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Introduction

This thesis explores the concept of antispeciesism in English Literature and other international media, beginning with an introduction that clarifies the principles and key figures associated with this philosophy. It distinguishes antispeciesism from related concepts such as animalism and animal welfare, while also addressing its intersectional dimensions. The focus then shifts to Victorian Literature, analyzing works by Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Anna Sewell, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning for early signs of antispeciesist thought. This investigation extends to examining the legislative context surrounding animals during the Victorian era. Moving to contemporary literature, the thesis examines the works of J.M. Coetzee and Isaac B. Singer. This work concludes with a broader exploration of cultural forms and media, considering how they might be interpreted through an antispeciesist lens to varying degrees. This comprehensive study contributes to understanding the evolution and implications of antispeciesism within English Literature and other cultural forms.

Let us begin by giving an overview on the concept of antispeciesism. Antispeciesism is a term coined in the 1970s and it is a philosophy that rejects the idea that humans are inherently superior to other animals based on their species. Antispeciesists believe that all sentient beings, regardless of their species, have inherent value and should be treated with equal consideration and respect. This means that animals should not be used for human purposes such as food, clothing, entertainment, experimentation, or any other form of exploitation. This principle is based on the concept of sentience, which refers to the ability to experience subjective states of consciousness, such as pleasure, pain, and suffering. Antispeciesists argue that since non-human animals are sentient beings, they should be granted the same moral consideration as humans, and therefore have moral value. Antispeciesists argue that it is morally wrong to cause unnecessary harm and suffering to any sentient being, regardless of their species, and that we should extend moral consideration to all animals, not just those that we consider to be pets.

Its counterpart is speciesism and its origins can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, who believed that humans were superior to all other forms of life. This belief was reinforced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which considered humans being created in

the image of God and therefore had a special place in the natural world. In the modern era, the rise of science and technology has further reinforced the belief in human superiority. American philosopher and animal rights advocate Joan Dunayer wrote a book entitled *Speciesism* and defined it:

Whenever you see a bird in a cage, fish in a tank, or nonhuman mammal on a chain, you're seeing speciesism. If you believe that a bee or frog has less right to life and liberty than a chimpanzee or human, or you consider humans superior to other animals, you subscribe to speciesism. If you visit aquaprisons and zoos, attend circuses that include "animal acts," wear nonhuman skin or hair, or eat flesh, eggs, or cow-milk products, you practice speciesism. If you campaign for more "humane" slaughter of chickens or less-cruel confinement of pigs, you perpetuate speciesism. (Dunayer 2004: 1).

Speciesism is closely linked to the concept of anthropocentrism, which is the belief that humans are the center of the universe and that all other beings exist for their benefit only. According to anthropocentrism, the other beings are merely resources to be used for human benefit. The most evident characteristic of anthropocentrism is the idea of opposing the single species "Man" against the countless of different species of non-human animals, each with their own peculiar characteristics, and treating them as a single unit of animals.

In human language, we have two distinct categories: Human and Animal, intricately interwoven. Biologically, humans are animals, yet socially, they stand apart. The Human is perceived as separate from nature, elevated above it – a master endowed with rationality and free will. This separation places humans in the realm of Culture, detached from Nature. The Human is self-determining, unique, distinct from other beings. However, labeling a human as an animal is met with danger, insult, and injustice, as the Animal is perceived as something subject to exploitation, mistreatment, and even death. Behind this distinction lies a practice and a narrative, fueling an entire industry. Numerous factors perpetuate the world's adherence to this paradigm, building a metaphorical wall composed of words and social structures. This barrier keeps certain groups apart from the so-called humans, highlighting the exclusivity even within humanity. The wall is a creation of those in power, perpetuating a hierarchy that

designates who is deemed edible, disposable, or endlessly breedable. This construct is rooted in speciesism.

Antispeciesism is often associated with the animal rights movement, which seeks to end the use of animals for human purposes and to promote the idea that animals are not property but rather individuals with their own interests and needs. Antispeciesists also advocate for the recognition of legal rights for animals.

The concept, in fact, has its roots in the animal rights movement, which emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the growing recognition of the unethical treatment of animals in industrial agriculture and other forms of animal exploitation. The idea of animal rights is often criticized by those who argue that animals do not have the capacity for rational thought or moral agency. One of the earliest advocates of animal rights was the Australian philosopher Peter Singer, who published his work *Animal Liberation* in 1975. In this book, Singer argued that animals have inherent moral value and should not be used for human purposes, such as food or experimentation. He wrote: “The assumption that animals are without rights, and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance, is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity.” (Singer 2009: 4).

It is important to highlight that, despite Singer being referred to as the “father of animal rights”, he rather relies on the concept of equal consideration. He writes about equal consideration and does not demand that we give animals the right to vote but that we take their feelings into consideration when making decisions that affect their lives. Singer's ideas were further developed by other philosophers, including Tom Regan, who argued that animals have inherent rights and that these rights should be recognized and protected by law. According to him: “Animals are not our property or resources. They are not things, but persons.” (Regan 2004: 29). Regan's book *The Case for Animal Rights* was a significant contribution to the development of the animal rights movement and the concept of antispeciesism. In addition to the work of philosophers, the animal rights movement has also been shaped by activists and organizations that work to raise awareness of animal rights issues, featuring people belonging to the entertainment industry such as the American singer Moby and the American actors Peter Dinklage and

Joaquin Phoenix. Some notable organizations include People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), and the Humane Society of the United States. Antispeciesism has also been influenced by social justice movements, such as feminism and the civil rights movement. These movements have helped to highlight the ways in which all forms of oppression are interconnected, and have contributed to the growing recognition of the importance of extending moral consideration to all beings, regardless of their race, gender, or species membership, advocating for an intersectionality.

It is important to take a closer look at intersectionality and, in particular, at intersectional antispeciesism. This is an approach to animal rights that recognizes the interconnections between different forms of oppression, including those based on race, gender, sexuality, class, and species. This approach emphasizes that all forms of oppression are interconnected and that addressing one form requires addressing others as well. The feminist and animal rights activist Carol J. Adams wrote in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*:

We believe both that we are being kind to the animals and that they like how we are treating them. Or we like to believe that the animals have no consciousness of suffering and that their plight should not affect us. To paraphrase Rousseau, everywhere animals are in chains, but we image them as free. This denial is very strong. To convey this sense of the animals' freedom, patriarchal-cultural images draw upon cues about another supposed freedom: the consumption of women's sexuality. Thus animals and women are not only depicted as free, though they are not, but as sexually free. The result is the sexual politics of meat. (Adams 2015: 19).

Intersectional antispeciesism rejects the so-called "single issue", an animalist mainstream approach that tends to speak about animal rights only, ignoring or denying the intersections between speciesism and other forms of oppression. Often, speciesism is not even mentioned, because activists think in an anthropocentric way. This idea considers civil rights movements either less urgent or even detrimental towards non-human animals. Carol J. Adams introduced a fundamental concept of carnism: the absent referent. She wrote:

Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. The “absent referent” is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our “meat” separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep the “moo” or “cluck” or “baa” away from the meat, to keep something from being seen as having been someone. Once the existence of meat is disconnected from the existence of an animal who was killed to become that “meat,” meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image. (Adams 2010: 13).

Intersectional antispeciesism considers that animals are not the only beings who suffer from systemic oppression and that many humans also experience forms of oppression that are linked to the exploitation of animals. For example, workers in the industrial agriculture industry are often subject to poor working conditions and low pay, while communities living near factory farms may be exposed to environmental pollution and health risks. Intersectional antispeciesism also recognizes the ways in which different forms of oppression can reinforce one another. For example, racism can contribute to the exploitation of animals by promoting the idea that certain animals are “less valuable” than others, while speciesism can reinforce other forms of oppression by promoting the idea that some beings are “more valuable” than others based on their species membership. This concept is well explained by the following quote by American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer: “When we think about the way we treat pigs, we should consider what our reaction would be if dogs were treated the same way. If we would not accept it for dogs, why should we accept it for pigs?” (Foer 2009: 178). To address these interconnected forms of oppression, intersectional antispeciesism advocates for a more global approach to animal rights that takes into account the broader social, economic, and political context in which animal exploitation occurs. This approach emphasizes the need for collaboration between different social justice movements and the importance of addressing systemic issues that contribute to the exploitation of human and non-human animals alike. Based on what already said, we can affirm that animal rights incorporate human rights or, to be more precise, animal rights are human rights.

Singer emphasized his approach of persuading individuals to abandon speciesism through rational persuasion, his arguments draw heavily upon various illustrative

elements. Most fundamentally, he draws parallels between the treatment of animals, African slaves, women, and victims of genocide, such as the Holocaust. In doing so, he highlights the presence of racism, sexism, and genocidal prejudice. These parallels align with the historical liberation movements. Singer underscores the historical connection between early feminists and vegetarianism, highlighting the intertwining of social justice causes, i.e., intersectionality.

Indeed, the overlap between leaders of movements against the oppression of blacks and women, and leaders of movements against cruelty to animals, is extensive; so extensive as to provide an unexpected form of confirmation of the parallel between racism, sexism, and speciesism. (Singer 2002: 221).

This parallel, in particular that between animal exploitation and human slavery is not merely a surface comparison; it implies a significant connection between present-day American attitudes towards animals and their historical attitudes towards slaves. This emotional link serves to support the argument against speciesism, although its intensity could potentially distance readers rather than persuading them due to its direct confrontation with their beliefs. While this analogy is compelling, it does encounter resistance from certain critics who raised reservations about its validity. The Executive Director of The Institute for the Development of Earth Awareness and winner of a 2005 Fellowship in Nonfiction Literature from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Marjorie Spiegel wrote about intersectionality in her book *The Dreaded Comparison*: “Comparing speciesism with racism? At first glance, many people might feel that it is insulting to compare the suffering of non-human animals to that of humans. In fact in our society, comparison to an animal has come to be a slur” (Spiegel 1988: 14).

She, then continued:

we might look at the relationship between a dog and their master, just one example of what is sometimes a modern slave/slave-owner relationship. The dog is considered by her owner to be a 'good dog' if she walks to heel, displays no great interest when nearing other dogs, doesn't run except when allowed, doesn't bark except when required, and has no emotional needs except when desired by the master. Many dogs spend their entire lives in isolation, chained to a slab of concrete or a tree in their

master's backyard. If a dog wishes to do something other than what pleases her master -play with other dogs (socialize), for instance- she may be beaten or otherwise punished (Spiegel 1988: 37).

Fighting speciesism means also rejecting patriarchy. Joan Dunayer wrote in the preface of her book *Speciesism*: “Words have political effect. They can foster oppression or liberation, prejudice or respect.” (Dunayer 2004: xi) and words like “chick” or “bitch” exude speciesism and sexism, they picture women as just a body to exploit. The same Dunayer in one of her earlier works entitled *Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots*, wrote:

While only some nonhuman-animal pejoratives denigrate women, *all* denigrate nonhuman animals. Numerous nonhuman-animal terms act as invective solely or largely against men and boys: *shark, skunk, lap dog, toad, weasel, snake, jackass, worm*. The male-specific *wolf* and *cur* parallel the female-specific *vixen* and *bitch*. *Cock of the walk* and *bullheaded* correspond to *mother hen* and *stupid cow*. *Dumb ox* equates to *dumb bunny*. And *old buzzard* and *goat* resemble *old biddy* and *crow*. Nonhuman-animal terms also serve as racist epithets, as when blacks are called "monkeys" or "gorillas." Often, invoking another animal as insult doesn't target any human group: *sheepish, birdbrain, crazy as a loon*. In such cases the comparison's fundamental speciesism stands alone. Whether or not a person is avaricious, labeling them a "vulture" exhibits prejudice against no group except vultures. (Dunayer 1995: 16-17)

In her book, Dunayer pointed out another issue in the English language that expresses speciesism: the plural.

To remind readers that any group of nonhumans consists of multiple individuals, I often use uncommon (but accepted) plural forms that end in *s*: *fishes*, rather than *fish*, *squids* rather than *squid*, *minks* rather than *mink*. As noted in *The Merriam-Webster Concise Handbook for Writers*, hunters, fishers, and trappers generally refer to their victims with plurals identical to singular forms: two "quail," three "trout," four "beaver." Such usage blurs the victims together, de-emphasizing their individual sufferings and deaths (Dunayer 2004: xii).

Eating meat is also part of a toxic masculinity and a cultural upbringing which has been imposed upon us since our birth, adhering to the rape culture. Eating vegetables, on the other hand, is seen as something opposite, as highlighted by Carol J. Adams:

The word vegetable acts as a synonym for women's passivity because women are supposedly like plants. Hegel makes this clear: "The difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because their development is more placid". (Adams 2010: 61).

It became also common to use the adjective "voiceless" to refer to animals after the publication of *The Voice of The Voiceless*, a poem written in 1910 by American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox. The term can be found in numerous contemporary animal advocacy texts and animal rights campaigns. The phrase "voice for the voiceless" is a saviorist formulation, giving voice to a group that is unable to defend or speak for themselves, this phrase seems to turn animality into a form of disability: animals are dumb, voiceless, weak, and frail. This idea perpetuates ableism while trying to fight another form of oppression. Indian author and political activist Arundhati Roy went against this idea with the following quote: "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard." (Roy 2006: 330).

Another implication of the philosophy of antispeciesism is that humans should recognize the value of non-human animals and their ecosystems. Antispeciesists argue that the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species are not only morally wrong but also harmful to humans. Regarding this issue we talk of environmental ethics, a branch of philosophy that explores the moral relationship between humans and the natural world. Environmental ethicists argue that humans have a moral obligation to protect the environment and the non-human animals that inhabit it. Antispeciesists believe that the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species are harmful to humans because they result in the loss of biodiversity, which is essential for the health of ecosystems.

One of the most practical implications of the philosophy of antispeciesism is veganism. Veganism is a lifestyle that seeks to minimize the harm caused to non-human animals by avoiding the consumption of animal products, such as meat, dairy, and eggs. Veganism is a way to put the philosophy of antispeciesism into practice in our daily lives. By choosing a plant-based diet, we are choosing not to contribute to the

exploitation and suffering of non-human animals. Antispeciesists believe that veganism is a moral obligation, as it is a way to minimize harm to other sentient beings. Some critics of veganism argue that it is not a practical solution, as humans have evolved to eat meat and dairy products. However, antispeciesists consider that humans have also evolved to be capable of making ethical choices, and that our evolution should not be used as an excuse to exploit other sentient beings.

The philosophy of antispeciesism has political implications as well. As already mentioned, antispeciesists support the idea of animal rights. This could involve legislation to ban the use of animals in scientific research and to protect the habitats of non-human animals. Animals should be represented in our political systems, and their interests should be considered when making policy decisions. For example, environmental policies should take into account the impact on non-human animals and their ecosystems.

Antispeciesism is different from animalism. Animalism is focused on welfarism, in the Saunders Comprehensive Veterinary Dictionary, animal welfare is defined as "the avoidance of abuse and exploitation of animals by humans by maintaining appropriate standards of accommodation, feeding and general care, the prevention and treatment of disease and the assurance of freedom from harassment, and unnecessary discomfort and pain.", this idea evidently is in contrast with the antispeciesist view of seeing non-human animals as individuals and not property. The concept of welfarism hinders the emancipation of non-human beings. Whether expressed explicitly or implicitly, proponents of welfarism endorse the idea that animals subjected to enslavement and slaughter can experience well-being (welfare). However, genuine welfare is fundamentally incompatible with practices such as enslavement, slaughter, and other forms of abuse. Welfarists aim to bring about changes in how non-humans are treated within systems of speciesist abuse. Their efforts focus on modifying, rather than abolishing, the exploitation of specific non-human beings. Essentially, welfarists advocate for the replacement of certain forms of abuse with less cruel alternatives. In contrast, advocates for animal rights stand against exploitation itself, seeking an end to the systemic mistreatment of non-humans.

There is a growing awareness and interest in the concept of antispeciesism, and media outlets are increasingly covering the topic in various forms: mainly books, news articles and documentaries. One of the most recent and impactful work is the 2018 documentary *Dominion*. The documentary features footage from hidden cameras and drones, as well as interviews with animal rights activists, industry experts, and former farmers. It depicts the harsh realities of animal agriculture, including the use of confinement, mutilation, and killing of animals on a massive scale. The film also exposes the cruelty in the industries of fashion, entertainment, and animal testing. The documentary has been praised for its powerful and emotional impact, but has also been criticized by some for its graphic content. At the end, the narrators read a clear and remarkable speech written by the director Chris Delforce, that is:

In our entire recorded history, 619 million humans have been killed by war. We kill the same number of animals every 3 days, and this isn't even including fish and other sea creatures whose deaths are so great they are only measured in tones. (...) It is not a question of treatment, or better ways of doing the wrong thing. Bigger cages, smaller stocking densities, or less painful gas. We tell ourselves that they have lived good lives, and in the end, they don't know what's coming and don't feel a thing. But they do. (...) We take their lives, sending them healthy and whole into a slaughterhouse to come out as packaged pieces on the other side, and we tell ourselves that somehow, along the way, something humane and ethical happened. (...) we continue to justify animal agriculture by claiming that it's normal, necessary and natural. That the animal kingdom, or certain species within it, are inferior to ourselves, because they lack our specific type of intelligence, because they're weaker and cannot defend themselves. We believe that, in our apparent superiority, we have earned the right to exercise power, authority and dominion over those we perceive to be inferior, for our own short-sighted ends. It is a justification that has been used before. By the white man, to enslave the black, or to take their land and their children. By the Nazis, to murder the Jews. By men, to silence and oppress women. (Delforce 2018).

Important in the strife against speciesism is knowing and analyzing the concept of privilege. Privilege is based on pseudo-biological characteristics, which actually are deeply cultural. Some of the most recognized kinds of privilege are being white and belonging to the Western society, which both influenced the entire history of our world; speciesism, of course, is another type of privilege. Privilege is innate; a living being by the moment of their birth is either privileged or oppressed in one or more ways

according to their skin color, nationality, gender, patrimony and among many others, also species. While, as previously said, privilege cannot be chosen, instead it is in our hands, as privileged people, to decide whether we want to take part in the oppression or fight it. It is intrinsic in the privilege to not see the problem, precisely because once privileged you are not a victim, hence remaining neutral means silently supporting the oppression. In an oppressive society is not enough to remain silent, you have to be against it, therefore in a speciesist society is not enough to be non-speciesist, you have to be antispeciesist.

Chapter 1 The Victorian Age

In recent years, the concept of antispeciesism has emerged as a significant topic of discussion in the field of animal studies, as well as in the broader cultural and social spheres. Literature has long been a site for exploring ethical questions and challenging dominant attitudes towards various forms of oppression, but being antispeciesism a relatively new approach, it is difficult to find authors openly adhering to the cause with their works, especially before Singer's book. This chapter wants to focus on the 19th century and especially on one author who supported animal rights and can be considered a precursor, a forethinker, a proto-antispeciesist: Thomas Hardy.

1.1 Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy was a British novelist and poet who lived from 1840 to 1928. He is best known for his novels, such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, but he also wrote poetry that often touched on themes related to nature and animals. In his writing, Hardy often expressed sympathy for animals and concern for their welfare. He portrayed animals as sentient beings with their own emotions and experiences, and he criticized the ways in which humans treated them. For example, in his poem *The Puzzled Game-Birds*, he describes the confusion and distress of birds who are hunted for sport. Hardy's concern for animal welfare was rooted in his interest in the natural world and his belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings. He saw humans as part of a larger ecosystem and recognized the importance of preserving the balance of nature. Although Hardy did not explicitly advocate for animal rights as we understand them today, his writing reflects a deep concern for the well-being of animals and a recognition of their inherent value. Hardy's perspective on animal rights is not as prominent or well-known as his views on other social concerns of his time, such as class inequalities or the role of women in society. It is worth noting that Hardy lived during a time when the concept of animal rights as we understand it today was still in its nascent stages. As mentioned earlier, the modern animal rights movement emerged primarily in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, gaining traction in the 1970s and beyond. Therefore, Hardy's perspective on animal rights may not align with contemporary

notions of the movement. He was not a vegetarian, although he was conflicted about meat eating. He became explicitly dedicated to the cause of improving the treatment of animals, he refused to attend events that featured animal cruelty, such as bullfights and horse races. He also spoke out against the practice of animal testing, which was increasingly common during his lifetime. In his biography, written by Michael Millgate is written that: “The sight of animals being taken to market or driven to slaughter always aroused in Hardy feelings of intense pity, as he well knew... how much needless suffering is inflicted” (Millgate 1984: 468). Hardy's views on animal rights were also informed by his experiences as a country boy. He grew up in rural England and spent much of his childhood exploring nature and observing the behavior of animals. This early exposure to the natural world likely shaped his belief in the importance of preserving the balance of nature. In 1911, he was even the principal witness in court for cruelty towards a cow. While Hardy's views on animal rights may not have been as explicit or radical as those of some contemporary animal rights activists, his writing and personal beliefs reflect a deep concern for the well-being of animals and a recognition of their inherent value. His work continues to influence modern discussions about animal welfare and the relationship between humans and the natural world. In his will he even left sums of money to two different animal-protection societies “to be applied as far as practicable to the investigation of the means by which animals are conveyed from their home to the slaughter-houses with a view to the lessening of their sufferings in such transit” (Millgate 1984: 468).

Of course Hardy shared the speciesist view of his time but it can be argued, had he existed today, he would have had a more radical view thanks to all the information, the essays and texts regarding antispeciesism. In his writings, there are countless examples of his interest for all creatures. We have the bird and the sheep in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the first one cannot escape because is caged and it is destined to stay that way, the second one is weak and vulnerable, relegated to worth only within the context of the fairgrounds.

Hardy's concern for animal welfare was also reflected in his criticism of the ways in which humans treated non-human animals. In his two most famous novels: *Tess of the*

d'Urbervilles and *Jude the Obscure* his criticism against the treatment of non-human animals is more evident.

The novel begins with the humble Durbeyfield family, who are struggling to make ends meet. John Durbeyfield, the family's patriarch, discovers that he is a descendant of the once-noble d'Urberville family. This revelation leads to a somewhat misguided hope for a better life. Meanwhile, Tess, the eldest daughter, participates in a May Day dance, during which she shares a fleeting connection with a young man. With the newfound belief in their noble heritage, Mr. Durbeyfield and his wife decide to send Tess to the d'Urberville mansion, hoping that Mrs. d'Urberville will provide opportunities for their daughter. Unbeknownst to Tess and her family, Mrs. d'Urberville is not a true d'Urberville by blood; her husband simply adopted the name after retiring from the merchant profession. Alec d'Urberville, Mrs. d'Urberville's son, pursues Tess and offers her a job tending fowls on the d'Urberville estate. This offer is made to atone for an accident involving the d'Urbervilles' horse, which Tess feels responsible for. Tess takes the job, despite Alec's inappropriate advances. Over several months, Tess resists Alec's persistent attempts to seduce her. But after a fair, Alec takes advantage of her in the woods, leading to Tess being raped. She returns home to her family and gives birth to Alec's child, whom she names Sorrow. Tragically, Sorrow dies soon after birth, leaving Tess in a state of emotional turmoil. A year later, Tess decides to leave her family to seek work elsewhere. She finds employment as a milkmaid. During her time there, Tess experiences a period of contentment and happiness. She forms close friendships with fellow milkmaids. Here, she encounters Angel Clare, the man she had briefly met during the May Day dance. Tess and Angel slowly fall in love, and their relationship deepens. Despite her newfound happiness, Tess is burdened by guilt and believes she must disclose her past to Angel. She writes a confession and attempts to give it to him, but it goes unnoticed, slipping under a carpet. After Angel's proposal, the two marry, but both carry secrets. Angel admits to a past affair in London, while Tess finally reveals her history with Alec. Although Tess forgives Angel, he struggles to forgive her. Angel decides to embark on a journey to Brazil to establish a farm, leaving Tess behind with some money. He expresses hope that, in time, he can accept her past and return for her but she must not join him until he comes back for her.

Here we have an episode in which Hardy highlights the cruelty of hunting. Tess has run away from a man and finds herself in the woods where she decides to spend the night, there, she hears strange sounds and some things falling to the ground all around her. When the day breaks, she realizes what made those thuds:

Under the trees several pheasants lay about, their rich plumage dabbled with blood; some were dead, some feebly twitching a wing, some staring up at the sky, some pulsating quickly, some contorted, some stretched out all of them writhing in agony except the fortunate ones whose tortures had ended during the night by the inability of nature to bear more. (Hardy 1961: 257, 258).

Hardy criticizes hunting more harshly in the subsequent lines when he describes hunters as blood-thirsty creatures:

She had been told that rough and brutal as they seemed just then, they were not like this all the year round, but were, in fact, quite civil persons save during certain weeks of autumn and winter, when, like the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, they ran amuck and made it their purpose to destroy life in this case harmless feathered creatures, brought into being by artificial means solely to gratify these propensities at once so unmannerly and so unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in Nature's teeming family. (Hardy 1961: 258).

Then, in the final lines of the chapter, Tess shows empathy towards the agonizing pheasants and, while ending their sufferings, she compares her gloom with their pain:

"Poor darlings to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o' such misery as yours!" she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly. "And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled, and I be not bleeding, and I have two hands to feed and clothe me." (Hardy 1961: 258).

In *Jude the Obscure* there is a scene where Jude and Arabella, who are husband and wife, prepare to butcher the pig they have been fattening through the past months. The novel begins with Jude Fawley, who harbors aspirations of pursuing a higher education at the prestigious university in Christminster. Unfortunately, his humble beginnings as an orphan, raised by his working-class aunt, force him into a career as a stonemason. His dreams are ignited by the aspirations of Richard Phillotson, the town schoolmaster who had departed for Christminster when Jude was just a child. However, Jude's life takes a different turn when he falls in love with Arabella, a young woman of his village. He is manipulated into a hasty marriage with her, compelling him to stay in his

hometown. He is depressed and even considers killing himself. One day, arrives the moment to kill the pig they have been fattening, but since the slaughterer doesn't come, they need to do it themselves. The scene is described in detail and emphasizes Hardy's belief that animals are capable of experiencing emotions and have their own unique perspectives on the world. The butcher is late and Jude and Arabella decide to kill the pig themselves. Arabella suggests that Jude keeps the animal "bleeding long" (Hardy 2002: 58). Jude refuses, and "plunged in the knife with all his might" (Hardy 2002: 58). Hardy uses vivid imagery and detailed descriptions to draw attention to the suffering of the pig and to challenge readers to consider the ethical implications of our treatment of animals.

The blood flowed out in a torrent instead of in the trickling stream she had desired. The dying animal's cry assumed its third and final tone, the shriek of agony; his glazing eyes riveting themselves on Arabella with the eloquently keen reproach of a creature recognizing at last the treachery of those who had seemed his only friends. (Hardy 2002: 59).

"Pigs must be killed", as Arabella bluntly remarks (59); for her, Jude's reaction to the necessary process of slaughter simply makes him a "tender-hearted fool" (58). This patriarchal idea that a man needs to eat meat to be considered such is mentioned in Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat*:

It has traditionally been felt that the working man needs meat for strength. A superstition operates in this belief: in eating the muscle of strong animals, we will become strong. According to the mythology of patriarchal culture, meat promotes strength; the attributes of masculinity are achieved through eating these masculine foods. (...) The literal evocation of male power is found in the concept of meat. (Adams 2010: 56, 57).

In late 1895, the so-called "pig-killing chapter", was about to be reprinted by the Victorian Society for the Protection of Animals in the December edition of the Society's periodical, *The Animal's Friend*.

Jude the Obscure does not address animal cruelty only, the main theme of the novel is the critique towards the institution of marriage. In fact, after leaving Arabella, Jude is determined to finally make his way to Christminster. However, his attempts to enroll at

the university are met with indifference and disappointment. Jude's path crosses with his cousin, Sue Bridehead, and he struggles to resist falling in love with her. In an attempt to keep her close, he arranges for her to work with Phillotson. However, his hopes are crushed when he discovers that Sue and Phillotson are engaged. When they marry, it becomes apparent that Sue is unhappy with the situation. Eventually, she leaves her husband and chooses to live with Jude. Both Jude and Sue undergo divorces, but Sue is not inclined to remarry. Meanwhile, Arabella informs Jude that they have a son in Australia, and Jude seeks to bring him into their lives. Jude and Sue become parents to this child and have two more children together. Jude falls ill, and upon recovering, he decides to return to Christminster with his family. However, they face difficulties in finding suitable lodging due to the fact that they are not married. As a result, Jude stays in a separate inn, apart from Sue and the children. One night, the young boy decides that life would be better without so many siblings and ends up taking his own life as well. Sue, grieving and shocked, thinks that it was all a punishment from God for her relationship with Jude, thus she decides to go back with Phillotson, while Jude goes back to Arabella. The novel ends with Arabella discovering that Jude passed away in his sleep.

Hardy establishes a strong connection between the critique towards animal cruelty and towards marriage. In an attempt to address these problems, he adopts a similar approach. His primary goal is to raise awareness among readers, and to achieve this, he strategically appeals to their empathy. He employed vivid depictions associated with animals and their innate qualities. Through various scenes, he portrayed Jude and Sue as individuals who deeply empathize with the pain and suffering endured by animals. By drawing parallels between their struggles, induced by the oppressive marriage system, and the anguish experienced by animals, Hardy highlights the shared plight and agony. Jude and Sue, despite their compassionate nature towards both humans and animals, find themselves deprived of the sympathy they truly deserve within a society governed by rigid conventions. Specifically, Jude's empathetic sensitivity becomes more of a burden than a blessing. During his childhood, before marrying to Arabella, while engaged in the task of frightening birds away from Farmer Troutham's fields, Jude develops a deep understanding of the birds' unfulfilled desires and allows them to feed on the crops. However, this act of empathy results in a harsh scolding from the farmer:

He sounded the clacker till his arm ached, and at length his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. Why should he frighten them away? They took upon them more and more the aspect of gentle friends and pensioners—the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him, for his aunt had often told him that she was not. He ceased his rattling, and they alighted anew. 'Poor little dears!' said Jude, aloud. 'You shall have some dinner you shall! There is enough for us all. Farmer Troutham can afford to let you have some. Eat, then, my dear little birdies, and make a good meal!' (Hardy 2002: 9).

Hardy remarked in a conversation with the journalist William Archer: "What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man — to woman — and to the lower animals." It was too soon for Hardy to be antispeciesist and with this quote, which on the surface exudes respect and consideration towards all sentient beings, actually shows how even a man who was thought to be ahead of time was unconsciously still adhering to a patriarchal and anthropocentric hierarchy. He uses the term "humane", whose synonyms are "compassionate" and "kind" exposing both the limited scope of the statement and the anthropocentrism of the word itself. 'Inhumanity' implies that kindness, morality, compassion and feeling are qualities that pertain exclusively to human beings in fact, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary, "humane" is a parallel variant of "human" and mean "pertaining to a human being" (Online Etymology Dictionary). This word, even when used to condemn acts of cruelty toward non-human animals, affirms human superiority. Furthermore, we can see a hierarchy in the quote: man, woman and eventually the lower animals.

Another episode of Jude's compassion towards animals is when he is trying to fall asleep and gets disturbed by a squeak. This sound is familiar to him, it is the cry of a trapped rabbit. When he was a child he saved worms, now he pictures the agony of the rabbit and can't stand it. Jude knows that the rabbit was done for. After some time the rabbit repeats his cry so Jude dresses himself up and goes to the street. He hears the weak sound of the trap and hits the rabbit with his hand killing the creature immediately. When Jude breaks the rabbit's neck, Sue appears there with the same intention:

I haven't been able to sleep at all, and then I heard the rabbit, and couldn't help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it! But I am so glad you got there first ... They ought not to be allowed to set these steel traps, ought they! (Hardy 2002: 205).

Of course this episode of the trapped rabbit symbolizes the trapping nature of marriage and foreshadows the impending death of their children but at the same time the snare represents a cruel human imposition upon the animal world, trapping the rabbit and subjecting them to pain and distress. The animal's perspective invites readers to consider the ethical implications of such actions and question the imbalance of power in the human-animal dynamic. The trapped rabbit highlights the themes of suffering, and the disregard for non-human lives. It invites readers to reflect on the broader treatment of animals in society, provoking a deeper examination of the ethical responsibilities humans bear towards the natural world. This metaphor, although not directly aiming at a different approach towards non-human animals, it invites the reader to feel empathy by imagining themselves in the rabbit's position and sharing its fear and distress. The reader may also feel sympathy, expressing concern and compassion for the rabbit's well-being. Both emotional responses can lead to a heightened sense of compassion and an examination of the ethical implications of the situation.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy blurs the line between human and non-human animals, showing that some fragments of antispeciesist ideas have room in his view of the world. Birds appear 22 times, each living creature, according to Hardy, exists akin to captive birds, ensnared by their predetermined destinies despite their most ardent struggles. Both humans and birds are prey to the Immanent Will, a blind and indifferent force that orchestrates the fates of both privileged and common folk. The tragedy of Henchard, the novel's central figure, mirrors the tragic essence of all living entities. At the beginning, a fragile bird appears, symbolizing Henchard's isolation and desperation following his union with Susan. Their silence amplifies the sound of the weak bird.

For a long time there was none, beyond the voice of a weak bird singing a trite old evening song that might doubtless have been heard on the hill at the same hour, and with the self-same trills, quavers, and breves, at any sunset of that season for centuries untold (Hardy 2010: 5).

At the narrative's close, Henchard, now once more impoverished, acquires a caged goldfinch. Left in solitude, he meets his end alone and poor, paralleling the goldfinch's

fate. Both fall victim to human indifference, ultimately living and perishing in confinement. The bird becomes a manifestation of the human experience itself.

Mrs. Donald Farfrae had discovered in a screened corner a new bird-cage, shrouded in newspaper, and at the bottom of the cage a little ball of feathers- the dead body of a goldfinch. Nobody could tell her how the bird and cage had come there; though that the poor little songster had been starved to death was evident. The sadness of the incident had made an impression on her. She had not been able to forget it for days (Hardy 2010: 373).

The novel features another non-human animal which is compared to humans: the sheep. Hardy uses the sheep to represent women who were at a disadvantage in the patriarchal society, with this he penetrates the realms of intersectional antispeciesism. At the onset of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Henchard and his wife stepped into the bustling Fairfield, the stalls captivated their gaze. In the marketplace's lively commerce, a multitude of sheep were sold, their transactions inspired Henchard. Driven by alcohol, he auctioned off his wife, mirroring the practices of businessmen dealing with livestock. Like the sheep, Susan found herself traded to a sailor, exposing the disheartening parallel between women's societal status and the plight of sheep in a patriarchal society. Women were relegated to obedience akin to sheep obeying a shepherd, as men assumed dominion over both human and nonhuman realms.

As Susan departed with the sailor, onlookers held optimism for her newfound fortune because "for seafaring natures be very good shelter for shorn lambs, and the man do seem to have plenty of money, which is what she's not been used to lately, by all showings." (Hardy 2010: 14).

This imagery, employing the lamb as a symbol, conveyed the vulnerability of women who, akin to "shorn lambs," relied on stronger figures for survival within a patriarchal framework. Opportunities for women to venture into the male-dominated society were scarce, and men maintained their dominance. Furthermore, women's limited education impeded their self-sufficiency, further reinforcing their reliance on men's protection. In this patriarchal context, women's happiness hinged on dependence, mirroring the sheep's need for safeguarding. Devoid of men's support, women faced vulnerability akin to "shorn lambs." Thus, their fate intertwined with male guardianship, echoing the

poignant reality of a society where, like the sheep in the market, women's agency remained overshadowed by patriarchal norms.

In his novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy vividly portrays the interactions between his characters and farm animals, particularly the sheep appear again, using them as a reflection of the characters' emotional and physical well-being. Through this portrayal, he emphasizes the significance of proper care, protection, and empathy towards animals. The story revolves around Bathsheba Everdene, a strong-willed and independent woman who inherits a farm and manages it herself. Throughout the novel, Bathsheba navigates romantic entanglements with three very different suitors: Gabriel Oak, a loyal shepherd; William Boldwood, a wealthy and reserved landowner; and Sergeant Francis Troy, a dashing but unreliable soldier. Additionally, the novel contains passages that condemn the cruel treatment of animals, notably during the sheep-shearing scene.

The shearing scene presents a complex web of voyeurism and dynamics between the female, male, and animal. Bathsheba, the woman, observes Gabriel as he shears a frightened ewe, and Thomas Hardy's description of the act carries unmistakable undertones of male sexual dominance. Gabriel forcefully handles the ewe, exposing its vulnerable body, reminiscent of undressing a helpless female. Bathsheba, perceptive to this symbolism, empathizes with the ewe and perceives its blush as a reaction to the insult it endures. The juxtaposition of Bathsheba's solidarity with the ewe reveals the patriarchal structures at play. The focus shifts from the insult Bathsheba witnesses to the delicate beauty of the ewe's blush, projecting societal expectations of shame onto the animal. The effects of mistreatment are portrayed as enviable and creditable, applying them to any woman. This suggests that mistreatment and insult are inevitably linked to the female experience. Additionally, the association of unmistakable rape images in the shearing speaks to the objectification of both animals and women a continuous reminder of Carol J. Adams' theories. It underscores the problematic normalization of rape culture and the manipulation of animal bodies in a speciesist world. Bathsheba's position of authority as Gabriel's employer and supervisor is diminished by Hardy's choice to refer to her as "his mistress quietly looking on." (Hardy 2005: 174) While this initially denotes her professional superiority, when considered in the context of the

sexualized scene and the possessive pronoun "his", Bathsheba momentarily embodies the definition of a kept woman. One may argue that Bathsheba, as a female voyeur, disrupts the male power. However, as Gabriel takes pleasure from having her watching over him, it reverses the dynamic of the gaze. This passage intricately explores themes of power, gender, voyeurism, and objectification. It sheds light on the complexities of societal expectations, the dehumanization of animals, challenging the reader to contemplate the intersections of gender, power, and the treatment of all sentient beings regardless of their species.

Another noteworthy episode involves Fanny Robin, a young and innocent woman who works as a servant. She becomes involved with Sergeant Francis Troy, and they have a secret romantic relationship. Fanny is deeply in love with Troy, but their relationship faces numerous challenges. One of the key plot points involving Fanny Robin occurs when she mistakenly goes to the wrong church on her wedding day, missing her intended marriage to Troy. This mistake leads to a series of unfortunate events, including Fanny's subsequent disappearance. She becomes pregnant with Troy's child and struggles to find him and finally dies giving birth to his child at the poor house in Casterbridge. In a passage, she is exhausted and vulnerable and encounters a dog. This scene presents a fascinating subversion of the conventional speciesist dynamic between man, woman, and animal. The part highlights the elevated position of the dog in relation to Fanny: "In her reclining position she looked up to him just as in earlier times she had, when standing, looked up to a man" (Hardy 2005: 318). The language used emphasizes the dog's position, described as being "at least two feet higher," and Fanny's gaze directed upwards towards the dog. This elevation is directly linked to the archetypal position of women beneath men. This passage overturns the traditional hierarchical order, as the dog, typically considered a "lower" animal, is now elevated to a position above the woman. The dog effectively replaces the man, indicated by the use of past tense: "just as" the woman looked up to a man "had" been. Hardy's choice of language in the past tense suggests not only a change in social status but also a substitution, as the animal assumes the role previously held by a man. This passage in *Far from the Madding Crowd* challenges societal norms and power dynamics, highlighting the potential for animals to disrupt established hierarchies. Through the

reversal of the man-woman-animal dynamic, Hardy invites readers to reconsider their assumptions about the relationships between humans and non-human animals and to question the traditional power structures embedded in society. In this particular episode, Hardy goes beyond subverting the traditional hierarchical order, he also blurs the boundaries between human and animal. On a more intimate level, the dog in the scene is depicted as having moral qualities and genuine concern for Fanny's well-being. The dog is described as experiencing "distress" for Fanny, implying a deep emotional connection and empathy that transcends the typical perception of animals as solely driven by instinct. Hardy's portrayal of the dog's genuine concern for Fanny challenges the notion that animals lack complex emotions or the capacity for empathy. By attributing moral qualities to the dog, he emphasizes the shared emotional experiences between humans and animals. This blurring of distinctions between the two species serves to emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings and suggests that animals can possess a depth of feeling and moral consciousness comparable to that of humans, a belief that was not a prevailing or widely held view before and during the Victorian Age. Through this blurring of boundaries, Hardy encouraged readers to reevaluate their perceptions of animals and to recognize their capacity for emotional engagement and empathy. By highlighting the dog's distress for Fanny, he reminded people of the inherent value and worth of all creatures, regardless of their species, and prompted them to reconsider the moral responsibilities they have towards them. In this scene from the novel, there is a blurring of the boundaries between humans and animals, highlighting the indistinct distinction between the two. Fanny Robin, who is starving and heavily pregnant, finds herself alone on the highway, desperately seeking shelter at the Casterbridge Union. Her isolation is emphasized by the absence of even a breeze to accompany her. Like Jude, she embodies the archetype of a human disconnected from community. Due to her weakened state, Fanny requires assistance to walk. In her resourcefulness, she constructs wooden crutches as a material aid. However, these devices, being purely inanimate objects, lack any inherent energy and do not contribute to Fanny's strength. As she stumbles and struggles, Fanny exhausts every possibility, considering sticks, wheels, crawling, and even rolling. In her state of hopelessness, a remarkable event unfolds. Fanny becomes aware of something touching her hand—something soft and warm. When she opens her eyes, she discovers that it is a dog licking her cheek. This

natural force, described as "assignable to no breed," (Hardy 2005: 317) serves as a sort of unexpected solution to the tasks she had envisioned as artificial aids like sticks, wheels, crawling, and rolling. This blurring of boundaries emphasizes the ways in which humans and animals can intermingle and mutually benefit from one another's presence and assistance. It challenges the notion of a strict separation. We see a less dominating relationship between human and non-human animals under the sign of friendship, ascribing to an antispeciesist view of animals (human and non-human) helping each other without any form of dominion. The dog plays a crucial role in assisting Fanny, enabling her to move towards the shelter when she is unable to do so on her own. This idyllic moment, where the dog lends a paw to Fanny, is short-lived. It abruptly comes to an end when Fanny faints at the door of the Union and is taken inside. She murmurs about the dog's disappearance, expressing gratitude for the help she received. However, the man at the Union reveals that he stoned the dog away, effectively removing it from the scene. The dog can be seen as a *deus ex machina* for that particular brief episode. While the dog's role is essential, it remains transient and disconnected from the larger narrative. Although the man at the Union dismisses the dog, Hardy does not approve this action. Fanny's savior, while not achieving a prominent role in the story, is still depicted as a figure deserving of sympathy and compassion, just like any other existing sentient being. The dog's departure and the man's decision to stone it away demonstrate the harsh reality of a world where compassion and aid can be easily discarded or overlooked. It serves as a reminder of the fleeting nature of empathy especially towards living beings that are considered to be a lower level.

Another crucial episode in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is the pastoral plot in Chapter 5. Gabriel Oak is a shepherd but he fails to sympathize with the sheep; this failure leads to a catastrophe. The sheep have suddenly disappeared:

As far as could be learnt it appeared that the poor young dog, still under the impression that since he was kept for running after sheep, the more he ran after them the better, had at the end of his meal off the dead lamb, which may have given him additional energy and spirits, collected all the ewes into a corner, driven the timid creatures through the hedge, across the upper field, and by main force of worrying had given them momentum enough to break down a portion of the rotten railing, and so hurled them over the edge. (Hardy 2005: 45)

After the dog is back, he realizes where all the sheep have gone:

The dog came up, licked his hand, and made signs implying that he expected some great reward for signal services rendered. Oak looked over the precipice. The ewes lay dead and dying at its foot—a heap of two hundred mangled carcasses (Hardy 2005: 44).

The first and most spontaneous reaction shows how Hardy showed readers how to pity for the sheep as if they were human beings: “His first feeling now was one of pity for the untimely fate of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs” (Hardy 2005: 44). Even if Gabriel is not an antispeciesist, the transformation of the living animals to meat can be discomforting; meat-eaters usually don’t enjoy seeing how animals die and how their flesh becomes meat. This is exactly what the theory of the absent referent is all about. As already explained, behind every meat-based meal, there is an absence: the death of the animal whose meat takes its place. Through slaughter, animals become absent referents, meaning they are made absent in name and body as animals to allow the presence of meat. Their lives precede and enable the existence of meat, but the living animals do not allow its existence. Thus, the dead body replaces the living animal, and when language renames its corpse, before consumers participate in the act of eating it, its presence becomes absence. Our culture further mystifies the term “meat” through gastronomic language, so the words no longer evoke dead slaughtered animals but cuisine. Through the absent referent, we can forget the animal as a sentient being. Verbally, the physical process of slaughter is summarized with terms that ensure its objectification. Animals are transformed into non-beings, into food-producing units, reduced to consisting of edible and inedible parts. After being killed, they flow on a disassembly line and lose parts of their bodies at each stop. The essence of slaughter is, therefore, through the tools used, the total disappearance of defenseless creatures, which must be considered as inanimate objects to be dissected until they are suitable for consumption. Consumption, of course, is the completion of oppression, the annihilation of will. Through fragmentation, the object is separated from its ontological meaning, and when consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The pieces of the animal, renamed, allow the consumer to change their conceptualization of the animal and further distance them from the living creature. Cooking, the addition of spices, flavors,

and more, contribute to obscuring the true nature of what is on the plate. Deprived of the slaughtered and bleeding animal reference—let us not forget that slaughterhouses have always been surrounded by fences or walls and separated from social reality—meat becomes a consumable object. Notable is a quote by sir Paul McCartney about the building structure of slaughterhouses: “If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian” (McCartney: Last accessed Oct. 10th 2023). In fact, slaughter is an act that belongs only to human beings. Carnivorous animals kill and consume their prey directly; for them, there is no absent referent, only a dead referent. In the scene, by becoming a heap of carcasses the sheep lose their individuality which always belongs to any sentient being but is constantly denied by speciesist ideas. Flesh without individuality is there both when the non-human animals are alive and dead. Furthermore, Hardy's advocacy for animal welfare extended beyond his literary works. Even after he had ceased writing novels, he wrote a letter to the Humanitarian League expressing his views. In this letter, he asserted that ethics should stem from recognizing the common origin of all species. Hardy advocated for expanding the application of the Golden Rule, which urges individuals to treat others as they themselves wish to be treated, to encompass the entire animal kingdom. According to Hardy, humankind should no longer perceive itself as a distinct creation separate from other creatures but rather as an integral part of the interconnected web of life:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging, as a necessity of rightness, the application of what has been called “The Golden Rule” from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not quite perceive it. While man was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough to practise towards the “inferior” races; but no person who reasons nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable. And though we may not at present see how the principle of equal justice all round is to be carried out in its entirety, I recognize that the League is grappling with the question. (The Times May 3rd 1910).

Hardy's writings captured also the poignant experiences of horses enduring the hardships of war during the Boer War and the distress of cattle within slaughterhouses. However, it was not solely these animals that troubled him. He was deeply concerned about the suffering endured by gamebirds, foxes, and other targets of hunting. In early

January 1882, following a conversation with a gamekeeper he had encountered, Hardy made a note that strikingly foreshadows the already mentioned scene in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, where Tess, driven by compassion, takes matters into her own hands and mercifully ends the lives of wounded pheasants left behind after a hunt, using only her bare hands. This conversation is quoted in Hardy's biography written by Michael Millgate:

Tells me that one day this season they shot—(3 guns) 700 pheasants in one day—a battue—driving the birds into one corner of the plantation. When they got there they will not run across the open ground—rise on the wing—then are shot wholesale. They pick up all that have fallen—night comes on—the wounded birds that have hidden or risen into some thick tree fall, & lie on the ground in their agony—next day the keepers come and look for them. (They found 150, on the above occasion, the next day)—Can see the night scene—moon—fluttering and gasping birds as the hours go on—the place being now deserted of humankind (Millgate 2004: 218).

Another author who expressed sympathy for the non-human animals in a way that moved away from the ideas of her time was George Eliot. In her novel, *Middlemarch*, she established a recurring theme that highlights the significance of the human connection with animals. This theme serves as a way to examine how people care for others and explore the potential for independence and companionship free from dependence, in contrast to a parasitic relationship where one being completely submits to the other.

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity (Eliot 2000: 124).

It is a multi-layered work with various subplots and characters, but the central character is Dorothea Brooke, a young and idealistic woman who becomes a key focus of the novel. Dorothea's relationship with animals isn't a central theme in the novel, but it does provide insight into her character. Her attraction to the scholarly and self-assured Edward Casaubon is partly rooted in her hope to support his intellectual pursuits and contribute to the betterment of society. Dorothea's character arc is central to the novel, as she undergoes significant personal growth and transformation. She marries Casaubon, only to realize that he is a dry, uninspiring partner, and her idealism clashes

with his intellectual arrogance. Her frustration with her marriage and her unfulfilled ambitions lead her to reassess her life. Her journey in *Middlemarch* ultimately centers on her quest for self-fulfillment, her desire to make a meaningful impact, and her search for a deeper connection, which she eventually finds in Will Ladislaw.

Eliot specifically portrays Dorothea as a character who displays a lot of interest in animals. Dorothea Brooke's relationship with a kitten is a small but significant aspect of her character and story in *Middlemarch*. The kitten serves as a symbol of Dorothea's compassionate and nurturing nature, as well as her desire to care for the vulnerable. Early in the novel, when Dorothea is still living at her uncle's estate, Tipton Grange, she comes across a small, sickly kitten. Despite her relative wealth and privilege, she has a deep empathy for the less fortunate and vulnerable, which is symbolized through her care for the kitten. She takes the kitten in, feeds it, and shows it love and affection. This act of caring for the kitten illustrates Dorothea's innate desire to make a positive impact in the world and to be of service to those in need. It is a reflection of her idealism and her belief in the importance of nurturing and helping others. Throughout the novel, Dorothea's character continues to be defined by her desire to do good in the world, whether through her relationships, her marriage to Edward Casaubon, or her later involvement in social and philanthropic activities. While the kitten itself is a relatively minor element in the novel, it is a symbol of Dorothea's character and her inclination toward selflessness and compassion. This suggests that she would likely pay attention to the heartbeat of a squirrel, symbolizing her attentiveness to the subtle connections and possibilities for companionship that exist beyond human relationships. Furthermore, Hardy can be seen as the first important English author to willingly listen to “the squirrel heartbeat” (Eliot 2000: 124) offering respect to a broader scope of animals and not just pets.

1.2 Anna Sewell

Another author that depicted and denounced the sufferings of non-human animals during the Victorian Age is Anna Sewell. She wrote *Black Beauty* which first published in 1877. This book is a classic of children's literature and has significantly contributed

to raising awareness about the importance of animal rights. The novel is narrated in the first person by the protagonist, a horse named Black Beauty. The story follows his life, from his early experiences with a loving owner to his subsequent encounters with various owners, some of whom mistreat animals. Through Black Beauty's perspective, the book addresses themes such as animal cruelty, the significance of kindness and respect towards animals, and the challenges that animals face in their relationship with humans. *Black Beauty* was one of the first novels to highlight the viewpoint of animals and underscore the need to consider them as sentient beings. The book had a significant impact on public awareness regarding animal welfare. It is an engaging and emotionally-charged novel that continues to be appreciated by readers of all ages, and it remains an important testament to the struggle for animal rights during the Victorian era. Anna Sewell presents Black Beauty as a sentient being capable of experiencing both physical pain and emotional distress. By giving the horse the human language and allowing readers to see the world from his perspective, Sewell elicits empathy and fosters a deeper understanding of the suffering endured by animals at the hands of humans. The novel also depicts the harsh treatment of horses used for labor, the widespread use of painful bits and harnesses, and the consequences of overworking and neglecting animals. Through these depictions, Sewell highlights the urgent need for improved animal welfare and advocates for societal change. Anna Sewell challenges the prevailing view of horses as mere commodities to be bought and used for human purposes. Throughout the novel, she vehemently criticizes the dehumanizing treatment of horses, shedding light on the indignities they faced in horse markets and the mistreatment by some drivers who treated them as if they were soulless machines. Merrylegs, the pony, articulates his frustration at being treated “like a steam engine or a thrashing machine” which can “go on as long and as fast as they please” (Sewell 2000: 40), existing solely for the convenience and desires of humans.

The author meticulously delves into the physical discomfort and pain endured by working horses in Victorian England. The scenes of breaking in Black Beauty and Ginger underscore the harsh realities of the process, emphasizing the physical agony they experienced during such training. Black Beauty's description of the bit as a "nasty thing" and the "feel" of "a great piece of cold hard steel... pushed into one's mouth" (Sewell 2000: 15) unveils the harshness of the tools used on the animals. He also

complains about “straps here and straps there, a bit in my mouth and blinkers over my eyes” (Sewell 2000: 27).

Sewell's focus on the horses' sensations and emotions reflects her commitment to portraying the tangible reality of being a horse. She avoids anthropomorphizing the animals, which was a common trend in literature at the time, and instead stays true to the authentic experiences of these sentient beings. By describing the world from the perspective of the horses and acknowledging their unique ways of perceiving the world, she aims to dissolve the artificial barriers between humans and animals. In doing so, Sewell effectively dismantles the notion of animals as soulless commodities and urges readers to recognize the individuality and intrinsic value of these creatures.

Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the interconnectedness between humans and animals. The relationships between *Black Beauty* and various owners, both kind and cruel, demonstrate the impact that human actions have on non-human animals' lives. The novel encourages readers to also reflect on their own treatment of animals and to consider their responsibilities towards them. By illustrating the animal's capacity to suffer, the novel ignited compassion and empathy among its readers, leading to increased support for animal welfare reforms. It contributed to the emerging awareness of animals as sentient beings deserving of protection. *Black Beauty* holds the distinction of being a forerunner to numerous children's tales that depict animals with human-like qualities. Presently, it primarily targets a young audience as its main market. However, during its inception, the novel specifically targeted working-class men. One challenge lies in the portrayal of non-human animals in Victorian literature, as they often symbolize minor roles through diverse and intricate means, with genre playing a crucial part. In Victorian narratives, these animal characters tend to be placed within two minor genres, namely children's literature or anecdotal accounts.

One of the remarkable aspects of *Black Beauty* was its broad readership, particularly among the working class, including men who worked with horses. The novel aimed to promote empathy and kindness towards animals, specifically horses, by showcasing the mistreatment they often endured. It served as a form of animal welfare literature, encouraging readers, especially those involved in horse-related professions, to treat their

horses with care and compassion. By targeting working-class individuals and being modestly priced, the book reached a wide audience, spreading its message effectively. Despite its adult readership and intention to promote responsible treatment of animals, many analyses of *Black Beauty* have categorized it within the tradition of children's literature featuring animals. This classification is partly due to the novel's simple narrative style and its capacity to resonate with younger readers. Scholars have compared *Black Beauty* to other works in children's literature that portray animals as anthropomorphic and capable of communicating with humans, a trend that became popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The significance of animals in novels, particularly in the Victorian era, is an intriguing aspect to consider. Animals were often relegated to minor roles, existing on the fringes of the story. They were secondary to even the least significant human characters in the novel. This relegation of animals to minor positions in literature reflects the hierarchical social structure of that time, where humans were considered superior, and animals were seen as inferior beings. Woloch sheds light on the treatment of minor characters and animals in canonical Victorian fiction. Woloch likens minor characters to the "proletariat of the novel" (Woloch 2003: 27), drawing a parallel between the marginalized social class and the secondary characters in literary works. In this context, minor characters are often overlooked, overshadowed, and given limited importance compared to the main characters. Expanding on this comparison, the quote takes the analogy further by suggesting that animals featured in Victorian literature could be considered the "proletariat of the proletariat". In other words, they occupy an even lower position in the literary hierarchy than human minor characters. Animals are relegated to such minor roles that they frequently fail to be recognized as fully developed characters with their own agency, emotions, and narrative significance. In this context, *Black Beauty* stands out as a powerful counterexample, elevating the status of animals to the forefront of the narrative. The novel allows readers to see the world from the perspective of a horse. By giving animals an intelligible language and agency, *Black Beauty* challenged the prevailing notion of animals as mere props or background elements in literature. Instead, it provided a platform for animals to express their feelings, emotions, and experiences, making readers more attuned to their welfare and rights.

The conclusion of *Black Beauty* presents a largely utopian outcome for the protagonist, who departs from the harsh realities faced by many other characters in the novel. Black Beauty's happy ending, retiring to rural bliss with the kind cabman Jerry, represents an idyllic resolution that he rightly deserves, but it may not be the fate he would have encountered in the real world. The utopian nature of the ending becomes evident when contrasting Black Beauty's fortunate fate with the tragic outcomes of other characters in the story. Ginger, another significant horse in the narrative, endures a life of overwork and hardship, eventually meeting a grim end. This stark contrast between Black Beauty's happy retirement and Ginger's tragic fate highlights the randomness and unpredictability of life's outcomes for non-human animals in a speciesist world, emphasizing that the novel's optimistic conclusion is not necessarily reflective of the broader reality for all horses. Sewell further underscores the potential misfortunes awaiting other horses, even those as gentle and peaceable as Merrylegs. While Black Beauty is enjoying his well-deserved retirement, he encounters a pony in London that bears a striking resemblance to Merrylegs. This pony, however, is subjected to cruel treatment, forced to pull a heavy cart while being mistreated by a boy with a whip.

Once I saw a little gray pony with a thick mane and a pretty head, and so much like Merrylegs that if I had not been in harness, I should have neighed to him. He was doing his best to pull a heavy cart, while a strong rough boy was cutting him under the belly with his whip and chucking cruelly at his little mouth. Could it be Merrylegs? It was just like him (Sewell 2006: 129).

This stark depiction of the mistreatment of another horse serves as a reminder of the potential suffering that awaits many other animals, contrasting sharply with Black Beauty's more fortunate circumstances. The final line of the novel adds a bittersweet layer to the seemingly utopian ending. As Black Beauty happily retires and fancies himself back in the orchard at Birtwick with his old friends, it serves as a poignant reminder of the miserable fates of Ginger and Merrylegs, both of whom Black Beauty knew in his youth. This serves to emphasize the element of chance that saved Black Beauty from a similar tragic destiny. "My troubles are all over, and I am at home; and often before I am quite awake, I fancy I am still in the orchard at Birtwick, standing with my old friends under the apple-trees" (Sewell 2006: 156). In essence, the novel's

conclusion, while offering a sense of satisfaction and resolution for Black Beauty, carries a deeper message about the inequalities and unpredictability of life for animals during the Victorian era. Thus, while the ending of Black Beauty provides an uplifting conclusion for its protagonist, it also encourages reflection on the broader issues of animal welfare and the significance of the chance circumstances that can determine the fate of these sentient creatures. The Victorian Age has been full of critical works centered on animal studies because of the many legal, social, and scientific changes that affected the status of the non-human animals. At the beginning of the 19th Century, animal welfare gained popularity in Great Britain, with many activists seeking protection for non-human animals. This period, characterized by rapid industrialization and societal transformations, witnessed an increasing awareness of the mistreatment and exploitation of animals.

1.3 Animal Rights in the 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century, animals were largely regarded as commodities, existing primarily for human use and exploitation. They were subjected to cruel practices in various domains, including entertainment, labor, and scientific experimentation. However, as the century progressed, several influential voices began to challenge the prevalent attitudes towards animals, arguing for their moral consideration and protection.

One of the most prominent figures in the early animal rights movement was Richard Martin. In 1822, he successfully championed a piece of legislation known as "Martin's Act," which aimed to prevent the cruel treatment of cattle and horses. This act, officially titled "An Act to prevent the cruel and improper Treatment of Cattle," was a crucial milestone in animal welfare legislation and marked the first attempt to protect animals from deliberate cruelty. It laid the foundation for future developments in the field of animal rights. Another influential figure during this era was William Wilberforce, known for his tireless efforts in the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce was also an advocate for animal welfare, believing that cruelty towards animals was morally wrong. His stance on animal welfare added momentum to the growing movement, as he argued

that compassion towards animals was a reflection of humanity's moral character. In 1824, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) was founded in England, with the primary objective of promoting the humane treatment of animals. Led amongst others by Richard Martin and William Wilberforce, the SPCA played a crucial role in raising awareness about animal cruelty and actively pursued legal reforms to protect animals. The society conducted investigations, raised public consciousness through pamphlets and lectures, and supported cases against animal abusers. Their efforts culminated in the passage of the Cruelty to Animals Act in 1835. This landmark legislation further strengthened the legal protection afforded to animals by extending the scope of Martin's Act to cover various domesticated animals, including dogs and cats. The act imposed penalties for acts of cruelty. The rise of scientific and medical advancements during this period posed ethical questions regarding animal experimentation. This led to the establishment of organizations like the Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, which aimed to regulate and restrict scientific experiments on animals. These organizations, along with notable scientists such as sir Charles Darwin, voiced concerns about the ethical implications of vivisection and called for stricter regulations. The Victorian era marked a significant shift in public awareness and attitudes towards animals, providing a foundation for further reforms.

As the 19th century progressed, the momentum for animal rights continued to grow. The issue of vivisection, in particular, gained significant attention during the late Victorian era. Concerns over the ethical treatment of animals in scientific experiments led to heated debates and the formation of additional societies dedicated to addressing this issue. The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, founded in 1898, campaigned against the use of animals in scientific research and pushed for stricter regulations and alternative methods.

While legislative advancements were made, animal rights in Victorian England were primarily focused on preventing cruelty rather than recognizing animals' intrinsic rights. The prevailing mindset still considered animals as property, and their treatment depended on their utility to humans. However, the growing movement laid the

groundwork for future developments that would expand the scope of animal rights and antispeciesism.

It is worth noting that the efforts of the Victorian animal rights movement were not without their critics. Some argued that excessive concern for animals detracted from human issues and social reform. Others believed that animals were devoid of rights altogether because they existed solely for human use. However, those advocating for animal rights continued to gain support and influence. The Victorian era marked a crucial turning point in the history of animal rights, witnessing the emergence of organizations, legislation, and influential figures who challenged the prevailing attitudes towards animals. Notable was the intervention by Lord Thomas Erskine in the House of Peers, on the second reading of the Bill preventing malicious and wanton cruelty to animals in 1809, at the beginning he said:

Animals are considered as property only – To destroy or to abuse them, from malice to the proprietor, or with an intention injurious to his interest in them, is criminal – but the animals themselves are without protection – the law regards them not substantively – they have no RIGHTS! (Phillips 1809: 2).

He, then, continued:

Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to subdue to the dominion, use and comfort of man, the strength and faculties of many useful animas, and to provide others for his food; and whereas the abuse of that dominion by cruel and oppressive treatment of such animals, is not only highly unjust and immoral, but most pernicious in its example, having an evident tendency to harden the heart against the natural feelings of humanity. (Phillips 1809: 7).

Evidently, what Lord Erskine was supporting was not antispeciesism; his views could be collocated in what we call today “Welfarism”, he maintains a distinct hierarchy between human and non-human animals but he hinted at the possibility that animals have feelings.

Almost every sense bestowed upon man is equally bestowed upon them; seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking; the sense of pain and pleasure; the passions of love and anger; sensibility to kindness, and

pangs from unkindness and neglect, are inseparable characteristics of their natures as much as of our own. (Phillips 1806: 3, 4).

This awareness of the immorality of how the non-human animals were treated can be understood as a feeble spark for the current antispeciesist fire.

Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was groundbreaking and made Victorians rethink of their place in the world. For many, his theory diminished the importance of God over the natural world and undermined both Creationism and the *scala naturae*. It caused people to change the way they saw themselves in relation to the natural world. Darwin theorized the Natural Selection:

By the theory of natural selection all living species have been connected with the parent-species of each genus, by differences not greater than we see between the natural and domestic varieties of the same species at the present day; and these parent-species, now generally extinct, have in their turn been similarly connected with more ancient forms; and so on backwards, always converging to the common ancestor of each great class. (Darwin 1909: 335).

According to this theory, all animals life forms are connected. His attention however was towards non-human animals and plants; and throughout the text, he excludes human beings from his analysis. He explains that the laws of nature act around us, as if we are distinct from nature. The growing concern for animals' welfare was not limited to legislation and activism. Victorian literature also reflected a changing attitude towards animals and after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, many Victorians began to advocate for animal welfare and, despite the progress made in this era regarding animal rights, it is essential to acknowledge that the concept of animal welfare was still in its infancy. Many practices that would be considered cruel and unethical today were commonplace during this time. Animals continued to face mistreatment in various forms, including bear-baiting, cockfighting, and brutal working conditions and, of course this was a far cry from antispeciesism.

1.4 Other Examples

The poem *Flush or Faunus* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning is an example of the growing importance of non-human animals in the topics of literature during the Victorian age. She reflected on her emotional state while being comforted by their dog, Flush. In the lines, Browning depicted a tender and transformative encounter with her dog. The narrator initially finds herself lost in thoughts, oblivious to Flush's presence. However, in a moment of sadness, tears start streaming down her face, Flush emerges, pressing his furry head against her face. The suddenness of the dog's affectionate gesture startles the poet, evoking a comparison to an Arcadian shepherd surprised by the appearance of a divine figure in a twilight grove. This metaphor suggests that Flush's comforting presence and unconditional love are unexpected blessings, comparable to a godly intervention. As her vision clears from the tears, she recognizes Flush. This recognition is significant as it represents a shift in her emotional state. She comes to appreciate the solace and support offered by Flush, thanking the true Pan, the god of nature, who guides her to experience profound love through the companionship of lowly creatures. Browning underlines the transformative power of the bond between humans and non-human animals. Flush, with his simple yet genuine display of affection, becomes the cause of the Browning's emotional healing, lifting her from sorrow. The poem highlights the capacity of animals to provide comfort, understanding, and elevate human experiences to a higher level. Browning was surprised by the emotional capacity of what she had considered a "low creature." In comparing Flush with Faunus, a half-man, half-animal, she highlights that non-human animals can offer an unconditional, inter-species love that mirrors God's transcendent love. This work was not her sole work where Flush appears and with multiple other poems appear in a collection with other less important poets because of the low consideration of animal writing.

A more famous example of the influence of Darwin's theory in English Literature is George Eliot, pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans, thanks to her interest in science. She viewed this theory with skepticism and in *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot portrays animals that are unfit for this world. These animals live but do not reproduce and according to Darwin, these creatures are seen as unsuccessful and only serve as material for

evolutionary theory. However, for Eliot, these beings possess inherent worth and significance. By closely examining the domesticated animals in the novel, they not only assume the role of minor characters but also serve as allegories and metaphors. They emphasize the importance of acknowledging and caring for creatures that defy scientific notions of progress. Eliot draws upon Darwinian concepts to create intricate depictions of animals and extends these ideas to her human characters as well. While Darwin focuses on nonhuman animals, Eliot appears to tell a story centered on human protagonist Maggie Tulliver. However, Eliot's nuanced portrayal of nonhuman animals in *The Mill on the Floss* indicates that she places greater value on them compared to Darwin. She presents them as subjective beings with complexity. Unlike Darwin, who sees animals as instruments of evolution, Eliot recognizes their lives as possessing inherent worth and significance. The novel tells the story of Maggie Tulliver, an impetuous and clever young girl who faces family conflicts and societal challenges. Maggie's emotional dependence is on her older brother Tom, who is less studious than her. Their father decides to send Tom for additional education, causing tension with their relatives, the Dodsons. Maggie befriends Philip Wakem, who is disabled and the son of their father's enemy. The family faces financial difficulties, and their mill is bought by Lawyer Wakem, humiliating Mr. Tulliver. Maggie goes through a period of religious self-denial but eventually rekindles her friendship with Philip. Tom becomes successful and pays off their debts. However, Mr. Tulliver attacks Lawyer Wakem and dies. Maggie teaches in another village, and she and Philip rekindle their friendship, while Lucy considers marrying a rich suitor, Stephen Guest. Maggie is initially set to leave, but she and Stephen find themselves drawn to each other, causing jealousy in Philip. Maggie and Stephen become trapped in a boat together but eventually part ways. Maggie returns home, but her actions lead to societal rejection, even from her brother Tom. She finds solace with Bob Jakin and his family, and some forgiveness from Lucy and Philip. The novel ends tragically when a flood occurs, and Maggie and Tom drown trying to rescue others. Years later, their graves are visited by Philip, Stephen, and Lucy.

While narrating the poignant tale of Maggie's life and her tragic destiny, Eliot intricately weaves in the lives of numerous animals, emphasizing the essential yet

frequently neglected role they play in human narratives. The inseparable connection between human history and animal history underscores the significance of acknowledging and exploring the presence and experiences of animals in literature. Eliot challenges hierarchical perspectives on human-animal relationships by introducing animals as characters, purposefully disrupting conventional thinking.

The Mill on the Floss is set in rural Warwickshire during the early 1800s. What's particularly noteworthy is the sheer variety of animals featured in the story, ranging from dogs, cats, sheep, horses, rabbits, ferrets, rats, snakes, spiders and many more. Throughout the narrative, these animals serve multiple purposes. From the barking cur in the opening chapter to Mumps, the dog of a childhood friend of Tom's, who provides comfort to Maggie Tulliver after her ill-fated river journey with Stephen Guest, Eliot employs these creatures to enrich the setting and provide insights into the individual characters and their relationships within society. The inclusion of animals, often associated with outdoor experiences and male characters, serves to underscore the stark differences between the lives of men and women in the novel. It's a literary technique that not only deepens the story's context but also contributes to a better understanding of the characters' roles and societal dynamics.

In his youth, Mr. Tulliver was a spirited and independent young man, reminiscent of his ancestor Ralph Tulliver, who was known for his bold riding of spirited horses. Mr. Tulliver seemed to be continuing this tradition by displaying a strong-willed and self-opinionated nature. However, he also shared the unfortunate trait of imprudence with his ancestor, which ultimately led to his ruin. The turning point in Mr. Tulliver's life comes after he learns the distressing news that Lawyer Wakem is the owner of the mortgage on their mill. This revelation, coupled with the weight of the financial burden and the distress it causes him, proves to be too much for him to bear. The shock and stress of the situation take a severe toll on his health, leading to a stroke that has devastating consequences. Mr. Tulliver's collapse from his horse symbolizes the collapse of his financial stability and the trajectory of his life, marking a significant turning point in the story. The moments in the novel where the bond between characters and their horses is abruptly severed carry significant symbolism and consequences.

In the first instance, after Mr. Tulliver's stroke, he is left attended only by his grey horse. The horse seems to sense that something is terribly amiss, highlighting the idea that animals can often perceive and react to the emotional states of their human companions. It's a poignant moment, emphasizing the isolation and strangeness of Mr. Tulliver's condition.

The second case of a rider being unseated occurs when Mr. Tulliver attacks Lawyer Wakem. In this altercation, Wakem's horse throws him off, which is symbolic of the disruption in the power dynamics between these two characters. It also underscores the physical consequences of their clash, leaving Wakem bruised and shaken. What's interesting is that Wakem is then forced to ride Mr. Tulliver's "low horse" home, indicating a reversal of fortunes.

The third separation of horse and rider occurs in favor of the Tulliver family. Jetsome, who was hired to manage the mill, is thrown from his horse and seriously injured. This incident leads to Wakem's eagerness to transfer the mill's ownership to new buyers, thus paving the way for Tom to assume the role of the mill's manager under Guest and Company. This turn of events significantly influences the family's future prospects and further underscores the pivotal role of horses in the novel's plot.

Chapter 2 Contemporary Age

In the last years, after Singer's book, there has been an increase in literary works that challenge speciesism, offering readers critical perspective on the consideration we have of non-human animals. J.M. Coetzee, although vegetarian, actively supports various animal rights organizations. Despite his well-known aversion to giving interviews, he occasionally engages with the media to discuss matters related to animal rights. His novel *Disgrace* is one of the various examples that criticize dominant attitudes possessed by humans towards other animals. The novel tells the story of a middle-aged English professor named David Lurie who is forced to confront his own prejudices towards non-human animals after being accused of sexual harassment by a student. In the second chapter, we have this self-explanatory regarding Lurie's perspective:

He has never been much interested in animals, not even as a child, and has never understood people who are, people who talk to their pets and so on. They are, after all, only animals. Cats, dogs, horses, parrots – what are they in the end but creatures to be used by human beings (...) (Coetzee 1999a: 4).

Lurie and his daughter Lucy emerge as stark contrasts in *Disgrace*. Lucy's vegetarian and ecofeminist beliefs, subtly introduced in the novel, remain elusive to Lurie, who only begins to grasp them towards the story's conclusion. Throughout the narrative, Lurie consistently struggles to comprehend Lucy's unique perspective, particularly regarding her choices concerning her body and property. While prevailing critiques often frame Lucy as a victim of patriarchal and racist violence, this chapter aims to portray her as an assertive figure with an independent voice and a positive vision.

At the start of *Disgrace*, Lurie's character is portrayed as predominantly self-centered and content, prioritizing his own needs. The opening lines reveal this self-assurance: "For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" (Coetzee 1999b: 1). His weekly visits to the prostitute Soraya are characterized by a reflection on her satisfaction: "he finds her entirely satisfactory" (Coetzee 1999b: 1). This self-satisfaction is further underscored by his contemplation of happiness. In good health with a clear mind, Lurie, a scholar by profession, still finds

intermittent engagement with scholarly pursuits. He maintains a lifestyle within the bounds of his income, temperament, and emotional capacity. By most conventional measurements, he deems himself happy. Subsequently, Soraya declines further meetings. Desperate for a substitute, Lurie searches, but any effort for a satisfactory replacement proves futile, despite the many exotic options available—Malaysian, Thai, Chinese, and more. The use of these generic terms diminishes the individuality of the women involved. This negation of individuality to women has the same roots of the negation of individuality towards non-human animals.

Following an ill-fated affair with the new departmental secretary, Lurie contemplates the drastic measure of castration. His inability to restrain his erotic impulses, often described as his "animal" passion, becomes a precursor to the disgrace that awaits him. This unraveling is hinted at through vivid animal imagery when Soraya vehemently rejects his attempts to contact her: "But then what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs?" (Coetzee 1999b: 10).

When he brings his student Melanie home, Lurie is fully aware of the gravity of the situation.

The woman he has brought home is not just thirty years his junior; she is a student, his student, under his tutelage. No matter what transpires between them now, they are destined to meet again as teacher and pupil. Is he prepared for that? (Coetzee 1999b: 12).

Lurie is exploiting his role as a teacher and his patriarchal status to indulge in his desires. He employs music, wine, and conversation filled with suggestive undertones to seduce or, better, to deceive Melanie. He justifies his plea for her to spend the night with a rationale: "Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it" (Coetzee 1999b: 16). This justification underscores his manipulation of academic authority and patriarchal influence in the pursuit of his personal passions.

The problematicness of what he is doing is complicated by descriptions of her body as child-like: "Her hips are as slim as a twelve-year-old's" (Coetzee 1999b: 19) and "A child! he thinks: No more than a child! What am I doing? Yet his heart lurches with

desire” (Coetzee 1999b: 20). Later: “He makes a bed for her in his daughter’s room” (Coetzee 1999b: 26) and, when she decides to stay over at his house:

He sits down on the bed, draws her to him. In his arms she begins to sob miserably. Despite all, he feels a tingling of desire. ‘There, there,’ he whispers, trying to comfort her. ‘Tell me what is wrong.’ Almost he says, ‘Tell Daddy what is wrong’ (Coetzee 1999b: 26).

The mention of "daddy" not only points to the patriarchal authority that Lurie has exploited but also raises unsettling associations with incestuous pedophilia, especially considering Melanie is in his daughter’s bed. During their first sexual encounter, it becomes evident that Melanie is an unwilling participant. The description of the act is solely from Lurie’s viewpoint, according to his needs and desires: "though she is passive throughout, he finds the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into blank oblivion" (Coetzee 1999b: 19). Her shame becomes apparent as she averts her face upon departing. He remains utterly indifferent to her emotions; she is merely an object of his desire. This indifference can be compared to that of speciesist people towards the images of suffering of non-human animals, because they are seen as mere objects of their desire, be it economic, gluttonic or personal.

Soon, a notification arrives from the Vice-Rector’s office, informing Lurie of a harassment complaint filed against him by a student. Accompanying the notice are legal documents marking the initiation of proceedings against him. Appalled, Lurie dismisses his lawyer's suggestions of “sensitivity training. Community service. Counselling” (Coetzee 1999b: 43) with arrogance and contempt. However, by the novel's conclusion, he willingly engages in voluntary community service at a dog shelter. At this point, it has transformed into a sincere and meaningful private endeavor, as opposed to the insincere public display it would have been if he had agreed to it earlier. Defiantly refusing to take responsibility, Lurie, believing he is too old to change, leaves the university and chooses exile, opting to reside with his adult lesbian daughter, Lucy, on her farm. Throughout his stay, his erotic imagination gradually evolves into a more sympathetic one, and his egoism transforms into altruism. On her land, Lucy practices autarky alongside vegetarianism, and dedicates herself to caring for animals. Her principles of non-violence, economic independence, and respect for life are deeply

embedded in her connection to the land. Lucy realizes that her father does not approve her lifestyle, because he believes it won't lead her to a “higher life” (Coetzee 1999b: 74), Lucy believes that:

They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is, there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals. That's the example that people like Bev try to set. That's the example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. I don't want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us (Coetzee 1999b: 74).

She adopts a philosophy exemplified by people like Bev, aiming to share some of humanity's privilege with animals. Lucy expresses a desire to avoid a possible reincarnated life dictated by how humans treat non-human animals and is actively trying to change this. Lucy emphasizes the significance of living a moral life over an aesthetic one—prioritizing the shared experience of others' suffering rather than the indulgence of personal desires. This perspective closely aligns with principles found in Buddhism. Lucy's contemplation of the possibility of reincarnation as a dog or pig might reinforce this interpretation. In response, Lurie addresses Lucy affectionately, urging her not to be upset. He concurs with her viewpoint that this is the sole life we have. Regarding animals, he advocates kindness toward them but cautions against losing perspective. Lurie contends that humans and animals belong to distinct orders of creation, not necessarily one higher than the other, but simply different.

Lucy, my dearest, don't be cross. Yes, I agree, this is the only life there is. As for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different. So if we are going to be kind, let it be out of simple generosity, not because we feel guilty or fear retribution (Coetzee 1999b: 74).

However, it becomes apparent that Lurie has not begun to question his speciesism, clinging to his belief in human supremacy. His language lacks the rhetoric of animal rights, leaning instead towards a human-centered ethics. This is evident in his use of terms like “kind” and “generosity,” revealing a perspective that revolves around human values rather than acknowledging the inherent rights of animals.

Coetzee uses Lurie's experiences to critique speciesist attitudes, his journey towards antispeciesist consciousness is slow and painful but, in the end, he realizes he has been an accomplice in the oppression. The following are two quotes that highlight this transition: "He is interested in dogs not as extensions of their owners but as individuals, each with its own character, its own needs, its own pleasures." (Coetzee 1999a: 44). This shows Lurie's growing appreciation for the individuality of animals. He has become involved in a project to help a neighbor care for her dogs, and he takes pleasure in getting to know each dog's personality. "He will have to think hard, he realizes, about the morality of breeding and rearing animals for the table. About the morality of eating meat." (Coetzee 1999a: 95). This second quote reflects Lurie's contemplation of the ethics surrounding the consumption of animal products.

One day, three black men, serving as the novel's antagonists, confine David in a bathroom, eliminate all but one of the farm's kenneled dogs, and inflict harm upon Lucy, David feels the urge to scrutinize his past actions. Lucy's violation and her subsequent revelations, unveiling that the attack was driven by hatred, power, and subjugation, prompt David to think about how his previous actions impacted Melanie. This traumatic incident creates a stark separation between David and Lucy's experiences. This exclusion may be Coetzee's way of suggesting that male writers, out of respect for women, cannot adequately capture certain female experiences and should refrain from attempting to do so. Lucy's initial words are towards the dogs in the dog-pens. This event shows how animals are often subjected to violence and cruelty, and how humans can use their power to inflict harm on animals. Coetzee portrays animals as sentient beings with their own desires and needs, capable of feeling pain and suffering. This is evident in the way Lucy cares for her animals, treating them with respect and dignity. She sees them as equals, not as mere objects to be used and discarded. The following are two examples in the text that highlight Lucy's vision towards non-human animals:

Lucy has always had a way with animals. Even as a child she could calm the most skittish or frightened of creatures, could coax a stray kitten out of hiding or a bird to come to her hand. She seems to know instinctively what they require, what they are capable of. (Coetzee 1999a: 9).

In chapter 5, Lucy has a moment of reflection that represents a challenge to the idea of human superiority, suggesting that the relationship between humans and animals is more complex than the traditional hierarchy suggests. The quote is: "But are they only dumb animals? Lucy asks herself. Is dumbness all there is to it? They look at her out of their dark eyes with their old wisdom, and she wonders: what do they see, what do they know, that she does not?" (Coetzee 1999: 52). By examining the ways in which Lucy contemplates the intelligence and agency of animals, Coetzee continues to raise questions about the ethical treatment of the non-humans and challenges readers to consider a world where the boundaries between human and non-human animals are redefined.

Lurie offers his bedroom to Lucy, recognizing her reluctance to stay in her own room or the adjacent back room containing the freezer holding the frozen meat for the dogs. Lurie assumes she avoids the back room due to its association with the slaughtered dogs. However, he fails to draw a parallel between the violence inflicted upon him and Lucy and the violence imposed on the animals destined for meat. Ironically, Lucy's vegetarianism appears to strengthen following her rape, as she now finds it unbearable to stay near the freezer containing the meat. This circumstance establishes a connection between male violence and meat-eating in the narrative, echoing what Carol J. Adams theorized in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

Lucy refrains from disclosing the rape to the police during their investigation of the house and while taking her statement, but they are clearly aware of it. "In Lucy's bedroom the double bed is stripped bare. The scene of the crime, he thinks to himself; and, as if reading the thought, the policemen avert their eyes, pass on" (Coetzee 1999b: 109). The police's ignorance appears to implicate them, to some extent, in the violence perpetrated against women in South Africa, exemplified by Lucy. This attitude mirrors the willed ignorance later found in *Elizabeth Costello* concerning the widespread and systematic violence against non-human animals that many choose to overlook on a daily basis.

In another scene, Petrus, Lucy's Black neighbor and former assistant, acquires some sheep and confines them to a post for three days in the sun without access to water or food. Lurie gradually develops a bond with these sheep and becomes troubled by Petrus's harsh treatment of them. Reflecting on their situation, Lurie observes:

The sheep spend the rest of the day near the dam where he has tethered them. The next morning they are back on the barren patch beside the stable. Presumably they have until Saturday morning, two days. It seems a miserable way to spend the last two days of one's life. Country ways—that is what Lucy calls this kind of thing. He has other words: indifference, hardheartedness (Coetzee 1999b: 125).

Lurie contemplates skipping the party to avoid eating the bodies of the sheep. What troubles him is the realization that these sheep aren't mere abstract concepts but rather living, feeling, individual beings. As the aroma of meat flows through the air on the day of the event, he wonders whether he should mourn for them. This episode shows how Lurie is involuntarily coming to terms with the concept of the absent referent. Ultimately, when served the meat at the party, he starts thinking "I am going to eat this... I am going to eat it and ask forgiveness afterwards" (Coetzee 1999b: 131).

This internal struggle coincides with Lucy's presence at the party, asking to leave after catching sight of one of her abusers. This juxtaposition once again draws a parallel between the violence inflicted upon Lucy and, by extension, women in general, and the violence perpetrated against non-human animals.

Upon catching Pollux, the youngest of Lucy's three assailants, spying on her, David responds with physical force, unleashing his long-suppressed racist sentiments. Despite Lucy's plea for peace and her attempt to guide David toward a better future for both himself and the country, he stubbornly insists on his inability to change and become a better person. Lurie's change, however, is evident in his new attitude towards non-human animals. While he is emotionally affected by his work at the clinic, he's not as much touched by the animals he consumes because of the personal connection with those he assists in disposing of. Recognizing their subjectivity, he realizes that instead of growing desensitized to the act of killing, he becomes increasingly uneasy with each instance when the narrator says: "the more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets" (Coetzee 1999b: 142).

The novel concludes with a touching scene where Lurie holds the individualized dog, Driepoot, in his arms, resembling a sacrificial lamb destined for euthanasia. In a conversation with Bev, he acknowledges, "Yes, I am giving him up" (Coetzee 1999b: 220), marking a profound moment of surrender and reflection on his evolving relationship with non-human animals.

The universe portrayed in *Disgrace* is full of disgrace, not only in its treatment of fellow humans as expendable tools for various ends but also in its disregard for the daily injustices inflicted upon millions of non-human animals. Amidst the majority of humanity turning a blind eye to these atrocities, individuals like Bev Shaw and Lurie emerge, exhibiting compassion despite enduring profound personal and psychic costs. Their altruistic gestures, devoid of personal gain, become pathways to grace, offering a glimpse of redemption not only for themselves but potentially for the world. This redemption hinges on recognizing our shared kinship with non-human animals, and embracing our shared capacity for both suffering and joy. It demands a critical examination of our most ingrained prejudices—not only racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and ageism but, at its core, speciesism, which is the root of all oppressions.

Coetzee's other most notable works that evidently present animal rights stances that try to oppose speciesist views are *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello*. Both books feature the character of Elizabeth Costello, who serves as a spokesperson for Coetzee's own views. Over time, Coetzee appears to be more willing to express his ethical perspectives directly in support of animal welfare. For instance, through Costello, he provocatively draws parallels between human brutality towards animals and the tragic experiences of Jews during the Holocaust. Within his novel *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee skillfully crafts his title character to deliver a series of fictionalized lectures that delve into profound philosophical viewpoints concerning also cruelty towards non-human animals. Coetzee, in his role as a novelist, employs eloquent and lyrical expressions to articulate the essence of cruelty, draws compelling parallels between the horrors of Nazism and the grim reality of factory farms, and employs

elements of ethical elitism to intricately explore and engage with these pressing ethical dilemmas.

Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed, dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them. (Coetzee 1999c: 21).

2.1 Isaac Bashevis Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer is one of the most famous people who has drawn direct comparisons between animal cruelty and the Holocaust. He was a renowned Polish-American writer, best known for his works written in Yiddish, which often explored themes of Jewish identity, tradition, spirituality, and the human condition. His life experiences greatly influenced his ideas about the Holocaust and animal rights. Singer lived through the World War II and the Holocaust. He was deeply affected by the horrors of the Holocaust, during which millions of Jews and other minority groups were systematically persecuted and murdered by the Nazis. Singer's own family was touched by this tragedy, with several of his relatives falling victim to the Holocaust. These traumatic experiences shaped his perspective on human cruelty and suffering. His literary work often grappled with the Holocaust's impact on Jewish identity and the Jewish experience. He explored themes of survivor guilt, the loss of innocence, and the enduring trauma of those who lived through the Holocaust. His writing provided a means of preserving the memory of those who died and bearing witness to the atrocities of the time. Isaac Bashevis Singer was also a passionate advocate for animal rights. His belief in the ethical treatment of animals was deeply rooted in his Jewish upbringing and his sense of compassion for all living creatures. As previously mentioned, he drew parallels between the suffering of animals and the suffering of humans, highlighting the interconnectedness of all lives. His short stories *The Slaughterer* and *The Letter Writer* explored these themes.

Herman Gombiner, the central character in *The Letter Writer*, is a poignant portrayal of an aging, gentle, and lonely Jewish man living in New York. His solitude is primarily

a result of the devastating loss of his entire family in the Holocaust, a tragedy that looms large in his life. To alleviate his loneliness, he engages in an unusual form of correspondence with strangers, particularly women who share his fascination with the psychic and the paranormal. This habit shows his deep desire for human connection, as he no longer has any living relatives to write letters to. “Now, since Hitler had killed off all of his family, he had no relatives to write letters to. He wrote letters to total strangers” (Singer 2004: 728).

He is vegetarian and his diet choice is seen by other characters as the reason for his frail health.

Recently, he had begun to suffer from tremors of the hands and feet. He had once had a meticulous handwriting, but he could no longer write. He used a typewriter, typing with his right index finger. Old Korver insisted that all Gombiner’s troubles came from the fact that he was a vegetarian; without a piece of meat, one loses strength. Herman couldn’t take a bite of meat if his life depended on it. (Singer 2004: 727).

We see how the theme of eating meat equals strength is also present in this story, reinforcing the sexual politics of meat illustrated by Carol J. Adams: “The sexual politics of meat also works at another level: the ongoing superstition that meat gives strength and that men need meat” (Adams 2010: 17).

Herman has an aversion for meat. “The odors from the apartments made Herman feel faint. All kinds of meat and fish were fried there” (Singer 2004: 729).

His relationship with a mouse in his apartment is a particularly striking element of the story. Initially, he is concerned that the mouse might damage the books that cover the floors of his flat and that she may have offspring, echoing his fears of property damage and infestation. However, as the story unfolds, these fears are unfounded, and the mouse becomes more than just pest to him. In fact, he comes to consider the mouse as a "she", gives her the name of Huldah and provides her with food and water to ensure her well-being. The mouse, in Herman's eyes, transforms from a potential nuisance into a companion, symbolizing his capacity for empathy and connection with another living beings, even one traditionally regarded as vermin. Naming the mouse Huldah “humanizes” the creature and makes it more relatable to the reader. It serves to blur the

distinction between human and animal, emphasizing the idea that all living beings share a common bond and deserve empathy and understanding. The name Huldah suggests that the mouse is not just a random pest but an individual with its own unique identity, challenging the concept of speciesism. The act of naming the mouse suggests that the protagonist has formed a personal and emotional bond with her. This transformation is a reflection of Herman's unique sensitivity, which has been heightened by the profound loss he suffered during the Holocaust. Even when Herman falls seriously ill and is unable to care for himself, he remains concerned about the mouse's welfare, further underscoring his respect for her existence and the bond they share.

He twitched and woke up. (...) Suddenly Herman remembered. What had become of Huldah? (...) No one fed her or given her anything to drink. "She is surely dead," he said to himself. (...) He felt a great shame. (...) I should not have forgotten her! I should not have! I've killed her! Despair took hold of Herman. He started to pray for the mouse's soul. (Singer 2004: 750).

In a broader sense, the narrative alludes to the dehumanization and demonization of certain groups by comparing Herman's initial concerns about the mouse to how the Nazis and Germans characterized Jews as vermin during the Holocaust. The story suggests that Herman's heightened sensitivity to the life of this small creature stems from his own personal experience of loss and persecution.

In his thoughts, Herman spoke a eulogy for the mouse who had shared a portion of her life with him and who, because of him, had left this earth. "What do they know-all those scholars, all those philosophers, all the leaders of the world-about such as you? They have convinced themselves that man, the worst transgressor of all the species, is the crown of creation. All other creatures were created merely to provide him with food, pelts, to be tormented, exterminated. In relation to them, all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka. And yet man demands compassion from heaven. (Singer 2004: 750).

This excerpt plays a crucial role in emphasizing Herman's deep sense of desolation, primarily because he mistakenly believes that Huldah has died. In this passage, Herman's emotions are portrayed with a vivid intensity that underscores the depth of his grief and despair. The mention of Huldah's death is a turning point in the story, and it symbolizes the culmination of his suffering and isolation. However, this specific passage has been frequently quoted out of context, and as a result, its emotional impact

may have diminished over time. In other words, it has become a familiar literary reference that no longer shocks or moves readers as it once did. In response to this issue, Coetzee, in *The Lives of Animals*, chose to rework the Nazi analogy rather than merely quoting Singer. His decision to revisit the analogy is a deliberate attempt to reinvigorate its emotional power and defamiliarize it for contemporary readers. By doing so, he aims to force readers to reconsider the analogy's lesson from a fresh perspective, encouraging them to engage with it more deeply and hopefully gain a new level of understanding. This process of reworking and revitalizing established literary elements can help ensure that their lessons and messages remain powerful and thought-provoking for successive generations of readers.

Another story, featuring in the collection where *The Letter Writer* is also present, which shows Singer's stance towards animal cruelty is *The Slaughterer*. In the short story, the central character, Yoineh Meir, initially aspires to become a *rabbi*, a revered and spiritual role within the Jewish community. However, his destiny takes an unexpected turn when the *Hasidim* in their old country assign him the position of the ritual slaughterer, also known as the *shochet*. This role involves the responsible and precise slaughter of animals in accordance with the laws and customs of Jewish dietary laws, particularly as found in sacred texts.

Yoineh Meir takes on his new role with a deep sense of duty and reverence. He embarks on a rigorous study of the laws and regulations related to *kosher* slaughter, delving into the religious texts and traditions that govern this sacred practice. He acquires and maintains holy instruments, such as sharp knives and a whetstone, which are essential for ensuring that the slaughtering process is carried out in accordance with the strict religious standards. Despite his devotion to the role and his adherence to the commands, Yoineh Meir's life takes a tragic turn. He becomes haunted by misgivings and moral dilemmas. These doubts and inner conflicts grow over time, as he grapples with the weight of taking the lives of animals in the name of religious ritual. The act of slaughtering becomes increasingly distressing for him, leading to a profound inner turmoil that he cannot escape.

After he agreed to become the ritual slaughterer, Yoineh Meir imposed new rigors upon himself. He ate less and less. (...) The truth is that becoming a slaughterer plunged Yoineh Meir into melancholy (Singer 2004: 547).

The first doubts arise right after becoming a slaughterer. Then, the feelings keep getting worse.

Yoineh Meir was afraid that he might faint as he slaughtered his first fowl, or that his hand might not be steady. At the same time, somewhere in his heart, he hoped he would commit an error. This would release him from the rabbi's command (Singer 2004: 547).

Yoineh Meir feels that he is not fit for this role and that his empathy towards non-human animals would take over, which unconsciously would make him commit a mistake that would get him removed from the task. The act of killing and the sight of carcasses show the referent that usually remains absent, this gives way to doubts and remorse.

Those that are not slaughtered die anyway of various diseases, often ailing for weeks or months. In the forests, the beasts devour one another. In the seas, fish swallow fish. (...) And yet Yoineh Meir could find no consolation. Every tremor of the slaughtered fowl was answered by a tremor in Yoineh Meir's own bowels. The killing of every beast, great or small, caused him as much pain as though he were cutting his own throat (Singer 2004: 547-548).

The protagonist tries to find different consolations and excuses to justify the slaughter, but his conscience cannot stand what he has been doing.

Singer depicts with extreme and crude reality the resistance the non-human animals show when they realize they are going to die.

His ears were beset by the squawking of hens, the crowing of roosters, the gobbling of geese, the lowing of oxen, then mooing and bleating of calves and goats; wings fluttered, claws tapped on the floor. The bodies refused to know any justification or excuse - every body resisted in its own fashion, tried to escape, and seemed to argue with the Creator to its last breath (Singer 2004: 548).

This inner torment eventually drives him to madness, as the conflict between his religious obligations and his personal moral compass becomes unbearable.

He had developed a repugnance for everything that had to do with the body. He could not even bring himself to go to the ritual bath with the other men. Under every skin he saw blood. Every neck reminded Yoineh Meir of the knife. Human beings, like beasts, had loins, veins, guts, buttocks. One slash of the knife and those solid householders would drop like oxen (Singer 2004: 549).

Although his madness is taking over, in the passage we can see the clarity of Yoineh Meir to see human and non-human animals alike. This folly that would accompany the protagonist throughout the story can be understood as a sort of awakening, the realization that a speciesist world is morally wrong. After this realization, he screams: “The whole world is a slaughterhouse!” (Singer 2004: 555) and then the narrator describes the moment: “He had opened a door to his brain, and madness flowed in, flooding everything” (Singer 2004: 555).

Yoineh Meir no longer slept at night. If he dozed off, he was immediately beset by nightmares. Cows assumed human shape, with beards and side locks, and skullcaps over their horns. Yoineh Meir would be slaughtering a calf, but it would turn into a girl (Singer 2004: 551).

He starts being haunted in his dreams as well, his unconscious tells him that what he has been doing is morally wrong and shows him non-human animals taking the shapes of humans, blending their characteristics and underlining the fact that humans and non-humans are all animals.

Yoineh Meir went to the pantry where he kept his knives, his whetstone, the circumcision knife. He gathered them all and dropped them into the pit of the outhouse. He knew that he was blaspheming, that he was desecrating the holy instruments, that he was mad, but he no longer wished to be sane (Singer 2004: 555).

At the end of the story, he renounces his role in a symbolic way. His madness leads him to death, but more than madness, it can be understood that what really killed him was the guilt that came after his realization. He is aware of being crazy but more likely,

given this clarity, he is just perceived as mad because his behavior is different from what is usually seen as normal.

Isaac Bashevis Singer and Coetzee were both distinguished with the Nobel Prize for Literature — Singer in 1978 and Coetzee in 2003. Additionally, both Singer and Coetzee embraced the mantle of passionate and compassionate vegetarians, making it an integral part of their creative identities. Within the domain of Coetzee's literary exploration, the analogy to the atrocities committed during the Nazi era made by Isaac Singer is revisited, in the aforementioned work *The Lives of Animals*. Coetzee's approach to the analogy extends beyond a mere reliance on quoting Singer and leveraging his moral authority. Instead, Coetzee intricately reanimates the analogy, infusing it with renewed vigor and the capacity to unsettle readers. Coetzee's narrative intention is to make the analogy capable once again of evoking deep reflection and prompting readers to engage with its implications. This reinvigoration of the analogy serves for motivating the readers to confront complex ethical questions and encouraging a deeper, more active form of intellectual engagement.

In this sense, Costello's concept of "willed ignorance" is a thought-provoking term that can be linked to the Socratic idea of "virtue is knowledge" in the context of the Germans who allowed the Nazi regime to flourish and, by extension, to contemporary individuals who partake in the meat industry.

In Germany, we say, a certain line was crossed which took people beyond the ordinary murderousness and cruelty of warfare into a state that we can only call sin . . . It marked those citizens of the Reich who had committed evil actions, but also those who, for whatever reason, were in ignorance of those actions. It thus marked, for practical purposes, every citizen of the Reich. Only those in the camps were innocent (Coetzee 1999c: 20).

In the case of ordinary Germans during the Nazi era, it implies that many people chose to turn a blind eye to the atrocities of the regime, such as the Holocaust, despite having access to information or the ability to question the morality of their government's actions. Many individuals chose to remain ignorant about the horrors being perpetrated by the Nazi regime. This deliberate ignorance allowed the regime to perpetuate its

atrocities. By extension, the analogy suggests that individuals who consume meat may, like the Germans during the Third Reich, practice "willed ignorance" by not fully engaging with the ethical and moral implications of the meat industry.

2.2 Elizabeth Costello

Understanding Coetzee's stance within the complex realm of animal rights proves intricate, the challenge is heightened due to his utilization of what seems to be a persona and alter ego, Elizabeth Costello, through which he articulates his perspectives. Some critics are cautious in associating her viewpoints directly with Coetzee's, as they perceive him employing the fictional medium of philosophical dialogue to explore more radical ideas than he might openly acknowledge. At the same time, it is not fundamental for us to know Coetzee's stance, the work proves to be an important pillar in the animal rights discourse. Although *The Lives of Animals* doesn't directly mention Peter Singer, his influence is evident in the *Reflections* section of the book. Singer's *Animal Liberation*, often thought to be the most important work in the field of animal liberation and animal rights, echoes through Coetzee's narrative, aligning Costello's views with the broader sentiments held by global animal activists. Notably, Costello, paralleling Singer's approach, critiques the tradition of Western philosophers for speciesism and the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration based on the criterion of rationality. This resonates with Peter Singer's chapter-length critique of Western thinkers for the same speciesist tendencies, indicating the potential synergy between Coetzee and Singer's influential ideas. Hence, the concept of the "willed ignorance" has a central role in Costello's lectures:

The people who lived in the countryside around Treblinka—Poles, for the most part—said that they did not know what was going on in the camp; said that, while in a general way they might have guessed what was going on, they did not know for sure; said that, while in a sense they might have known, in another sense they did not know, could not afford to know, for their own sake. (...) They lost their humanity, in our eyes, because of a certain willed ignorance on their part. Under the circumstances of Hitler's kind of war, ignorance may have been a useful survival mechanism, but that is an excuse which, with admirable moral rigor, we refuse to accept (Coetzee 1999c: 19, 20).

Similarly, Costello also explores the comparison between non-human animals and prisoners of war:

We had a war once against the animals, which we called hunting, though in fact war and hunting are the same thing (Aristotle saw it clearly). That war went on for millions of years. We won it definitively only a few hundred years ago, when we invented guns. It is only since victory became absolute that we have been able to cultivate compassion. But our compassion is very thinly spread. Beneath it is a more primitive attitude. The prisoner of war does not belong to our tribe. We can do what we want with him (Coetzee 1999c: 59).

Furthermore, Elizabeth Costello perceives humanity as an integral part of the animal kingdom, a concept pioneered by Charles Darwin, as we have already mentioned. This viewpoint positions human beings as one species within the broader spectrum of life forms that have evolved over time. Costello's adoption of Darwinism underscores the idea that humans are not separate from nature but rather a continuation of it. This perspective challenges traditional notions that might position humans as distinct and superior entities outside the realm of the natural world. By emphasizing the concept of "evolutionary development," she draws attention to the gradual processes of change and adaptation that have shaped not only humans but also the diverse species on Earth. She does it while criticizing Descartes's perspective on human nature, highlighting the limitations of the Cartesian dualism that separates the mind and body, positioning humans as beings with a unique and separate essence. This separation, according to Costello's view rooted in Darwinism, fails to capture the intricate interplay between human beings and the environment, as well as the shared evolutionary history that links humans to all other living creatures.

Getting back to Descartes, I would only want to say that the discontinuity he saw between animals and human beings was the result of incomplete information. The science of Descartes's day had no acquaintance with the great apes or with higher marine mammals, and thus little cause to question the assumption that animals cannot think. And of course it had no access to the fossil record that would reveal a graded continuum of anthropoid creatures stretching from the higher primates to *Homo sapiens*—anthropoids, one must point out, who were exterminated by man in the course of his rise to power (Coetzee 1999c: 61).

Elizabeth Costello maintains a distinct demarcation between animal rights and environmentalism, despite recognizing that ecological arguments can offer compelling

grounds against practices like industrialized agriculture and meat production. While environmentalism primarily concerns the broader ecosystem and the health of the planet, animal rights focus on the individual experiences and rights of sentient beings. In Costello's view, environmental arguments might indeed highlight the negative consequences of industrialized agriculture and meat production on ecosystems, such as deforestation, water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. These factors have the potential to resonate with environmentalists advocating for sustainable and harmonious coexistence with nature. However, Costello's distinction arises from her emphasis on the intrinsic value of each individual animal's experience. It's important to note that Costello's separation of animal rights and environmentalism is not meant to undermine the importance of environmental concerns. Rather, it reflects her desire to ensure that animals are not merely treated as elements within a larger ecological system, but as beings with their own capacity for suffering, joy, and autonomy. By maintaining this distinction, she highlights the necessity of addressing animal suffering on its own terms, not just as a byproduct of broader ecological issues. Regarding the use of climate change as a reason for animal welfare or animal rights, this approach can be seen as a reflection of an inclusive and holistic perspective rather than being inherently antispeciesist. Climate change affects entire ecosystems and all living beings within them. Advocating for animal welfare or rights within the context of climate change recognizes that animals, as integral parts of these ecosystems, are vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation. However, an antispeciesist approach goes beyond this and acknowledges that animals deserve moral consideration not solely due to their instrumental value within ecosystems or as victims of environmental crises, but because they are sentient beings capable of experiencing suffering and well-being. While using climate change as a reason to support animal welfare is a step in the right direction, it is essential to also recognize animals' inherent worth and rights regardless of their role in environmental dynamics. The contemporary world confronts an urgent crisis: a climate catastrophe of human origin that threatens the existence of life on Earth. To counter this danger, a widespread movement is imperative, challenging the profit-centric motives of corporate giants responsible for a precarious scenario where extinction looms over all species, including humans. This constitutes a genuine emergency, demanding collective action to safeguard both the Earth's future and the

lives of its inhabitants. Despite the undeniable correlation between animal agriculture and environmental degradation, a paradox often surfaces within climate activism. While advocates frequently champion compassion for all life, instances arise where animal products, and even animal bodies, find their way onto their plates. When the matter is broached, a retreat to the personal choice narrative is observable, occasionally accompanied by defensiveness that borders on hostility. Such scenarios can be encapsulated by the concept of freeganism, where non-vegan environmentalists rationalize consuming anything or anyone that hasn't directly financially supported environmentally unsustainable industries. This often involves scavenging discarded food, "rescued food," or even roadkill. This practice, not contributing to ecologically harmful systems, aligns with critiques of capitalism and consumerism. Irrespective of the consumed fare, the heart of the issue remains: animals are still perceived as entities inferior to humans, products devoid of active agency in their own struggle. In an antispeciesist context, the consumption or utilization of animals is ethically indefensible, only marginally pardonable in cases of real necessity. In mainstream environmental movements, however, animals are often relegated to passive roles, victims or commodities dictated by human preference. Furthermore, the fundamental discord between anti-speciesism and conventional environmentalism lies in the unsustainable proliferation of species due to human intervention. Domesticated, genetically modified, and introduced species like cows, rabbits, sheep, and horses have exacted tolls on ecosystems through mass breeding, deforestation, and impacts on native species. Through an anti-speciesist lens, these creatures bear intrinsic value, deserving of existence despite any inadvertent damage they cause. Yet, mainstream environmentalism tends to view animals either as environmental burdens to be avoided or as elements of nature to be preserved for their aesthetic appeal. There's insufficient acknowledgment of the significant population of domesticated animals with carbon footprints that remain even in a transition to plant-based diets. Of course this characterization does not encompass the entirety of the environmental movement. Groups like Climate Save and Vegan Rising champion animal rights as an integral facet of their activism, striving to ensure animals are at the core of the conversation as the environmental movement garners momentum. Nevertheless, the emphasis on animal agriculture's climate impact, while vital, should not monopolize discourse within

environmental circles. While the imperative to revolutionize behaviors to salvage the planet is undeniable, this transformation mustn't inadvertently perpetuate oppression. A truly holistic movement is one that advocates for both environmental renewal and the ethical treatment of all species, acknowledging the inextricable connections between ecological health and compassion for all sentient beings.

However, as antispeciesist as she would seem to be, Costello cannot be defined as such, the apparent paradoxes in Elizabeth Costello's beliefs, as portrayed by Coetzee, create an intriguing complexity in her ideological stance. She is depicted as simultaneously denouncing the exploitation of animals, yet paradoxically using products like leather shoes and a purse that stem from such exploitation. Similarly, she endorses the pro-hunting viewpoint. These contradictions make it challenging to categorize her within a particular ideological framework. However, despite these apparent inconsistencies, a deeper examination reveals that Costello's position aligns closely with ecofeminism, a feminist perspective that starkly challenges the underpinnings of liberalism, especially the notion of the independent, male-centered "isolated individual." This ideology rejects all forms of oppression and exploitation. Coetzee's portrayal of Costello's beliefs shares significant parallels with ecofeminism. In Coetzee's novels, he often supports the cause of the oppressed, silenced, and marginalized, who are frequently victims of systems of patriarchy and colonialism. This aligns with Costello's own concerns, which are notably directed towards non-human animals, revealing her empathy for those subjected to oppression. Her advocacy for animal rights reflects her identification with these victims. In summary, while Elizabeth Costello's ideas may seem contradictory on the surface, her alignment with ecofeminism, provides a unifying thread to her seemingly disparate beliefs. This connection is reinforced by Coetzee's own narrative focus on the marginalized and oppressed, and it underscores Costello's empathy for the plight of animals as victims of oppression.

In May 2004, Coetzee was interviewed by the American magazine *Satya*, he acknowledged the intricate challenge of portraying animal consciousness within the realm of literature. He astutely observed that, in his literary works, animals occupy a predominantly peripheral role, with two notable exceptions: *The Lives of Animals* and

Disgrace. This thematic choice mirrors the societal reality where animals themselves occupy a marginal position.

Aside from the two chapters in Elizabeth Costello which are directly concerned with animals, animals are present in my fiction either not at all or in a merely subsidiary role. Partly this is because the fact is that animals do occupy a subsidiary place in our lives, and partly it is because it is not possible to write about the inner lives of animals in any complex way (Satya May 04: Last accessed 6 Oct. 2023).

In comparing *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*, the presence of dialogue stands out as a common narrative element. However, an intriguing distinction emerges when examining the nature of this dialogue. The dialogism in *The Lives of Animals* can be characterized as static and public, contrasting with the dynamic and private exchanges found in *Disgrace*.

Beyond the variation in conversational settings, the characters Elizabeth Costello and David Lurie reveal striking disparities. Costello, a renowned female author and fervent feminist vegetarian with a deep affection especially for her cats, stands in stark opposition to Lurie, a sexually predatory, meat-eating, misogynistic male and obscure Romantic scholar. Lurie, initially indifferent to animals, experiences a transformative connection with the dogs in his care. Despite these glaring differences, significant parallels surface between Costello and Lurie. Both protagonists are academics, grappling with the inevitable passage of time and its impact on their lives. Intriguingly, both characters seem to find or actively seek salvation, not in God, but in their relationships with animals. In essence, the common thread of dialogue, despite its contrasting qualities, weaves through the narratives, while the divergent characteristics of Costello and Lurie contribute to a rich exploration of themes such as gender, ethics, and the evolving relationships between humans and animals.

When asked about the potential connections between various forms of oppression, Coetzee provides a thought-provoking response. He delves into the notion that cruelty is not inherent to human nature; rather, it necessitates the deliberate closure of our hearts to the suffering of others. He draws a striking parallel between the act of closing off our sympathies as we prepare to consume poultry and the same emotional distancing that allows society to send a person to the electric chair. In essence, he argues that the

emotional mechanisms we employ to cope with the killing of animals are remarkably similar to those used to justify taking human life, although typically only during times of war. This profound insight exposes the complex psychological and philosophical constructs humanity has developed to rationalize its actions.

We are not by nature cruel. In order to be cruel we have to close our hearts to the suffering of the other. It is not inherently easier to close our sympathies as we wring the neck of the chicken, we are going to eat than it is to close off our sympathies to the man we send to the electric chair (I write from the United States, which still punishes some crimes with death), but we have evolved psychic, social and philosophical mechanisms to cope with killing poultry that, for complex reasons, we use to allow us to kill human beings only in time of war (Satya May 04: Last accessed 6 Oct. 2023).

He then distinguished his interest from the pursuit of legal rights for animals and instead emphasizes a more profound desire for a transformation of heart and mindset concerning animals. He recognized that the paramount right any being possesses is the right to life, acknowledging the improbability of domesticated animals ever being granted this right under the law. However, he asserted that even if legal change seems remote, fiction can serve a vital purpose in shifting human perspectives. Coetzee argued that the most meaningful contribution literature can make is to vividly illustrate the spiritual and psychological costs incurred by continuing to treat animals with indifference or cruelty. By portraying these costs in his works, he hopes to engage readers emotionally and intellectually, causing a change of heart among as many people as possible regarding the treatment of animals.

Strictly speaking, my interest is not in legal rights for animals but in a change of heart towards animals. The most important of all rights is the right to life, and I cannot foresee a day when domesticated animals will be granted that right in law. If you concede that the animal rights movement can never succeed in this primary goal, then it seems that the best we can achieve is to show to as many people as we can what the spiritual and psychic cost is of continuing to treat animals as we do, and thus perhaps to change their hearts (Satya May 04: Last accessed 6 Oct. 2023).

In this way, Coetzee's reflections underscore his commitment to inciting empathy and ethical introspection through literature, even when legal reforms may remain elusive. His words invite us to reflect on the profound potential of storytelling to illuminate the consequences of our actions and ultimately influence our attitudes and behaviors towards animals. He also highlighted in another speech the paradox of the

word “human/humane” as something compassionate. In 2007 for the exhibition opening of *Voiceless: I feel therefore I am*, he said:

So it is a good thing that Voiceless has been concentrating its efforts on combating the animal-farming industry, without ignoring other practices – the use of animals in laboratory experiments, for example, or the trade in wild animals, or the fur trade – that we might also call cruel and inhuman but for the fact that inhuman is the wrong word, such practices are all too human (Hugo Weaving | Random Scribblings: Last accessed Oct. 6th 2023).

Moreover, Coetzee doesn't just hold the practitioners of these industries accountable; he extends culpability to the consumers who support them by purchasing their products. This implicates a wide range of people who, knowingly or unknowingly, contribute to the suffering of animals through their choices as consumers. He even highlights the unsettling phenomenon of individuals who are repulsed by the cruelty inherent in these industries but choose to turn a blind eye and shield their children from the harsh realities of animal exploitation. This perspective aligns with the concept of the "absent referent" proposed by Carol J. Adams. Coetzee's critique seems to resonate with this notion, as he highlights how people often evade facing the cruelty within these industries, effectively making the suffering of animals an "absent referent" in their lives.

(...) then there are the vast majority, people who in one degree or another support the industrial use of animals by making use of the products of that industry but are nevertheless a little sickened, a little queasy, when they think of what happens on factory farms and abattoirs and therefore arrange their lives in such a way that they need be reminded of farms and abattoirs as little as possible (...) (Hugo Weaving | Random Scribblings: Last accessed Oct. 6th 2023).

In the same speech, Coetzee makes a reflection typical of an antispeciesist. He continues with the narrative of the comparison between the Holocaust and the treatment of non-human animals and says:

Of course we cried out in horror when we found out about this. We cried: What a terrible crime, to treat human beings like cattle! If we had only known beforehand! But our cry should more accurately have been: What a terrible crime, to treat human beings like units in an industrial process! And that cry should have had a postscript: What a terrible crime, come to think of it, to treat any living being like a unit in an industrial process! (Hugo Weaving | Random Scribblings: Last accessed Oct. 6th 2023).

Chapter 3 Other Cultural Forms

Although this thesis primarily centers on literature, it is still imperative to provide a brief exploration of other various art forms closely associated with animal rights, distinct from written works. This section will delve into the following creations: the song *Meat Is Murder* by the British rock band The Smiths, the Anglo-French-American film *Chicken Run*, the American film *Finding Nemo*, the British film *Babe*, and two Japanese *manga & anime* series, namely *Parasyte: The Maxim* and *The Promised Neverland*.

3.1 Meat Is Murder

Released in 1985 as the titular piece of The Smiths' second studio album, *Meat Is Murder* confronts the subjects of vegetarianism and animal rights. The cover art shows a soldier and, on his helmet, there is the sentence "Meat Is Murder", in March 1985, shortly after the release of the album, the lead singer Steven Morrissey in an interview explained the meaning:

The link is that I feel animal rights groups aren't making any dramatic headway because most of their methods are quite peaceable, excluding one or two things. It seems to me now that when you try to change things in a peaceable manner, you're actually wasting your time and you're laughed out of court. And it seems to me now that as the image of the LP hopefully illustrates, the only way that we can get rid of such things as the meat industry, and other things like nuclear weapons, is by really giving people a taste of their own medicine (Morrissey, *Melody Maker*: 1985).

When it came out, these matters weren't as prevalent or recognized as they are in contemporary discussions. Nevertheless, The Smiths boldly utilized their platform to shed light on the plight of animals in the meat industry. About the song, Morrissey said in another interview in 1984:

It is a direct statement. Of all the political topics to be scrutinised people are still disturbingly vague about the treatment of animals. People still seem to believe that meat is a particular substance not at all connected to animals playing in the field over there. People don't realise how gruesomely and frighteningly the animal gets to the plate..." (Morrissey, *NME*: 1984).

The song begins with the haunting echoes of cow groans and contrasts them with the industrial noises. This visual composition promptly establishes a connection between the anguish expressed by animals and the suffering they endure in the slaughter process. Striking is the first verse where Morrissey says “Heifer whines could be human cries”, the link between human and non-human animals is quickly laid out. The lyrics then underscore the futility of animal slaughter for food, asserting that “death for no reason is murder.” A striking moment occurs towards the conclusion of the initial verse, as the lyrics proclaim, “And the turkey you festively slice. It is murder. Do you know how animals die?”. The turkey is a central dish in various celebrations, particularly Thanksgiving and Christmas and in this instance, the author aims to upset the listeners by juxtaposing the festive imagery of a family celebrating a holiday with the harsh reality that their joy and merriment are founded on the death of a sentient being. Then the question always creates debate, people that consume animal products rarely want to see where these products come from and how they are made, this is obviously linked to the theory of the absent referent by Carol J. Adams. This part is connected to the lines in the second verse when Morrissey vocalizes, “The flesh you so fancifully fry, the meat in your mouth, as you savor the flavor of murder.” Here, again, the expression compels listeners to ponder the disjunction between the food on their plates and the lives of the animals that endured suffering to supply it. It disrupts the conventional perception of meat as a gratifying indulgence, offering instead a portrayal of it as an act of violence. The line before “it’s not natural, normal or kind” displays another important theory towards antispeciesism, the fact that people can naturally live without killing animals and living on peaceful natural resources such as fruit or vegetables. Robert H. Shmerling, the Senior Faculty Editor of Harvard Health Publishing, wrote an article on how healthy plant-based diets are. According to him:

Research over many years has linked plant-based diets to lower rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers (as compared with diets high in meat and other animal products) (Harvard Health Publishing, Plant-based diets are best... or are they? Last accessed Jan. 2nd 2024).

On the website page of the Columbia University Irving Medical Center, the digestive disease dietitian Sabrina Oliver was asked whether a plant-based diet was healthy and she replied:

Yes. A plant-based diet is considered to be nutrient-dense and packed with fiber, healthy fats, protein, vitamins, and minerals. It is a very healthy way of eating and can meet all of your nutrient needs (Columbia University Irving Medical Center, What is a plant-based diet, and is it healthy? Last accessed Jan. 2nd 2024).

3.2 Chicken Run

Chicken Run is a 2000 animated film produced by Aardman Animations in partnership with DreamWorks Animation and directed by Peter Lord and Nick Park. The movie is a stop-motion comedy that revolves around a group of chickens living on a farm called “Tweedy's Egg Farm”. The main character, Ginger, is determined to escape the farm and its oppressive owner, Mrs. Tweedy. The narrative takes a somber turn when the hens become aware that their once-hospitable farm is destined to transform into a factory churning out chicken pot pies. In short, the film depicts the stark reality of animal exploitation, subtly alluding to instances of cruelty, and even presenting a poignant scene depicting the demise of a chicken. Despite being categorized as a children's movie, *Chicken Run* weaves intricate themes that delve into the ethical treatment of animals. The film directly communicates these complex messages while simultaneously appealing to the innocence of its young audience, tapping into the period of childhood where children often perceive non-human animals as their companions and friends. The movie touches on various themes, including the desire for freedom, teamwork, and the pursuit of a better life. One of the underlying messages in *Chicken Run* is the concept of animal rights. The chickens in the film are portrayed as sentient beings with the right to live free from harm and exploitation. “We lay eggs; day in and day out. And when we can't lay any more, they kill us” (*Chicken Run* 2000). Their struggle for freedom mirrors the real-world challenges that animals face in industrial farming and food production. The connection to animal rights in *Chicken Run* can be seen through the characters' fight against their exploitation and the oppressive conditions they endure on the farm, this idea is well represented in the quote: “We'll either die free chickens or we die trying” (*Chicken Run* 2000). The movie serves as a metaphor for the ethical treatment of animals and raises awareness about the importance of acknowledging and respecting the rights of animals. The film's lighthearted and humorous approach makes it accessible to a wide audience, allowing

viewers to empathize with the characters and consider the ethical treatment of animals in the context of industrial agriculture.

An important theme in the movie is how Mrs. Tweedy sees the hens, she sees them not as sentient beings but as mere commodities. The prospect of using her egg-laying hens for meat raises no objections when presented to her. This reflects the stark reality of contemporary factory farms but also how a speciesist view grants no subjectivity and dignity to non-human animals, who are treated according to the benefits they can bring. Animals are bred in staggering quantities, reaching a scale where an unplanned loss, such as a death, holds little significance. In fact, it is integrated into the operational strategy. The movie, in fact, highlights the paradox that, despite the seemingly content life portrayed in the farm, it inevitably concludes with what Morrissey would call murder. This realization pushes the characters on a journey to save themselves. The film suggests that the notion of a “happy life” serves as a façade for the underlying reality, the deceptive perception surrounding the “happy slaughtered animals” myth.

3.3 Finding Nemo

Finding Nemo is a Pixar animated film released in 2003 that tells the adventurous story of a clownfish named Marlin who embarks on a journey across the ocean to find his son, Nemo, who has been captured by a diver and placed in a fish tank. The film is notable for its vivid animation, memorable characters, and themes of trust, friendship, and overcoming fears.

From an antispeciesist perspective, *Finding Nemo* offers some interesting insights. The characters, mostly fishes, are portrayed as individuals with unique personalities, emotions, and relationships. The film humanizes the marine creatures, challenging the notion that animals are mere commodities. This aligns with antispeciesist principles, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the sentience and individuality of animals. The narrative also showcases the autonomy and agency of fish. They have their own goals, desires, and natural behaviors. The film highlights the instinctual need for freedom and the right to live their lives undisturbed. The movie challenges anthropocentrism, the underwater world depicted in the movie operates with its own

rules, hierarchies, and ecosystems. This reinforces the idea that all species have inherent value. It stands out as a significant achievement for the animal rights movement, serving as a powerful medium to subtly disseminate the principles of antispeciesism worldwide. The film's core message, "fish are our friends, not food," (Finding Nemo 2003) is ingeniously conveyed through the unexpected spokesperson, a shark. The creators of the film sought to elevate all life forms above human interests. They provocatively suggested that even a shark could adopt a vegan lifestyle, with the movie strategically avoiding any depiction of meat-eating. Targeted at children, Finding Nemo becomes a way to transmit antispeciesist ideas to the next generations. The narrative portrays sea creatures as inherently peaceful beings coexisting harmoniously with one another. However, this portrayal starkly contrasts with the complex realities of marine life. Within the narrative of Finding Nemo, the fish cast as the antagonists are consistently depicted as sharp-toothed carnivores. From barracudas to sharks and eerie angler fish, the bad characters embody carnivorous traits. Notably, the sharks, including a great white, a hammerhead, and what appears to be a sand shark, participate in a quirky assembly resembling Alcoholic Anonymous. In this unconventional gathering, they have collectively committed to abstain from consuming other fish, presenting a humorous twist to the traditional portrayal of predatory marine life. However, subsequently to the fame of the movie, we have another illustration of the disconnection we frequently encounter. The surge in *Nemo's* popularity led to an increased demand for clownfish. Reportedly, in the year the film was launched, two hundred thousand fish and various marine species were exported from the Pacific Reefs, posing a threat to the sustainability of these ecosystems and the primary reason was people's desire to acquire the clownfish seen in the cinemas for their aquariums.

3.4 Babe

Babe is a family film that tells the tale of the eponymous little pig. Released in 1995, directed by Chris Noonan, and based on the novel *The Sheep-Pig* by Dick King-Smith, the movie follows Babe, a piglet who aspires to be a sheepdog. While the primary focus of the film is on friendship, perseverance, and breaking stereotypes, it also indirectly prompts viewers to contemplate their relationships with non-human animals, making it an interesting point of discussion for animal rights. Babe finds himself on a farm where

he discovers his unique talent for herding sheep. With the help of Farmer Hoggett and his border collie, Babe sets out to defy societal expectations and prove that a pig can indeed be a valuable member of the farm. The movie subtly raises questions about the traditional roles assigned to non-human animals, challenging the notions of speciesism, such as the dog is a companion, whilst the pig is food.

The film starts on a macabre note – Babe is orphaned after his mother is herded to the slaughterhouse. We're constantly reminded of the fragility of Babe's life as Farmer Hoggett's wife measures the growing piglet for Christmas dinner. (The Guardian, The film that makes me cry: Babe, Last accessed Feb. 3rd 2024).

By highlighting Babe's intelligence and capabilities beyond the typical farm pig, it encourages viewers to reconsider preconceived notions. The fact that Babe has a unique trait can be suffice to give him an identity and by doing so it can create an inner struggle in viewers, just like what happened to the actor playing the role of Arthur Hogget in the movie, namely James Cromwell. At 83, he even saved one piglet and named him Babe.

Having had the privilege of witnessing and experiencing pigs' intelligence and inquisitive personalities while filming the movie *Babe* changed my life and my way of eating, and so I jumped at the chance to save this real-life Babe (Vegnews.com, last accessed Jan. 15th 2024).

One may think that the non-human animals that feature in the movie may be exploited but according to Humane Hollywood:

In general, the animals were trained in preproduction and each specie responded to a specific sound that triggered a conditioned response needed for each situation. They were then rewarded with food. When the camera rolled and several species shared the scene, the real sounds heard on set were a cacophony of clickers, buzzers and horns. This was, of course, edited out in post-production. For the instances where Babe and Fly are seen kissing each other or being affectionate, the animals were really bonding with one another, having been trained together for a lengthy period of time (Humane Hollywood.org, Babe, last accessed Feb. 3rd 2024).

3.5 Parasyte -the maxim-

Parasyte -the maxim- (*Kiseijuu Sei no Kakuritsu*) is an anime and manga series written and illustrated by Hitoshi Iwaaki. The story follows Shinichi Izumi, a high school student whose life takes a drastic turn when mysterious alien parasites invade

Earth. These parasites infiltrate the brains of their hosts, taking control and transforming them into monstrous creatures hungry for human flesh. However, Shinichi manages to avoid being completely taken over by the parasite as it fails to reach his brain. Instead, it occupies his right hand and becomes a distinct entity, named Migi. This unusual symbiotic relationship forces Shinichi and Migi to coexist and navigate a world filled with other parasitic creatures that threaten humanity. Shinichi and Migi form a complex bond, learning to cooperate to survive. Together, they face various challenges, including other parasitic creatures with malicious intents, as well as the societal and ethical dilemmas arising from the coexistence of humans and parasites.

It is exactly in this dilemma that we can see a view that is sort of antispeciesist. When parasites take over the body, the human brain is gone, replaced with a parasite brain which, despite starting without knowledge, is quickly able to adapt to society. To survive, parasites eat other humans and Shinichi alongside Migi decides to kill them in order to protect humanity. The only reason why Migi decides to side with Shinichi is simply because if he dies, they would die as well. Throughout the series, Migi and other parasites who at a certain point reached high positions in society, point out the hypocrisy of Shinichi and other humans to protect humanity from the parasites despite they have always been harming non-human animals for the same reasons. In this sense, the local mayor Takeshi Hirokawa, who was earlier turned into a parasite, made a speech that sums up the whole point.

This is why I cannot abide my own kind. If defiance is truly your intention, do not pretend to act otherwise. Even environmental conservation is skewed in favor of our own hubris. A few points most refuse to acknowledge. We must consider all life on Earth, not just the prosperity of a single species. That presumes your own rule over creation. Humans repeatedly claim they're on the side of justice, and what greater justice is there than natural selection? The human race has been inhabited, and relinquished of the sacred duty by preserving the balance of life on Earth, thus exposing you as nothing but parasites infesting this planet. It's you, you are the infection (Parasyte: The Maxim 2014).

3.6 The Promised Neverland

The Promised Neverland (*Yakusoku no Nebārando*) is a Japanese manga series written by Kaiu Shirai and illustrated by Posuka Demizu. It was serialized in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine from August 2016 to June 2020. The manga consists of 181

chapters collected into 20 volumes. The story is set in an orphanage called Grace Field House, where the children live happily under the care of their loving and nurturing caretaker, Isabella. However, the idyllic façade quickly shatters when three of the brightest children, Emma, Norman, and Ray, stumble upon a dark secret: the orphanage is actually a farm, and the children are being raised as livestock to be harvested for food by creatures known as “demons”. After discovering the horrifying truth, Emma, Norman, and Ray embark on a dangerous journey to escape from the orphanage and find a way to survive in the outside world, which is filled with unknown dangers and mysteries. As they plan their escape, they must outsmart Isabella and the demons while uncovering the secrets behind their existence and the true nature of the world they live in. What is really notable is the fact that the children are essentially products and this revelation is a central plot point. Just as the animals raised on traditional farms are bred, raised, and eventually slaughtered for human consumption, the children in Grace Field House are similarly bred and raised under the guise of being prepared for adoption. However, instead of being adopted into loving families, they are ultimately sent to their deaths to serve as sustenance for the demons. This connection highlights the dehumanization and exploitation of both the children and the animals. Both are seen as commodities to be exploited for the benefit of a more powerful entity—in this case, the demons. The children's realization of this truth leads them to confront the harsh reality of their existence and fuels their determination to escape from their fate as livestock.

Notable is the conversation the children have with Isabella when the truth is discovered, she says “Because I love you, I don’t want you to suffer, I don’t want to have to make you all suffer” (The Promised Neverland 2016). Then she continues: “It’s a happy life, isn’t it? A warm house filled with delicious food and love, you don’t starve or get cold. Without knowing the truth... you can die with a satisfied feeling” (The Promised Neverland 2016).

This is the exact description of free-range farming, where non-human animals don’t live in cages but are free to roam and live a so-called happy life but just like the children in *The Promised Neverland*, the non-humans still live in captivity and are still destined to end up slaughtered as soon as they reach the right weight, unaware of their situation.

Free-range is basically the solution adopted by welfarists who still see non-human animals as products.

After the children successfully escape the farm, they encounter two “demons”, Sonju and Mujika, who rescues them because they belong to a religion called “Heathens”, characterized by not consuming human flesh making them, in a way, vegan. The two explain to the orphans that there are different farms and the diverse typologies resemble the different kinds of farming used in animal agriculture.

To begin with, there are different types of farms out there. And there are only a few top-class farms like Grace Field. Most are mass production farms. (...) They breed humans in horrible environments. Humans born there don't understand words. They have no names. They don't have free will. They would never even think of escaping. Of course, even if they could think of it, they wouldn't be able to (The Promised Neverland 2016).

The farms described are akin to intensive animal farming, where non-human animals are kept in small spaces, with horrible conditions until the day they are slaughtered. Their individuality gets denied because they have no names, they are just number in a mass-production system.

The Promised Neverland received widespread acclaim for its storytelling, well-developed characters, and intricate plot twists. It has garnered a dedicated fanbase both in Japan and internationally and has been adapted into an anime series, a live-action film, and several video games. The manga's conclusion in June 2020 left a lasting impact on readers and solidified its status as a modern classic in the world of *manga*.

Conclusion

In this thesis the introduction starts by presenting the concept of antispeciesism and its counterpart, which is linked to the concept of anthropocentrism. Further in the chapter, it is highlighted the connection between antispeciesism and the animal rights movement. Peter Singer and other authors contributed to create a manifesto in forms of literary essays which further developed into intersectionality. One of the first writers that endorsed intersectionality was Carol J. Adams, who in her seminal work *The Sexual Politics of Meat* focused primarily on the relation between speciesism and the patriarchal system; Joan Dunayer, on the other hand, underscored how impactful words can be and choosing a term instead of another can tell a lot about the ideas of the person speaking. At the end of the chapter, we see the difference between the terms “veganism” and “antispeciesism” as well as “animalism” and “antispeciesism”. Chapter 1 explores how authors of the Victorian Age, especially Thomas Hardy, addressed animal rights in their literature. It is evident there is a different sensitivity towards animal cruelty but, mainly because it was long before Singer theorized antispeciesism and because the first step towards recognizing non-human animals some rights were made in that period, it is difficult to insert any of the works or the authors of the chapter in the antispeciesist framework. Chapter 2 shifts the focus on the contemporary era, mainly on J. M. Coetzee and his novels. While there is a closer engagement with antispeciesist theme in these works, instances such as Costello’s use of leather underscore the complexity of fully deeming them as antispeciesist. What stands out is characters grappling with the morality of their treatment of non-human animals, a theme that was less present in the works of the preceding chapter; this is even more evident in the stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer that have been analyzed. The last chapter shows how, even though created in different periods, the various media can convey messages close to animal rights and antispeciesism although the sole example which explicitly declared this intention and can be inserted in the paradigm is *Meat Is Murder*.

I am an antispeciesist myself and this song, alongside *Dominion*, led me towards this stance. Being antispeciesist is still extremely unconventional because although we can find countless of vegan people in the world, the two definitions, as I have already clarified, do not always coincide.

Despite speciesism has been proved to be interwoven with the other oppressions (e.g. racism or sexism), it is extremely difficult to find someone who openly advocates against it, whilst, on the other hand, it is extremely rare to find someone proudly promoting racism or sexism publicly, deeming antispeciesism as a second-class issue, as extreme, illogical or too difficult.

The apparent justifications behind this behavior are numerous: 1) Animals eat other animals, but this happens as a necessity for survival; carnivores rely on hunting as their primary means of sustenance. This dynamic creates an interdependent relationship between predator and prey, where the survival of both parties hinges on successful/unsuccessful hunts. In nature, preys have various ways to survive such as running, camouflage, and even counterattacks. However, within the framework of speciesism, which centers human interests above all others, this balance is nowhere to be found. Human beings assert dominance over non-human animals, relegating them to a subordinate position. Unlike in nature, where preys have some chance to escape or defend themselves, non-human animals under human dominion have no recourse. This hierarchical system erases the natural roles of predator and prey, replacing them with the unjust dynamics of subjugation and domination. Furthermore, as already highlighted in Chapter 3, eating animal products is not necessary to our survival as it is for carnivores. Furthermore, constructing our ethical framework solely on the behaviors of non-human animals in nature is inherently flawed. By doing so, we would also need to consider other behaviors exhibited by non-humans, such as infanticide or forced mating; 2) Eating animals is a personal choice and must be respected. This concept hinges on the belief that because an individual chooses to engage in a particular action, such as consuming animal products, it automatically becomes justified. However, a personal choice does not inherently equate to moral correctness. Any action that affects others cannot be considered moral because it denies them the freedom to consent. If our society were to uphold the idea that all personal choices are inherently moral, it would lead to the justification of abhorrent acts like murder or rape. Despite the undeniable presence of a victim in both consuming animal products and committing murder, the perceived moral acceptability of these actions differs drastically, highlighting the speciesist disconnectedness. This so-called “personal” choice negates the victim and therefore has no right to be respected; 3) Some problems are more urgent and more

important. It is crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression. To effectively address these injustices, we must not merely tackle their symptoms but delve into their underlying cause. At the core lies the ruling thought that assigns varying worth to different lives, leading to discrimination against those deemed different, whether human or non-human. While every problem deserves attention, it is essential to avoid hierarchizing them, as doing so reflects subjective viewpoints and privileges over others; 4) Veganism is too extreme. The perception that veganism is excessively radical stems from a narrow understanding of its principles. While it's often reduced to a dietary choice from an external viewpoint, veganism transcends mere food preferences. It is fundamentally a moral stance, unrelated to favoring one type of food over another, as elucidated in Chapter 1. Focusing on the label “extreme”, it is worth considering what truly constitutes extreme behavior. Traditionally, extreme actions entail acts like killing, stealing, or enslaving—actions that parallel the exploitation inflicted upon non-human animals, yet are the very actions condemned under the guise of extremism. However, due to speciesism, the victims of such atrocities are often not regarded as such.

These are only few of the diverse justifications that have been presented to me on why people refuse to adopt an antispeciesist ideology and with this thesis has been shown that embracing antispeciesism in literature, other media and in the daily life requires continued effort; the road is long and for now we can only get glimpses of it.

“The test for speciesism is simple: If the victims were human, would you be speaking and acting as you are? If not, don't speak and act that way when the victims are nonhuman” (Dunayer 2004: 73).

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