid reader, he knows things; he is like an encyclopedia. Working at the plant, Ency begins to change after a while, and Marcos notices this change at work; “Ency seemed quieter. When he was on a break, he’d stare at the shipment in the resting cages” (35). One day, Ency starts cutting the resting cages to free the heads. People try to stop him, but he threatens them with a chainsaw. The event and the outcomes are described as follows.

Only a few heads escaped, but the majority stayed in their cages. They were confused and frightened. Ency was shouting, “You’re not animals. They’re going to kill you. Run. You need to escape,” as if the heads could understand what he was saying...He had to fire Ency because someone broken cannot be fixed (35).

After this instance, Marcos arranges psychological support for Ency, but within a month, Ency shoots himself. The novel makes it clear that it is through disassociation that these people can do their jobs that require them to kill animals on a daily basis. It also gives the message that if one knows too much, learns, and/or starts to question things, they start feeling guilty. What is “broken” here is the disassociation and automatization. It is the realization that these are not products, or materials like wood but rather living, feeling creatures who do not want to die. Those who adapt to the system like Spanel does keep doing business and survive while those who respond with empathy cannot adapt and even live with the guilty conscious and choose to die instead.

4.1.2 *The Human Look*

One day, El Gringo, the owner of a breeding center that Marcos’s processing plant works with, sends Marcos a “female” as a gift. Humans bred for consumption are no longer called humans but are referred to as males, females, heads, and studs throughout the novel. They are also classified according to the purpose of their breeding. Genetics play a significant role in this classification. For this “female” that El Gringo sends Marcos as a gift, he explains that she is a First Generation Pure, shortened as FGP. “FGPs are heads born and bred in captivity” (11). Marcos gets irritated by El Gringo’s surprise gift and calls him, telling him that he does not want the gift. El Gringo tells Marcos that she is special because she has pure genes and the gift is to show how he appreciates doing business with the processing plant. After the call, Marcos looks at her and sees that she is still tied to the tree as they delivered her. He realizes that she hasn’t taken the rope off her neck because “(...) she doesn’t know she can. He moves towards her and she begins to tremble. She looks at the ground. Urinates. He takes her to the barn and ties her to the door of a broken and rusted truck” (20). This first observation of the “female” does not show any difference from a pig or any other mammal. The only difference might be that in the case of a nonhuman animal, the pronoun would be “it” rather than “she”.

The relationship between Marcos and Jasmine changes in time as he gets sexually attracted to her and seems to find something special in her, something that he does not expect her to have. He names her Jasmine because her filthy smell reminds him of the flower’s scent. The novel’s second part opens with the information that Jasmine is

pregnant with Marcos's baby. They have an almost normal life together, but Jasmine is actually a hostage.

...he kisses her, and as he does every day, walks her to the room where he keeps her locked up. (...) She'll be fine watching the TV mounted on the wall, sleeping, drawing with the crayons he left her, eating the food he made for her, flipping through the pages of books she doesn't understand. He wishes he could teach her to read, but what's the point if she can't speak and will never be part of a society that sees her only as an edible product? The mark on her forehead, the huge, clear, indestructible mark, forces him to keep her locked up in the house. (55)

Marcos knows that they cannot have a "normal" life and he seems to disagree with the naturalization of cannibalism. Nevertheless, he is not completely different from the other people who are content with consuming humans. The capability to think or show emotions is not expected of the "heads", humans who are bred by other humans to be turned into "special meat". Earlier in the novel, before letting Jasmine in the house for the first time, after a fit of fury induced by a telephone call with his wife Cecilia, Marcos smashes and burns the cot of his deceased son Leo. Then he lies on the grass drunk and exhausted. The last image he sees before passing out is Jasmine who has also laid down next to him, looking at him. "It seems like she's crying. But there's no way she understands what's happening, she doesn't know what a cot is. She doesn't know anything" (38). Later in the novel when Jasmine is pregnant, Marcos sets a camera in the room to check up on Jasmine when he is not home. Watching Jasmine on the camera, he says, "At times, it seems she's thinking, like she really can" (60). It is clear that though he finds eating the flesh of humans strange, his mind has already adapted to the replacement of some humans with nonhuman animals. His observations about Jasmine and others show that he has also adapted to the system.

At the end of the novel, when Jasmine's pregnancy and birth come with some complications, Marcos has no choice but to call his wife Cecilia who is a nurse. Cecilia learns about their relationship when she arrives. At first, she finds the whole situation disgusting and calls him "sick," but when he tells her that the baby is going to die, she starts helping with all her might, probably remembering the loss of her own son Leo. After an emotionally built scene where Cecilia helps Jasmine push the baby, the mood changes. They do not give Jasmine her baby, she tries to get to her baby but she cannot.

As she tries to reach her newborn baby, she is ignored by Marcos and Cecilia; Marcos says to Cecilia, “He’s ours now” (89). To calm Jasmine down, Marcos sings “Summertime” to her ear, and when she is calm, he grabs her by the hair to kill her. Marcos hits Jasmine on her forehead, where she carries the stamp “FGP” and takes her body away to cut her into pieces. Frustrated, Cecilia asks him why he did it, “She could have given us more children.” Marcos’s answer to her reveals who the novel is all about.

As he drags the body of the female to the barn to slaughter it, he says to Cecilia, his voice radiant, so pure it wounds: “She had the human look of a domesticated animal.” (89)

The scene is remarkable because it is a reenactment of what happens at the dairy farms. The cow gives birth, and before long the people who help her during birth take the calf away. There are many videos online that show cows running after their babies who are being taken away in a vehicle. With artificial insemination, the cow gets impregnated again and again to make her produce milk. Each time a cow gives birth, humans take her baby away. When she can no longer be impregnated, she is sent to the slaughterhouse. This is a common practice in animal husbandry.

Similar to cows and other exploited animals, Jasmine could not express herself through words, she could only show her feelings through body language, and the look she had in her eyes made him suspicious several times until then. He saw something human in her, it was a sort of understanding, cognition maybe. This does raise the issue of whether only animals who show qualities that we deem human-like should be treated as individuals while others could be exploited freely. It also hints that nonhuman animals who are exploited and killed in the industries narrated in the novel also understand, feel, and have individual responses to what happens around them. “The human look of a domesticated animal” is an expression that reveals the human criteria. If they look and act like humans, they deserve to be treated as one, if not, then it gives us permission to treat them as our inferiors and use them for our purposes. The fact that Marcos finds Jasmine different from the other heads just because he finds something “human” in her demonstrates once again how we nullify the individuality of nonhuman animals and consider them unimportant by comparing their existence to human existence.

Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* ends on a bleak note on humanity and does not strike hope. However, it shows that as humans we are capable of many evils when the circumstances are granted and thus it provides the readers with a critical outlook on the normalcy of exploitation. It discloses how an atrocious concept and series of actions can be naturalized through laws and culture. Thus it questions anthropocentrism and the morals of this perspective regarding nonhuman animals. Because the reader sympathizes with Marcos first and Jasmine later, the ending has a powerful effect on us. When Marcos kills Jasmine, as the reader we feel the injustice of it. We confront our own hypocrisy and the system of exploitation which we support without knowing.

4.2 *Making the connection: Compassion and ethics*

Carol J. Adams repurposes the concept of absent referent to explain how animals become absent in the process between the killing of an animal to the final stage when it is merely a product. She says, "...meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image..." (Adams, p. 13). In this chapter I focus on three visual narratives that utilize Adams's concept and defamiliarize the viewers by bringing the animals into context where we are not expected to see them alive. "Extra Fresh" (2020), a vegan TV advertisement produced by Vegan Friendly, chooses to address the human capability to empathize with other animals and feel compassion for them. Likewise, *Casa de Carne* (2019), the short film directed by Dustin Brown, draws attention to compassion and empathy. It highlights the realization that the dish we order at a restaurant is the result of an individual being slaughtered by someone. "Make the Connection" (2022), another TV advertisement by Vegan Friendly, shares the same concept; asking the viewer to reconsider their choices and habits by making the connection between the "food" and the "animal" who was killed and exploited for the product. All three of them aim to show the absent referent and ask the viewers to empathize with the animals. They also hold non-vegan viewers accountable for the killing of animals for food. The focus of these narratives are on the killing of animals.

Social psychologist Leon Festinger coined the term "cognitive dissonance" in 1957. It is a phenomenon that occurs when what one person believes in or knows to be true stands in conflict with the action this person takes. Festinger explains that human beings

tend to solve this inconsistency either by changing their actions so that they are no longer incoherent or they find justifications to alleviate these actions. In the case of buying and consuming products that harm animals, individuals who agree that no animal should be harmed and killed either become vegans to solve the inconsistency of loving or caring for animals while harming them or they find excuses that might justify the habit. Cognitive dissonance is one of the main factors which enable nonvegan consumers to continue buying and consuming products that harm animals while still being “animal lovers”. However, cognitive dissonance is also a reason why some people change their behavior and habits and become vegans to solve the problem of discrepancy in the treatment of animals. Festinger takes the case of a cigarette smoker as an example; “the person might stop smoking so that it is not contradictory to his knowledge that smoking is bad for his health. This person might also “change his “knowledge” about the effects of smoking. This sounds like a peculiar way to put it, but it expresses well what must happen. He might simply end up believing that smoking does not have any deleterious effects, or he might acquire so much ‘knowledge’ pointing to the good effects it has that the harmful aspects become negligible. If he can manage to change his knowledge in either of these ways, he will have reduced, or even eliminated, the dissonance between what he does and what he knows.” (Festinger, p. 6) The advertisements “Make the Connection” and “Extra Fresh”, and the short film *Casa de Carne* have the mutual aim of addressing the cognitive dissonance which is shared by the majority of people. Their motivation is to lead the viewers toward the former solution as explained by Festinger, changing the action. In this case, becoming vegan so that on the individual level one does not support harming animals.

In *Casa de Carne*, Eric, the protagonist, is at a restaurant with two friends, ready to order one of the many dishes that include animal bodies or ingredients derived from animals. The waiter welcomes them and says, “We take the dining experience full circle” and asks Eric if this is his first time. Eric, who orders “baby back ribs” says yes and is invited to follow the waiter. This is not the first time for Eric’s two friends, they know what will happen. The waiter gives Eric an apron and a butcher’s knife before opening the door to a white, and well-lit room where he meets a young pig. Seeing the pig on the floor looking at him, he looks unpleasantly surprised and tries to leave the room. However, there is no door handle and the door is locked. He is forced to kill the pig so that he can a “full circle” experience of eating an animal. Eric turns to the pig

again and when he crouches down and looks at the pig, the pig comes near him. He ends up petting the pig and then gets up, drops the knife to the floor. An alarm rings, two people with white aprons and protective glasses enter the room, saying “another one”. Before Eric can realize what is happening, they quickly turn the pig to the side, the man asks Eric if he wants to do it. Eric says no, and yells at them saying “stop”. The scene of the slaughter is not shown to the viewers, we only see the knife going down and right after this image, we see the plate on which Eric’s order is laid out, being served. Then we see Eric whose face is covered in sweat and looking at the plate in front of him, extremely sad. Across him sits his two friends and one of whom says “That was awesome! I’ve never done a cow before!” They say that it tastes fresher this way and the male friend says that he feels like a caveman. We see a close-up of Eric’s plate and then his neck which has blood on it. When his friend asks Eric about the experience, Eric only looks at them with a facial expression that shows emotional exhaustion, sadness, and disturbance. It resembles the religious ceremony of sacrificing an animal when the children who watch the murder are marked with the blood on their foreheads during the Feast of Sacrifice. It also shows that in addition to animals being commercialized, the very act of killing the animals is here marketed and sold as an experience that flatters masculinity, the male friend feels like a caveman. After looking at both his friends, Eric looks directly at us, the camera, and the film ends. The credits roll and end with the note; “No animals were harmed in the making of this film”. The film chooses to include two opposites sitting across each other; while some in the society encourage killing animals and enjoy it, some people like Eric will go through a major change when faced with the animal. The short film is intended for urban consumers and focuses on the choices of individuals over food. Similarly, Extra Fresh, the vegan TV advertisement by Vegan Friendly highlights our ability to bond with animals when we face them and draws attention to the cognitive dissonance, and the animals who are the absent referents.

In “Extra Fresh”, we follow a couple shopping at the supermarket. Moving from one section to another, the man gets packaged “lamb” from the fridge and shows it to the woman. The woman replies to him by saying, “Honey I want it extra fresh” and they move to the butchery section of the supermarket. As they wait to order, they are both content with how fresh everything looks. The man asks if they have fresh lamb, the woman interrupts and tells the butcher to make sure it is extra fresh. The butcher yells to

the workers who are in the back room; “Lamb! Extra fresh!” The worker happily announces that he is bringing it right up. Just when the fresh lamb is about to arrive, the woman looks at the butcher’s display of animal parts and says that she is getting hungry. Right after this scene, in the next shot, the couple is perplexed to see a live lamb held by the worker who is bringing the animal. The worker hands the lamb to the woman, she is not given a choice, she has to hold the baby animal. The butcher asks if they want it chopped or wrapped. The woman holds the lamb close and hugs the animal. There is a similar pattern that aims to show that when faced with the actual animals, a connection is made. Because the viewer is made to sympathize with the protagonist in the short film and the advertisement, we tend to feel compassion toward the animal. It is presumed that as the urban consumers who do not spare a second to realize that what they are eating is the dead body of an animal, making the connection would bring individual change. The habits become strange when they encounter and interact with the animals whom they normally only see in pictures. A routine and normal shopping day or night out with friends with which the viewers can sympathize with easily, comes out with a twist. They address the elephant in the room; the animal whom we have grown accustomed to overlook or disregard, the animal who was killed.

Following a similar route, “Make the Connection” has an open kitchen as the setting of the advertisement. Two women and one man, sitting around a table talk about how plastic straws are ruining the oceans and pity the fish by saying, “poor fish don’t stand a chance” and immediately the close-up shot of the woman eating fish is shown followed by three other shots that show what was just said by this woman; “a large number of live fish out of water on a conveyor belt, a close-up of a fish head still gasping for air, and a headless fish being filleted on a chopping board that had streaks of blood and fish guts on it.”²⁴ This directorial choice and narrative is used in the advertisement and it shows pigs and other animals as well, as they eat these same animals and talk about how they care about animals while others apparently don’t. The advertisement addresses the cognitive dissonance that is experienced by the majority of consumers but is not realized by them. The advertisement ends with the note; “no animal was harmed, consumed, or purchased to make this advert”, followed by the text “MAKE THE CONNECTION”.

²⁴ <https://www.asa.org.uk/rulings/vegan-friendly-uk-g22-1148327-vegan-friendly-uk.html>

After being aired in the UK, The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) received sixty-three complaints while the ad was already given restrictions to ensure that children under the age of sixteen would not be likely to see it. One of the reasons for complaint from viewers was that “it contained gratuitous violence towards animals, which caused unnecessary distress to viewers”. Vegan Friendly UK defended the advertisement by stating that the imagery was “no different to displays seen in butchers or fishmongers’ windows on the average high street, (...) or a cooking program, (...) a nature documentary”. In reply to this, The ASA draws attention to the difference between watching the ad and watching a butcher or a cookery show; it is “an active choice” that is unlike the expectations of a TV ad. In this case, the advertisement is banned because of the defamiliarizing affect it has on the audience, which is distressing and disturbing. The advertisement successfully delivers the purpose and the outcome; it makes the viewer confront the outcome of their choices and actions. Because it uses montage and actual footages of animals in pain, or dead; it disturbs. As the ad’s producer Vegan Friendly UK states, the intention is to highlight “an individual’s potential hypocrisy, and the contradictions between what people said and their actions” and ask them to reconsider their habits and choices.

Why is “Make the Connection”, which only brings the nonvegan audience face to face with the violence and cruelty they pay for and support, banned when it is acceptable and even normal to tell a story of how a little boy helped his father slaughter a baby animal and even watched the animal bleed out in the introduction of a cookbook chapter? In the analysis of Michael Psilakis’s cookbook chapter, in the second chapter, we read the detailed narrative of an animal being slaughtered by a father as the son holds the animal. While this is accepted and published for the audience, among which children might be, the advertisement “Make the Connection” is banned. The ASA argues that it is about our expectations. Our expectations depend on what we are familiar with in a particular context. Thus, in this case, defamiliarization creates a moment of encounter between the audience and the animals whom they were not expecting, not as alive beings looking back at them. Therefore, it serves as a reminder of empathy and sensitivity, the feelings that have been nulled in our culture toward nonhuman animals.

The three visual narratives discussed here have a limited time to address the issues of absent referent, cognitive dissonance, and the normalization of animals being killed

for food. They aim to reach the audience and appeal to their sense of empathy which has been nulled due to the dominant culture of animal exploitation and objectification, along with the laws which allow and sustain such practices. To make the audience see the animals as sentient individuals that they are, they show the animals themselves. Because we have a short span of attention in the quick-paced contemporary life, these narratives manage to affect the audience in a short time without centering the narrative on violent imagery. Moreover, they have the advantage of *showing* the animals themselves instead of writing about them. It brings about a direct confrontation between animals and human animals.

4.3 *Animal Gaze: a mediated confrontation*

The gaze of animals and their looking back at humans is most famously discussed in Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008.) This gaze directed at the human animals brings up the potential that the tables could be turned; just as animals become the objects of our gaze, we could be the objects of their gazes. Derrida encounters the gaze of a she-cat at home after taking a shower, naked before the eyes of the cat. He says, "It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbor ... than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat" (11). Afterward, Derrida points out that many thinkers from the Western philosophical traditions have failed to take account of the seeing animal, the fact that they are looking back at them.

Animals look back at us, and in this look, the center and periphery as well as the interiority (of the human) and exterior (of the animal) gets misplaced.

Traditionally, sight is possession at a distance: we take in to human interiority and reason the object of our gaze. When the animal looks back, the hegemony of human vision becomes confounded. (Broglie, p. 58)

Broglie elaborates on the hegemony of looking and being the object of someone's gaze which is a significant part of visual arts in the context of an exhibition. We visit an exhibition and see "things" that affect us in various ways; they can be visually appealing when aestheticized or make us question certain things. Shklovsky advocates for the latter; art is a device that makes us realize and question what is around us, it gives us a

new perspective. As an experimental and practical part of this thesis, I curated the group exhibition *Animal Gaze*. I incorporated the concept of “gaze” into a mediated confrontation between animals: human and nonhuman. Because “seeing” and “witnessing” bring up accountability and a confrontation with them, I took the concept of an animal gazing at a human to a point where it is the human animals who are made to look at what they have done (and are still doing, being an accomplice in), discursively.

In this speculative future (non-human) animals are no longer “natural” resources (for clothing, food, furniture, medicine, etc.) for humans, and human exploitation of animals has become an archive and is being exhibited. Today, the human audience is looking at what animals from the future have come to see, their past, and what their ancestors have been through. A former slaughterhouse repurposed as a permanent exhibition space; the goal is to show animals their own history. Meanwhile, we (the people who are today’s exhibition audience) attend the future confrontation of animals indirectly from today. (Exhibition Text²⁵, Ece Nada²⁶)

The play at temporality brings the utopic future and the animals of that utopia to the contemporary, which is hell for animals made by the humans of today. As I explain, the idea of the exhibition came from “the imagination of a trial under the name of ‘crimes against animals’”. The criminalization of human treatment of nonhuman animals plays a significant role, and vice versa, as seen in the novel *Tender is the Flesh*. When certain actions are no longer considered criminal, such as cannibalism, it contributes to the normalization and cultural appropriation of such acts. As the curator of *Animal Gaze*, I tried making human supremacy strange, if not openly criminal, with the speculation of a vegan world. In *The War Against Animals*, Dinesh Wadiwel discloses the ways in which animals are positioned in the human supremacist hierarchy. He concludes that sovereignty precedes ethics; it is human sovereignty that is built on the domination and exploitation of animals that brings about the ethical values we are taught in society. In other words, when arrogant anthropocentrism represents the perspective of humans in the majority, it is no surprise that otherization of nonhumans becomes a tool for

²⁵ Exhibition text can be found on <http://www.ecenada.com/animal-gaze/>

²⁶ I use the name Ece Nada except for formal situations.

normalizing animal exploitation and violence. Wadiwel suggests that a “truce” between humans and animals could be a possible beginning toward another order in which animals are not fought against.

If we say that we want a one day truce in the war against animals, one day without killing, this allows us to underline the fact that even “humane” killing counts as violence, and that a response to this violence, indeed the barest imaginable “ethical” response, is to offer animals a reprieve...

(Wadiwel, 2015, p. 290)

Wadiwel himself is vegan and in this book he highlights the systemic violence in opposition to individual ethics and focuses on how the killing and exploitation of animals can be halted in the larger context, on the level of large industries stopping work. As he also says, this is quite an ambitious plan but if it can be experienced, “in the peace of truce we can begin the work of imagining what a world beyond the war against animals might look like” (292). As an artist and curator, I imagined a future where animals are no longer commodities and aimed to have the human visitors of today see an exhibition from this future. *Animal Gaze* occurs at a time of peace; it is a future in which both human and nonhuman animals visit this exhibition and confront the past. By making the “normal” practices of animal exploitation of today into archival materials of the past, I made them strange.

Animal Gaze defamiliarizes the human audience of today with a fictive archive from the future. What makes it strange is the fact that these materials that are parts of a “fictive archive” are the familiarized, legal and “normal” objects and practices of today. The exhibition raises the question of whether our “normal” routines are as normal as we have come to accept them as such. Returning to the point at which Psilakis reacts to his father as he cries and tells him he killed his friend and he helped him do it; *Animal Gaze* asks the audience to look again at the knife that they use at home to cut animal parts or the dishes with leftovers by the sink, the poster at the butchery which shows the body parts of a cow, defining each part as a kind of meat.

Separating the exhibition into two parts, as the curator I prevented the visitors from meeting the gazes of animals in the first part. The first part consists of the first room, the small room next to it and the small area at the entrance of another room. This other room is where the second part of the exhibition begins in the curatorial arrangement. In the first part, we are made to look at how animals have been made into objects, through

the artworks that are produced to give the illusion of an archive of animal exploitation from the future. Even before entering any of these rooms, we hear the sound of animals; they follow us in every part of the exhibition. In the first room, the artworks meet us in three categories; on the left, we have an eye-catching red, on the right we have a ghostly white while in the middle and right across the entrance, there is a collection of archival images that can be seen in traditional archival exhibitions.

4.3.1 *Red*

What catches the eye of the viewer first is the artwork titled “Veal/Beef Cuts” which is a drawing of a cattle on canvas. It is a common object seen at butcheries that shows which part of the animal is called what. The difference here is that, in contrast to the other parts of the body, the hip of the animal is not left as a white mapped-out area but a fleshy part painted on the canvas. Contrasting the white map that is drawn on the body of an animal who does not even have an eye, the red flesh strikes out. The contrast aims to remind the viewer of the fact that these various “cuts” are taken from the body of a once-living animal. The flesh does not seem to have a distinctive quality that would suggest this must be the flesh of a specific nonhuman animal. The fleshy area looks the same as any flesh, including humans’. In that sense, it also reminds us of the mutual grounds we have with nonhuman animals; a mutual vulnerability under the cuts of violent sovereign power. On the left, the viewer meets “Inventory” on the side wall, which is a video installation. On the shiny, eely side of an empty but seemingly used, creased butcher paper that is fixed on the wall, two images are projected; a video compilation of cows walking around and grazing is also projected on top of the dead bodies of the animals who are referred to as “livestock” hung in a cold storage room. The artwork refers to the three stages of a consumption circle; animals when they are alive, reflected on animals who are killed and hung up, reflected on the wrapping paper which we are accustomed to seeing at the butcher’s in which these body parts are put. It is the paper that we bring home, carrying the dead body parts of an animal. Engin Arer, the artist of “Inventory”, elaborates on the title of the artwork;

The word “inventory” comes from the French word “inventaire,” which means “a detailed list of goods”. In English, farm animals are also defined by the word livestock, which means “live stock”. Inventory also asks a question with the

name of the work; whether the definition of living beings with these terms used in animal husbandry is a result of or a reason for the breaking of this bond between the animals and the consumed products made from animals.²⁷

Similarly, the artwork of Kübra Ateş, “Veal/Beef Cuts” also draws attention to the bond that has been broken by referring to Carol J. Adams’s term absent referent. “The marked and cut pieces are under human domination, similar to a battlefield conquered by killing, a non-living country map. It aims to remind us that the “cuts” that are mapped and cut are body parts of a living individual who has been detached from the whole body”. Disidentification of individual animals is exposed in these works to reveal the hidden subjects, the animals, and to show the connection between the flesh we bring onto the kitchen counter and the animals who are unseen in this final stage, becoming an ingredient for a recipe.

4.3.2 White

A ghostly white meets the viewer’s eyes on the opposite side of the room. Ateş’s second artwork, “1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ...,” is a mixed media sculpture that was “created to depict thousands of animals transformed into numbers, objects in the sector, homogenized, detached from their natural habitats and condemned to a life of confinement, bred and killed to be consumed at the end of the process rather than considered living things” (Artist’s statement). A similar thread of bringing out the unseen individual animals can be found in all of the artworks exhibited in *Animal Gaze*. However, this artwork also carries a statuesque aura similar to a monument made in memory of all the chickens slaughtered in the exhibition’s fictional past. White chicken silhouettes made of cheap, transparent parchment paper stuck and confined together in a white frame, looking at us without eyes, and placed onto a white surface have a ghostly quality. It is as if the ghosts of the chickens are haunting humanity for the pain they suffered. Since chickens are among animals such as fish whose individuality is disregarded the most, the material used in the artwork draws attention to the cheapness of the final product, chicken as food. The ghostly white is followed in another artist’s installation on the corner. “Counting Sheep” makes use of the found material which is a visual guide for herding sheep and the cloud-like sheep forms suspended in the air. The shadows of sheep forms

²⁷ All artist statements can be found on <http://www.ecenada.com/animal-gaze/>

made of cotton fall on the pages of this visual guide that are hung on the walls of this corner. The dreamy and cloud-like imagery contrasts with the drawings of the sheep illustrated on the pages of the guide. The animal is held in different positions, and the movements are numbered. The sheep hung up in the air become the ghosts casting their shadows on the pages, reminding us of the exploitation they endured. The artist comments on his artwork with the following statement; “The forms that seep into people's dreams as "counting sheep" are visualized in this common consciousness as the discomfort that comes with the promise of peace. The work strives to form the common virtual world between the perpetrator and the victim.”

4.3.3 *Archive*

“Haliç Congress Centre”, an installation that combines two pasts of the fictional future, approaches the concept of archive more literally and presents the facts of today as the future archives. Positioned in the middle of the room, “Haliç Congress Centre” exhibits the drawings of the building, which is today a congress center formerly known as a slaughterhouse. The artist focuses on the industrial workings of animal exploitation in both works. The drawings of the building, hung high on the wall, descending from a traverse rod, roll at a slow speed while the archive images of the slaughterhouse are reflected on the white paper. The artist Volkan Parlak particularly criticizes capitalism and highlights how animals and human workers are used and consumed in the industrial setting.

Architectural drawings of the place, similar to a building survey, are constantly rotating on the tracing roll. The continuous rotation of the paper, like the conveyor system, is similar to the system in which the producer, who entered our lives with post-Fordism, is also consumed as a product. In the late capitalist era, when humans and non-human animals are seen as products, everything is easily consumed. An architectural space can also be consumed over and over again with minor changes.

Parlak’s second artwork exhibits the rotary milking system and thus focuses attention on the industrial exploitation of animals. The stations where cows are made to stand are empty, but the machine keeps turning. The moving sculpture has a knob on it; when the lights are off, we hear the sound of a cow who is screaming after her calf was taken

away from her. When the viewer turns the lights on, it is silent. The work is suggestive of what might happen if we were to turn the lights on. Would the screaming end if we were to see and witness the pain and exploitation involved in this system? By giving the audience a chance to get involved in the work and making it interactive, the artist hints at the individual responsibility in changing the system.

The installation at the center of the room, on the floor, titled “encounter_the archive” has a similar approach to making an archive out of today’s materials and practices. As the artist of this artwork, I used stills from YouTube videos shot by farmers, teaching other farmers or farmers to be how to artificially inseminate a cow or teaching them how to feed the calves who have been taken away from their mothers after birth. The other source for these archival images was online shopping websites. Almost all of the instruments used in animal husbandry are sold on well-known shopping websites that the exhibition visitors are very familiar with. Drawing a black band on the faces of people who appear in these videos and pictures, I aimed to address the criminality of the acts. Because *Animal Gaze* abstains from having artworks that use human language, written or verbal, I also erased the texts but left the signs and symbols, such as the YouTube sign, and the heart sign, which is the button that adds the product to a list. Another one of these which I left on the archive to be seen was the number of people who liked a video on YouTube. Leaving these familiar signs to be seen, I aimed to demonstrate that animal exploitation is not happening behind closed doors; doing a quick search online brings up all the data about what is happening right in front of our eyes. As a coincidence, this installation was in dialogue with at least two artworks by other artists. Parlak’s artwork that shows the rotary milking system “Mom” also appears in “encounter_the archive”. The nose ring, also called “milk sucking preventer”, which is among the images that are laid on a cream-colored cloth in “encounter_the archive”, is seen in Havva Zorlu’s video collage, on the nose of a calf who is looking at us. To make the artwork more available to the animals of the future, I placed the archive on the floor. Another motivation behind the positioning of the work was to make the human visitors crouch down to see the images and change their usual posture to be on the same eye level as animals such as chickens, lambs, and other shorter animals.

In the small room next door is the animation film “Labyrinth Rat” by Uğur Savaş, which archives what the rats used in lab experiments might have been experiencing

through the eyes of a rat. The types of experiments are not highlighted in the short film because, to the rat, there is no difference; these appear as various traps set up for the animal from which they try to escape and survive. Savaş explains that he was “inspired by Art Spiegelman's famous Pulitzer-winning comic book *Maus*. In the book, which depicts the life of a Jew trying to survive in Nazi concentration camps, Nazis are drawn as rats and Jews as cats.” In contrast to Spiegelman's usage of animals as metaphors for humans, Savaş chooses to show the viewers and the future animals what a rat experiences in this confined area. Since the film is without speech, the narrative depends on the imagery and sound. It is one of the exhibition's most compelling works because it has a storyline and gripping music specially made for this film. The audience feels the tension of being in the labyrinth. The final scene of the film reveals that the labyrinth is constructed with the blueprints of a human's fingerprints and thus, the film holds humans accountable for the pain the animals endure in the laboratories.

On the other side of the exhibition floor, before entering the second part, the visitors encounter two artworks; one of them on the counter by the sink titled “encounter_the dishes” by me and next to the counter, on the mirror of a door titled “Archive of Exploitation in Art” by Emin Çelik. “encounter_the dishes” is a site-specific installation that makes use of the counter to create an archival scene; the scene of the dishes that pile up after consuming a dish. This familiar scenery is protected by a glass covering the dishes, which hints at the traditional archival exhibitions where objects are displayed behind protective glass. Under the glass lay the dishes; two plates on top of each other, cutlery and a foam package that had been opened, left next to the plates. Stuck in between these objects, the viewer sees dark red flesh-colored pieces representing the flesh of animals. These are placed in a certain way to connote that these animal parts are caught in motion, struggling to leave the scene, resisting being consumed, and trying to escape. Referring to the struggle and resistance of the chickens as they are being hooked by factory workers, discussed by Wadiwel²⁸ I aimed to create a scene where these strange-looking animal parts uncannily show resistance in the lifeless flesh.

In the second part, the visitors find two screens placed on opposite walls. This part of *Animal Gaze* is curated particularly to invite the visitors to confront the gazes of

²⁸ Dinesh Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals* (2005) 2.

animals and to coexist in this space with the animals of the future. Havva Zorlu's video collage "Look Again" contains sheep, lambs, chickens and a cow gazing at us, the camera. The camera mainly focuses on a single animal with close-up shots to highlight the individuality of these animals who are mostly thought of in masses, in a flock. The video also invites the human seer to meet the gaze of the subjects who are being exploited, as addressed in the other areas of the exhibition. The images of these animals are reflected on the mirror screen placed across the artwork "encounter_the mirror". The ornamented gold frame of the mirror has an antique familiarity, reminding the visitors of their grandparents' houses. In this frame, the person looking at the mirror finds the silhouettes of animals walking around, and their own reflections on these animals. Thus, the artwork brings together the human visitors of today and the animals of the future visiting the same exhibition. In other words, the real animals from today that appear in Zorlu's video collage are also reflected in the mirror, the frame captures moments when the future animals and animals of today meet. The confrontation is complete with this work. The exhibition asks us to look at what we have come to accept and even support, the exploitation of animals with another perspective and imagine a future world where this is no longer allowed to happen. In the final stage, it is also asked to confront ourselves, the individuals who are complicit in this crime that is hinted at.

4.4 Conclusion: Encountering the Other

In *Tender is the Flesh*, when Marcos avoids eating his special meat which is the fingers of a human who was hunted by the hunting party, Urlet says to him; "You have to respect what's being served, cavalier"²⁹. Every dish contains death. Think of it as a sacrifice that some have made for others" (p. 64). A few lines later, Marcos thinks to himself about the so-called "sacrifice"; "He's not going to tell the man that a sacrifice generally requires consent from the person being sacrificed..." This brings us back to the sacrifice narrative told by Psilakis's father to his grieving child. The novel makes the point that there is no consent in this sacrifice. The animal, whether human or not, did not die willingly but rather was murdered. Telling the story of nonhuman animals who are exploited in slaughterhouses, dairy farms, tanneries and labs; Bazterrica makes the readers empathize with them by using humans as metaphorical devices for animals.

²⁹ Urlet is a Romanian character, "cavalier" means "knight" in Romanian.

The dark portrait of humanity might as well be discouraging but I argue that in the end, we empathize with Jasmine, who represents “the other”. Meeting the other is a moment of reflection that could trigger a change of perspective.

Likewise, in *Casa de Carne*, “Extra Fresh” and “Make the Connection” we meet the animals themselves when we least expect it. It catches the viewer by surprise, even red-handed, and asks us to look at the animal who is often unseen and disregarded. Meeting the other, the food, the consumable as a sentient being, vulnerable to the eyes of the human, we are asked to make a choice between killing them or letting them be. This suggests a power imbalance between the human and the animal, and it depends on us to “let” them be. At the same time, facing the animal and acknowledging the gaze of the animal directed at us reminds us that they are not mere objects but rather sentient individuals.

Animal Gaze hosts the visitors in a utopia and makes them imagine that there is a world where animal exploitation is abolished. It documents what is familiar to us today and exhibits them as the archive of the future to the animals. In the context of an archive, we meet humanity as the perpetrator and animals as the wronged party. However, this is not curated in a way that puts the human visitors on the spot directly. Because this is an exhibition intended for animals, we as humans see the archive through the eyes of the animals. We only see what was meant for them to see. Welcoming animals as visitors, putting together an exhibition for animals and not humans shifts the subject from humans to nonhumans. Moreover, the exhibition does not include verbal and written human language but exposes human visitors to the sound of animals. It asks the human visitors to stop speaking and start listening to them even if they might not make sense of what they are exactly saying. Rather than deeming animals as the “voiceless” or those who “lack” language; *Animal Gaze* contains the speech of animals only. In every part of the exhibition, animals can be heard, and though they are not there in person, their sound creates the feeling that they are there, following the human visitors of today. *Animal Gaze* problematizes the human gaze over animals which objectifies them and questions the possibility of another world and an exhibition that is intended for the animals, thus changing the subject from human to animal; the other who is never considered as “the subject”.

Chapter 5:
CONCLUSION:
DISMANTLING ARROGANT ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND
HUMAN SOVEREIGNTY

“In the case of human relations with animals, sovereignty precedes ethics. Ethical engagement does not inform our relations with animals; instead, the force of our sovereign domination of animals sets in place our relations, and establishes the limited bases for any ethical consideration which follows.

(Wadiwel 2015, pp. 36–55)

In this thesis, I had the goal of questioning and analyzing how we normalize the exploitation and killing of animals through literary and visual materials of different mediums. Dinesh Wadiwel summarizes the problem clearly; human sovereignty over nonhumans defines ethical values, normalcy, and the overall system of exploitation. I address this issue with the concept of “arrogant anthropocentrism,” defined by Lori Gruen (*Entangled Empathy*) as the human-centered perspective which condemns all nonhumans as inferior and exploitable “things.” I approach anthropocentrism as a tenet that we are taught in childhood by an authority figure. This affects our perception of animals, and each person responds to this teaching and set of norms differently, which is discussed in the first chapter.

Primarily animals are objectified, and their singular existence is lost in the narrative. They are used as metaphors to prove a point about humans, abstracted as ingredients in recipes, aestheticized, and most of the time, the other animals, named as livestock, are nullified and stripped of their individuality. Due to the norms of arrogant anthropocentrism, animals are categorized as the others in society and then classified depending on which species are useful to humans and how. The animals who are not beneficial to humans are disregarded. Those who get in the way, such as “pests,” are exterminated. In *Regarding Animals*, the authors of the book explain that “nonhuman outsiders are removed from most researchers not by class or ethnicity but by biology,” and they present how “meaning is socially created in interaction, ... how we organize our social world; and how we see our connection (or lack of it) to other living

beings”(4). In modern Western societies, they find “inconsistency” in how humans regard animals. The book was published in 1996 and still retains pertinence to how we see animals. In this thesis, I studied how the selected materials include animals in the narratives to disclose the tenets of arrogant anthropocentrism. Though today we live in a world constructed on human sovereignty over nonhumans, I hold that this can be deconstructed and dismantled. Defamiliarization is a valuable method in achieving this end, making the readers and the viewers see the “nonhuman outsiders” from a non-anthropocentric point of view. The last part of the thesis aims to show various ways creative works can actively challenge this structure of otherization and human supremacy. Anthropocentrism marks the beginning of nonhuman animals’ exploitation, qualifying them as natural resources for humans. Literature, cinema, and fine arts have the potential to use art as a device, without falling into the pit of didactic language and emotional manipulation, to confront us with the inconsistency in our actions and beliefs, cultivate empathy and make us recognize the animals as subjects. In a world where human sovereignty and domination of animals are sustained and perpetuated financially, I argue that we, the civilians, can challenge this physical and epistemic violence by producing works that trigger change. We need to start with our taught perception of animals to change today in order to recognize animals as individuals with whom we share this earth and respect their intrinsic right to live freely without exploitation.

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