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The Only Labourer Left: Resituating the Nonhuman Animal in the Language of Labour and the History of Philosophy

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theory and Criticism

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The Only Labourer Left:

Resituating the Nonhuman Animal in the Language of Labour and the History of Philosophy

Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation of the ontological position of the nonhuman animal within the Marxist tradition and as it concerns both the language of value production and the slaughterhouse. The premise of my study is an engagement with Marx's oeuvre and influences, as well those who respond to his work.

Within this context, I propose that the nonhuman animal's ontological position—as it concerns labour, language, and intellect—is subject to a gesture of erasure which marks their being as performing the action of interest in the absence of the possibility to claim either determination, or fluency of capability. This paradoxical presence shores up theoretical characterizations of the nonhuman animal as a creature who labours, but is not a labourer, who speaks but lacks language, and who thinks but has no thought.

My first chapter investigates the way Marx—uninterested in the animal—allows such creatures to creep into his work, mostly through references to ecology. Responding to contemporary discourse within Marxist animal studies, I argue that the animal remains a problem in Marx—something which complicates the boundary of the definition of value production. As such, I offer a novel analysis of the nonhuman animal's labour in the slaughterhouse. I then turn to Aristotle as the source from whom Marx derives the definition of value. Unlike Marx, Aristotle, I argue, situates the nonhuman animal in a position of relevant context. As such, I reread concepts of perception, imagination, and judgement for the improbability of Man as a contained subject from whom the nonhuman animal is made a degraded Other. Finally, I relate my investigation to Fredric Jameson's *Political Unconscious*. How can a text that is devoted to uncovering the essential framework of class analysis and labour exclude the nonhuman animal? To answer this, I turn to the tradition in which Jameson writes, and apply the master-bondsman dialectic to the slaughterhouse. This analysis leads me to my conclusion wherein I affirm that the force of the slaughterhouse and animal industry sets up a world in which there is only one labourer left: the nonhuman animal.

Keywords: animal labour, Marx, animal capital, slaughterhouse, animal ontology, master-bondsman dialectic.

Summary for Lay Audiences

This dissertation is an investigation of the way animal being—that is, the capabilities and capacities that define their existence—is represented in the Marxist tradition. My analysis specifically focuses on the question of who can and cannot be titled a labourer.

With consideration to the Marxist tradition, I argue that the nonhuman animal is at once, a creature who is included and indeed, informs the definition of labour, language, and reason, but is nonetheless refused the possibility to claim that activity as a part of its being. That is, animals are present in the philosophy of language and labour as speakers and workers who do not actually have speech and cannot present as makers of value.

My first chapter investigates the way Marx frequently references nonhuman animals despite his disinterest in the role they may or may not play in production. Responding to contemporary discourse within Marxist animal studies, I claim that the animal remains a problem in Marx—something which complicates the boundary of the definition of labour. I therefore offer a novel analysis of the nonhuman animal's labour in the slaughterhouse. I then turn to Aristotle as the source from whom Marx derives his definition of value. I argue that unlike Marx, Aristotle takes time to directly address the role of animals in language with an allowance towards possibility. I therefore reread concepts of perception, imagination, and judgement for the improbability of Man as the subject from whom the nonhuman animal is made a degraded Other. Finally, I relate my investigation to Fredric Jameson's notion of the political unconscious. How can a text that is devoted to uncovering the essential framework of class analysis and labour fail to think of the nonhuman animal? To answer this, I turn to the tradition in which Jameson writes, and analyze the slaughterhouse through Hegel's master-bondsman dialectic. This analysis leads me to my conclusion wherein I affirm that the force of the slaughterhouse and animal industry has set up a world in which there is only one labourer left: the nonhuman animal.

Acknowledgments

This piece is dedicated to my mother, as I credit her unwavering support and strength as the single most important force behind my pursuits in academia and all avenues of life. I would also like to dedicate this piece to my animal companions, “the gentlest, fondest of the tabby race”—then and now.¹

To Dil:

“One who possessed Beauty without Vanity,
Strength without Insolence,
Courage without Ferocity,
and all the virtues of Man without his Vices.
This praise, which would be unmeaning
Flattery
if inscribed over human Ashes,
is but a just tribute to the Memory of”
Dil Ollo Stanley.²

To Ducky Timothy Stuart:

“Shall not his worth a poem fill,
Who never thought, nor uttered ill;
Who by his manner when caressed
Warmly his gratitude expressed;
And never failed his thanks to purr
Whene’er he stroaked his sable furr.”³

I am grateful to all my professors at both The University of Western Ontario, and McMaster University for endorsing my curiosity and nourishing my ideas—no matter how wild or obscure.

To Dr. Joshua Schuster: thank you for your endless guidance and support. This project could not have materialized without Dr. Schuster’s expertise and aid, and I would not have wanted it any other way. Thank you for being an invaluable part of this journey.

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Finally, I would like to thank Kiefer Davies. The road was not always easy, but your “heart of gold” and our shared laughter and friendship made it feel that way.⁴

¹ Anna Seward and Lisa L. Moore, “An Old Cat’s Dying Soliloquy,” in *The Collected Poems of Anna Seward*, ed. Lisa L. Moore (Routledge, 2016).

² Lord Byron, “Epitaph to a Dog,” in *Selected Poems of Lord Byron*, ed. John Smith (New York: Random House, 2000), 45-47.

³ Percival Stockdale, “An Elegy on The Death of Dr. Johnson’s Favorite Cat,” in *The Poetical Works of Percival Stockdale*, vol. 2, 255–257 (1810).

⁴ Neil Young, “Heart of Gold,” on *Harvest* (Reprise Records, 1972).

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Introduction: Almost Touching

“I don’t know if a snake has a face [...] I do not know at what moment the human appears,” Emmanuel Levinas says—quite remarkably—in “Paradox of Morality.”¹ Reflecting on Levinas’ curious relationship to the nonhuman animal, Derrida, in “And Say the Animal Responded?” wonders if an “ethic like that of Levinas’ attempts” is enough to “recall the subject to its [...] being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other?”² In other words, is the Levinasian ethic capable of coping with a philosophical tradition and history that otherwise seems devoted to the demotion and disparaging of the nonhuman animal, especially as it concerns the question of language? Derrida concedes: “I don’t think so. More than that is required to break with the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine without language and without response.”³

My interest in this snake—and what seems to be a certain hesitation on the part of Levinas—follows the central scope of my project: an exploration of the situation of animals who work but are not workers, who speak but are not speakers, who live in time but not history. That is, my project situates its examination within a particular thread of philosophy that begins at the point of Marx, and follows those whom he influences, as well as his own influences. As such, I discuss Aristotle, Hegel, Louis Althusser, Henri Lefebvre, and Fredric Jameson in effort to detect and define the shape of nonhuman animal ontology in their respective arguments.

The course of my involvement examines a situation where the nonhuman animal’s

¹Emmanuel Levinas, interview by Alison Ainley, Peter Hughes, and Tamra Wright, in Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, “Paradox of Morality,” in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other* (London: Routledge, 1988), 171-172.

² Jacques Derrida, Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills, “And Say the Animal Responded?” In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 119.

³ Derrida, “And Say the Animal Responded?”, 119.

presence functions to define the scope of the concept in question—be it value-production, language, or history—but in doing so, suffers the consequence of erasure. The erasure of the nonhuman animal, necessarily coinciding with their presence, generates a turn in the text that marks their being as performing the action in question, but without the possibility or determination to claim capability. This relationship between presence for the purpose of erasure means that in discourses and philosophies which concern the nuances of labour—a concept that guides and frames the totality of this project—the nonhuman animal, particularly the cow, chicken, and pig, emerge as creatures whom, involved in the process of value-production, are not themselves granted the status of value-makers. The animal, I argue, does indeed labour, but in the Marxist texts I analyze, and therefore the arguments Marx offers regarding the nuances of capital and production, the animal is not marked as a labourer: they work but are not a worker—even though their presence, I argue, necessarily delineates both the textual and material scope of the concept.

It is also important, I emphasize, to understand that neither Marx nor Aristotle are consistent in their characterization of the nonhuman animal, and it is this very nuance that I study. Within Marx, Aristotle, Althusser, Hegel, and Lefebvre, the nonhuman animal emerges as a creature of ontological lack. What I discover, however, is such that while the nonhuman animal's description may refuse them the nuances otherwise attributed to the human, their cumulative presence in the text paradoxically challenges that premise of lack. As such, and in the case of Marx and Aristotle in particular, I explore the full picture of their canon and the differentiated ways in which the nonhuman animal appears in situations of difficulty and paradox.

Additionally, when I turn to the language of labour I do so in a very particular manner.

For Marx, the bulk of his interest is wage-labour. As I find later in my discussion, however, the conditions of the wage are not entirely relevant to the nonhuman animal as we understand them within the nexus of animal industry and the course to the slaughterhouse. As such, the way this thesis manages and defines the language of labour remains consistent with its consequences: alienation, and the energy—both mental and physical—that informs the generation of the commodity, that is, the animal’s own body. The kind of labour to which I therefore refer is largely metabolic labour⁴—that is, a biopolitically mediated labour⁵ and therefore the totality of the slaughterhouse animal’s life and body as conditioned and generated for the very purpose of death. However, this thesis is also engaged with the very question of labour precisely because, for Marx, the nonhuman animal, while refused the status of wage-labourer—and therefore, a creature capable of being subject to the consequences of surplus labour, value production, and exploitation too—is often used to guide its definition. As such, the language of labour, though careful and specific in my wielding and attribution, does often come under investigation precisely because its originary scope is quite seamlessly troubled in sight of the nonhuman animal. For the present moment, labour in this thesis assumes a Marxist perspective. However, it is the generation of use values whose relationship Marx ties to human nature, that is, species being, which I critically interrogate precisely because it bars the nonhuman animal a definitional link to the consequences shaping the scope of their existence in animal industry: alienation, suffering, exploitation, and the eventual possibility of emancipation and revolutionary determination.

⁴ Les Beldo, “Metabolic Labor: Broiler Chickens and the Exploitation of Vitality,” *Environmental Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2017): 108–28, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3829154>.

⁵ Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

I also take time to refer to the language of human labour as well, but this thesis does recognize a critical difference between the two. It is important to take care to elaborate upon the precarious nature of the human worker in the animal meat and dairy industry. Often vulnerable in terms of both status and identity, the human wageworker is a central feature that helps define the difficulty of Marx's sense of value in this thesis as I spend time discursively analyzing the biopolitical ontology of the nonhuman animal and their contractual obligation to die.

In this thesis, the human, a wageworker, and victim to the suffering of that animal industry differs from the nonhuman animal insofar as those chickens, cows, and pigs I refer to are economically, socially, and culturally interpellated as objects in the process of fulfillment—that is, commodities whose death directly informs and helps define the value-making process. At the same time, the nonhuman animal, though suffering the physical and emotional labour of making their bodies into products are not regarded as value-makers: a key difference I also take time to work through in this thesis.

While the work of this thesis is thought through the definition and language of labour it is important to keep in mind the infrequency with which Marx mentions the nonhuman animal. As I will explore, however, the Marxist canon, is often cited in works that consider and study the nonhuman animal's occupation. As such, my thesis is concerned with questioning the very definition of labour.

As I have already mentioned, the labour to which Marx often refers is largely wage labour, but the nonhuman animal—and especially the cows, chickens, and pigs to whom I refer—do not receive a wage or any kind of reciprocity. Additionally, this thesis will often refer to the nonhuman animal in a very definitionally deliberate manner. It is therefore my intent to guide the question of labour and its definition through the course of my study. Might we locate

labour's definition in the working body as well as the wage? What shape does wage labour take regarding the nonhuman animal, the slaughterhouse animal? Is it possible to decouple wage labour from the terms of Marxist exploitation? These are questions that inform my thought and culminate in my final chapter where I take time to consider the circumstances of alienation as a vehicle through which one may reimagine the logics of wage labour, and the wage more broadly. This thesis is the work of exploring the definition and boundary of the language of labour.

To therefore return to Levinas is, at this point, to remind ourselves that right when it seems like he may risk a proximity to the nonhuman animal in suggesting something potentially radical, he pulls away. Unsure of whether the snake has a face, the animal remains an "attraction" and while "more specific analysis is needed," the declared premise of attraction, is, as it seems, insufficient for its fulfillment. In this moment, the animal becomes a site of energized inquiry without the necessity for an answer. Continuing, Levinas will begin to linger on a dog:

In the dog, what we like is perhaps his child-like character. As if he were strong, cheerful, powerful, full of life. On the other hand, there is also, even with regards to an animal, a pity. A dog is like a wolf that doesn't bite. There is the trace of the wolf in the dog. In any case, there is here the possibility of a specific phenomenological analysis.⁶

While confessing to what he sees in the dog—strength, cheer, power, and life—Levinas cannot commit to firmly declaring the existence of such ontological nuances. That is, Levinas does not commit to directly marking the dog a "strong, cheerful, powerful"⁷ creature that is "full of life"⁸—rather, he devotes his language to the maintenance of skepticism. The dog lives only "as

⁶ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

⁷ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

⁸ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

if' he was indeed that which Levinas observes.⁹

Yet, despite this potential allusion to mimesis and possibility, Levinas cannot help but lead his refusal in the direction of further confession: “there is here the possibility of a specific phenomenological analysis.”¹⁰ Almost touching the nonhuman, Levinas at once retracts and fails in his retraction, leaving the evidenced fact of the nonhuman’s diverse capacity as hostage to the bondage of ontological suspicion. This moment is quite notable because the animal’s character and life force exists as a kind of evidence that is uttered only in premonition.

If Levinas describes his regard for the dog, why can he not confirm his reception? I want to suggest that this passage reflects far more on the difficulty of confession than it does the creature itself. The skepticism that therefore emerges finds its origin in the human utterance. The dog is full of life—I see it “cheerful, and powerful,”¹¹ present and on display, but despite such evidence, my judgement falls on the side of deliberation. Interestingly enough, it is only in the language of the human when Levinas paradoxically confesses what we may risk understanding as a certainty regarding the nonhuman. He notes that “children are often loved for their animality. The child is not suspicious of anything.”¹² Here, the dog becomes the implied subject: the child, unlike the dog, is not suspicious and therefore the dog *is* suspicious—capable of interrogation and assessment. In other words, when the ontological framing revokes the word “animal,” any utterance concerning their capacity can bubble up to the surface of truth. It seems that we can attest to the animal only in their absence.¹³ Levinas continues to evade the

⁹ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

¹⁰ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

¹¹ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

¹² Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

¹³ Can we not let the animal know we say and declare? If so, why is the animal barred from knowing that we know them as capable creatures? What does such a confession risk?

conjunction between the declaration, the utterance of the nonhuman, and the possibility that they may be *something*.

This tension is not unlike that which we see in passages from *Difficult Freedom*. Let us consider the following moment from “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights”:

At the supreme hour of his institution, with neither ethics nor logos, the dog will attest to the dignity of its person. This is what the friend of man means. There is a transcendence in the animal! And the clear verse with which we began is given a new meaning. It reminds us of the debt that is always open. But perhaps the subtle exegesis we are quoting gets lost in rhetoric? Indeed?¹⁴

In this moment Levinas assumes a kind of struggle in his writing: “But perhaps the subtle exegesis we are quoting gets lost in rhetoric? Indeed?”¹⁵ Perhaps, he suggests, his critical interpretation is lost in rhetoric, in language, but also perhaps not: “Indeed?”¹⁶ This moment characterizes an episode of triple disavowal where Levinas (1) disavows his interpretation, only to then, (2) disavow the ability of language to carry the possibility of true understanding, and finally, (3) disavow his disavowal. Perhaps there is a way to articulate understanding, Levinas proclaims—but also, perhaps not. Does understanding perhaps occur in the same breath as its disavowal? On one hand, one may interrogate the creature’s ability to understand, and on the other hand, is the possibility to interrogate the primary interrogation the understanding I have sought all along? Levinas, I want to suggest, directs the possibility of the question of animal life through the ontological tension that characterizes the event of writing about nonhuman beings. To address nonhuman life in writing and language is to speak through the tension that

¹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,” in *Difficult Freedom: Essays in Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 152.

¹⁵ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 152.

¹⁶ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 152.

characterizes the event. Indeed, in the span of just three pages, Levinas asks ten questions—each one exclusively concerned with nonhuman life:

1. “Is the biblical verse guilty, as one will later accuse it, of attaching too much importance to what ‘goes into man’s mouth’ and not enough to what comes out?”¹⁷
2. “So, who is this dog at the end of the verse?”¹⁸
3. “Someone whom we accuse of being rabid when we are trying to drown him?”¹⁹
4. “Someone who is given the dirtiest work - a dog’s life — and whom we leave outside in all “weathers, when it is raining cats and dogs, even during those awful periods when you would not put a dog out in it?”²⁰
5. “So, does it concern the beast that has lost the last noble vestiges of its wild nature, the crouching, servile, contemptible dog?”²¹
6. “Or, in the twilight (and what light in the world is not already this dusk?)”²²
7. “Does it concern the one who is a wolf under his dogged faithfulness, and thirsts after blood, be it coagulated or fresh?”²³
8. “But perhaps the subtle exegesis we are quoting gets lost in rhetoric?”
9. “Indeed?”²⁴
10. “How can we deliver a message about our humanity which, from behind the bars of quotation marks, will come across as anything other than monkey talk?”²⁵

Levinas’s first question—“Is the biblical verse guilty, as one will later accuse it, of attaching too much importance to what ‘goes into man’s mouth’ and not enough to what comes out?”²⁶—opens his essay. Here, Levinas—as David L. Clark suggests in “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’: Dwelling with Animals after Levinas”— “almost sounds as though he will abstain from animal flesh.”²⁷ Of course, this is not the case because as “the essay’s oddly

¹⁷ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

¹⁸ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

¹⁹ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

²⁰ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

²¹ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

²² Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 152.

²³ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 152.

²⁴ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 152.

²⁵ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 153.

²⁶ Levinas, “The Name of a Dog,” 151.

²⁷David L. Clark, “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’: Dwelling with Animals after Levinas,” in *Post-Modernism and the Ethical Subject* (Montreal: McGill-Queens’ University Press, 2004), 41–74.

disparate thoughts and tones” become “a delicate whole” it is clear that Levinas is “not so much concerned with the letter of dietary laws as he is with the more general [...] question of what it means to consume animal flesh in the first place, what it says about us.”²⁸ Clark, quoting Levinas, asks “Who are we for whom the murderous violence of killing the animal other and sharing its flesh ‘at the family table’ is so effortlessly ‘sublimated by intelligence’?”²⁹ Levinas’ first question inches towards the possibility of the nonhuman only to retract in its sight and utterance. Close to the question of nonhuman life, Levinas flinches and returns to the human.

Levinas’ next question, however, finally addresses not just any animal, but Bobby. Afterall, who is Bobby but a dog (1) proximate to man in his gaze, (2) constituting man as man, but also (3) constituting man’s ability to be man in his transcription: “Bobby performs a limited testimonial function [...] but this role is a temporary measure, in earnest of the true human witness whose account – in the form of Levinas’s essay – has always already usurped Bobby’s place in our reading of it.”³⁰ Levinas, from this point on, will proceed to struggle with the role and ontological character of Bobby—in particular I am referencing questions three, four, five, six, and seven. It is not until question eight that Levinas’s text releases itself of its tension—of its tossing and turning—and declares that Bobby is just that: Bobby, a literal dog. It is here when Levinas, at first hesitant to approach the subject of nonhuman life, contacts the animal. Yet, even in this singular stroke of proximity, Levinas continues to interrogate, not only the ontological being of Bobby, but all that follows the knowledge of that being: the debt that is “always open” and thus, the reminder, the rehearsal, and the question of the animal as a chanting that pulses

²⁸ Clark, “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’,” 50.

²⁹ Clark, “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’,” 50.

³⁰ Clark, “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’,” 70.

through the entirety of Levinas's text.³¹ It is at this point when Levinas finally risks approaching Bobby: "But perhaps the subtle exegesis we are quoting gets lost in rhetoric? Indeed?"³² Here Levinas asks a question within a question, leaving room for the unutterable and declaring that he is, nonetheless, always "thinking of Bobby."³³

This turn, disturbing the architecture of language which Levinas employs to engage Bobby, characterizes the way in which the problem of conceptually approaching nonhuman life,³⁴ of writing about nonhuman life, carries with it the promise of return—that the "thought [of Bobby] unerringly returns [Levinas] to the singularity and the solitude of the true task at hand, the work that his essay is destined to do; namely, bearing witness."³⁵ To know an animal or write about animals is to always return to the primary episode of bearing witness and having to dare proximity. And yet, as my project explores, such a task is easier said than done.

As I have already indicated, my study, starting from the point of Marx and the language of labour, discusses the way nonhumans are made to work in texts that depend upon the possibility of denying those same creatures the status of working beings. That is, dug into Western philosophy's engagement with the nonhuman is a dynamic of disavowal that exceeds rudimentary notions of exclusion. The course I trace through Marx, Aristotle, and Jameson is one in which the sight of the nonhuman—as necessary for the development of the concepts in question—renders the text inoperative, not because it is inherently so, but because it regards the

³¹ Levinas, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," 152

³² Levinas, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," 152

³³ Levinas, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," 151.

³⁴ Mary Bunch, "Posthuman Ethics and the Becoming Animal of Emmanuel Levinas," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55, no. 1 (2014): 43; Max Hantel, "Bobby Between Deleuze and Levinas, or Ethics Becoming-Animal," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 18, no. 2 (2013): 108; Bob Plant, "Welcoming Dogs: Levinas and 'the Animal' Question," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 37, no. 1 (2011): 56.

³⁵ Clark, "On Being 'the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany'," 42.

nonhuman as such. In other words, needing the nonhuman to shape, for example, the notion of labour, Marx often struggles with his definition, leading the discussion into unstable grounds. The breakdown of the possibility of justifying such exclusion—and therefore the emergence of various paradoxes—is the consequence of the primary limitations placed on the nonhuman’s ontological status. The nonhuman animal, regraded as a creature of lack, reflects back onto the text within such terms, generating a logic shrouded in paradox, inconsistency, and contradiction.

In the work of Marx, Aristotle, and Jameson alike are scenes of struggle over the status of animals which, when probed, reveal a distinct effort on behalf of the text to preserve the sanctitude of man’s ontological reputation through a gesture of exclusion, renunciation, and denial that cannot escape confessing to its anthropocentric error in judgment. I must mention, however, that this is not a dissertation that seeks to disseminate and argue in accordance with a particular text’s anthropocentric proclivity. My priority is an elaboration on the nonhuman’s ontological position. I am invested in tracking deeply sensitive moments where the text—silent in thought, backtracking on its ideas, pausing in curious places, and questioning its own logic—turns its gaze back upon itself. My task is the activity of carving out textual spaces in which to critically reflect on the deeply complicated and often paradoxical role of nonhumans in Western philosophy—especially as it concerns labour. My dissertation is largely invested in technical detail and as such, traces not the totality of what is said but the mechanics that inform the shape of meaning. My study, while alluding to controversial subjects such as species-being, imagination, and sense, for example, finds their dissection and definition outside the scope of its methodology and intention. This is not a project that seeks to argue on behalf of the nonhuman’s potential possession of any one faculty of mind or body—nor is it interested in the faculty as such. Rather, I seek to study how the text mechanically justifies exclusion, tracing the

consequence such moments bear on the overarching coherency and logic of the text.

I situate my ideas and vocabulary in the Marxist tradition; and, moreover, while I do spend time on other animals like dogs, horses, and even elephants, the subject of my argument is the modern slaughterhouse animal: cows, chickens, and pigs. More recently, and as I explore in my first chapter, there seems to be a trend in some of the Marxist thinkers I reference towards inaugurating animal labourers into the Marxist context. This is a very curious gesture, I find, because Marx, while valuable to class analysis, says very little about the nonhuman. Whereas Ted Benton takes severe issue with Marx's comments on animal life—finding them quite degrading and dismissive—John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Christian Stache argue that Marx, is, in fact, progressive in his cross-species thought. All three thinkers offer somewhat of a revision or allowance that finds in Marx a vision of labour compatible with our current moment of ecological strife and animal industry.

My analysis of Marx, contrary to both Benton and as his critics, argues that the animal remains a problem in his work. My efforts, in this regard, comprise of a comprehensive analysis of Marx's comments on animal life which I organize into concluding sections. Marx, I argue, is in fact dismissive of animal life, but gestures of negation do not necessarily imply a lack of difficulty. On the contrary, the samples I offer related to Marx's dismissal of animal life demonstrate a tension that struggles to cope with the way in which inclusions of creaturely life may indeed threaten the totality of the text's logic. Marx thinks little of animal life, but when he does dare mention the cow or horse, his argument struggles in gestures of paradox and indecision. My analysis amounts to the development of a certain methodological gaze which I view as necessary for inquiries that concern the role of the nonhuman in those texts averse to their inclusion.

This dissertation is the culmination of a near decade's interest I have held in the cultural phenomenology of meat, as well as a personal devotion to veganism, and animal rights. The theoretical roots of this project began in my undergraduate career with a semiotic analysis of developing alternative-meat products such as *Beyond Meat* and *Impossible Meat*. At this point, the questions I asked revolved largely around the conditional definition of meat. In time, my interests evolved beyond the semiotic and in the direction of Marxism as I sought to fill the gap between the meaning of meat, and its production.

Proposing this thesis, I intended to situate Marx's discussion of nonhuman life in dialogue with anarchists such as Élisée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin. As I progressed in my research, however, I found it necessary to turn in the direction of developing a more advanced theory of ontology and the language that frames its position in Marx, as well the various thinkers in his orbit. This turn coincided with my own curiosity in the subject, as well the understanding that comparisons to the Marxist interest in nonhuman life would remain incomplete without a coherent, and full discovery of the ontological paradox I had detected.

My first chapter, reflecting on current Marxist discourse, assesses why it may be difficult to engage with slaughterhouse animals from the Marxist perspective. In doing so, I take time to ground the analytic perspective I assume going forward—i.e., inquires into the ontological nuances of nonhumans as it concerns their exclusion. We cannot confidently mark the nonhuman a labourer within Marxist terms, and this means that our task is two-fold: (1) we must develop a more coherent understanding of the problem of the animal in Western philosophy—i.e., where else we may locate this ontological issue, and (2) we must seek resolve as it concerns how we go about confidently developing a theory of animal labour. What does it mean to say that the slaughterhouse animal is a labourer in the contemporary context? Where do we begin?

Continuing my pursuit into the question of animal labour and its relationship to Western philosophy's textual attitude towards the nonhuman, my second chapter argues that in order to fruitfully interrogate the question of animal labour, we must begin at the point of language. It is precisely because Marx derives his concept of value from Aristotle that I turn to his canonical works. Here, I argue that unlike Marx, nonhumans run through the course of Aristotle's work; moreover, such creatures emerge alongside his discussion of the definition of human capacity. This being the case, my analysis seeks to reread concepts of soul, perception, imagination, intelligence, reflective judgement, and desire for the improbability of this thing called the human. My analysis finds that the category of the human emerges *after* the consolidation of exclusively human language concepts. Which is to say, man is a presupposed concept, and when we suspend his existence, we can reread the faculties he seizes for himself with a renewed transspecies ethic. Deconstructing man as a stable category also forces us into a new conceptual space that demands a thorough reassessment of how we have historically interpreted those concepts otherwise critical to the justification of human superiority. This chapter argues against our philosophical inheritances, urging instead, a concept that I will specifically term *animal speech*: an existential crossing of ontological boundaries that is mediated by the dynamism of the definition of language and its conditional features. The object of this chapter and its devotion to concepts of capability serves to defend and ground the nonhuman within a framework of sharedness that demands we always already recognize the animal as a subject and therefore a labourer.

Any argument that concerns the situation of the nonhuman as a labourer, I urge, must also do the work of undoing the arguments that seek to defend their alleged inferiority. To reach the nonhuman, to know them, to sufficiently argue in their favour, we must first demolish that

which stands in our way: “Man.”³⁶ When I invoke the term “Man,” I do so in specific reference to Sylvia Wynter. As Katherine McKittrick says in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, Wynter’s initiative is “not to find the true and objective definition of ‘what is Human,’ but to show that” philosophy is “filled with an imperial bend, a will to objectivity and truth.”³⁷ Man, Wynter notes in *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom*, is something of a “Imaginary extrahuman Being,” “the figure of ‘Nature,’ now represented as the authoritative agent on the earth of a God who, having created it, has now begun to recede into the distance”³⁸ “a purely biological being whose origin, like that of all other species, was sited in Evolution, with the human therefore existing in a line of pure continuity with all other organic forms of life,”³⁹ a “purely secular, biocentric, and overrepresented modality of being human.”⁴⁰ To Wynter, “Man overrepresents himself as the human, making himself the exclusive model and measure of what it means to be human,” of what it means to live, and “this overrepresentation is the foundation for a new epistemological order, with political and material consequences.”⁴¹

It is important to note that Wynter, we may say in a prefatory remark, responds in part to Franz Fanon whom in *Wretched of the Earth* observes that “whiteness/language/religion [...] constitute a morphology in denial of its own contingent bodiment and bent on the active denunciation of any other than gives the lie to this denial.”⁴² Wynter expands on this

³⁷ Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 110.

³⁸ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR* 3, no. 3 (2003): 306.

³⁹ Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom,” 314.

⁴⁰ Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom,” 317.

⁴¹ Anya Topolski, “Unsettling Man in Europe: Wynter and the Race–Religion Constellation,” *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2023): 2.

⁴² Emily Anne Parker, “The Human as Double Bind: Sylvia Wynter and the Genre of ‘Man,’” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2018): 441.

interconnected linkage, this geography, articulating a specific kind of Man, whom she regards as constituted by the denial of embodiment. This genre of “Man”—a term I will continually reference in quotation marks throughout this thesis and therefore in a specific recognition of the philosophical premise of Wynter’s work—is “produced by a denial of its own specific bodiment, something that this body hides from itself,” that is, “it denies its status as a concrete individual, as a flesh-and-blood body, precisely by contrasting itself with other bodies and ignoring and silencing those who would depart from this morphology.”⁴³ For us, Wynter’s contribution and context articulates the way “[this] specific conception of the human, Man, curtails alterative models of being, the fullness of our interrelated” nonhuman and “human realization, and a new science of human discourse.”⁴⁴

The strategy of this thesis is to work within the theoretical canon, and with a discursive interest that is invested in the various paradoxes that inform the theoretical inclusion of the nonhuman animal in the work of Marx, his precursors, and select post-Marxists. My research is critically theoretical, however, my thesis does take time to recognize the importance of reflecting on the material condition of the nonhuman—that is, the real animal, and their lived experience. I do take time to consider how Marx’s terms—including alienation, species being, or language—apply to creaturely life in the present. My theoretical scope is directed towards understanding the imposed ontology in the conceptual and material factors that define animals as working but not themselves as workers. It is because my thesis is focused on the theoretical premise of ontology that my gestures towards the condition of the nonhuman in the slaughterhouse remain within the

⁴³ Parker, “The Human as Double Bind,” 441

⁴⁴ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis*, 2.

boundary of that same scope. I am interested in the animal body as it relates to condition and lived experience, and while I do take some time to responsibly acknowledge intersectional perspectives, this thesis remains situated in a theoretical and philosophical legacy.

This is a Marxist study, and more importantly, it is one situated within the domain of critical theory—as such, it is not yet within the possibility of the inclusion of sociological data in what we may deem a more comprehensive or inclusive scope. I am invested in the conceptual bases of the text—what it does and does not do with the nonhuman. As such, the methodology I apply, namely deconstruction and discovery, relates to the way I position myself within the genre critical animal studies. In other words, it is important to mention that as a thesis situated within the genre and style of critical theory and continental philosophy my task is necessarily and inherently discursive. As a text I have long admired and studied, Nicole Shukin’s *Animal Capital* is something of a model for this thesis as its similarly conceptual methodology operates in the background. In other words, though I do spend a considerable amount of time thinking through and about cows, chickens, and pigs this thesis is outside the scope of a method of study that is concerned with data practises, or what we might risk referring to as the empirical possibility. My concern and the legacy of my concern is an outcome of my own training in critical theory, and as such what I present is consistent with an interest in conceptual implication, and discursive genealogies. At the same time, I regard this dissertation as inherently preliminary and a moment of foundational thought, that is, the sketch of what could, in the future, become a more involved research task that does indeed consider the quantifiable measure(s) of the slaughterhouse.

I am also working within a Derridean legacy that is in the tradition of animal studies theorists like Cary Wolfe, Matthew Calarco, David L. Clark, and Giorgio Agamben. To get a better sense of the definition of this tradition, it may be helpful to shift to Derrida’s own words

from his 2004 interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco: “All the deconstructive gestures I have attempted to perform on philosophical text [...] consist in questioning the self-interested misrecognition of what is called the Animal in general, and the way in which these texts interpret the border between Man and Animal”⁴⁵ The thinkers alongside whom I regard myself as working through and with, place emphasis on delineating “how philosophy has failed to account for the animal precisely because of its emphasis”—in Derrida’s specific case, on— “self-interested humanism.”⁴⁶ That is, I identify this thesis within an argument that is concerned with that very same “logocentrism that dogmatically reinforces the limitation of the animal”⁴⁷ as something of a “cornerstone of Western philosophy.”⁴⁸ This philosophical legacy emerges out of what Derrida regards as the necessity to change our ontological concepts. He notes: “The relations between humans and animals must change. They must, both in the sense of an ‘ontological’ necessity and of an ‘ethical’ duty”⁴⁹ This, I emphasize, is the position I too assume as I endeavour upon something of a preliminary ontological exploration similarly situated within a context that considers the history of philosophy.

I am thinking and analysing in discursive terms that are within the domain and practise of continental philosophy. The method I employ differs from methods in critical animal studies that foreground activism and animal liberation. In other words, critical animal studies is that which “contests speciesism,” and “speciesism does not refer simply to human relationships with other animals, but means socially, politically, economically, and culturally constructed everyday

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), 63.

⁴⁶ Michelle B. Slater, “Rethinking Human-Animal Ontological Differences: Derrida’s ‘Animot’ and Cixous’ ‘Fips,’” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 16, no. 5 (2012): 686.

⁴⁷ Slater, “Rethinking Human-Animal Ontological Differences,” 686.

⁴⁸ Slater, “Rethinking Human-Animal Ontological Differences,” 686.

⁴⁹ Slater, “Rethinking Human-Animal Ontological Differences,” 687.

practices and a body of knowledge that supports such relationships.”⁵⁰ What defines critical animal studies, in arguments by Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson, for example, is that the field seeks to “confront” this nexus of violence, “the taken-for-granted assumptions that form a hidden structure of violence and that make the most unspeakable atrocities seem an acceptable part of everyday life.”⁵¹ Matsuoka and Sorenson proceed:

Part of this effort is to challenge the anthropocentrism of various academic disciplines. CAS’ commitment to unsettle speciesism cannot remain a mere intellectual exercise but must be dedicated to destabilizing the fundamental power relationships, which sustain the capitalist economic system that commodifies all animals, including humans [...] CAS is political and explicitly and forthrightly committed to animal rights, calling for engaged scholarship and emphasizing the significance of activism in order to transform the structure of oppressive systems.⁵²

This particular definition of critical animal studies—a field that is politically energised and committed to material change—does not necessarily constitute the kind of work that Derrida or this thesis preforms, that is, a discursive, ontologically driven philosophy in a manner that “rethink[s] ontological difference between animals and humans based on shared suffering, finitude, and compassion that ethically raises the stakes of the question of the animal and destabilizes established notions of what is intrinsically human.”⁵³ This thesis seeks to contribute to the tradition of “rupturing the history of anthropo-centric subjectivity,”⁵⁴ as opposed to a more

⁵⁰ Atsuko Karin Matsuoka and John Sorenson, eds., *Critical Animal Studies: Toward Trans-Species Social Justice* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 1.

⁵¹ Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Critical Animal Studies*, 1.

⁵² Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Critical Animal Studies*, 2.

⁵³ Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Critical Animal Studies*, 2.

⁵⁴ Slater, “Rethinking Human-Animal Ontological Differences,” 687.

sociologically driven approach that thinks of activism and intervention that build *on* rather than *with* the work of continental theorists.

This differentiation in approach is one not unlike that which the *Introduction: The Emergence of Critical Animal Studies* defines: “CAS scholars have often cited Derrida, just as they might cite Karl Marx, in their exploration of the animal condition. However, this does not make Derrida or Marx CAS scholars, while McCance tacitly infers that this is the case for Derrida.”⁵⁵ Anthony J. Nocella, John Sorenson, Kim Socha and Atsuko Matsuoka similarly articulate a difference between those critical animal studies scholars who write about subjects like liberation, activism, and intersectionality in the slaughterhouse, and those who write about animals in reference to key continental philosophies. The latter approach is where I locate this thesis. It is important to recognize that this is a preliminary piece of writing in the genealogy of my own thought. I very deliberately chose to begin at the level of textual detail, not only because it reflects the legacy of my own education—that is, one situated mainly within the scope of critical theory—but also because I want to take time to responsibly rethink the texts that I have devoted my studies to thus far in my career.

Before I can engage in language of liberation, and activism it is important, I believe, to critically understand the concepts which otherwise inform the terms that have historically given shape to the evolution of our ideas. In other words, before I move forward, I must take time to consider and study the history of thought, and with renewed vision as well. I want to know what the nonhuman is doing to the text itself—I aim to reread Marx and those within his scope with an attention to how and why animals assume space in the text, and more importantly, how they

⁵⁵ Anthony J. Nocella, John Sorenson, Kim Socha, and Atsuko Matsuoka, “Introduction: The Emergence of Critical Animal Studies: The Rise of Intersectional Animal Liberation,” *Counterpoints* 448 (2014): xxv.

challenge otherwise philosophically canonical ideas.

With this in mind, my third chapter, “The Political Animal’s Unconscious, Re-visiting Marx, and Work (Once More)” is the culmination of my inquiry into the erasure and general disinterest in the nonhuman in Western philosophy. This chapter begins with an inquiry into Jameson’s *Political Unconscious* precisely because it is a text that seeks to uncover the buried reality of class conflict as a fundamental theme to all life and literature. This turn is important because it reflects on the intention of my previous chapters as similarly involved in the work of discovery. I make a point of relating my investigative gesture to Jameson’s political unconscious, probing his texts for the way in which Marxism’s apathy towards the nonhuman disturbs the scope of his gaze. How can a text that is devoted to uncovering the essential framework of class analysis and labour—a gesture seemingly compatible with the work we have done so far—fail to think of the nonhuman?

I find in Jameson’s work an unconscious within the proposition of the political unconscious which takes the form of a nonhuman perpetually rejected from the analysis of labour and class. From this point, my third chapter problematizes the legacy from which Jameson draws his analytical operation: the master-bondsman dialectic. How do we rethink or reimagine Hegel’s inquiry into the development of the subconscious in relation to animal labour? More specifically, how does the master-bondsman dialectic restrict the role of slaughterhouse animals in contemporary capital and labour? Rereading the Hegelian form in the language of contemporary animal capital, I ask: what would it look like if we applied the master-bondsman dialectic to the slaughterhouse, and how does that reading change the inquisitive approach we assume towards animal labour?

My fourth and final chapter functions as both a conclusion, and continuation of the

legacy of animal exclusion I have traced thus far. Here, I return to Marx's notion of labour, situating him in conversation with Arendt's idea of work. Building towards an assessment of the permanence of capitalism as exploiting the work of the nonhuman's seemingly disposable labour, I argue that the force of the slaughterhouse and animal industry has set up a world in which there is only one labourer left: the nonhuman. This conjunction of Marx and Arendt's thought lends to an understanding of Marxism as necessary indeed, but also unequipped to cope with the modern landscape of animal capital precisely because it embodies what I argue is the speculative eventuality of alienation which Marx himself hesitates to explore.

It is important to keep in mind that the language of labour and work differ in Arendt's canon: a dynamic that takes centre stage in my fourth chapter. Whereas Marx tends to use the two terms interchangeably, situating his interest within the domain of subjectivity and sociality, Arendt casts a clear division between the two terms. For Arendt, labour generates that which deteriorates or is immediately consumed—to this, she cites food and the products of mass-production and consumption. Work on the other hand, retains a certain stability and consistency in quality, and, in doing so, contributes to the social and cultural fabric of life. Though it will take time for me to reach the culminating point of my fourth and final chapter, it is important to keep Marx and Arendt's difference in mind because it is that very division that I bring together in a propositional turn. In the conclusive turn of my final chapter, I affirm Arendt's terms and rely on her language in order to simultaneously include rather than challenge Marx's vision. As such, I propose that labour does indeed deteriorate, but that that loss has the effect of enabling the work of capitalism itself. This argument, I find, is the logic that enables the possibility of regarding slaughterhouse animals as the only labourers left—the animal is a perpetual producer whose labour reaffirms the work of “Man” as capital(ism). In other words, it is difficult to

abstract animal labour from wage labour, but alienation, I suggest bridges that theoretical gap, aiding in connecting Marxist terminology to the work of the animal that Marx denied.

It is because of animal capital that we are fundamentally unable to gaze upon the scope of suffering we have created and nurtured—it is so vast, so seemingly omnipresent—and as such, every inquiry is but a return. My project is the fate of working on the condition the nonhuman animal's illegibility. Why can't we see the animal? The Levinasian ethic demands we bare witness, but animal capital refuses us the fundamental position that an ethics of relationality might demand.⁵⁶ More prudently, however, animal capital disturbs the essential fact of the animal's face. The animal in capital loses the ability to attest to their own existence, and sometimes it feels like nothing will ever be able to restore to the surface the rudimentary notion that they are *there*: that they exist, and that they suffer—that they are a labourer who produces value (*as value themselves*).

This lack brings new meaning to Levinas' disavowal of the animal's face. I don't know if the cow has a face: how could I ever? Is there a face to be had anymore? Is there anything left in the world for the creature who dies between those slaughterhouse walls? I am refused sight in both the philosophical texts that disavow nonhuman life, and the economies of animal capital—but then again, the nonhuman is refused a semblance of a form capable of substantiating the possessing a face. How then do I seek sight? How do I see the animal for the first time? Where do I look? How do I begin to help restore—fibre by fibre—skin to bone, life to skin? My project emerges from this effort. My project is the work of trying to see the animal, perhaps for the first

⁵⁶ Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

time.

Chapter One: The Problem of Anti-Speciesism as Identity, and The Place of Marx

Posing the Question

The ontological status of the animal as it pertains to concepts of labour, value, language, and logic (and therefore that which denotes subjecthood), is a fraught and complicated terrain. There is, I will argue, a tendency in Western philosophy to simultaneously situate the animal in discourses of ontological capacity while denying them all that accompanies such categories. In this first chapter I focus on Marx and labour. Marx rarely thinks about animals, but, as I will soon demonstrate, on the rare occasion when he dares mention a cow he does so within a very paradoxical and contradictory context.

My discussion of Marx's comments on nonhuman life takes the form of both an isolated case study and an overall genealogy of his oeuvre. How do we parse Marx's nuanced, varied, and inconsistent allusions to animal life? What does this variety of discourse have to say about the broader context of nonhuman life in Marx's work—of this ontological disparity I regard as deeply prevalent in his work? What does this variety, this interloped complexity of approach, have to say about the possibility of inquiring upon the place on nonhumans in Western philosophy?

Framing the Question of Animal Work in Marx

The concept of labour is complex and multiple in its historical iterations and theoretical conceptions. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, published in March of 1776, declares that "No equal capital puts into motion a greater quantity of productive labour than that of the farmer.

Not only his labouring servants, but his labouring cattle are productive labourers.”¹ After all, cattle too work the land, relieving the farmer of some of his duties while also allowing an “increase [of cattle products] in proportion to the goodness of the pasture.”² As cattle elevate the natural quality of the pasture, “the rent increases in proportion to the goodness of the pasture,” which also increases the “landlord’s gains both ways: by the increase of the product, and by the lessening of the labour that must be maintained out of it.”³ There is an “equality between the rent and profit of grass and those of corn—of the land whose immediate product is food for cattle and land whose immediate product is food for men.”⁴

What Smith describes here is the difference between the amount of money that is made from the sale of cattle products, and the dual role that the cow plays as both an object of value, and a labourer who works on the object—their body. As Smith sees it, the cow works for its commodification—it takes part in its own death and, thus, its emergence as a product. In other words, Smith negotiates both the fact of the cow’s labour and energy, as well as its ability to become a commodity. The cow, for Smith, is not always already a product, but a being capable of becoming a product through its own labour.

For Smith, labour is the source of value, and this means that that which we value is also that which produces profit. The cow is therefore valuable in such terms because it contributes to the generation of profit, but it is also valuable because it itself *is* the profit. In this way, Smith articulates value as a form of wealth that is created through the endurance of the labourer whose relationship to the commodity is synonymous with an attention to craft.

¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Dublin, 1776), 260.

² Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 64.

³ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 64.

⁴ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 66.

Smith's discussion of cattle also describes surplus value as well as labour-power; moreover, he hints to the very production of surplus value as surplus work. Relieved of some of his duties, Smith notes, the farmer capitalizes on the labour-power of his cattle to produce themselves to a point where it is suitable to extract the meat, hide, and bone from which profit is derived. It is "because [cattle] can be brought closer together" that the farmer employs more cattle than originally thought necessary. Smith's discussion of labour, profit, and animality is important because it allows us to draw a link to Marx and therefore the delicate differences that constitute the definition of labour, but also the nonhuman's ontological status.

Smith clearly situates the cow in a role that we may risk understanding as that of the labourer's—however this is not the limit of his thought. Generating the potential of the labouring category, Smith simultaneously copes with the cow's role as a commodity. There is a distinction in Smith that organizes the meaning of value as it pertains to the cow's status as both worker and object (worked). Capable of now reinvesting parts of their profits into the purchase of more assets—more cows and therefore more labourers—Smith, as Marx would say, describes the farmer's "compulsion to accumulate capital," as maximizing "the extortion of surplus value from the workers."⁵ As Nathaniel Wolloch affirms in "Adam Smith and the Economic Consideration of Animals," "[Smith's] mode of discussing animals, particularly from a material-economic viewpoint, was much more original than appears initially. Smith historicized the common consideration of animals as property, emphasizing the importance of their utilization for the progress of civilization. Yet at the same time he perceived that the abuse of animals was morally

⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 33.

objectionable.”⁶ While “Smith, like most of his contemporaries, regarded the difference between human beings and animals in most respects as a matter of degree, not kind” he embodies certain nuances which Wolloch concedes were not available at the time—namely the assertion that “animals were first and foremost treated as property.”⁷

Marx is quite vehement in his response to Smith. In a short footnote from *Capital Vol. II*, Marx, says, “To what extent Adam Smith has blocked his own way to an understanding of the role of labour-power in the process of self-expansion of value is proven by the following sentence, which in the manner of the physiocrats places the labour of labourers on a level with that of labouring cattle.”⁸ Here, Marx critiques Smith’s lack of a dynamic theory of labour value through an attention to his marking of cattle as productive labourers. Smith’s perspective on labour-power, Marx alleges, is limited not only because he believes that commodities express a value that is in proportion to the labour necessary for their production, but also because the proof he offers lies in an allusion to the possibility of nonhuman labour. In this way, Marx is not only damning Smith’s seemingly rudimentary concept of the measure of value, but more importantly, the way in which he sabotages the possibility of achieving an understanding by thinking through a lens which regards the cow a labourer. Marx, in this moment, is very clear in his assessment of the cow’s potentiality for labour. For Marx, the nonhuman is not capable of labour—they cannot produce value, they *are* value: a distinction very different from Smith’s.

This moment activates what I regard as a central and primary tension in Marx’s ontological assessment of the nonhuman. Marx’s comments on the cow’s role as value without

⁶ Nathaniel Wolloch, “Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings of Dead Animals and Changing Perceptions of Animals,” in *The Enlightenment’s Animals* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 162.

⁷ Wolloch, “Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings of Dead Animals and Changing Perceptions of Animals,” 167.

⁸ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 128.

the possibility of making value throws a wrench, as it were, into the coherency of the very concept of production and labour. In other words, the fixedness in Marx's words regarding the nonhuman animal's alleged inability to produce value is incapable of sustaining itself precisely because the nonhuman animal will, time and time again, demonstrate a resistance to such ontological limitation. This resistance, I suggest, is the ontological tension to which I refer throughout the course of my project. For now, however, I want to emphasize that my interest is not so much whether the nonhuman can labour but *how* Marx's firm denial of their labour illuminates a pattern that I will go onto fine tune in detail. This pattern is one that finds itself in the difference between the language of one's statement and the technical production that grounds its place in the text. To put it another way, Marx may say that the nonhuman cannot labour and therefore fix their ontology as one of simple value, but the way that statement functions—the way it is said, how it is said—challenges what *is* said. Tracing the ontological status of the animal in Marx, I centre my focus on what the language is *doing*. As I will go onto argue, the nonhuman, invited into the text, will always exceed, and challenge the lacking ontology to which it finds itself attributed. In this excess, the nonhuman animal's position exposes the text as a fraught and inconsistent philosophy that degrades those outside the scope of "Man" at the expense of its own consistency in argument and idea.

Marx's inquest into the extent of Smith having "blocked his own way to an understanding" is rather significant when we consider his delineation of the place of cattle in the question of labour-power.⁹ Just a few chapters earlier, Marx will say that "cattle as beasts of toil are fixed capital; as beef cattle they are raw material which finally enters into circulation as a

⁹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 128.

product; hence they are circulating, not fixed capital.”¹⁰ This sentence is of particular interest because of the nature of Marx’s language. Here, Marx explains that cattle are inherently, and thus, ontologically, raw material that circulate in the realm of capital. That is, in life, they are fixed capital, but as beef, become circulating capital. It is, however, the term “beast of toil” that takes centre stage. Just a page earlier, Marx will say that “as a beast of toil, an ox, is fixed capital. If he is eaten, he no longer functions as an instrument of labour, nor as fixed capital either.”¹¹ While Marx argues that cattle do not work, the language he takes up cannot help but challenge the context in which it is uttered.

The ox, he explains, does not work, and, when consumed it is nothing at all—at least, nothing but energy for the working human—but as a beast of toil, the nonhuman animal emerges within a boundary that expects the possibility of a being capable of knowing work. The beast of burden necessarily implies a history of the possession of the capacity to labour that is both passed down genetically and expected to manifest. Work is therefore a biological fate (one the nonhuman animal shares with the human), that, in turn becomes a social fate always already present in the animal in question but discursively treated as a pre-disposition. This logic refuses the animal entry into the category of labourer precisely because its efforts are regarded as a biological impulse as opposed to something external. In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx says, “labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature [...] his labour is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it.”¹² The

¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume II* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 95.

¹¹ Marx, *Capital: Volume II*, 94.

¹² Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 1st American ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 30.

ox cannot labour because its work activity is something seemingly inherent to its being, but does the reduction of that activity to impulse not come into question when we regard Marx's words on estrangement?

The effect of exploited labour, Marx goes on to explain, reduces the labourer to their biological function—the only activity available to them is “eating, drinking [and] procreating.”¹³ While Marx does note that biological function is the primary state of animal being, this does not bare on the understanding that the beast of burden is necessary caught between the demand for an inherently biological premise as well as a social expectation—i.e., a boundary which condemns its life to an activity that “does not develop freely” as an act of “will and of his consciousness.”¹⁴ After all, the labour of the beast of burden is not “one with its life activity” if that activity, is, as Marx has already explained, “eating, drinking [and] procreating.”¹⁵ Logically placed outside the language of labour, the beast of burden therefore re-emerges within the confines of the consequence of exploited labour. Marx's language, in this way, brings forth the possibility of animal work for the purpose of its denial.

The affirmation of work in this case is the grammatical reflection of refusal, such that joined with any node of the animal's ontological possibility is the inescapable reproduction of the project of human centrality. The route of the nonhuman leads us in the direction of a language reliant on an ontological paradox. The nonhuman is forced to linger in the background, held captive as an allegory, as the inferior subject upon whom “Man” steps in his ascension towards ontological superiority.

¹³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 30.

¹⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 31.

¹⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 30.

If we wish to consider the more systemized and extended linguistic implication that follows this kind of ontological dynamic, it is useful to turn to Derrida. In his analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, Derrida argues that within Aristotle's terms it is only the human who possesses the ability to metaphorize. This is because "Man" is the only creature who possess language as the unique ability "to produce a good metaphor," or "to see a likeness."¹⁶ As Derrida goes onto observe, "the definition of metaphor has its place in the *Poetics*, a work which starts off as a study of mimesis."¹⁷ It is the ability to regard likeness, and, in doing so, produce a metaphor that "excoriates the differences between entities" which characterizes man's "ontological difference from other animals."¹⁸ As Derrida continues, "For mimesis so defined belongs to logos and is not a matter of aping and mimicking, of animal gesture; it is connected with the possibility of meaning and truth in discourse."¹⁹

Dinesh Wadiwel links Derrida's discussion of mimesis to the way "animals can exist as both a use value and as a circulating currency which underpins human claims of superiority," such that "value in animals is both arrived at *through* the use value of the animal as a commodity for human consumption *and* as a form of currency that serves a function in reproducing the value of the 'human' itself."²⁰ This duality that Derrida puts forth is quite notable within the context of our ontological study, especially as it concerns the Marxist vision of labour and thus, the nonhuman's paradoxical relationship to its definition. From a transspecies context, the Marxist

¹⁶ Aristotle and Anthony Kenny, *Poetics* (Oxford, U.K: Oxford University Press, 2013), I.459a7-8.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," tr. F. C. T. Moore, *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (1974): 37, 5–74.

¹⁸ Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel, "'Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market': Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 21, no. 2 (2016): 71, 65–82.

¹⁹ Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," 37.

²⁰ Wadiwel, "'Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market': Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification," 66.

definition of labour depends on the possibility of the human *miming* the total act of production.

As Marx explains, “Since a commodity cannot be related to itself as an equivalent, and therefore cannot make its own physical shape into the expression of its own value, it must be related to another commodity as equivalent, and therefore must make the physical shape of another commodity into its own value form.”²¹ The generation and application of value, as Wadiwel describes, “relies upon substitution to generate a value that is not inherent in the entity which is valued” and this is important because it means that “one entity is made to look like the other.”²² This is a process that is “inherently violent in so far as valuation requires erasure of the perceived independent qualities of one entity to create a generalised equivalence and identification with another.”²³ There is a strong difference between the application of Marx’s language in the question of animal labour and the application of Marx’s discussion of animal labour. The rigidity of Marx’s categorization of nonhuman life—as working or labouring life—plays out in two ways.

On one hand, Marx is very clear when he says that “the value of draught cattle is determined by the means of subsistence needed for their maintenance, and thus by the amount of human labour needed to produce the latter.”²⁴ In other words, for Marx, cattle simply do not work; moreover, any sense of value which they possess emerges from the originary point of human labour as that which maintains their various capacities and capabilities. Labour, within such terms, is an addition to the nonhuman—an outside property with which they must mingle if

²¹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 148.

²² Wadiwel, “Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market: Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification,” 67.

²³ Wadiwel, “Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market: Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification,” 68.

²⁴ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 96.

they are to aid in an agreeable generation of profit. The value of cattle and the outcome of their activity is wholly dependent on the human labour that goes into their care and maintenance.

On the other hand, it is important to understand the difference between the questions “Do animals labour?”, “Does Marx think animals labour?”, and “Do animals belong to the working-class?”—a distinction epitomized in (1) the context specific use of “working class” and “labour” and, (2) Marx’s inability to draw a line between what he does and does not consider an exclusively human phenomenon.

As we know, Marx very clearly articulates several shared attributes between humans and nonhuman animals—eating, drinking, and procreating. There is, then, the possibility of a very rudimentary ontological communion between human and nonhuman life on the level of base need. However, while the historical beginning of “Man” may find a way to unite itself with animal life, his historical end is utterly severed and distinct. Furthermore, the meaning of work and its relationship to nonhuman life continues to obscure when we consider recent perspectives that investigate the contradictory intersection between the animal sciences and critical animal studies.

In “Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production” William Boyd argues that it is because of biotechnology that the chicken no longer exists: “The chicken as an independent organism no longer exists. Rather they have become a form of industrial production that is a very efficient vehicle for transforming feed grains into higher-value meat products.”²⁵ Capitalist driven obsessions with value and efficiency have nullified the nonhuman worker and thus, the very premise of their ontological status. Lost in machines, the chicken is no

²⁵William Boyd, “Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production,” *Technology and Culture* 42, no. 4 (2001): 632, 631–64.

longer an intelligible worker to be named and cited as the source of the product. The chicken simply breathes, eats, and stays still: they are made forcibly docile and passive to their murder and, thus, unified with the technological demands of that which takes their life. What action or activity, I wonder, really constitutes labour in this case? Perhaps, in this conception, Marx is correct. If every facet of the chicken's life activity is mediated by machines made by humans, is it even realistic to suggest that the animal is capable of labour? It might be useful, at this point, to turn to narratives of resistance as we may find that it in gestures of dissent where the consequence of the nonhuman animal's role in modern labour is most legible.

Labour Through Resistance

Sarat Colling's *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era* makes it clear that to suggest animals of all species and genus have "struggled for their freedom" is not a stretch of any kind.²⁶ As Colling observes in their conclusion, "in the face of seemingly insurmountable oppression and tyranny, animals have resisted this placement and struggled for their freedom."²⁷

In an interview with *Animal Voices Radio*, Jason Hribal shares Colling's sentiment:

Every captive animal knows, through years of direct experience and learned response, which actions will be rewarded, and which actions will be punished. Elephants, for instance, most of them are trained with a bull hook, if they do something wrong, they get hit repeatedly or stabbed with the barbed end to correct those actions so that they don't do them again. So really, it's against their own self-interest to be disobedient in any way, because who wants to get hit [...] Yet, history is filled with cases of captive elephants doing just that: continuously refusing commands or purposefully injuring trainers even though they are going to get beaten, and then they do, and then they get back out again, and then they do it again. That's why I say these are acts of resistance: because these

²⁶ Sarat Colling, *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2021), 131.

²⁷ Colling, *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era*, 131.

animals are struggling against their captivity and against domination.²⁸

As Hribal observes, the consequences of one's actions are not a foreign concept to nonhuman life. Knowing that they will face intense violence and suffering for their actions, captive animals persist and resist. Colling offers an interesting example of this sort of resistance:

Take the example of Edie. In January 2011, the twenty-eight-year-old elephant at the Knoxville Zoo crushed the head of her trainer against steel bars. The zoo director called the incident a “tragic accident,” but Edie was looking right at the trainer before she attacked. The zoo was cited by a government health agency for allowing the handler to work with the elephant without any physical barriers, and while using a bullhook [...] Edie was intentionally fighting back against the physical and psychological torment of being held in an exhibit and constantly surrounded by human activity.²⁹

Edie fights back and refuses the suffering of being held captive, of being surrounded by the gawking eyes of observing humans. As Colling proceeds, they note that of course “Animal rebels need not show reflective intentionality or proof of intentionality,” and offers the following passage from Stephen Bostock's *Zoos and Animal Rights*:

An animal's apparent attempts at escape—a leopard tearing at the bars or a lizard scabbling at the glass—may be just what they seem. We may not always be justified in reading the intention of escaping into such actions, but an animal clearly can have such an intention. Take the extreme case of a very small or otherwise very unsuitable cage: a large box, for instance. If we put a dog into this, he would scabble around, frantically trying to get out. Would we be less justified in thus describing his reactions than in similarly describing a human's reaction to the same situation? Would it really be anthropomorphic, would it not just be obvious, that the dog as much as the human was trying to escape?³⁰

²⁸ “Encore Episode: Jason Hribal, The Hidden History of Animal Resistance, and Nathan Runkle, ‘Farm to Fridge’,” *Animal Voices*, Vancouver Co-op Radio, February 17, 2012.

²⁹ Colling, *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era*, 56.

³⁰ Stephen St. C. Bostock, *Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals* (London: Routledge, 1993), 92.

Colling concludes, “Whatever form of intentionality we read in such purposeful attempts to escape a small prison, these attempts constitute resistance.”³¹ In the context of the slaughterhouse animals we study, it may be useful to turn to Charlotte Blattner’s “Toward a Prohibition of Forced Labour and a Right to Freely Choose One’s Work”:

More and more newspapers have reported on sheep escaping from the slaughterhouse, pigs jumping off transport trucks, and cows preferring to swim into the open sea rather than enduring heart-wrenching conditions aboard transport ships. At work, animals feign ignorance, reject commands, slow down work processes, refuse to work in heat or without adequate food, take breaks without permission, reject overtime, complain vocally, engage in open pilfering, break equipment, rebuff new tasks, escape, and initiate confrontations.³²

If we consider the force of Colling’s argument, surely the nonhuman animal must labour in *some* capacity if they are rebelling in *every* capacity? Now, it is true that fighting for independence is not the same as fighting for a worker’s right, but as Wadiwel explains in “The Working Day,” there is more overlap than we would like to think. We must, however, reorder our logic outside the boundary of human definition. Animals “have little use for money,” rendering the cause for dissent on behalf of say, the elephant that is entraining, and the chicken in the slaughterhouse, one that is concerned with a “unique exploitation of animals in relation to the difference between the time required to reproduce their own life and the time required by animals to produce for us (i.e., for humans, capitalism, productive systems).”³³ In other words, discourses concerning labour conditions must interrogate one’s ability to flourish in the short

³¹ Colling, *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era*, 57.

³² Charlotte E. Blattner, “Toward a Prohibition of Forced Labour and a Right to Freely Choose One’s Work,” in *Animal Labour: A New Frontier of Interspecies Justice?*, ed. Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford University Press, 2019), 99.

³³ Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” in *Animal Labour: A New Frontier of Interspecies Justice?*, ed. Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford University Press, 2019), 188.

time we have on Earth, as well as the universal restrictions that prohibit animals from the possibility of not just the dissipation of violence, but also the pursuit of happiness.

With that said, how might we begin to navigate towards the possibility of generating a more sophisticated picture of the nonhuman animal's complex ontological identity, especially as it pertains to our Marxist direction? It might be useful, at this point, to assume a more historicized perspective. How have we historically imagined the animal in labour, and as a labourer? Is Marx's complicated perspective on animal ontology unique?

Historical Perspectives

Published in 1601, Arthur Dent's *The Plain Man's Path-Way to Heaven: Wherein Every Man May Clearly See Whether He Shall be Saved Or Damned*, cycled through twenty-five editions by 1640, and forty-seven by 1831. Dent's dialogue opens with a conversation between Theologus, and Philagathus. Walking about, the two men encounter a pair of neighbours, Asunetus, and Antilegon, discussing a cow that has recently been put up for sale by one of Theologus' parishioners. The dialogue goes as follows:

Theologus: Hath my neighbour a cow to sell?

Antilegon: We are told he hath a very good one to sell; but I am afraid at this time of the year, we shall find dear wear of her.

Theologus: How dear? what do you think a very | good cow may be worth?

Antilegon: A good cow indeed, at this time of the year, is worth very near four pounds, which is a great price.

Theologus: It is a very great price indeed.

Philagathus: I pray you, Mr. Theologus, leave off this talking of kine, and worldly matters; and let us enter into some speech of matters of religion, whereby we may do good, and take good one of another.³⁴

³⁴ Maurice Hussey, "Arthur Dent's 'Plaine Mans Path-Way to Heaven,'" *The Modern Language Review* 44, no. 1 (1949): 26–34.

Erica Fudge reads the following exchange as affirming the difference between cows as material creatures attached to currency, exchange, and worldliness, and man as a creature who must instead, give his attention to otherworldly issues:

For Philagathus, cows are material creatures— ‘worldly matters’—and, in his opinion, focusing attention on them has the potential to drag people down into the mire of the flesh. It is, he urges, the better part of humanity to remember this and ‘take good one of another’ by contemplating otherworldly issues.³⁵

As much as there is reason to interpret Philagathus’ plea to focus on taking good care of one another as a condemnation of the materiality of cattle as detracting from man’s religiosity, there is just as much reason to suggest that the cow may be included *in* that care. Philagathus may be suggesting that we care for all life—human and nonhuman—resisting the worldly impulse to materialize God’s creatures. Philagathus may be uniting human and nonhuman life, asking that we refrain from exclusively designating cattle an item to be traded and sold rather than a creature to be cared for as long as we live on this Earthly plane.

I want to suggest that the cow wields in part, a complex, and ever shifting ontological identity—and it is because of this that their role in the question of labour is just as fraught. It is during the long sixteenth century when the physical body of the cow undergoes what will result in a nearly two-century long transformation in size and shape. Animal husbandry efforts and developments between the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern England result in drastic size increases in cattle—and no where else is this evolution more legible than in zooarchaeological

³⁵Erica Fudge, *Quick Cattle and Dying Wishes: People and Their Animals in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 125.

evidence. From the years approximating 1600-1700, the size of English cows archeologically excavated demonstrates a change in general size that triples over the course of one hundred years.³⁶ As William Youatt describes in his 1832 text, *Cattle; their breeds, management, and diseases*, “the average weight of the calf is 144 lbs [...] approaching to double the weight of these animals in 1730,” which correlates to the consumption of beef at an all-time high³⁷. Youatt continues, “the improvement of cattle has progressed with unsuspected rapidity since the middle of the last century.”³⁸ Each person in London, per Youatt’s calculations, “consumes nearly half a pound of meat everyday” and this, as he proceeds, “is a very high calculation compared to Paris [...] and Brussels.”³⁹ Regardless of how precise Youatt’s calculations may or may not be, he nonetheless epitomizes the way cultural perceptions of cattle in England begin to change in the 1600s. It is during this time when the population begins to take notice of the rapid increase in the size of cattle, as well as the frequency of the consumption of their flesh. As the century proceeds, we see a drastic increase and democratization in the consumption of beef across all classes and people. This frequency of change in the size of cattle and its widespread consumption—or rather, its normalization in the meat market—has a profound effect on the aesthetic world as well.

William Gilpin’s 1786 publication, *Observations on Cumberland and Westmoreland* illustrates the rapid development of cattle, and the consequences it had on the way they were visually and therefore economically perceived. In his insistence that the scenery painter should find cattle more suited to the picturesque character of landscape art than the horse, Gilpin notes,

³⁶ Idoia Grau-Sologestoa, “Pots, Chicken and Building Deposits: The Archaeology of Folk and Official Religion During the High Middle Ages in the Basque Country,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 49 (2018): 8–18.

³⁷ William Youatt, *Cattle; Their Breeds, Management, and Diseases* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1838), 23.

³⁸ Youatt, *Cattle; Their Breeds, Management, and Diseases*, 23.

³⁹ Youatt, *Cattle; Their Breeds, Management, and Diseases*, 23.

In the first place, the lines of the horse are round and smooth; and admit little variety: whereas the bones of the cow are high, and vary the line, here and there, by a squareness, which is very picturesque.... Nor are the lines only of the cow more picturesque, it has the advantage also in the filling up of those lines. If the horse be sleek especially, and have, what the jockies call, a fine coat, the smoothness of the surface is not so well adapted to receive the spirited touches of the pencil, as the rougher form and coat of the cow.⁴⁰

Gilpin, an artist of the picturesque, takes great interest in technical detail as mediating the possibility of ideality—i.e., the aesthetic production of a standard in perception and imaginary. As Rob Broglio enumerates in *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750-1830*, the depiction of cattle in the project of the picturesque as a vehicle for standardizations in visuality is particularly relevant in Giplin's case. Considering the geography of Giplin's life, it was just twenty years before his lifetime that his home in the Dishley Grange near Derby would become famous for the innovative breeding practises of Robert Bakewell. Eventually, Bakewell's practises would contribute to the British agricultural revolution, but, for Giplin, it is the development of a biological standard that parallels his aesthetic form. As Broglio notes, "To improve the form, flesh, and propensity for fattening cattle, [Bakewell] developed 'in-in' breeding, breeding cattle within the same family lineage."⁴¹ The effect of Bakewell's breeding practise helps ensure (1) the "purity" of the line, and (2) "that if an offspring did not meet his standards" it could be eliminated from the breeding stock.⁴² The cultivation of an ideal image enabled Bakewell to "read the body of cattle," discerning which attributes were "worthy of developing, and which were to be eliminated"—the consequence of this fidelity towards

⁴⁰ William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (1786), 253.

⁴¹ Ron Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750-1830* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008), 48.

⁴² Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 48.

verisimilitude being a union between art, and science that was dedicated to an ideal type.⁴³ In Broglio's words, "the ideal type set the standard within one's mind and from within culture's demand for what sort of animal was needed—more meat here, less bone there, and so on. While the ideal was derived from artistic models, in practice it changed the animals from within their very bodies."⁴⁴

Cattle portraiture followed suit, both copying animals *and* creating a breeding ideal for graziers to follow. As we reach the seventeenth century, cattle portraiture—specifically that of George Garrard's—is officially recognized by the Board of Agriculture.⁴⁵ These portraits were often disseminated in animal husbandry books, and yet despite their very specific purpose, the artistic representation of cattle, depicts something far more complex.

In his enumeration on Garrard's *Durham Ox*, Broglio notes that "the ox's body substitutes for the landscape, and, by extension, the viewer reads its body as one would a landscape scene, or as the grazier, judges, and agricultural writers would, describing in detail scoops, curves, lines and bulges of cattle."⁴⁶ Positioned in such a way that would enable its intended audience—the farmer, the breeder—to imagine ideal cuts of meat, Garrard's *Durham Ox* is striking on multiple accounts. The creature of *Durham Ox* stands out against a soft background, and in colours far bolder and more striking than anything else in the image. The ox's brown spots, and its almost outlined figure pop out of the image. Compared to the man stood at its side, the ox presents as though it does not belong to the softness of the world of the painting. The white of its hide is a far opaquer white than the white of the clouds, or of the man's

⁴³ Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 48.

⁴⁴ Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 49.

⁴⁵ Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 49.

⁴⁶ Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 49.

shirt. And yet, the ox, unlike the rest of Garrard's work, is in a field overlooking the parish. The ox persists in a space to which it does not belong—at least in Garrard's oeuvre. The ox also appears to be gazing at its viewer—once again, a remarkably different pose than the rest of Garrard's cows and oxen. Literally belonging to the natural world of the painting, while also stood out against its space, the ox remains suspended between the natural and the technological as to the purpose of its existence. The ox is at once divided and present in nature and society, addressing its voyeur as though it knows it is being looking upon. There is a visual conflict at play wherein the ox appears as a question of belonging and therefore ontological identity.

Much like the question of to whom Philagathus is addressing the meaning of care—the human, nonhuman, or both—the ox challenges the boundary between the commodity, and what Philagathus regards as the material world and virtue, or rather, an attention to religious ethic as divorced from earthly gain. Garrard's painting presents its subject as its own punctum, and, in this way, provokes one to ask whether the ox is, in this circumstance, of nature or of the market—a tension that reaffirms the trouble around not only understanding the subject position of nonhuman life in the question of economy, but also whether that subject position (re)shapes the meaning of labour. The definition of nonhuman labour is necessarily specific and varied—especially within contemporary terms and with an attention to the historical development of animal industry and agriculture.

Animals are both involved *in* work—that is, in “an interspecies labour process,”⁴⁷ as well as assigned *animal work*. For example, the pack animal works, *and* takes up animal work when transporting all that which they are made to carry. Animal work is that which depends upon the

⁴⁷ Kendra Coulter, *Animals, Work, and the Promise of Interspecies Solidarity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23.

corporeality of the animal: it needs their body, and the job in question cannot happen without their body. In animal work, the animal body works and is worked, functioning as labourer and product. The dairy cow, within such language, is worked by the human-made (or worked) machine unto which its udder is joined, and into exceeding their natural capacity for milk production. In that excess, the cow works to produce more milk than they otherwise would have if not for force.⁴⁸

Often, animal work will mingle with interspecies labour processes, which makes it difficult to categorize. As Jocelyne Porcher explains in “Animal Work,”

With farm animals, the question of work is difficult to grasp. In the interviews with farmers, it clearly appeared that farm animals have an important place in work and collaborate with the work. Some farmers think that their animals do effectively work, other farmers think not, reserving real work for equine and bovine draught animals, for example. This perception of animal work also depends on the place of the animal in the production system. For example, a farmer is more inclined to think that a cow works, but that a calf does not.⁴⁹

Porcher’s investigation suggests that to conceptualize animal work one must necessarily privilege the complex network of relationships that characterize the production process. Of course, this complex network illuminates the fact that (exclusively) human labour also comprises of a myriad of intersecting human relationships. Why then is it so difficult to understand nonhuman life as an ontological identity with the capacity to labour?

Animals in work, as well as animal work is also caught up in both anthropocentric and inter-species hierarchies—i.e., animal versus animal, animal versus human, and human versus

⁴⁸Jessica Eisen, “Down on the Farm,” in *Animal Labour: A New Frontier of Interspecies Justice?*, ed. Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford University Press, 2019), 147

⁴⁹Jocelyne Porcher, “Animal Work,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*, ed. Linda Kalof (Oxford University Press, 2017), 8.

human. As Kendra Coulter observes, “scholars pursuing this kind of research have emphasized issues such as the changing an enduring nature of gender relations, industrial relations and worker voice, and how human-animal relationships influence the work and forms of agency.”⁵⁰ This hierarchy—a complex organization of relationships both intimate and disparate—carries the possibility to challenge its existing structure through the very activity of its operation: communication, reflection, and action. In other words, the hierarchy functions by the consolidation of the human’s supremacy and primacy over the animal worker and (co-)worker—but it must risk challenging its own existence as it plays out in the practice of its principles. This challenge is important because it has the paradoxical consequence of asking that question it never dares answer: can animals work?

Labour and Hierarchies

The kind of anthropocentric hierarchy that frames the question of work—especially in the slaughterhouse—is one that must constantly risk reassessing itself for the purpose of affirming itself. Reassessment, however, does not imply that the hierarchy is in any way fragile or at risk of dissolution. In the case of the slaughterhouse, risk of a faulty gear in the hierarchy works in the favour of efficiency and dedication (to work), allowing its structure and organization to reaffirm its ability to ensure productivity.

In a January 2020 *BBC* article, “Confessions of a Slaughterhouse Worker,” the anonymous author explains that “On [their] first day, [the manager] gave [the author] a tour of the premises, explaining how everything worked and, most importantly, asked [them] pointedly

⁵⁰ Coulter, *Animals, Work, and the Promise of Interspecies Solidarity*, 23.

and repeatedly if [they] were okay.”⁵¹ The repetition of the question, “are you okay?” is a common reference of experience. Four years before the *BBC* broke their story, *VICE* would publish a very similar article detailing the visceral experience that accompanies one’s encounter with the space of the slaughterhouse: “You hear stories of people throwing up on their first day or freaking out and leaving right away.”⁵²

The comforting call, or the repetition of focus placed on the emotional wellbeing of the potential employee is, on one hand, I am sure, a genuine question from worker-to-worker. More critically, however, the comforting call—“are you okay”—is also a (re)address on behalf of the slaughterhouse, to the dedication or grit of the potential worker. In calling itself into question—is this okay (for you)?—the slaughterhouse demands that the humans who pass the boundary of its walls, those who might participate in its architectural and economic demands, will not return the call (“No, this is not okay, no I am not okay”). This call without recall, or this address that refuses an answer, characterizes the phenomenological habit of the slaughterhouse as an icon of the species hierarchy, and more importantly, that which depends on obscuring animal ontology. By phenomenological habit I am referring to the speech act (“Is this okay?/Are you okay?”) that calls those who pass into the space of the slaughterhouse into being through an individually disseminated, albeit primarily deferred, discursive consciousness—of what can and cannot be uttered, regardless of whether or not it might be felt and thought. This speech act, the possibility of interrogation, re-territorializes the imposed banality of the slaughterhouse through a specific

⁵¹ Ashitha Nagesh, “Confessions of a Slaughterhouse Worker,” *BBC News*, January 6, 2020, www.bbc.com/news/stories-50986683.

⁵² Hannah Ewens, “What It’s Really Like to Work in an Abattoir,” *Vice News*, 10 April 2017, www.vice.com/en/article/yp989g/what-its-really-like-to-work-in-an-abattoir

discursive operation that encourages its participant to (potentially) interrogate the violence of their surroundings in the language of silence. The phenomenological habit of the slaughterhouse reproduces the act of potential interrogation into an affectively reiterative exchange that invites the subject to question their surrounding so as to regulate the consequence or response.⁵³ The question, (“Is this okay?/Are you okay?”), therefore mimes the possibility of agency or discourse within the constraints of silence. In other words, the slaughterhouse takes part in the fantasy of its discursive disavowal, allowing its subject to consciously mingle with the image of its violence and the hierarchy unto which it depends, and at the same time it reasserts its efficacious power as the ability to kill.

To return the call, to speak back without denial (“No, I am not” or, “Yes, but I do not think those animals are okay”), is to demand a certain reverberation or sound from the slaughterhouse. This is something it does not want to do because it cannot risk having that sound escape through the cracks in the walls. Metonymically, we might imagine this to be the purpose behind isolating slaughterhouses in relatively uninhabited or innocuous areas—along highways where no one can stop to look or dare to come close without serious risk to their lives and others. The efficiency of the slaughterhouse is thus an effort to self-preserve through the paradoxical disavowal of its own effort.

In that moment of address, the slaughterhouse risks its hegemonic power in exchange for a human labour force that, in some cases, dare not gaze at that which it might (re)address—generating a self-policing task force. For example, *In Every Twelve Seconds*, Timothy Pachirat

⁵³ William Flesch, “J. L. Austin and Speech-Act Theory,” in *Modern British and Irish Criticism and Theory*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 61–67.

details an exchange with an employee who disregards, or skips their role in auditing the cows. This entails a practise in which one “stands in the area in front of the sticker platform to determine whether the cattle have remained unconscious as they hang upside-down on the chain”:

Jill and I took turns performing the animal-handling audit, and it was not long before I noticed that Jill’s forms for the week were filled out before she went out to the chutes and knocking box to observe the cattle. When I asked her about this, her response was, “Nobody looks at these forms anyway, and we have to record what is acceptable whether it actually is or not, so why does it matter? Besides, it makes me sad to go out there and watch them get killed.”⁵⁴

To avoid that feeling of not being okay, Jill forgoes her duties, risking the consciousness of any number of cows as they troop towards their slaughter. This risk demands that one participate in degrading the animal’s ontological capacity—the logic being that not only is the animal in the slaughterhouse incapable of labour, but perhaps pain as well. Suffering, in this case, is tunneled past the creature set for slaughter and towards the human. The slaughterhouse, in this case, rests upon the ability to reproduce what we have come to understand as the nonhuman animal’s ontological fate as one which is constantly at the mercy of those who seek to accumulate that which they cannot risk seeing in the Other: be it ability, a belonging to the working class, or a lack of pain. Jill cannot bare the sadness, the pain of watching the slaughterhouse cows troop towards their gruesome death, and so decides to forgo knocking them unconscious. In doing so, however, she traverses the possibility of their own pain, shuttling suffering in the direction of “Man.” To the slaughterhouse, this disparity is of no consequence: not only does it speed up the slaughter, but it furthers one’s gaze from the suffering animal. The more the nonhuman is forced

⁵⁴ Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 228.

into a space defined by evaded ontological capacities, the more it is ignored. In this case, the more the slaughterhouse sets up the animal for suffering, the more that suffering is ignored. This diversion necessitates the primary premise of animal capital: the loss of sight as the inability to not just bear witness to suffering but consider its possibility. Not only are slaughterhouses outside the boundary of sight as it pertains to human residence, but the marriage between ontological obscurity and violence encourages far more diversion and erasure—we do not want to think about animals suffering, but most of all we do not or perhaps, cannot bare to witness. This loss of sight, energised by those violent actions which demand privacy, produces even more privacy and even more pain.

As animals work and do animal work—labouring in the exhaustion of their own existence—we are produced and called into being as subjects always already incapable of answering the question and the comforting call. The organization of animal ontology in our contemporary landscape is such that the *possibility* to disavow the question of animal work and ability gains authority over the question itself—thereby producing its own lack as a silent speech act, that in wielding the question it detests, reproduces the questioning subject.

Subject to a novel and unique kind of suffering, the voices of those cows, chickens, and pigs fill the space of the slaughterhouse, uttering in concepts and exclamations foreign to “Man.” How can one grasp the language of that which it will never know or feel? The denial of language to nonhumans seems more plausible from this perspective. It is, nonetheless, he whose pained voice fills the space with words far beyond the border of human understanding and experience that responds: “No, I am not.”

A Reverb to the Marxist Context

A thorough analysis of Marx’s discussion of nonhuman life and its place in the history of

economy demand that we cope with a complex ontological arrangement that does not generate a sense of conclusion or closure. In Marx, the nonhuman emerges as a creature who is present without presence and therefore without self-possession. They are caught in discourses of value, and labour without the possibility of attribution and the acknowledgment of intentioned capability. It is therefore necessary for us to read Marx with a certain openness, keeping this ontological dilemma in mind and recognizing that ontology constitutes a conflicted and often paradoxical logic in his writing.

In more recent debates, Marx has been charged as anthropocentric by ecologist Ted Benton: a position which has come under further discussion and critical re-reading by thinkers like John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Christian Stache. As Benton argues, Marx expresses a concept of labour, class, and emancipation that only services the human. Marx makes a distinct and violent contrast “between the human and the animal” which ultimately “cuts away the ontological basis for [the] critical analysis of forms of suffering shared by both animals and humans.”⁵⁵ Benton notes that “underlying both Marx’s concept of historical development and his critique of estrangement, then, is a contrast between what he variously calls ‘crude,’ ‘physical’ or ‘animal’ need, on the one hand, and ‘human’ need, on the other.”⁵⁶ Citing Marx’s *Manuscripts*, Benton concludes that “Marx’s attempt [...] [to] provide an account of human nature in terms of a thorough-going opposition between the human and the animal is very much in line with the mainstream of modern Western philosophy and such more recent disciplines as cultural anthropology and sociology.”⁵⁷ Marx’s “utopian vision” of the possibility of an eventual unity

⁵⁵ Ted Benton, “Humanism=Speciesism?: Marx on Humans and Animals,” in *Socialism Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader*, ed. Brenda Almond (Philosophical Books, 2013), 11.

⁵⁶ Benton, “Humanism=Speciesism?,” 8.

⁵⁷ Benton, “Humanism=Speciesism?,” 8.

between man and nature, or man and *his* nature may at first appear to challenge Western philosophy's historical tendency towards dualism insofar as Descartes's influence is concerned.⁵⁸ However, the "systemic use of human/animal contrasts in [Marx's] early work tells against this."⁵⁹

Benton's charge is generally rooted in two fundamental claims: (1) Marx utterly dissociates humans and animals, suggesting a conceptual and political disparity between the two, and (2) he has made a myriad of generally negative remarks about animal welfare.⁶⁰ In the *Manuscripts*, for example, Marx argues that animals do not feel or are incapable of feeling a sense of self loss. In other words, animals cannot feel the estrangement from self that would otherwise emerge when the products of their labour become appropriated as what they do produce is one sided. Marx says,

But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom.⁶¹

Besides the clear human exceptionalism, Marx, as Benton argues, reduces the animal to mere existence, to creatures that lack the wealth of complexity he otherwise attributes to the human. The distinction Marx produces depends upon a species hierarchy that views nonhuman life as always already in a state of lack. There is nothing to estrange the animal *from* because the animal is always already nothing, and if the animal does possess something, it is immediately consumed.

This selfish immediacy, however, suggests that the animal in question is regulated by a

⁵⁸ Benton, "Humanism=Speciesism?," 8.

⁵⁹ Benton, "Humanism=Speciesism?," 8.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Katherine Perlo, "Marxism and the Underdog," *Society & Animals* 10, no. 3 (2002): 303–318.

⁶¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 276.

kind of production which characterizes their existence. Marx, in other words, seems to lean towards a certain objectification or mechanization of nonhuman life. Animals, implicated in a reduced state, assume a mechanical routine—eating to live, and living to eat. Nonhuman activity within such terms regards itself as its own product: it is one sided in its ability to produce because its proclivity towards production occurs for the sake of production itself.

Curiously enough, Marx, in *The German Ideology* will reference freshwater fish, arguing that modern capitalist production often severs nonhumans from their natural needs—in this case, water:

The “essence” of the freshwater fish is the water of a river. But the latter ceases to be the “essence” of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steamboats, or as soon as its water is diverted into canals where simple drainage can deprive the fish of its medium of existence.⁶²

While seemingly sympathetic, this passage must be understood in its context to derive the full meaning. On one hand, Marx is arguing that Ludwig Feuerbach’s vision of naturalism falls into the trap of assuming an essence in its subjects—including the human—that is completely divorced from historical status and social configuration. Marx is criticizing Feuerbach for assuming a theory of essence without any thought towards existence as both historical and social, and, in this way, evolving throughout time. Without an eye to history, Feuerbach fails to grasp that life—human and nonhuman—changes, thus resorting to essentialist narratives of being or stable essence. In terms of the freshwater fish in question, Feuerbach’s methodology risks casting the discontinuation of fish from water as an inexorable anomaly.

⁶² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, tr. Christopher J. Arthur (International Publishers, 1972), 90.

This glimpse into the suffering of nonhuman life functions as a linguistic vehicle that enables Marx to navigate himself away from the peripheral meaning of fish and their water to humans and their primary historical nature as characterized by an eventual revolution. Even if Marx may seem to begin at the point of nonhuman life, expressing the observation that capitalist production has a negative impact on nonhuman habitats and habits, this remark remains a reference which returns the aim of Marx's writing back towards the simultaneous starting and end point of human history. Once again, the nonhuman functions as a devalued ontological character whose place in discourse serves not to attribute them with its content, but to guide the human in the direction of its naturalized supremacy. The passage, devoted to a discussion of the clear risk to animal life, is disillusioned with the force of "Man" as a creature so dominating in discourses of capability and being that it can redirect even serious allegations of the risk to life. That is, even in its more dire state, the nonhuman once again functions as an avenue into the human.

The destruction of animal life is a collateral objective in the effort to reorient "Man" in the direction of his nature. Later, in the *German Ideology*, Marx will say the following:

The different forms of material life are, of course, in every case dependent on the needs which are already developed, and the production, as well as the satisfaction, of these needs is an historical process, which is not found in the case of a sheep or a dog [...] although sheep and dogs in their present form certainly, but in spite of themselves, are products of an historical process.⁶³

Here, Marx explicitly arranges a binary between man and animal. Whereas human needs belong to, function as, and play an exceptional role in the development of history—in the emergence of

⁶³ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 91-92.

exchange and production—the needs of animals, such as dogs and sheep, do no such thing. Dogs and sheep are not historical in the way that the human is historical, but they are, nonetheless, and “in spite of themselves,” drawn into the historical process.⁶⁴ In other words, Marx is talking about the way breeding serves to alter dogs and sheep as humans too alter throughout the course of history. Wadiwel makes note of this in “‘Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market’: Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification,” when he thinks in a direction similar to our own analysis. While conscious of human intervention in breeding, Marx appears to bridge human history with animals *in* history, and in doing so, affirms the relationship we may have to those animals we manipulate.⁶⁵ Yet, Marx does not cast judgement or comment on the process of breeding. Rather, the impetus here is much like the previous passage: nonhuman life, and any potential suffering it may face, or labour it might act, is but a rhetorical vehicle for the conclusion of human ontology and history. Marx is placing emphasis on the productive role human life plays in nature,⁶⁶ and thus, our special capacity to work and rework our relationship with its quantities and entities. Here, Marx is not thinking about the work of nonhuman animals as much as he invokes the concept of breeding as way to emphasize the universal quality of the human’s production. On the surface, the animal therefore emerges as a creature of history, without history.

The passage in question reveals the way in which Marx, despite his focus on the non-consensual quality of breeding, always already marks the animal as a non-agented entity that lives in history without the possibility of claiming all that which follows that presence. Once

⁶⁴ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 92.

⁶⁵ Wadiwel, “‘Like One Who Is Bringing His Own Hide to Market’: Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification,” 72.

⁶⁶ Anna L. Peterson, “The Zoological Marx,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 33, no. 3 (2022): 19, 18–36.

again, we face a nonhuman, present in conversations concerning complex ontology, but without the ability to possess its details: the animal emerges as incapable of embodying the very thing they make legible.

For Benton, Marx is an “implicit anthropocentric”⁶⁷ and his concept of history, species-being, and sociality— “as inseparable from true human fulfilment”—not only fails to account for nonhuman life but refuses to think outside the category of the human.⁶⁸ At the other end of this discussion, however, is Foster and Clark who consider Marx “the only writer to have developed a science of the kind that is now needed for an adequate understanding of environmental issues.”⁶⁹ As they go onto argue, Marx’s discussion of nonhuman life demonstrates a historical materialist attitude whose value lies in “what it teaches us concretely regarding the changing relations between human beings and other animals, particularly with evolving ecological conditions,”⁷⁰ including what Marx refers to as the “degradation” of nonhuman life in and under capitalism.⁷¹

Foster and Clark’s introduction in “Marx and Alienated Speciesism” states: “Few contemporary scholarly controversies on the left are more charged than those surrounding Karl Marx’s view of the status of animals in human society.”⁷² The irony of Benton’s 2019 response, “A Reply to My Critics,” is, with Foster and Clark’s words in mind, not lost on anyone. As

⁶⁷ Ted Benton, “Marx, Animals, and Humans: A Reply to My Critics,” *Monthly Review* 71, no. 1 (2019): 16, 40–44.

⁶⁸ Benton, “Marx, Animals, and Humans,” 4.

⁶⁹ Ted Benton, “Peter Dickens: Late Capitalism, Nature, and Mental Life,” in *Changing Our Environment, Changing Ourselves: Nature, Labour*, ed. James S. Ormrod (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 15–35.

⁷⁰ John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” *Monthly Review* 70, no. 7 (2018): 132, 1–20.

⁷¹ Karl Marx, *Marx: Early Political Writings*, ed. Joseph J. O’Malley, and Richard A. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 239.

⁷² Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 130.

Benton writes, “Although the texts [Foster, Clark, and Stache] cite were written more than a quarter-century ago, it is encouraging to find there is still enough energy in them to provoke this response.”⁷³ In his reply, Benton argues that Foster and Clark proceed in their criticism as though his [Benton’s] purpose in writing about Marx was a desire to “attack Marx for his views of the human-animal relation,” and, that being the case, “their essay is devoted to showing that [Benton’s] reading was mistaken.”⁷⁴

Benton notes that Foster, Clark, and Stache do not recognize his work as “promoting a mutual rapprochement between Marxists and animal rights/animal liberation advocates”—though admittedly, Stache’s conclusion falls short in what Benton views as understanding his original argument.⁷⁵ Suffice it to say, the question of Marx’s treatment of nonhuman life remains relatively split in its address.

My exploration of Marx is not in the binary camp of assuming either a reparative or disparaging reading of his discussion of nonhuman life. Instead, I am invested in the way the animal remains a problem in Marx’s work, suggesting the possibility of varying degrees of intimacy between human and nonhuman life, as well as the nonhuman’s position within the question of those explicitly Marxist capacities and terms—namely, value and labour production. I will explore the way Marx—curiously uninterested in the assimilation of the animal into the working class—allows those creatures to creep into his work, mostly through references to ecology and agriculture and in doing so, produces a useful tension in discourses of ontology. That is, this tension is useful to us insofar as it disturbs the default position of “Man” in favour of

⁷³ Benton, “Marx, Animals, and Humans: A Reply to My Critics,” 40.

⁷⁴ Benton, “Marx, Animals, and Humans: A Reply to My Critics,” 40.

⁷⁵ Benton, “Marx, Animals, and Humans: A Reply to My Critics,” 39.

making legible the kind of ontological partialities that define the role of the nonhuman.

My analysis also differs from Benton. For example, Benton's *Marxism and Natural Limits* argues that Marx offers an unfinished critique of political economy, likening his canon to "a series of related conflations, [and] imprecisions."⁷⁶ From this point, Benton emphasizes the necessity for correcting the Marxist perspective, that is, for steering such errs in the direction of what could be its potential for a thorough "ecological perspective."⁷⁷ In other words, this correction assumes the task of curating the gaps in Marxism's discussion of the nonhuman in favour a far less speciesist perspective. Benton notes, for instance, that "there is much in the corpus of Marxist historical materialism which is readily compatible with an ecological perspective" and as such, assumes a very selective gaze in his Marxist applications.⁷⁸ While I am also in the camp of reading Marx's discussion of the animal and ecological life as necessarily troubled, I do not think that it is entirely productive for this thesis to assume a sense of selectiveness with Marx—nor do I think such "imprecisions" should be steered in favour of any selective gaze I were to consider.⁷⁹ There is great value and critical possibility in the way Marx's discussion carries a sense of ontological fraughtness which seems to potentially struggle in sight of the nonhuman. To put it simply, I am invested in the "imprecisions" Benton seeks to otherwise correct—a gesture I make legible at the end of this chapter, and as the thesis proceeds as a whole.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ted Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits: An Ecological Critique and Reconstruction," *New Left Review* 178 (1989): 63, 51–86.

⁷⁷ Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits," 64.

⁷⁸ Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits," 64.

⁷⁹ Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits," 63.

⁸⁰ Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits," 63.

Assessing Current Discourse and Arguments

In “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” Foster and Clark argue that Benton’s charge of Marx not only relies on a “handful of sentences from one or two texts out of context,” but that it also “neglect[s] the larger historical conditions, intellectual influences, and debates out of which Marx’s treatment of the human-animal dialectic arose.”⁸¹ Foster and Clark argue that a meaningful assessment of Marx’s comments on animal welfare must necessarily consider his understanding of Epicurus and Lucretius, his grasp on the German debate on animal psychology, his reception of René Descartes’ charge of animals as machines, his application of both Ludwig Feuerbach’s notion of species-being and Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and finally “his development of the concept of socioecological metabolism based on Justus von Liebig and others.”⁸²

Foster and Clark’s methodology is diverse and multiple, considering the totality of what Marx has to say, as well the context(s) from which that totality emerges. The trouble, however, arises when we consider the oppositional nature their conclusion holds regarding Benton’s argument. As Foster and Clark conclude, Marx “clearly recognized that the uprooting of alienated speciesism is part of this fight,”⁸³ and that a robust analysis of the historical and philosophical context in which he is writing makes this abundantly clear—after all, it is Marx who says “all living things must become free.”⁸⁴ Regardless of its critical methodology, there are several points of tension within this rather absolutist statement from Marx. To begin, we might turn to the passage from the *Manuscripts* that Foster and Clark analyze:

⁸¹ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 132.

⁸² Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 132.

⁸³ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 151.

⁸⁴ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 141.

Equipped with natural powers, with vital powers, he is an active natural being; these powers exist in him as dispositions and capacities, as drives. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his drives exist outside him as objects independent of him; but these objects are objects of his need, essential objects, indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being with natural powers means that he has real, sensuous objects as the object of his being.⁸⁵

As they observe, “What stands out here is the strong materialism and naturalism of Marx’s analysis, which unites human beings with nonhuman animals through the concept of drive related to various dispositions and faculties.”⁸⁶ Marx, in this instance, may demonstrate an attention towards animal life, and, in that demonstration, we might find reason to doubt Benton’s total charge, but this does not erase the inherently anthropocentric character of the passage. The union Foster and Clark consider is one that dignifies nonhuman life only through the vehicle of human “passion” as “essential power.”⁸⁷ Here, the human remains the centre for the possibility of nonhuman concepts of drive. Confirming his “essential power,” nonhuman life, in Marx’s own words, serves as a “partial object,” filling in for the things that he needs to properly claim natural being.⁸⁸ Even if the passage does indicate a union between human and nonhuman life, the fundamental character of its statement operates through a Hegelian gaze that posits the human—the vehicle for history—as the meeting place of all other life. As Foster and Clark continue,

If the human species has more developed social drives, needs, and capacities compared to other animals, as reflected in human production and social labour, these arise through a corporeal organization that unites humanity with the rest of life. It follows that even though nonhuman animal species lack the *self-conscious* social drives characteristic of human beings as *homo faber*, they nonetheless remain objective, sensuous beings, with

⁸⁵Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 181.

⁸⁶Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 138.

⁸⁷Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 181.

⁸⁸Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 181.

their own distinct forms of species life, which reflect their own corporeal organization, drives, needs, and capacities.⁸⁹

Marx does say that “a being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a natural being and plays no part in the system of nature,” but to what extent does nonhuman life, in his view, possess a nature outside of itself if he later concedes that nonhumans are limited subjects:⁹⁰

Man is more universal than animals [...] plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., theoretically form a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of science and partly as objects of art - his spiritual inorganic nature, his spiritual means of life, which he must first prepare before he can enjoy and digest them - so too in practice they form a part of human life and human activity [...] Man lives from nature, i.e. nature is his body, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die.⁹¹

The above passage prefaces Foster and Clark’s reference. Like nonhuman animals, man’s drive exists outside of himself. The trouble then, is that the nonhuman animal is a drive to the human, and if the nonhuman animal does possess some semblance of “universality” it is because man “digests them.”⁹² The human “lives from nature” indeed, and, while for Foster and Clark this link may critically unify him with nonhuman life, Marx is very clear when, in the *Manuscripts*, he notes that “the animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity”—a gesture which interlocks them with an ontological image that declares their inclusion in the value-making process without the possibility of being valued themselves, that is, without claiming the status of value-makers on their own accord.⁹³

This attachment of being to activity is a gesture of reduction that ensures the nonhuman’s

⁸⁹ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism,” 139.

⁹⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 390.

⁹¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 327-328.

⁹² Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 327-328.

⁹³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 31.

exclusion from the world, and therefore the process of material production because that which they do perform is regarded as life as such—it is ontological and therefore othered from the container of labour as an addition *to*, rather than an inherent quality *of* being. In this composition, the nonhuman performs what may be, upon amateurish regard, quantified as labour, but cannot be qualified as labour because that which separates the two depends on the valuation of life activity and species disposition. Despite the notion that that which the animal performs mimes the gestures of labour, it cannot be qualified as such because it is only an inherent biological trait as opposed to an external quality capable of taking part in a certain systemization. The human, on the other hand, rises above such activity, capable of transcendence because his biological and organic origin is always inherently historical—he is *from* nature, and this means that he cannot return because he must continue the very fashioning of history.

Animals, from this perspective, are therefore timeless because they are bound to the immediacy that creates the human, and if the human “makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness,” then he makes nonhuman life an object of his conscious life.⁹⁴ While the relationship between the fashioning of the human’s conscious life, and his being “from nature” may suggest a unity between human and nonhuman—in the sense that the human cannot enact his will and thus proceed in his Hegelian destiny without nonhuman life—the consequence or benefit of free activity, of the inevitable emergence of self-consciousness, is not accessible to nonhuman life.⁹⁵

As Foster and Clark proceed, they interrogate Benton’s criticism of Marx’s concept of species-being, noting that his discussion conveniently omits passages from Marx that might

⁹⁴Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 328.

⁹⁵Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 328.

otherwise challenge the premise of his argument. For Benton, species-being characterizes the fundamental hierarchical opposition between human and nonhuman life in Marx's work. For Foster and Clark, however, species-being is merely a "recognition of human needs, powers, and capacities for active self-development" within history.⁹⁶

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* species-being stands alongside labour,⁹⁷ the product of labour, and Man's coexistence with his fellow as the four identifiable features of human existence. The *Manuscripts* also consider self-alienation: "In general the statement that man is alienated from his species-existence means that one man is alienated from another just as each man is alienated from human nature. The alienation of man, the relation of man to himself is realized and expressed in the relation between man and other men."⁹⁸

Seldom does Marx mention self-alienation after 1844. In fact, in the *German Ideology*, he will go so far as to alter the language of human nature, preferring human history instead. Nonetheless, Marx, in his early writing, amalgamates self-relation with social relation, rendering self-alienation a feature always already belonging to social alienation. Marx adds: "the relationship of man to himself is objective and actual to him only through his relationship to other men," making it so that "when a man confronts himself, he also confronts other men"; and, moreover, "in the real-world self-alienation can appear only in the real relationship to other men."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Foster and Clark, "Marx and Alienated Speciesism," 140.

⁹⁷ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 31, states that labour "In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labour estranges the species from man. It changes for him the life of the species into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form."

⁹⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 296.

⁹⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 297.

The work of revolution, of unburdening the labourer is therefore the work of man, rising from his state of self-alienation into a communal reality. Once he has been drawn out of his self-alienation, recognizing not only the bond between species-being and/as social being—the bond between each human self—the quest towards revolution, a fully self-conscious and controlled moment of history, may proceed. So, while species-being may represent the “recognition of human need” the trouble arises when we consider the way in which it is consolidated within the project of man’s destiny.¹⁰⁰ Stache argues that Marx “neither makes use of species-being nor a human-animal dualism to establish the concept of estrangement, nor does he ground his critique of capitalism,” but as the amalgamation of self-alienation and social alienation shows, Marx does develop the human-centered limit of species-being in his discussion of praxis.¹⁰¹

Marx, in the *German Ideology*, develops his concept of species-being, abandoning the language of human nature for that of history and even science. While subtle, this change constitutes a declaration of the fate of nonhuman life in the project of revolution. Marx establishes the empirical and primary premise of the human’s history. Man begins to have a historical premise in the production of the following aspects:

- (1) That men must be in a position to live in order to be able to ‘make history’. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing, and various other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself.
- (2) In the production of new needs, or the continued production of the aforementioned needs.
- (3) In familial, romantic, and social interactions.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism”, 140.

¹⁰¹ Christian Stache, “On the Origins of Animalist Marxism,” *Monthly Review* (New York. 1949) 23 (2018): 23.

¹⁰² Marx, *The German Ideology*, 21.

Whereas the concept of species-being that Foster, Clark, and Stache discuss considers a uniquely human set of “needs, powers, and capacities for active self-development in history” what we see in the *German Ideology* is something different.¹⁰³ In the *Manuscripts*, for example, Marx’s use of the language of nature expands the possibility of the meaning of man’s relationship to nonhuman life. Synonymous with status or habit, nature is an isolated, or singular term because it defines the subject’s mode of being without casting any judgement on the particularities of that mode. In his *Early Writings*, when Marx speaks of species-being as nature, as “the inner life of man” it remains the temperament of human life.¹⁰⁴ As his thought evolves, Marx develops his concept of species-being, transforming it from a genealogical concept of nature, or the status of “Man” in general, into an empirical premise. This change is important because it represents the fortification of a political philosophy dependent upon a cultivated definition of the category of the human. The socialization of species-being as the joining of “Man’s” communal state, to his natural need, the development of new needs, and the history of production, transcends temperamental constitution (natural reaction) for a social character whose sense of consciousness focuses only on its own history and communal body. The shift towards a sense of empirical history that is at once natural and social develops Marx’s vision of revolution into a specific social organ exclusively communicable within the dignified category of human life.

The utilization of consciousness as a force of historical progress axes out nonhuman life from the possibility of the course of history as an interaction constituted by a certain type of nature whose essential need for production marks them as the only labourers in history. That is,

¹⁰³ Foster, and Clark, “Marx and Alienated Speciesism”, 139.

¹⁰⁴Ludwig Feuerbach, “On the Evaluation of The Essence of Christianity,” *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 2019, no. 1 (2019): 63, 241–252.

while the nonhuman's mention plays a significantly miniscule role, it is present nonetheless and thus leads us not towards a species diverse philosophy, but "Man's" singularity.

If species-being describes the state of "Man" as such because he requires certain criteria to fulfill his need, but that criteria is exclusively accomplished through socialization, and it is this state that capitalism exploits and desecrates, then where do we textually locate the historical role of nonhuman life in Marx's writing? Charged as anthropocentric with hierarchized concepts of life, Marx's species-being shuffles between an openness to the singularity of life as a distinctiveness in drive, and the termination of the possibility of including nonhuman life in the definition of labour and history precisely because the human remains both the limit and question of sociality.

The *Manuscripts* and *Ideology* provide a conception of "Man" as a cross-section of himself, and thus a totality of all that constitutes consciousness. "Man" is a totality of his subjective condition, his condition as derived and constituted from/of the communal body, as well as his needs in the present and future. All human consciousness is bound up in a social substructure, such that "Man, however much he may therefore be a particular individual [...] is just as much the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of thought and experienced society for itself."¹⁰⁵ As a social substructure, consciousness carries out a practical purpose. For example, Marx notes that "It is true that thought and being are distinct, but at the same time they are in unity with one another."¹⁰⁶ As a uniquely human characteristic, one must ask if nonhuman life, in this instance, is exploitable in such terms. When the unity of thought, as both personal

¹⁰⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 351.

¹⁰⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 351.

and social, is ruptured, “Man” falls prey to the suffering of capitalism. If, however, nonhuman life falls outside the bounds of this unity then how do we, as scholars, reconcile Marx’s refusal to think generously of those outside his species? Or perhaps more appropriately, is there room for us, as Marxists, to think about nonhumans in and through Marx?

Marx uses species and naturalist terms to make a historical argument that, in its production, generates either a complete disavowal of the nonhuman, or an interest in the nonhuman for the eventual sake of human exceptionalism. Yet, the conjuring of the nonhuman alone is a gesture noteworthy in and of itself. We cannot responsibly ignore the disavowal of the nonhuman, but we must also resist the urge to discard Marx and assume a hostility towards his ideas. My interest at this point is not an attempt to try and apply Marx’s philosophy to the nonhuman and advocate for some manner of relevance. My task is not invested in trying to prove that species-being, labour, or value are in fact ontological capacities embodied by the nonhuman. On the contrary, my investment thus far has been in the demonstration of the ontological strife which the nonhuman continues to find itself in as it concerns their place in Marx—and in later chapters, Aristotle, and Jameson. In grounding this characteristic difficulty, my pursuit is invested in an excavation, not only of Marx’s specific allusions to nonhuman life, but the way in which the text articulates such allusion. It is important to understand both the meaning of the animal’s disavowal as well as the mechanics that execute those exclusions. Developing a full picture of ontological exclusion on the level of both meaning *and* mechanics charges us with the energy to break in a new direction of interpretation that is more equipped to detect sensitivities in the text where human exceptionalism become increasingly difficult to uphold, and therefore vulnerable to intervention.

For Marx, nonhuman life is more than just a simple, and irrelevant subject. Rather, when we peer in the direction of *how* things are said as opposed to just *what* is said, we see that the nonhuman constitutes a conflicted point in his work that fails to meet any sense of resolve. Marx's reliance on ontological hegemony shores up a sense of strife in the architecture of language that is otherwise incapable of firmly describing and defining the animal to which Marx is referring outside the language of simple lack.

For brevity's sake I have divided this final portion into sections—each of which is interested in one of six selected texts from Marx's bibliography: *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), *The German Ideology* (1845), *Grundrisse* (1857), *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), *Capital Vol. I* (1867), and *II* (1885). Each portion focuses on a single mention of a nonhuman, and what I identify as the text's mechanical struggle to uphold its otherwise ontologically exclusionary logic or utterance.

Selections from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844)

In his discussion of “the life of the species, both in man and in animals,” Marx says the following:

In creating a world of objects by his personal activity, in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as his own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc.¹⁰⁷

Here, Marx describes the way in which man, constituted by the objects of the world (which belong to him), takes on the activity of species-being through his ability to create, and work (upon nature). Yet curiously enough—and, following this statement—Marx, in a single sentence

¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 31.

will say: “Admittedly, animals also produce.”¹⁰⁸ Now, this turn is not the limit of our curiosity in Marx’s statement because right after he admits to animal production, he once again back tracks. Marx confesses that, animals, though productive, are so in a strictly “one-sided” manner.¹⁰⁹

This moment of confession and its arrangement within the context of Marx’s language plays a tenuous and tangled role in the way he goes onto achieve the end of his argument. In that moment, before the reader proceeds and Marx goes onto write beyond the point of admission, the possibility of the implication of animal life into capitalism as a worker and labourer—exploited in their activity, fatigued, and oppressed—remains open for but a miniscule increment in time. Here, Marx may pause in confession, turn in thought, and ruminate. While he does go onto to express those thoughts which he takes time to separate from the activity of thought—the “admittedly”—his turn in language remains a capsule of potential and temperance.¹¹⁰

Selections from *The German Ideology* (1845)

One year later, Marx will write the following about human history: “The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals.”¹¹¹ The language here is very clear. For there to be human history, Marx explains, there must also be a human—such that the inception of human history is too the inception of the human. Curiously enough, however, it is in the manuscript where Marx will demonstrate that this sentence is not actually as simple as it may appear at first glance.

The sentence in question is a correction of the following sentence, struck out from the

¹⁰⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 31.

¹⁰⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 31.

¹¹¹ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 37.

final publication: “The first historical act of these individuals distinguishing them from animals is not that they think, but that they begin to produce their means of subsistence.”¹¹² In its erasure, Marx too erases the assumption that animals do not think, thus reaffirming it as an assumption after all. In its published form, we find the final iteration of this struck out line: “Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like.”¹¹³ Of course, Marx will go on to describe the way in which man distinguishes himself from animal in the specificity of his activity and labour(s), but in this moment, we arrive, once again, at a strange, and even confessional configuration of nonhuman life. That is, nonhuman life becomes a linguistic and functional point in Marx’s language: it not only reflects upon, and thus confesses his own condemned capacity to think and re-think the place and position of animal life, but the reader’s as well. This sentence looks back upon those who gaze at its page, implicating them in a system of assumption, which the text, in its logical form, relies upon.

In this moment, Marx will finalize the position of nonhuman life as a subject socially susceptible *to* and posed *as* a reflection of all that which “we like”—of assumptions, and axioms upon which to struggle in thought and discourse.¹¹⁴ Mechanically, nonhuman life becomes a reference point for difficulty in meaning and thought.

Selections from *Grundrisse* (1857)

In both *Grundrisse* and *Capital* Marx argues that “the appropriation of animals [and] land” is not compatible with the master-slave dialectic:

Basically, the appropriation of animals, land etc. cannot take place in a master–servant relation, although the animal provides service. The presupposition of the master–servant

¹¹² Marx, *The German Ideology*, 37.

¹¹³ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 37.

¹¹⁴ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 37.

relation is the appropriation of an alien will. Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal, may well provide a service, but does not thereby make its owner into a master.¹¹⁵

Much like Marx's admission in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, the word "although" threatens the premise of the passage, suspending its meaning for just a moment. It is not that Marx will go onto somehow argue that the animal labours in some capacity. Rather, this turn, or admittance, takes the form of a brief allowance that occurs in a contained or singular sentence structure, cut off from its negating factor by a period. The "although" operates not as a tension in form, but a tension in affect. Indeed, there is no legible disagreement.¹¹⁶ To sever the negating clause from the subject in question is not an initiating act, but a precarious and potentially speculative gesture. We know that Marx will go onto directly and clearly negate the possibility of the animal taking part in the master-slave dialectic; moreover, we have seen Marx clearly situate the negating clause with the negated subject in one sentence. So, what are we to make of this brief eclipse in meaning?

The "although" constitutes an axiom of anxiety and potential.¹¹⁷ In this moment, there is a problem of ontological possibility wherein Marx's encounter with the animal, as an example or metonym, contours itself in such a way that its delineation (or separation) from man (to animal) becomes a paradoxical site of uncomfortable proximity. The "although" functions as a moment of hesitation: it is a moment where the possibility of the animal as near to all that which is human—creation itself—is granted permission to potentially slip through the cracks of negation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 424-425.

¹¹⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 424

¹¹⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 424

¹¹⁸ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 424

Marx's language structure (inadvertently) enables a negation of the nonhumans ontological range that is at once oppressive in its conclusion, and reciprocal insofar as it carries with it the very question of animal possibility. The sentence in question, and Marx's tendency to logically delay his conclusions—to write with bated breath—binds together two “impossible presents” in a correspondence of reciprocal negation.¹¹⁹ Each portion of the logical statement mutually negates the isolated unit of meaning attached to its companion sentence. There is at once, a unified denial *of* and *by* each competent. The confirmation of nonhuman life's inability to partake in the master-bondsman dialectic erupts through the terror that they just *might*. The pause in Marx's logical arrangement threatens the pursuit of conclusion: and yet it is this very terror which the conclusion depends upon. The reciprocal denial of each component (“Though the animal provides service” *pause* “But they cannot assume the master-slave dialectic”) may, for us, straddle an existential territory of difference and trans-situational potential.

In denying the animal their status as a working subject, the text hesitates to conclude, thus collapsing the question of what the animal *is* to this theorization of capital and work. The animal is not bondsman to master, but they are also not *not* something else. The animal's exemption from the category of Hegelian slave refuses them the capacity to gain a sense of self-consciousness through their labour, but it also implies the perpetual nature of the animal's *labouring*. The animal, unlike the Hegelian bondsman, will not break away from this cycle of work, rather they will remain the oppressed class, they will remain ambiguously *laboured*—and this brings us to our fourth section.

¹¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 131.

A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)

Here, Marx says the following: “The particular use-values which, as a result of barter between different communities, become commodities, e.g., slaves, cattle, metals, usually serve also as the first money within these communities.”¹²⁰ Marx conflates the slave with cattle: both are commodities. Now, it is not that Marx *himself* views the slave as a commodity, and thus, as a subject incapable of production. For example, when discussing the conquering of nations, Marx observes that it is slave labour which, in this style of economy and governance, becomes “the basis of production”: “A conquering nation may divide the land among the conquerors and in this way imposes a distinct mode of distribution and form of landed property, thus determining production. Or it may turn the population into slaves, thus making slave-labour the basis of production.”¹²¹

Indeed, the curious dimension of this passage arises when we consider the changeability of Marx’s conflation. Every other time Marx mentions the slave, he conflates them either with the land upon which they reside¹²²—or rather, the land which their master *owns*—or “wageworkers”: “For example, the slave, the serf, the wageworker, they all receive an amount of food enabling them to exist as a slave, serf or wageworker.”¹²³ The effect of this conflation is two-fold. On one hand, to conflate the slave with the wageworker within Marx’s ideology is to very clearly presume that the slave too labours and resides under the possibility of liberation, or revolution. On the other hand, it produces a sort of logical clot. Why would Marx amalgamate the slave with cattle if he very clearly understands nonhuman life as incapable of production and

¹²⁰ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 19.

¹²¹ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 118-119.

¹²² Marx, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* notes on page 75: “[the] accumulation of slaves and land necessitates relations of domination and servitude, and so on.”

¹²³ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 114.

thus, axed out of the possibility of the end of capitalism? Is the slave like the wageworker, or are they like cattle which is both raw material for production, and capital for exchange? We know that the cow is not a part of the master-bondsman dialectic and so, bears no resemblance to either of those categories—beyond the historical fact of exchanging life as currency. Indeed, this is the first and last time Marx will utter nonhuman life in the same category as human life, and thus, directly risk any kind of communion within the realm and question of production. Throughout the text, Marx will go onto amalgamate nonhuman life with “wool, corn, butter, milk and other goods” and thus,¹²⁴ “material wealth, i.e., use-values, such as clothes, jewellery.”¹²⁵

Marx’s momentary conflation is quite striking when we consider that this is, once again, a moment he will never repeat. What then does it mean to witness this singular configuration? We know that within Marx is a clear disavowal of nonhuman ontologies in the question of labour. While Marx may be clear in his speech, such punctums of tension—the corrections in his manuscripts and the inclusion of those corrections, the trans-situational potentials of his sentence formation—summon that clarity into question, into immanent suspect. One must, however, not mistake the technical tension of Marx’s language for an untruth. Rather, it is that the questionability of Marx’s speech which functions as a power that makes the former stability of his statements “undecidable.”¹²⁶ While Marx’s logical components (“Yes the animal is” *pause* “But, no the animal is not”) are distinct, the distinction itself is not “always discernible.”¹²⁷ Which is to say, the tension carried within Marx’s writing makes the subject of nonhuman life potentially, or at least, momentarily, undecidable. This indecisiveness “posits the simultaneity of

¹²⁴ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 74.

¹²⁵ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 75.

¹²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 66.

¹²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 65.

impossible presents” through the very distinctions that characterize the contours of nonhuman life.¹²⁸ The very ambiguity, or questionability of Marx’s technical tension strays his logic closer and closer towards, if not a struggle to capture a stable definition (of the nonhuman).

In *Capital Vol I*—the fifth section of this portion of my chapter—Marx says, “Of all the great motors handed down from the manufacturing period, horse-power is the worst, partly because a horse has a head of his own, partly because he is costly, and the extent to which he is applicable in factories is very restricted.”¹²⁹ Of course, Marx is in no way suggesting that the horse is somehow a labourer. Instead, the horse is but a “motor,” or an inferior technology. Yet, spun into Marx’s statement is a sense of logical insatiability. Marx, as we may recall in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, condemns nonhuman life to one-sidedness, arguing that unlike man, “an animal only produces what it immediately needs.”¹³⁰ In *Capital Vol. I*, Marx will also make the following comparison:

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement.¹³¹

While capable and able, the spider—a master weaver—bears no resemblance to the human worker and mind because of its inability to “raise [its] structure in imagination before” it ushers them into materiality. The spider, instead, is detached from the cognitive capacity of creation, and attached only to the instantaneous, simultaneous creation as (1) a one-sided, self-serving

¹²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 131.

¹²⁹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 263.

¹³⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 276.

¹³¹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 127.

production, and (2) a production brought into being the moment it is materialized as opposed to imagined or visualized. Whereas the spider does not think or plan its creation, man transforms nature consciously, and mindfully—he knows what he does, and produces out of that knowing, the prophecy of his ability, of his visualizations. This comparison, however, is but one between a nonhuman life in the wild and a human in the throes of economy.

In his discussion of horsepower, Marx, despite his tendency towards negation and human exceptionalism, paradoxically confesses that animals—or at least, the horse—can indeed think in such a way that its action, in the throes of production, carries with it a premonition like that of working man. The horse, per Marx, has a mind of its own, and, as such, produces complications for those other minds working in the space in question. Yet, the premise of Marx's argument depends upon the notion that nonhuman life is presumably impulsive and non-thinking. The relationship between the appearance of animals in Marx's writing and the theoretical role they are assigned within his canon reveals, in this moment, the multi-faceted character of the production of meaning, and the risks we take when we attribute meaning to lives that we, ourselves, have not lived.

Time and time again, nonhuman life slips through the cracks, and preserves the very limit(s) of language and thought. Derrida argues that “thinking perhaps begins” with cross-species encounters, and Levinas shows us that the sight of that encounter is one that transcends time.¹³² We will always meet Bobby's gaze, we are always and have always been under the pressure and tension of witnessing the Other, even when we think they are no where to be found. Indeed, transspecies thought, in Marx's case emerges at the very moment he suspends thought: it

¹³² Jacques Derrida, “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, tr. Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills (Fordham University Press, 2008), 397.

is the space between sentences. We are inclined, invited, and even at risk of asking questions which the text itself rejects: “Do animals work?”, “Do animals produce value?”

What we learn from identifying Marx’s technical hesitancy is that the question of nonhuman life, as an act of identity and meaning, constantly negotiates whether it will risk gazing at nonhuman life to utter its inquiry. By understanding the paradoxical way in which nonhuman ontology is oriented, we are far more equipped to re-read our culture as one deeply enmeshed and ensnared by the inability to speak and think in a space unoccupied by the denial and oppression of nonhuman life. But this denial is also a presence buried beneath the soil of our speech, threatening to sprout, to claim the field beneath our feet.

While this chapter is devoted to an exploration of the relationship between discussions of nonhuman ontology and value, my second chapter will extend our discourse in the direction of Aristotle. The Aristotelian concept of language I argue, is crucial to properly fleshing out this pattern of the nonhuman’s ontological denial because it is from language that subjectivity emerges, and subjectivity is the status of the creature who creates value: “Man.” Aristotle in particular explores and builds his idea of language through the attribution of concepts like imagination, logic, and learning. Language therefore exceeds rudimentary notions of whether one can assume an organized function of expression, and directs us instead, towards the concept of ontological complexity. Language, in this framework becomes subjecthood, that which “Man” often appropriates in exclusivity. An exploration of value and the ability to labour, to suffer in capital, necessarily demands an inquest into language as the concept that ground the parameters of subjecthood.

Furthermore, Marx attributes value *to* Aristotle. In *Capital* Marx notes that to demonstrate why labour is value, or the origin of value, one must look to Aristotle’s notion “that

the money form of commodities is only the further development of the simple form of value.”¹³³ Marx cites a small passage from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he notes that the material concept of five beds amounting to a single home is not to be differentiated from five beds amounting to a considerable amount of money.¹³⁴ In this citation Marx finds that Aristotle reaches the critical point of demonstrating that “the value relation which gives rise to this expression [of the beds] makes it necessary that the house should qualitatively be made the equal of the bed, and that, without such an equalisation, these two clearly different things could not be compared with each other as commensurable quantities.”¹³⁵ Aristotle is unable to explain why commodities which are otherwise unequal in quality are mutually judged in terms of exchange—and this, of course, is why Aristotle cannot reach the point of articulating concepts such as exchange value. In Aristotle, Marx finds the advent of value, but not because of some lack of judgement on Aristotle’s part. On the contrary, Marx goes as far as to say that Aristotle tells us “What barred the way to [Aristotle’s] further analysis; it was the absence of any concept of value.”¹³⁶ What we see in this case, is the Marxist ethic developing out of Aristotle’s labour and thought rather than despite any possibility of lack on his behalf. For example, Marx asks:

What is that equal something, that common substance, which admits of the value of the beds being expressed by a house? Such a thing, in truth, cannot exist, says Aristotle. And why not? Compared with the beds, the house does represent something equal to them, in so far as it represents what is really equal, both in the beds and the house. And that is – human labour.¹³⁷

¹³³ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

¹³⁴ Aristotle and Terence Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2019), 1133b.

¹³⁵ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

¹³⁶ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

¹³⁷ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

Aristotle's "genius," Marx concludes, "is shown by this alone, that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality."¹³⁸ Moreover, while Marx does cite Aristotle as limited in his exploration of value, it is at no fault of his own: "The peculiar conditions of the society in which he lived, alone prevented him from discovering" what, "in truth," was at the bottom of this equality," which is to say, for Marx, Aristotle potentially embodies the capacity to articulate the complexities of value, and any limitation is a matter of circumstance.¹³⁹

There is considerable reason to regard Marx's theory of value, labour and thus, historical subjecthood one that is at least in conversation with Aristotle's methodical operation. This link between Marx and Aristotle is the demand that directs me towards pursuing our ontological perspective in the direction which Marx himself follows as he develops the concepts which we have so far analyzed. If the theory of labour, in part, arrives from the Aristotelian method, then might we locate ontological paradox in the classical world as well? For Marx, it is the possibility to produce value that, in part, inspires the definition of subjecthood, but as the methodological framework for the concept of value itself, how does Aristotle develop the concept of subjecthood? How does Aristotle cope with animal ontology?

¹³⁸ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

¹³⁹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 40.

Chapter Two: The Language of Ontological Strife

Prologue

Jeremy Bentham is often lauded as a foremost scholar in animal rights and welfare, and his argument that nonhuman animals should be treated with respect, kindness, and moral consideration is a grounding statement in Western philosophy.¹ Yet, as significant as his contribution may be, it is, within the scope of his work, quite minimal.² It is a small footnote from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* where Bentham will relate the slave to the animal:

The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?³

In this moment, Bentham makes a striking remark that will take hold of the rest of my chapter.

Does the possession of language bare judgement on whether animals can suffer? Does it matter

¹ Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, “Animal Others—Editors’ Introduction,” *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (2012): 477–487.

² Cass R. Sunstein, “The Rights of Animals,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* 70, no. 1 (2003): 387–401.

³ Jeremy Bentham, “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (Chapters I–V),” in *Utilitarianism and on Liberty*, ed. Mary Warnock (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 144.

whether animals can exist in language if we know they can suffer? Does the inability to possess language justify exploitation? For Bentham, the knowledge of suffering is enough to argue against animal exploitation. Yet, as fundamental as Bentham's claim may be, it is precisely the negation of animals from the world of language which often justifies their suffering and ontological degrading.⁴ Animals are not regarded as life, let alone a life capable of bearing witness either to the suffering of others or their own; moreover, even if the nonhuman could do such a thing, they would, per this logic, lack the possibility of making evidence of such suffering. The possession of language becomes, not only the ability to speak, but also the possibility of being heard.

The invisibility of suffering in the meat and dairy industry is not only constituted by the architecture of the slaughterhouse—as well as the systematic and historical commodification of cows, chickens, and pigs—but also the kind of ontological boundaries consistently imposed on nonhumans. Animals are abused on camera, and yet, as *Animal Equality UK* explains, those who perpetrate the abuse “typically receive little more than a slap on the wrist.”⁵ The animal cry, audible on tape, is not regarded as a cry proper because it comes from the mouth of a creature outside the boundary of the language within which the cry is defined.⁶ A deconstruction of the rigidity of language is central, and in fact necessary to any work being done within the scope of animal rights, let alone inquires into ontological status.⁷

⁴ Grace Y. Kao, “Creaturely Solidarity: Rethinking Human-Nonhuman Relations,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 42, no. 4 (2014): 743–768, 744.

⁵ Nada Farhoud, “Animals are being abused in slaughterhouses with CCTV cameras, but no action is taken,” *The Mirror*, November 27, 2022, www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/animals-being-abused-slaughterhouses-cctv-28596143.

⁶ Annie Potts and Philip Armstrong, “Picturing Cruelty: Chicken Advocacy and Visual Culture,” in *Animal Death*, ed. Jay Johnston and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (Sydney University Press, 2013), 151–168, 165.

⁷ David Sztybel, “Can the Treatment of Animals Be Compared to the Holocaust?,” *Ethics and the Environment* 11, no. 1 (2006): 97–132, 113.

As I will go onto detail, it is the capacity to possess a particularly human definition of language which both informs and defends the production of “Man” and therefore the degradation of the animal. The category of the human emerges after the consolidation of exclusively human language concepts. Yet, as I argue, the sorts of language practises we attribute to human language alone are very contradictory and therefore non-exclusive activities. In other words, I wish to extend my exploration of ontological capacity in the direction of language, assessing how, when, and where animals are used to define subjectivity and whether they can claim any semblance of ability.

When we assume the perspective of animal possibly to analyze those language concepts so often used to defend the human’s exclusive possession, the otherwise firm reality of the human as a singular and isolated way of being starts to fall apart. As “Man’s” image crumbles, we are forced into a new conceptual space that demands a thorough reassessment of how we read those texts otherwise used to justify human superiority.

The philosophical legacy of the definition of language is a spectrum of cascading differences and contradictions that envelope the human and nonhuman into an irreconcilable unity.⁸ It is my intention to investigate and reread the work of Aristotle for the improbability of this thing called the human. Alongside his relationship to Marx, Aristotle—arguably the first theoretical linguist—is paramount to my discovery because his concept of *logos* and its relation to creaturely life is foundational to all inquiries concerning human capacity within the domain of philosophy. I must affirm however that my interest in Aristotle—much like my investigation of

⁸ Anita Auer and Jennifer Thorburn, eds., *Approaches to Migration, Language and Identity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022); Christina Späti, ed., *Language and Identity Politics: A Cross-Atlantic Perspective* (New York: Berghahn, 2016); Paul Gubbins and Mike Holt, *Beyond Boundaries: Language and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2002); John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Marx—is not strictly invested in the meaning of his concepts. This chapter does not constitute an Aristotelian analysis which demands a necessary fluency in the entirety of his theories. I am once again engaged not in what is said—let alone the totality of what is said—but how (animal) things are said and organized. How is the animal figured into Aristotle’s discussions, and what does that configuration have to say about our inquest into the way animal ontology is evoked in the maintenance of the human’s alleged superiority? I am focused on the role of animal ontology in specific examples that I will analyze through a technical perspective.

As Susan Crane reminds us, “animal studies often seek to reconfigure thinking about animals by turning interdisciplinary to skew and stretch each field’s range of vision.”⁹ As per Aristotle, Crane contends and argues that we can “recover traces of animal presence, not by treating language as if it were a transparent window on the real, but by concentrating on the peculiar obscurities and revelations inherent in turns of phrase, narrative strategies, and formal conventions.”¹⁰ Crane’s statement is interesting because it reflects the Aristotelian account I want to pursue. The only necessary stretch we must take is one that stands in the direction of our willingness towards suspension. Animals—non-metaphorical and non-allegorical—are everywhere in Aristotle. These creatures emerge alongside and within his discussion of the definition and possibilities of language. Within this scope, the nonhuman is a challenge to our sense of philosophical presupposition, prompting us to consider if we, as readers, are willing to suspend our presupposed reading of Aristotle in favour of what seems to be a field where

⁹ Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 4.

¹⁰ Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*, 4.

language and species intermix in a back-and-forth that never seems to fully sway in either ontological direction.

Something that threads through my argument and works in tandem with Crane's discussion is an understanding of Aristotle's concept of *logos*, sense, and language as reproduced from a legacy of reflection which is often quite speciesist. The preoccupation with philosophy's generosity towards "Man" begins from a place of the nonhuman's primary exclusion from the possibility of language.¹¹ In other words, it is not just that the animal's exclusion from language is somehow discovered in the throes of analysis, but that it is a pre-condition, a research bias that exists before the advent of ontological proof. As I will demonstrate, this bias is most legible when we suspend our pre-conditions and approach Aristotle with a gaze that leaves behind all consequence and inherited interpretation. Ignoring, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen puts it in *Medieval Identity Machines*, any "insubstantial allegories in which we discover ourselves," may allow us to locate what "might occur between animals and humans—that is, what processes, desires, identities might circulate in the interspace where animal and human differences come together or come apart."¹²

With this in mind, I develop a concept of *animal speech*: an existential crossing of ontological boundaries that is mediated by the dynamism of the definition of language and its conditional features. Within our speech, our language, is not the activity of the subject as a self-relation, but more abstractly, an event of ontological difference that unites human and nonhuman utterances through their mutual absence. That which we utter returns, and therefore deteriorates

¹¹ Cheryl E. Abbate, "'Higher' and 'Lower' Political Animals: A Critical Analysis of Aristotle's Account of the Political Animal," *Journal of Animal Ethics* 6, no. 1 (2016): 54–66, 55.

¹² Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 42.

into a reminder that is always in denial. In metaphors, analogies, and tangents—even in the very way we go about theorizing language—the denial but also the ever-present reminder of animal ontology remains.

Aristotle

In *Rhetoric* there is a dog—well, there are many dogs, as the word Aristotle uses *is hoi kunes*: a pack of general dogs.¹³ These dogs are well behaved and gentle—and indeed, they should be because they make an appearance in Aristotle’s discussion of calmness.¹⁴ Even dogs, Aristotle expresses, demonstrate that “anger ceases towards those who humble themselves, for they do not bite those who sit down.”¹⁵ Why do these dogs show up in the middle of what is otherwise a text foundational to Western philosophy’s conception of rhetoric, language, and therefore a seemingly exclusively human activity? What a strange intimacy—and I use this word deliberately because of the dog’s proximity or intimacy to Aristotle’s discussion of *pathos* (intimacy as feeling). What is this passage doing?

On one hand, this passage invokes a complication in what we historically attribute to Aristotle as a species hierarchy.¹⁶ More critically, however, this exchange also illustrates a scene in which nonhumans and humans, gathered and collectivized, ruminate over their specific positions: an action that manifests in the adjustment of their responses to the social situation. The dogs, in this case, function as way for Aristotle to make legible—in a very day-to-day manner—that one’s affect greatly shapes the reception and consequence of their rhetorical position. At the

¹³ This is assuming that there is or can be a such thing as a *general* dog.

¹⁴ Debra Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw: Animals, Language, Sensation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 2.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018), 1380a.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Ernest Richard Lloyd, “The Development of Aristotle’s Theory of the Classification of Animals,” *Phronesis* 6, no. 1 (1961): 59–81, 64.

same time in “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” Jorge Torres finds that the “friendly natural character of dogs” underscores Aristotle’s tendency to situate humans and nonhumans in communicative sociality and friendship.¹⁷ Torres contends that “Aristotle’s account of friendship has been seriously misconstrued”¹⁸ by those who claim that “Aristotle does not allow for the possibility of friendship between human beings and nonhuman animals.”¹⁹ Torres maintains, however, that “a more careful reading of the textual evidence available reveals that Aristotle does accept that human beings and other animals can establish certain forms of friendship.”²⁰ Torres relates the dogs in question to a moment from the *Eudemian Ethics* wherein Aristotle notes,

This kind of friendship [i.e., virtuous friendship] is found only among human beings (for they alone are aware of rational choice), but the other kinds are also found among wild animals; and usefulness is even apparent to some small degree between tame animals and humans and between tame animals and each other, as Herodotus says that the plover is useful to the crocodile.²¹

Torres holds that “this passage not only states that animals are capable of friendship, it argues, moreover, that they are capable of interspecies friendship, including friendship between nonhuman animals and human beings.”²² Torres takes “this passage to offer compelling, indeed conclusive, evidence [...] that nonhuman animals can also build friendships based on pleasure.”²³ This fact of pleasure is important to note because, as Torres articulates, it forges a

¹⁷ Jorge Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship: An Aristotelian Perspective,” *Journal of Animal Ethics* 12, no.1 (2022): 76–88, 84.

¹⁸ Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” 76.

¹⁹ Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” 77.

²⁰ Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” 77.

²¹ Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, trans. and ed. Brad Inwood and Raphael Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1236b5–9.

²² Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” 77.

²³ Torres, “Animal Ethics Based on Friendship,” 84.

link between the nonhuman and language. Though the nonhuman's possession of language may be subject to intense dissection, it remains that they do, per Aristotle, "have a voice which, unlike mere sounds, is a signifier of the pleasure and pain that they feel."²⁴ To be social and to belong to a social group—as the dogs in this case do—is to have pleasure and therefore attest to the fact of communication and the possibly language possession.

Debra Hawhee, sharing a similar interest in *Rhetoric's* dogs points out something very important and mutually critical: "nonhuman animals turn up in [Aristotle's *Rhetoric*] when sensation matters the most, thereby bringing rhetoric to its—or the—senses."²⁵ Describing the dogs in question, Hawhee also concedes that the dogs and "their noisy, kinetic movement fill the world with sensory material," and this is important because "that filling [...] fills out the art of rhetoric."²⁶

Diane Davis' "Creaturely Rhetorics" shares Hawhee's sentiment, arguing that "without a representable sense of self, animals are not only without language, but also without thinking, understanding, reason, response (and so responsibility)."²⁷ The trouble of this dynamic, Davis proceeds, "leaves rhetorical studies free to continue ignoring animals—ignoring all of them, since it is this lack of language that defines what is called 'the animal' in general."²⁸

John Muckelbauer too thinks of the problem of language and its anthropocentric exclusivity as at once the beating and calcified heart of rhetorical studies. In "Domesticating Animal Theory" Muckelbauer says: "Ever since the cicadas offered a sonic canvas on which Phaedrus and Socrates articulated their fetish for logos, rhetoric has made its way on the backs of

²⁴ Torres, "Animal Ethics Based on Friendship," 86.

²⁵ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 2.

²⁶ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 3.

²⁷ Diane Davis, "Creaturely Rhetorics, *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 44, no. 1 (2011): 88–94, 99.

²⁸ Davis, "Creaturely Rhetorics," 91.

animality.”²⁹ What Hawhee, Davis, and Muckelbauer show us is that there is emergent reason to turn our deconstructive gaze towards the very texts that, in writing about language, philosophically cement its capacities to the human. We must necessarily question the texts from which we derive not just our conception of language, but also ontological character. As Hawhee observes, “It may be tempting, for example, to follow those working in animal studies and to peg the pathos-ridden dog passage from the *Rhetoric* as yet another wince-inducing instance of anthropomorphism, offensive for casting nonhuman animals as having something like human feelings.”³⁰

An approach that negates speciesist texts through the demonstration of anthropocentrism paradoxically allows those texts and their exclusionary premises to persist in form and legacy. The animals we witness in such description may arrive to us in metonymic forms, but it does not take long for them to exceed those originary manifestations, placing us into an ontological tension that our study of Marx knows all too well. Aristotle’s dogs illustrate less of a binary between humans and nonhumans and more of an image which embodies the very complexity of the question and possibility of ontological difference. The dogs challenge our ability to metaphorize them in such a way that casts their possession of language—their complexity of character and capacity—into the realm of fiction.

Yet despite the possibility of this premise of openness, there remains a central point of contention: *logos*. As Hawhee proceeds, she makes an interesting point regarding what Aristotle does not utter: *alogos*. Hawhee explains that “*Alogos* [...] names a part of the soul for Aristotle,

²⁹ John Muckelbauer, “Domesticating Animal Theory,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 44, no. 1 (2011): 95–100, 98.

³⁰ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 4.

a part that operates without reference to rationality.”³¹ *Alogos*, in comparison to reason, is not the faculty of irrationality as much as it is an inquiry into the place of nonrationality in Aristotle’s thought. Hawhee proceeds, “*Alogos* may therefore usefully be approached as a capacity [...] rather than a deficiency [and] may be found in texts composed by Aristotle himself and in the capacities exhibited by the nonhuman animals that appear there.”³²

In the question of rhetoric and language, nonhuman animals “expand into the role of proxy feelers and are often carriers of sensation” and this is important because of the way sensation and feeling—as that which remains present yet unutterable beyond description—“help to fill out the parts of rhetoric that are *alogos*”: “This means that along with sensation, which is decidedly *alogos*, nonhuman animals often bring life, energy (*energeia*), to *logoi*, to speeches, to writings, or to words themselves.”³³ Feeling, and the affect that come with sense, expands beyond the physical and into the psychic—a communication that simultaneously transcends language at the same time it depends upon its grip to know itself and its content. The diverse quality of feeling and affect is very interesting and beneficial to our discussion because it challenges the boundary of language and therefore the speciesist implications that follow.

In “Witness: Humans, Animals, and the Politics of Becoming” Naisargi N. Dave makes an interesting point regarding the species divide that necessitates animal exploitation. Dave argues that even some animal rights movements, which can sometimes function through the logic or desire to speak on behalf of the animal, threaten to further the divide: “the intimacy of human and animal, by showing that intimacy is other than a freely chosen bond between two sovereign

³¹ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 13.

³² Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 14.

³³ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 15.

(and thus presumably human) subjects, [...] explode[s] the species divide.”³⁴ The desire to speak for the animal may serve to further alienate them from those categories otherwise regarded as exclusively human. As Dave narrates, “to give voice for that unfree other that cannot speak, the witness” must therefore “hyper-embod[y] [themselves] as [a] human by doing precisely that which defines what it is to be human: to speak.”³⁵ Dave’s discussion brings forth what Hawhee epitomizes for us at this point: the understanding that just because we, as humans, do not and perhaps cannot exercise within what we may regard as the various gaps in language, does not imply they remain unoccupied (think: *alogos*).

Retuning to Bentham, it might be useful to contextualize his argument within the boundary of animal activism. Activism, especially as it concerns nonhumans, functions through a particular mode of intimacy that draws the human and nonhuman together in a relationship that may not necessarily be consensual. As Dave goes on to explain, “by entering into intimacy with an animal in pain, the activist seeks not to be freer, but to render herself even more deeply subject to unequal relations of obligation and responsibility.”³⁶ The activist who speaks against animal suffering risks reproducing a bond predicated on the sovereignty because the execution of dissent demands the “simultaneous sublimation and deployment of the self as a sovereign human subject to and for the needs of the unfree other.”³⁷ In giving a voice to the nonhuman, one must assume a position that is hyper-human—hyper-capable in its capacity for language because it simultaneously (1) declares the animal a voice capable of language, and (2) negates the nonhuman’s position in language by using a human voice.

³⁴ Naisargi N. Dave, “Witness: Humans, Animals, and the Politics of Becoming,” *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 3 (2014): 433–456, 445.

³⁵ Dave, “Witness,” 445.

³⁶ Dave, “Witness,” 445.

³⁷ Dave, “Witness,” 445.

What shape would dissent take if we understood and indeed privileged the perspective that regards nonhuman life as an ontologically diverse force capable of language? We may, in doing so, recognize those gaps that we cannot fill in order to progressively direct ourselves towards a world where the cry of the cow, chicken, and pig may hold up as an utterance, comprehensible in meaning, and garnering consequence in action: we may be able to fill out *logos* with *alogos* and complete a more species diverse picture of language forms.

Filling out language through its necessarily diverse form helps us traverse the difference between humans and animals that otherwise informs the violences we commit. Filling out language with the nonhuman aids us in our direction towards expansive upheaval, towards “unnatural participation”: the making of the subject into a “questioning-machine.”³⁸ The acknowledgement of language forces us outside of our category and into the possibility of not another self, but a becoming, “an affectability that is no longer that of subjects.”³⁹

The effect of Hawhee’s analysis extends beyond the way language manifests as multiplicity and into the realm of anthropocentric presupposition. In this case, the possibility of language as an exclusively human belonging falls apart, and, with it, the epistemic demands of anthropocentrism. As *logos* detaches from the possibility of defining the contours of man in language, it becomes, not concept, but the activity of an unrestricted inquiry that goes so far as to touch the position of its inquirer.

When we work against expectation in interpretation we can witness, with renewed sight, the map of difference that produces, in this case, Aristotle’s judgements as at once constructed, but always “detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable” with “multiple entryways and exits

³⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 259.

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 259.

and its own lines of flight.”⁴⁰ How then can we work against presupposed readings of ontological capacity to discover difference and the possibility of unnatural participation? To answer this question, I have broken down several key concepts often attributed to human essence and nature into sectioned case studies.

My intention is to offer a reading of Aristotle that is not shackled to a philosophical legacy of anthropocentrism which both expects and frames its reading with an a priori animal-human hierarchy. However, I also do not wish to affirm the possibility of an equal ground where the text attributes the same features and forms to animals and humans alike. I am inclined to argue that there is room to read Aristotle as offering less of a union and more of a conceptualization of two unique forms of life, tied together by their ability to perceive, think, imagine, and act so long as we resist a presupposed, hierarchized inclination. Once again, however, I would like to note that my analysis is not one that I carry within the Aristotelian tradition and as such, I invest, not in what is being said, but *how* things are said. The range and scope of my discussion is therefore limited to the location and question of animal ontology and its framework.

Soul and Perception

In *De Anima* Aristotle says, “similarly that by which we have health means either health itself or a certain part, if not the whole, of the body.”⁴¹ Aristotle’s language of health, and the understanding of its possession seems to imply a resistance to hierarchies of both thought, and language. Aristotle appears to state that where health is concerned, one’s possession of its faculty or status depends on its possession as a status embodied in some form, fragment, or capacity.

⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1965), 414a7-8.

Aristotle proceeds: “Hence those are right who regard the soul as not independent of body and yet at the same time as not itself a species of body.”⁴² Here, Aristotle describes the way in which one’s soul is at once disjointed from the body—reorienting the body as not the sole measure of whether someone has a soul—and related to the body in our ability to know the soul.⁴³ This dual distance and relation, however, does not imply that the soul is, itself, a species of the body—a kind of limb, or a type of body. Indeed, what we discover in Aristotle’s words is the idea that an inquiry into the possession of the soul, as related to the capacity for understanding those things sensual and even rational, reaches a standstill when filtered through the perspective of the body.

The possession of a soul and all that which Aristotle associates with it cannot be subject to or discerned from the type of body one possesses—be it human or nonhuman.⁴⁴ Aristotle continues, “although we do not even find that of any two things taken at random the one will admit the other.”⁴⁵ Even though the soul is in the body and apart of the body, “our predecessors were wrong in endeavouring to fit the soul into a body without further determination of the nature and qualities of that body.”⁴⁶ That is, the body will not admit to the soul and the soul will not admit to the body, such that the two, while entwined, are not the measure of each other.⁴⁷ In this moment, the rhizomatic conception of the soul and its relation to sensation implies that the

⁴² Aristotle, *De Anima*, 414a21-22.

⁴³ Eve Rabinoff, “The Perceptual Part of the Soul,” in *Perception in Aristotle’s Ethics* (Northwestern University Press, 2018), 16.

⁴⁴ Robert Heinaman, “Aristotle and the Mind-Body Problem,” *Phronesis* 35, no. 1 (1990): 83–102.; Abraham P. Bos, “Why the Soul Needs an Instrumental Body According to Aristotle (Anim. I, 3, 407B13-26),” *Hermes* 128, no. 1 (2000): 20–31.; H. M. Robinson, “Mind and Body in Aristotle,” *The Classical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1978): 105–124.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 414a28-29.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 414a30-31.

⁴⁷ Christopher Shields, “Soul as Subject in Aristotle’s *De Anima*,” *The Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1988): 140–149, 140.

reception of knowledge is also a cascade of difference. As Aristotle proceeds, he cannot help but interrogate the implications of his own concept: “Whether they [animals] have imagination [*phantasia*] is not clear.”⁴⁸

Imagination

Traditionally translated as imagination, *phantasia* implies the perception and creative reception of not just the image as imagined in the mind, but also, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.⁴⁹ Even though Aristotle’s references and examples are mostly within the realm of the visual,⁵⁰ his departure into the different senses poses *phantasia* as a challenge to the construction of worldly reception or imagined production as possessing a centre. *Phantasia*, reluctant to totalizing principles of thought, suspends the requirement for dualism in the conception and attribution of reason.⁵¹

In “The Meaning of *Phantasia* in Aristotle’s *De Anima*” Kevin White tells us that imagination, “which derives from *imago* [...] from *imitor*, carries the suggestion of imitation, and hence of resemblance, connotations which are not present in the root meaning of *phantasia*.”⁵² White proceeds, “Aristotle says that *phantasia* is that in virtue of which we say that any *phantasma* comes to be in us: *kath’hen /egomen phantasma ti he min gignesthai*” and this is important because it means that “like its cognates, *phantasma* suggests the action of appearing,

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 141b16.

⁴⁹ Krisanna M. Scheiter, “Images, Appearances, and ‘Phantasia’ in Aristotle,” *Phronesis* 57, no. 3 (2012): 251–278, 252.

⁵⁰ Terrell Ward Bynum, “A New Look at Aristotle’s Theory of Perception,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1987): 163–178, 165.

⁵¹ H. J. Blumenthal, “Neoplatonic Interpretations of Aristotle on ‘Phantasia’,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 31, no. 2 (1977): 242–257, 250.

⁵² Kevin White, “The Meaning of Phantasia in Aristotle’s *De Anima*, III, 3–8,” *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review / Revue Canadienne De Philosophie* 24, no. 3 (1985): 483–505, 484.

but more specifically it points to the transfer of an appearance from its origin in that which appears into another medium.”⁵³

We must keep in mind, however, that imagination, as Aristotle tells us in section 427a28 of *De Anima*, “is something different both from perception and from thought, and is never found by itself apart from perception, any more than is belief apart from imagination.”⁵⁴ Under the “influence of imagination,” however, we are “no more affected than if we saw in a picture the objects which inspire terror or confidence,” and this is quite notable because it reminds us that Aristotle is in no way degrading imagination.⁵⁵ Instead, imagination seems to serve to maintain the difference between intellect and all other faculties without severing or directly hierarchizing man from animal. Indeed, a focus on the language of imagination might reveal an interconnectedness between the human and nonhuman as it pertains to a spectrum of thought wherein the object is not severed from perception.

Aristotle seems to conceive of *phantasia* as a means of conceptual referral: the nonhuman animal, he tells us, acts in and through *phantasia* as the faculty which receives perceptual data. In fact, animals *only* act in and through *phantasia*: “For men often act contrary to knowledge in obedience to their imaginings, in the other animals there is no process of thinking or reasoning, but solely imagination.”⁵⁶ Yet, *phantasia* is still a kind of interior purposiveness that emerges through perception.⁵⁷ This being the case, we might be inclined to read Aristotle’s *phantasia* as

⁵³ White, “The Meaning of Phantasia in Aristotle’s *De Anima*,” 487.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427a28 - b26

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427a28 - b26

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433a9-12.

⁵⁷ Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 114.

suggesting the possibility that both human and nonhuman animals act out of a purposive faculty that differs only in its non-hierarchized emergence as a concept.

Motion and Intelligence

Later on in *De Anima* Aristotle asks “what is it that imparts to the animal local movement?” and “what it is that imparts the animal progressive movement?”⁵⁸ He concludes with the affirmation that “motion is always directed to an end and is attended either by imagination or by appetency”—that is, Aristotle contends that “Both [...] are causes of locomotion, intelligence and appetency,” where intelligence refers to “that which calculates the means to an end,” or what Aristotle calls practical intelligence.⁵⁹ What we can gather from Aristotle’s discussion is that movement, as both interior movement and locomotion, emerges from those purposive capacities, (pre)dispositions, or proclivities available to humans and nonhumans.⁶⁰ Of course, there are certain faculties particular to man, and by extension, his purposive activity, but as section 3.10, 433a23 tells us, these exclusive competencies can only alter one’s action in the event they also alter the desirability⁶¹ of the object in question:

But appetency may move a man in opposition to reason, for concupiscence is a species of appetency. While, however, intellect is always right, appetency and imagination may be right or wrong. Hence it is invariably the object of appetency which causes motion, but this object may be either the good or the apparent good.⁶²

Man is such because he possesses the ability to reflect on those proclivities which he shares with non-man. In such terms, “Man” seems to deviate from non-man only in his ability to regret, to

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 43 b13

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 432b13

⁶⁰ Lorenz, *The Brute*, 114.

⁶¹ Desirability is what energizes or gives rise to purposive dispositions.

⁶² Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433a23-25.

turn back, re-think, or reflect.⁶³ Yet, this difference, overblown into a critical hierarchy, is not subject to measure in Aristotle. The question of why someone might do something, or the possibility to re-evaluate one's choice bares no resemblance to the question of whether nonhuman animals can act with intention. Reflective judgement, as a capacity exclusive to the human, is not the measure of one's ability to perceive and act upon the things of the world. Animals, in this reading, do not move around the world with blinders: they possess a strong sense of intention. Reflective judgement bares no weight on whether nonhuman life lacks any sort of faculty. Animals, per Aristotle, may not reflect upon the purpose of/for their action, but that does not mean their lives, methods of thought, or sense of purposiveness are, in any way, incompatible with the possession of reason as reasoning, intention, the purposiveness of perception, and *phantasia*.

There are certain faculties from which the nonhuman is excluded in Aristotle, but does that exclusion necessarily warrant the charge of anthropocentrism if we risk ourselves in privileging not the consequence of reflective judgement but the ability to act in and through purposiveness?

Reflective Judgement and Desire

Derived from Aristotle's concept of intellect and reflective inclination is the measure of reason as unavailable to nonhuman animals.⁶⁴ This exclusion is a necessary consideration because of the way it might impact the question of intent. Yet, the lack of this kind of investigation does not negate the ability to act through purposive intent, and, in doing so, feel as

⁶³ Daniel Coren, "Aristotle on Motion in Incomplete Animals," *Apeiron (Clayton)* 53, no. 3 (2020): 285–314, 288.

⁶⁴ Stephen D. Hudson, "Reason and Motivation in Aristotle," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 11, no. 1 (1981): 111–135, 127.

though one has succeeded or failed. There is ample room to interrogate whether the attribution of reflective judgement to human animals is, at all, exclusive.

In *De Anima* Aristotle notes that if one possesses sensation—which animals do—then, “also appetency: where under appetency we include desire, anger, wishing,” and, after all, what is reflective judgment but a derivative of the faculty of affect? While “sensation may be true, imaginings prove for the most part false,” it nonetheless “remains, then, to consider whether it be opinion.”⁶⁵ Opinion, however, is not “joined” with sensation to produce imagination, “nor yet a complex of [opinions joined with] sensations.”⁶⁶ Desires, attached to sensation, arise “which are contrary to one another, and this occurs when reason and the appetites are opposed,” meaning if one possesses sensation, then they desire as well, and desire is the avenue to the activation of reason.⁶⁷ It is intelligence too which “bids us to resist,” and this is important because it means in attributing *phantasia* to the animal, Aristotle may open us up to the possibility of potentially and meaningfully attributing intellect and reason to nonhuman ontologies.⁶⁸

Putting Everything Together

Suspending equalizing impulses for instead a rhizomatic mapping of difference without binary logics, we witness an abstract proposition for the animal’s cultural and social response to consequences. More critically, the purposiveness implicit in *phantasia* suggests, if not reflective judgement, then the possibility of choice as a motion independent from the question of whether one can re-think or re-imagine. Moreover, to pass judgement—whether it is an exclusively

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427b27.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 428a22.

⁶⁷ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 428a22.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 428a22.

human capacity or not—does not suggest an inherently positive or negative outcome. That is, through this specific reading of Aristotle, there is nothing missing from animal life. Indeed, the language of reflective judgement turns itself not towards aimable capacity but cultural morality: a faculty that precipitates from the only socialization Aristotle can know. For example, in section 433a9 of *De Anima* Aristotle differentiates between “good” and “practical good”—the latter being that which may not be good under all circumstances.⁶⁹ This gesture towards a goodness without refrain—a universal moralistic measure of virtue, or culturally imposed conduct—in no way alters the purposiveness of animals in the question of perception as they too will choose to act in a similar manner (out of desire and on purpose). Animals, in this case, are aware of that which they see and know, acting accordingly. If we allow ourselves to suspend the notion that Aristotle is attributing a sense of priority to reflective judgement what we witness is the emergence of intention, movement, and thoughtful action outside the bounds of language.

Within the map of difference and purpose that characterizes *phantasia*, Aristotle does not state that animals lack intelligence (*nous*), he also does not associate intelligence with reason, as one does not account for the other. Reason, instead, is that faculty of mind which allows one to conceptualize objects in their abstractions; moreover, *De Anima* is very vague on what kind of relation the soul bears to intellect. The obscure nature of this paradigm posits the question of the animal in the form of an acentric logic “whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end.”⁷⁰ It is important to understand the way nonhuman life becomes, what Deleuze and Guattari call, a “dimension of multiplicity under consideration”

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 433a9.

⁷⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 22.

because of the role it plays in Aristotle's work.⁷¹

Though one may try to justify the exclusion of animal life through the *a priori* logic that there is such a thing as a philosophical concept of human language and that that concept is somehow superior, the nonhuman animal persists, taking with it our investment in firm ontology and moving it in “a perpendicular direction, [a] transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”⁷² As Hawhee tells us, those passages from which we derive human exceptionalism in Aristotle “form something of a self-referential loop: (human) perception of the just and good constitutes a *polis*, and participation in the *polis* by means of *logos* that works to vivify perception binds and distinguishes humans in the context of politics and friendship.”⁷³ Yet, the notion of *politika* emerges, and is derived from the necessity for perception—something that, as we know from our reading of *De Anima*, humans and nonhumans share. This overlap is interesting because in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle will do something, that, once again, generates a human/animal ontological parallel. In a discussion of the way perception constitutes friendship, Aristotle says:

We agreed that someone's own being is choice worthy because he perceives that he is good, and this sort of perception is pleasant in itself. He must, then, perceive his friend's being together [with his own], and he will do this when they live together and share conversation and thought. For in the case of human beings what seems to count as living together is this sharing of conversation and thought, not sharing the same pasture, as in the case of grazing animals.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 22.

⁷² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

⁷³ Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*, 18.

⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019), 1170b, 10.

In this passage, the perception of what is good in general as well as within oneself—as shared with others—constitutes the faculty of *logos*. As Aristotle notes, however, this sharing of conversation, goodness, and thought is not a feature we find in and amongst animals—or so, this text says.⁷⁵ In *Politics*, Aristotle notes that man is the only creature “whom [nature] has endowed with the gift of speech” and yet, sound too is “an indication of pleasure or pain and is therefore found in other animals.”⁷⁶ We might also keep in mind that in *History of Animals*, Aristotle marks perception as that which, within the domain of *politika*, binds together “such social creatures [like] man, the bee, the wasp, the ant, and the crane” as they “have some one common object in view.”⁷⁷ Implicit in the concept of *politika* is a sharedness that makes legible the kind of ties we have to each other—human and nonhuman. It is in our suspension of a presupposed hierarchy of analysis where we can make radical claims that begin from a point of obligation. Sharing a political space not only brings forward the fact of diverse sense, reason, and language, but the multifarious ways in which such faculties can be oppressed. In other words, sharedness encourages inter-species models of thought and consequence not only because it places the Other in sight of the self, but more importantly, in relation to a “common object” and therefore in union.⁷⁸

Grounding animals within the framework of shared sociality and function also shores up the horrors of their contemporary status as epitomizing the consequences of severe biopolitical violence. Sharedness demands that we at once recognize the animal as a subject and relinquish those ontological justifications we assume in order to justify their capture and suffering. Without

⁷⁵ I would argue that grazing together, eating together is too the sharing of something intimate and good.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.2.1253a.7–18

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, trans. Johann Gottlob Schneider, (London: H. G. Bohn, 1862), 488a8–13.

⁷⁸ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 488a8–13.

the precondition of sharedness, the possibility of animal liberation threatens to maintain a species proximity to objecthood as the impossibility of exploitation. Without sharedness, we not only negate, for example, the nonhuman's labour *as* labour, we also shield them from those structures which may inform their future security and protection. In other words, Bentham is right: we do not need to know that the animal has language to understand that they are suffering, but without the premise of language as the avenue to subjectivity, we deny them a sense of futurity, relying instead on an ontological presupposition and the dangers that follow. The preconditions that follow the grounding of nonhuman life in language negates the necessity of having to pose questions like "do animals work?" because their ontology always already understands them as in possession of the faculties that bind one to the demands of labour. After all, if we are to strive for justice, witnessing simply does not suffice.

As Derrida reminds us, witnessing within the boundary of theory is autobiographical—it is, in part, proof of self and therefore the staging of the other, the nonhuman, for the demonstration and sight of self. The "animal of theory" Derrida describes, is subject to an "objectivizing staging," wherein "it is seen," but does not see: the animal is a "thing to be observed, [an] object for a human who says 'I,' 'I am,' or 'we,' 'we are.'"⁷⁹ Considering Derrida's words within the context of our argument is to suggest that the language of simply bearing witness risks making spectacle of the nonhuman—much like the rudimentary regard for suffering outside the premise of language. To seek the possibility of unnatural participation, subjectivity must be an a priori condition for both subjects. Veena Das tells us that the witness of violence is such because they survive and, in this way, possesses an obligation to live. For

⁷⁹ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 82

example, in *Life and Words*, Das notes that life after violence is “recovered not through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary” of speech, and confession.⁸⁰

If, however, we deny the animal their rightful place in language and logic—if we hoard language to ourselves, marking suffering as sufficient—we condemn them to a destiny of unprotected spectacle that never extends them the obligation or even promise of flourishing life. The situation of the nonhuman in language reflects the demands of a very particular kind of kinship that is born from the premise of direct action: the subject who suffers must be able to testify to their pain in a language that frames their utterance as not only heard and understood but validated within protective terms.

Seeking Difference

For all he may declare in his speech, seldom does Aristotle deny nonhuman animals those features which, when pieced together, emerge as speech and language. Though Aristotle declares that animals do not possess speech, the features that even out to the emergence and possession of speech may be, in their description, credited to nonhuman life. We might consider not just perception, or *phantasia*, but *gnosis*, *phronesis*, and *thumos*. In Book I, part 23 of *De Generatione Animalium*, Aristotle classifies animals and plants within the broader context of the question of knowledge possession and says, “In all this nature acts like an intelligent workman [...] For they have sense-perception, and this is a kind of knowledge.”⁸¹

Aristotle will also attribute animals a certain range of difference, and thus, a semblance of

⁸⁰ Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.

⁸¹ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, tr. A. L. Peck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 731a25-30.

singularity: “But the function of the animal is not only to generate (which is common to all living things), but they all of them participate also in a kind of knowledge, some more and some less, and some very little indeed.”⁸² In *De Anima*, Aristotle will starkly deny animal life entry into the realm of knowledge, arguing that “neither, again, can imagination be ranked with the faculties, like knowledge or intellect, which always judge truly.”⁸³ Of course, we do not know the order in which these two texts were written so it is impossible to say whether Aristotle, like Marx from *Grundrisse* onward, possibly develops, changes, or fine-tunes his judgements. Nevertheless, Aristotle’s inability to situate his thought within a logical succession illuminates the necessarily fraught nature of the question of animal language and ontology. There is no beginning or end to the place of animals in the work of Aristotle because the premise of his oeuvre, excavated and studied, simply cannot convey that which we need most of all to formulate a single, conclusive standing for animals in the place of language, speech, and stature. Instead, animal life interrupts both the text itself and our understanding of its content, demanding that we rethink what we know or thought we knew about the formulation of language and ontology.

If we recall, it is in *Politics* where Aristotle suggest that while man possess speech, he too shares with the bee a certain amount of political verve. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle very clearly extends memory to “some” animals, and this is important because (1) it opens up the possibility that nonhuman life can learn and therefore accumulate intelligence, and (2) it once again brings our attention to the way nonhuman life, while discredited in their possession of those faculties seemingly human, are narrativized as possessing them nonetheless.⁸⁴ When Aristotle names the

⁸²Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 731a30

⁸³Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427b27.

⁸⁴Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, tr. Hugh Tredennick (London: W. Heinemann, 1947), 980a27.

faculty to which he is referring, he clearly marks the concept in question as exclusively human—and yet, there remains a way in which the text, upon consideration of nonhuman life, cannot help but describe those human qualities as belonging to nonhumans as well. Though Aristotle may not declare the possibility of possession in nonhuman life, the way he goes about excommunicating animals (from communication) paradoxically admits to their keeping of those things to which Aristotle, and the Western philosophical tradition more generally, dare not admit. In fact, Aristotle will even go so far as to contradict himself on what appears to be his hyper-fixation: bees.

A Case Study – Where Does One Draw the Lines of Labour?

For all his talk about bees—as he mentions them 53 times in *De Generatione Animalium*—Aristotle cannot make up his mind. Bees “are a peculiar and extraordinary kind of animal,”⁸⁵ Aristotle says in *De Generatione*, “the facts, however, have not yet been sufficiently grasped.”⁸⁶ In his discussion of wasps, Aristotle says: “Concerning the generation of animals in the same family as bees, such as *anthrenae* and wasps, things are in a way similar for all of them, but the unusual aspects are appropriately absent, for they possess nothing divine like the genus of bees does.”⁸⁷ What does Aristotle mean when he casts divinity onto the bee, and what can this tell us about the difficulty of this ontological pattern we have traced thus far? Later, Aristotle will say the following:

Now some existing things are eternal and divine whilst others admit of both existence and non-existence. But that which is noble and divine is always, in virtue of its own nature, the cause of the better in such things as admit of being better or worse, and what is not eternal does admit of existence and non-existence and can partake in the better and the

⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 759b1.

⁸⁶ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 760a30.

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 761a2.

worse. And soul is better than body, and the living, having soul, is thereby better than the lifeless which has none, and being is better than not being, living than not living.⁸⁸

Whereas in *De Anima* Aristotle conceptually navigates the body's relationship to the soul, here, he deliberately casts the soul as superior to the constraints of materiality—and yet, having a body and existing within the material realm is better than not having a body and not living. The divine too is always the cause of that something which is better. Later, Aristotle will say that the principle of the soul—*semen*—“belongs to those animals in which is included something divine (to wit, what is called the reason).”⁸⁹ There is then, a link between the production of life, and that divinity which Aristotle amalgamates with reason. Furthermore, it is, as we already know, the production of not just fellow bees, but a social system or culture that Aristotle admires.

Aristotle “explicitly parses [...] proportion (symmetry), magnitude, the number three, order, [and] completion (limit, definiteness)” as hallmarks of the special—albeit mysterious—quality of bees.⁹⁰ It is therefore reasonable to determine that, within the context of *De Generatione*, divinity is at once beyond the limit and acquisition of human knowledge (as both a knowing and doing), and the representation of a systematic, fastidious socio-cultural practise. Aristotle does not limit the divine mastery of bees to the domain of reproduction: he explicitly considers a network of systematic communication. For example, when describing the generational bee community, Aristotle says the following:

Bees are intermediate between the two other kinds, for this is useful for their work, and they are workers as having to support not only their young but also their fathers and [...] while they suffer the kings to do no work as being their parents, they punish the drones as

⁸⁸ Aristotle, 731b25.

⁸⁹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 737a10.

⁹⁰ Daryn Lehoux, “Why Does Aristotle Think Bees Are Divine? Proportion, Triplicity and Order in the Natural World,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 52, no. 3 (2019), 403.

their children, for it is nobler to punish one's children and those who have no work to perform.⁹¹

One could argue that this moment does indeed describe a back-and-forth between ruling bees and their servants. What stands out for our purposes, however, is the way in which Aristotle's description of bee culture overlaps with the very definition of speech that he offers in *Politics*: “[S]peech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is just or unjust. For it is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just, or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state.”⁹²

Not only is Aristotle narrating a social system of service predicated on a knowledge base of relations to which he admits he is generally ignorant— “the facts, however, have not yet been sufficiently grasped”—but also, a justice system that measures the benefit of work versus idleness.⁹³ The language of punishment and dignity, as coupled with Aristotle's admitted ignorance, allows us to risk ourselves in supposing that bee culture and the dynamism involved does in fact depend upon a basis of communication, of language as the exchange of knowledge. This is important because it challenges the very premise of language as both exclusive to humans, and necessary to the concept of reason, or *logos*. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle famously says, “those which are incapable of hearing sounds are intelligent though they cannot be taught, e.g., the bee, and any other race of animals that may be like it; and those which besides memory have this sense of hearing can be taught.”⁹⁴ Yet, in the *History of Animals*, bees are described as

⁹¹ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 760b15.

⁹² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a14.

⁹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a18.

⁹⁴ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1.980b.

“rejoicing” at the sound of certain noises.⁹⁵ Aristotle also points out that “voice and sound are different from one another [also] language differs from voice and sound.”⁹⁶ Moreover, while nonhuman animals, he says, have “neither voice nor language [...] they may be enabled to make noises or sounds”⁹⁷—yet there is still a “special” quality to the production of this sound, and it is one which conjures a reaction, or a knowledge that is received through sense perception and structured through a strict work ethic and justice system.⁹⁸

Aristotle develops his concept of interiority and intellect with a degraded example of nonhuman life whose cumulative description across multiple texts paradoxically culminates in the declaration of language as a diverse multi-species capacity. As he draws out the human from the image of the nonhuman, the scale at which Aristotle measures the possibility of speech, intellect, and other various ontological capacities does not imply the strict denial of nonhuman life.

Aristotle is rather ardent in expressing that bees, unique and special, rejoice and find pleasure in certain noises. Aristotle also tells us that bees are intelligent because their thin, cold fluid or blood aids their perception. Of course, this may suggest an intensity of pleasure that evens out with the intensity of their perception—though we can only speculate. Regardless, bees, as Aristotle tells us, are uniquely intelligent creatures—even more so than those animals who have blood. Yet, the bee, within this logic, cannot hear—hearing being a faculty that is primary to the possibility of learning as one must listen to the spoken sounds and words to learn. Aristotle seems to be implying then, that the bee is arguably more intelligent than say, the horse—even if

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 627a15.

⁹⁶ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 627a15.

⁹⁷ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 627a10.

⁹⁸ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 627a10.

the horse has memory and hearing and is thus capable of learning. Yet, if we look to the *Metaphysics*, bees, from this perspective, appear to be capable of learning because of their ability to memorize—if only they could hear: “some are intelligent but not able to learn, if they are unable to hear sound (e.g. bees and any other animals of that kind) while those that learn are the ones that have hearing in addition to memory.”⁹⁹

In the Greek translation, ζῷον πολιτικόν (*zoon politikon*) becomes not just he who speaks with *logos*, but he who echoes *logos*: posing *logos* itself as a faculty potentially independent from man—i.e., not dependent on his mind and being for its existence and therefore a property in and of itself.¹⁰⁰ This give-and-take, and the language of the echo is especially interesting when adopted as a logic within Aristotle’s work. There is a way in which human and nonhuman life echo off each other, mingling in an indistinct assemblage that makes it difficult to parse one from the other. This conjunction forces us out of the species hierarchy and into a landscape where the self is conjured through an identification with the Other.

What this study of language makes most legible is that the terrain upon which we conceive the idea of human ontology is always touching and being touched by nonhuman ontology. Why then, should we consider exploitability, let alone the possibility of labour or value production, an exclusive phenomenon? It goes without saying that the bee is of interest here precisely because of its historical and rhetorical relationship to labour. The worker bee, exploited in differentiated ways, is regarded as a worker because its ontology is utterly collapsed with its labour. In other words, synonymous and ontologically equivalent, the bee’s labour is not

⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a27.

¹⁰⁰ Claudia Zatta, *Aristotle and the Animals: The Logos of Life Itself* (London: Routledge, 2022), 12.

regarded as labour proper—instead, it is a biological fact, an innate drive that occurs with or without human influence.

Without the possibility of stably existing in language, and therefore in being—an existence that is constituted by a complexity often protected under the status of subjecthood—the ontologized justification of nonhuman value production remains insufficient ground for rights and justice. The terms *worker* and *labourer* do not prevent exploitation—they may even exacerbate suffering. To put it simply, it is not enough to know the nonhuman as a labourer. Instead, it is necessary that the terms we wield within the range of rights and freedoms stand on epistemological, philosophical, and ontologically determined ground. It is my intention to therefore formalize the ontological analysis I have conducted so far, and, in doing so, propose the methodological possibilities of animal speech as a fruitful premise for readdressing the history of philosophy and its future in relation to animal liberation.

Animal Speech and Bees

Animal speech occurs in Aristotle when concepts like reason, logic, sensation, language, and speech are at odds with their account and example. This disparity accumulates into an oeuvre enveloped in discontinuous platitudes that rely on, reference, or define terms always already disjointed from the total project. Aristotle's bee, for instance, begins and ends at a point of speculation, and yet, despite this axiom of flexibility, their movement within the text is a feverish travel between instances that do not resemble the subject in question. It is, in many ways, and to borrow from *A Thousand Plateaus*, “a composition of speeds and affects involving entirely different individuals [...] it makes the rat become a thought, a feverish thought in the man.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 258.

The bee becomes a thought uttered without consequence and upon the primary definition to which it is referent. Man, on the other hand, assumes a silent monopoly over the terms of speech. These two entities mingle in the utterance that is spoken from the mouth of the animal, and the voice of man who sees himself only in the artifice of naming and meaning. But the bee and man are not the same. Instead, it is language, as the very risk of asking to whom it belongs and what form it takes, that expresses itself on the stage of composition and the production of thought. Man, and bee are differently oriented and alternately directed within the plateau of language, but this difference does not imply or demand a privileging of one concept over, nor does it assume the logic of an analogy.

The way in which one writes about and thinks of language becomes, in the context of this animal speech, a tension within the question of the animal's ontology and therefore its position in the language of work. The formless shape of language and being "continually makes and unmakes [its] assemblages, employing" the artifice of declaration of definition.¹⁰² Language, as epitomized in the differential movement between man and bee becomes a transient space for the discovery and concealment of the project of "Man" as expressed in a movement that both resists ontological attribution or categorization and exceeds the construction of a new identity through its inability to know its definitions beyond the moment of declaration. Animal speech, special to my study of ontological identity, offers itself to us as a methodology for navigating the production "Man" within the ill-formed boundary of all he seizes in the effort of his totality, and therefore the disparate, and often paradoxical picture of the nonhuman.

¹⁰² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 258.

We can detect this ontological paradigm not only in the work of Marx and his framing influence in the definition of value—that is, Aristotle—but also, those whom Marx has influenced. At this point, it is necessary to balance the score, and consider the legacy of Marx. Aristotle is far more flexible than Marx in the way he draws out nonhuman ontology and its role in language and reason, but can the same be said of the legacy that follows? Do we find this ontological issue rectified in those who later write about Marx? What happens to the ontological tension Marx draws up?

I want to turn to the anti-humanist discussions that takes place amongst the most notable and influential Marxists: Louis Althusser and Henri Lefebvre. The problem of nonhuman ontology in Marx, I argue, imprints itself onto Lefebvre and Althusser's respective positions as it concerns the nature of human standing in history and their role in the interpretation of philosophy. Rereading Lefebvre and Althusser's position on the human through the lens of the problem of animal ontology may therefore function to radically challenge our approach to the conclusions made throughout their respective texts and regarding the inheritance of Marx's own tensions. The human's ontological exaltation, I ultimately affirm, is the consequence of an exclusionary legacy of thought which otherwise restricts the totality of experience to a single species.

Lefebvre, Althusser, and the Marxist Relation

Meditations on Lefebvre

In *Dialectical Materialism*, Lefebvre rereads Marx's *Manuscripts* in order to ground human labour and value as the basis of consciousness. Developing the humanist perspective that is at the centre of his thought, Lefebvre works in extreme proximity to Marx. In doing so, however, Lefebvre reproduces precisely the same ontological paradox we have traced thus far in

our study. Like Marx, Lefebvre will regard the nonhuman animal as a source of value, but never a being capable of producing or even possessing value. For example, Lefebvre will note that “historical and social process” begins at the point of “primitive animality,”¹⁰³ and while he continues to deny the nonhuman a role in the social world—a landscape constituted by (human) beings of sophisticated consciousness—he will, nonetheless, depend upon animal allusion to affirm the scope of his discussion. That is, like Marx, Lefebvre returns to the image of the animal as a source from whom to declare the human a sophisticated subject.¹⁰⁴ When we consider the role of the nonhuman from a perspective that emphasizes the Marxist desire to escape the possibility of theological credit or sourcing, what we see more clearly is a regard for the animal as a creature allegorized in a totalizing mythology of (human) being, and therefore subject to the Marxist affirmation of “Man’s” singular ability and prowess. In this arrangement, the nonhuman is forced into a paradoxical position that demands they be both prior and post the human. That is, the animal, as the source of man’s sociality, is simultaneously subject to it as well.

Turning to Marx’s *Grundrisse* we find a very similar statement. Situated in a discussion concerning production and exchange, Marx says that the “human being is in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν [a political animal], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.”¹⁰⁵ Here we witness a clear usage of the language of animal being to define the scope of human ontology, and while the animal referent is, as always, disavowed, the implications sufficiently demonstrate the animal’s ontology as necessarily grounding the very condition of sociality and value without the possibility of

¹⁰³ Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 62.

¹⁰⁴ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 126.

¹⁰⁵ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 85.

claiming any sense of social or economic status. Animals, while social, are excluded from the possibility of developing their identity through a relationship to others. The difference between the animal and human, in this example, is the marked refusal to endow the nonhuman that which is otherwise granted to the human—even though they both occupy a similar premise. Moreover, the human retrieves their social standing from the proposal of animal origin. My point in this case is that Lefebvre replicates the methodology which Marx employs in the differentiation of the animal as an act of ontological disavowal.

Consciousness too plays a very interesting role in this dynamic of relation and repetition. The animal, per Lefebvre, is a social creature, but ironically, animals are not capable of alienation—yet when man is alienated, he *becomes* an animal.¹⁰⁶ Alienation, in Lefebvre's turn, conjures the image of an animal who embodies an ontological complexity from which it is shunned through the force of capitalist labour.¹⁰⁷ Lefebvre for example says that “man reverts to being an animal for man, and the human is then alienated as well as the human community.”¹⁰⁸ Sociality and history take hold in the throes of animality, and it is from this point that the human develops—leaving the less evolved nonhuman behind.¹⁰⁹ While initially denying the animal's ontological complexity—that is, marking them as “primitive” beings—the inquest into alienation demands a reassessment of what Lefebvre means what he utters *animal*.¹¹⁰

If man becomes animal upon alienation, surely that implies or invites us to regard the labouring animal as an oppressed consciousness as well. Even if this specific turn may hesitate in

¹⁰⁶ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 45.

¹⁰⁸ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 62.

¹¹⁰ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 62.

sight of marking the nonhuman a creature of consciousness and value production, it remains that the two kinds of animal being—one primitive, and the other alienated—challenge the ontological framework at play. How does the animal constitute a viable, equivalent example in the language of alienation? Turning to Marx’s “Estranged Labour,” Lefebvre cites:

As a result, the man who works no longer feels free except in his animal functions: eating, drinking, breeding. In his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. True, eating, drinking, and breeding are also authentically human functions. But in the abstraction that separates them from the other spheres of activity and turns them into an end, they become animal.¹¹¹

It is not that the alienated human devolves to the primary and primitive animal, thereby losing the capacity for “authentic” human function—that is, sociality, and a defined human consciousness.¹¹² Rather, the human, now animal, retains their ontological complexity, and this is important because it is the state of suffering in a condition of retention which defines, in part, the tragedy of alienation.

The application of Marxist concepts to nonhumans is nothing new—though interestingly enough, our ontological perspective may help flesh out some of the details and contentions. Barbara Noske’s de-animalization theory, for example, argues that “animals are being alienated from their own products which consists of either their own offspring or (parts of) their own body,” such that “in production, animals are made to have as many young as possible, which are taken away from them almost immediately after birth.”¹¹³ This network of alienation, Noske

¹¹¹Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 146.

¹¹²Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 146.

¹¹³ Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1997), 17.

elucidates, affirms the nonhuman's body as "the very cause of the animal's misery."¹¹⁴ Noske continues: "Perhaps we can speak of the body as 'an alien and hostile power confronting the animal? The body which makes up an important part of the animal self used to be steered largely by the animal itself but has now become like a machine in the hands of management and is actually working against the animal's interest."¹¹⁵ In "Alienation and Animal Labour" Omar Bachour shows that the Noske's theory is directly and clearly applicable to something like Diana Stuart's discussion of the dairy industry. In other words, and what is important to us in the case, is Bachour's insistence that Marx's theory of alienation, as a method of analysing the dairy industry, "shows how animals are central to issues of capital accumulation, exchange value, labour, private property, [and] praxis."¹¹⁶ Bachour adds that "the labour process in capitalist societies [...] brings to light the material interest that humans and animals share in meeting the needs of living beings rather than those of the economy and profit maximization."¹¹⁷ Bachour is quite adamant that there is not only room to use Marx for the sake of analyzing animal labour, but that when we do so, we are able to make legible the possibility of transspecies allyship.

Moving forward, and thinking of the way the dairy cow's milk, for example, functions as "an alien force that dominates her,"¹¹⁸ Bachour narrators a story that we know all too well:

Forced to produce as much milk as possible, the dairy cow is subject to specialized grain feeding, bovine growth hormone shots, intense cycles of artificial insemination, impregnation, hyperlactation, and mechanized milking machines, lasting up to four or five years at most (out of their natural twenty-year life spans), after which the cow's existence is deemed no longer profitable and she is sent to slaughter. Her calves are taken from her at birth (in order not to interfere with milk production), causing great distress to

¹¹⁴ Noske, *Beyond Boundaries*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Noske, *Beyond Boundaries*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Omar Bachour, "Alienation and Animal Labour," in *Animal Labour: A New Frontier of Interspecies Justice?*, ed. Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford University Press, 2019), 120.

¹¹⁷ Bachour, "Alienation and Animal Labour," 120.

¹¹⁸ Bachour, "Alienation and Animal Labour," 119.

the calves and to their mother, who often makes her feelings plain by constant calling and bellowing for days after the infant is taken. Female calves are reared on milk substitutes (which are cheaper) until they are ready to produce milk around their second year of life, while male calves are sold off to veal producers. Not only is the product of the dairy cow expropriated from her; it is turned against her, transforming her into a fine-tuned milk machine [...] [and] because her capacity to produce surpasses her ability to metabolize her feed [...] she begins to break down and use her own body tissues; she begins milking off her own back.¹¹⁹

Marx's language, as Bachour shows, is very compatible with the lives of slaughterhouse animals; moreover, when we encourage this compatibility, we are more equipped to not only regard the nonhuman as an oppressed labourer but a creature deserving of the historically projected freedoms that come with such a status. The Marxist lens emphasizes the startling horror of the capitalist landscape in which the dairy cow resides, articulating a level of exploitation that is both singular to their species and exceptional within Marx's terms. The horror of the meat and dairy industry embodies a level of suffering that exceeds Marxist expectations of capital and production. For example, Marx, and as we previously explored, takes time to describe the reduced status of the human labourer in terms of the animal's biological existence: "[Man] only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal."¹²⁰ We can compare the state of the oppressed working man to the modern nonhuman slaughterhouse worker in order to make the disparities to which I am referring far more legible. Bachour continues to explain:

Industrial dairy cows are alienated from their calves, from bulls, from other dairy cows, and from their relationship with human beings. As we saw above, their offspring are taken from them at birth: some female calves are kept in order to become replacement

¹¹⁹ Bachour, "Alienation and Animal Labour," 119.

¹²⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 30.

dairy cows, others to be reared as beef, while male calves are sold to veal producers or, if their upkeep proves costlier than their market price, killed directly. Reproductive technologies, such as artificial insemination, ensure that the relationship between dairy cows and bulls in factory farms is non-existent. Despite having a deep need for kinship, dairy cows are also estranged from other cows, and display signs of aggression due to the high levels of stress stemming from the demands of production, cramped housing conditions, and the sheer scale of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).¹²¹

Rather than the kind of relationship that Marx draws between the labourer, and the value they must produce, the nonhuman assumes what Rosmarie Claire Collard and Jessica Dempsey regard as “lively commodities,”¹²²: “a biopolitical process” in which “making life/keeping alive is central to value production.”¹²³ Wadiwel explains: “Collard and Dempsey’s approach strongly resonates with the perspective of Melinda Cooper, who explores the processes of the biological body as sources for a self-regenerative surplus value, a biological promise whose future self-valorizations cannot be predetermined or calculated in advance.”¹²⁴ This biopolitical engine of production and animal murder surpasses what Marx, at the start of section four of the *Manuscripts*, sees in capital as he notes that “to appropriate labour during all the 24 hours of the day is, therefore, the inherent tendency of capitalist production. But as it is physically impossible to exploit the same individual labour-power constantly during the night as well as the day.”¹²⁵ This moment is also special because as Marx takes the time to point out that “within the 24 hours of the natural day a man can expend only a definite quantity of his vital force” he also adds that an animal like “a horse, in like manner, can only work from day to day, 8 hours.”¹²⁶ Of course,

¹²¹ Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour”, 119.

¹²² Rosemary-Claire Collard and Jessica Dempsey, “Life for Sale? The Politics of Lively Commodities,” *Environment and Planning. A* 45 (11): 2682–99, 2687.

¹²³ Dinesh Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine: Animal Labour, Resistance, and the Time of Production,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 117 (3): 527–49, 531.

¹²⁴ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 532.

¹²⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, 376.

¹²⁶ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 341.

there is room to argue, as Wadiwel proceeds to explain for us, that this number is arbitrary and quite the anthropocentric gesture, but the point remains that Marx does indeed articulate a limit on labour time for both the human and quite remarkably the nonhuman: a reality of work in which the contemporary slaughterhouse animal does not live. On the contrary, the “brute economics” that guide the slaughterhouse animal exceed,¹²⁷ as I have remarked thus far, the expectations and boundaries of the Marxist ethic, functioning through “a perverse biopolitics that seeks to speed growth and shorten the lives of animals in order to reduce production time.”¹²⁸ As Wadiwel observes,

Over the past fifty years, broiler chickens have been genetically selected to effectively halve growing time, speeding production and increasing profitability. Similar techniques are emerging in relation to feed and technology to facilitate improved efficiencies in fish production. Here surplus value is attained, not by reducing the length of the working day (which has already been extended to its limit in an absolute sense), but by speeding up the labour of life and simultaneously reducing the time the animal has to live (the number of working days) in order to shorten the production cycle. In a sense, animals used for food in intensive animal agriculture realize a particular fantasy of capital; on one hand the whole of the lifetime has been captured by production so that all time is labour time; however, simultaneously, since animals represent the whole production phase, the shortening of lives becomes a useful strategy to expand surplus. The absence of almost any normative limits on how we treat animals—inherent to a dominant anthropocentrism—provides the licence to pursue this fantasy.¹²⁹

Marx, while useful in one regard, comes up short in two ways. On one hand, the text, while seemingly compatible in terms of content, is fraught regarding its reference to the animals that are cited within its pages. Marx does not care to analyze animals and this apathy mingles with examples that are deeply fraught in the way they figure the nonhuman’s ontology in relation to

¹²⁷ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 195.

¹²⁸ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 195.

¹²⁹ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 196.

concepts of value and labour. On the other hand, there is room to suggest that even if we were to exclusively think about Marx on the level of content—how we can use Marx for animals rather than how Marx uses animals for his text—their status in modern capital threatens to exceed the level of alienation and suffering Marx sees at play, and Bachour sees this occurring as well.

There remains, Bachour proceeds, a “struggle to apply Marx’s final dimension, namely, alienation” to a reading that is capable of linking human and animal labour positions for the sake of an argument directed towards kinship.¹³⁰ Bachour explains: it is “not that Marx focuses exclusively on human workers while ignoring animals. On the contrary, animals play a central role in his story. The problem is that he defines unalienated humanity precisely in opposition to animality.”¹³¹ Indeed, Bachour agrees with our contention that “overcoming alienation, under the humanist account, involves the transformation of animal functions into human functions, i.e., the transformation of natural powers into species powers”—a gesture, which for us, stands at the centre of our ontological interests.¹³²

To therefore return to Lefebvre is to regard a legacy of ontological trouble that is defined by the animal’s status and its role as a textual substrate to the human. The animal is both assigned the language of the primitive and therefore the image of ontological lack, as well as the picture of a creature in possession of a complex inner world that is subject to extreme oppression. These two pictures of animal being—one lacking, and one forced into lack—are deeply conflated in the text, and as such emerge not only in relation to “Man’s” status in capital, but as a testament to the multifarious ways in which nonhuman life exists for the definition of

¹³⁰ Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour,” 120.

¹³¹ Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour,” 122.

¹³² Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 144.

that which it may never claim. The animal, in this case, is not defined—it is instead drawn and redrawn repeatedly and in order to shape the picture of Man’s role in the world. In fact, as Lefebvre in *Dialectical Materialism* continues on the point of alienation, he notes that “man sinks lower than the animals; he enters into solitude. He sometimes goes so far as to lose even the desire for true commerce with his fellows.”¹³³

Firm in the fact that the animal is not a social creature, Lefebvre contradicts his ontological allegations in favour of a reassessment of the nonhuman that contributes to the picture of a seemingly exclusive human suffering. The animal is not a creature of consciousness and value production—they are not social—but in his alienation, “Man” becomes a creature lower than the animal and therefore a being who lives in solitude without even the desire for “true commerce with his fellows.”¹³⁴ This portion stands against the way Lefebvre denies the nonhuman a sense of community in the coming pages. In his description of quite ironically, “the return of man to himself,” Lefebvre says that “human alienation will end with” the production and maintenance of a kind of “unity,” an “organization of the human community” that is distinct from the moment “before he became fully differentiated from the animals.”¹³⁵ In his alienation, “Man” loses the possibility to forage the kind of community which even the animal forms, but unalienated “Man”—unlike animals—forms communities. Despite the way Lefebvre may measure the sophistication of such nonhuman communities, the fact remains that once again, the animal is caught up in a cycle of ontological denial that serves the human’s exceptional position in discourses concerning value, sociality, and consciousness. Even if Lefebvre is historicizing

¹³³ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 144.

¹³⁴ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 144.

¹³⁵ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 150.

animals—that is, suggesting a kind of difference to which they may also be subject—it is not a change that touches the notion of the possibility of a “true commerce” with “fellows.”¹³⁶ Bertell

Ollman argues that human power and the powers of nature have a deeper connection:

The distinction between natural and species powers stands out clearly if we try to conceive of one without the other. This is easy to do for natural powers—we see them every day in all animals. Natural powers are the processes of life devoid of human attributes. It is inconceivable, however, how species powers could exist without natural powers, without the qualities man shares with all living things [...] Man without any relations to nature is a relationless void; without any specifically human relations to nature, he is an animal [...] If natural powers can be viewed as establishing the framework in which life itself goes on, then species powers express the kind of life which man, as distinct from all other beings, carries on inside this framework.¹³⁷

Of this passage Bachour notes that “the humanist account acknowledges that humans share natural powers with animals [and] this recognition is not used to cast doubt on the stark opposition between animal and human functions. Rather, the relationship between natural and species powers is deployed precisely to underscore the difference between animals and humans.”¹³⁸ Our perspective thus contributes the notion that the shape of this deployment—as it concerns the textual role of the nonhuman—is that of an ontological fraughtness since it functions to propel the human to their exalted status, but underscores what one may reasonably regard as the impossibility of reducing the animal to mere substrate.

Mediations on Althusser

Althusser’s concern with humanism is in part an investigation whose gaze prioritizes the thinkers from whom Marx derives his concepts. Unlike our expedition into Lefebvre, Althusser’s

¹³⁶ Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, 144.

¹³⁷ Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx’s Concept of Man in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 125.

¹³⁸ Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour,” 125.

approach in the texts I centralize rely less on Marx's own words, and more on the legacy that informs the ideological framework within which he writes. It is by looking to Hegel and Feuerbach that Althusser partially affirms the interpretation of Marx's oeuvre as a developing canon which begins with an immature humanist ethic that, with time, becomes a more fleshed-out anti-humanist or ahumanist philosophy.

I want to focus on a few key moments from *The Humanist Controversy*—edited by François Matheron—because of the place it holds in Althusser's oeuvre as a text which clarifies his theoretical anti-humanism. For us, our interest begins with Althusser's declaration that “to say that Marxism is, theoretically speaking, an anti-humanism or a-humanism, is quite simply to observe that, in Marx's mature thought, theoretical-humanist concepts are absent and are replaced by new scientific concepts.”¹³⁹ This moment iterates the way Althusser centralizes Feuerbach's interest in anthropology to argue in favour of a conception of the Marxist oeuvre as a collection that thinks its way out of an interest in “Man.”

For Althusser, Feuerbach is trying to “‘resolve’ the great philosophical problems of German idealism by transcending Kant and inverting Hegel” through “an impossible unity (Man-Nature, *Sinnlichkeit*).”¹⁴⁰ For Feuerbach, “Man” therefore becomes “the unique, originary fundamental concept, the factotum, which stands in for Kant's Transcendental Subject, Noumenal Subject, Empirical Subject and Idea, and also stands in for Hegel's Idea.”¹⁴¹ In other words, and what we need to know is that humanism is the basis of Feuerbach's philosophy which itself sees “Man” as the answer to the questions posed by German Idealism, Kant, and Hegel—a

¹³⁹ Louis Althusser and François Matheron, *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings* (1966-67) (London: Verso, 2003), 157.

¹⁴⁰ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 235.

¹⁴¹ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 236.

dynamic that Althusser calls a “dumbfounding theoretical gamble [...] invested in a wish for an impossible philosophical consistency.”¹⁴²

More importantly, however, it is Feuerbach whom Althusser cites as “overtly at work in the *1844 Manuscripts*”: a text, which for us, is critically important in the way it makes such staunch declarations concerning “Man’s” ontological superiority and at the same time it mingles with nonhuman ontology.¹⁴³ Althusser argues that when Marx, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, notes that “to be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself,” he is “theoretically speaking, a Feuerbachian with no qualifications” as “this sentence is one hundred per cent Feuerbachian [because] [...] Feuerbach says nothing other than what Marx repeats in 1844: man is not an abstract being [...] but a concrete being. If you want to know the essence of “Man,” look for it where it is to be found: in his Objects, his world.”¹⁴⁴

Althusser will continue to note that “what is truly new in Marx’s texts of this period is political interests and a political position of which Feuerbach was altogether incapable”¹⁴⁵ and this is important because, as per Panagiotis Sotiris, in *A Philosophy for Communism*, “what marks in Althusser’s opinion the retreat of Feuerbach in relation to Hegel is the [Feuerbach’s] conception of history as a process of alienation with a subject, with the subject being man.”¹⁴⁶ Sotiris explains that per Althusser, there is no anthropological issue in Hegel, and, as such, the notion of history with only “Man” as a subject is something that is “alien to Hegel’s thought.”¹⁴⁷ The reduction of the subject to object in the absence of an idea of process is a concept of

¹⁴² Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 235.

¹⁴³ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 244.

¹⁴⁴ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 244.

¹⁴⁵ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 244.

¹⁴⁶ Panagiotis Sotiris, *A Philosophy for Communism: Rethinking Althusser* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 367.

¹⁴⁷ Panagiotis, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 367.

alienation that is divorced from history and is therefore a broad, even vague conception constituted by an “abstraction involving only significations.”¹⁴⁸ I preface my discussion with this inquest into the relationship between Hegel and Feuerbach because “for Althusser this theoretical humanism is the theoretical basis for Marx’s early writings.”¹⁴⁹

The link which Sotiris forages for us is one that emphasizes the methodological detail Althusser assumes in his reading of what he understands as Marx’s early humanism. The *1844 Manuscripts*, per Althusser “is difficult to understand”¹⁵⁰ without a conception of how they came to be: “Marx gave himself over to the classical economists (Say, Skarbek, Smith, Ricardo), he took copious notes which leave their mark in the body of the Manuscripts themselves (the first part contains long quotations)—as if he wanted to take into account a fact.”¹⁵¹ I do not mean to criticize Althusser’s methodology as much I want to clearly articulate the difference in response that is going on between the humanist and anti-humanist texts. As far as it concerns the *1844 Manuscripts*, theoretical humanism is the basis of Marx’s ideas and, as Sotiris notes, “Althusser is aware that Marx is not concerned with the critique of religion, but with the critique of politics and the state, but he insists that there is no change in the underlying theoretical problematic.”¹⁵² Additionally, to look even to *For Marx* is to regard the way Althusser suggests that “we can and must now deal with these *Manuscripts*, which have been the argument of a struggle,” through a method that “concerns the formation, or rather the transformation of Marx’s thought.”¹⁵³

Not only does Althusser’s methodology insist on a gaze that prioritizes the influences

¹⁴⁸ Panagiotis, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 234.

¹⁴⁹ Panagiotis, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 368.

¹⁵⁰ Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, tr. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 157.

¹⁵¹ Althusser, *For Marx*, 157.

¹⁵² Sotiris, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 368.

¹⁵³ Althusser, *For Marx*, 156.

upon Marx, but we must also remember that Althusser very clearly declares that Marx will assert an epistemological break in relation to humanism: “Marx’s theoretical revolution was precisely to base his theory on a new element after liberating it from its old element: the element of Hegelian and Feuerbachian philosophy,” and “in Marx’s mature writing [...] Marx broke with Feuerbach.”¹⁵⁴ Althusser continues: “Marx was already a materialist, but he was still using Feuerbachian concepts, he was borrowing Feuerbachian terminology although he was no longer and had never been a pure Feuerbachian: between the *1844 Manuscripts* and the mature works Marx discovered his definitive terminology; it is merely a question of language.”¹⁵⁵ Althusser will add to this comment, noting that “I know this is to schematize, but it makes it easier to see the hidden meaning of the procedure.”¹⁵⁶

I bring our attention to the way Althusser turns *away* from Marx to *read* Marx so as to emphasize a critical break that happens in the development of his analysis. Having concluded with his discovery of Feuerbach and Hegel in a manner which seldom makes reference to Marx’s own statements, Althusser breaks in order to suggest that we consider a host of “real problems”¹⁵⁷—the first being “the problem of the definition of the human species” or, as Althusser proceeds, “the specific difference that distinguishes the forms of existence of the human species from those of animal species (obstacles: the notions of man’s generic essence, of consciousness, etc.).”¹⁵⁸ Curiously enough, this is the only question that strikes the text with a necessity for clarification. In other words, Althusser will offer a number of other “real

¹⁵⁴ Althusser, *For Marx*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ Althusser, *For Marx*, 61.

¹⁵⁶ Althusser, *For Marx*, 61.

¹⁵⁷ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 275.

¹⁵⁸ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 275.

problems,”¹⁵⁹ but he will not grant those problems the necessity for rumination and clarity. No other question has its own section. As Althusser turns away from this lengthy justification of Marx, the problem of species becomes not a punctum in meaning, but a parallel in textual space.

Remarking on the way “recent discoveries have cast doubt on the classic Darwinian thesis of man’s simian ancestry,”¹⁶⁰ Althusser proceeds:

It has, it seems, been proven that man’s ancestors did not descend from the most highly evolved breeds of the simian species, that the pertinent sign of humanness is not brain size [...]. Rather, it would appear that the ancestor of the human line was a creature which had only a modestly developed brain but was distinguished by the fact that it stood upright, so that its hands were free to fashion rudimentary tools under conditions which, it seems reasonable to suppose, were not individual but social.¹⁶¹

These discoveries are notable and of considerable interest to historical materialists as devotees “of the nature of the forms of historical existence characteristic of the human species.”¹⁶² It would seem, Althusser asserts, that such discoveries “supposedly make it possible to bridge the gap between present-day human societies and the animal origins of the human species, since they seem to show that the human, species comprised, from its beginnings, creatures living together and producing rudimentary tools.”¹⁶³ In other words, this connection threatens the possibility of a humanist narrative that regards labour as synonymous with human essence and the impulse to regard “Man” as a creature in possession of a near divine ontological status wherein being is self-generating. Althusser explains this threat in the following passage:

The ideological operation I wish to denounce is simple. It consists in giving Theoretical Humanism a new ‘lease on life’ by reactivating the ideological notion of ‘labour’ against

¹⁵⁹ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 274.

¹⁶⁰ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 284.

¹⁶¹ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 284.

¹⁶² Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 284.

¹⁶³ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 284.

the background provided by the following theoretical complex: Essence of Man = labour (or social labour) = the creation of Man by Man = Man, Subject of History = History as a process whose Subject is Man (or human labour). It looks very much as if the Recent Discoveries of human palaeontology had here given the ‘green light’ to a ‘revival’ of Theoretical Humanism.¹⁶⁴

It is by virtue of the threat of “a transhistorical ontological foundation of a humanist problematic”¹⁶⁵ that Althusser “insists that in Marx’s mature work [...] the category of labour explodes and a whole array of scientific notions emerges: labour process, labour-power, concrete labour, abstract labour.”¹⁶⁶ He notes that when “Marx talks, in *Capital*, about the ‘social’ character of labour [...] the word ‘labour’ in these expressions does not refer us to a basic concept that is theoretically prior, and thus scientific in and of itself—the concept of Labour—but, rather, to the new complex concepts of which I have provided a brief list.”¹⁶⁷ Althusser affirms that capitalism is not the “result of [a] genesis that can be traced back” to a mode of production as though it encompasses an “origin.”¹⁶⁸ Rather, capitalism emerges through “the process of an encounter of several distinct, definite, indispensable elements, engendered in the previous historical process by different genealogies that are independent of each other and can, moreover, be traced back to several possible ‘origins’: accumulation of money capital ‘free’ labour-power, technical inventions, and so forth.”¹⁶⁹ Althusser decouples “Man” as essence from the possibility of his possession of the concept of labour, and, in doing so, affirms a diverse, and nuanced conception of capitalism. Unminding the essential position of “Man,” the theory Althusser draws out wields a significantly transspecies threshold that, in application, potentially

¹⁶⁴ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 286.

¹⁶⁵ Sotiris, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 371.

¹⁶⁶ Sotiris, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 371.

¹⁶⁷ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 290.

¹⁶⁸ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 290.

¹⁶⁹ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 296.

promises to encourage significations of animal labour and value production. Labour does not belong to “Man,” and capitalism, necessarily emerging from historical and situational multiplicities, potentially thinks outside of the boundary of species. In other words, as we veer through Althusser’s engagement with humanism, we see a conception of value production that in dethroning “Man,” makes room for an analysis much like our own. Furthermore, while Althusser’s impression of Marx as seemingly captured by a humanism that is not his own is quite suspect, his reading of the diverse capacity of labour is promising.

At this point, Althusser invites us to now consider “man and ape.”¹⁷⁰ Althusser says, “I, too, shall take the liberty of utilizing (just this once) a Famous Quotation: the short, very clear sentence in which Marx tells us that it is not the ape who is the key to understanding man, but man who is the key to understanding the ape.”¹⁷¹ This moment is striking because of the way Althusser omits the second portion of the sentence to which he refers. In its full context Marx says that “the anatomy of man is a key to the anatomy of the ape. On the other hand, indications of higher forms in the lower species of animals can only be understood when the higher forms themselves are known.”¹⁷² Of course, an Althusserian reading may cast this moment as a symptom of the immature Marx, but the trouble is that this is a judgement Marx tends to repeat throughout the course of his work.

The nonhuman is repeatedly cast into an explicitly hierarchized role—especially in Marx’s maturity. In *Capital* for example, Marx says, “We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labour that remind us of the mere animal.”¹⁷³ Later, Marx will also

¹⁷⁰ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 297.

¹⁷¹ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 295.

¹⁷² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr. David McLellan (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 42.

¹⁷³ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 127.

regard nonhumans as mere “instruments of labour along with specially prepared stones, wood, bones, and shells.”¹⁷⁴ Althusser notes that neither “the ape no more than the man—is the result of a genesis,” but Marx, even in his maturity, cannot help but fix the nonhuman within the boundary of a primitive history, or render them objects to “Man’s” historical role in capital.¹⁷⁵ In other words, and as it concerns value and production, the nonhuman in mature Marx is necessarily figured as an object to “Man” and therefore situated in the language of genesis insofar as they become a lacking, reduced, and even primitive origin which the more sophisticated human transcends. While convincing in the understanding that influence must be thoroughly considered upon interpretation, it still remains that Marx’s engagement with the nonhuman does not fit or entirely agree with the theoretical progress Althusser proposes.

In fact, Marx will go so far as to bridge a gap between the animal as an instrument of labour, and “relics of bygone instruments” as possessing “the same importance for the investigation of extinct economic form”—namely “fossil bones.”¹⁷⁶ In this moment, the primitive characterisation of the nonhuman is directly cast and related to a time that is almost stereotypically attached to narratives of archaic genesis. The irony is, however, that for all the space the nonhuman takes up in discourses concerning time, they never seem to be able to move through it in the way the human does. As Althusser therefore notes that evolutionary relations help us understand “how it was possible to make an ape”—in other words, their ontological make up—the onus is on us to make distinct the way in which that ontology is historically narrativized.¹⁷⁷ Marx continues to note that “animals and plants, which we are accustomed to

¹⁷⁴ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 128.

¹⁷⁵ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 297.

¹⁷⁶ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 128.

¹⁷⁷ Althusser, *The Humanist Controversy*, 297.

consider as products of Nature, are in their present form, not only products of, say last year's labour, but the result of a gradual transformation, continued through many generations, under man's superintendence, and by means of his labour."¹⁷⁸ This point is quite poignant because we see the nonhuman in a role of passivity that regards their place in time as not future looking, but ontologically static and existing in utter dependence on "Man's" own futurity. In this moment, the nonhuman is in time, but not by virtue of their own ontological character—they move, but are immobile, they develop but only under "Man's" insistence and guardianship. This is a very odd moment to consider when we reflect on the insistence with which Marx situates the nonhuman not just in the past, but even the prehistoric age: a time removed from the time of "Man" proper, "Man" evolved. Here, the animal emerges as a process that takes place *because* rather than *by virtue* of their ontology. Marx embodies this difficulty when he regards the nonhuman as at once a static object, but also a being that embodies the capacity for production: "Take, for instance, the fattening of cattle, where the animal is the raw material, and at the same time an instrument for the production of manure."¹⁷⁹ Once again, the animal is defined as a static object that simultaneously possesses the capacity for forward moving gestures—and yet they remain nothing but tools to "Man" whose value production is presumably constituted by the ontological potentiality of the animal.

Later in a footnote in *Capital*, Marx will say that the slave is "instrumentum vocale" whereas the animal is "instrumentum semi-vocale" and while he does not elaborate on this difference, it is curious to consider from a critical animal studies perspective.¹⁸⁰ What does it

¹⁷⁸ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 129.

¹⁷⁹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 129.

¹⁸⁰ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 140.

mean to be a being heard only in partiality? This moment suggests the presence of a faculty which, despite itself, goes unnoticed, and, as such, reminds us of the ontological ties we have accumulated thus far. Language that concerns nonhuman ontology seems to occur in an ironic union that at once affirms them in lack, at the same time it confesses to the fact of their being regarded in partially.

Even more curious is the way Marx mobilizes a comparison between the cow and the child to depict “how capitalist production acts on the brain-functions of capitalists and their retainers.”¹⁸¹ Marx cites, “The muscles of animals, when they are deprived of a proper amount of light, become soft and inelastic, the nervous power loses its tone from defective stimulation, and the elaboration of all growth seems to be perverted [...] In the case of children, constant access to plenty of light during the day, and to the direct rays of the sun for a part of it, is most essential to health.”¹⁸² Though sourced from Dr. W. Strange, Marx’s inclusion of this passage is quite striking in the way it uses the physical deterioration of the nonhuman body to emphasize the cruelty associated with employing “children in night-labour.”¹⁸³ If, to think alongside Althusser, we may consider man in order to understand how the nonhuman becomes the nonhuman, and in doing so, extend a certain amount of liberty to his words in order to think not only of time and genesis, but also ontological impression, here we see the extremity of child labour—of the suffering of the vulnerable—reflected on and by the nonhuman. This channel of access from the human to the nonhuman is another ontological paradox that, in drawing us out of the animal to get to “Man,” has the effect of reemphasizing the sort of lack to which nonhumans are often

¹⁸¹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 201.

¹⁸² Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 201.

¹⁸³ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 201.

attributed within discourses of labour and value production.

Marx will also note that “animal power” is one of “man’s earliest inventions,”¹⁸⁴

suggesting that animals too are linked to the history of the labour process:

Thus, in the oldest caves we find stone implements and weapons. In the earliest period of human history domesticated animals, i.e., animals which have been bred for the purpose, and have undergone modifications by means of labour, play the chief part as instruments of labour along with specially prepared stones, wood, bones, and shells.¹⁸⁵

This link, as one that concerns the development of “Man” in time emphasizes Marx’s proclivity towards situating the nonhuman in an evolutionary position which they never transcend, though are obligated to fulfill. In other words, while the nonhuman is suited in the language of evolution, they do not evolve and as such, this narrative of origin functions to paradoxically affirm the human’s incompatibility with the language of such genesis. The temporal and historical connection between the animal and the human is set out in order to affirm their seemingly binary difference and therefore “Man’s” utter disconnect from transspecies linkages.

With this passage we see a historical narrative that is drawn out in such a way that even if one were argue against the development of an essentialist human genesis, the nonhuman most certainly remains a categorically fixed creature which narrativizes the human’s move through time. While we may refute the humanist understanding of an essential labour history, Marx nevertheless affirms the animal within a boundary that never seems to evolve. Here, the nonhuman is once again condemned to the realm of the static.

The nonhuman runs through time without the possibility of being in time and thus retains

¹⁸⁴ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 260.

¹⁸⁵ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 128.

an objectified identity despite their configuration as informing “Man’s” own development. Althusser is right that there is no essential human history, but Marx does make an essential animal history and while labour is not the essence of “Man,” objecthood becomes the essence of the animal.

Concluding Ruminations

It is not just, as Derrida claims, that “all the philosophers [...] say the same thing: the animal is deprived of language.”¹⁸⁶ Rather, all philosophers struggle to say that very thing—they cannot fully articulate the exclusion upon which they set their premise. While human/language may stand as evidence to the fact that we cannot know the world outside our inherently biased forms and projections, it does not mean that we let it be, that we let animals be in their being without wrapping them into our desire or impulse for autobiography. There is no pause after the reckoning of language. The risk we take in assuming this ethic is the maintenance of the project of human/language as necessarily stable and therefore clear in its form and category. We cannot step in any linguistic axiom without encountering not just a nonhuman, but also a logic that fails to totally maintenance the continuity of human ontology. Our theories of language must stand within a realm of tension that is at once placing man in language and pulling him out at the same time. The image of the human in philosophy functions as a creature forced into camouflage: finding a way to fit into any logic to defend its stature. We must, as Derrida orders, track where and how we create difference, but we must also find places where that difference is most fragile because it is in that realm of ontological strife where we are able to catch a glimmer of equitable congregation.

¹⁸⁶Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 32.

This returns me to the forceful centre of my chapter. Our initial focus on Aristotle demonstrates the difficulty inherent to ontologizing the human in strokes of unique singularity, and therefore the different ways in which humans and animals overlap in character and capability. In those moments where Aristotle is thought to have utterly defended the status of “Man” as an animal presence that contradicts the primary character of texts like *De Anima* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Our analysis shows us that there may not be such a thing as exclusive human language or speech because the forms we name as such cannot help but return to those creatures against whom we forage the definition. This return too is a kind of deterioration of our handle on concepts otherwise seemingly stable. All it takes is a trace of animal life to loosen our grasp on ideas like politics, the divine, speech, and passion. Moreover, our analysis shows us that what is often referred to as human language, is, instead, an assemblage of difference—two voices made into a single sound, received by ears that know only “Man.” This logic extends beyond language too and into the realm of function as victim to imposed hierarchy. Aristotle does not necessarily privilege one kind of function over another, in fact, he finds wonder and curiosity in beings whom—as far as he is concerned—we will never be able to understand in totality. The terms of our analysis resist the impulse to not only hierarchize, but demand, by proxy, that nonhumans animals conform to the functional conditions of the human. The allowance that our reading offers is one that is cognisant of anthropocentrism as operating through the impulsive tendency to examine nonhuman life for its ability to conform to human-driven logic, structure, and habit.

To orient this analysis in the direction of labour and value is to say that any reasonable scholarship on the question of animal labour must necessarily resist the impulse to amalgamate the organization and order of animals in capitalism to that of the human. Instead, an investigation

into the question of animal labour must regard its quest as bearing the responsibility of parsing through that which makes the nonhuman condition in capitalism distinct. As our primary subject of inquiry, slaughterhouse animals—cows, chickens, and pigs—produce their body as object, therefore doubling as both object and labourer, and this is very different from the functional role of humans in the animal food industry. Both capable of and subject to violence, the human, as wage labourer, exists within a very different nexus of power than the slaughterhouse animal—and the pattern of our analysis helps make this legible.

Let us, in this case, conclude with Marx, considering our strategies towards ontological character within the context of *Capital* in particular. As we already know, Marx seems to hesitate in sight of the possibility of transspecies analysis, but there remains a handful of thought-provoking moments where he seems to otherwise suspend human subjectivity in favour of a project which subjectivizes capitalism itself. In other words, there are—much like Aristotle—deeply sensitive moments in Marx which do not accumulate into a proper theory of animal labour, but which epitomize the central premise of this chapter: the ever-shifting lines of difference in the history of philosophy as it concerns the animal and human distinction.

In *Capital*, Marx pushes beyond the language of wage labour, and into time. Capitalism, he says,

Usurps the time for growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight. It haggles over a meal-times, where possible incorporating them into the production process itself, so that food is added to the worker as to a mere means of production, as coal is supplied to the boiler, and grease and oil to the machinery. It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, renewal, and refreshment of the vital forces to the exact amount of torpor

essential to the revival of an absolutely exhausted organism.¹⁸⁷

As opposed to most of his writing, this moment in Marx forgets the human, thinking instead of the violent, exhausting, and vampiric quality of capitalism as reducing life to mere process. Capitalism just barely keeps the subject alive, maintaining as little of the self as possible for the purpose of production. This passage is interesting because it thinks of labour outside of its relation to the wage as monetary compensation—a facet that is relevant to our discussion because, as Kendra Coulter reminds us, and Wadiwel rearticulates, animals have little use for money.¹⁸⁸ If, however, we consider this passage in its disjointed anonymity it is possible to conceptualize a labour dynamic that is far more useful to the nonhuman: theft, not in terms of money, but as Coulter notes, time.¹⁸⁹

Elaborating, Wadiwel considers the possibility of time as a premise for animal labour: “The advantage of foregrounding time as a calculation is that it measures the imposition of productive systems upon the subjective being of the living labouring subject.”¹⁹⁰ Wadiwel continues, “Marx points out that productive systems under capitalism will always determine labour time as a combination of the necessary labour time required to maintain the life of the labouring subject and the additional or surplus time extracted for the productive system.”¹⁹¹

This determination is important because it emphasizes the tension inherent to the working day: the difference between the time it takes to live—to maintain life—and “the exploitation time involved in giving up labour for capital.”¹⁹² Exploitation, premised, in this regard, on temporality

¹⁸⁷ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 375.

¹⁸⁸ Coulter, *Animals, Work, and the Promise of Interspecies Solidarity*, 76.

¹⁸⁹ Coulter, *Animals, Work, and the Promise of Interspecies Solidarity*, 76.

¹⁹⁰ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 189.

¹⁹¹ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

¹⁹² Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

and within the terms Marx details in “The Working Day,” is particularly potent and meaningful for animal workers in the animal agriculture industry because of the “intensification of time” that preoccupies such processes.¹⁹³ Within the boundary of the slaughterhouse, the calf enters the world as an apriori subject to an industrial-scale investment in its lived youth which is biopolitically calculated to remain in the throes of stasis.¹⁹⁴ The calf is such not only because of its youth, but because of the fact that they will only ever experience youth, and the commodity—veal—depends on the biological and material maintenance of such youth.¹⁹⁵ Refused the ability to stand, to exercise its muscles, the calf is forced to live in a body that straddles the primordial and birth: born, but without the biological function birth would otherwise normatively afford—walking, moving.¹⁹⁶ This near impossible task that demands the calf maintain the softness of its tissue in a biological time in its life which otherwise resists that possibility represents “the transformation of labour into labour time for capital, which alters the temporal experience for animals who are subject to this transition in systems of violence.”¹⁹⁷ In the life of the calf that is born into a slaughterhouse, every minute counts. As such, they live in an intensely monitored, and managed environment. This continuous control illustrates, Wadiwel tells us, “a difference in techniques that exactly conforms to the template offered by Michel Foucault for the emergence of biopower.”¹⁹⁸

As opposed to “episodic mechanisms of violence,” the calf is instead subject to “continuous methods of discipline and regulation” which, devoted to stunting its youth,

¹⁹³ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

¹⁹⁴ Terry Engle, ed., *The Welfare of Cattle* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 308.

¹⁹⁵ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

¹⁹⁶ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

¹⁹⁷ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

¹⁹⁸ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

“intensively manage” its biological life.¹⁹⁹ Life for the animal in the slaughterhouse becomes a productive stasis which trades on time in a violent environment whose only stimulus is the affect of pain and fear—such creatures are “nourished with only the purpose of attaining value as commodities after slaughter.”²⁰⁰ The working day, in this case, consumes the premise of life, emblemizing the extremity of capital and the condition of a life forced to devote itself to production in total embodiment.

Later in *Capital*, Marx, as we have already encountered, will say that “within the 24 hours of the natural day a man can only expend a certain quantity of his vital force. Similarly, a horse can work regularly for only 8 hours a day.”²⁰¹ Even the horse, Marx explains, cannot reasonably labour for more than eight hours. All species are limited in their ability to labour for extended periods of time; moreover, that labour must be constituted and regulated by biological impulses: “The worker needs time in which to satisfy his intellectual and social requirements.”²⁰² In this case, Marx is, by no means extending the language of social and intellectual flourishing to the horse, but that is of no consequence because the invitation of the animal always already produces a tension that underscores any insistence upon human exceptionalism. Marx does not have to say that the horse also needs social and intellectual stimulation because our investment is in the tension that such denial produces and therefore the disruption of anthropocentric assumption. Indeed, this tension goes beyond the difference between animal and human, leaking into Marx’s own determinacies. Why does Marx insist upon an eight-hour workday for the horse? Wadiwel explains that “these limits are not self-evident or guided by a detached

¹⁹⁹Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

²⁰⁰ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 190.

²⁰¹ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 341.

²⁰² Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 341.

philosophical or empirical analysis of the characteristics of organisms; instead, norms around work arrive through social relations.”²⁰³ In other words, animal labour time is measured by their arguably unwilling and forced relationship to humans. Not only does Marx deny the horse the possibility of free time, but the text itself does to the horse what, as Marx describes, capitalism does to the human: it subjects them to a violence without limit, assuming that it is simply capable of doing what it is told because it deliberately presupposed capability to satisfy productive demand.

Alienating the horse from the possibility of need, Marx declaratively confines their biography to an eight-hour day without question or concern. The text may indulge the horse in the language of labour time, but that does not happen without consequence. This kind of force—as the nature of our anthropocentric violence, Wadiwel continues—“is marked by the fact that it is almost without limits or regulation when it comes to time: there is no apparent social limit on the time we demand from animals.”²⁰⁴ Divorced from the possibility of social need, we eliminate all boundaries in relation to the animals, and we do so as though upon impulse, almost unconsciously.

²⁰³ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 193.

²⁰⁴ Wadiwel, “The Working Day,” 193.

Chapter Three: The Political Animal's Unconscious, Re-visiting Marx, and Work (Once More)

Prologue – Concerning Literary Analysis

So far, we have studied the way in which exclusionary logics of labour and language depend upon a fraught ontological organization of the nonhuman animal. Marx, for example, grounds the concept of value through the nonhuman animal while simultaneously refusing them the status of labourer. Aristotle—the figure from whom Marx, in part, derives his definition of value—sequesters nonhuman ontology into a similar corner. While guiding the development of concepts like language, imagination, logic, and sense, Aristotle's nonhuman animals are routinely exiled from the possibility of possession, but remain within the boundary of generous possibility, nonetheless. Fleshing out our interest in the question of ontology, we also looked in the direction of legacy, analyzing the work of Lefebvre and Althusser. It is therefore in our interest to further analyze the direction of this paradoxical dynamic by turning to the concerns that surround the role of literature and therefore Marxist reading practices.

In other words, having studied the influence upon Marx as well as his theoretical legacy, our analysis must, at this point, reach in the direction of application. There are several influential literary texts on the interconnected subject of slaughterhouses and socialism—namely, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and more recently, J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*. While these texts are notable and key sources within the study of nonhuman life and experience, my interest lies within the realm of Marxist literary methodologies. Here, I turn my gaze to the foremost Marxist literary theorist in recent decades, Fredric Jameson. Within this scope, I will discuss Jameson's use of Marx and how Marx performatively supports the kinds of conclusions Jameson draws. More specifically, by centralizing the Marxist literary method I take time to consider the details of Jameson's argument as it concerns the structural

form of the bourgeois novel and its relationship to the nonhuman.

The scope of what Jameson has to say is relevant for us because it is the boundary of his subject which reveals a further gap within the gaps he seeks to fill. As I will go onto examine in the following chapter, the political unconscious, an intervention in analysis which regards the interpretation of the literary text as necessarily incomplete without a properly Marxist understanding, is itself incomplete in this attention. Privileging the Marxist perspective as both central and conclusive, the political unconscious must be subject to its own questioning, probed for the way in which Marxism's apathy towards the nonhuman—let alone the idea of nonhuman labour—disturbs the scope of its gaze. There is an unconscious within the proposition of the political unconscious, and it takes the form of a nonhuman perpetually rejected from the analysis of labour and class. When we consider the boundlessness that literature afford us as scholars who seek to investigate the primary role nonhumans play in the work of capitalism, the possibility of their exclusion from textual discovery is a risk which obstructs our ethical obligations.

The unconscious to which I am referring—that is, the Jamesonian concept of the text's ideological-political context that is implicated in literary form and content—is important to the work of prioritizing animal labour because the economy to which it has dedicated its analysis is always already constituted by animal labour. Capitalism *is* animal labour because of its investment in biopolitical calculation for the pursuit of new markets as a self-sustaining impulse. As Derrida writes in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)”:

It is all too evident that in the course of the last two centuries these traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic forms of knowledge and the always inseparable techniques of intervention with respect to their object, the transformation of the actual object, its milieu, its world, namely, the living animal. This has occurred by means of farming and regimentalization at a demographic level unknown in the past, by means of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of what can be called the production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale,

more and more audacious manipulations of the genome, the reduction of the animal not only to production and over-active production (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning, and so on) of meat for consumption but also of all sorts of other end products, and all of that in the service of a certain being and the so-called human well-being of man.¹

Nichole Shukin's *Animal Capital* is helpful in parsing through Derrida's words: "Derrida's words intimate that it is not enough to theorize biopower in relation to human life alone and that the reproductive lives and labours of other species [...] also become a matter of biopolitical calculation."² Capitalism is not only historically premised on the exploitation of animals, but more critically, it is an economic form which nurtures itself through advancements in animal exploitation. However, keeping in mind that the breadth of such advancements may be outside the scope of our sense of empirical measure, Jameson's literary Marxism proves fruitful ground for our investigation into animal labour and the legacy we have traced thus far in our study.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida argues that for Lacan "there is [...] no unconscious, except for the human; it in no way exists for the animal, unless that be as an effect of the human unconscious," and this is a significant statement because it strikes Jameson's method as premised on how it defines the role and scope of capital.³ Invested in a rigorously historical methodology that reaches through the text to touch the primary and essential question of class, Jameson, like Marx, forgets the animal. Yet, as we have seen thus far, it is in the animal's utter disavowal where we find creaturely life and labour most legible. So, what is it about Jameson's political unconscious that compels such a direct erasure of animal labour in a

¹ Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am," 394.

² Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 12.

³ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 121.

methodology otherwise critical to Marxist literary analysis? More significantly, how do we restore animal life to the surface of inquiry and investigation?

The Dialectic Side and Framing the Direction of Discussion

My interest begins with an inquiry into Jameson's methodology as necessarily dialectical. Jameson states his argument at the start of the first chapter: "This book will argue the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts."⁴ He continues, "It conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today—the psychoanalytic or the mythocritical, the stylistic, the ethical, the structural—but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation."⁵ Not only is Jameson arguing for the prioritization of interpreting literary texts through the political lens, but that that lens is primary, total, and thus the "absolute" of all forms of interpretation within the scope of all other forms.⁶ Yet, this totalizing does not exclude the sort of relationality implicit in the dialectic. The political unconscious "turns on the dynamics of the act of interpretation and presupposes, as its organizational fiction, that we never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself."⁷ The apprehension of meaning within the context of literature as an eye or avenue into the historical is apprehended through "sedimented layers of previous interpretations."⁸ The identification of interpretation and allegory juxtaposes a "totalizing,

⁴ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 17.

⁵ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 17.

⁶ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 17.

⁷ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 9.

⁸ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 9.

properly Marxist ideal of understanding”⁹ to “demonstrate the structural limitations of other interpretative codes”—namely, those which discount the centrality of class analysis.¹⁰

Prioritizing and demanding historical thought, Jameson affirms that only “a genuine philosophy of history is capable of respecting the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day.”¹¹ This moment is very interesting because it makes legible one of the gaps Jameson is trying to bridge. Jameson’s concept of genuine philosophy can, per his understanding, cope with a multiplicity of differences within the social and cultural past at the same time it draws a thread to the present day. The challenge then, is to carefully balance the dialectical premise that there is (1) a horizon, (2) a culminating unconscious that we can trace in our literature as well as see in history (as past and present), and that (3) it is our task to relate these concepts while maintaining the necessary differences that make up that past and present.

Jameson’s argument is interesting, not only within the scope of the philosophical history of dialectics—of which I will soon explore—but also because of the paradoxical way in which it refuses to be a part of the tension and exchange that nurtures the dialectic. In *Touching Feeling* for example, Eve Sedgwick interrogates the “sacred status of Jameson’s ‘always historicize.’”¹² Sedgwick proceeds,

Always historicize? What could have less to do with historicizing than the commanding, atemporal adverb “always”? It reminds me of the bumper stickers that instruct people in other cars to “Question Authority.” Excellent advice, perhaps wasted on anyone who

⁹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 10.

¹⁰ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 10.

¹¹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 18.

¹² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 125.

does whatever they're ordered to do by a strip of paper glued to an automobile! The imperative framing will do funny things to a hermeneutics of suspicion.¹³

This immovable language—the term “always”—stands in opposition to the flexibility Jameson appears to advocate for in his devotion to historical consequence.¹⁴ In other words, Jameson, while seeking to promote a seemingly diverse method, fails to ensure that diversity through the application of an otherwise confined and inflexible language. The word “always” is the least historically thoughtful term Jameson may employ in this context.¹⁵ Premised on an inquiry into the hermeneutics of suspicion, Sedgwick argues that rather than attaching ourselves to what she regards as “paranoia,”¹⁶ we must shift our analysis towards a more receptive approach that considers possibility as but a unit of meaning “among other possibilities.”¹⁷ In other words, Jameson’s analysis goes against the understanding that “that knowledge does rather than simply *is*.”¹⁸

Brian Massumi and affect theorist Ann Cvetkovich are similarly critical of Jameson. Both Massumi and Cvetkovich take issue with Jameson’s discussion of mass culture and therefore the interpretive gaze to which he regards himself as respondent in the *Political Unconscious*. In *Mixed Feelings*, Cvetkovich argues that “Jameson challenges Adorno and Horkheimer’s claim that the culture industry manipulates and dehumanizes its audiences” by insisting on a “dialectical relation between reactionary and utopian dimensions of culture in order to avoid a narrowly instrumentalist position.”¹⁹ For Cvetkovich, “Jameson comes close to removing the

¹³ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 125.

¹⁴ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 125.

¹⁵ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 125.

¹⁶ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 125.

¹⁷ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 125.

¹⁸ Sedgwick and Frank, *Touching Feeling*, 124.

¹⁹ Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 28.

very historicism that is fundamental to his Marxism” and this is because his theory of the utopian discounts “the theory of affect upon which it depend.”²⁰ What is important for us is not the premise from which Cvetkovich is working, but their conclusion, which, much like Sedgwick’s, understands Jameson as stubborn in perception and method.

In Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual*, Jameson comes under charge for the way he discounts affect in his analysis of the rise of neoliberalism.²¹ As Massumi contests: “Fredric Jameson notwithstanding, belief has waned for many, but not affect. If anything, our condition is characterized by a surfeit of it. The problem is that there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect.”²² For Massumi, this erasure is the product of an unrelenting gaze that risks “undoing the considerable deconstructive work that has been effectively carried out by poststructuralism” through a dialectical form that is far more proximate to binary thought than diverse nuance.²³

Thinking alongside Sedgwick, Cvetkovich, and Massumi, there is considerable room to engage with Jameson’s *Political Unconscious* with a reasonable amount of doubt and worry. Jameson often anchors himself to strict terms that invoke similarly strict concepts. To think even of his reference to the historical premise is to regard his language as always already posed against interpretations that enable even the possibility of animal-centered thought. For example, it is the pursuit of a “genuine philosophy of history” which Jameson seeks, but it is Marxism alone which he regards as capable of the kind of coherency necessary for such a critique.²⁴ As we

²⁰ Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, 29.

²¹ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), XVIII.

²² Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30.

²³ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30.

²⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 18.

know from our own analysis, Marx—read through the particular focus I draw—seems quite untempered in his thought: a characteristic most legible in his severely anthropocentric ethic. At the same time, it is theoretically irresponsible to situate a single oeuvre or method as entirely capable of offering an “ideologically compelling resolution,” let alone analysis.²⁵ Jameson, from this perspective seems to relinquish skepticism and exploration in favour of affirming the authority of a resolutely dialectical Marxist method. By invoking the language of resolution, Jameson poses himself as insistent on a permanence that alleviates the text from further inquiry. From the perspective of nonhuman centered thought, it is reasonable to regard Jameson’s fixation on the human as, for our purposes, insufficiently skeptical—particularly as it concerns his insistence on a unified “human adventure.”²⁶

There is not much, if any flexibility in Jameson’s work, and this is a problem for us because it means that if we want to intervene, we must go beyond the fact of Jameson’s expected disinterest in nonhuman labour. If it is stubbornness or methodological paranoia wall-to-wall, it might not be possible for us to break through in the way we have with Marx and Aristotle. Instead, we must problematize the legacy from which Jameson draws his analytical operation: the Master-Bondsman dialectic.

My analysis of Jameson—in particular, *The Political Unconscious*—shapes the direction of my discussion as it leads us towards a meditation on Hegel and the Master-Bondsman dialectic. As such, the following chapter takes a natural break in the second portion, finding it necessary to steer towards the influences from whom Jameson derives his concepts and theoretical

²⁵ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19.

²⁶ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19.

forms. This shift is the accumulation of an involved investigation into Jameson's treatment of nonhuman life within the literary scope, as well as within the political unconscious.

A Preliminary Turn to Wynter

The political unconscious, Jameson tell us, "Finds its function and its necessity" through the theorist's capacity to detect "the traces of that uninterrupted narrative" and to restore to "the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality" of the "fundamental history" of class struggle.²⁷ This moment is important, not only because it gives us a better sense of the direction in which Jameson is going, but because in establishing his premise through the terms of a collective struggle he simultaneously expands and restricts his concept of the political unconscious.

The mystery of the cultural past—that same mystery that "only Marxism" can adequately gage—is "re-enacted," or in other words, written and thought about, if and "only if the human adventure is one."²⁸ The political unconscious is a human task and this, by proxy, renders class struggle a similarly human phenomenon. The premise of my stake, however, is not this single mention of the human. In fact, and as I will soon detail, there is a problem with Jameson's concept of subjecthood. As much as Jameson may attempt to distance himself from the category of the single being, he fails. Rather than decentring the privileged position of the subject in favour of a description of experience that is liberated in its anonymity, Jameson's methodology falls prey to the universalising task of the human, centring a subject that we know far too well: "Man." In other words, and with consideration to "Realism and Desire: Balzac and the problem of the Subject," Jameson's attempt to demonstrate a decentred manifestation of subjectivity is

²⁷ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 20.

²⁸ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19.

but a reaffirmation or return to “Man” as the default entity. This return positions “Man” at the heart of the concept of the political unconscious. Jameson’s task, I suggest, begins and ends with the human and this, for me, is the kind of fixedness I want to emphasize and deconstruct.

Indeed, we may liken Jameson’s task to Sylvia Wynter’s discussion of the human—that is, the project of “Man” as one which seeks to secure, or rather maintain a certain “overrepresentation” of itself “as if it were the human itself [...] being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself.”²⁹ In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, McKittrick very usefully encapsulates the theoretical drive that runs through Wynter’s thought: a force which “attends to the ways in which our specific conception of the human, “Man,” curtails alternative models of being, the fullness of our interrelated human realization, and a new science of human discourse.”³⁰ I mention Wynter not only because I share a similar, albeit methodically and contextually divergent interest in the language of “Man,” but also because her discussion with McKittrick helps frame the scope of our inquiry. At one point in their conversation Wynter asks McKittrick how we might go about thinking outside our systems of knowledge. What does it mean to think away from how we are interpellated to think? How do we think away from thinking? As Wynter puts it, “How, then, [...] can we be enabled and empowered to climb out of our present order of consciousness?”³¹ More importantly, “how do we be,” she asks, “hybridly human?”³² McKittrick does not answer, but I want us to keep Wynter’s questions in mind because the task of my analysis is not one that seeks to tunnel itself into our theories of interest in order to work with its contents. Rather, my perspective is one

²⁹ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337, 26.

³⁰ Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

³¹ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 45.

³² McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 45.

which seeks to find a way out of the text: what can I do with Jameson, with Hegel in order to arrive at a diverse species-perspective which the text itself necessarily resists? How do I think away from what is said about the nonhuman? How do I tunnel out of the text in order to locate the places and ideas that depend upon exclusion? How does our literary and critical gaze change when we pry “Man” out of the container of the political unconscious? How does this re-orientation of Jameson’s argument similarly reorient our reading of Marx?

It is my intention to conclusively propose a primary, and strategic method for the investigation of what I will deem the political *animal* unconscious. On one hand, our analysis thus far demonstrates that there is a deeply unstable, even neurotic attempt at ontologizing species hierarchy in Western philosophy. On the other hand, Jameson offers us the political unconscious as a means of uncovering the fundamental history of class struggle—albeit in the severe absence of the nonhuman from the history of labour. This dynamic suggests another kind of thought, a differentiated kind of unconscious that copes with and returns to animal being in the way it returns to collective class consciousness. If Jameson’s proposition is that we must, through Marxism, restore to thought and therefore literature “the repressed and buried reality” of class struggle, my stake is not too different.³³ I propose that we do indeed prioritize the “political interpretation,”³⁴ but that that interpretation must restore “to the surface [...] the repressed and buried reality” of the complicated, fraught, and interconnected relationship between humans and animals *within* the discussion of collective class struggle.³⁵

³³ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 20.

³⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 17.

³⁵ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 20.

Balzac as A Way Through

In his development of the political unconscious, Jameson investigates the structural form of Balzac's work, arguing that the Balzacian narrative apparatus functionally transcends the possibility of binding the sorts of feelings or desires it textually encapsulates to its narrative, speaker, character, or even author. The unboundedness of the affect of Balzac's work is, Jameson remarks, a kind of "libidinal investment" that "effaces" the text's "symbolic satisfaction"—the measure of who feels what and why—between the "biographical subject," "Implied Author," and reader.³⁶

Furthermore, it is description, Jameson explains, that becomes a "privileged moment" wherein "such investments"—that is, affect and desire—"may be detected and studied."³⁷ These affects, now liberated from the container of subjectivity can be studied when the object of description "is contested," focusing "antagonistic ambitions within the narrative itself."³⁸ To elaborate, we may focus on the passage Jameson himself studies:

On the balustrade of the terrace, imagine great blue and white pots filled with wallflowers; envision right and left, along the neighboring walls, two rows of square-trimmed lime-trees; you will form an idea of this landscape filled with demure good humor, with tranquil chastity, and with modest homely [bourgeois] vistas offered by the other bank and its quaint houses, the trickling waters of the Brillante, the garden, two rows of trees lining its walls, and the venerable edifice of the Cormon family. What peace! What calm! Nothing pretentious, but nothing transitory: here everything seems eternal. The ground-floor, then, was given over to reception rooms for visitors. Here everything breathed the Provincial, ancient but unalterable.³⁹

³⁶ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 155.

³⁷ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 155.

³⁸ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 155.

³⁹ Honoré de Balzac, *The Old Maid; The Cabinet of Antiquities*, tr. William Walton (London: Caxton, 1898), 247.

Jameson cites this passage from Balzac's *The Old Maid*, a text that is typically regarded for its stake in social metaphor. For Jameson however, the focus is very clear: Balzac's text shows us an accreditation of the object as desirable, "as the heavily persuasive nature of the passage in question testifies, it has for whatever historical reason become necessary to secure the reader's consent, and to validate or accredit the object as desirable."⁴⁰ For Jameson we cannot, as readers, attach or direct the expressed desire for the Cormon's home towards a single subject. The priority of the text, Jameson concedes, is reversed: "this narrative apparatus depends on the desirability of an object whose narrative function would have been a relatively automatic [...] effect."⁴¹

As Jameson emphasizes, *The Old Maid* is also told through the perspective of an anonymous speaker. The "biographical Balzac" the "implied Author" and "this or that desiring protagonist" is not "present" in the offered sample from *The Old Maid*⁴². Instead, "desire here comes before us in a peculiarly anonymous state which makes a strangely absolute claim on us."⁴³ The kind of desire that is laid out before us is not yet "privatized by the ego-barriers" of "the personal and purely subjective experience of the monadized subject."⁴⁴ Balzac's description, per Jameson, is therefore liberated from the private world of the singular perspective: his is a "depersonalized" phenomenon that remains undisturbed by any notions of legible identity.⁴⁵ In this way, as per Jameson, that which the speaker articulates takes the form of a kind of allegorical desire, rendering its manifestation a subjectively detached but intuitively rich

⁴⁰ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴¹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴² Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴³ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴⁵ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

phenomenon. Jameson therefore interprets Balzac's narrative as a manifestation of desire as such, and this being the case, it functions outside the boundary of the container of identity.⁴⁶ In a more critical sense, it is the stake of this anonymity that broadly enables Jameson to pursue, in part, a more formal and applied image of the manifestation of his analytic gaze.

For us, the emphasis on the particularly bourgeois narrator is paramount because their position is precisely the device that binds the literary and social cues of the text to the human perspective, thereby restricting the possibility of a diverse class analysis or species consideration. Jameson takes time to emphasize that, contrary to the modernist literary landscape, Balzac achieves, or at least arrives at the possibility of a description that is as such: an allegorical sensory experience that manifests through an intensely anonymous affectual flow. As he therefore attributes anonymity to the perspective in which the *The Old Maid* is written and thus the methods of the political unconscious, Jameson does more than just outline a framework for class-driven analysis. Instead, the effect of this anonymity is such that it makes a new subject whose non-identity, situated in the heart of class-based analysis, is but the masquerade of a more pronounced identity: "Man." The affirmation of anonymity functionally limits the scope of the political unconscious' proposed methodology, rendering the anthropocentric gaze a pre-requisite to analysis.

The pursuit of the development of anonymity and therefore the primary stake of "Man" begins with Jameson's attention to the Cormon townhouse. Jameson notes that the Cormon home is the "prize on which the narrative [...] turns" standing in as a "quintessential object of desire," and yet despite such ideality, no single character expresses a singular sense of desire for its

⁴⁶ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

content and presence.⁴⁷ Instead, Balzac's seemingly anonymous description "solicits the reader not merely to reconstruct this building and grounds in some inner eye, but to reinvent it as the Idea, and as heart's desire."⁴⁸ Here, Jameson suggests that beyond the way in which the reader is encouraged to imagine the Cormon's home in detail, and thus within the context of their own mind, is the text's ability to enable a rearticulation of the house in terms of a self-inspired desire. Balzac awakens "a longing for the possession" of the fantasy of "landed property" as a real material figure that represents "utopian wish-fulfillment."⁴⁹ Within the historical context from which Balzac's text emerges is also the manifestation of a "peace" that mingles with the "warming fantasy" of property ownership.⁵⁰ The "metropolitan business struggles of Paris" and therefore the intensification of capital and its pursuit in the modern landscape takes hold of this relatively modest fantasy of "husbandry," "the routines of daily life," "garden paths," and "the eternal cycle of meals and walks," "magnify[ing] it into the fantasy of feudal lordship and of the return of the great estate."⁵¹ As such, the "vivid description" of Mademoiselle Cormon's home "already resolves in advance" the "social and ideological contradiction around which the [*The Old Maid*] will turn."⁵² This resolution occurs precisely because the text "combines," or marries, in relative disharmony, the mutual logic(s) of "commercial activity" and "aristocratic tradition."⁵³ No where do we see this contradiction more legible than in Mademoiselle Cormon herself: she is desirable yet grotesque, she is a beauty despite her big feet and triple chin.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 156.

⁴⁸ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁴⁹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁵⁰ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁵¹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁵² Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁵³ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 157.

⁵⁴ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 158.

Mademoiselle Cormon descriptively and therefore physically embodies the desires and aversions of what we may understand as the aristocrat as well as the modern commercial man.

Furthermore, Balzac's passage is, in fact, without a singular named identity insofar as (1) what is described is detached from a particular person, and (2) the passage relies upon a call to action from the reader ("Imagine").⁵⁵ However, within the boundary of such motion is the proposition of a static identity between subject and asset/desire that restricts the passage within tautological bounds. The description becomes the subject. The description is desirous by the simple fact that there is a fundamental subject—even if that subject is not a body explicitly named within the text itself. Jameson's reading of Balzac quite generously endows the text a form of identity that is all together a positionality which, within the bounds of the chapter, becomes a universalist status dictated not by name, but by human function. Jameson's reading is doing human identity without naming or having identity, and this bind is precisely where we find gestures to the tautological lens that his reading cannot seem to escape.

The production of "Man" as at once an individual and an ideological presence is interesting to consider within particular regard to the genre of realism. Cora Diamond's "Realism and the Realistic Spirit," for example understands the realist novel—to borrow from Stephen Mulhall's *The Wounded Animal*—as "presenting individual characters built out of detailed observations rather than character types whose qualities are determined in advance by labels."⁵⁶ When we consider Jameson's approach to Balzac from the perspective of human ontology, we are more equipped to detect the way in which the particularly of his reading makes "Man" both

⁵⁵ Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 245.

⁵⁶ Stephen Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal: J. M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality in Literature and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 147.

“individual character” and “character type.”⁵⁷ The anonymity of “Man,” drawn from Jameson’s reading and insistence on scope, may transcend the conditions of the genre in which it is contained.

Mulhall proceeds: “realism could do no more than secure an impression of reality [...] in truth, however, that text remained a text: the individuals it portrayed did not exist, the specific resources used to create the impression of their reality were no less conventional than those of any other literary genre.”⁵⁸ This perspective on the genre’s expectation is quite considerable when we contrast it with Diamond’s understanding that realism is such because “certain things do not happen in it.”⁵⁹ When we take seriously the conception of “Man” as a creature whose role in the text emerges as a kind of manifesting force of all things natural and otherwise, we witness the ideological range of the species binary as transcending its own shape. “Man” is so inflated that he is incapable of occupying the seat of his representation: he suppresses even himself; moreover, he is granted an allowance to exist as a near-divine creature in a genre, which, for Diamond, is dictated by the fact of its limitations. The utterance—“Man”—always already exists in excess, the difficulty however, is that that excess is real and made real precisely because it is situated within the realist genre.

The details of the Cormon home form around gestures that call upon the experience and gaze of “Man” as the architect of the real. What becomes most real, most truthful and frank is the identity of the human as the detail most proximate to reality and life. The astounding truth of “Man’s” existence triumphs over realism’s emphasis on the matter of depicting the shape of life

⁵⁷ Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal*, 144.

⁵⁸ Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal*, 144.

⁵⁹ Cora Diamond, “Realism and the Realistic Spirit,” in *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 40.

and the world as frankly as possible. In this effect, the human is all that is needed for the depiction of life because they emblemize the shape of the genre and reading form, per Jameson. The relationship that is cast between genre and “Man” generates a world whose ability to attest to the truth needs only the gaze of “Man’s” desire. It is therefore upon his totalizing and exclusive life force that the very possibility of nature, and the world blooms.

In *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, Erin James and Eric Morel take time to flesh out the typical or traditional difference between the narrative and storytelling. The narrative, they note, is “a human practice, of course, and as such it is inevitably geared toward human interests and values,” whereas storytelling “always participates in a broader cultural ecology: by entering into dialogue with other areas of culture.”⁶⁰ Storytelling therefore wields the potential “to engage in a reconceptualization of humanity’s position vis-à-vis physical realities that transcend individual human existence, or even the existence of the human species.”⁶¹ James and Morel cite this transgressive quality of storytelling in their exploration of contemporary narratives whose approach to plot progression replaces “the [narrative’s] traditional focus on human intentionality and agency.”⁶² James and Morel challenge the narrative/storytelling binary through an emphasis on nonhuman driven stories that bring diverse subjectivities to the foreground. This challenge is interesting in our regard because it means that in narratives where “Man” is synonymous with all life, agency, and nature he alone defines the text’s cultural ecology at the same time he articulates the narrative as a whole.

⁶⁰ Erin James and Eric Morel, “Introduction”, in *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, ed. Erin James and Eric Morel (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020), 60.

⁶¹ James and Morel, *Environment and Narrative*, 60.

⁶² James and Morel, *Environment and Narrative*, 61.

It is important to note that in the passage to which Jameson refers, “Man” is not just a singularly defined, self-serving creature—he is social: “The ground floor was thus open to the reception of guests.”⁶³ Balzac draws this moment as close as possible to the very body of “Man,” implying a certain sociality, a meeting between oneself and their fellows, and therefore an implied identity that is necessarily acknowledged and made real by the social.

The totalizing effect of “Man” at the expense of the nonhuman’s ontological coherency stands parallel to what we have traced thus far, especially in Marx. In Jameson’s reading of Balzac, and therefore his direction towards the full iteration of the political unconscious, we find a world—situated in a bourgeois estate—that, in totalizing “Man,” reproduces the negation of nonhuman presence and therefore analytic potential at the expense of their ontological character. As Balzac’s landscape moves through the interpretive scope of Jameson’s insistence on anonymity, the text’s realist possibilities, the consideration of life outside the boundary of “Man” alone, is subject to erasure. The development of the political unconscious therefore resists, in its very architecture, an analysis capable of coping with diverse species contexts, and this is quite troubling considering the potential it otherwise embodies as a text capable of detecting the seemingly untraceable gestures of labour and value production.

To direct our gaze towards the speculative consideration of nonhuman presence is to imagine, for example, a worm within the soil of the Cormon’s flower bed. What does “Man” materially absorb in his consumption of the landscape? The worm, singular in the soil, and the earth nourished by virtue of that singularity, signifies a kind of labour that the human is otherwise incapable of performing. Yet, through Jameson’s perspective, this otherwise human

⁶³ Balzac, *The Old Maid*, 69.

incapability becomes an ontological fact that acknowledges the consequence of labour without the presence of the nonhuman producer. More critically, Balzac offers a realist landscape which Jameson produces as a call to “Man” as a universal being. This version of “Man” is undetectable even within the language of anonymity and desire, tactfully driving the genre’s scope towards the singularity of human identity. Unsurprisingly, this universalized human scope foretells the trouble we have faced thus far in our analysis: the implication of the nonhuman in ontological systems of meaning dependant on paradoxical measures of capability and presence.

In this case, nonhuman value—their being—supports the affirmation of the image of “Man” as a totalized subject. This totalization is made *more* real because it traverses the realist genre in which it manifests. The fiction of “Man” as everything, and therefore the nonhuman as value alone gains the status of truth despite its erasure and because of the literary framework in which it exists. The effect of “Man’s” masquerade as a transcendent entity obscures the tether that leads us towards understanding that we are meeting a real subject. In our passage from Balzac, subjectivity is presented as imaginary, and this produces the notion or belief that every other instance of subjective presence—a name being called, for example—is the properly real aspect of the text. This ideological belief pushes us to imagine that the text lacks a subject proper, rendering “Man” a manifestation of his own deterred image: finding ways to exist even in the places where we think existing things cannot manifest, not only because it is not present but because it is always already occupied by another. “Man” is exempt from the question of ideology as the representation of reality, working within a logic that conceals the notion that what we understand as real is no longer. “Man” does not need to be real to exist—he can just *be* and this is a deeply troubling reality to situate alongside the nonhuman’s paradoxical ontology.

McKittrick, thinking through Wynter brings this to the forefront when she notes that “as

humans, we can therefore only fully realize ourselves in terms of a particular genre of Being Human, which is narratively instituted and then performatively enacted by its subjects. And we do not become human before or outside of this process.”⁶⁴ Wynter calls this direction from the narratively instituted to the performed manifestation “a mode of auto-institution,” and it is “based on a specific narrative of origin and conception of Being Human, that determines human behaviours.”⁶⁵ In our case, it is interesting to consider the way “Man,” in relation to the nonhuman, presents the possibility of a kind of being that escapes the logic of the narrative. In this case, “Man,” having consumed the total scope of the existing and non-existing, finds himself capable of a self-preservation that does not rely on “a specific narrative of origin” because it *is* the start and end of everything.⁶⁶ Non-performance becomes a way of exiting as “Man” transcends the boundary of the kind of becoming to which Wynter refers. The functional effort of Jameson’s analysis therefore poses several immediate problems outside the scope of routinely defaulting to “Man” as the location of anonymity.

The position of “Man” at the expense of the nonhuman’s ontological character generates an extreme sense of obscurity that is not too unlike what we have seen before in Marx and Aristotle. In this case, however, the libidinal investment is dug even deeper: it is not just a kind of authorial wish fulfillment or the design of aesthetics. Rather, it is the configuration of nonhuman life in the deepest recesses of “Man’s” self concept. What occurs in Jameson’s reading of the Cormon garden not only constitutes the affirmation of the paradoxical position in which the nonhuman is so often situated, but the generation of “Man’s” brazen mastery over the

⁶⁴ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis*, 238.

⁶⁵ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis*, 238.

⁶⁶ McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: on Being Human as Praxis*, 238.

nonhuman as the degraded steppingstone of knowledge and identity.

Indeed, as Jameson's insistent reading reemphasizes Marcel Proust's very popular reading of Balzac—which, in this case, I will approach through Deleuze's lens. In *Proust and Signs* Deleuze cites Proust, noting that in “In Balzac there coexist, not digested, not yet transformed, all the elements of a style-to-come that does not exist.”⁶⁷ Deleuze continues in his reference:

Style does not suggest, does not reflect: it explains, explicates. It explicates moreover by means of the most striking images, but not dissolved into the rest, which make us understand what he means the way we make it understood in conversation if we have an inspired conversation, but without being concerned with harmony and without intervening.⁶⁸

For Deleuze, Balzac and Proust are defined by the open-endedness with which they write—and this concerns both the elements, and objects of the text, as well as the narrative direction. Balzac directly copes with what Deleuze understands as “the problem of unity,” and he does so through the intimation of the states of being that are suspended in a certain fragmentation, or a partiality that does not feel the need to conform to any one idea of totality or unity.⁶⁹ What is interesting for us is the way Deleuze takes care to consider the few times Balzac recites an interest in the nonhuman, and while he does so through a relation to Proust, my own discussion omits that portion simply by virtue of the fact that it is outside my scope of analysis.

While Deleuze does not cite any of Balzac's declarations, there is reason to consider that he is referencing a notable passage from *The Human Comedy*.⁷⁰ Here, Balzac gives us a very

⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 165.

⁶⁸ Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 165.

⁶⁹ Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 164.

⁷⁰ Travis Wilds, “Animality and Contagion in Balzac's *Père Goriot*,” *SubStance* 46, no. 3 (2017): 173–192.

firm idea of the kind of partiality and non-subjecthood that is played out through references to the nonhuman animal. He says,

Among animals the drama is limited; there is scarcely any confusion; they trample and attack one another--that is all. Men, too, trample on one another; but their greater or less intelligence makes the struggle more complicated. Though some experts do not yet admit that animal nature flows into human nature through an immense tide of life, the grocer certainly becomes a peer, and the noble sometimes sinks to the lowest social grade.⁷¹

For Balzac, “there is only one animal,” such that both humans and nonhumans experience the same fundamental circumstances of life—the only difference is that the human experiences the more complicated manifestation of life.⁷² This difference too is derived from the notion that the human is a “social species,” and therefore sociality is the determinant factor of the difficulty of any given situation.⁷³ When we marry Balzac’s understanding of the flow of species with Deleuze’s emphasis on partiality, animality emerges as a means of description—and it does not help that the world in which Balzac sets his humans is devoid of nonhuman life: especially the Cormon house.

That is, to return to the flowers in the Cormon garden is to understand that in his declaration of being-everything, “Man” takes with him, for example, and once again, the lifework the worm who fertilizes the soil simply by virtue of existing. The extreme intimacy between ontological identity, and the natural is not available to “Man” and, as such, he lacks the kind of self-concept or image that the worm may otherwise embody as a creature whose ontology is innately materialized. There is, in this regard, no self for man *to* touch because he is made up of those who make the world, and yet, as he reduces the nonhuman’s value production

⁷¹ Honore de Balzac, *La Comedie humaine*, ed. Pierre Georges Castex, 12 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976-1981), 6.

⁷² Balzac, *La Comedie humaine*, 6.

⁷³ Balzac, *La Comedie humaine*, 6.

to such paradox it seems that he cannot stop himself from touching the Other. The reluctant nonhuman is therefore, and once again, pushed into a conceptual site where they must enable the growth of identity, of value, at the expense of their own existence in the world. Upon the generation of such value and identity—nourishing the flower, the world—the nonhuman, in their language, labour, and ability, is dubbed over in strokes of silence and the framework in which they exist—the political unconscious—prevents their retrieval. There is no contribution for the nonhuman to make—their pollination, their grazing, their relationship with the objects of the world is appropriated in gestures of non-consensual intimacy.

The notion of self-concept and claiming selfhood through the materialization of one's labour leads us in the natural direction of Hegel and the master/bondsman dialectic. For Hegel, of course, this dialectic is the encounter between two independent self-consciousness that struggle in sight of each other and in sight of the possibility that they—as individuals—are not in fact the measure of all things worldly or otherwise. This scene of struggle is important for our analysis, not only because Jameson himself thinks in dialectical terms, but because it leads us towards a more involved assessment of animal labour and ontology.

The Hegelian Turn

Prelude - The Status of the Cow's Bondage

The overwhelming violence of what Karen M. Morin regards as the carceral geography of the slaughterhouse reiterates the sublime character of capital through the inherently restrictive language of speciesism.⁷⁴ As Morin notes, “To understand violence against human and nonhuman animals it is important to not only be able to epistemologically define what we mean by ‘violence’ and ‘cruelty’ in the first place, but also to be able to establish that suffering and pain are in fact experienced in carceral spaces such as the death house and slaughterhouse and not simply assume it to be so.”⁷⁵ It is because of the link between epistemology and the possibility of articulating the severity of suffering that Morin too turns to literature. For example, as Morin identifies the way in which Henry Ford “paved the way for the slaughter of humans in the Holocaust”—noting that “in fact some of the soldiers who worked in the death camps first worked in slaughterhouse”—she turns to Coetzee to aid in articulating the gravity of this connection: “As J.M. Coetzee’s protagonist Elizabeth Costello declares in Coetzee’s acclaimed novel *The Lives of Animals*, ‘Chicago showed us the way; it was from the Chicago stockyards that the Nazis learned how to process bodies.’”⁷⁶

The inability to capture the empirical breadth of capitalist production is, indeed, a feature built into the very character of economy, but when contextualized within the space of the slaughterhouse we see this kind of passive denial assume a central activity. This kind of animal capitalism extends beyond its wonted disposition, actively seeking to deny us the possibility of

⁷⁴ Karen M. Morin, *Carceral Space, Prisoners and Animals* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 9.

⁷⁵ Morin, *Carceral Space, Prisoners and Animal*, 9.

⁷⁶ Coetzee, J. M. *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 43.

empirical knowledge through the visual banality of the slaughterhouse as well as growing legal prohibitions on documentation, and recording.⁷⁷ This attempt at activity, this excess of function, constitutes, in part, the energy required to maintain the universal architecture of speciesism as a structure invested in affectual discord and hegemonic maintenance. In other words, capitalism must be exceptionally diligent in its effort to ensure a landscape of isolation where humans and animals are unable to engage in a meaningful exchange outside of the language of purchase. This isolation, in part, inflames the cultural tolerance, or apathy towards the suffering of those in slaughterhouses. Our connection with animals is always disturbed—but literature, perhaps more than philosophy, is a space capable of interrupting the silence between species.

In *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals*, Katerina Kolozova gestures to “Marx’s reading of the problem of philosophy as trapped in its circularity and inability to account of the real or of materiality and practice.”⁷⁸ Kolozova continues to note that philosophy’s “incapacity to think from a third person’s perspective [...] is at the core of the principle of philosophical sufficiency”⁷⁹ such that, “without such tectonic epistemic shift, decentering the human is an always already failed act.”⁸⁰

In *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry*, Gail A. Eisnitz interviews several slaughterhouse employees who work on the kill floor. Eisnitz, in eerie detail, describes, what for many who read and write within the genre of animal studies, is the all-too-familiar knocking box: “The stun operator, or

⁷⁷ Megan H. Glick, “Animal Instincts: Race, Criminality, and the Reversal of the ‘Human,’” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2013): 639–659, 643.

⁷⁸ Katerina Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy, and Patriarchy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 136.

⁷⁹ Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals*, 137.

⁸⁰ Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals*, 138.

‘knocker,’ shoots each animal in the forehead with a compressed-air gun that drives a steel bolt into the cow’s skull and then retracts it.”⁸¹ Later, Eisnitz interviews slaughterhouse employee Albert Cabrera who narrates his time as a knocking-box worker, citing the inconsistency with which it operates. Cabrera says, “you don’t know which [cow] got shot and which ones didn’t get shot at all, and you forget to do the bottom ones. They’re hung anyway, and down the line they go, wriggling and yelling.”⁸² Cabrera proceeds, “It was a serious problem with the cows, and the bulls have even harder skulls. A lot I had to hit three or five times, ten times before they’d go down. There were plenty of times you’d have to make a big hole in their head, and still they’d be alive.”⁸³

Cabrera’s narration brings about an obvious irony: the cows, property of the slaughterhouse, must become meat, and a reasonable amount of effort must be made to ensure that that is the case. For Cabrera, he must, at the very least, try to shoot the cow—whether he is successful in either murdering or rendering the cow unconscious is of no consequence. The kill floor is focused on the movement of the cows from one end of the plant to the other: from life to meat, and their state of consciousness does not—within this narrative, it seems—directly affect the efficiency of that transition. The cow, no matter their state of mind, is necessarily restricted in movement and agency. Furthermore, if the creature cannot become meat—that is, if they were to escape—they must still die and therefore occupy a position proximate to meat: dead flesh.

In 2004 six cows escaped from a slaughterhouse in Omaha, Nebraska. Four of the cows, though soon apprehended, ran in the direction of the Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church.

⁸¹ Gail A. Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1997), 16.

⁸² Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse*, 35.

⁸³ Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse*, 35.

Saint Francis is the patron saint of animals. Pachirat details this tale for us in *Every Twelve*

Seconds:

A fifth animal trotted down a main boulevard to the railroad yards that used to service Omaha's once-booming stockyards. The sixth, a cream-colored cow, accompanied the fifth animal partway before turning into an alleyway leading to another slaughterhouse. Workers from the first slaughterhouse and shotgun-armed Omaha police pursued the cream-colored cow into the alley, cornering it against a chain-link fence. After failing to herd the uncooperative cow into a waiting trailer, the police waved the workers back and opened fire on it. The cow ran a few steps, then fell, bellowing and struggling to rise while the police fired on it again.⁸⁴

Pachirat, reflecting on the scene, takes time to quote one of the slaughterhouse employees and eye witnesses: “‘They shot it, like, ten times,’ she said, her face livid with indignation, and her words sparked a heated lunch-table discussion about the injustice of the shooting and the ineptitude of the police.”⁸⁵

The difference between Eisnitz and Pachirat's tale is not premised on whether the flesh of the cow is consumed, but whether they fulfill the purpose of their labour: death. The cow is contractually obligated to die. Consumption of the cow's flesh, in this case, is a profitable consequence of death as opposed to a mandatory guideline. We do not need to eat the cow, but the cow must, nonetheless, fulfill the possibility of consumption: they need to be in a position where we *could* eat their flesh—where profit is a possibility.

The nature of the creature's death—gunned down by police or shot in a knocking box—will almost always come down to the bullet of a gun. What difference does it make if the cow is

⁸⁴ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 2.

⁸⁵ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 2.

shot on the kill floor, or against a chain-link fence? In the slaughterhouse, the cow, held up by its ankles, or shuttled towards a blade does not have to fall unconscious prior to their butchering. In the case of the renegade cow, however, death must be a certainty—not least because the creature stands against a police force and therefore a figure of power that is very particular in its approach to dissent. The renegade cow cannot simply be apprehended or made unconscious and therefore transported back to the slaughterhouse: this is a cow that must fulfill its contractual obligation in a distinct manner.

It is necessary to frame our pending Hegelian discourse with this particularly gruesome reality because the slaughterhouse cow is a creature forced into a state of bondage that is outside the scope of a Hegelian self-conscious liberation—or so I will argue throughout this section. Even if the cow were to fit the prerequisite consciousness Hegel details, emancipation remains an impossibility because there is no life to have outside of their duty to work for death.

Furthermore, and with consideration to the terms of the slaughterhouse, the cow is not a labourer: they are raw material, and it is our analytic gaze that reads their life as one entrenched in labour. The kind of bondage to which the cow belongs makes no promise of emancipation. As such, that which occurs between the slaughterhouse cow and “Man”—as the universal subjectivity that informs and directs the slaughterhouse—is not a relationship proper, i.e., the Hegelian relationship: “the pure concept of the doubling of self-consciousness in its unity [...] up for examination.”⁸⁶ “Man” directs the murder of the cow and does so without the Hegelian stage, and this is important because it reorders our very concept of history.

It is also important to take time to clarify my philosophical access point into Hegel. On

⁸⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel “Self-Consciousness,” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. Terry P. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), §185.

one hand, the drive of this thesis is to study not only Marx and those whom he influences, but also Marx's own influence. As such Hegel and Marxist readings of Hegel are of particular interest. Even more so, however, is the curious connection that Marxist readers of Hegel's stream of thought has to the nonhuman. In particular I turn to the *Introduction to The Reading of Hegel* wherein Alexandre Kojève in quite the striking footnote suggests that at the end of history man returns to a kind of animal life, or animality:

The disappearance of Man at the end of History, therefore, is not a cosmic catastrophe: the natural World remains what it has been from all eternity. And therefore, it is not a biological catastrophe either: Man remains alive as animal in harmony with Nature or given Being.⁸⁷

And:

If Man becomes an animal again, his arts, his loves, and his play must also become purely "natural" again. Hence it would have to be admitted that after the end of History, men would construct their edifices and works of art as birds build their nests and spiders spin their webs, would perform musical concerts after the fashion of frogs and cicadas would play like young animals and would indulge in love like adult beasts.⁸⁸

In both these footnotes is the understanding that the end of history is the moment of humanity coming into animality—a kind of animal peace that finds itself in harmony with nature. In other words, what Kojève does in this case, and within a Hegelian legacy of analysis, is suggest that animality makes itself legible only at the end of history. This gesture of return or, in other words, the way in which Kojève locates the nonhuman at the end of history despite their absence from

⁸⁷ Alexandre Kojève and Raymond Queneau, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 158.

⁸⁸ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 159.

its general duration and course, is a paradox I directly respond to in my own Hegel assessment. That is, as I argue, animality, and the nonhuman runs through the Hegelian scope as opposed to simply concluding its history.

The Hegelian Premise and Statement of Argument

To begin, we may look at how Hegel himself begins: “For self-consciousness, there is another self-consciousness; self-consciousness is outside of itself. This has a twofold meaning. First, it has lost itself, for it is to be found as an other essence. Second, it has thereby sublated that other, for it also does not see the other as the essence but rather sees itself in the other.”⁸⁹ Here, Hegel describes a relation where the two self-consciousness undergo a loss of self in sight of each other—this loss, however, is ultimately recovered as the self finds itself once more in the other. Moreover, the other appears to the self as a part of the self, or as in possession of the self. In sight of itself, however, one does not regard the other as essentially real. This act of witnessing incites the self to (1) sublimate the other independent self in order to attain a selfhood that is certain of itself, and (2) sublimate itself because “this other is itself.”⁹⁰ In this dual sublation, the self returns “into itself” at the same time it “gives the other self-consciousness back to itself, since it existed for itself in the other, but it sublimes its being in the other, and it thus sets the other free again.”⁹¹

Later, self-consciousness, Hegel tells us, is “desire, full stop,” and therefore the manifestation of an entity that finds fulfillment in another self-consciousness.⁹² This relational dynamic is necessary as it is the framework through which Hegel articulates the master-

⁸⁹ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §179.

⁹⁰ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §180.

⁹¹ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §180.

⁹² Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §167.

bondsman dialectic, or the subject who overcomes the kind of selfhood that instigates the primary “trial by death.”⁹³ History is self-consciousness overcoming itself, and this is interesting when we consider the role of the nonhuman in the history of modern capital.

Hegel, unsurprisingly apathic towards animals, will argue that humans, unlike animals, desire in pursuit.⁹⁴ That is, human desire is a forward moving cascade: having fulfilled one desire, the human will continue to reach for more, assuming a kind of progressive movement.⁹⁵ Animals, on the other hand, desire and are satiated.⁹⁶ The difference between the human and animal, for Hegel, lies in the fact that the human wields the power of articulating “I am I”: they exceed consciousness and possess self-consciousness.⁹⁷ Unsurprisingly, this difference in consciousness falls apart when we move the cow outside the proverbial space in which Hegel imagines the animal, and into the slaughterhouse.

Hegel’s development of self-consciousness plays a central role in the way he marks history as a progressive movement of *zeitgeists* characterized by entirely human forms of governance, power, and capital. Yet, we know that animals too play a role in history.⁹⁸ It is therefore reasonable to propose a historical dialectic between humans and animals where nonhumans, living in their own histories, mingle with ours—out of force or otherwise—and produce forward moving gestures. At this point, I intend to argue in favour of the nonhuman’s

⁹³ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §188.

⁹⁴ Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 71.

⁹⁵ Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, 21.

⁹⁶ Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, 21.

⁹⁷ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §167.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Clemens Wischermann, Aline Steinbrecher, and Philip Howell, *Animal History in the Modern City: Exploring Liminality* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*. (London: Routledge, 2018).; Jennifer Bonnell and Sean Kheraj, *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological Challenges in Animal History*, vol. 11 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2022); Harriet Ritvo, *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras: Essays on Animals and History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

status as a self-conscious being, but it is also important to note that while potentially wielding the possibility to exist within domains of Hegelian progress, the nonhuman may not need to *live* in that progress in order to *be* (self-conscious). On the contrary, I want to emphasize that the nonhuman may be content as such, and/or because, in some cases, the product of their labour is also intimately linked with their inherent being.⁹⁹ The proposal of the nonhuman's attachment to self-consciousness and contentment is necessary for my study because it activates the reassessment of the definition of labour within the slaughterhouse.

In the landscape of the slaughterhouse, and through such stakes, the cow emerges a self-sufficient self-consciousness made into a new kind of bondsman: a position very different from the Hegelian iteration because it depends on fettering a being who has already gained that which labour endows. This fettering at once subjugates the animal, at the same time it arrests the human in their ability to potentially develop self-consciousness. Indeed, it may be a stretch to even regard the site of subjugation as instigated by a battle at all.

In “trial by death,” the two-consciousness embroiled in the master-bondsman dialectic wield, above all, the possibility of not just the address, but the fate of being heard.¹⁰⁰ The subject who will assume the role of the bondsman “is not self-sufficient,” because in begging for their life—in relinquishing—they have proved that life, for them, “or being for an other, is the essence.”¹⁰¹ In other words, freedom for the bondsman is of little significance as long as life

⁹⁹ As we have already analyzed in our discussion, there are certain creatures capable of producing materiality from the fact of their being and in a manner singular to their species, to their body. The hypothetical worm in the Cormon garden forages a deep intimacy between ontology and labour in a way that is unattainable to the human, and in a more relevant turn, the lifeforce and activity of the cow in the slaughterhouse is forcibly associated with labour and production: to be, is to produce. Labour in this way, is, in part, an identity factor; and, moreover, that identity is itself the image of history.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness”, §188.

¹⁰¹ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness”, §189.

itself is preserved. In this scene, there is an essential mutuality between the two beings as they “indifferently leave each other free-standing, like things,” and this, of course, is because “their deed is [...] not the negation of consciousness” as such.¹⁰² To therefore imagine the position of the cow, obligated to die in the slaughterhouse, but wielding the possibility to resist, we must immediately recognize that the allowance to “leave” the other is not possible in the space of encounter.¹⁰³

The cow, often born into the tension that Hegel narrates,¹⁰⁴ is never able to spend the allowance that the Hegelian dynamic otherwise affords because the subjectivities that arrange the encounter are severely distinct from the master-bondsman dialectic. In this case, there is no possibility of mutuality and therefore a self-other relation that is the sight of the self in the other as self. The slaughterhouse cow cannot beg for their life and yet they are forced to “risk [their] life” regardless of circumstance.¹⁰⁵ Typically, the bondsman, in service to the master, generates an independent relation with their object of labour. At the same time, the bondsman, while developing in consciousness, is never denied the premise of being—in fact, they assume their station precisely because they *are* being, gazing and gazed upon by another. The slaughterhouse cow, working on itself, is always already made independent from selfhood, reduced to an object before labour even begins. As the cow therefore witnesses the product of labour in the death of their kin and the sight of the blade, they exceed, not only the promise of the possibility to be self-conscious in character, but to be anything at all.

The human, on the other hand, enjoys the creation of the cow as their body—beef. Is the

¹⁰² Hegel, “Self-Consciousness”, §188.

¹⁰³ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §187.

¹⁰⁴ Joyce D’Silva and Carol McKenna, *Farming, Food and Nature: Respecting Animals, People and the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2018), 87.

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §187.

cow, much like the bondsman, therefore affirmed in their production? No. The human, however, *is* as they enjoy the product of labour (death). Yet, the human is dependant on the cow insofar as their desire is concerned. If self-consciousness is desire, then the human needs the cow to maintain its endless demand for flesh. Conversely, the cow has never been dependant on the human¹⁰⁶ because there was never an episode of mercy: the cow, self-conscious, could have never been granted the supposed mercy of choice (“life or death?”) because they are always already dead: they are there as death, and beef pending.

What then is the human? The human is not master as such because there was never a “trial by death.”¹⁰⁷ The human, situated in capital, is the sublation of the necessity for self-consciousness and therefore the triumph of an endless desire severed from any sense of control. In this way, Hegel is right: human desire exists in perpetuity. The human will continue to reach for more—and this ontological character is most legible within the context of animal capital as the human unbound in its most prominent feature: the ability to want and have more.

The slaughterhouse negates the human’s necessity or drive for self-consciousness, allowing for a kind of untethered desire that confines the progress of history as well. In other words, there is no progression outside of capitalism—there is no self to grasp, no time beyond its reach and the slaughterhouse epitomizes this dynamic.

Theory, and Real Animals

It is necessary to consider the implication of self-consciousness within theoretical terms and thus with an eye to Hegel, but our analysis of the condition of the slaughterhouse animal remains incomplete without an investigation into the materiality of their lived condition. It

¹⁰⁶ Within such Hegelian terms and therefore as it pertains to the dialectical encounter.

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, “Self-Consciousness,” §188.

therefore follows that, at this point, we take time to ground our inquest into the Master-Bondsman dialectic through an address to the biopolitical consequences at hand. Where or how do we locate this consequently extreme subjugation of nonhuman life? What specific mechanisms, or implications are we referring to when we cite the degraded condition of the slaughterhouse animal in modern capital? My intention going forward is to frame the theoretical discourse we have assumed thus far with a dialogue that is capable of attesting to the materially nefarious methodology of the slaughterhouse, and thus the consequence it bares on the subjective condition of the nonhuman animal.

To begin, we may turn to “Animating Capital: Work, Commodities, Circulation,” wherein Maan Barua synthesis the ethno-ecological work done within the field of critical animal studies, taking time to ruminate on the way that dairy cows are not only “workers in the shadow of capitalism”¹⁰⁸ but that the kind of work they perform assumes the characteristics of habit. Barua notes that at the same time “work on [dairy] farms require cows’ participation” cows also “learn to follow rules that facilitate robot milking.”¹⁰⁹ The effect of animal industry is such that the cows, in part, “may learn to habitually accommodate industrial milking and in doing so, extend the potential of effectiveness,” such that “in their exploitation, the cow’s body is mechanically interpellated” by virtue of its “intra-herd negotiations and hierarchies.”¹¹⁰ The cow is always already socialized within the boundary of certain hierarchies and the mechanics of their exploitation intrude and prey upon such dispositions in order to maximize ease and therefore production. To look to Porcher and Schmitt’s “Dairy Cows: Workers in the Shadows?” as Barua

¹⁰⁸ Maan Barua, “Animating Capital: Work, Commodities, Circulation,” *Progress in Human Geography* 43, no. 4 (2019): 650–69, 653.

¹⁰⁹ Barua, “Animating Capital,” 653.

¹¹⁰ Barua, “Animating Capital,” 653.

does would be to add that this is in part because “automation and drives to increase production, reduce costs and do away with human labour wherever technologically possible—what would typically be seen as the subsumption of labour by capital are contingent upon the intelligence and affects cows invest in the activity of work.”¹¹¹

Animal labour ushers in the progress of capitalism’s ability to paradoxically negate the primary act of labour and therefore execute its exploitative measures, which in turn produces more labour—and this is done on the interface of a self-conscious, social creature. This direction of labour, to borrow from Les Beldo, is what we might call metabolic labour, “that which remains after human labour is subtracted from the equation of the production of animal flesh.”¹¹² Haraway makes a similar suggestion in *When Species Meet*: “the emergent ways of fleshy becoming” that exist “at the heart of biocapital” are such that cows become “both commodities and modes of production.”¹¹³

We see this kind of metabolic labour perhaps most legibly in the lives of slaughterhouse chickens. Boyd’s “Making Meat” offers a very notable citation in the tracing of metabolic labour: “Between 1935 and 1995 the average market weight of commercial broiler [chickens] increased by roughly 65 percent while the time required to reach market weight declined by more than 60 percent and the amount of feed required to produce a pound of broiler meat declined by 57 percent.”¹¹⁴ Boyd continues, “In short, a commercial broiler [chicken] from the 1990s grew to almost twice the weight in less than half the time and on less than half the feed

¹¹¹ Jocelyne Porcher and Tiphaine Schmitt, “Dairy Cows: Workers in the Shadows,” *Society & Animals* 20, no. 1 (2012): 39–60, 56.

¹¹² Les Beldo, “Metabolic Labour: Broiler Chickens and the Exploitation of Vitality,” *Environmental Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2017): 108–28, 112.

¹¹³ Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 54.

¹¹⁴ Boyd, “Making Meat,” 637.

than a broiler from the 1930s.”¹¹⁵ Barua adds to Boyd, noting that “metabolic labour is not only vital for intensification and speed-up of commodity production but, from the perspective of capital, transforms one substance into another in a way that anthropogenic machines cannot yet duplicate.”¹¹⁶

The recognition that animals can labour, and that they labour with their bodies alone makes them severely vulnerable. The labour system recognizes the nonhuman to be self-consciously capable of labour, and yet it is that knowledge that makes them victim to the violence of animal industry. As Barua put it for us, “the animal body” is “an accumulation strategy, where conditions for its growth are intensified to realize relative surplus value [and this] implies there is more-than-human inputs involved in value generation.”¹¹⁷ This kind of output “displaces human labour,” and while the nuances of that displacement are outside the scope of my work, it is important to note that it does imply the centering of nonhumans within the conditions and boundary of labour—a great paradox when we regard their demotion to the strict category of value. This isolated automation “involving nonhuman labour leads to a breakdown of the rigid distinctions between constant and variable capital, for animals reproduce their own value in themselves (as a raw material) whilst simultaneously doing labour.”¹¹⁸ Wadiwel takes time to clarify this breakdown in “Chicken Harvesting Machine”—a text we explored earlier in our study.

Human labour is that which “works on an object of production distinct from one’s own body and this process consumes use value and, simultaneously through labour, produces a new

¹¹⁵ Boyd, “Making Meat,” 638.

¹¹⁶ Boyd, “Making Meat,” 654.

¹¹⁷ Barua, “Animating Capital,” 654.

¹¹⁸ Barua, “Animating Capital,” 662.

use value that contains the old use value within it,” and this important because as a typically Marxist scope, “it fails to account for labour where the object of production is the body of the labourers themselves.”¹¹⁹ Wadiwel continues to note that “this means that it is not immediately useful for thinking about the labour of food animals, since for food animals it is their own bodies that are created as the product of processes through production,” yet, “we might apply some flexibility to the rigid categories that Marx imposes on the labour value process.”¹²⁰

Marx, in *Capital: Volume I*, and as we have already explored, describes capital, to put it in Wadiwel’s terms, as that which “enters the production process either as constant capital, that is, raw material, the auxiliary material and the instruments of labour, or as variable capital, that is, labour-power that both reproduces the equivalent of its own value and produces an excess, a surplus value.”¹²¹ Contrary to Marx’s image of an “absolute separation between the value forms of constant and variable capital”¹²² Wadiwel argues that “we can suggest that food animals enter the production process as a hybrid of both constant and variable capital.”¹²³ In other words, and as we have affirmed thus far, slaughterhouse animals “are deployed as both a raw material that will be finished as a product by the production process and simultaneously labour that must work on itself through a metabolic self-generative production.”¹²⁴ This simultaneity is important because it means that the kinds of alienation Marx details as taking part in and through the course of production “is actually located in close proximity to the labouring animal: in this case, animals work on their own bodies, consuming old use values and producing new use values

¹¹⁹ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²⁰ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²¹ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²² Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²³ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²⁴ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

seamlessly in their bodies' own materiality.”¹²⁵

From this point, it is reasonable to suggest that the maintenance of the nonhuman in a dynamic where labour is refused the possibility of its acknowledgment as such not only ensures the possibility of near perpetual exploitation, but also the continued negation of nonhuman self-consciousness. The animal, under the guise of history, remains a bondsman in honour of the concept of (human) self-consciousness which, in this situation, can never come to fruition: it only advances the premise of nonhuman suffering.

Animal capital—the slaughterhouse—within Hegelian terms, forces animals into positions they have already exceeded, rendering them at a full stop: incapable of transcending their position, forced to live as perpetually confined self-consciousnesses. As Collard and Dempsey’s “Capitalist Natures in Five Orientations” notes, and Wadiwel paraphrases, “the role of animals [...] is one where being alive is central to the production process.”¹²⁶ Our position expands on the point of life and understands that while to live is to labour, the nonhuman is, within their life/labour, denied the terms that outline the ontological expectations of life and, more ardently, the capacities that follow. Wadiwel too adds that “death is configured as a value-producing moment: it is when death arrives that the living commodity ceases existence as a raw material and attains a use value,” and this is significant because it suggests that “the production process is equivalent to life: for food animals, the whole of life is subsumed within production, so that all labour time is equivalent to the fact of living and will only reach its completion at slaughter.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 535.

¹²⁶ Rosemary-Claire Collard and Jessica Dempsey, “Capitalist Natures in Five Orientations,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 28, no. 1 (2017): 78–97, 536.

¹²⁷ Collard and Dempsey, “Capitalist Natures in Five Orientations,” 536.

Within the boundary of the slaughterhouse the nonhuman is seldom, if ever in possession of life because its time as a breathing body is in such extreme proximity to death. There is room to argue that the mention of life within the scope of this kind of production and labour should necessary be cited and written in strokes in order to emphasis the interchangeability: life/death.

The confinement of nonhuman life within the boundary of modern capital precisely articulates the methodological reasoning that frames how we, as humans, maintain our ontological identity. We cannot live without the fact of affirmed and developing self-consciousness, but capital's design refuses us the dynamic necessary for its stage. Capital enables, inflames, and produces the illusions we demand at the expense of the nonhuman's life. To put it in terms of Kathy Rudy's *Loving Animals*, "The identity 'human' captures us [...] because language and culture have carved up the world on this axis rather than another."¹²⁸ We can contribute to Rudy's language of acquisition with the understanding that this apprehension of identity occurs, in part, on the thin line that marks the difference in the definition of life. To think of the slaughterhouse chicken, for example, is to understand that they are such because "labour time equals life."¹²⁹ As Wadiwel argues, "Chicken labour time equals the time the chicken is alive: this is exactly how much labour time is required from the chicken to produce 'chicken' as a product."¹³⁰ When we extend the language of life as labour and therefore the categorization of genres of life in the direction of ontology we can see, in part, why restrictions may follow. When identity is tied up with life, and life too is defined by the time spent labouring—in this case, all living time—the possibly *to be* (something, anything) outside death is completely nullified. In

¹²⁸ Kathy Rudy, *Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 20.

¹²⁹ Rudy, *Loving Animals*, 20.

¹³⁰ Wadiwel, "Chicken Harvesting Machine," 536.

other words, it is not just that nonhumans are completely denied ontological complexity as well as the recognition of subjecthood, but that their lives are economically and mechanically ordered to ensure the utter repression of any/all ontological capacities that exceed mere existence/production/death. There is at once a discursive and ideological denial as well as a more material consequence within the terms of economy that functions to dually affirm this ontological dynamic.

To proceed with our interest in life, we must understand that the slaughterhouse animal exists within “the perverse situation where animals are bred to grow faster in order to die quicker.”¹³¹ As Wadiwel explains:

The tendency of productive processes toward increasing “relative surplus value” is to reduce labour time for the production of the same use value. On the one hand, for humans, this means that average labour time to produce consumption items such as food, televisions, and automobiles has progressively been reduced through the introduction of machines, technologies, and techniques. On the other hand, for food animals, since labour time equals life, increasing relative surplus value has been accompanied by the shortening of life: for example, over the past fifty years broiler chickens have been genetically selected to effectively halve “growing” time.¹³²

What Wadiwel describes is a kind of labour landscape that intensifies the severity of suffering while shortening the lives of the nonhuman labourer. The number of nonhuman labourers—slaughterhouse animals, in this case—continues to increase, but as this occurs, their life spans are shortened, and yet they remain under the demand to considerably expedite output (labour) in an environment which itself intensifies in its biopolitical, metabolically-gearred methodologies. As Kenneth Shapiro notes in “The Death of the Animal,” this “ontological reduction [...] is a

¹³¹ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 536.

¹³² Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 536.

distinct form of harm that yet further broadens the scope of suffering.”¹³³ To think of the way developments in technology—as human labour—bear on our interest in the configuration of animal ontology within discourses of value and production is to understand, as Oxana Timofeeva does, that “the boundary between human and animal runs through the human body.”¹³⁴

The calculation of nonhuman ontology has the paradoxical effect of situating nonhumans in discourses concerning the specific ontological nuances in question while refusing them the capacity to claim ability—be it the ability to produce value, to have language, to sense, etc. This paradoxical logic leads the direction of analysis and conclusion towards the human as the master signifier of all life and ability. It is important, however, to adopt the perspective analysis that the tendency to trace discourse in the direction of the human also has the consequence of rendering the nonhuman not only an ontologically lacking creature, but an utterance of existence that fails to articulate the proof of life. When the nonhuman is brought up in this kind of fraughtness they do not function as a subject proper, and as such are not *as* real: they are simply a vehicle for the pronouncement of “Man.” This gestural emphasis means that the word ‘animal’ in such contexts, yields no meaning—it is, instead, a point of deferral. The nonhuman, is, if we may put it as such, pulled away from itself *as* a self. Here, the utterance ‘animal’ carries no signifying meaning that directs us towards a real creature. What is left to imagine when we are told that the nonhuman cannot think, cannot feel, cannot speak? There is no image for us to grasp besides the instruction that leads us towards “Man.”

The position of the nonhuman and the suffering it endures is terrifying, in part, because

¹³³ Kenneth Joel Shapiro, “The Death of the Animal: Ontological Vulnerability,” *Between the Species* 5, no. 4 (1989): 192.

¹³⁴ Oksana Timofeeva, *The History of Animals: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 280.

its ontological role in capital is neither regressive nor progressive: they remain, as they have always been, captured in totality. This stability in suffering and objectified identity returns us to the difficulty we found in Hegel wherein the nonhuman is, for the purpose of exploitation and production, refused a place in time. Wadiwel thinks in this direction as well, concluding his discussion with a question that similarly remains on my mind: “what would it mean to give animals time?”¹³⁵ I think for us, the answer is to ricochet back in the direction of the Hegelian concept of history, and the nonhuman’s configuration in the master-bondsman dialectic.

History, I want to affirm, will not end until animal bondage ceases, and when we consider the nonhuman we see history, halted, tied up with an ontology of smoke and mirrors: it is a Hegelian stage without its lead actors. There is nothing to *be*, there is no other way to exist in the slaughterhouse except as the figure of what could be life, the figure of something indistinct, something that is almost nothing, just barely anything, but something enough to die.

The end of history, I propose, is the development of a class consciousness that sees animal self-consciousness as a bondsman, stuck in time with a creature who halts all life in order to maintain the image of mastery, thriving on untamed desired, refusing to relinquish control. The end of history is the cow, lying in wait. The end of history begins with the political animal unconscious set into drive: it is the return of animals to history, to time, and therefore the beginning of history. In other words, the dialectic itself does not leave the animal behind, rather it depends on their suspension for progress.

A Resolve on Jameson

Now that we have examined the master-bondsman dialectic as well as its material

¹³⁵ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 543.

framework, there remains a final concept from Jameson that will be helpful in our thorough conceptualization of modern capital, and the slaughterhouse animal.

Jameson theorizes the absent cause as another term for the political unconscious. For him, the absent cause is both labour and history. For us, we detect the absent cause as also implicated in the logic of animals that labour without being called labourers. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol Adams discusses the way desire, patriarchy, and animal exploitation are intimately linked. Advertising, Adams explains, often makes use of the objectified bodies of women to sell hamburgers, and in doing so, mobilizes its historically sexist toolbox for the sake of capital. An important tool in the evolution of its worker, sexism, as a phenomenon with absent cause, links up with animal exploitation in the production of desire. More importantly, however, it is the loss of meaning to which the concept of meat is dependant that is important for our cause. Adams points out that is only after “being butchered” when “fragmented body parts are often renamed to obscure the fact that these were once animals.”¹³⁶ It is only after an enormous amount of suffering when “cows become roast beef, steak, hamburger; pigs become pork, bacon, sausage.”¹³⁷ Adams continues:

Since objects are possessions, they cannot have possessions; thus, we say “leg of lamb” not a “lamb’s leg,” “chicken wings” not a “chicken’s wings.” We opt for less disquieting referent points not only by changing names from animals to meat, but also by cooking, seasoning, and covering the animals with sauces, disguising their original nature.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 74.

¹³⁷ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 74.

¹³⁸ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 74.

Lacking a referent, lacking the very concept of a living creature, slaughtered, butchered and bleeding “meat becomes a free-floating image.”¹³⁹ In other words, meat, as concept, absorbs meaning as opposed to possessing meaning, possessing history. The inherently future looking disposition of meat is emblematic of the causal absence upon which capitalism depends. Adams continues,

Meat is seen as a vehicle of meaning and not as inherently meaningful; the referent ‘animal’ has been consumed. ‘Meat’ becomes a term to express women’s oppression, used equally by patriarchy and feminists, who say that women are ‘pieces of meat.’ Because of the absence of the actual referent, meat as metaphor is easily adaptable.¹⁴⁰

Absent causality is at once the erasure of the referent, as well as the emergence of a phenomena that holds no basis outside of its usefulness to and for capital. Now butchered, the cow’s lower back, the side of its body just above the utter, is no longer the spot upon which it may lie, or sleep, but a sirloin and a flank. At the same time, misogyny, a pattern and attitude of disdain or contempt for women, assumes a deeply structural form that guides the organization of labour in society. The prejudice that is central to this structure carries no inherent meaning or purpose. Moreover, these nodes of absent causality are not isolated from each other, rather, they produce a cultural web that is isolating.

Beyond the boundary of capital, if such a thing is legible, is a landscape of history—global, personal, and circumstantial—from which we are severed, and above us is a mesh of interconnected productions: touching one thread means touching a thousand and this how the

¹³⁹ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 74.

¹⁴⁰ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 75.

language of “pieces of meat” carries such flexibility.¹⁴¹ For this dome of lost meaning to survive it needs to intertwine in a gesture of obscurity: the link between meat, and woman is obscured and yet totally and inherently tunneled. We move from one to the other without knowing, and with complete fluidity. Capitalism is a deeply isolationist and totally embodied experience: we are at a remove not just from history and meaning, but the possibility to arrive at that meaning. The hegemonic force of capitalism renders us in a state of captured, and static delusion—so much so that it threatens to impact the way we, as thinkers, read and interpret.

Capitalism also produces certain preconditions of labour without justification and historical relationality: this is where I want to strike when the iron is hot. The conditions and language of labour that surrounds those cows, chickens, and pigs in slaughterhouses emerge through this very axiom of precondition. Capitalism, as a kind of historical isolation, disturbs the legacy of labour in favour of granting an allowance to the unquestioned torment of nonhuman lives.

Jameson’s discovery into the innate role of capital is necessarily limited insofar as the text fails to descend into the unconscious of its own discussion of the unconscious. If we return to Jameson’s interest in the way the aristocratic ethic relates or fails to relate to the emergence of early market capitalism in England and France what we see is his failure to regard animal labour as necessarily mediating the market to which he is referring.

Moreso than even animal meat is the animal worker, and the animal for-hire companion—one example being the lap dog. Francis Coventry’s *The History of Pompey the Little* also reminds us that labour is not necessarily physical. Nicholas Hudson makes this clear in

¹⁴¹ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 75.

his edition through the inclusion of the anonymous 1751 essay “A dissertation on Mr. Hogarth’s...*The Four Stages of Cruelty*.” The essay details not just the paramount, albeit suffering role that dogs and cats assume in the burgeoning markets of eighteenth-century England—and therefore early capitalism—but also, “in service of mankind.”¹⁴² This service is limited to the kind of companionship and care for which they are, in the first placed, purchased. That is, in early and contemporary capitalism, domestic pets, by virtue of their body—as cute, and small—labour psychically and emotionally. The physical component of this labour is made most legible in the health consequences these animals face due to curated breeding. Breathing, and motor function for example, become tiresome and troubling when one is brought into the world and granted life for the sole purpose of working: “Whether animals are in fact killed or are welcomed into our homes as pets does not displace the logic of sovereignty; rather, both modes of treatment are simply alternative faces of the same sovereignty.”¹⁴³

We may also consider the dog’s being carried around and held as a labour. The loss of agency that such constriction produces constitutes the dog’s purpose in being purchased, in being alive all together. Emotionally, these animals labour as forced companions—placed into relationships they may otherwise have not sought. Afterall, sociability and compatibility go both ways—human or otherwise. The anonymous writer’s language lends to a characterization of the domestic pet as sold for their labour. Wadiwel is very helpful in making legible the myriad ways in which labour manifests. He notes for example, that “humans and animals co-shape each other, but within a context of overarching domination, where deep hostility and violence shapes almost

¹⁴² Francis Coventry, *The History of Pompey the Little, or The Life and Adventures of a Lap-Dog*, ed. Nicholas Hudson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008), 271.

¹⁴³ Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), x.

all relations;” and, moreover, “this context of hostility does not necessarily stop at the borders on animal agriculture, but includes relations we might imagine as relatively benign, such as human relations with companion animals.”¹⁴⁴ Wadiwel proceeds,

While companion animals are not routinely exposed to the life-and-death scenario of food production, the overt domination directed toward companion animals in urban societies is suggestive of different conflict zones: these sites of friction include routine controls over reproduction and sexuality; the use of forced bodily modification (such as microchipping), discipline, and training; total controls over diet, movement, living spaces, and sociality; and quite arbitrary regimes of disposability that accompany the politics of pet industries. In these contexts, again the idea of the “domesticated” animal remains unstable: instead, “wild” resistant beings continually prompt innovation in new techniques of compliance. Conflict and antagonism mark these encounters, even if we would prefer to imagine otherwise.¹⁴⁵

We may add to this observation with the critical understanding that classes also intersect and mingle by virtue of these animals. In eighteenth-century England, as a pivotal touchstone in the development of early capitalism, the aristocrat becomes patron, and vendor. As Colin Smith helps us establish, animals, their flesh and labour, alive and dead, *are* the market. As we near that primary encounter with capitalism, the improvements that are made, and the infrastructure that is manifested, brings together “farmers, growers, middlemen, brokers, waggoners, porters, innkeepers, bankers, warehousemen, shopkeepers, stallholders, higglers, and numerous others”—each either selling, raising, counting, buying, using, or employing animals.¹⁴⁶ The history of capitalism leads us, not only towards the sight of man and his money, but cows, chickens, pigs, fish, cats, and dogs: and this what Jameson does not trace. Indeed, Jameson’s discussion necessarily halts at the sight of nonhuman life—and yet, we can trace his discussion of the

¹⁴⁴ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 541.

¹⁴⁵ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 541.

¹⁴⁶ Colin Smith, “The Wholesale and Retail Markets of London, 1660-1840,” *The Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002): 31–50, 33.

Cormon house and all the class dynamics he emphasizes back to animals. His argument, premised on the notion that there is an inherent border between aristocratic and market life fails upon the inclusion of the role of animals.

The writing of Marx, Aristotle, and Jameson alike exists in a visceral sense of obscurity: it seems like no matter how far or deep each text digs, they always restrict at the level of the animal. It is because all three thinkers stumble at the sight of the animal that we may argue for the ontological trouble we have traced so far, suggesting that nonhumans constitute an overwhelming presence Western philosophy may not be prepared or indeed, willing to discuss. The animal disrupts the ease, and harmony of each argument: their simultaneous oneness and otherness expands and restricts our discourse all at once. Wadiwel also considers this diversity when he reminisces on a comment Marx makes in *Capital*: “No boots can be made without leather.”¹⁴⁷ Wadiwel understands this comment as suggesting that “we must assume that the processes of violence and subordination that leads to the production of leather pre-exist—indeed discursively and ‘naturally’ pre-empt—the human labour production process.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, and for us, ontological erasure and paradox is necessary and expected in the work of Marx because once again, “for Marx, capitalism relies on the ability of the human worker to alienate their own labour-power as a commodity.”¹⁴⁹

Touching the animal in gestures of similarity is tracing that which we will never know or understand. Truly equitable inductions of animal life in philosophy therefore produce an existential anxiety on behalf of the genre itself. Can philosophy survive the proper inclusion of

¹⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 272.

¹⁴⁸ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 160.

¹⁴⁹ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 160.

animal life into its concepts and forms? Cross species interconnectedness may just mean a complete overhaul in how we do philosophy. In this way, a discovery into the difficulty of animal presence and ontology is a fundamental component of inquiry and expansion because it functions as such a legible boundary—a proverbial floodgate.

This boundary is the difference between the political unconscious and the political animal unconscious. If we understand the political unconscious as a progressive motion that, in traversing differentiated layers of interpretation, arrives at the essential Marxist account as the primary injunction, then the political animal unconscious is the injunction to the injunction. Starting at the end point, that is, at the point of understanding Marxism as the ideologically compelling perspective into to the question of textual analysis, the political animal unconscious moves in an upward and downward interpretive direction. This manifestation of inquiry pushes past the Marxist conclusion at the same time it reassesses all interpretation that precedes the eventuality of Marxism.

It is true that “only Marxism offers a philosophically coherent” ideology but it only remains true if the historical account in question is limited to the human.¹⁵⁰ As we have seen, the attempt to justify anthropocentric methodologies in labour, language, being, logic, and imagination is a necessarily unstable task that demands an analytic like Jameson’s method.¹⁵¹ If we visualize the boundary between the political unconscious and the political animal unconscious as a thin veil, we can start to adjust our tools of inquiry, working in ways that might puncture that fleshy difference that further suppresses the oppressed. As we therefore progress towards the final chapter of this thesis, I want to return to Marx with a renewed perspective. My

¹⁵⁰ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19.

¹⁵¹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 19.

intention going forward is to reenergize my efforts in not agreeing or disagreeing with Marx but problematizing the place of nonhuman life in the definition labour. To do so, I will turn to Arendt whose comparative language of work and labour is compelling in the way it strikes the Marxist ethic with a consideration for subjectivity. This Arendtian perspective is not an unlikely comparison as Arendt herself directly address Marx's terms of labour, articulating a concern that has lingered in the background of this thesis: is the recognition of labour enough?

Chapter Four: The Ends of it All

Context – The Languages of Labour and Work

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt brings Marx to a charge, citing that she finds a “fundamental and flagrant” difficulty in his text, one that runs “like a red thread through the whole of [his] thought.”¹ This difficulty, she continues, produces “patent absurdities” in his argument.² Arendt characterizes Marx’s “attitude towards labour” as a problem which, situated in “the very centre of his thought” he cannot seem to solve.³ Marx defines man as a labouring subject at the very same time he situates his liberation from labour as the goal of social revolution. Marx, per Arendt, fundamentally constricts subjecthood to the very thing one must shed in order to claim its title, *subject*. How can “emancipation from labour, in Marx’s own terms [...] ultimately mean emancipation from consumption as well, that is, from the metabolism with nature which is the very condition of human life?”⁴

While Marx is popularly regarded as a materialist invested in reversing Hegelian idealism, Arendt argues that Marx is, on the contrary, deeply embedded in the subjectivist perspective.⁵ As Arendt sees it, the kind of estrangement that Marx details is not one from the objective material world—it is instead concerned with the self. This focus on subjectivity is significant because Arendt’s fundamental concern is that of material content—the durability of all that constitutes living: something which Marx, per Arendt, seems to ignore in favour of a more internalist insight.

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 104.

² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 102.

³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 104.

⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 131.

⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 131.

Arendt, as I will explore, defends the realm of politics, action, and thought through the insistence that they should be situated within durable institutions and art forms—properties which she understands as demanding a certain amount of distance from the social world of labour. This distance is important because from the Arendtian perspective it is the very thing that Marx threatens to interrupt. As Arendt sees it, Marx situates politics, action, and thought into the heart of labour.⁶

Arendt is not trying to say that Marx necessarily forgoes acknowledging material life, but that his approach to materiality is interrupted: it is indirect insofar as his discourse is mediated by an overwhelming interest in human experience.⁷ Arendt, in a way, poses a reverse methodology. Unlike Marx, Arendt touches the material and thinks not of the hand, but the thing the hand touches. Arendt's discussion generates the conclusion that Marx's analysis is an act of deep passivity, and she arrives at this place through her own discussion of the collapse of difference between the private and the public, and therefore the emergence of what she deems the social. This shift from the private to the public constitutes a significant loss in the world. We become less caring, but also, obsessed with notions of development: an impulse that makes for a deeply unstable world. That is, development and process make for a world where the focus on futurity and re-making renders all things necessarily fleeting: nothing lasts, nor is lasting a desire. For Arendt, the loss of the difference between the private and the public amounts to a rise in intimacy—a phenomenon that makes us devotees of the problems of the social world without the project of material intervention.⁸ This sentiment is epitomized in its analogous expression:

⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.

⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.

⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 53.

To live together in the world means essentially that a world to things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance.⁹

The differences we draw between the public and the social depends upon the necessary structures inherent to its existence. Arendt's analogy is concerned with the difference between a group of people sat at a single table, and another, without a table and therefore lacking the necessary structure that would mediate and affirm their togetherness as well as singularity. The table unites them in form, but the chairs secure their individuality. The table is therefore representative of the kinds of institutions that ensure our stability in society by offering us defined material spaces and concepts: libraries, public parks, statues etc. Without a table, and therefore permanence, we lose our tie to each other and when this happens, we cannot help but run off in search of a space to call our own.

This tangle of unstructured interest is important because it is precisely what Marx—as Arendt alleges—fails to invoke.¹⁰ Failing to interrogate the setting of his work, Marx embraces the presuppositions of his setting. While directly political, the fact of labour is not enough to bring people together.¹¹ A more durable materiality—the table Arendt thinks through—is necessary for any kind of action.

More importantly however, and central to our discussion, is Arendt's critique of Marx as

⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52-53.

¹⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52-53.

¹¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.

a thinker who fails to differentiate between labour and work. Marx, as Arendt understands, simply accepts the notion that labour is the fundamental model of all human action or production.¹² Arendt's approach to labour is a bit more sensitive in its terminology as she produces a difference between work and labour.¹³ For Arendt, labour is an activity that is the least human of all human activities. Labour is simply a base need that satisfies the most primal level of existence.¹⁴ Labour has no special product other than the maintenance of the labourer—it is simply a process, and, in this way, it may have a beginning but there is no end. More importantly, labour produces nothing except the possibility to continue production. The difference between work and labour is premised, not upon the experience of production, but the product itself. Work produces that which sustains and therefore exists outside of the process that manifests its form.

In her definition of work, Arendt highlights the modern landscape as incapable or unwilling to significantly differentiate between things like bread and a chair precisely because mass production has damned everything to disintegrate.¹⁵ If, however, we push this focus on disintegration forward, the line between work and labour begins to blur. Having therefore parsed Arendt's difficulty with Marx and the kinds of in-betweens she sees in his writing, it is important to now consider how this discussion might change our understanding of alienation as the consequence of modern labour.

To begin, we might make note of the fact that Arendt and Marx have a different definition of objectivity. Arendt suggests that there is a marked binary between a lived human

¹² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

¹³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

¹⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

¹⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

experience and the objective landscape.¹⁶ When Arendt refers to the objective, she is grounding herself in a deeply normative, even conventional tradition. Humans quite literally make the objective world, whose objects, once produced, are necessarily severed from the independent human. For Marx on the other hand, the difference between subject and object, or maker and the thing that is made, is the very premise of the concept of alienation and is therefore a result of the economic, social, and historical world.¹⁷ Arendt is seemingly uninterested in the language of consequence—that the difference between subject and object may very well be the result of a particular cultural dynamic. For Arendt, the binary of object and subject is a naturally occurring event—or it is, at least, not the result of the kind of social organization that is on Marx’s mind.¹⁸ Furthermore, it is the very loss of the difference between subject and object which remains a sore spot in Arendt’s discussion. It is, as Arendt remarks, “durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them, their ‘objectivity’ which makes them withstand, ‘stand against’ and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users.”¹⁹ She continues: “against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the over-all cyclical movement of nature’s household.”²⁰ The world, objective and fixed, is one that emerges from the work of man and, in doing so, offers the human race a sense of protection from the otherwise apathetic world of nature: “Only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of

¹⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

¹⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 67.

¹⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 137.

¹⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

²⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

our own from what nature gives us, who have built it into the environment of nature so that we are protected from her, can look upon nature as something ‘objective.’”²¹

Arendt’s discussion, anthropocentric itself, paradoxically and perhaps even accidentally illuminates the problem of animal work and labour in Marx. What is crucial about Arendt’s discussion of Marx is the understanding that his idea of labour produces *more* labour. There is something missing in Marx, and we know this from our developed methodology—when encountering an animal, he reroutes his discussion, and this does in fact lead to an intense focus on subjectivity. In this way, Arendt is right: Marx cannot seem to escape the subjective experience of the human. At the same time, Marxist labour does in fact consider a radical sense of objectivity that is not exclusive to the human, meaning that the focus Arendt points out as consuming his text is but a partial gaze. This partiality is quite significant for our analysis as it implies the possibility of filling out Marxism with the nonhuman in such a way that takes the focus on subjectivity as an opportunity to flesh out its belonging. Subjectivity, in this positionality, is fertile ground for its analytic endowment to the nonhuman and therefore a direction of thought capable of making amends with Marx’s tendency towards nonhuman exclusion. In other words, if we agree with Arendt insofar as she considers Marx as preoccupied with subjectivity, then there may be a way to expand the species boundary of its belonging to include nonhuman subjectivity.

At this point, I want to invest our interest in work and labour into a series of meditations on the condition on the contemporary slaughterhouse animal. This analysis will comprise of topics that consider time—both labour time, and lived time—alienation, contemporary

²¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

discourses concerning meat, semiotics, and the language of sight or witnessing. This categorized discovery functions to frame my final rumination on the question of work and labour, and work versus labour as it pertains to the slaughterhouse animal.

I regard this conclusion as one that stands in harmony with the first chapter of my thesis—that is, the attentiveness with which I regard the Marxist canon. Additionally, the kind of framing I assume functions to affirm the notion that while the nonhuman is, as my study explores, a creature that is often subject to ontological paradox and thus violence, and I in no way wish to imply the necessity to abandon the Marxist ethic. On the contrary, I want to conclude that Marxism and the kind of class analysis it invokes is necessarily applicable to an analysis of the modern condition of the slaughterhouse animal.

Finally, and in my closing section, I want to offer a potentiality that considers the complexity of the nonhuman's relation to labour within terms that reframe the scope of Arendt's notion of work. This reorientation serves as my conclusion, not insofar as I regard my project as brought to strict end or completion, but to a theoretical open and therefore, a turn to the reader to consider in the terms of their life and geography.

The Nonhuman Turn of Work – The Slaughterhouse

Prologue/Alienation

The body of the animal bound for consumption suffers up until the point of death. The fatigue of the slaughterhouse animals' existence in conjunction with the economic and social technology which constitutes their industrialized positionality functions to massage their tissue in order to ensure that their breast, leg, and thigh is as plump as possible—"an essentially parasitic

formation that compels labour and sucks value.”²² The existence of the slaughterhouse animal therefore constitutes an act of creation that results not only in an exterior product in the way we might consider for example, a chair, but also the exteriorization of the worker themselves. As Noske argues, and Bachour elucidates in “Alienation and Animal Labour,” “animals under conditions of capitalist production are alienated from their bodies and offspring; from their bodily functions; from their own societies, potential human–animal relations and surrounding nature; and, finally, from their species-life.”²³ The slaughterhouse animal, a labourer indeed, produces their own corporality as product through the process of life.

Alienation, in this context, is not just a consequence: it is a status, or a totalizing lived experience. As Dinesh Wadiwel puts it, factory farming animals “are always caught in an exceptional space” and “we see this explicitly in the discriminatory exercise of law: anti-cruelty legislation has always provided an exception for animals used for science, and animals used for food.”²⁴ Reflecting on Wadiwel’s characterization, Jessica Eisen’s “Down on the Farm Status, Exploitation, and Agricultural Exceptionalism” takes time to explain the way “many legal regimes around the world are characterized by animal protection laws that either explicitly or implicitly exempt farmed animals from their purview.”²⁵ Eisen continues: “In Canada, the federal Criminal Code prohibits cruelty toward animals, but this prohibition has been interpreted to exclude otherwise illegal conduct that occurs in the normal course of agriculture.”²⁶

The slaughterhouse animal is severed from the possibility of subjectivity and always

²² Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 533.

²³ Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour,” 119.

²⁴ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 82.

²⁵ Jessica Eisen, “Down on the Farm,” in *Animal Labour: A New Frontier of Interspecies Justice?*, eds. Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 142.

²⁶ Eisen, “Down on the Farm,” 142.

already assumed an object because productivity, cast upon their being, is a prerequisite for birth. It should therefore come as no surprise that while “provincial laws also prohibit cruelty” they also “include explicit or implied exemptions for agricultural animals.”²⁷ Eisen concludes: “The result in each jurisdiction is a legal regime that demonstrates some concern for animal well-being, but which also creates an increasingly firm delineation of the farm as a ‘private sphere’ within which legal interventions on behalf of animals have no place.”²⁸ It is this “exceptional treatment of farmed animals as beyond the scope of legal protection, and the farm as a space outside the scope of the usual rules of social and legal conduct respecting animals” that enables, in part, “the problematic of animal labour [...] with respect to the limits of comparisons to human labour: namely, the unclear relationship of animal labour to (human) forms of forced or coerced work.”²⁹

Whereas my study relies on the question of animal labour, Wadiwel argues that “part of the problem here is that we are asking the wrong question when we ask, do animals labour? Instead, a different question is: what is the specific use value of animals to capital? Or, do animals in productive processes produce value in a way that is different from that accounted for by Marx?”³⁰ Wadiwel concludes in a manner that is quite interesting for our analysis as he notes that “animal labour is tied to the process of resistance to that labour.”³¹ To consider the relationship between labour and resistance within the terms of the slaughterhouse would be to say that such dynamics of economy “represent a messy grappling with potentially noncompliant natures that will have to be ‘tamed’ or subordinated, including through coercive means, into the

²⁷ Eisen, “Down on the Farm,” 143.

²⁸ Eisen, “Down on the Farm,” 143.

²⁹ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 530.

³⁰ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 531.

³¹ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 531.

rhythms of production in order to generate value.”³² The paradox, however, is that the nonhuman’s alienation, their status as object, predates the birth of the subject of experience—that is, the possibility of subjecthood, let alone the premise of disciplinary action. In other words, this is a process that seeks to tame a subject whose primary presence in the space of the slaughterhouse depends on their a priori status as object. How does one tame that which has already lost the status necessary for the possibility of dissent, of noncompliance? In an effort to ensure productivity, to control the possibility of “noncompliant natures,”³³ the slaughterhouse coercively subordinates a creature who is always already interpellated into objecthood and therefore outside the boundary of the definition of subjective character. This interpellation, however, confesses that which we have known all along: no matter its instance, the slaughterhouse animal is a thinking, and feeling creature. They are not an object, and it is the paradoxical demand to tame and subordinate that proves this premise.

Eisen is also quick to emphasize the difficulty associated with the possibility of marking individual nonhuman subjectivity outside the realm of value. Prefacing her discussion, Eisen argues “that animal advocates ought to rely on the fact of animal work as a mode of identifying animals with the social category of workers, in the hopes that this identification will improve animals’ social, legal, and political status.”³⁴ She proceeds:

Farm groups that stand to lose out if agricultural products were treated like other commodities find their own ‘strong financial incentives’ to be bolstered by concentrated interest group advantage, public sympathy for farmers, concerns about food security and foreign dependence, ignorance among consumers or taxpayers, and financial features of

³² Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 531.

³³ Wadiwel, “Chicken Harvesting Machine,” 531.

³⁴ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 139.

local political systems, such as the disproportionate weight accorded to rural electorates.³⁵

It is not that the slaughterhouse animal simply lives and dies—rather, they are born into a state of living that traverses the logic of life, and, through an act of transfiguration, is forced to manifest that living into objecthood. In this way, the slaughtered animal, within the logic of the slaughterhouse itself, gains status the moment they die because it is only upon their death when they may claim the title which their destiny anticipates and demands: meat; object. This eventuality of status is quite legible in the way “animal industries already occasionally invoke images of animals as workers in advertising campaigns designed to obscure the realities of animal use in general, and dairy production in particular.”³⁶ It is only in death when the image of such creatures may mingle with that which stands outside the architecture to which they are otherwise intimately attached. Carol Adams for example “recounts a grocery store flyer from the United States that sets out the following ‘benefit package’ enjoyed by dairy cows, ‘tongue in cheek’³⁷:

To start with, the cows receive full-time pay for part-time work. The work (of being milked) takes about 20–30 minutes per day. The employer provides paid medical coverage, with a doctor (veterinarian) on call 24/7, 365 days per year. Meals are prepared by a nutritionist, with room service and clean up every time. There is a full-time housekeeper who even cleans the bathrooms. A paid team of experts is always available for these bovine beauties; hairdresser, pedicurist and spa facilities are provided. There is 24-hour surveillance. No need for online dating . . . there is mate selection provided

³⁵ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 144.

³⁶ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 146.

³⁷ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 147.

through a directory of selective traits and could be a different mate each year. All transportation is provided free of charge for a lifetime.³⁸

As Eisen goes on to observe: “This image of dairy cows as carefree working girls, interested in beauty treatments and dating, relies on tropes of female frivolity and leisurely service to cast a sheen of normalcy over an industry that relies on routine artificial insemination, separation of calves from their grieving mothers, intensive zero-graze confinement of lactating cows in ‘tie stall’ barns, and slaughter.”³⁹ Besides the caricature quality of the image and the gender-based assessments—that is, “[the] dairy cows’ labour as traditionally female, and to be policed as such”—is the notion that in death the slaughterhouse animal may become/return to a status that exceeds the identity of the slaughterhouse because their subjectivity no longer threatens the functionality of alienation.⁴⁰

The slaughterhouse refuses the nonhuman animal the possibility of meaning outside of death, and Adams’ reading of this ad emphasizes this limit. We can, on one hand, read the ad as Adams does, but in its relation to the slaughterhouse what we also see is the way in which ontological identity can be mimed only after the cow, chicken, and pig have served their sentence. I am not suggesting that the nonhuman in any way receives the connotation of life, but that its death—necessarily obscured—enables the production of identity meanings outside of the boundary of the walls in which they die. The slaughterhouse is more than a physical space: it is a limit on what can be said of the creature. This system of meaning is and can be tongue-and-cheek—as Adams shows—but it can also be a representation of the cow, chicken, and pig as not

³⁸ Carol J. Adams, “Towards a Philosophy of Care through Caregiving,” *Critical Inquiry* 43, no. 4 (2017): 765–89, 25.

³⁹ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 147.

⁴⁰ Eisen, “Down on The Farm,” 147.

living, but as a picture of *life* that is such because we grant a certain allowance upon death. This picture of life is a static, even stereotypical representation of the creature as existing in severe lack: it is a hierarchy of imagery that is synonymous with meat and dead flesh. This image of life is compelling because it provokes us to consider the kind of hold that the slaughterhouse has on language and meaning.

An example of this kind of hierarchical life is the generic images of chicken, pigs, and cows that we find plastered onto plastic packages of their flesh. The portrait of the animal, in this case, stands within the boundary of the meaning of a creature that has life (in the picture) but is not living. As such, all connotations of lived time defer back to death in a way that escapes any reference to the slaughterhouse. The animal, in this condition, remains in a realm of incomplete status: present, without presence, life without living. The image of the animal functions to paradoxically remove the slaughterhouse from the very product it sells, and this is, in part, because the calculated logic of the experience of estrangement in slaughterhouse animal workers is such that even the animal signifier loses meaning. The barrier of meaning between a picture of an animal on a package of their severed limbs, and the severed limbs themselves—the meat—is strengthened and upheld by alienation's ability to escape its otherwise human limit.

The timing of the process of the slaughterhouse animal's alienation as both all the time, and no time consequently manufactures a mode of estrangement that is so forceful and intentional in its hegemonic property that it threatens the realm of academic discovery. Indeed, the urgency to ask the question of animal labour reveals the degree of dissonance involved in the labour process and, more importantly, our reception of the necessity to ask the question. In

Capital, for example, Marx, as Wadiwel explains, “provides an account of the micro dynamics of labour’s role in creating value.”⁴¹ Marx says,

While productive labour is changing the means of production into constituent elements of a new product, their value undergoes a metempsychosis. It deserts the consumed body, to occupy the newly created one. But this transmigration takes place, as it were, behind the back of the actual labour in progress. The worker is unable to add new labour, to create new value, without at the same time preserving old values, because the labour he adds must be of a specific useful kind, and he cannot do work of a useful kind without employing products as the means of production of a new product, and thereby transferring their value to the new product. The property therefore which labour-power in action, living labour, possesses of preserving value, at the same time as it adds it, is a gift of nature which costs the worker nothing, but is very advantageous to the capitalist since it preserves the existing value of his capital.⁴²

Wadiwel, reflecting on this passage, points out why it may be so difficult for us, as Marxists, to address questions of animal labour. Wadiwel says: “For human labour, [Marx’s statement] means that labour works on an object of production that is distinct from one’s own body.”⁴³ Marx’s account fails to consider the object of our study thus far—namely, and as Wadiwel proceeds, “labour where the object of production is the body of the labourers themselves.”⁴⁴ This means that “it is not immediately useful” or even natural for one to begin “thinking about the labour of food animals” as a part of labour theory and analysis “since for food animals it is their own bodies that are created as the product of processes through production.”⁴⁵ There is a thought barrier that we must first cross if we desire to produce a succinct theory of labour in the agricultural industry, and it is one that concerns the necessity to alter our perspective on the changeable definition of labour and value.

⁴¹ Wadiwel, “Chicken harvesting Machine,” 534.

⁴² Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, 314.

⁴³ Wadiwel, “Chicken harvesting Machine,” 534.

⁴⁴ Wadiwel, “Chicken harvesting Machine,” 534.

⁴⁵ Wadiwel, “Chicken harvesting Machine,” 535.

Animal Ghosts and Pain

At this point to it is important to examine the question of timing in order to consider the kind of ontological complexity that arises not only from the estrangement of the nonhuman, but also the human inquirer's estrangement. The demand that the estrangement of the animal labourer makes upon us as humans and primary consumers extends to the psychic realm. We are not simply severed from the idea of the animal as a labouring creature, but from the possibility of the spectre of the dead animal: a being that may return in haunting—a reminder of what we have done, a reminder of who they were as individual subjects with diverse experiences. From the perspective of animal industry, this rupturing of nonhuman presence relates to the way “the industrial organization of work [...] and the repression of work rationales that are not economically based have triggered a deterioration, if not a perversion, of the relationship between workers and animals.”⁴⁶ Porcher explains in “Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry: A Shared Suffering,”

The industrialization of work has profoundly changed the nature of violence towards animals, which is no longer individual or limited to small numbers but has become institutionalized, linked to the industrial organization of work. Violence is no more the fact of workers themselves but the fact of the ruthless character of work. Such soft violence, for example killing animal with machines to gas or electrocute pigs instead of striking them, that hides its real nature is all the more deadly. Hence, in industrial and intensified systems, suffering has become a shared pathology for animals as well as for worker.⁴⁷

The systemization of such violence has, for example, “the drastic consequence of blocking out

⁴⁶ Jocelyne Porcher, “The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry: A Shared Suffering,” *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics* 24, no. 1 (2011): 3–17, 5.

⁴⁷ Porcher, “The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry,” 5.

the thought process, thus preventing any change in representations and practices.”⁴⁸ It is the translation of violence into natural disposition that lends itself to the way “[industry] can make perfectly immoral practices tolerable.”⁴⁹ Animal pain in the slaughterhouse is thus “an abstract object” that lays claim to what is otherwise the location of subjectivity and the premise of the possibility of all that may follow its acknowledgement: dignity, respect, affect, identity.⁵⁰ From this position, animal being emerges as the duration of a process embodied in biological material, and as such it is refused the potentiality any other kind of death may bring—including memory and haunting. The production of meat and its intimacy to the produced objecthood of the creature refuses us the ability to think of its flesh as remains of life.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida argues that hauntology should replace ontology, and through the image of a ghost notes that hauntology, contrary to its near homophone, illustrates how in the absence a thing, there remains a residual possibility that is more real than its corporeal parallel. Hauntology, Derrida argues, is “in contrast to the traditional ‘ontology’ that thinks being in terms of self identical presence. What is important about the figure of the specter, then, is that it cannot be fully present: it has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet.”⁵¹ Hauntology becomes the image of a present that is haunted by a future which we lose, which never precipitates. Mark Fisher refers to hauntology as the “failure of the future.”⁵² We can situate Fisher’s engagement with hauntology in terms of the slaughterhouse animal in order to better understand the implications their objecthood bears on discourses of temporality and

⁴⁸ Porcher, “The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry,” 12.

⁴⁹ Porcher, “The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry,” 12.

⁵⁰ Porcher, “The Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry,” 12.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, tr. Stephen Cullenberg, Peggy Kamuf, and Bernd Magnus (New York: Routledge, 2006), 82.

⁵² Mark Fisher, “What Is Hauntology?,” *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2012): 16–24, 16

suffering. For example, Porcher spends time thinking about the slaughterhouse's tendency to try and find "painless solution[s]" to various handling tasks—in this case, castration.⁵³ She explains,

The castration of piglets is standard practice on pig farms. Most workers describe this task as being extremely unpleasant, both physically and psychologically [...] the pain inflicted upon the animals is directly linked to the industrial nature of the procedure, since work productivity excludes the use of anaesthetics. Biologists have therefore found a fast and painless solution to castrate piglets, "immunocastration," which consists of a chemical intervention in the process of testicular production. Castration is thereby replaced by a 'vaccine and hence injections.'⁵⁴

Porcher concludes:

As this innovation reduces animals' visible pain, it keeps animal rights organizations satisfied, even though nothing is known about the indirect effects of this vaccine on animals. It meets the pork industry's demands as well by allowing for further intensification of labour on pig farms [...] for the animals this actually makes very little difference, since the benefits of avoiding castration are nothing compared to the permanent suffering, they endure in industrial systems.⁵⁵

What Porcher describes is an attempt at alleviation that is incapable of fulfilling its task, not least because it is situated in a landscape where the nonhuman lives the time of their life in pain. The attempt at alleviation posits the animal's body as an interface for the logic of hauntology. The slaughterhouse animal is a creature whose remains become the desecration of the possibility of a future without pain. On one hand, this hauntological dynamic occurs because on a larger scale it conjures—for me, at least—the question of what the world would be without animal agriculture. On the other hand, and therefore on the individual scale, we might consider the way in which this procession of death links together. Which is to say, as one creature passes by the blade, their remains become a hauntological touchpoint for the question of what the following creature's life

⁵³ Porcher, "Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry" 12.

⁵⁴ Porcher, "Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry" 12.

⁵⁵ Porcher, "Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry" 13.

may have been like if only they were somewhere else. Each creature gestures to the next in illusions of possibility and community that emphasize the deeply subjective nature of the slaughterhouse and its dependence on the erasure of creaturely singularity. To return to knocking-box cows, for example, is to understand that as each seemingly unconscious cow passes by the blade, their death activates not only the death of another but the necessity to birth another cow and therefore subject another to a life of misery.

The body of the animal in the slaughterhouse is an elementary hauntological object insofar as the very premise of the slaughterhouse demonstrates the cancellation of a (painless) future, of a meatless future. The very moment one cow, chicken, or pig dies a “painless” death,⁵⁶ another is born into the pain of life, another is wounded, another is beat, another is sick. The hauntological object is “accompanied by a deflation of expectations,” and as such, the cows, chickens, and pigs that reside within any slaughterhouse at any given time serve as reminders of a future that will never be painless precisely because the slaughterhouse persists.⁵⁷

For Derrida, “the ghost [...] is the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future” such “the ghost pushes at the boundaries of language and thought.”⁵⁸ Exploring the development of the application of Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* in literary theory, Colin Davis notes: “Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecoverable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving. Hauntology is

⁵⁶ Porcher, “Relationship Between Workers and Animals in the Pork Industry” 12.

⁵⁷ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014), 12.

⁵⁸ Colin Davis, “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” *French Studies* 59, no. 3 (2005): 373–79, 379.

thus related to, and represents a new aspect of, the ethical turn of deconstruction which has been palpable for at least two decades.”⁵⁹ For the slaughterhouse animal, there is no lost future to haunt, no ghost to address because the slaughterhouse achieves the future it desires: death, the loss of future and life for the creature. While Fisher’s context may vary, I find his words quite applicable to the slaughterhouse’s relationship to the future and past: “What haunts the [...] twenty-first century is [...] the disappearance of [...] the capacity to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live,” and thus, our “acceptance of a situation in which culture would continue without really changing.”⁶⁰

What does it mean to begin the work of thinking about a world without the slaughterhouse? I argue that the inception of this kind of thought must begin from the point of retrieval: we must return the nonhuman to the domain of subjecthood. Our understanding of alienation in a non-anthropocentric context reminds us not just of its ability to dissolve the very concept of the animal as both existing in general *and* working, but also our capacity to reflect on animal labour—critically, and affectually as a memory, and as pain. The speed and frequency at which animals are both born and killed,⁶¹ as well as the deeply isolated and sensory-stripped habitat of the slaughterhouse characterizes this kind of alienation with a particular sort of atemporality that is not the loss of time, but rather, the loss of life lived in time and therefore the eradication of waiting (for life).⁶² The erosion of time that occurs *in* and because of the slaughterhouse makes it so that we never even have to address the possibility of a live chicken, cow, or pig. If we refer to Boyd’s argument that “the chicken as an independent organism no

⁵⁹ Davis, “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” 379.

⁶⁰ Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 17.

⁶¹ Stephanie Marek Muller, “Zombification, Social Death, and the Slaughterhouse: U.S. Industrial Practices of Livestock Slaughter,” *American Studies* 57, no. 3 (2018): 81–101, 82.

⁶² Muller, “Zombification, Social Death, and the Slaughterhouse,” 85.

longer exists” because of the direction of biotechnology, then what this conjugation of alienation demonstrates is that the chicken ceases to exist or was evacuated from history upon the inception of the slaughterhouse.⁶³ In the place of the animal emerges the concept of meat as its own singular entity, no longer indebted to the body from whom it is sourced and therefore liberated as an autonomous species. The idea of meat, in this context, does not need the animal or that which refers to their being—even when a generic image of their form is plastered on packaging. In many ways, we can see this level of alienation as an increasingly generative force that continues to find new ways to make life, to make concepts and forms out of the loss of its victims. The sort of estrangement that happens to the slaughterhouse animal and because of their labour is therefore intensely subjective as much as it is objective: it is an experience singular to the animal, but also, a manifesting force that brings new—albeit violent—ideas, concepts, and ways of thinking into the world. This is a deeply productive force that rings the language of labour out of its victim and towards its own purpose and apparatus. Indeed, this kind of estrangement is so powerful that it is also capable of erasing things from the world. Within this logic, these chickens, cows, and pigs will never haunt us—we cannot see their image, their Levinasian face, because the force of their labour fulfills the produced destiny of their presupposed objecthood and therefore the loss of their self as a self in the contemporary landscape and history. To put simply, while the nonhuman may perform, or find themselves in a condition that necessitates the possibility of hauntological analysis their status within capital, the force of their alienation, fails to conjure the events that would otherwise necessitate haunting—and this is because they are revoked the kind of status that is necessary for a return: existence.

⁶³ Boyd, “Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production,” 632.

Interlude: On Genre, Human Labourers, and Cannibalizing Marx

Though the interest of this thesis falls within the realm of a theoretical and therefore discursive investment in the animals of Marx, my discussion raises connections to how critical animal studies may address the intersectional nuances of labour. Sociological perspectives that concern animal labour must consider not only creaturely life and conditions, but also the humans alongside whom these animals congregate and the relational ties they have to each other. For example, Adams, as *Animal Labour* articulates, has analyzed the “interlinked oppression of women and animals, arguing for a political and ethical project rooted in reciprocity, an ethics of care.”⁶⁴ This perspective considers not just the “animals’ capacity for agency and voice, but our (mutual) capacities to listen and be responsive, as the core of an ethical relationship.”⁶⁵ In other words, this interspecies perspective is compelling to consider in this thesis and situate alongside my own discursive thought as I analyze the theoretical and technical details that inform the possession of language. Though outside the central scope of my argument and thesis, it is important to ground the totality of the landscape to which I refer to when I remark upon animal industry and its various manifestations.

The Guardian reported in February of 2023 that over 100 children from the ages of 13 to 17 years old had been discovered “to be illegally employed by a slaughterhouse cleaning firm across the country [...] working overnight shifts at 13 meat processing facilities in eight states.”⁶⁶ Maya Yang elaborates:

⁶⁴ Charlotte E. Blattner, Kendra Coulter, and Will Kymlicka, “Introduction: Animal Labour and the Quest for Interspecies Justice,” in *Animal Labour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 8.

⁶⁵ Blattner, Coulter, and Kymlicka, “Introduction: Animal Labour and the Quest for Interspecies Justice,” 8.

⁶⁶ Blattner, Coulter, and Kymlicka, “Introduction: Animal Labour and the Quest for Interspecies Justice,” 8.

The investigation discovered that children were working with hazardous chemicals and cleaning meat processing equipment including back saws, brisket saws and head splitters. At least three minors suffered injuries while working for PSSI, one of the country's largest food safety sanitation service providers.⁶⁷

The federal court documents that concern the exploitative labour situation cite “a 14-year-old child who worked at a Nebraska facility from 11pm to 5am five to six days a week,”⁶⁸ cleaning machines, and “suffering injuries as a result of chemical burns.”⁶⁹ In this situation, however, it is not the companies themselves that are the target of the federal case. Rather, “the investigation is focused on smugglers who may have provided the children with false identities and possibly led them to dangerous jobs.”⁷⁰ This case indicates there is little room for consequence when it comes to the multi-billion-dollar meat-packing industry, that in 2024 amounts to \$132.30 billion, and is expected to grow annually by a startling 4.39%.⁷¹ To this, a former manager of the meat-packing company in question said,

In this industry you have a lot of people who are undocumented workers. A lot of times it's because they're not going to pay well enough to hire people in America who want to do it [...] you can look at the ID and tell the person on the ID is not even close to the person standing in front of you.⁷²

⁶⁷ Maya Yang, “Underage child labor working in slaughterhouses revealed in investigation,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2023/feb/17/underage-child-labor-working-slaughterhouse-investigation>.

⁶⁸ Yang, “Underage child labor working in slaughterhouses revealed in investigation,” *The Guardian*.

⁶⁹ Yang, “Underage child labor working in slaughterhouses revealed in investigation,” *The Guardian*.

⁷⁰ Julia Ainsley and Laura Strickler, “Feds expand probe into migrant child labor at slaughterhouses,” *NBC News*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/feds-expand-probe-migrant-child-labor-slaughterhouses-rcna72930>.

⁷¹ Ainsley and Strickler, “Feds expand probe into migrant child labor at slaughterhouses,” *NBC News*.

⁷² “Meat market revenue in the United States from 2012 to 2026 (in billion U.S. dollars),” Statista, Accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/food/meat/united-states>.

Dangerous and traumatic, the human labour that takes place within the boundary of animal industry is led by a majority migrant population, many of whom, as I will soon discuss, are undocumented. This precarious labour, an incredible risk to one's mental and physical health, as well as safety and status, emblemizes the profitability of such economic informality. Those most vulnerable are exploited in favour of the production of surplus labour—a phenomenon that links their condition to the nonhumans who similarly constitute the industry's labour force. In both cases, the possibility of the kind of recuperation otherwise implicit in production and surplus labour is maximally minimized, subjecting the worker to exhaustingly extended periods of product generation. As we know, the nonhuman animal is both labourer and commodity, working on their body for as long as they are alive, and until the eventual moment of death and the commodity's retrieval. This suffering, though varied in its species-specific form, is a manner of surplus expenditure that we see present in the life of the human slaughterhouse workers. However, it is important to emphasize the categorial species difference that is implied in the language of surplus labour while still retaining the understanding that there remains a fundamental premise of suffering that emerges from conditions of vulnerability as they relate to social, juridical, and legal status, as well as overall health and condition.

In *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, Vanesa Ribas describes the difficulty of the intersectional scope in which animal industry find itself situated. As migrant women integrated into the “chain migration network,” that is, “increasing female migration by sponsoring sisters, cousins, and friends,” they found that the “plentiful employment opportunities,” albeit grueling and difficult, enabled them to gain a sense of independence and

identity.⁷³ Ribas elaborates, “women could be full members of the network, paying back family members who had fronted the fee for their journey.”⁷⁴ The difficulty, however, is such that the very work that endowed them with economic stability, now “consumed” their lives.⁷⁵ Labouring in conditions of industrial meat-packing that lacked the kind of infrastructure implicit in something like employee care or resources, these women could be and were often subject to “frequent sexual harassment,” not to mention incredible fatigue at both the physical and mental level.⁷⁶

Subject to violence and situated in a complex of monetary benefit at the expense of selfhood and safety, the dynamic implicit in the place of women in such workplaces accrues even more difficulty when we consider, for example, that as such settings increased their female work force, situating women “in higher-level positions of authority [...] gender inequalities in outcomes such as earnings” shifted.⁷⁷ This dynamic situates women who are already vulnerable and live with little social mobility and choice as it pertains to their income source, exist within a nexus that trades on gendered violence for fundamental need. As such, gender, species, and race constitute a very complex entanglement whose language and forms of violence bridge together in an unsettling intimacy. Pergadia’s “Slaughterhouse Intimacies” is a useful resource to work through this connectedness as she opens her essay with a sexual harassment lawsuit “brought against the New York City ballet”⁷⁸ wherein “a text message exchange between an unnamed

⁷³Vanessa Ribas, *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 45.

⁷⁴ Ribas, *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, 45.

⁷⁵ Ribas, *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, 45.

⁷⁶ Ribas, *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, 150.

⁷⁷ Ribas, *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, 157,

⁷⁸ Pergadia, “Slaughterhouse Intimacies,” 1013.

donor and a male principal dancer envisions assault against the female dancers through an analogy: ‘I bet we could tie some of them up and abuse them like farm animals.’⁷⁹ To this, Pergadia makes palpable the “material affinity lying beneath the surface,” which is to say, the understanding that “factory farming serves as a reference point for” the suffering of woman, of the vulnerable, and those who wield far less social capital and protections than others.⁸⁰ This point of reference “suggests an opaque awareness about” sexual violence, industrial farming, and “the sexual violence of industrial farming.”⁸¹ Such a discussion returns to Adams’s insight about the way in which “animals have become absent referents, whose fate is transmuted into a metaphor for someone else’s existence or fate.”⁸²

In *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb advocate for transmuting labour analysis focused on materiality in favour of “the moral burdens and the emotional hardships” that the workers endure.⁸³ This call for difference is especially striking because it has the effect of facilitating a dialogue between the animals of our focus and those who perform the human labour that informs the conditions of their surroundings. Though I do link animals and humans within the language of time and capital—as the wage simply cannot apply to the cow, chicken, and pig—affectual turns help make interspecies connectedness and solidarity more legible. In *Dirty Work*, for example, Eyal Press points out that slaughterhouse workers may often bear the burden of post-traumatic stress disorder,⁸⁴ and this kind of emotional

⁷⁹ Pergadia, “Slaughterhouse Intimacies,” 1013.

⁸⁰ Pergadia, “Slaughterhouse Intimacies,” 1013.

⁸¹ Pergadia, “Slaughterhouse Intimacies,” 1013.

⁸² Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 69.

⁸³ Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 60.

⁸⁴ Eyal Press, *Dirty Work: Essential Jobs and the Hidden Toll of Inequality in America*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Picador, 2022), 14.

distress is an outcome that we find reflected and embodied in the nonhuman creatures of factory farming as well.

Matthew Scully's *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* for example, talks at length about the impetus of agricultural scientists to eliminate the "stress gene,"⁸⁵ or "the precise stress causing strand of DNA—the protein molecules present in chromosomes, carrying the hereditary information of all creatures."⁸⁶ Scully proceeds:

The trick is to eliminate that gene, known in the pork industry as "porcine stress syndrome," or PSS, by means of careful genetic selection so that the creatures might all reach "optimum performance," comporting themselves agreeably and then, on command, sauntering shoulder to shoulder down the chute to a clean, squealless kill.⁸⁷

What Scully is pointing out here is that the economic drive and productive force that informs the genetic maintenance of these pigs occurs not for their own sake, but for that of profit's. The pig, in this case, can be thought of ways similar to the human worker insofar as we imagine the possibility of a certain unification in mental suffering for both animal and slaughterhouse worker. However, whereas the over-stressed human worker can be fired for potential inefficiencies, the nonhuman animal—distinctly desubjectivized, that is, a seemingly exclusive point of commodification and profit—must be corrected in order to ensure a productive outcome. Scully elaborates:

As D. E. Gerrard, a "meat scientist" at Purdue University, puts it in "Pork Quality: Beyond the Stress Gene": "The primary goal of the pork industry is to produce the

⁸⁵ Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*, 1st St. Martin's Griffin ed. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002), 271.

⁸⁶ Scully, *Dominion*, 271.

⁸⁷ Scully, *Dominion*, 271.

greatest amount of high-quality protein possible for the least amount of input”— “input” here including the time it takes to transport and herd the creatures to slaughter.⁸⁸

It is for the sake of ease in transportation and docility that the pig’s mental health is subject to biopolitical intervention. Indeed, this methodology of intervention, as we may observe, has the effect of reaffirming the pig as a commodity precisely because it interrupts and eliminates the propelling force that, one could argue, grounds the possibility of agented resistance. This docility, this biopolitical schema eases the intensity of labour on behalf of the human but does not offer a clean-cut solution. Scully elaborates:

Stress is also common among pigs already subjected to extensive genetic manipulation, affecting not only their comportment on the slaughter line but fertility rates in sows and even appetite. Such is the “stress” on our farms that even pigs are losing their appetites, displaying “the classic symptoms of anorexia.”⁸⁹

The biopolitical calculation of the pig results in the production of successive and additional difficulties. It is important to keep the singularity of this kind of suffering in mind while also connecting it to a critical sense of difference with the suffering of human slaughterhouse workers. A direct comparison of the animal condition to the human condition may not be entirely ethical. Yet, there is no need to discount the possibility of communion as a sense of sharedness, or dialogue. In other words, it is through this particular kind of dialectical approach, though species specific, wherein we may begin to consider the position of women, people of colour, those of migratory status, and undocumented individuals in a position of solidarity with the

⁸⁸ Scully, *Dominion*, 272.

⁸⁹ Scully, *Dominion*, 273.

nonhumans of the animal agricultural industry.

It is in *When Species Meet*, for example, where Haraway affirms animal rights within the language of an “instrumentality” that approaches the nonhuman as a fellow in and of labour.⁹⁰ Haraway argues that we, as humans, must take time to critically learn and fulfill a treatment of the nonhuman that wields an inherent sense of respect, responsibility, and dignity. To this, Kolozova purposes that Haraway’s demand for humans to consider and respect the level of sacrifice that nonhumans preform is a “philomorphising” gesture that is inherently value-based.⁹¹ To put it another way, Kolozova argues that the situation of nonhumans in the language of labour reemphasizes their existence as such because they function as value for the human—a dynamic that fails to consider the effect on the nonhuman themselves.⁹² Furthermore, as Yvette Wijnandts articulates in “Rejecting Animal Exploitation: A Case for Interspecies Solidarity,” “any argument based on labor rights falls short, as laborers are consistently losing their status and rights; non-human animals will not gain anything by being lifted to ‘laborers’ if human laborers are increasingly being turned into resources themselves.”⁹³ Kolozova argues that the human must take care to recognize the nonhuman as a “companion first and foremost,” as it is only in doing so when “their lived, material circumstances can and should be improved.”⁹⁴ Kolozova notes, “[it is] only by the emancipation of the animal that the marginalized and exploited parts of humanity can be free from suffering and killing [...] Posthumanism can accomplish its goal of human decentering only by way of emancipating the non-human, beginning with the animal.”⁹⁵ To this,

⁹⁰ Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 73.

⁹¹ Kolozova, *Capitalism’s Holocaust of Animals*, 142.

⁹² Yvette Wijnandts, “Rejecting Animal Exploitation: A Case for Interspecies Solidarity,” *Krisis* 41, no. 2 (2021): 150.

⁹³ Wijnandts, “Rejecting Animal Exploitation,” 150.

⁹⁴ Kolozova, *Capitalism’s Holocaust of Animals*, 148.

⁹⁵ Kolozova, *Capitalism’s Holocaust of Animals*, 148.

we may consider the totality of our discussion thus far, and the interconnectedness we have articulated in order to consider not just the discursive and theoretical perspective as it constitutes the genre of this thesis, but also and even sociological considerations.

In “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability: Expanding the Domain of Environmental Justice,” for example, Judy K.C. Bentley, elaborates on the situation of nonhuman animals in factory farms:

Egg-laying hens are typically caged in groups of six to eight, with each one allotted less than a square foot of living space. Their cages are stacked five high, while feces and urine from the cages above coats the feathers of the hens below. Milk cows are confined in stalls just big enough to exist. Their feet may never touch grass, as long as they live to give 22,000 pounds of milk per year, per cow.⁹⁶

This point of reference is important because it functions as an access point into the discourses of solidarity and connectivity. Bentley explains:

The socially constructed identities of nonhuman animals as exploitable commodities on factory farms resembles much too closely the socially constructed identities of human animals with disabilities, including aging, who are neglected and actively abused in our nation’s “nursing” homes and other long-term care facilities.⁹⁷

Though, “at best” Bentley suggests, “long-term care facilities provide medical, social, and personal care in specialized housing for individuals who have lost some capacity to care for

⁹⁶ Judy K.C. Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability: Expanding the Domain of Environmental Justice,” in *The Intersectionality of Critical Animal, Disability, and Environmental Studies: Toward Eco-Ability, Justice, and Liberation*, ed. Anthony J. Nocella, Amber E. George, and J. L. Schatz (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 31.

⁹⁷ Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability,” 31.

themselves,” home care agencies such as “nursing homes, and assisted living residential communities” are inherently “for-profit entities,” and as such, “they constitute an elder industrial complex, confining and abusing their ‘residents’ in manners similar to the short and brutal lives of animals confined on factory farms.”⁹⁸ We can further explore and emphasize the considerable linkable between the residents of such facilities, and the nonhuman animals of the slaughterhouse, the factory farm, when we turn to the material conditions that frame their day-to-day life. As Bentley synthesizes:

In 2010 the top ten for-profit nursing home chains were cited for “serious deficiencies” including: failure to prevent bed sores, resident weight loss, falls, infections, resident mistreatment, poor sanitary conditions, and other problems that could cause their residents serious harm. Confined to a bed, or confined to a cage, falls of elderly humans or falls of “downed” meat animals, unsanitary conditions in nursing homes and farms—the socially constructed identity of sentient beings who endure these unjust environments puts profit above decency and compassion. So it becomes possible for too many people to treat the “residents” of nursing homes and factory farms as exploitable, unselfed resources, without a pang of conscience.⁹⁹

Here Bentley epitomizes the notion that the value placed on life—be it human or nonhuman is “inextricably confounded with the socially constructed value of money,” such that “socially constructed identities and environments become oppressive when they are reductive, exclusive, oppressive, and devalued.”¹⁰⁰ For our purposes, this of course means that “regardless of one’s “socially constructed label”—be it “dis-abled,” “meat,” or “old”—one’s “socially constructed identity creates a socially constructed environment as well, where harmful practices and

⁹⁸ Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability,” 31.

⁹⁹ Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability,” 32.

¹⁰⁰ Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability,” 35.

diminished quality of life are the consequences of environmental injustice.”¹⁰¹

In *Disability and Animality* Stephanie Jenkins, Kelly Struthers Montford, and Chloë Taylor consider the language of disability as it pertains to the nonhuman in a more direct context. Neoliberalism, they argue, “reduces the value of life to economic efficiency and disassembles the bodies and minds of workers of all species to increase pace, production, and efficiency” and this is significant to consider because “factory farms simultaneously obscure the institutions’ disabling of non-human animals for profit” at the same they “kill those whose bodies cannot be transformed into profit”—that is, “non-productive animals, such as dairy cows deemed low producing, are slaughtered for failure to manufacture expected bodily outputs.”¹⁰² They elaborate:

The agricultural and food industries rely on and naturalize disability within farm animals, exploiting their impairments for profit. Non-human animals are bred and maimed for profitable traits (e.g. debeaking and tail docking) and disabled by unnatural, unhealthy, and painful living conditions. Neoliberalism’s reduction of disability to matters of production and profit impacts human animals as well.¹⁰³

To consider this disabling process within transspecies terms is to recognize that “low-paid human workers are [also] exploited in slaughterhouses” and in such a way that the “unyielding pressure for rapid and efficient killing creates some of the most dangerous workspaces on the planet.”¹⁰⁴ Jenkins et al proceed: “the high rates of impairment from workplace injury reveal the devaluing of human life, in addition to more-than-human animals, in the intense workplace

¹⁰¹ Bentley, “Deconstructing Symbolic Identities and Building on Eco-ability,” 35.

¹⁰² Stephanie Jenkins, Kelly Struthers Montford, and Chloë Taylor, “Disability and Animality: Introduction,” in *Disability and Animality*, 1st ed. (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2020), 2.

¹⁰³ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 2.

¹⁰⁴ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 2.

violence of the abattoir.”¹⁰⁵

As Sunaura Taylor notes in “Animal Crips,” “animal agriculture is a leading cause of disability among animals,”¹⁰⁶ as the creatures of the factory farm, of animal industry are “quite literally manufactured to be disabled.”¹⁰⁷ Culling practises, for example, “believe the normalization of bodily abnormality on the farm.”¹⁰⁸ To this, Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor point out that “disability pervades the farm, but it is not visible,” that is, “disability is seen not in relation to impairment but in relation to productive value of exchange on the farm: the more “disabled the animal, in terms of bodily alteration through genetic engineering or environmental conditions, the more productive they are deemed.”¹⁰⁹ To think, for example of the dairy cow is to understand that, in this context “the embodied laboring in the production of milk” has the effect of transforming itself “into production for human benefit, subjugating one species to the will of another” and it is this “created disability” that is “normalized, while so-called non-productive bodies in the spectrum of species variation, such as those that produce less due to aging or physical exhaustion, are removed from view.”¹¹⁰ In other words, “Farms make the disabled body productive, while the so-called non-productive body is killed.”¹¹¹

It is also important to note, as Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor point out, that the “work performed by people with disabilities has historically been regarded as not having worth, with

¹⁰⁵ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 2.

¹⁰⁶ Sunaura Taylor, “Animal Crips,” in *Disability and Animality*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2020), 104.

¹⁰⁷ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 96.

¹⁰⁸ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 39.

¹⁰⁹ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 39.

¹¹⁰ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 39.

¹¹¹ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 40.

little or no market-exchange value,”¹¹² which is to say, it assumes a kind of paradoxical invisibility:

If we think of the farm also as an institution, the bodies of its animal inhabitants “farmed” for “goods” of market-exchange value, the farm depends on the self-sustaining body work of its residents/captives. This unseen and unremunerated work of farmed animals maintains the institution of the farm. Like the cow placed in the paddock for visible grazing and rest, while her body produces huge quantities of milk, the disabled body-and-mind was put aside in the visible institution, though the forms of capitalist exploitation that went on inside went unseen.¹¹³

The “invisible visible,” is a collective, or shared positionality, “combining bodies-and-minds, human and non-human, in the naturalization of capitalist exploitation.”¹¹⁴ Neoliberalism situates productivity as a “normative part of the life course, a life course that becomes visible only through capitalist evaluations of productivity” and it is through an attention to the scope of animal industry that we can begin to “expose the harms of viewing each other’s worth in terms of productivity for market exchange and the appropriation of profits through the dissembling of bodies-and-minds, human and non-human.”¹¹⁵ It is important to note however, that this dissembling quality of neoliberalism and its species interconnectedness extends beyond the discursive and into the historical.

In *Like an Animal*, Natalie Khazaal and Núria Almiron take time to point out that the species divide we witness within the language of labour and capital can be regarded as “the prototype of new ways of social stratification among humans,” in this case, “colonialism,

¹¹² Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 46.

¹¹³ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 47.

¹¹⁴ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 47.

¹¹⁵ Jenkins, Montford, and Taylor, “Disability and Animality,” 48.

slavery, and the subjugation and exploitation of women under capitalist patriarchy.”¹¹⁶ Which is to say, “with capitalism, nonhuman animals” become “forced laborers like never before, while at the same time serving as a measure of alterity unmatched in any previous period.”¹¹⁷ This particular kind of species divide—one fortified and premised upon the advent of animal industry—not only reflects “new methods of intense exploitation and genetic manipulation of nonhumans to ensure ever increasing demands for growth” but emphasizes the consequence for those who “didn’t fit the new ideal of human,” especially as it concerns systems and structures of exclusion and marginalization.¹¹⁸ Khazaal and Almiron explain:

The ramped-up speciesism also affected inequality among humans as it supplied a whole new toolkit of technologies of control that could be copied to humans and used more intensely than ever before [...] Nazis borrowed from the animal slaughter house practice of the assembly line, which they adapted to exterminating Jews, following Henry Ford who had adopted the practice in his car factories after visiting a slaughterhouse.¹¹⁹

Steven Best’s *The Politics of Total Liberation* contributes to Khazaal and Almiron’s historical analysis with the understanding that even “international slave trade borrowed heavily from the technologies of animal domination that emerged with domesticating wild species, including cages, shackles, branding, and auctions.”¹²⁰ It is important to remind ourselves at this point, that the range of our analysis in this specific portion are necessarily sociological and this is quite compelling because, as Khazaal and Almiron argue, the premise or foundation of sociological

¹¹⁶ Núria Almiron and Natalie Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal: Critical Animal Studies Approaches to Borders, Displacement, and Othering* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 23.

¹¹⁷ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 23.

¹¹⁸ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 23.

¹¹⁹ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 24.

¹²⁰ Steven Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 11.

specific methodology and ideology is “unthinkable without the human-nonhuman divide that endows humans with minds, consciousness, subjectivity, and agency, or the unique ability for meaningful action, while denying nonhumans a collective that is simultaneously natural and social.”¹²¹ However, this dynamic is not the consequence of sociology’s inability to “grasp the contradiction.” On the contrary, “they typically avoid or suppress it,”¹²² a phenomenon which Khazaal and Almiron rely on Richie Nimmo’s “The Making of the Human” to explain:

Indeed, it is striking how predictably non-anthropocentric reflections have arisen in sociological thought only to be ultimately swept aside, whether on the grounds of “culture,” “language,” “reflexivity,” “agency,” or some other means for asserting the exceptional nature of human beings in the interests of properly “social” science.¹²³

It is compelling to consider such generic conventions when we reflect on the impetus and questioning methodology of this thesis—that is, can continental philosophy and critical theory survive the advent of the nonhuman animal and the necessary rethinking of dialectical gestures? Nonetheless, and as *Like an Animal* epitomizes, “animalistic dehumanization would be impossible if nonhuman animals weren’t the oppressed outgroup par excellence.”¹²⁴ There is an intimate link between the mistreatment of marginalized people, and animals—so much so that the mistreatment, exploitation, and suffering of nonhumans becomes the a priori condition for human mistreatment.

In “Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed,” Syl Ko, reflecting on the work of Cora Diamond’s “Eating Meat and Eating People” notes that arguments that concern the

¹²¹ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 26.

¹²² Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 26.

¹²³ Richie Nimmo, “The Making of the Human: Anthropocentrism in Modern Social Thought,” in *Anthropocentrism*, ed. Rob Boddice (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 70.

¹²⁴ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 26.

language of rights and legislative matters “get to the heart of why animal exploitation, torture, and slaughter happen.”¹²⁵ Ko argues that the culturally discursive difference between humans and animals is something of a “functional device.”¹²⁶ That is, the species difference that defines our culture, our methods and styles of life is a deliberate tactic that legislatively and juridically reinforces the nonhumans lack—a condition of their life that enables human splendour. The tactical and material intention to reduce the nonhuman always already wields or carries within it, the instructions “for how to treat that being.”¹²⁷ In other words, the nonhumans exile from categories of citizenship and from the diversity of kinship within legal terms implies the eventuality of violence.

As such, and as Khazaal and Almiron note, while reflecting on the piece themselves, “it is within language, the power of words and terms, that we can rebalance the dynamics,”¹²⁸ or in Ko’s terms: “Just calling someone an ‘animal’ or ‘nonhuman’ is more than enough to justify extreme violence toward that person.”¹²⁹ Situated within this logic, is, once more, the notion that the term animal is always already a culturally interpellated violence precisely because of the implications that follow its category of being. Ko, in this turn, reflects back upon the nonhuman’s exile from basic categories of rights and freedoms, of our cultural tolerance towards the violences they face and the subsequent suffering—multiple and often invisible—to not only emphasize its link with human contexts of marginalization, but the preliminary issue of material speciesism.

¹²⁵ Syl Ko, “Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed,” in *Aphro-Ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*, Aph Ko and Syl Ko (Lantern Books, 2020), 40.

¹²⁶ Ko, “Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed,” 40.

¹²⁷ Ko, “Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed,” 40.

¹²⁸ Almiron and Khazaal, eds., *Like an Animal*, 41.

¹²⁹ Ko, “Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed,” 43.

It is interesting to reflect on Ko's argument and interest in the consequence of the nonhuman's a priori condition of lack through Best's *The Politics of Total Liberation*. As Best points out in a more direct and detailed scope, the language of animality and references to the nonhuman's position as exiled from the language of dignity and its related capacities is explicitly weaponized in order to cast certain human groups within similarly oppressed bounds. The irony, however, is that whereas indignity experienced by humans is regarded by most as a situational violence, the nonhuman animal remains perpetually attached to such lack in a metaphysical way without the possibility of emancipation. Best observes:

The criterion created to exclude animals from the human community was also used to ostracize blacks, women, the mentally ill, the disabled, and numerous other stigmatized groups. The domination of human over human and its exercise through slavery, warfare, and genocide typically begins with the denigration of victims as "savages," "primitives," and "mere" animals who lack the essence and sine qua non of human nature—rationality.¹³⁰

There is an inherent and necessarily historical tie between discourses of Otherness, and animality precisely because "speciesism provides both the prototype for hierarchical domination and a battery of tactics and technologies of control."¹³¹ Best's discussion is particularly useful as he reminds us that Marx himself takes time to elaborate upon the "inseparably interrelated" connection between "the accumulation of wealth and the production of poverty" that is, "the aggrandizement of the ruling class and the immiseration of the ruled, the development of the European world and the underdevelopment of its colonies."¹³² Best adds: "Then as now, these

¹³⁰ Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 10.

¹³¹ Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 9.

¹³² Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 21.

apparent antipodes are inevitable consequences of a grow-or-die, profit-seeking system of exploitation whose ceaseless expansion requires a slave class and inordinate amounts of cheap labor power.”¹³³ It may therefore be in our interest at this point to turn to Rebecca Jenkins’s “The Other Ghosts in Our Machine” in order to build upon Best’s discussion and ground our interest in the working class within the context of experience. How have the factory farm workers of our interest been systematically refused the possibility of equitability? In pursuit of a momentary study of the reality of the working condition of those marginalized human labourers in the animal industry, we may inquire upon the particularities that inform the precarity of such labour.

Jenkins, for example, and in relation to our interest, cites “systematic interference with workers’ freedom of association and right to organize trade unions,” “aggressive campaigning against employee’s self-organization in violation of international standards,” and “mandatory ‘captive audience’ meetings in which employers can inveigh against workers self-organizing and speak about potential workplace closure so long as the discussion does not constitute a “threat” of closure.”¹³⁴ Not only is the nonhuman of the meat and dairy industry objectified and therefore barred entry into the category of subjecthood, but the humans who *are* endowed the language of labour in this context exist within a nexus that grants them the title of value producer with little protections. This is interesting in regard to our discussion of ontology because it enables a particular kind of reflection that pushes us to complicate even the preliminary status of the human. It is important to contribute to Jenkins with the reminder that the disenfranchised labourers to whom she makes reference are often people of colour.

¹³³ Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 21.

¹³⁴ Rebecca Jenkins, “The other ghosts in our machine: Meat processing and slaughterhouse workers in the United States of America,” in *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Clair Linzey (New York: Routledge, 2019), 236.

It can be argued that these workers, lacking any mobility and thus, the possibility of an improved workspace remain in a kind of perpetual stasis that sees their occupation as infinity precarious. Within specific regard to Jenkins’s language, there seems to be little social movement, or change of status and condition for these labourers. While the language of stasis is differentially applied to the nonhuman, the premise alone allows for the possibly of a certain sharedness, or a conceptual arrangement that is able to risk itself in the possibility of a transspecies allyship. As Best himself emphasizes, “that human, animal, and earth liberation movements are inseparably linked, such that none (humans, animals, and dynamic ecosystems) can be free until all are free— from human exploitation and interference.”¹³⁵ |

In other words, “given their symbiotic, holistic, and interlocking relationship, it is imperative that we no longer speak of human liberation, animal liberation, or earth liberation as if they were independent struggles, but rather that we talk instead of total liberation.”¹³⁶ The method of intervention that this particular thesis undertakes is one that sustains itself in regard to the question of the definition of work and labour. That is, keeping emancipatory perspectives mind, the gestures I assume are situated within the realm of the preliminary work of critical theory—it is my intention to first define the scope of labour and work within the Marxist context in particular before I embark upon any kind of liberatory discourses.

At this point, I would like to take a moment to reaffirm the direction of my argument and its rather specific methodology. While the texts I have cited within this particular section are generally sociological, my own course of study is discursive, and as such, the logic of my analysis takes the form of a necessarily theoretical approach. The impetus and drive of my thesis

¹³⁵ Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 80.

¹³⁶ Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation*, 81.

is to study a very specific thread of continental philosophy to detect the repetition of a similarly specific ontological presupposition and its textual manufacturing. This ontological interest concerns the nonhuman animal's simultaneous proximity to, and removal from language, value, and history. My priority is to evaluate the relevant discourses and make sense of why and how this paradoxical characterization shapes the nonhuman's textual role in continental philosophy. As I therefore bring this section to a close, I do so with the understanding that while the texts I have cited do indeed rely on Marxist language and even ideology, my specific approach to Marx remains within the realm of problematization. In other words, I do think that Marx can be applied to the condition of the nonhuman animal, to all that informs the factory farm, but what my study privileges most of all is the way in which the nonhuman animal remains a problem in his work. Though applicable to the nonhuman, Marx himself, I must affirm, cannot seem to make up his mind and in this way, the critical relevance for continental philosophy shores up as a question of survivability. Can Marxism survive the advent of the nonhuman? What does it mean to utilize Marx in a thought landscape that is yet to reckon with the ontological instability that defines the very creatures we consider in its applicability?

In "1844/2004/2044: The Return of Species-Being" Nick Dyer-Witheford, confronted with the trouble of Marx's species-being and its inhospitable nature towards the nonhuman discusses "an attempt to cannibalise parts [of Marx] for a new intellectual machine adequate to contemporary conditions,"¹³⁷ and it is this perspective that I want to maintain precisely because it refuses to disregard Marx at the same time it maintains an interest in his refusal of the nonhuman. Later on in this chapter, I do go onto refer to the specific living conditions of

¹³⁷ Nick Dyer-Witheford, "1844/2004/2044: The Return of Species-Being," *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 12, no. 4 (2004): 5.

nonhumans in factory farms, but the scope of such references, I must affirm, unravel with a careful gaze towards the relevance of the Marxist concept of alienation and the production of surplus-value. My approach in this case is similar to Fair and McMullen's, who "borrow Dyer-Witford's perhaps unlikely metaphor of cannibalizing, as it invokes the consumption of flesh that enables the realization of the value derived from metabolic labor."¹³⁸

Alienation Examined

The slaughterhouse is, in part, a timeless space because it is at such an isolated remove from the human subjects who are granted the dignity of a timely life. There is no sense of a life lived in time for a calf: seldom do they take their first step, they do not nurse from their mother, they do not grow up—instead, they are shackled, forced into a stasis that will ensure their tissue remains as soft as possible. In fact, the calf is at such a remove from the time they do spend on Earth that they are stripped even of their genus and species, becoming only veal. In *Every Twelve Seconds*, Pachirat describes the scene of a cow who has recently given birth on slaughterhouse grounds. While gazing "directly at the animals [...] listening to their voices" the inspector who visits the site of slaughter—the recently pregnant cow—hears them "only as criteria within a technical process, as data input."¹³⁹ One of the slaughterhouse employees is quoted as saying that the inspector "[will not] let us mess with this cow until it passes its after birth."¹⁴⁰ Pachirat goes on to note that the cow, "as it turns out [...] is the last 'to come in to die,' number 2,452 slaughtered that day. There is no mention over the radio of the fate of its newborn calf, at most a momentary nuisance within a process that views the cattle as the raw material inputs required to

¹³⁸ Hannah Fair and Matthew McMullen, "Toward a Theory of Nonhuman Species-Being," *Environmental Humanities* 15, no. 2 (2023): 201.

¹³⁹ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 229.

¹⁴⁰ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 229.

produce the desired output.”¹⁴¹ The “powerful juxtaposition of a birth taking place in the midst of the work of killing is transformed into a technical dispute” regarding the possibility of the cow’s eventual slaughter; and, moreover, this discourse is “further neutralized by the language typical of conversations about cattle in the slaughterhouse: the cow will ‘come in to die’ rather than be killed.”¹⁴²

While the slaughterhouse is capable of ideologically traversing the ontological status of the animal to pre-emptively mark them an object before they’ve even been given the chance to possibly become a subject, it cannot escape the natural time it takes to build the fat and muscle tissue of each animal. In the cultural imaginary the uselessness of time posits these animals as always already dead—as never having lived. This mesh of timelessness and alienation is precisely why the image of the chicken, cow, and pig on packages of meat is not a threat to the hegemonic order of things. The degree of alienation which consumes the slaughterhouse animal renders their life seemingly nonexistent—even though their body, as proof of existence, is placed before us glowing in the light of the supermarket. The cow, the subject, “the living creature, the animal that is herded off a truck and into the production sequence of the kill floor, in contrast, arrives in varied shapes and sizes, each distinct, each unique.”¹⁴³ It is therefore the job of the kill floor to “make concessions to this uniqueness, this regular irregularity. In tandem with the cooler, its function is to erase individuality and produce in its place a raw material, an input.”¹⁴⁴ Pachirat goes onto narrate:

Already stripped of all individuating characteristics of hide, horns, and sex, the carcass

¹⁴¹ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 230.

¹⁴² Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 230.

¹⁴³ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 40.

that reaches the cooler is further homogenized: the very texture of the flesh is reduced to one temperature, one consistency, one thing identical to the thing next to it, which is identical to the thousands of things next to it, all ready to be fabricated into a series of meat “products.”¹⁴⁵

When we consider the loss of the possibility of retrieving the animal labourer from the thing/self they labour upon, what we see is a kind of power that is writ into the question of the relationship between nonhuman animals, and labour. That is, when we look at a package of meat the very possibility of the animal is erased and their image on the package of their dead body proves just how powerful this kind of alienation is in the cultural imaginary, in our philosophies, and as an economic force. The animal looks right at us: they are in our homes, inside of us, and yet we cannot see. Indeed, the slaughterhouse animal is so viscerally intertwined with its labour that sometimes, as Lori Gruen observes in “The Faces of Animal Oppression,” “reared dairy cows are so overworked that they begin to metabolize their own muscle in order to continue to produce milk.”¹⁴⁶ Thinking alongside this fact, Wadiwel, in *The War Against Animals* rereads Gruen in the language of nonhuman creativity—digging us even deeper into the question of retrieval: “production processes will work with the vitality and processes of the living organism to capture every ounce of the creativity and energy produced in order to maximise profit. This capture might even work against the body in such a way as to lead to auto-destruction.”¹⁴⁷

Ironically, the objectification of animal labourers depends, in part, on their primary

¹⁴⁵ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 40.

¹⁴⁶Lori Gruen, “The Faces of Animal Oppression,” in *Diversity, Social Justice, and Inclusive Excellence: Transdisciplinary and Global Perspective*, eds. Seth Nii Asumah and Mechthild Nagel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 162.

¹⁴⁷ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 15.

subjectivity and therefore the necessary act of negation as the maintenance of this web of irretrievability. Focusing on “the corrals used to lead bovine to slaughter” Wadiwel explains,¹⁴⁸

[Temple Grandin’s] introduction of curves into the chutes that led cattle towards death minimised the possibility of an animal responding to the chute by balking and backing up. These curved corrals should be understood precisely as means of containing and dealing with resistances”¹⁴⁹. The contradiction, however, is that such the corral’s “development relies upon animal intersubjectivity, coproductivity and agency.”¹⁵⁰

Wadiwel cites Anna Williams’ “Disciplining Animals: Sentience, Production, and Critique”:
“these manufacturing devices all proceed from an understanding of the animal as a subject whose sentient engagement with the world can be recruited to assist production by manipulating the environment.”¹⁵¹ Wadiwel concludes: “The genealogy of the war against animals is one of continual adaption and reworking of systems of domination to most effectively capture the agency, escape and vitality of animals and simultaneously maximise human use value.”¹⁵²

When Marx talks about cows as objects which the human labours upon by feeding and housing, he does not imagine a landscape where capitalism, having reached such an intense peak, now turns idleness into gruesome labour. Sometimes, the slaughterhouse does not even need to feed their animals: they feed on each other. In states of extreme suffering, pigs bite off the tails of their kin, and chickens eat the sick. There is human labour in feeding those animals indeed, and perhaps this is what Marx would point out, but the act of scattering feed does not mean that the chicken is not labouring, that they are not held captive and forced to build their bodies

¹⁴⁸ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 15.

¹⁵¹ Anna Williams, “Disciplining Animals: Sentience, Production, and Critique,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 24, no. 9 (2004): 45–57, 57.

¹⁵² Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, 16.

through the experience of an all-consuming suffering. After all, Marx, in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, says, very clearly, that labour and its estrangement is “activity as suffering.”¹⁵³ That is, labour is capitalism’s torturous appropriation of the “worker’s own physical and mental energy.”¹⁵⁴ Labour is “as an activity which is turned against [the labourer], independent of him and not belonging to him.”¹⁵⁵ Just because the cow, chicken, and pig, are fed by a human does not mean that they do not labour—in fact, their being fed, as an activity that is severed from them, necessarily affirms their status as labourer. This kind of self-estrangement is not just a consequence of labour: it is instead, a necessity, a tool that ensures the premise of the animal’s labour. Marx continues, “We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour [...] [as] the relation of the worker to the product of labour as an alien object exercising power over him.”¹⁵⁶ The animal as product—their meat—exercises power over their living body, and, in this way, death and life coexist. The death of the cow, for example, is a product pending, it is an object of labour in the throes of production and processing. The slaughterhouse animal’s death carries signification, not just over their life, but with their life: the two states of production/being mingle, generating an ontology of work that renders the cow, chicken, and pig the product, process, and labourer.

As the slaughterhouse animal exists in a state of simultaneous living and dying, the ability to differentiate between when they are product and labourer, and when they are living or dying obscures. This obscurity emerges because the slaughterhouse animal’s death, or their state of being as death pending functions as a master signifier. The meaning that is made around the

¹⁵³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 31.

¹⁵⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 31.

¹⁵⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 31.

¹⁵⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 31.

slaughterhouse animal's death transforms our perception of the ontological order of life. In other words, the slaughterhouse demands that we regard the animals it holds captive through a logic that transcends the very premise and possibility of material existence. For us, this means that we are, in part, incapable of thinking of those cows, chickens, and pigs as creatures who ever existed at all.

Thinking in tandem with Lacan's concept of the master signifier, we can imagine a signifier capable of returning to itself as opposed to other, seemingly proximate signifiers within the chain of signifiers: "Everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier. It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse too be situated."¹⁵⁷ The kind of alienation that constitutes animal labour produces the animals we eat as referents for and to the meaning of meat and therefore death as such. Self-referential, the body of these animals signify, not another entity or state, but the orientation of being to which they always already belong. Death, in this case, overcomes every other chain of signification and claims a supreme sense of intimacy over its very opposite. In the same way that money, or value, refers only to itself and therefore consumes its opposite—the lack of value—into its self-referential landscape, meat envelopes everything that it is not into its scope of signification: the animal's subjectivity, their beating heart, their breathing lungs, their ability to experience pain, their emotional, mental, and interior world. Death as signifier holds the slaughterhouse animal captive, refusing them the ability to mean anything else. It is then no wonder why we struggle to maintain the animal as a labourer within the context of Marx's argument: the consumption of

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, tr. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1991), 268.

animals makes it almost impossible for us to escape the oppressive boundary of signification.

Moreover, the oppressive signification that poses the slaughterhouse animal as always already dead necessitates capitalism's proclivity towards what we might deem a kind of memory loss. The force and energy—both economic, and subliminal—that is tunneled into the productivity of the slaughterhouse, its ability to exist without intrusion, inquiry or outcry is so potent that we, the consumer, are unable to recall the cow, chicken, and pig as life at all. Were they *there*? Was there ever anything there?

Witnessing Nullified

The slaughterhouse is also a historically private space: not only does it punish those who seek to make its process of killing legible, but it is geographically isolated, and seemingly unimpressive in stature.¹⁵⁸ The slaughterhouse's unassuming architectural form¹⁵⁹ is important to note because it curates an image of nonchalant privacy that is emphasized by its distance from highly populated areas, and its adamant fight against any potential exposure—any acts of witnessing.

Since 2019, ag-gag laws have passed in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, and Prince Edward Island.¹⁶⁰ In fact, as Shannon Riley Nickerson of *Animal Justice Canada* explains, in 2022 “a federal ag gag bill was even introduced in Parliament, under the guise of trying to protect biosecurity. But thanks to the efforts of animal advocates and a coalition of

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, our previous discussion on the legal measures taken to prohibit documentation. The following article also details the modern history of ag gag laws in the United States: Mahalia Kahsay, “Silent Slaughter: How Freedom of Speech and Expression Restrictions Keep Animal Abuses Hidden and Stifle Animal Welfare Activism in Europe and the United States,” *Derecho Animal* 10, no. 1 (2019): 144–160.

¹⁵⁹ Dominic A. Pacyga, *Slaughterhouse: Chicago's Union Stock Yard and the World It Made* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 51.

¹⁶⁰ Shannon Nickerson, “5 Things You Need to Know About Ag Gag Laws in Canada,” *Animal Justice Canada*, February 2, 2022, accessed [5 May 2022], www.animaljustice.ca/blog/ag-gag-laws-in-canada.

groups, including Animal Justice, the bill was amended to blunt its impact.”¹⁶¹ The continued effort to repress the sight or sound of the slaughterhouse animal and its lived state of absolute suffering further cements these cows, chickens, and pigs, into a state of obscurity and non-existence in the cultural consciousness. This kind of legislative concealment direct us away from the possibility of carrying the knowledge of animal suffering as even a vague possibility. Ag-gag laws semiotically isolate meat as a signifier, and therefore the animal to whom that meat belongs, barring it from any kind of connection to life or existence. Such control encloses upon the signifying chain, displacing its connection in favour of a scattered albeit isolated concept or meaning. Though in possession of life, the cow, for example, doomed for death and made for beef, is severed from the chain of signification that follows the term ‘life’—even though it is life that flows through their body and mind. It is not just that the slaughterhouse animal is always already dead, but that the slaughterhouse dually projects us, as consumers, into a near distant future where the work of feeding, raising, and killing has already been done.

The semiotic isolation of the slaughterhouse animal from the language and notion of life directs our associative logic away from the animal itself and therefore the primary subject of inquiry. The animal, as being, is perpetually delayed in that being. In place of say, the cow, is the signification of death as presence without the demand for the conditions that produce death. This is a death that sprouts within the logic of life. The cow emerges upon its loss, ontologically amalgamating with its commodified objecthood as the precedent purpose of their emergence at all. This semiotic delay makes it so that the cow is unable to claim life or space within the chain that follows life as a master signifier in the first place. When the cow emerges within language, it

¹⁶¹ Nickerson, “5 Things About Ag Gag Laws in Canada.”

does so post-mortem—estranged from existence all together: it is beef, it is meat. The utterance ‘cow’ is an act of loss because the possibility of a cow divorced from their meat as beef can only happen after they have supplied the food chain. The cow happens after itself, and it is gone before we call its name into being. And yet, it is the fulfillment of labour—death—that returns the cow to itself so that it may be acknowledged as such.

A Case Study on the Semiotics of the Slaughterhouse

The 1992 “Beef. It’s What’s for Dinner” slogan is arguably the most recognizable advertising campaign in the meat and dairy industry, and despite its age it continues to wield a significant amount of influence. Since 2013, the “Beef. It’s What’s for Dinner” *YouTube* channel has garnered 220 million views.¹⁶² The most recent ad, “We See Beef” is of significant interest to us because of its rather stereotypical narrative. In other words, unlike previous campaigns, this ad is not, in anyway, unconventional, or innovative—but it does have 3.4 million views.

As the camera pans over a wide, open field with greenery, and cascading hills we see a family of healthy, robust cows grazing against the sunset. As the ad proceeds, the image of these cows mingles with that of rangers and cowboys—wholesome farmers smiling at the camera. Near the end, the ad focuses on individual cows, some looking right into the camera, and others grazing on healthy portions of grass and feed. This very last shot is particularly interesting.

As the camera gradually loses focus on the image of a single cow, grazing, and stood out against the idyllic background, we slowly cut to a hand picking up a fork and plating a piece of beef. Here, the narrator says, “cattle have an amazing ability to take what we can’t eat and turn it

¹⁶² “We See Beef,” September 28, 2021, *YouTube* video, uploaded by Beef. It’s What’s For Dinner, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HR2gjaemDs0.

into something we can.”¹⁶³ The speaker credits the cow with transforming the grass they consume—and therefore that which the human cannot digest—into beef. It is therefore the inherent biological function of the cow that becomes the source of labour in the production of beef. However, the credit which the speaker grants the cow does not, in any way, mark them a labourer. Indeed, the ad strategically overlays the image of the cow with that of the farmer: we are not allowed to forget that humans are the workers. At the time same, the implication of the cow’s ability to digest grass as the processing that facilitates the production of beef does not necessarily pose the cow as a labourer within this logic. The work, in this case, is a union of human labour, and a passive ability that the cow just so happens to possess. Within the boundary of this logic, the cow remains in exile from the category of the labourer. The focus, instead, is the processing impulse that is innate to the cow’s biology. The cow is a stand-in for what is, otherwise, the technology of the slaughterhouse: they become the slaughterhouse embodied and assume the narrative’s subtext.

Within the language function of the ad, the cow’s existence reaffirms both the erasure of labour on behalf the slaughterhouse as well as the deeply anthropocentric notion that the cow *could* never labour—that it is, instead, only the fictional, wholesome farmer who works. In this version, death is strategically erased. The cow moves from a romantic, and idyllic image to a position where their body becomes the structure in which they suffer. The cow’s corporeality is therefore subject to a hyper proximity to the slaughterhouse: a collapse between subject and space. This fatalistic union is so extreme that the body and the place of the body’s suffering become interchangeable: the cow suffers at the hand of industry because it has a body. This

¹⁶³ “We See Beef”, 00:00:21- 00:00:25.

fatalistic synthesis nullifies the very image of the cow. In that moment, we are not witnessing a cow, and the camera's decreased focus—the blurry nature of the shot—emphasizes this nuance. When the corporeality of the cow is uttered, we are provoked to witness a deeply paradoxical dynamic that is invested in pronounced absence.

As the scene therefore cuts from a living cow to an image of a hand plating a cut of beef, the final product—dead, cooked flesh—is made distinct from the corporeality of the cow. The cow is not the labourer, but their visual and textual union with the slaughterhouse orients the cooked beef as at once a product derived and not derived from their body. The slaughterhouse emerges as an unutterable, even spectral force that we all know is there but cannot name. The body of the live cow thus transforms, becoming the personified signifier of the slaughterhouse—something capable of conjuring its presence without its image. The personified form through which the cow functions depends upon a logic of delay: it is a metonym that projects us past the possibility of witnessing the cow, and towards a more transcendent presence of the structure to which it belongs. In other words, this kind of metonymy produces an escape valve in meaning: we skip over the cow and reach the product without ever thinking of its origin.

On one hand, this transgression in iconography and identification semiotically detaches the beef from the cow, and, in doing so, renders the cow primarily nonexistent. On the other hand, the meat that we consume is conceptually accredited to something else—something that we, as viewers, are unable to grasp. In this visual logic, the very signifier, 'cow' loses its meaning: it is a word written in blanks.

But death itself is not wholly erased: it lingers in the background as a fundamental purpose and a well-kept secret. The cow's dying becomes a conspiracy between the actors on TV, the meat industry, and the viewer at home. The product—meat—therefore emerges before

the subject from whom it is derived, and we at home are inspired to eat the evidence of labour as the labourer.

The Slaughterhouse Dialectic

Without an end to the human, or even the ability to clearly see the end—even though the product we are told will manifest our future is dissipating its possibility—we cannot achieve the non-speciest ethic we desire. There is no room for friction, for assessment when we are unable to gaze upon the entities in question: when we are alienated from the ability to regard alienation as such. The slaughterhouse arrests us in time, transforming into a blood thirsty impulse that stops us from gazing upon its logic. We are dialectically arrested.

Our language system and the logic upon which it depends, the linguist legacy of the very concept—animal—is incapable of articulating animal labour. We do not have the capacity to say the words ‘animal labour’—it is not compatible with the logic of our language structure. Language fails in sight of the slaughterhouse animal because it has shaped itself around the perverted semiotic form that the slaughterhouse, the symptomatic epitome of capitalism, dictates. Let us consider a moment from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* we have continually return to throughout this project:

As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal [...]. Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity, and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 30.

A more traditional reading would simply consider Marx's statement as reductive and anthropocentric. Now, of course, what Marx has to say here is, on a very surface level, bias towards the human. However, when we take his statement seriously, and within the context of the slaughterhouse, it does more than just demonstrate his careless attitude towards nonhuman life: it shows us the severity of the deterioration of animal life in the contemporary landscape. Here, Marx describes the reduction of self to basic biological sustenance as the extreme axiom of capital. Using what he perceives as the kind of life an animal would live, Marx dictates the limited agency of the labourer. Animals, as severely reduced agents, are not labourers and therefore live with a sense of freedom that the human labourer is only granted in between work times, and within a deeply oppressive context. But, this freedom, while momentary, is not freedom as such—which is to say, a kind of true human freedom, or a necessarily sophisticated activity. Instead, this animal freedom Marx describes is a form of limited animal activity inherent to the creature's biology or base instinct. In other words, the little flexibility the human labourer is granted is indeed, a necessity, but a necessity of the most reduced and primitive order. To be allowed the time and space to eat, to procreate, only works to emphasize the severity of the labourer's alienation. This logic very clearly articulates Marx's unfavourable opinion on animal labour, but, if we take what he says seriously, and situate his focus on bodily function within the context of this particular discussion, what we find is that despite Marx's intention, his language—as it pertains to the slaughterhouse—anticipates animal labour.

The animal function and the reduction of self to basic need, as Marx describes, is the extreme gesture, or the pinnacle of capital's severity upon the labourer. To examine suffering through the labourer's reduction to biological activity by reducing animal life to biological activity paradoxically reveals the state of inactivity to which animals are always already

confined. After all, Marx does not tell us why animals are only “eating, drinking, procreating” and while we may presume that his conclusion is drawn from a certain bias, there is a flexibility to his language as well.¹⁶⁵

Indeed, if we read with a consciousness towards the logical absences in Marx’s speech, we can reasonably risk the determination that his discussion of animal activity always already understands nonhuman life as necessarily oppressed and thus, forced to live within the bounds of mere biological activity. From this perspective, Marx’s language extends us the ability to articulate the animal as a labourer, and more importantly, the primary labourer who predates the human. In this version, alienation, having suppressed the animal to biological function, is now doing the same to the human: the subject responsible for the animal’s oppression. But this reading is, after all, a very generous examination.

When we understand that despite Marx’s ontological paradoxes, animals do indeed labour, we are more equipped to pursue the consequences of alienation, and the dialectical arrest that follows. It is no wonder why we find our discussion of the slaughterhouse and labour at odds with Marx. The labour that the slaughterhouse animal endures exceeds Marx’s thinking, entering the realm of the unutterable: those possibilities which Marx himself dare or cannot name. This limit in Marx’s language brings Arendt’s contestation to charge. Marx’s work is not actually invested in the full scope of subjectivity precisely because it fails to do the kind of dialectical work otherwise expected from its reader.

If, however, we choose to exceed the boundary Marx places on his discussion of capitalism’s investment in biological need, we begin to understand slaughterhouse animals as

¹⁶⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 30.

creatures made to labour for the very possibility of human labour as the culmination of subjectivity in the language of labour theory. Furthermore, the same subjectivity that Marx neglects is also the objective world Arendt regards as missing in Marx—i.e., permanence, a kind of infrastructure that stands as evidence of our resistance to labour as the centre of our life. Of course, it is important to remember that within Arendt, labour is distinct from work. Labour produces that which deteriorates. Work, on the other hand, is an effort that leaves behind a durable outcome. To therefore return to the history we have discussed so far is understand that human work, the durability we produce, is the subjugation of the nonhuman in industry. Capitalism is the work of “Man” making the animal labour. Capitalism, as (animal)life *working*, is the essential durability that constitutes our position as humans, as “Man.”

The nonhuman labours over the nondurable outcome of its body *as* the work of capitalism which in turn, seemingly immortalizes the very premise of animal labour. In this turn, the promise of animal exploitation under the biopolitical order is the permanence that grounds us in public life—that makes it ours, and ours alone. Our ability to move around in the world as humans, “to live together in the world”¹⁶⁶—to be as such without question and to do so in public space, to do so at that “common [...] table” which Arendt metonymically regards as the premise of permanence, is only possible, only stable because of animal work as that which, in forcefully producing products of labour, reluctantly makes permanent the primary possibility of its status as utterly degraded.¹⁶⁷

Value itself cannot exist outside partiality without the nonhuman to constitute its breadth and evolution. Marx, as we know, is incapable of thoroughly describing the history of capitalism

¹⁶⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 53.

without the nonhuman—whether he acknowledges them as suffering, or otherwise. Yet, we understand that within Marx is a threshold he cannot or will not pass but which stands out as a punctum upon analysis and through our discovery of Jameson and Arendt. Whether he is engaged in a discussion of wheat and the rich farmer, wool and the merchant, or coal and the mine owner, the landscape of productivity depends on the essential task of the nonhuman to support, transport, and supply. And, as the profits of their labour are reinvested in the purchase of even more products of their labour, the maturing capitalist economy generates a labour-power which, sold for money, earns the animal, not a wage or the possibility of survival, but a death sentence. These deaths, these bodies accumulate, and in doing so, give our life its shape—its fortitude. Our landscape, the fabric of our everyday life, our concept of a living space, of a community, the physical shape of that community—the structures that inform its boundary—everything we regard as constituting what life should be is such because of animal industry. The animal is the only labourer left.

As we know, value is not a material thing we can hold, but a relationship that emerges within terms of ownership, of the very picture of life lived with expectation. This being the case, we exist in the world with the expectation that our homes will remain unbothered by creatures of the nonhuman sort, we live within the boundary of uninterrupted routine—and we do so within a space that is not shared, and more importantly a globe catered to the life and sight of one. The nonhuman is not just rendered intrusive, something to shun into spaces unnatural and unfit to its needs and wants, but a sight never to be seen, a life we never have to think of as having life—condemned at the expense of the human’s highest quality and order of life. The slaughterhouse animal’s death is the only one without a corpse as we digest even the idea that they existed at

all—that there was a cow, and that they once lived, or could have lived, just as we do now.

Conclusion

This dissertation defends the view that the nonhuman remains, not a strictly apathetic or antagonistic point in the collected works of Marx, but a problem concerning the boundary of the definition of value production and subjecthood. As such, I argue that the nonhuman's ontological position assumes a paradoxical representation that at once endows them with the potential for value-production, while denying them the ability to claim a title or role in the language of labour. My argument, however, is not limited to the collected works of Marx. On the contrary, my discussion extends to Marx's influences—Aristotle and Hegel—those whom Marx himself influences—Jameson, Althusser, and Lefebvre—as well as those alongside whom we may contrast his terminology: Arendt.

Furthermore, sewn into my dissertation is an attention that returns to the slaughterhouse animal as the interface of study—that is, a figure or status with whom I mingle the various ontological paradoxes which I make legible. A stark contrast emerges within this study that finds the theoretical material—those allegations which refuse the nonhuman a role in the language of labour—at an extreme remove from the reality of the condition of the nonhuman in the meat and dairy industry.

I begin my dissertation with a gaze to Levinas' interview in *Paradox of Morality*. Here, Levinas confesses that he does not know if the animal—in this case, a snake—has a face. Interestingly enough, Levinas proceeds to confess that he also does not know “at what moment the human appears.”¹⁶⁸ Besides the critical interest that Levinas' discussion of Bobby shores up for us in terms of the theoretical theme of obligation and relation, my project, mingling my

¹⁶⁸ Levinas, *Provocation of Levinas*, 172.

technical investment in ontology with labour, carries with it a curiosity which pertains to the reflexive position of Man. In particular, and as I reflect on the course of my writing, I find that it is the application of the slaughterhouse to the master-bondsman dialectic which, to me, stands out as a turning development in my analytic. That is, while my project is devoted to an ontological investigation of Marxism's engagement with the nonhuman, what I discover along the way and what I wish to emphasize here, at the end, is the relation that our study must bear to the seemingly eternal presence of "Man," and the perpetually delayed subjectivity of the nonhuman animal.

At this point, and as I bring my study of ontological inconclusion and difficulty to a close, I am reminded of a moment from *War and Peace* that rather succinctly epitomizes the running thread with which I seek to end: "When a man sees a dying animal, horror comes over him: that which he himself is, his essence, is obviously being annihilated before his eyes—is ceasing to be."¹⁶⁹ What I take from this passage is not only the understanding that there is a certain connectedness, a kind of ethical and affectual duty that lies between "Man" and animal, but that the death of the animal—its erasure—exalts "Man," affirming his identity as anything but the kind of species mythology I have affirmed thus far. The task of the ethical subject—our task—is, in this regard, to not only bring justice to the nonhuman within Marxist terms, but to annihilate the façade that is the all-consuming identity of the Human. In other words, we must liberate the nonhuman from the confines of their modern condition, resisting the cultural, economic, and social anchor of anthropocentrism *through* the fundamental gesture of our own destruction as Humans. We must risk ourselves in the possibility that humans and animals are, in

¹⁶⁹ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, tr. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 1316.

every sense of the word, equal—that animal life is as meaningful and worthy as the human life. In my research, I came across several tongue-and-cheek hypotheticals that asked the reader to choose between their child or their pet in a house fire. Though it is a common, even stereotypical comment, it has a way of grounding the fundamental cue I want to emphasize at this point: perhaps the only ethical difference we draw between the human and the nonhuman is the one we (re)produce everyday of our lives. The everyday architecture of our life depends on its difference and isolation from the labouring slaughterhouse animal, and this means that the work of species justice needs to be disruptive enough for us to unsettle our habits and terms of living. To consider the modern economic landscape as Marxists is to suggest that perhaps the notion of revolution and labour rights must begin with the liberation of nonhuman animals from the confines of their suffering. We must risk ourselves in the knowledge that humans and animals are fundamentally, and in every sense of the word, equal.

I have elucidated at length upon the extremely isolated position of the slaughterhouse, and, in particular, its stark remove or distance from the daily life of human society. There is a concerted effort on behalf of the industry itself, and at many times, the parliamentary system to conceal the events of the slaughterhouse. The places where these chickens, cows, and pigs die are, we can say at this point, a kind of wild terrain where anything can happen and most of all, without consequence or care. Pachirat, amongst many, spends a considerable amount of time exploring the details of this concealment:

The zones of confinement that characterize contemporary practices of industrialized killing replicate one another, beginning with the division between the slaughterhouse and society at large, followed by the divisions of labour and space between different departments within the slaughterhouse, and reproduced yet again in minute intradepartmental divisions. These zones segregate the work of killing not only from the ordinary members of society but also at what might be expected to be the most explicitly

violent site of all: the kill floor.¹⁷⁰

The slaughterhouse, Pachirat explains, “is not a single place at all”¹⁷¹—it is everywhere *we* are as humans, “its internal divisions create physical, linguistic, and phenomenological walls that often feel every bit as rigid as those marking off the exterior of the slaughterhouse from the outside world.”¹⁷² That which the slaughterhouse generates, produces, and affirms runs past its walls, through the streets and towards us, wherever and whenever we are in the world. That is, the survival of our species demands concealment, for without it we risk becoming something inhospitable to the economy in which we live, and as such, risk the social, cultural, and economic infrastructure that surrounds the cocoon of our human lives. What would the world look like without animal industry? Where would we go? The slaughterhouse, revoking the nonhuman any sense of subjecthood, defines the figure of “Man,” shaping the picture of our species: it belongs to us, is of us, and perhaps is who we are as humans because it divides, in modern terms, the difference between “Man” and Other as any and all creatures who may, in potentially or in present, become object to its systems and logics.

As critical animal studies scholars, and those who now study all that follows the slaughterhouse, we should not abandon Marx. We should, however, resist the impulse to correct or explain the difficult, paradoxical, and antagonized role nonhumans assume in the Marxist oeuvre. Instead, we must lead this ontological strife in the direction of legibility so that we may, perhaps for the first time ever *look*, and in doing so, cease (to be) anything at all.

¹⁷⁰ Pachirat, *Every 12 Seconds*, 240.

¹⁷¹ Pachirat, *Every 12 Seconds*, 240.

¹⁷² Pachirat, *Every 12 Seconds*, 236.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Education

The University of Western Ontario
Doctor of Philosophy – Theory and Criticism
2019-2024
London, ON

McMaster University
Master of Arts – English Literature
2018-2019
Hamilton, ON

McMaster University
Bachelor of Arts – English Literature
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Honours and Awards

2021-2023
Ontario Graduate Scholarship

2017-2018
Provost's Honour Roll Medal
Brian Blakey Memorial Scholarship
Gladys Richards Scholarship
The McLean Family Academic Award

2016-2017
Kit Memorial Scholarship
Gladys Richards Scholarship
Clifford and Aline Smith Academic Grant

2014-2015
Class 1952 M. Hawkrigg Scholarship

Related Work Experience

Teaching Assistant, The University of Western Ontario, September 2019 – May 2023
London, Ontario

-Introduction to Film Studies (Fall & Winter 2019 – 2020; Fall & Winter 2020 – 2021)
-Film Theory (Fall 2021)

- Gender and Fashion (Winter 2022)
- Speculative Fiction: Science Fiction (Fall 2022)
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Professor, Fanshawe College, September 2019 – May 2023
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- Reason & Writing (Winter 2020)
- Reason & Writing – Contemporary Media (Fall 2020; Winter 2021; Fall 2022)
- Professional Communication for Office Environments (Fall 2021; Winter 2022; Fall 2022; Winter 2023)

Teaching Assistant, McMaster University, September 2018 – May 2019
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- English/Shorter Genres: Poetry and Short Fiction (Fall 2018; Winter 2019)