

The Monstrous Vegan: Reading Veganism in Literature, 1818 to Present



Emelia Quinn

Wolfson College, University of Oxford

DPhil in English

Abstract

The term “vegan” was coined in 1944. In the years since, the prevalence of individual vegans and the intelligibility of veganism, as a commitment to living without exploiting nonhuman animals, has increased rapidly across the developed world. Numerous studies detailing the impact of animal agriculture and mass meat consumption on the environment, compounded by an unprecedented rise in global population, have contributed to a significant shift in veganism’s cultural currency: from ineffectual fad to an urgent and essential response to a wide range of ethical, environmental, and social issues. Within such contexts, it is necessary to address how veganism is written, how it is read, and the importance of the critical construction and deconstruction of vegan identity.

However, a nuanced interrogation of veganism as activism and lived practice has been limited within existing humanities scholarship. My DPhil thesis addresses this lacuna by establishing a theoretical lens through which to read both with and for veganism. The dissertation constitutes a significant intervention within the nascent field of vegan theory and establishes the relevance of veganism for a range of existing fields of study, beyond those with which it is typically associated. I expand the remit of contemporary queer theory and offer radically new readings of canonical texts, providing close textual analysis that demonstrates their overlooked potential as sources for thinking about vegan modes of life. I focus on the iteration of a trope which I define as “the monstrous vegan” across two hundred years of Anglophone literature, including the work of Mary Shelley, H. G. Wells, Margaret Atwood, J. M. Coetzee, and Alan Hollinghurst. Explicating, through such monsters, veganism’s relation to utopian longing and challenge to the conceptual category of the “human,” the dissertation explores ways in which ethical identities can be written, represented, and transmitted.

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This thesis is written for the 150 billion animals slaughtered by humans each year. I write in the hope that theory constitutes a form of activism and that this work contributes something to ameliorating their suffering.

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Fig. 1 “Joseph Ritson.” Courtesy of the British Museum.

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Introduction

In late 2015, the multi-national fast-food chain McDonald's launched a televisual and web-based advertising campaign in the UK that sought to counter the widespread negative reputation of the quality and source of its food. The television advert focuses on a mother's panicked response when when her young son asks if he can have some "chicken McNuggets." The narrator accounts for this maternal anxiety by explaining: "that's put Sarah in a spin, because she's heard they're made from all sorts of chicken bits." Sarah's hesitation and inability to reconcile her consumer fears with her son's consumer desires cuts to an animated reference to the myth of Frankenstein: a chicken-like creature, pre-plucked, of gigantic stature, a bolt through its neck, human eyes, and a long bushy tail, comes to life at the hands of an onlooking male scientist. However, the mother's fears of the Franken chicken are assuaged as a second woman appears on screen. The male narrator explains that Rosie, "a food tech teacher and mum," "knows exactly what 100% real chicken breast meat looks like, and what it tastes like" as she stages an inspection of a McNugget under a magnifying lens and takes an approving bite. This allows for the advert's resolution: mother and son can enter a McDonald's restaurant and leave contentedly with a trademark HappyMeal.

The monochrome of the central animation confines the mother's apprehensions to fictional fears from the past. In contrast, photographic images on the webpage to which the advert directs the viewer appear in vibrant colour and foreground a young man,¹ dressed casually in rugby shirt and jeans, against a background of cows, contrasting the image of a wholesome farmer with the interventions of the advert's mad scientist. By seeking to emphasise the unadulterated status of the meat used in their food, McDonald's engages with contemporary anxieties over children's dietary health and factory farming. They present their

¹ mcdonalds.co.uk/good-to-know

food as a morally sound choice for children produced through a nostalgic vision of rural life. There is an ambivalence to the temporality of this attempt to assuage anxieties surrounding genetically modified food and industrial meat production. Such fears are confined to the past, whilst the past, as a nostalgic vision of both traditional farming practices and the traditional family, is mobilised as a guarantor of futurity. This is stressed through the claim, on the McDonald's website, that the company is "Always Farm Forward" ("The Future"). In addition, the advert endorses the education of the future generation in relation to concerns around meat production and consumption. Maternal concerns are prioritised, positing a world in which teachers and mothers, or better, teachers who are also mothers, are to be trusted over a male-gendered science. The scientist, by contrast, revels in the anxiety-inducing pleasure of creating a threatening genetic hybrid outside of heterosexual intercourse.

It perhaps comes as no surprise that McDonald's, a multi-national paragon of the extremes of modern speciesism,² would want to distance itself from the Gothic horror of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). The novel's transmutation into global cultural myth over the past two centuries has transformed the tale into a locus point for anxieties surrounding modern scientific practices that assume control over nonhuman life. The McDonald's advert negates the pathos inspired by the creature in Shelley's narrative in favour of the more immediate danger such a creation might pose to the future of the world as we know it.

McDonald's employs a popular conception of the myth of *Frankenstein* as it has crystallised within the mainstream cultural imaginary. And yet, the central animation's Gothic noir styling and appropriation of the hackneyed phrase "It's alive!" alludes to the 1931 film adaptation of *Frankenstein*, a cinematic production that is itself an adaptation of a 1927 theatrical adaptation. Such mutations of meanings around Shelley's novel, and the

² "Speciesism" is a term coined by the psychologist and animal activist Richard D. Ryder in 1970. Structurally akin to racism and sexism, it refers to discrimination on the grounds of species.

complications, contradictions, and complexity inherent to their transmission is a key concern across this dissertation. In addition, my thesis unpacks the significance of the fact that this reincarnation of Frankenstein's monster has, with a seemingly unselfconscious irony, an apt relation to all that McDonald's is not: Victor Frankenstein's creature is a vegetarian.

This is not the first critical reading of a McDonald's advert and itself constitutes a hackneyed gesture within vegan discourses. Elspeth Probyn's analysis of McDonald's advertising, for example, argues that critiques of McDonald's in animal rights discourses constitute a clichéd gesture and demonstrate the limitations of veganism's ethical currency. She compares McDonald's construction of a "glocal" family, positioning their customers as a community of families around a global dinner table in their 1990s "It's Mac Time" televisual campaign, to the vegetarian moralising used in the famous McLibel case,³ to which the Franken chicken advert arguably responds. Probyn contends that the vegetarian rhetoric of the McLibel trial proposes itself as a necessarily strict moral code that provides an antidote to the perceived immorality of McDonald's. The most interesting question for Probyn is "why it is that multinationals [such as McDonald's] can mobilise the affect of caring [interconnectedness, commensality], while serious forms of eating philosophies are still content to tell us how we should be eating and why, and even with whom we can or cannot eat" (57). If the McDonald's advert above utilises the cultural capital of the Frankenstein myth to promote the importance of a maternal education, filial affection, and futurism, where exactly, Probyn might ask, does this leave a vegan theory left only with rigid proscriptions and threatening monsters?

³ The McLibel trial, in which McDonald's filed a lawsuit for libel against two environmental activists, is the longest civil or criminal case in British legal history. For a succinct breakdown of the case see Mark Oliver "McLibel."

The Monstrous Vegan: Reading Veganism in Literature, 1818 to Present argues that Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein* marks the origins of a literary trope that I define as that of the "monstrous vegan." Tracing this figure across two centuries of Anglophone literature, the following four chapters explore the origins and mutations of vegan monstrosity across a range of national and historical contexts. I propose that we can recognise and identify the monstrous vegan in relation to four key traits. First, monstrous vegans do not eat animals, an abstinence that generates a seemingly inexplicable anxiety in those who encounter them. Second, they are hybrid assemblages of human and nonhuman animal parts, destabilising existing taxonomical classifications. Third, monstrous vegans are sired outside of heterosexual reproduction, the product of male acts of creation. And finally, monstrous vegans are intimately connected to acts of writing and literary creation.

From Victor Frankenstein's hybrid creation in *Frankenstein*, to the "Beast People" of H. G. Wells's 1896 *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and Margaret Atwood's genetically modified Crakers in her 2003-2013 *MaddAddam* trilogy: across two hundred years of Anglophone literature, the story of the monstrous vegan is iterated. Destabilising binary divisions between human and animal, mind and body, and natural and artificial, their divergence, in each case, from normative models of human identity centres around a fact routinely ignored in critical scholarship: they do not eat animals.

This thesis makes a significant intervention in the nascent field of vegan theory, expands the remit of contemporary queer theory, and contributes radically new readings of canonical texts to literary scholarship, explicating their overlooked potential as sources for thinking about vegan modes of life. In addition, the chapters that follow contextualise the texts under examination in relation to the vegetarian and vegan thought emergent in the

periods from which they originate, contributing to historical understandings of Romantic, late-Victorian, and contemporary cultures of thought.

My temporal range spans from 1818 to 2016, and across British, Canadian, and South African contexts. The choice of 1818 as the starting point for this study attests both to the significance of Shelley's *Frankenstein* and to the importance of nineteenth-century cultural contexts for the growth of literary veganisms. As detailed in chapter one, the nineteenth century marked the birth of a distinct mode of vegetarian identity, where, as Timothy Morton argues, vegetarianism appears as "a specifically *Romantic* ideological practice" ("Consumption as Performance" 6, emphasis in original). The period also bore witness to the birth of the novel as a dominant form of literary expression for a democratising literary market. Thus, whilst vegetarianism and veganism possess a rich history beyond this period, 1818 to present provides the scope for my focus on attempts to both read and write veganism by means of novelistic form.

My close-readings explore traces of anxiety, insufficiency, and utopian potentiality as they have clustered around the figure of the monstrous vegan. I follow the repetitions and mutations of a trope that complicates the conflation of vegan identity, practice, and ethics. Focusing on the repetition of the monstrous vegan across two centuries of literary creation, I explore how literary inheritance and transmission play a role in the construction of vegan identities. My analysis deconstructs narratives that dominate contemporary understandings and ossifications of vegan identity, and demonstrates veganism's repeated confrontation with epistemological uncertainties. I argue that vegan monsters rehearse the key paradoxes involved in the writing of vegan identity. This, I contend, is important for understanding and theorising vegan identity and modes of being in the twenty-first century. In the process, the thesis provides a literary history of vegan representation that offers a vegan theoretical lens through which to read a range of different narratives.

As detailed in the chapters that follow, vegetarianism and veganism appear frequently across the respective oeuvres of Shelley, Wells, and Atwood. In each case, specific historical, national, economic, and social contexts play a significant role in shaping these representations. This thesis seeks to establish the importance of such contexts whilst explicating the ways in which vegan monsters transcend them, often in unexpected ways. The concluding chapter, for example, establishes the visibility and influence of the monstrous vegan in contemporary literature, such as the modernist works of J. M. Coetzee and historical realist narratives of Alan Hollinghurst.

By establishing a latent canon of literary veganisms I am not seeking to label texts as vegan polemic, but to trace narrative possibilities of veganism.⁴ I want to forcibly distance myself from the former enterprise, conscious of the need for veganism to resist the often stultifying logic of identity politics. This may appear paradoxical in a study by an avowed vegan, which relies on veganism's lexical comprehensibility for its analysis. However, the vegan monsters under examination in this dissertation exemplify veganism's resistance to delimitation as a consistent or stable subjectivity. In this sense, I follow Judith Butler's argument that the political efficacy of terms such as "woman" or "queer" comes from understanding them as permanent sites of contest and refusing closure into an all-inclusive or substantive definition. Resisting attempts at discursive closure is seen to require "a double movement: to invoke the category, and, hence, provisionally to institute an identity and at the same time to open the category as a site of permanent political contest" (Butler, *Bodies* 222). By complicating the often dismissive or derogatory conceptions of veganism that circulate in the mainstream imagination, my close-readings enact a deconstruction that reveals glimpses

⁴ And indeed, as the chapters that follow demonstrate, some of the texts and authors under examination show an explicit hostility to veganism.

of veganism's potentiality at the limits of literary representation and offers reparative reading strategies for embracing and inhabiting a monstrous vegan identity.

This introduction establishes the key theoretical paradigms within which this thesis is positioned. I contextualise the contemporary vegan movement and offer a broad definition of veganism before situating the dissertation within vegan theory and the related fields of animal studies and ecocriticism. From here I outline its key points of intersection with contemporary queer theory and explore existing scholarship on monstrosity. If monsters offer a hideous vision of veganism as murderous, repressive, and uncontainable, they also cast a reflection back on the society that has created them. The final section of the introduction reflects on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on paranoid and reparative criticism, framing the trajectory built across the chapters to follow by the possibility of embracing and performing, rather than exorcising, the language and gestures associated with the monstrous vegan.

Defining Veganism

Since the term's coinage in 1944, the prevalence of individual vegans and the intelligibility of veganism, as a commitment to living without exploiting nonhuman animals, have increased rapidly across the developed world.⁵ Veganism is adopted for a range of different motives, upon ethical, environmental, health, and economic grounds, amongst others, and functions as a form of both personal transformation and political activism. In this thesis, I ground my definition of veganism in the combination of belief and action that seeks the end of the exploitative use of nonhuman animals for human benefit. Recognition of the suffering of nonhuman animals is central to the definition of vegan practice and its end is constitutive of the kernel of utopian desire undergirding it.

⁵ "Vegan" appears therefore as an anachronistic but nonetheless helpful term in much of the close analysis that follows.

In the past few decades, numerous studies detailing the devastating impact of animal agriculture and mass meat consumption on the environment, compounded by an unprecedented rise in global population, have contributed to a significant shift in veganism's cultural currency: from ineffectual fad to an urgent and essential response to a wide range of ethical, environmental, and social issues. For example, a 2010 UN report advocated a global move to meat and dairy-free diets (UNEP), whilst a 2016 survey, published by The Vegan Society and *Vegan Life* magazine, suggested that in the ten years previous the number of vegans had risen by over 350% in the UK alone (Vegan Life). However, the experience of being a vegan, and of living a vegan life, occupies a complex and neglected critical terrain. As such, it is important to address how veganism is written, how it is read, and the importance of the critical construction and deconstruction of vegan identities.

A nuanced interrogation of veganism as activism and lived practice has been limited within existing humanities scholarship. Whilst vegetarian philosophies are generally perceived as a modern phenomenon, a number of historical studies released over the past few decades, from Colin Spencer's *The Heretic's Feast* (1993) to Tristram Stuart's *The Bloodless Revolution* (2006), and Rod Preece's *Sins of the Flesh* (2008), provide a wide range of evidence that traces their existence back to prehistoric times. Such studies dissociate vegetarianism from the faddish and their publication attests to the increasing scholarly interest in, and weight accorded to, narratives about vegetarian and vegan lives. However, such studies tend to end with a brief concluding remark mentioning veganism, confining its existence to the mid-twentieth century. This thesis aims to broaden our understanding of veganism by investigating the multiplicity of ways in which it has functioned transversally through literature and across history.

As such, it is first necessary to offer a comprehensive definition of veganism. Its coinage in 1944 means we can trace the term's etymology precisely, originating with the founder of The Vegan Society, Donald Watson. Watson chose to use the first and last characters of "vegetarian," a term in use, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, since at least 1842. Amongst a range of alternative suggestions for naming an ethical practice that excluded the use of all products derived from nonhuman animals, including "dairyban" and "benevore," his choice of "veganism" was retrospectively explained as marking "the beginning and end of vegetarian" (Vegan Society). Veganism appears here as a utopian vision of the *ends* of vegetarianism, as both its truncated linguistic form and inevitable ethical endpoint. This focus on the temporal emphasises veganism's reliance on the lexical comprehensibility of vegetarianism as much as it surpasses the latter as a moral baseline.

The *OED* defines "vegetarian" as "a person who abstains from eating animal food and lives principally or wholly on a plant-based diet; *esp.* a person who avoids meat and often fish but who will consume dairy products and eggs in addition to vegetable foods." The adverb "often" suggests the ambivalent classification of fish as animal food, signalling a confusion over the definitional boundaries of vegetarianism. Taking a more absolutist line, the Vegetarian Society offers the following definition:

A vegetarian is someone who lives on a diet of grains, pulses, legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruits, fungi, algae, yeast and/or some other non-animal-based foods (e.g. salt) with, or without, dairy products, honey and/or eggs. A vegetarian does not eat foods that consist of, or have been produced with the aid of products consisting of or created from, any part of the body of a living or dead animal. This includes meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, insects, by-products of slaughter or any food made with processing aids created from these (Vegetarian Society).

However, the focus here on the act of eating nonhuman animal bodies neglects the ethics involved in relation to the wearing of such bodies, as with leather and fur. Moreover, the definition appears to work against itself, where the fact that the prohibition against "foods that consist of, or have been produced with the aid of products consisting of or created from, any

part of the body of a living or dead animal” does not include “dairy products, honey and/or eggs,” negates the nonhuman animal bodies necessary for their production. Such omissions highlight the paradoxical nature of vegetarianism’s ethical limits whilst the focus on the non-ingestion of animal bodies aspires to a nonetheless clear demarcation of “the vegetarian,” as a recognisable and achievable identity.

In contrast, The Vegan Society offers the following definition of veganism, formulated when it became a registered charity in 1979:

a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals” (Vegan Society).

Whilst the “dietary terms” of veganism appear with certainty, “dispensing with *all* products derived wholly or partly from animals,” this definition frames veganism as “a philosophy and way of living” within the hyphenated clause “as far as is possible and practicable.” Thus, whilst striving towards the end of exploitation and promoting future developments that will enable this, veganism appears tethered to the burdens of its impossibly inclusive aspirations, reliant on a recognition of that which is not possible or practicable.

The impossibility of achieving a stable or secure vegan identity, explored below in relation to a poststructuralist notion of impossibility, exemplifies the dilemma facing postmodern identity politics more broadly. For example, reflecting on the reclamation of the term “queer,” Butler suggests the necessary violence enacted by identity categories in their attempt to totalise the individual. However, this does not negate the importance, or necessity, of identity categories as a means through which to subvert and reinvent political discourses. As Butler goes on to argue, “the temporary totalization performed by identity categories is a necessary error. And if identity is a necessary error, then the assertion of ‘queer’ will be

necessary as a term of affiliation,” even if one must acknowledge that “it will not fully describe those it purports to represent” (*Bodies* 175). Similarly, Tim Dean, in the context of queer subcultures of barebacking, critiques “identification politics,” a mode of subjectivity that, through identification with an ideal image, fails to result in a solid or fixed identity. Dean argues that “The very possibility of identification with an ideal image implies a gap between the one who identifies and the ideal” (21). This implicit gap brings then the “discomfort of subjective guilt or bad conscience,” where “We identify with an ideal image, only to be plagued by a nagging sense of failing to live up to the ideal” (Dean 22-23). As identified in The Vegan Society’s definition above, identification as a vegan is haunted by an implicit guilt or bad conscience, finding oneself always unable to meet the all-inclusive scope of its ethical aspirations.

Veganism, as I define it in this thesis, actively acknowledges contradiction and inconsistency in its ethical practice and therefore invites an acknowledgment of the need for responses that move beyond a drive for cohesive practices. This runs counter to many mainstream preconceptions of veganism, associated with moral righteousness, an aspiration towards the “beautiful soul,”⁶ or a fascistic quest for purity. Furthermore, veganism is often derogated as a naive and sentimental love of nonhuman animals associated with children and childhood squeamishness or with a white, middle-class subject whose concern for the nonhuman comes at the expense of the structural oppressions effecting disenfranchised humans.⁷ Interrogating such assumptions and stereotypes, this dissertation explores what monstrosity offers to conceptions of vegan identity. In addition, employing a literary-historical methodology and bringing queer theory to bear on conceptualisations of vegan

⁶ The beautiful soul is a Hegelian concept referring to a spiritual mode of life that seeks goodness through isolation from social reality.

⁷ This is not to say that much vegan rhetoric hasn’t perpetuated racist and sexist assumptions. Such issues within the vegan community have been challenged by several important works from vegans of colour. See, for example, A. Breeze Harper’s *Sistah Vegan* and Aph and Syl Ko’s *Aphro-ism*.

identity, I explore the utopian aspirations embedded within a mode of being that must learn to grapple with an often inescapable complicity in abhorrent systems, as well as inconsistency, horror, and trauma. I therefore conceptualise veganism as a state of strategic insufficiency that nonetheless aspires towards a pragmatic model of utopian thought.⁸ I offer, in the concluding chapter, a means of inhabiting and performing vegan monstrosity that functions as an alternative to the relentless focus, in much current work within vegan studies, on exposure to violence.

Vegan Theory

The nascent field of vegan theory is a recent development within the humanities. However, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, it builds on work published over the past three decades across a wide range of interrelated disciplines, including ecocriticism, animal studies, posthumanism, and moral philosophy.

Whilst much has been written on veganism within the social sciences over the past few decades,⁹ Laura Wright's *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror*, published with University of Georgia Press in 2015, was the first major academic monograph in the humanities that focussed on veganism as a topic of serious study in its own right. Wright takes an ecofeminist stance and traces the appearance of veganism across literature, film, TV, and popular American culture since the events of 9/11. The edited collection *Critical Perspectives on Veganism* (Castricano and Simonsen) followed closely,

⁸ Lori Gruen and Robert C. Jones distinguish between two ways in which people conceive of veganism: as a lifestyle or identity, and as an aspiration or goal. For Gruen and Jones, the first is ineffective because “to ascribe moral purity and clean hands to veganism is to make a category mistake” (156). An aspirational veganism, by contrast, has the power to make a difference, forging “a particularly empowering and grounded form of individual political commitment, [and] fostering a deeper understanding of intersecting injustices and oppressions” (Gruen and Jones 169). For more on this dual conception of veganism as a state of necessary insufficiency see also mine and Benjamin Westwood’s introduction to *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture*.

⁹ See, for example, Barbara McDonald ““Once You Know”” and Richard Twine’s “Negotiating Social Relationships.”

towards the end of 2016. *Critical Perspectives* considers veganism in a global context and focuses on practical movements and developments in the contemporary world, featuring essays exploring vegan food blogs, cookery books, and celebrity chefs. In addition, *Through a Vegan Studies Lens: Textual Ethics and Lived Activism* (edited by Laura Wright) was published with University of Nevada Press in 2019. Such developments signal the contemporary period as a seminal moment in vegan theoretical discourse.

Veganism's entry into the academy has not, however, occurred in a vacuum. Carol J. Adams's 1990 *The Sexual Politics of Meat* stands as a field-defining text. Whilst Adams focuses nearly entirely on the politics of meat-eating and its relation to dismembered animal bodies, veganism is of central significance to her theory. Establishing *The Sexual Politics* as "truly a feminist-vegan critical theory" (Adams 63), the absence of the term veganism from the bulk of the text is proposed as a logistical matter due to veganism's relative lexical incomprehensibility at the time of writing and Adams's reluctance to attribute a contemporary term to the historical texts under evaluation.

At the heart of Adams's analysis is her explication of the relationship between meat-eating and masculinity. For Adams, meat-eating is a male identified activity that reflects patriarchal dominance. Whilst my dissertation moves away from Adams in several ways, her theorisation of the structure of the "absent referent" provides an important foundation for the chapters that follow. Taking the term from Margaret Homans's earlier feminist literary criticism, Adams sees the structure of the absent referent as the connective tissue linking the oppression of women and nonhuman animals within a patriarchal, meat-eating culture. Adams defines three key ways through which nonhuman animals are made absent:

One is literally: ... through meat eating they are literally absent because they are dead. Another is definitionally: when we eat animals we change the way we talk about them, for instance, we no longer talk about baby animals but about veal or lamb ... the word *meat* has an absent referent, the dead animals. The third way is metaphorical. Animals become metaphors for describing people's experiences. In this

metaphorical sense, the meaning of the absent referent derives from its application or reference to something else (*Sexual Politics* 21).

For Adams, women are also the absent referents of cultural violence resulting from institutionalised patriarchal values. These absences are intertwined, with animals recalled in descriptions of female oppression, such as in the neologism she was “treated like a piece of meat.” Nonhuman animals are made absent through acts of butchering and naming in order for “meat” to exist, with the result that “The absent referent permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity; it also enables us to resist efforts to make animals present” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 21). Women, too, are seen to function as absent referents in the language and imagery of meat-eating.

Adams emphasises vegetarianism and veganism as a means of recovering the absent referent animal from structures that obfuscate its suffering. In relation to literary analysis, the recovery of the absent referent includes a reading practice that refuses to see nonhuman animals as mere metaphors or symbols for human experience and pays attention to nonhuman animal presences that are often overlooked. Moreover, texts are seen to bear the “vegetarian word,” as I explore in more detail below, if they employ “Language that clearly identifies the functioning of the structure of the absent referent by referring directly to dead animals” (*Sexual Politics* 91).¹⁰

The Sexual Politics was described by the *New York Times* in 2012, nearly twenty years after its initial publication, as “a bible of the vegan community” (Jesella). It wasn’t until this belated recognition that much else in the name of distinctly “vegan” studies began to emerge, though works did appear under the rubric of vegetarianism. For example, Nick Fiddes’s 1991

¹⁰ Adams gives as an example the language used in Atwood’s *The Edible Woman*, to be explored in chapter three. Protagonist Marian experiences a series of insight experiences, in which the meat she is served is no longer separable from the embodied animal from whom it is derived. Her steak, for example, is seen as “Part of a real cow that once moved and ate and was killed” (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 151).

Meat: A Natural Symbol interrogates the ways in which “meat” comes to mean and define itself as a symbol of human exceptionalism and domination over nature. Furthermore, Michael Allen Fox’s 1999 *Deep Vegetarianism*, whilst resisting veganism because of a supposed dearth of adequate nutritional studies at the time of writing, promotes vegetarianism as “helping to shape a way of life and to effect a shift in conscious awareness” (xix).

Furthermore, in the five years preceding Wright’s *Vegan Studies Project*, the confluence of veganism and academic scholarship is explored in a multitude of contexts and forms: as an approach to critical race studies in A. Breeze Harper’s 2010 *Sistah Vegan*, and as foundational activist praxis within the emerging discipline of Critical Animal Studies, taking a prominent place, for example, in the 2014 edited collection *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*.

Critical Animal Studies (CAS), a field committed to opening a dialogue between academic work on human-animal relations and animal activism, is, in many ways, the natural home of vegan scholarship. However, the emphasis of CAS on a concrete pragmatism, encouraging work that directly focuses on activism, often confines veganism to a rationalist and progressivist narrative. In their introduction to *Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, sociologists Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, for example, situate veganism as central to the work of CAS, framed as a means to an end that is part of a broader “Commitment to the removal of all forms of animal abuse” (Taylor and Twine 6). Their interest in systemic modes of oppression posits veganism as “only an ethico-political beginning to addressing the interconnected oppression of people and animals” that “needs to be moored to a broader political vision” (Taylor and Twine 12). Furthermore, distancing themselves from conventional animal studies, CAS scholars have often conflated hypocrisy and abstraction with that which they directly stand against. Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stanescu’s conclusion to the same volume stresses that CAS not only stands in opposition to more conventional animal studies scholarship but highlights the latter’s “inherent tensions, contradictions and

conflicts” (262). CAS, it is implied, resists such contradictions and tensions. Furthermore, Matthew Cole’s contribution to *Critical Animal Studies* states that one ambition of CAS is to contest “the misrepresentation of veganism by discursive authorities, including the mass media ... and (non-CAS) academia” (204). This “misrepresentation” entails the presentation of “personal transformation itself as solipsistic self-indulgence rather than the *consequence* of a revolutionized relationship with animal others” (Cole 204, emphasis in original). Whilst I support Cole’s thesis that “to live without exploitation entails *active engagement* with what were in 1944, and remain today, brutally exploitative social systems” (203, emphasis in original), I am uneasy with the connotations attached to the term “misrepresentation,” as if veganism can, and should, have a definitive and “correct” representation, or that such representation can be defined and capitulated exclusively through CAS.

Whilst the relationship between activism, praxis, and scholarly work is important, my thesis foregrounds the dual importance of literary theory and analysis. This is to stress that there is important work yet to be done in understanding what it might mean to occupy a vegan identity through language and narrative forms. Moving away from the finality and closure of the CAS vision, this thesis looks to modes of reading veganism that leave ethical response deliberately open and resistant to narrative closure. It is precisely, therefore, the “inherent tensions, contradictions and conflicts” rejected by Pederson and Stanescu that are foregrounded through my analysis.

A further field of study that has been of significant influence for vegan theory is ecocriticism. As we come to terms with the notion of the contemporary period as the Anthropocene, defining a geological age in which human activity has a significant effect on the climate and environment, ecocriticism has come to occupy an increasingly prominent role in humanities scholarship. Defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Branch and Slovic xvi), ecocriticism, broadly conceived, seeks to use

the imaginative capacities of literature to rethink our relationship to the “natural” world. The emergence of postcolonial, feminist, and queer ecocriticism, has further increased its scope as an intersectional mode of analysis that explores the connections between multiple forms of oppression.¹¹ The problematisation of the category of “the human” enacted in such work is a productive framework for theorising veganism by addressing, for example, that the oppression, violence, and domination that characterises global networks of exploitation against nonhuman animals is symptomatic of an exploitative human attitude to the nonhuman environment more broadly. Furthermore, in its lived reality in the contemporary world, veganism is motivated for many by environmentalist concerns.

However, veganism often faces criticism within ecocritical work for reinforcing and promoting an alternative model of anthropocentrism, prioritising ethical actions that are often unassimilable and unreciprocated by nonhuman animals and that therefore paradoxically reinforce humanity’s moral exceptionalism. In addition, by limiting its scope to the nonhuman animal, as opposed to the natural world more broadly, veganism risks reinforcing the exclusionary tendencies it ostensibly seeks to dismantle, simply drawing new lines of entry into ethical consideration. Consequently, the ease with which veganism has become associated with a belief in ethical purity and freedom from complicity in exploitative environmental practices demonstrates the necessity of engaging with ecocritical theory.

Whilst considering the importance of veganism in relation to the current environmental crisis, in this thesis I address a lacuna in critical scholarship about what it means to live, enact, or perform a vegan identity. My examination of the ways in which veganism and vegan identity has been constructed via narrative fiction thus neglects, in many ways, broader ecological concerns, though not without an open invitation for future scholars

¹¹ See Lawrence Buell and Ursula K. Heise for exemplary works of ecocriticism. For postcolonial ecocriticism see Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin and Rob Nixon. For feminist ecocriticism see Adams and Val Plumwood. And for queer-oriented ecocriticism see Nicole Seymour and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson.

to find thinking with or through veganism a productive means of expanding ecological consciousness.

My exploration of literary representations of veganism also risks sidelining the nonhuman animals at the heart of vegan refusals. Jacques Derrida's work on the nonhuman animal addresses this risk. In particular, his 1991 interview with Jean-Luc Nancy "'Eating Well', or the Calculation of the Subject" and the posthumously published text from his address to the 1997 Cerisy conference, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Ethics, for Derrida, is a process of continual questioning, an enquiry into the unknown, rather than something that can be fixed or decided in advance. Turning against the anthropocentrism of the Continental philosophical tradition, in particular the work of Heidegger, Derrida turns to utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Derrida references Bentham's much-quoted footnote that asserts that it is not whether animals can think, reason, or speak that should dictate our ethical responsibility, but whether they can suffer. He suggests that the question of suffering is pertinent because it "is disturbed by a certain *passivity*. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able" (Derrida, *The Animal* 27). A shared vulnerability, mortality, or, as Derrida terms it, "finitude," with nonhuman animals is seen as an inability, or radical non-power, in which true morality resides: "as the most radical means of thinking the finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, this possibility of impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish" (*The Animal* 28). Suffering then, in its very passivity, is seen to open an ethical responsibility to the nonhuman other.

However, Derrida's work is often seen as antagonistic to veganism. Despite citing Bentham, Derrida's conception of ethics is a far cry from the utilitarianism of the former and its legacy within the contemporary animal rights movement. Whilst acknowledging that the

unprecedented scale of our subjection of the nonhuman animal is comparable to “the worst cases of genocide” (Derrida, *The Animal* 26), ascribing a label and proscription to ethical action is seen to negate individual responses and the significance of an aporia of judgement. It is thus seen to perpetuate a refusal to recognise the irreducible otherness of the nonhuman animal, and its ability to issue a call to responsibility through its very singularity. As Kari Weil neatly summarises, the incalculable or undecidable are central to Derrida’s notions of ethics because “Otherwise, ethics would not be a response at all, but the application of a rule or mathematical equation; it would be more of a ‘reaction’ than a ‘response’ and hence an opting out of responsibility” (117-118). This, in part, explains Derrida’s hostility to vegetarianism and veganism, a resistance explicit in “‘Eating Well,’” where he distinguishes an excess of responsibility from the rational becoming-right associated with morality. Vegetarianism here negates individual response and responsibility and fails to escape the sacrificial structures that allow the noncriminal putting to death of the subject of phallogocentrism. He describes that “Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation” (Derrida, “Eating Well” 282), suggesting vegetarianism’s illusory sense of freedom from complicity that masks an inevitable participation in the continuation of that which he terms “carno-phallogocentrism.”

First coined by Derrida in “Eating Well,” carno-phallogocentrism names the white, male, and carnivorous subject of Western culture and binds the question of subjectivity to the question of sacrifice, whether of the racialised, gendered, or nonhuman other. Akin to the relationship between meat-eating and masculinity explicated by Adams in *The Sexual Politics*,¹² to the dominant schema of “phallogocentrism,” Derrida adds the prefix “carno-” as a sign of the necessary implication of the carnivorous virility of “the subject”: “Authority and

¹² Matthew Calarco expounds the links between the two thinkers in his preface to the 25th anniversary edition of *The Sexual Politics*.

autonomy ... are, through this schema, attributed to the man (*homo* and *vir*) rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal. And of course to the adult rather than to the child. The virile strength of the adult male, the father, husband, or brother ... belongs to the schema that dominates the concept of the subject. The subject does not want just to master and possess nature actively. In our cultures, he accepts sacrifice and eats flesh” (Derrida, “Eating Well” 280).

If vegetarianism simply reproduces the structures of carno-phallogocentric sacrifice, Derrida makes clear that this is because ethical prescription is incompatible with ethical responsibility: “responsibility is excessive or it is not a responsibility. A limited, measured, calculable, rationally-distributed responsibility is already the becoming-right of morality; it is at times also, in the best hypothesis, the dream of every good conscience, in the worst hypothesis, of the petty or grand inquisitors” (“Eating Well” 286). However, against this critique of vegetarianism’s illusion of “good conscience” or petty moral policing, moral philosopher Gary Steiner argues that the reality of modern veganism is not the safeguard of the beautiful soul, but “a gnawing horror born of a recognition of what is being done to billions of animals *right now* and of the seeming futility of one’s decision” (63). Aligning Derrida with a postmodern approach to veganism, Steiner, whilst in agreement with the basic premise that a “felt sense of lived kinship with other sentient beings” is the origin of ethical principles, suggests that once this sense has been awakened “it becomes possible to develop principles that articulate that sense in rational terms” (154).

Steiner argues that the relationship between reason and impulse, as conceived in the work of thinkers such as Derrida,

fails to recognise the potential of reason to scrutinize our prerational impulses and see whether they are warranted. Some of our impulses are merely selfish appetites that need to be forsaken in our endeavor to do justice to our relationships and obligations to others. To take the position that my ethical impulses are just what they are is to give voice to lazy reason. It is to rationalize an egotistical (or, in the case of our relationship

to animals, an anthropocentric) perspective and to fail (or simply refuse) to see that rational reflection can change the way we feel about things (158).

Rational reflection is thus positioned as an imperative to “guard against the tendency to revert to an egocentric (anthropocentric) standpoint that isolates us from our kinship with other sentient life” (Steiner 155). Steiner takes as an example someone who self-defines as a vegetarian but eats meat during festivities. This functions “as part of a regimen of spiritual discipline, not for the sake of the animals” (Steiner 155). However, if subjected to scrutiny, “If my vegetarianism or veganism *were* motivated by a direct concern for animals, then my living concern would become formalized into a principle and I wouldn’t go looking for opportunities to disregard my concern” (Steiner 155). Steiner is right that the proposition that “our prerational impulses are invulnerable to rational scrutiny” (158) is naive in its faith in our ability to stand beyond discourse. However, one might remain skeptical of his sense that rational reflection can uncover that which is “warranted” as a stable ethical principle.

David Wood, by contrast, critiques Derrida’s attack on vegetarianism whilst retaining the idea that attempts to calculate our responsibility to nonhuman animals “would be to fail to grasp a responsibility that exceeds all calculation” (27). Contrary to Steiner’s focus on principled reflection, Wood argues that vegetarianism might be better understood as a “willingness and capacity to respond, hence an indeterminable openness” (32). Wood invests in deconstruction as “the most powerful attempt to preserve philosophy against plausible complacencies,” by preserving for philosophy “a certain capacity to respond, and particularly to respond to what has not been adequately schematized, formulated, etc. — perhaps to the inadequacy of any schematization or formulation” (18). The “perhaps” is significant here, in its acknowledgement of the insufficiencies of the rule-based approach to ethics that Steiner endorses. If carno-phallogocentrism is a “mutually reinforcing network of powers, schemata of domination, and investments that has to reproduce itself to stay in existence” then

“Vegetarianism is . . . — at least potentially — a site of proliferating resistance to that reproduction” (33). Hence, for Wood, deconstruction *is* vegetarianism.

However, in direct response to Wood, Matthew Calarco suggests that before vegetarianism can begin to be thought of as a deconstructive move, it must first undergo a deconstruction itself: “a task which seeks to acknowledge vegetarianism’s critical and ethico-political potential while, at the same time, examining the consequences of vegetarianism’s unwitting reinforcement of carnophallogocentrism and anthropocentrism” (198). An example of the latter is the maintenance of the singular terms “human” and “animal.” Veganism is thus defined as coming down to “a contestation of where one draws the line between ‘symbolic’ and ‘real’ sacrifice” (Calarco 194). The distinction between such sacrifices becomes impossible to delimit, an impossibility acknowledged by the occupation of an always-already-partial vegan identity. And yet, contemporary vegan scholarship has avoided Calarco’s call. This dissertation turns to the role of narrative, in a range of texts, in constructing vegetarian and vegan identities. The monstrous results of transferring ethical abstraction onto the corporeal body constitutes a literary trope that, as I will demonstrate, is a productive site at which to enact Calarco’s call for a deconstruction of vegetarianism and veganism.

Veganism’s association with positivity, in its drive for health and purity, is countered by a necessary and productive negativity generated by a recognition of the inexplicable horrors of the modern world. As Steiner suggests, veganism operates as an openness to the torment of the reality that modernity seeks to shield from us. In this sense, veganism is not a definitive moral stance based on abstractions, but reflects an openness to contaminating knowledge, knowledge that infects both conscious and unconscious responses. Certainly, veganism occupies a precarious position in relation to response, functioning as much as a process of conscious decision-making, based on prescription, proscription, and boycott, as a bodily response, manifesting as disgust, squeamishness, and horror. As Anat Pick argues, in

an essay that urges a revised approach to animal ethics situated “between love and law,” veganism functions “as a worldly engagement that acknowledges the realities of violence” (62) but not “in the conceit that violence will cease” (82). Furthermore, in Sara Salih’s terms, considering the means by which knowledge of animal suffering comes to motivate personal change, “veganism is not a religion, nor is it about constructing a rigid moral code and sticking to it come what may. There are no ‘rules,’ only perceived wrongs, felt injustices and an ongoing capacity for break” (“Vegans on the Verge” 65).

With the foundations laid by such works, this thesis focuses on historical literary constructions of vegan identity through an engagement, as I outline below, with queer theory. In addition, my focus on the trope of the monstrous vegan across two centuries of literary history foregrounds close textual analysis over the cultural studies frame of scholars such as Wright. Whilst the centrality of monstrous vegans to my analysis risks perpetuating the logic of an anthropocentric culture by sidelining the lived reality of nonhuman animals, I argue that we might utilise that detachment as a productive position from which to critically evaluate our relationship to nonhuman others. As Derrida argues, the nonhuman animals whose oppression we are witnessing are not, and cannot be, the subjects of aesthetic or political discourse. We can only ever speak for, and on behalf of, the nonhuman. As such, it is important to explore the ways in which veganism grapples with this impossibility and what it means to occupy an identity that functions as a form of striving towards a necessarily unattainable utopianism.

Veganism and Queer Theory

The idea that failure need not be an impediment to action is particularly important to veganism’s relation to futurity, where the impossibility of being fully or wholly vegan can be outlined in numerous ways. The Vegan Society’s definition, provided above, captures the inevitability of veganism’s only partially realised ideal, inferring both an absence of viable

alternatives and infrastructures, and the inevitability of exploitative relations. Consideration of secondary and tertiary levels of exploitation, for example, risks a descent into an endless abyss of abstention. Possessing a body that must inevitably ingest, trample, or uproot animals through everyday actions, or displace and endanger through participation in global capitalism, suggests an ethical impasse that must be continually addressed.

To explain the poststructuralist notion of “impossibility”—an impossible ideal which must, nevertheless, be aspired to—I turn now to J. Jack Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure*. Halberstam looks to the potential rewards of failure for queer theory: “Failure preserves some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood and disturbs the supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers” (5). Failure appears as a possible strategy to bring down the mainstream establishment, a way of refusing to speak for others or directing all struggles into a normative logic that desires fulfilment, recognition, and achievement. This raises the question of how we might utilise queer theory to better understand veganism, not just as dietary practice or ethical response, but as a negotiation of normative understandings of success, adulthood, masculinity, and humanity.

Aligning queerness and veganism might appear on the surface as a problematic conflation of two distinct notions of identity and histories of oppression. And yet, as Adams and Derrida have demonstrated respectively, heterosexual masculinity and human subjectivity rely on the assumption of compulsory carnivorousness. Veganism is engaged in critiquing many of the same institutions as queer theory, challenging heteronormative ideas about what it means to be a sexed, gendered, and “speciesed” subject. In a recent article, Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen argue that the foundational texts of queer theory fundamentally interrogate and unsettle the concept of “the human.” Whilst the human has undoubtedly been prioritised by many queer theorists, they argue that “queer theory has long been suspicious of the politics of rehabilitation and inclusion to which liberal-humanist values lead ... because ‘full humanity’

has never been the only horizon for queer becoming” (Luciano and Chen 188). However, their nonhuman investments focus on the inanimate and object world over the nonhuman animal.

Similarly, whilst Lee Edelman’s analysis of the figure of the queer as a rupture in discourses of futurity concludes that “Rather than expanding the reach of the human ... we might ... insist on enlarging the *inhuman* instead” (152, emphasis in original), he appears strikingly uninterested in how “the inhuman” might intersect with the nonhuman animal. And yet, by disrupting the perpetuation of the subject of “carno-phallogocentrism,” veganism’s future vision can also be read as a resistance to the logic of sameness embedded in Edelman’s critique of reproductive futurism, signalling the end of “the human,” as we currently understand the term, in the service of a radically altered future.

Edelman’s *No Future* refuses the dominant cultural power of that which he terms reproductive futurism. Reproductive futurism is that which enshrines the figure of the child as “the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” (Edelman 3) and preserves “the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations” (Edelman 2). Futurism is bound to heterosexuality, “generational succession, temporality, and narrative sequence, not toward the end of enabling change, but, instead, of perpetuating sameness” (Edelman 60). Edelman thus calls for an embrace of queer negativity, refusing hope as affirmation and positing the child-averse, future-negating figure of the “sinthomosexual” as a disruption to the very value of the social itself, embracing a “locus of enjoyment beyond the logic of interpretation” (113). The queer is presented as an embodiment of the death drive that must be embraced rather than negated, responsible for pronouncing “that the Child as futurity’s emblem must die; that the future is mere repetition and just as lethal as the past” (Edelman 31).

Much vegan rhetoric relies on environmental discourses that promote the need to preserve the planet for our future children. Furthermore, the increasing publication of vegan literature for children, as noted by Cole and Kate Stewart, demonstrates a commitment to, and investment in, reproductive futurism. Critiquing the animal rights discourses of writers such as Jonathan Safran Foer, Salih is wary of the need to be able to defend ourselves against the enquiry of future generations into what we did to protect the animals. She comments that “Apparently it isn’t easy to discern right and wrong in the present, or else why would we need to be so proleptic about ‘what it is right to do’, to hold ourselves accountable even if only in our fantasies, to our accusing, ultra-moral children?” (Salih, “Vegans on the Verge” 54). The anti-social turn in contemporary queer theory raises questions about the oppressive heteronormativity undergirding such stalwart investments in futurity. The imperative to justify ourselves to Foer’s “ultra-moral” children, and assumptions of their inevitable veganism, is here both an imperative to action as much as a stultification, in which the future embodies the social order’s “traumatic encounter with its own inescapable failure” (Edelman 26).¹³

Re-balancing the trend towards negativity in much contemporary queer theory, typified by work such as Edelman’s, José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia* argues of the utopian potentialities nevertheless embedded within queer lives. For Muñoz, “Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1). Both queer theory and vegan theory have emerged under a shadow of death, though at different levels of proximity, in the context of HIV/AIDs and animal agribusiness respectively. As such, both struggle to balance an anti-social negativity with an account of the pleasure, optimism, and utopianism that remains. Furthermore, both seek alternative modes of affiliation and kinship. As such, I argue that veganism offers an extension of the remit of queer theory to a consideration of nonhuman animals. Veganism’s

¹³ Edelman refers to failure here in its traditional sense.

resistance to a normative humanity responsible for systemic abuses of nonhuman animals thus requires an acknowledgement, in Muñoz's terms, of the co-existence of failure, inconsistency, and complicity, with hope and utopianism. This can be seen from Robert C. Jones's recent call for a "revisionary political veganism" that, whilst acknowledging its continued complicity in systems of violence, "imagin[es] and earnestly tr[ies] to actualize ... a world in which there is no violence, exploitation, or oppression" (30), to Joshua Schuster's assertion that "Vegans must find a way to form a speculative life that bridges this world with a future world of animal justice" (219). For Schuster, the inevitability of violence and the impossibility of a "fully vegan world" is "no reason to relent on a desire for utopian ways of living together" (216).

As Halberstam suggests of queer time, the acknowledgement or threat of having "no future" need not only suggest annihilation but might also be "about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" (*Queer Time* 14). A further counter to veganism's relation to that which Muñoz terms "straight time" is the fact that veganism's resistance to the horrors of the factory farm hopes for an end to the meat industry's prolific and relentless reproduction of nonhuman others: the continual pregnancies, births, and deaths, that define animal bodies as expendable and replaceable. The animal industrial complex utilises and revels in the emphasis of heteronormative culture on reproductivity as *the* symbol of progress and survival, whilst veganism, in this context, suggests not so much the reproductive future of nonhuman animals as the termination of their excessive generation.

Veganism and the Monstrous

In *Feeling Backward*, Heather Love dwells on the "dark side" of modern queer representation. She interrogates affective states of regret, shame, despair, defeatism, and loneliness in

historical queer narratives whilst refusing to redeem them within a linear narrative trajectory of progress. Love therefore looks to the potentially transformative impulses of queer shame that she suggests have been suppressed by mainstream pride movements. Of interest here is her description of queer representation:

Whether understood as throwbacks to an earlier stage of human development or as children who refuse to grow up, queers have been seen across the twentieth century as a backwards race. Perverse, immature, sterile, and melancholic: even when they provoke fears about the future, they somehow also recall the past (Love 6).

That this description functions as an apt summary of the ways in which I will come to define and delimit the monstrous vegan suggests the following: the representation of vegans and queers has something in common, in an attempt to account for that which lies beyond normative expectations, and the anxieties induced by veganism represent a displaced homophobia in which the rejection of meat functions as a metaphoric rejection of dominant norms of masculinity. The trope of “arrested development” within the homophobic discourses which Love explicates, positioning queers as children who refuse to grow up, certainly speaks to veganism as a discursive strategy that invests in the child both as inherently vegan, with an innate connection to the nonhuman, and as under threat from vegans.¹⁴

Akin to the methodological framework employed by Love, this thesis does not seek to utilise historical literary monsters in order to establish a trajectory that leads to the establishment of a fixed vegan identity. Instead, by embracing and dwelling on monstrosity as an important facet of vegan being and identification, I enact a type of feeling backwards, in Love’s terms, by refusing to ignore or rationalise veganism’s frequent associations with

¹⁴ For the threat posed by vegans to children, see Wright on the media’s obsession with veganism and rates of infant mortality in *The Vegan Studies Project* (89-106). Wright draws attention to a number of news stories focusing on the death of children through neglect, depicting “veganism as a menacing danger inflicted by negligent, uninformed parents—primarily mothers—on their children” (*Vegan Studies* 92). For Wright, “these cases and the media’s focus on the supposed vegan diet fed to these children by their parents generated overwhelming condemnation of the parents in these cases and of veganism in general as an unnatural and unhealthy lifestyle, and it generated an abundance of articles condemning vegan mothers for breast feeding” (*Vegan Studies* 93).

essentialism, puritanism, and perversion. I draw attention instead to its inconsistencies, anxieties and exclusions in order to suggest the radical, queer, and utopian potentiality of vegan monsters. What we see are imperfect, inconsistent, and often violent vegans. My readings do not attempt to force such figures into a narrative of progress that doesn't fit, to name them as "bad" or primitive vegans. Instead, I trace the transmission of patterns of anxiety that cluster around such monsters and their relation to the structural oppressions enacted by discourses of misogyny, racism, homophobia, and speciesism.

Monsters exist at the borders of human and nonhuman animal definition. As Arnold I. Davidson writes, tracing conceptions of monstrosity to the sixteenth century, monsters are produced "by the natural cause of the fusing together of strange species, but, more important, their, so to speak, first cause is God's wrath at the copulation between human beings and other beings" (103). Bestiality, as the worst of all vices and explicitly forbidden in Leviticus, is seen here to create a monstrous embodiment of sin. Furthermore, monsters are a seemingly inescapable social convention and source of fear, superstition, and awe. As such, beyond Davidson, there have been various critical works that attempt to define and delimit the monstrous. Many of these focus on the prevalence of cinematic monsters. For example, Cary Wolfe, in a psychoanalytic analysis that draws out the discourses of species in the 1991 film *The Silence of the Lambs*, argues that "the monster represents disorder, confusion of identity, social havoc" (108). For Markus Bohlmann and Sean Moreland, in their introduction to an edited collection focused on cinematic representations of monstrous children, "Monsters are monstrous because they always escape human comprehension; they demonstrate what we do not know, and remonstrate against our presumption to know" (18).

Whilst resisting the humanist "presumption to know," monsters nonetheless provide moments of insight in which they incite and encourage a desire for knowledge. For Wolfe, the monster's destabilising affect reveals that "the function of this disorder is to secure, as inverse

image of his own pure otherness, the wishful coherence and purity of the humanist social and ideological order” (108). Marie Mulvey-Roberts, examining treatments of the body in canonical Gothic novels, argues that monstrosity “functions as a looking-glass, permitting us to see our own inner monster and revealing the extent to which monsters are us” (9). And for Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, in his seven theses towards understanding cultures through the monsters they bear, monsters require self-reflection because “They ask us why we have created them” (20). However, such self-reflection is rarely satisfied by the portrayal of monsters. As Halberstam suggests, “If the Gothic novel produces an easy answer to the question of what threatens national security and prosperity (the monster), the Gothic monster represents many answers to the question of who must be removed from the community at large” (*Skin Shows* 3). The monster offers an infinitely interpretable body, functioning as monster “when it is able to condense as many fear producing traits as possible into one body” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 21).

The monster therefore becomes an apt focaliser for specific cultural fears and anxieties. For example, Barbara Creed, from whose 1993 text *The Monstrous-Feminine* this thesis gleans its title, demonstrates the gendered dimensions of cinema’s monsters. The monstrosity of the monstrous-feminine centres, for Creed, on women’s reproductive and maternal functions: “The monstrous-feminine draws attention to the ‘frailty of the symbolic order’ through her evocation of the natural, animal order and its terrifying associations with the passage all human beings must take from birth through life to death” (83). Furthermore, by embodying everything that “the human” is not, Halberstam argues that monsters make way for “the invention of the human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual” (*Skin Shows* 22). By unpacking a distinct trope of monstrous veganism, this thesis questions what it is about veganism that becomes a locus of fear and anxiety and needs to be excised from the sociosymbolic.

The relationship between veganism and the monstrous has appeared in existing work in vegan studies. Wright offers one possible explanation for this connection. Noting the proliferation of vampires who choose to eschew blood in contemporary film and television, in shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *True Blood*, she argues that:

Our vampires are vegetarian or vegan and pacifist - or, perhaps more aptly, they *perform* such identities - because in a post-9/11 world, we are not; veganism, in many ways, is monstrous, alienating and antithetical to a cultural dietary discourse in which meat and blood are of central significance (*Vegan Studies* 46, emphasis in original).

For Wright, the vampire, like the monster, must change over time to accommodate that which society shuns. As such, the trend towards vegetarian and vegan vampires “indicates a cultural moment during which violence and cruelty constitute overt human characteristics that are no longer cast onto the shadow self of the vampire” (Wright, *Vegan Studies* 66). However, as established over the course of this dissertation, the trend towards vegetarian or vegan and pacifist monsters is not confined to the post-9/11 period. Neither is the idea of a *performance* of such identities. I establish the multivalent and complex reasons that such figures appear, beyond the specificity of US discourse in the aftermath of 9/11 that Wright seeks to unpack, and beyond the specificity of the vampire. Furthermore, my readings of canonical novels, across a broad historical scope, reveal the unexplored potential of a wide range of texts for thinking about veganism.

I thus turn to James Stanescu’s attempt to reclaim the power and possibility embedded within an understanding of oneself through the Gothic vampire and its iterations through the literary sphere. J. Stanescu argues that the trend for “vegetarian vampires,” defined as those that eschew human blood in favour of animal blood, presents an ascetic and ultimately unsatisfying restriction: “Their vegetarianism is maintained only through the greatest will power” (30). It thus becomes a form of paralyzing self-denial. Suggesting the need to understand veganism as a site of permanent becoming, “a practice that transforms the self and

our relationship with others” (38), J. Stanescu’s argument builds to the conclusion that “When we seek to constitute ourselves as becoming-vegan, we need to understand ourselves not through the moral denialism of the vegetarian vampire, but rather through the queer revelry of the Gothic vampire” (45).

Steve Bruhm suggests an identification with the monstrous as a mode of reparative criticism. Whilst he is speaking specifically in a film studies context, his questioning of the value of rethinking our affective response to the monster is pertinent here: “how might monstrosity, even malignancy, challenge the intellectually entrenched assumption that the only alternative to suspicious paranoia is irresponsible naivety or irrepressible sentimentality?” (Bruhm 3). This thesis seeks to respond to this question. Indeed, modern representations and derogations of veganism often revolve around this dichotomy, oscillating between a striving towards moral purity and a childish sentimentality directed toward nonhuman animals. Furthermore, that the monstrous vegan occupies a liminal position between the adult and child, as a newborn that emerges into the world fully-grown, optimally sets the stage for such concerns.

In this sense, if “monster” functions as an injurious term, the monstrous vegan nonetheless confers a productive social identity upon individual vegans. Butler describes how, “Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially” (*Psychic Life* 104). It is in this sense that the concluding chapter of this thesis explores the ways in which the monstrous vegan trope can be recuperated through a playful embrace of a marginalised identity. The performance of monstrosity offers a means of survival against the psychic trauma consequent to knowledge of the extent of human violence against the nonhuman animal and a camp revelling in the spectacle of a normative humanity.

Veganism and Science Fiction

The first three chapters of this dissertation focus on literature characterised as science fiction, a generic classification that functions as a broad umbrella term that includes the utopian, dystopian, apocalyptic, speculative, and fantastic. Brian Aldiss defines the genre as fundamentally concerned with problems of power, the “fiction of a technological age” (14), invested in “*the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode*” (25, italics original).

Many critics have argued that science fiction is central to understanding our relation to the nonhuman world. For example, Lawrence Buell, a pioneering figure within ecocriticism, argues that “No genre potentially matches up with a planetary level of thinking ‘environment’ better than science fiction” (57). Similarly, Michael Page sees science fiction as central to ecocriticism: “the cultural medium through which we can examine questions of technology, evolution, ecology, and those crises of self, other, and world that we will be facing in the coming years” (199). Amitav Ghosh, critiquing the absence of climate change from the modern novel, argues that the consequences of global warming present “peculiar forms of resistance ... to what is now regarded as serious fiction” (9). Whilst science fiction, and its relegation from the realm of “serious literature,” sees the genre well equipped to deal with ecological concerns, Ghosh worries that “the mere mention of [climate change] is often enough to relegate a novel or a short story to the genre of science fiction. It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel” (Ghosh 7), “an imagined ‘other’ world apart from ours” (Ghosh 72-73).

Whilst science fiction's historical relation to ecological concerns is well established, there is a lacuna in critical scholarship in regards to the relationship between science fiction and the question of the animal. Sherryl Vint's *Animal Alterity* (2010) begins to address this, arguing that it is a striking omission given that "Sf, more than any other literature, can defy [the separation maintained between humans and animals] because its generic premises enable us to imagine the animal quite literally looking at and addressing us from a non-anthropocentric perspective" (6). Her first chapter incorporates a series of readings that explore science fiction texts whose future visions are determined by an examination of meat-eating. She argues that their "interrogation of the human-animal boundary through the ethics of killing and consuming others suggest that they understand a metaphysics of subjectivity based on exclusion of the animal to be part of the problem [of the present]" (Vint 44). Nevertheless, conspicuous by its absence in a chapter focused on meat-eating is an interrogation of the role of vegan identity and praxis in science fiction.

This thesis establishes that vegetarianism and veganism have long been a staple of the science fiction imagination and proliferate across the genre. In the utopias of W. H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), and Philip K. Dick's post-apocalyptic *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), for example, veganism appears as worldview rather than character trait, as future cultural norm rather than discursive marker of individual identity. I thus build on work such as Schuster's recent analysis of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* as an "allegory of the contradictions and compromised positions that inform animals in a disintegrating world" in which everyone is de facto vegan (205). Schuster suggests that the feeling of being a vegan is akin to being within a science fiction narrative: "Being a vegan means living in a partially alternate world that has a science fiction feel because it involves continual cognitive estrangement from social norms" (219). Veganism then is perhaps both a literary trope of the science fiction genre and itself constructed as a

form of science fiction narrative. Veganism can be seen as an identity intimately connected to utopian speculations, acknowledging that meat-eating and the question of the animal present a difficulty in the present that requires resolution in fantasy imaginings.

The works under examination in the first three chapters of this thesis are considered part of the science fiction canon whilst also recognised as significant beyond such generic classifications. Science fiction, and its prolific use of intertextuality, disrupts conventional understandings of originality and authorship within its structuring tenets. This provides an apt formal analogy for my deconstruction of veganism, revealing its entanglement in discursive constructions. The final chapter suggests the permeation of science fiction tropes into modernist and historical narratives, where monstrosity is found dwelling in the most unlikely of bodies.

Veganism and the Reparative

In *The Sexual Politics*, Adams argues that the latent vegetarianism of literary texts has been largely neglected within the academy. She suggests that the failure of critics to acknowledge the vegetarianism inscribed within women's writing has seen vegetarianism reduced to “*a form of meat to meat eaters: ... something to be trapped and dismembered, ... a ‘dead issue.’*” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 75-76, emphasis in original). Adams thus argues for the feminist significance of re-membering vegetarianism, laying out a five-point template for recognising texts that bear the “vegetarian word”:

Bearing the vegetarian word in women's fiction re-members texts *and* animals through (1) allusion to the literal words of a vegetarian from an earlier text ... (2) Figures in novels who recall historic vegetarians ... (3) Translating vegetarian texts ... (4) Language that clearly identifies the functioning of the structure of the absent referent by referring directly to dead animals ... (5) A final form of bearing the vegetarian word is found when individuals are prompted by their reading of vegetarian texts to stop eating meat (*Sexual Politics* 90-91).

For example, she notes as exemplary Isabel Colegate's 1980 novel *The Shooting Party*.

Regardless of the author's relation to vegetarianism, Colegate's vegetarian character Cornelius Cardew bears the vegetarian word through his recitation of the words of previous vegetarians, resemblance to historical vegetarian Henry Salt, belief in the power of his pamphlets to convert others to vegetarianism, and reference to the killing of animals as murder. Connecting the dismemberment of vegetarian texts to the dismemberment of animal bodies, vegetarian futures are seen to have an important relation to the textual, where "the authority of previous vegetarian texts authors new vegetarians who take vegetarian words literally" (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 69).

Vegetarian words, as they appear in women's writing, put a stop to the story of meat that Adams sees embedded within conventional narrative structures, with the transformation of animals into meat recalling the movement of narration, aligning "the closure, the final summing up" with "the consumption of the animal" (*Sexual Politics* 77). Whilst the recovery of vegetarian words is seen to refuse a process of consumption and assimilation, I argue that the definition of vegetarianism, as a prohibition against meat-eating, perpetuates conventional narrative structures in its granting of closure to ethical responses. I argue that Adams's theory consequently risks reinscribing a carnivorous textual consumption through the assimilation of models of vegetarian identity that negate veganism's necessary enmeshment in inconsistent and contradictory responses to the nonhuman. The recognition of historic vegan words, in the service of greater visibility and recognition, thus risks circumventing the complications and complexities inherent to their transmission.

As this thesis demonstrates, the alignment of vegan monsters with literary production raises questions about the disjunction between an embodied veganism, as monstrous body, and veganism as discursive code from without, becoming monstrous when inscribed onto the corporeal body. In Butler's terms, the textual deferrals of veganism emphasise its position as a

discursive form of identity that eludes “the body.” I conclude the trajectory built across the first three chapters of this thesis by arguing that Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy deconstructs the vegan identities transmitted from Shelley to Wells. There is, however, little redemption offered by such deconstruction. The final chapter thus builds towards that which Sedgwick terms a reparative mode of reading. I suggest that the monstrous vegan, as literary trope, exists as a potential site through which to occupy the performative dimensions of veganism, a performance of vegan monstrosity that enables a productive embodiment and parody of the extremes of suspicious paranoia or irresponsible naiveté.

Important though Adams’s work is, her vegetarian-feminist critical lens is limited by its reliance on a narrative that prioritises the exposure of violence. For example, Adams argues that by obscuring our knowledge of the embodied nonhuman animals that act as absent referents within our patterns of consumption, definition, and metaphor, we ignore and institutionalise violence against both women and animals. This is exemplary of a key trend in vegan-oriented scholarship, in which veganism is the result of increased knowledge of, and an awakening to, the absent referent. Knowledge and visibility are central to this narrative, as exemplified by the much-popularised quotation associated with musician Sir Paul McCartney, “If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian.” The absent referent structure offers at least one possible alternative to the post-structuralist critiques above, in which veganism’s ethical force is a refusal to have one’s responses dictated in advance by a system that naturalises, by obscuring, the violence done to nonhuman animals.

The idea of recovering a seemingly inherent response to violence does, however, risk bordering on essentialism, in which veganism appears both beyond and before culture. This is prevalent in much vegan-oriented scholarship. For example, Brian Luke suggests that an animal liberation stance is a “semiwild state on the boundaries of hierarchical civilization” (313) that recovers a sense of innate compassion and outrage tamed by industries

of animal exploitation, whilst Fox aligns “meat insight experiences,” as a form of vegetarian conversion, with a return to “inborn ways of reacting” (57). Furthermore, the foreword to *Critical Perspectives* confidently asserts that the ideology of “carnism” runs “counter to core human values” (Castricano and Simonsen viii).¹⁵ It is perhaps because of its often complex and problematic enmeshment in identity discourses, outlined above, that so much vegan-oriented scholarship has sought to return to the body as the fundamental locus of vegan experience.

Sedgwick’s work on paranoid and reparative criticism crystallises the problems inherent to a sole focus on visibility and witness within vegan-oriented scholarship. Her essay is framed by her reflections during the first decade of the AIDs epidemic, and seeks to untangle the intimate relation between queer theory and the hermeneutics of suspicion now commonplace across critical theory as a whole. She asks: “What does knowledge *do* — the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How* in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?” (Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading” 124). Sedgwick suggests that paranoia might be understood as just “one kind of epistemological practice among other, alternative ones” (“Paranoid Reading” 128), and critiques practices of knowledge that reinforce a narrative of exposure by resisting and undermining reparative motives of pleasure and amelioration. Paranoid practices assume:

that the one thing lacking for global revolution, explosion of gender roles, or whatever, is people’s (that is, other people’s) having the painful effects of their oppression, poverty, or deludedness sufficiently exacerbated to make the pain conscious (as if otherwise it wouldn’t have been) and intolerable (as if intolerable situations were famous for generating excellent solutions) (Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading” 144).

¹⁵ “Carnism” is a term coined by Melanie Joy to refer to the normalisation of meat-eating. As Joy and Jens Tuider note in their foreword to *Critical Perspectives*, “*Carnism* is the ideology that conditions people to eat animals. It is the counterpoint to veganism ... And, as with all ideologies, carnism is social and psychological in nature” (Castricano and Simonsen vii).

The equivalent paranoid revelation of violence within the field of animal studies is typified by Adams's work on the absent referent and Josephine Donovan's 2016 monograph, *The Aesthetics of Care*.

Donovan builds on Adams's work by theorising the relation between aesthetics and an ethical vegan perspective through a focus on modes of looking and making visible. She calls for an "attentive love directed toward animals as moral beings—as subjects—in literature and art" (Donovan 10) and is critical of representational strategies which fail to attend to nonhuman animals, "requir[ing] the sacrifice of the animal as an independent being to human aesthetic interests" (Donovan 48). Donovan's "attentive love" draws heavily on Simone Weil's conception of "attention," posited as central to an ethic and aesthetic of care: "that is, paying attention to what is overlooked when the subject is framed according to prescribed value and aesthetic ideals, relegating the overlooked material to insignificance or indeed to nonbeing" (Donovan 7). For Weil, the suspension of imaginative concepts when confronting an object, seeing it without interpretation, reveals the presence of God and the divine within the everyday. For Donovan, such attention provides the means by which to extricate nonhuman animal subjects from the imaginative frameworks of anthropocentric culture, promising an awakening to their value as moral beings. An aesthetics of care "means *being with* the subjects, seeing through their eyes, feeling through their bodies" and "not standing apart as an outside observer but integrated into the same world as the 'observed'" (Donovan 92-93).

However, when it comes to the aesthetic experiences of ethical vegans, "seeing through [an animal's] eyes" and "feeling through their bodies," risks a relentless confrontation with horror and despair at the scale of human brutality, raising questions about the value and utility of ethical vegan witness. Sedgwick argues that whilst paranoid reading can be useful and politically necessary, it is only one way "among other ways, of seeking, finding, and

organizing knowledge” (“Paranoid Reading” 130). She critiques the ways in which paranoid reading practices place too much faith in exposure, as if making visible was equivalent to solving. Furthermore, she challenges the assumption that such violence is invisible, rather than hypervisible, where paranoia relies on an “infinite reservoir of naiveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings” (Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading” 141). In thinking about how vegans respond to violence, this thesis builds towards the possibility of performing vegan monstrosity, offering a reparative practice that recognises alternative forms of knowing beyond a debilitating focus on the immensity of global animal suffering.

Ethical veganism often results in an inability to ignore the absent referent animal behind practices of animal exploitation. It is a peculiar way of seeing the world in its radical misalignment with cultural norms. However, this does not necessitate a renunciation of pleasure and desire. Instead, following Sedgwick and turning to the reparative potential of practices such as camp teaches us “the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture — even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (“Paranoid Reading” 150-151). Furthermore, as I will argue, staging veganism as monstrous provides an important critical perspective on the feelings of guilt and complicity interwoven into vegan modes of life.

Chapter Outline

This thesis asks why, and in what ways, the vegan appears in a monstrous guise across two hundred years of literary history. I ask what a better understanding of such monsters, their contexts and literary afterlives, means for modern conceptions of veganism and how it helps to deconstruct and reimagine veganism as identity and practice.

Chapter one focuses on Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, reading Victor Frankenstein’s creation as a foundational monstrous vegan figure and outlining the ways in which he

destabilises conventional conceptions of gendered, raced, and speciesed identity through Gothic conventions. I contextualise the novel in relation to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century vegetarian discourses and look at the ways in which Victor's creature exemplifies a model of vegan identity as bodily disposition that signals both a return to, and future progress towards, a prelapsarian Eden.

Chapter two explores the work of H. G. Wells and his conflation of alimentary and sexual appetite. I position *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) as a re-writing of *Frankenstein* that depicts veganism as a mode of humanist discipline and restriction. Wells's vegan monsters are contextualised in relation to animal rights discourses of the time, providing a historical overview of the development of vegetarian and vegan thought across the nineteenth century. Whilst ostensibly dismissive of veganism, presented as a repression of an innate animalism, Wells's plethora of vegan monsters highlight the essential queerness of, and disruption posed by, figures who force humans to confront the violence underlying normative desires.

Chapter three argues that veganism undergoes a radical deconstruction and reformulation within Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-2013). I turn to the ways in which Atwood's vegan monsters are self-consciously presented as overdetermined literary constructions and signal the impossibility of connecting to a "pure" or inherent vegan identity. Unpacking allusions to a wide body of vegetarian and vegan philosophy and thought within the texts, from the Ancient Greek Orphics to the Romantics, this chapter rethinks ideas about narrative transmission and the reproduction of literary veganisms. Contextualising the novels in relation to Atwood's vast oeuvre, I argue that the trilogy simultaneously enforces and destabilises interpretations of Shelleyan and Wellsian veganisms. By consciously deconstructing literary models, Atwood's novels invite us to question our conception and

writing of veganism, presenting a form of speculative realism that brings metafictional attention to the role of texts in constructing our ethical lives.

Chapter four functions as the concluding chapter of the thesis, drawing out the key concerns of the previous chapters and suggesting that they come to a head in representations of unbearable knowledge in the work J. M. Coetzee and a vegan camp aesthetic in the novels of Alan Hollinghurst. Turning to two contemporary authors, I posit both Coetzee and Hollinghurst as writing within an extant vegan canon and expand the concept of the monstrous beyond its confines in Gothic and science fiction traditions. I recognise here that my analysis of Atwood's texts in chapter three risks suggesting a certain futility to literary representations of veganism, with little redemption within the narrative for an empowering occupation of vegan identity. I thus conclude by exploring reparative strategies by which monstrous veganism is performed, as a means of drawing sustenance from a hostile anthropocentric world. As such, this project offers a reparative means of reading both for and with veganism that encourages an embrace, performance, or embodiment of monstrosity.

The thesis contributes to the nascent field of vegan studies and speaks directly to work within animal studies and ecocriticism. However, it also moves beyond these fields. It is a queer project, introducing new ways of conceiving of ourselves, our relation to heteronormative culture, and our affective relations with others. It is a project about children and the damaging myths and idealisations we project onto them. And finally, it is a project about literary form and analysis, suggestive of what it might mean to be a vegan reader or to read in a vegan way.

Chapter One

Mary Shelley and The Conception of the Monstrous Vegan

In 1992, “Franken-” was added to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. A colloquial, and chiefly depreciative, combined form, Franken- creates “nouns with the sense ‘genetically modified.’” Testament to the infiltration of the lexicon of Mary Shelley’s 1818 *Frankenstein* into everyday parlance, encouraged by the vast proliferation of cinematic adaptations since 1910,¹⁶ the *OED*’s online Frankenentry also signals the inextricability of Victor Frankenstein’s monstrous experiment from anxieties attendant to food production and consumption. “Frankenfood” is noted as both the earliest and most common example of the form, with the derogatory designation of “Frankenstein food” tracing back to a 1989 *Sunday Times* headline designed to fuel anxieties about the possible consequences of genetically modified food. Over the subsequent three decades, the mythic status of Frankenstein and his monstrous creation has been evoked in no contemporary discussions more frequent than those concerning modern food production.

By contrast, descriptions of food and the physical act of eating in the novel itself have received scant critical attention. This is not to say that they do not take up a significant part of the narrative. In fact, descriptions of food and its consumption appear throughout *Frankenstein*. The creature describes, for example, “the remnants of the shepherd’s breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk, and wine; the latter, however, I did not like” (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 83),¹⁷ alluding, as Carol J. Adams notes, to a Rousseauian ideal of rustic fare (*Sexual Politics*). In addition, the oatmeal eaten by the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands

¹⁶ The first film adaptation of *Frankenstein* was the 1910 *Frankenstein*, directed by J. Searle Dawley and produced by Edison Studios. The most iconic is arguably the 1931 Universal Pictures release, directed by James Whale and starring Boris Karloff as the monster.

¹⁷ All subsequent references to Shelley’s *Frankenstein* refer to the Oxford University Press’s 2008 edition of the 1818 text and will be in parentheses throughout this chapter.

signals the poverty and destitution of the area, their “gaunt and scraggy limbs gave tokens of their miserable fare” (136). And the creature’s messages, left in bark and stone for Victor, proclaim that “You will find near this place ... a dead hare; eat, and be refreshed” (174), asserting a power dynamic that, as Margaret Homans argues, sees Victor endlessly defer the real through insistence on figurative readings of the creature’s literal inscriptions onto nature.¹⁸ Moreover, physical hunger dominates the experiences of the De Lacey family, whose poverty means that they “often ... suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly” (88). This stands in contrast to Victor’s neglect of his corporeal needs, unable to satisfy his all-consuming hunger for knowledge. His work leaves him, under Clerval’s observation, “so thin and pale” (42).

In addition to these background oscillations between descriptions of food, eating, and hunger, the creature’s composition from the remnants of the slaughterhouse sees Victor’s laboratory experiments transform the dead, dismembered, and digested, into the regurgitated, reconstituted, and resuscitated. The hybrid composition of the creature, combining nonhuman animal remains from the slaughterhouse with human remains from the charnel house and dissection table, draws on a wealth of imperial, racial, and gendered anxieties. That such anxieties, as I argue, are focalised around meat consumption is significant in a narrative saturated by allusions to the thriving vegetarian radicalism of the Romantic period and driven by the creation of a monstrous form who unambiguously asserts his vegetarianism. This chapter argues that such features mark the origins of a trope that I define in this thesis as that of the monstrous vegan, a figure that is subsequently iterated across two centuries of Anglophone literature. In addition, by examining the ways in which the novel reflects on the

¹⁸ For Homans, patriarchal culture sees women associated with the literal, as that which makes (male) language necessary: “The literal will be valueless and the figurative valuable because what the son searches for is not the mother herself, the literal that is forbidden by the father’s law, but figures for her” (13). The bodilyness of Victor’s monster is seen to associate him with the female, making the novel a literalisation of the romantic imagination: “*Frankenstein* is the story of what it feels like to be the undesired embodiment of romantic imaginative desire” (Homans 108).

process of literary creation and literary form, I argue that *Frankenstein* displays an uncanny prescience of the monstrous results of contemporary attempts to write veganism.

Framed by letters sent by the explorer Walton to his sister Margaret Saville, whilst on an expedition to discover the North-West passage, the narrative of *Frankenstein* proceeds to tell the story of Victor Frankenstein, a stranger picked up by Walton's ship in the middle of the Arctic. Victor describes his upbringing and childhood in idyllic terms whilst setting the stage for his increasingly fervent and ill-fated interest in the natural sciences. These come to fruition during his time at university in Ingolstadt, culminating in the creation of his now infamous monster. Instantly rejecting that which he has made, Victor undergoes a period of convalescence and his monster disappears, seemingly without a trace. The middle section of the novel provides the details of the creature's experiences during this time, told as part of his attempt to convince Victor to create for him a female mate as hideous as himself. Learning to read and write whilst living in a hovel attached to the De Lacey family home, the creature is initiated into the ways of mankind and finds himself longing for companionship. However, after finding himself spurned by human society due to his monstrous physicality, he embarks upon a quest of revenge against his maker, murdering Victor's infant brother William (and framing Frankenstein's servant girl Justine, leading to her execution), close friend Henry Clerval, and wife Elizabeth.

The novel has often been read as a warning against the hubris of male scientific endeavour and its enduring legacy has seen it amass an ever-widening range of interpretations, from a critique of Romantic creativity to a political allegory for the French Revolution, and adopted and proselytised by various schools of thought, including the psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial.¹⁹ However, despite the vivisection undertaken in

¹⁹ See, for example, Marc Rubenstein "'My Accursed Origin': The Search for the Mother in Frankenstein," Mladen Dolar "'I shall be with you on your wedding night': Lacan and the Uncanny," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Ellen Moers *Literary Women*, Margaret Homans *Bearing the Word*, and Marie Mulvey-Roberts *Dangerous Bodies*.

Victor's insatiable scientific quest, "tortur[ing] the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (36), his admission that "the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials" (37), and the meat-free pacifism espoused by his resultant creation, declaring "My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment" (120), *Frankenstein's* engagement with discourses of Romantic vegetarianism has gone relatively unacknowledged,²⁰ despite the wealth of critical exegeses since the scholarly rehabilitation of the novel in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Just as this thesis does not seek to label texts as vegan polemic, this chapter, in asserting the importance of such elements, does not seek to reduce *Frankenstein* to a singular vegan meaning. As Fred Botting elucidates, Shelley's novel refuses to grant definitive meaning or provide a unifying conclusion. Disrupting generic classification, Botting suggests that criticism of the novel is itself influenced by the same impulses ungirding the failed hubris of both Walton and Frankenstein. For example, the seeming obsession with biographical studies of Shelley, arising from "the desire to produce a unifying motive for the novel, a resolution of the structural instabilities that the text does not immediately present" (Botting 73), mirrors the epistemic quests of Walton and Frankenstein, who "As readers and failed authors of a somewhat different kind ... wish to occupy a singular pole from which all significance, all meaning, can be created, ordered and fixed" (Botting 132). For J. Jack Halberstam, such resistance to a unifying or cohesive sense of "meaning" is endemic to nineteenth-century Gothic fiction as a whole. The production of fear is seen to emanate from "a vertiginous excess of meaning," where "multiple interpretations are embedded in the text and part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that meaning itself runs

²⁰ Notable exceptions include Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990). Whilst Adams was the first to explore the vegetarian elements of *Frankenstein* in any real depth, it was also noted in 1972, with Christopher Small designating the creature as "vegetarian" (165) in *Ariel Like a Harpy*. In addition, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar make passing reference to the creature's "implicit dream of founding a new, vegetarian race" (236) in their 1979 *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

riot” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 2). As I note in the introduction to this thesis, by embodying everything that “the human” is not, monsters, whether representing anxieties around class, race, or gender, make way for “the invention of the human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 22).

My reading of *Frankenstein* builds on Botting’s analysis of the multivalent meanings embedded within the text itself and expands the remit of Halberstam’s analysis to explore the creature’s embodiment of vegetarian ideals. This is not to participate in an endless production of meaning. My analysis instead explicates the novel’s own critique of meaning-making, situating the origins of the monstrous vegan within a narrative that demonstrates the monstrous results of attempts to circumscribe ethical identities onto corporeal bodies and provides a commentary on attempts to write and transmit such identities through literary narratives. The first section of this chapter therefore seeks to outline the vegan elements of the novel in relation to its early nineteenth-century context. The second section explicates how these elements come together to define the monstrous vegan, established here in relation to four key traits. The final section turns to *Frankenstein*’s prescience for thinking about the embodiment of vegan identity in the contemporary period, exploring the implicit comedy of the novel and its appropriation as camp artefact through theatrical and filmic adaptations. Such elements are pertinent to the subsequent chapters of this thesis, particularly as they manifest in chapter four.

Romantic Vegetarianism

The long nineteenth century saw the development of a discursively legible vegetarian identity, and marks the advent of a vocabulary that both named and invented modern vegetarianism.²¹

²¹ This follows a Foucauldian logic, as outlined in relation to the birth of the modern homosexual in his *The History of Sexuality*.

Whilst not appearing as a term in print until 1842, the popularity of vegetarian diets was evident before its lexical coinage in a range of groups variously referring to themselves as Pythagoreans, followers of a “natural diet,” or Brahmins. Similarly, whilst veganism was not coined until over a century later, in 1944, the adoption of what would now be considered predominantly vegan diets, lifestyles, and consumer choices were also increasingly practiced in the period. In 1824, for example, Lewis Gompertz, a humanitarian and one of the founding members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (later the RSPCA), published *Moral Inquiries on the Situation of Man and Brutes*, a text which rails against a range of exploitative uses of nonhuman animal, from riding in horse-drawn carriages to the wearing of leather and eating of eggs.

The adoption of such diets and lifestyles towards the end of the eighteenth century is often associated with the radicalism of the French revolution and the potential to transform and defamiliarise what had previously appeared as divinely ordained. As Rod Preece argues, in his history of vegetarian thought, 1789 can be seen as intimately connected to the “the decisive moment in which the balance [of the rejection of animal flesh] tilts from thought to action” (232) with the proliferation of pamphlets and tracts advocating a move to a “natural diet.” Of particular interest for this chapter are the works of John Oswald, Joseph Ritson and Percy Bysshe Shelley,²² composing an “extremely articulate if very loose in organisation” (Preece 232) group of vegetarian radicals in the period. As Preece notes, Oswald, a British writer and philosopher, explicitly demonstrates the link between vegetarianism and the French revolution, with his proud assertion of his membership of the Jacobin club on the title page of his 1791 tract *The Cry of Nature; Or, an Appeal to Mercy and to Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals*.

²² In this chapter, “Shelley” refers to Mary Shelley, whilst Percy Bysshe Shelley is referred to by his forename.

However, as Marilyn Butler argues, in her analysis of the political contexts of British Romantic writing, traditional conceptions of Romanticism prove limiting in their desire to posit the destruction of the *ancien regime* as the sole direct cause of Romantic revolutions against authority. She notes the significance of the late eighteenth century as a time of mass social change and industrial revolution. In relation to the vegetarian ideals of the period, the increasing distance of urban populations from nonhuman animals and modern industrial farming processes contributed to a dramatic shift in human-animal relations.²³ Similarly, whilst Timothy Morton acknowledges that British Romantic vegetarianism was often a political statement associated with the French Revolution, he notes that it was equally an ethical statement about the rights of animals that operated as a discourse in its own right. For Morton, vegetarianism is “a specifically *Romantic* ideological practice” (*Cultures of Taste* 6), emerging alongside the birth of the modern consumer and incorporating contemporaneous debates regarding social inclusion, the environment, and public health. Morton writes extensively, across multiple works, on the widespread growth of vegetarian subcultures in the period, representing: a negotiation with the rise of consumerism and the power of politicised abstinence; a health-conscious choice with clear medical benefits; an awareness of environmental degradation; a denunciation of the excesses of capitalist modernity and the “culture of luxury”; a reaction to urbanisation, industrialisation and increasing food adulteration; a response to new theological and political questions about nonhuman animals; and a claim to encompass a wider circle of social inclusion.

In addition, knowledge of Hinduism, transported to Britain from the colonies, played a significant role in shaping Romantic vegetarianism. Tristram Stuart notes the significance of John Zepheniah Holwell, a prominent employee of the English East India Company, whose

²³ For more on this see David Perkins’s *Romanticism and Animal Rights*, where he argues that such changes led to a mass increase in expressions of kindness to animals amongst urban populations.

1771 defence of Hinduism sought to establish the global necessity of “the institution of a worldwide vegetarian reform” (277). Holwell’s written account of Indian religions saw the creation of a hybrid Hinduism that merged with Christian doctrine and ancient Greek mythology and centred around explaining and defending the consideration of nonhuman animals in ancient Brahmin texts. As Stuart summarises, “[Holwell] discerned that Hindu scriptures told the story of a vegetarian Golden Age and three subsequent ages of decay and decline” (278). Imperialists and soldiers such as Oswald returned from India heavily influenced by both vegetarian cultures and the authority of works such as Holwell’s.

Holwell’s amalgamation of religious doctrines forwards the idea that the origins of humanity were vegetarian, situating meat-eating as the locus of man’s continual fall. This logic was central to much vegetarian writing of the period. Percy, for example, positions meat-eating as the “root of all evil.” In the notes to his early epic poem *Queen Mab*, later published separately as *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, the rejection of both meat and alcohol is promoted as a solution to, variously: penury, disease, crime, mental and bodily derangement, the vice of commerce and avarice of commercial monopoly, the desire of tyranny, class inequality, unsustainable land use, food waste, and national security, amongst other social ills (107-120). Furthermore, Percy argues that the relationship between vegetarianism and the origins of man is proved by its continual appearance in allegories of origins, from Prometheus to Genesis. The mythology of origins at the heart of religious narratives of theistic creation are seen as representative of a broader human truth: “The language spoken ... by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites” (P. B. Shelley 107). As I detail in chapter three, the idea of a shared global mythology of man’s origins is a central thematic concern for Margaret Atwood’s rewriting of *Frankenstein*. In each case, the writing of origins laments the loss of an original

vegetarianism, a lament that itself functions to construct and reinforce a narrative of plant-based origins.

Envisaging a prelapsarian Golden Age of shared relations between human and nonhuman animals before the advent of meat-eating, Percy ruminates on the myth of Prometheus as a way of understanding the Fall: “Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles” (108). Such rhetoric permeates the narrative of *Frankenstein*. For example, the creature enacts the descent of man from vegetarianism to meat-eating through his transformation from natural man, as defined by Rousseau,²⁴ to monster corrupted by the human sphere. This corruption is marked by the creature’s discovery of fire and its association with meat-eating. Left behind by “wandering beggars” (81), fire is encountered as the prerequisite for meat consumption. The creature learns how to tend the Promethean gift and finds that “some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees” (82). The designation of “wandering beggars,” here suggests both the possible moral degeneracy of the lower classes and the moral degeneracy of a hierarchical society that creates such an underclass. Certainly, the De Lacey family, as an idealised representation of bourgeois family life, are also found exiled from their native France and left destitute as a result of social injustice.

Furthermore, the creature’s status as an assemblage of both human and nonhuman animal parts makes literal the process of construction and naturalisation imbued within the Romantic narrative of vegetarian origins. Mirroring Rousseau’s natural man whilst living in the forest after fleeing from Victor’s laboratory, the creature survives on a diet of nuts, roots,

²⁴ Rousseau’s establishes his conception of “the natural man” in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (or *Second Discourse*). The natural man, associated with the origins of man before civilisation, is described as living in a pure state of nature: primitive, solitary, and pre-linguistic.

and berries. Embodying the notion of an original vegetarian body, his dream of exile in South America evokes a return to a pre-Promethean world, in which “the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food” (120). However, the creature’s composition hints at the possible deconstruction or unravelling of such narratives, as a hideous and malformed approximation of a human being. Furthermore, there is a cyclical temporality initiated through his desire for exile, as expressed in the future tense, where “neither [Victor] nor any other human being shall ever see us again: I will go to the vast wilds of South America” (120), whilst conjuring a past idyll. As I explore below, the creature’s future vision alludes to a discursive framework imbibed from his reading of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. This is overt in the mirroring of both the creature’s and Adam’s desire for a female companion: just as Adam laments that the animals upon earth do not quench his thirst for companionship, “Among unequals what society/Can sort, what harmony of true delight?” (Milton VIII. 383-384), the creature desires a companion who is “of the same nature as myself” (120).

Percy’s vegetarianism has received far more critical attention than Shelley’s, despite Shelley also eating a predominantly vegetarian and oftentimes vegan diet throughout her life. In the plethora of vegetarian histories published over the past two decades, Shelley’s vegetarianism is repeatedly undermined, particularly as it relates to Percy. Preece, for example, notes that Percy’s temporary lapse in vegetarianism at the close of 1817 was because “Mary, the second Mrs. Shelley, persuaded Percy to go on what proved to be a very temporary flesh diet because of his illness” (257). Assigning Shelley the status as one of a succession of appendages to Percy and lacking any evidence as to Mary’s choices following Percy’s death, Preece nevertheless speculates that “Perhaps ... she abandoned the fleshless regimen. Perhaps she was never as fully committed as Percy” (261). One possible reason for the relative focus on Percy’s vegetarianism over Shelley’s, or, arguably a further manifestation of this bias, is that whilst vegetarian characters appear frequently in Shelley’s novels, they are often seen as

little more than literary incarnations of her husband. For example, Adrian of *The Last Man* (1826) is often read as an explicit and thinly veiled portrait of Percy, a pacifist who refuses to hunt, instead spending “hours in watching the tribes of lovely and almost tame animals with which [his parks and preserves were] stocked, and ordered that greater care should be taken of them than ever” (Shelley 24).

However, Shelley’s literary engagements with the contemporaneous vegetarian radical circles within which she moved, whilst often ambivalent, are significant. Acknowledging the vegetarian contexts influencing Shelley during the conception of *Frankenstein* is a central project of Adams’s vegetarian-feminist theory and the recovery of the novel’s vegetarian elements a means of understanding Shelley’s feminist politics. Adams promotes the novel as an exemplary case for demonstrating “the benefits of re-membering rather than dismembering vegetarian tradition” (*Sexual Politics* 95). She argues that *Frankenstein* explicitly brings together radicalism, feminism, and vegetarianism, and draws attention to the narrative’s engagement with the vegetarianism of Ritson and Percy, amongst others, who “uncoded all tales of the primeval fall with the interpretation that they were implicitly about the introduction of meat eating” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 112). The neglect of positive climates of vegetarian thought influencing the novel is posited as a form of critical dismemberment akin to the dismemberment of nonhuman animals processed for meat consumption, excluding the validity of vegetarian lives and ideals from the established canon. Adams thus notes key vegetarian texts from which Shelley explicitly draws, from Ovid to Rousseau.

Frankenstein might indeed be characterised as a fictionalisation of the plethora of contemporaneous radical tracts in support of meat-free diets. I draw attention here to the influence of Oswald’s vegetarian discourse on *Frankenstein*, epitomised by the following extract, from his *Cry of Nature*:

Ye sons of modern science, who court not wisdom in her walks of silent meditation in the grove, who behold her not in the living loveliness of her works, but expect to meet her in the midst of obscenity and corruption; ye who dig for knowledge in the depth of the dunghill, and who hope to discover wisdom enthroned amid the fragments of mortality, and the abhorrence of the senses; ye that with ruffian violence interrogate trembling nature, who plunge into her maternal bosom the butcher knife, and, in quest of your nefarious science, the fibres of agonising animals, delight to scrutinize; ye dare also to violate the human form august; and, holding up the entrails of man, ye exclaim; behold the bowels of a carnivorous animal!—Barbarians! to these very bowels I appeal against your cruel dogmas; to these bowels, fraught with mercy, and entwined with compassion; to these bowels which nature hath sanctified to the sentiments of pity and of gratitude; to the yearnings of kindred, to the melting tenderness of love! (31-33).

Oswald posits scientific ambition as a male endeavour, with his address to the “sons” of modern science standing in contrast to the female pronouns attached to the abstract notions of wisdom and a “trembling” mother nature. The lauding of wisdom as found in the “living loveliness” of nature mirrors the logic often associated with Romanticism, where science could be attacked “as though the banishing of the divine from nature had emptied the world of its mystery” (Wu). Furthermore, a masculine gendered science is seen to violently attack and rupture the maternal essence of the natural world, a mirror to Victor’s usurpation of the female reproductive role. Describing human bowels as “sanctified to the sentiments of pity and gratitude” Oswald critiques the idea that humans are by nature carnivorous, attacking those who use such contested arguments as justification for the cruelty inflicted by practices such as vivisection. Adams notes that the creature’s composition from slaughterhouse remains renders him, at least in part, biologically herbivorous, allowing Shelley to “circumven[t] the anatomical argument that vegetarians of this time found compelling and their critics ludicrous” (*Sexual Politics* 104). Oswald further pleads that the cruelties enacted against nonhuman animals be abandoned in favour of human virtues of compassion, gratitude, and love, mirroring the locus of struggle in Shelley’s novel: Victor’s abdication of the love of his family in favour of his experiments with life.

In addition to Oswald, Ritson's vegetarian writings also provide a key influence on the narrative of *Frankenstein*. Ritson was a friend of both Mary and Percy Shelley and his 1802 *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food: As a Moral Duty* heavily influenced Percy's later treatise in favour of natural diet, first appearing as his notes to *Queen Mab*. Ritson is of particular interest for Adams because of the ways in which his vegetarianism is intertwined with his attitude to the written word: his resistance to the intrusion of editorial dismemberment is seen to encourage an interrelation between "respecting the integrity of a text and the integrity of animals' bodies" (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 85). Ritson is thus employed to bolster Adams's broader argument that vegetarianism must be read literally, avoiding superfluity of meaning in favour of the direct transmission of textual meaning. The "meaning" of vegetarian words is here traceable to an original integrity that allows for their literal and unadulterated transmission to the reader. Whilst this provides an apt metaphorical comparison for both Ritson and Adams, resisting both the dismemberment of texts and nonhuman animals, in order to be made palatable for human consumption, it simplifies the nature of the literary and its relation to the literal. The desire to "preserve the integrity of an original text," relies on a model of original textual meaning that negates an often necessary ambiguity, inconsistency, and mutation of meaning across the literary sphere, as the following three chapters will demonstrate.

In re-membering the text and recovering that which is designated as its "literal" meaning, the vegetarian word functions, for Adams, as a means of literal conversion to vegetarianism and a metaphorical inscription onto the body of the reader:

The signature of a vegetarian in a vegetarian text ... is the signature of someone trying to write on the reader, leave a mark on the reader's own personal text of meat. It is an attempt to make their words flesh and to stop the story of meat. In their expectation of a literal response, they seek no more dismembered texts, dismembered animals, but instead hope for a re-membered text that protects the literal, living animals (*Sexual Politics* 93).

“The literal” refers here to the embodied presence of nonhuman animals, rendered invisible by the structure of the absent referent. Adams invests in the possibility of recovering the literal body of the nonhuman animal from its representation in text, without metaphorical distortion. Both the dismembered text and the dismembered animal present a truth that must be recovered from the obfuscation enacted by meat-eating culture. Vegetarianism is positioned as a feminist concern that is inextricably related to literality: “When women writers include vegetarianism in a novel it will represent a complex layering of respect for the literal and an acknowledgement of the structure of the absent referent” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 90). In this context, the literal refers also to the exact and faithful transmission, copy, or reproduction of an original textual meaning. Bearing the vegetarian word sees the faithful transmission of the words and diets of previous vegetarians and asserts an expectation for the reader’s literal response.

However, Shelley’s novel explicitly addresses the difficulties of such thinking about literary meaning and transmission. As Joyce Zonana notes, the written word is offered as the guardian of “proof” throughout the novel. For example, the letters passed between Agatha, Felix, and Safie retain a sense of authenticity throughout all three of the novel’s concentric narratives: offered as proof of the creature’s tale by the creature to Frankenstein, by Frankenstein to Walton, and by Walton to his sister. The creature offers the letters to Victor, claiming that “they will prove the truth of my tale” (99). However, as Zonana notes, the letters are only “copies” made by the creature from the originals and therefore ineffective, or at least inadequate, as a criterion of proof. Furthermore, Safie’s letters, from which the creature’s copies are made, are themselves the product of translations and transcriptions. Since Safie does not speak French, she “found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover

by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father's, who understood French" (99). Safie's thoughts are here mediated both through language and by men, with the servant's relation to her tyrannical father intimating a possible means of interception and interference with her message. The creature's insistence that such words function as proof, the unmediated expression of other minds, negates the overt signs in their composition and conveyance of the possibility for error, mistranslation, or forgery, and betrays the slipperiness of the written word; an unreliable means of transmitting meaning.

I thus argue that the creature's allusion to the vegetarian words of contemporaneous radicals—whether referencing the biological herbivorism or plant-based origins of man—demonstrates a patriarchal control over discursive spheres, and the inaccessibility of truth or authenticity through language.²⁵ Faith in the re-membered text inscribed onto the body of the reader, through which Shelley and Ritson are said to “presume a continuous relationship between text and reader in which the text, protected, left whole, will have an effect on the reader who greets the words literally” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 93), stands in juxtaposition to the hybrid composition of a monster who sets out to disrupt and destroy Victor's family: the symbolic destruction of a conventional source of meaning and self-conception.

As I argue in the introduction to this thesis, the conception of vegan, rather than vegetarian, words provides a more accurate conception of the nature of literary transmission

²⁵ The relationship between the written word and “proof” is also explored in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, a novel noted as a direct literary predecessor to *Frankenstein*. Caleb's record of the past functions as a concerted effort to redeem both himself and Falkland in the historical record: “These papers shall preserve the truth: they shall one day be published, and then the world shall do justice on us both” (292). The contents of the chest from which Caleb is said to have discovered Falkland's secret remains a mystery throughout. Caleb describes: “Once I thought it contained some murderous instrument or relique connected with the fate of the unhappy Tyrrel. I am now persuaded that the secret it inclosed was a faithful narrative of that and its concomitant transactions to be reserved in case of the worst, that, if by any unforeseen event the guilt of Falkland should ever come to be fully disclosed, it might contribute to redeem the wreck of his reputation” (293). Here, writing is source of the truth of one's honourable soul rather than actions in the world. Caleb's story is to supply the place of Falkland's narrative and the act of narration becomes the secret upon which the novel itself is premised.

and afterlives. Vegetarian identity itself risks perpetuating conventional narrative structures by granting closure to ethical responses. When it comes to narrative veganism, Adams's theory risks reinscribing a carnivorous textual consumption, assimilating models of identity that negate veganism's necessary enmeshment in inconsistent and contradictory responses to the suffering of nonhuman animals. In what follows, I establish the origins of the monstrous vegan. Whilst Adams focuses on addressing the lacuna in critical scholarship regarding the vegetarian foundations of *Frankenstein*, I argue that the creature reflects the ambivalence, contradictions, and anxieties that cluster around vegan modes of being. Shelley's text does not simply transform the ethical ideals of the time into narrative form but presents a creature—simultaneously human and nonhuman, female and male, civilised European and colonial savage—that functions as a monstrous embodiment of veganism's challenge to fixed notions of humanity.

Defining the Monstrous Vegan

Frankenstein establishes the foundations of the monstrous vegan trope traced across this thesis. The monstrous vegan is a complex amalgamation of anxieties and contradictions distilled here in relation to four key traits. First, monstrous vegans do not eat animals. Second, they are hybrid assemblages of both human and animal parts, resistant to taxonomic classification. Third, they are sired outside of heterosexual reproduction, the product of male scientific endeavour. And fourth, monstrous vegans possess an intimate relation to the act of writing, often as overt metaphors for the process of literary creation.

“Acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment”

As Adams evidences in detail, Victor's monstrous creation is a vegetarian. After fleeing from Victor's laboratory he describes foraging for “berries ... found hanging on the trees” (80) and

sustains himself, over the course of the novel, on nuts, acorns, roots, cheese, and bread.

Furthermore, as quoted above, he argues of his essentially peaceful and benevolent nature in the following terms: “I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment” (120). This vegan diet of acorns and berries associates the monster with a pre-Promethean Eden: convincing Victor of his duty to create for him a female companion the creature describes an exile in South America where “the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food” (120), suggesting a rejection both of meat-eating and the use of fire as a means of obscuring and making palatable its origins.

Morton argues that “Frankenstein creates a monster who finds out about how good it is to cook flesh. His cooked offals supplement his diet of nuts, roots and acorns” (*Revolution in Taste* 47). This is a striking misreading of the text. Finding the offal roasted, the creature describes attempting “therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved” (82). Here the pronoun “my” establishes his diet as confined to plant-based fare and distinct from that of humankind. Rather than “supplement,” a linguistic turn of phrase the seems to unwittingly betray Morton’s investment in the necessity of meat-eating, the offal appears as an aberration that reinforces the creature’s commitment to “natural diet.”

Following his initial sampling of the meat he does not consume animal flesh again in the novel, and indeed, never desires it. It is only the Romantic vegetarian diet, “The vegetables in the garden, the milk and cheese ... placed at the windows of some of the cottages” that are described as “allur[ing his] appetite” (83).

Furthermore, the meat made available to the creature is “offal,” referring to parts from the nonhuman animal considered waste, offcuts made during preparation of prime cuts, or parts deemed unsuitable for human consumption. This draws attention to the class inequalities that sees the “wandering beggars” consuming only the lowest quality meat and implicates

meat-eating within the injustice of hierarchical class structures. It also provides a stark contrast to the fruits and vegetables that sustain the creature, offered as products of an abundant nature available to even the most wretched of monsters. In addition, according to the *OED*, “offal” also signifies decomposing or mutilated flesh and slain bodies, providing a punning reflection on the nature of the creature himself and his origins in Victor’s laboratory. Meat-eating is here enacted and embodied by the creature as a monstrous degradation and corruption of the human form.

In addition, I argue that the offal symbolises the creature’s fall from grace. For Percy, “The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God, and loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet” (107), with unnatural diet referring here to meat-eating. Certainly, the offal eaten by the creature can be read as a monstrous parody of the apple from the tree of knowledge. Whilst living in the forest the creature observes with delight the “pleasant sound” that emerges from “the throats of the little winged animals” (81) with whom he cohabits and describes attempts to imitate their songs. However, his entry into the human social order is marked by a Promethean corruption. These instinctive responses and attempts at interspecies engagement are lost as he becomes educated in the reality of “vice and bloodshed” (96), a consequence of learning to read and write. The eating of offal thus marks a transition point in the creature’s development, from the recognition of a shared community with the birds of the forest to a Promethean introduction to meat-eating that leads to his eventual adoption of the destructive violence associated with the human social order. If the knowledge revealed in the Biblical tale of Genesis reveals the reality of death to Adam and Eve, the offal presents death as meaningless waste that corrupts the creature’s originary pacifism.

“The dissecting room and the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials”

As numerous scholars have argued, no definitive answer is ever provided within the text as to whether Frankenstein’s creature is human or animal (see, for example, McLane, and Armstrong) and his crippling isolation stems from his inability to fit within either taxonomical classification. Whilst Victor’s initial plans see him set out in pursuit of “the creation of an human being” (35), the complexity of such an operation sees him resolve “contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature” (36). Rather than a perfect human specimen, Victor’s ambition becomes to create an entirely “new species” (36). The scientific egotism of his project is clear as he fantasises about how such a species would “bless [him] as its creator and source” (36). The creature’s anomalous creation distinguishes him from traditional origin narratives, neither the product of Divine creation nor heterosexual reproduction, whilst his corporeal origins from both human and nonhuman animal parts aligns him with proto-evolutionary discourses. This hybrid anatomy produces the creature’s monstrous aesthetic and, as Jackson Petsche comments, “by virtue of his very make-up [the creature] destabilises the anthropocentric human-animal binary” (103). This destabilisation manifests in a variety of ways.

First, it suggests that human identity is mapped onto the field of vision and visual recognition. The creature’s grasp of the French language and evident faculty of reason serves to temporarily convince the blind De Lacey, and Victor himself, of his claim to humanity. However, when the younger De Lacey encounter his monstrous physicality, they experience “horror and consternation” (110). In addition, following the creature’s lengthy account of his life, Victor describes that “His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him ... but when I looked upon him ... my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred” (121). Thus, as Maureen McLane argues, in her evaluation of the novel as a critique of contemporary perspectives on the perfectibility of mankind through education, the narrative strongly

suggests that “a body requires a human appearance to stimulate, elicit and participate in human sympathetic reactions” (976).

There are racial and imperial undertones to such conceptions of what constitutes a human appearance. For example, after spotting the creature “which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature” (12), Walton describes Victor “not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European” (13), equating the monstrous with that which falls outside of ideas of European identity. However, it is Victor, rather than the creature, who exhibits an animality typically associated with savagery upon boarding the vessel. He is described with an expression of “wildness,” “gnash[ing] his teeth,” and with an assumed deprivation of understanding (13-14). This acts as a presentiment of the ways in which he himself comes to resemble the monster, described at a later point in the novel in identical terms, with a “gnashing of teeth” (116), after having vowed eternal vengeance on mankind. Despite this, Walton forms an immediate allegiance with Victor based on his recognisably European appearance. In contrast, the creature, when encountered upon Walton’s ship, expresses “grief and horror” over Frankenstein’s dead body, suggesting his possession of human emotions that nonetheless leads Walton to shut his eyes “involuntarily” based on his “appalling hideousness” (187). This prioritises the corporeal over distinctions such as reason and rationality in definitions of the human. By playing into the racial elements of animality, in which it is a distinctly white, European identity that is most representative of what it means to be human, the novel draws attention to the inadequacy of such categories.

Discourses around race and Empire are further significant throughout the novel. Reports, and subsequent anxieties, over cannibalism amongst so-called savages played an important part in Romantic discourses of colonisation, where “British and European explorers often brought a fear of being eaten by ‘primitives’ with them on their voyages” (Nichols 104).

In *Frankenstein*, Victor's infant brother William, upon first confronting the monster, immediately screams "monster! ugly wretch! you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces" (117). For Petsche, that William's immediate fear is of being eaten is the result of his confrontation with the creature's anatomy as "a bizarre by-product of meat-eating" (98) and the threat of becoming meat. William's fear of being eaten is also linked to an imperial narrative of cannibalism and the understanding of European humanity through consumption. The association of cannibalism with meat consumption is clear in Ritson's work, who concludes that "there can be no doubt" that practices such as cannibalism and human sacrifice are "a consequence of the use of animal food" (124). Ritson also sought to invoke anxiety around the act of meat consumption by suggesting that, when cooked, "the appearance, savour, and taste of [human and animal flesh] would be nearly, if not entirely the same" (124). The creature can be seen as a grotesque, metaphorical embodiment of this anxiety, confronting William with what it means to be a European consumer whose humanity is reinforced through "the already alienated status of the slaughtered animals which carnivorousness seeks to efface" (Petsche 99), as opposed to abject notions of cannibalism. Often rendered in descriptions as that which is not European, the creature links colonial discourses of monstrous consumption to the monstrous embodiment of nineteenth-century meat production. This challenges both meat-eating and the distinction between the European self and other through a destabilisation of the binary drawn between the human and nonhuman animal.

A latent fear of bestiality also permeates *Frankenstein*. For Ann Mellor, Victor's dismemberment of his unfinished female creature is expressive of his fear of "uninhibited female sexuality" (120). Victor articulates his fear of the female creature's power to reproduce an entire "race of devils" (138) as well as an anxiety about the errancy of her desires, directed towards "the superior beauty of man" (138) rather than his firstborn monster. The latter hints at the related, if unexpressed, fear that man might be tempted into sexual union with that

which is not human. The creature's physicality, as human and nonhuman animal hybrid, represents the monstrous results of such a union. By incorporating the bestial undertones of this fear, one can read Victor's suggestion of the threat to humankind posed by a "race of devils," as the anxiety that if such a race were to propagate, their offspring would further destabilise the binary division between the human and nonhuman animal. Furthermore, such reproductions would produce hybrids over which Victor would have no control. This fear of the bestial has clear links to contemporary fears of miscegenation, further encouraged by the creature's link to ethnic otherness. The latent bestiality of the novel can thus be read as a threat to the human-animal distinction alongside racial and gendered threats to white European patriarchy.

Rather than conservatively redressing the fixity of the term "human," by including ethnic others and women into its sphere of inclusion, Shelley's creature enables a disruption of such categorisations themselves. For example, the objectifying power of the male gaze, responsible for policing the boundaries of that which counts as "human," becomes a source of anxiety when it is turned back upon its agent. As Petsche notes, the "dull yellow eye" (38) of the creature is reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's animal gaze.²⁶ For Petsche, "Victor's terror at the sight of his monster exemplifies an anthropocentric anxiety at being looked at or addressed by the nonhuman" (102). Victor wakes up in horror to find that the creature's "eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on [him]" (40). His questioning of the status of the creature's eyes alienates them from the human sphere, suggesting that certain modes of

²⁶ In *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida famously registers the experience of being looked at whilst naked by his cat: "It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbour ... than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat" (11).

looking are restricted to a human ability to respond.²⁷ For Mladen Dolar, the creature's challenge to the autonomy of the singular human subject means that "The principle source of the uncanniness of the monster, for Frankenstein, is precisely the gaze" (20). Writing from a Lacanian perspective, Dolar argues that "The emergence of this impossible subject [the creature] is the emergence of the gaze ... One could say that the monster's terrible appearance is only a mask, an imaginary cover to provide a frame for his gaze" (20).

The reader gains access to the creature's gaze through his obsessive observations of the De Lacey family. When he first encounters the family's hardship he questions "What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain?" (87). This rhetorical evaluation of whether the humans he encounters "express pain" alludes to the contemporaneous writings of Jeremy Bentham. As I note in the introduction to this thesis, Bentham's footnote on the ethics of human treatment of nonhuman animals, part of a larger work on utilitarian principles, offers the following: "the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" (144). The creature's instinctive sympathy relates back to the expressive power of eyes here. His observation of the De Lacey's tears as a sign of their unhappiness is a formative part of his attempts to enter into human society.

In addition, the creature's narrative, prior his acquisition of human language, destabilises the conventional humanist subject as sole purveyor of the world. For example, that his observations of the De Laceys take place from within a pig-sty hints at the spectral presence of pigs who may also have been watching the family. In Derrida's terms, it draws attention to a certain failure to take into account "the fact that what they call 'animal' could *look* at them, and *address* them from down there, from a wholly other origin" (*The Animal*

²⁷ In a footnote to *Tarrying with the Negative*, Slavoj Žižek writes that "The nontransparent 'depthless' eye [of Frankenstein's monster] blocks our access to the 'soul,' to the infinite abyss of the 'person,' thus turning it into a soulless monster: not simply a nonsubjective machine, but rather an uncanny subject that has not yet been submitted to the process of 'subjectivization' which confers upon it the depth of 'personality'" (240).

13). The creature's ethical reasoning and observation of the family turns human beings into objects of the gaze, destabilising anthropocentric assumptions.

Eyes are an obsessive focus of the novel,²⁸ accompanying numerous descriptions of acts of seeing, looking, gazing, observing, perceiving, and watching. They appear as sensory organs with the power to elicit a variant range of affective states, including: elevation of the soul, supreme delight, nervousness, nostalgia, horror, hatred, and sympathy. Sight also functions as a means of acquiring knowledge about others, a guide of morality, and a signal for states of birth, death, sleep, and grief. Turning her attention to the vitalist debates of the period, Charlotte Sleight argues that "Eyes are the traditional window on the soul - and also the doorway to the mind for that most important of the empirical senses, sight" (69), and suggests that the central anxiety of *Frankenstein* is the question of whether the body is a purely physical organism or the container for an immortal soul. Certainly, from the outset of the novel, Walton describes the metaphoric "intellectual eye" of "the soul" (6). The dull yellow eyes of the creature are thus read as a sign of soul-less-ness and his uncanny provocation of horror is explained by the fear that if we have no underlying soul, "then we are all monsters" (Sleight 71).

Eyesight often functions in *Frankenstein* as an agent of predation. Having resolved to pursue the creature at the expense of all other earthly concerns, Victor describes how "the continual protraction of hope ... often wrung bitter drops of despondency and grief from my eyes. Despair had indeed almost secured her prey" (176). Here, he figures himself as prey to affective states seemingly beyond his control. However, this is followed by a glimmer of hope: "I viewed the expanse before me with anguish, when suddenly my eye caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain" (176). Victor's eyes gain a predatory agency through metaphor,

²⁸ In the 2008 OUP edition, eyes are directly mentioned ninety-three times whilst the novel itself, including the original preface, spans one-hundred-and-ninety-one pages. Eyes thus appear at a rate close to every other page.

associated with the transitive verb to catch. This transition from prey to predator is one seen throughout the novel, particularly in relation to eyes. For example, Walton describes that Victor's "eyes have generally an expression of wildness" (14), animalising him, whilst Victor describes Elizabeth eyes as "as lively as a bird's" (20). In these instances, eyes draw attention to an inherent animality in man, in juxtaposition to that which Sleight suggests as their status as indicators of a soul or common humanity. In this sense, eyes serve to reinforce the idea of the all-powerful, all-seeing humanist subject at the same time that they animalise the human in a proto-evolutionary rhetoric of origins. Eyes thus come to function as a marker of sameness that connects the creatural to the human. In addition, the novel intimates that acts of looking, and the establishment of oneself as a subject in relation to a field of vision, is never quite innocent.

Another significant aspect of the novel's depiction of vision is found at the numerous points at which sight is refused or obscured. For example, when Clerval asks of the cause of Victor's anxious state, he responds "'Do not ask me,' cried I, putting my hands before my eyes" (43). Confronting the creature for the first time since his disappearance from the laboratory, Victor describes that "its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes" (76), whilst, when asking to be relieved of the sight of its hideous form, the creature responds "'Thus I relieve thee, my creator,' he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes" (79). In addition, Victor describes the creature as "too horrible for human eyes to behold" (119), a fact realised by the creature when, on confronting William, the latter "placed his hands before his eyes" (117). Moreover, whilst undertaking the construction of a female creature, Victor notes that "During my first experiment . . . my mind was intently fixed on the sequel of my labour; and my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings" (137), and thinking that the monster has come to taunt him in prison in Ireland he expresses "I put my hand before my eyes" (152). Similarly, Walton, upon first seeing the monster, describes

that “I shut my eyes involuntarily” (187). In Victor’s description that “my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings,” his refusal to see moves from the literal to the metaphorical, a form of moral blindness. This ascription of moral judgement to sight suggests a relation between viewing and witnessing, and looking as a means of corruption. In the examples listed above, Victor’s continual placing of his hands over his eyes enables a temporary refusal to acknowledge the horror of his monster. Furthermore, his refrain that the monster is too hideous “for human eyes” (76), polices the border of human morality. Such instances serve as hyperbolic failures to describe the creature to the reader and suggest a selective blindness that maintains the parameters that define civilised human society.

However, if blindness here functions as a preservation of ignorance, a refusal to imbibe moral evil, it also comes to figure as a sign of moral purity through the blind and elderly De Lacey. Unprejudiced about the creature’s appearance, this is one of the few human beings from whom the creature is able to elicit genuine sympathy and fellow feeling before being discovered by the fully-sighted Felix, Agatha, and Safie. Being unable to see and perceive difference appears as a means of enacting sympathetic engagement.

Sight is a powerful determinant of communion and sympathetic engagement throughout the novel. However, shutting one’s eyes does not simply result in moral goodness, but is a means of refusing to acknowledge or accept that which is monstrous beyond a veneer of civilised life. The physical form of Victor’s monster exposes otherwise hidden and invisible spaces: removing corpses from the slaughterhouse, charnel house, and dissecting room. Furthermore, Victor’s nightmare at the close of the second volume positions him as the object, rather than agent, of vivisection. He recoils in horror at the image of “a multitude of filthy animals inflicting on [him] incessant torture” (123), a scene described by Philip Armstrong as an “inverted vivisection nightmare” (69). This reversal mirrors the anxieties that awaken when Victor first finds the monster looming over his bed, with his eyes “fixed on” him (40).

Undermining the power of the gaze to inculcate subjectivity results in the generation of an anxiety about what it means to be seen. The monster's hyper-visibility is disruptive to the limits of human morality. The ambivalence therefore attributed to a refusal or inability to see, presenting blindness as a form of both ignorance and moral purity, is of interest here, related to critiques used to discredit contemporaneous radicals such as Oswald and Ritson, as I will explore below.

In the context of a period in which nonhuman animals were increasingly disappearing from urban spaces, with slaughterhouses, for example, moving to the outskirts of cities, we might reflect further on the visibility of the monster as a piece of meat. As Petsche notes, the creature's slaughterhouse origins position him as a re-animated corpse of alienated meat products. Victor's refusal to see, by covering or averting his eyes, acts here as a prescient anticipation of the significance of visibility for vegan-oriented scholarship in the modern and contemporary period. For example, the respective works of ecofeminists Adams and Josephine Donovan, noted in the introduction to this thesis, foreground the importance of exposing the suffering of absent referent animals. I thus suggest that acts of wilful blindness in *Frankenstein* are a prescient reminder of the systemic blindness to, and disavowal of, the brutality inflicted upon nonhuman animals in the contemporary period. Such obfuscations come back to haunt the collective psyche as a vegan monster.

"A new species would bless me as its creator and source"

Frankenstein is a novel about an act of male creation. Victor's experiment sees him usurp the female reproductive role whilst the narrative charts the death of multiple mother figures, including Caroline Beaufort and surrogate mother figure Elizabeth. The diegetic world of the novel is thus populated primarily by motherless men, including Walton, Clerval, and Victor. Burton Hatlen argues that the centrality of male creation to the plot is a means of challenging

the patriarchal mythos which posits that “the act of creation is the executive prerogative of the male of the species, and it entails rights of ownership both over the ‘means’ of creation (that is, the female) and over the end result of this act” (20). Hatlen suggests that Shelley draws on the implicit critique of this mythos as it is found in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. From God’s creation of Adam, to Adam’s role in creating Eve, and to Satan’s birthing of Sin, “Until the last books of the poem ... the power to give birth is a power almost exclusively exercised by males” (Hatlen 28). The rule in the predecessor text appears to be that “The creator, if he is male and if he gives birth without the intercession of a woman, ‘owns’ the creature. It is an extension of him, and, theoretically at least, it finds its fulfillment in obeying him” (Hatlen 28). Hatlen argues that Shelley draws attention to the need for an alternative to this patriarchal mythos and that the rebellion of the creature against his creator allows for its subversion.

In *The Sexual Politics*, Adams argues that the creature’s assertion of an alternative mythos of origins based on inclusion and communion with the nonhuman is a feminist rebellion enacted through a rejection of the patriarchal language of meat. However, I argue that this is an ambivalent rebellion because his vegetarianism can also be read as a site at which he submits to and perpetuates a patriarchal story of origins. For example, the creature’s vegetarianism mirrors that of Adam and Eve before their fall from Grace, where the Garden of Eden offers an abundance of fruits and no knowledge of death. As such, his articulation of his vegetarianism to Victor draws directly upon Milton’s narrative of creation, made explicit by the fact that the creature describes reading *Paradise Lost* “as a true history” (104) and relates “several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own” (104-105). Rather than an assertion of rebellion, his vegetarianism could then be read as a means of securing and recognising himself within an existing patriarchal narrative of human origins.

The need for a patriarchal origin narrative can also be observed through the relation between Victor’s scientific ambitions and his mother’s death. Victor’s man-making

experiment lead him to reflect that “if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time . . . renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (36), an unambiguous reflection of his protracted grief and inability to accept his mother’s passing. This ambition eventually transforms into the project of a new creature, immune from illness and vulnerability. The creature thus constitutes a surrogate mother figure as much as he allows Victor to become a mother himself. In re-writing the maternal script Victor seeks to obliterate death, associated here with femininity.²⁹

In addition, usurping the maternal function sees Victor delay heterosexual intercourse. Promised from early childhood to his cousin Elizabeth, his university studies defer the consummation of their union. His isolation during his man-making experiment and subsequent depression leads both his father and Elizabeth to doubt his desire for marriage, suggesting that he might “love another” (158). That the other responsible for Victor’s hesitation is in fact his monstrous creation raises homoerotic connotations and positions Victor’s scientific enthusiasm as a replacement for heterosexual conjugal love. Accompanying a rejection of meat-eating and hybrid physiognomy, the monstrous vegans charted across this dissertation are the offspring of male scientists whose acts of creation render the female superfluous and are associated with social isolation, sexual anxiety, and reliance on homosocial networks. As I will argue, monstrous vegans are sired both outside of, and often in resistance to, heterosexual reproduction, challenging conventional reproductive temporalities.

Victor’s desire to create life liberates him, at least temporarily, from the compulsion towards heterosexual genital reproduction. This is cemented when the creature murders

²⁹ For more on the relation between femininity and death see Barbara Creed’s work on monstrous women. Whilst focused primarily on monstrous women in horror films, Creed’s explication of the monstrous-feminine is equally relevant to literary analysis, where, as I quote in the introduction to this thesis, “The monstrous-feminine draws attention to the ‘frailty of the symbolic order’ through her evocation of the natural, animal order and its terrifying associations with the passage all human beings must take from birth through life to death” (83).

Elizabeth on her wedding night, preventing the consummation of her and Victor's union. Moreover, the description of her form "lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair" (165) provides a perverse inversion of the throes of orgasm.³⁰ As well as negating the role of women in creating life, Victor's non-heterosexual reproduction is a child-averse force. For example, his creation results in the death of William at the hands of the creature. William's death is made all the more tragic through his position as a hyperbolic epitome of that which Lee Edelman famously rails against: the idealised Child. Descriptions of William focus on his treasured status within the family: "the most beautiful little fellow in the world ... inspir[ing] the tenderest affection" (25), "that sweet child ... who was so gentle, yet so gay!" (52), a "darling infant!" (53), a "dear child" (54), a "dear angel!" (56), a "fair child" (56), "Dearest William! dearest blessed child!" (66), "little darling William" (47), and "beloved William" (53). In this excessive repetition of the epithets "dear," "fair," "darling," "beloved" and "dearest," William is representative of the idealised innocence applied in certain Romantic conceptions of the child. This is further emphasised in the 1831 edition of the novel, where to Clerval's lament for William is added the epithet: "How much more a murderer, that could destroy such radiant innocence!" (2003, 75). The addition of "radiant innocence" further enforces William's status as the eternal child at the heart of Romanticism, a literary epoch which represented childhood "as a transhistorical holy time of innocence ... uncorrupted by the adult world" (McGavran 12).

As well as standing in for an idealised image of faultless childhood innocence, William supports the structure of heterosexual reproductive futurity, described in his infant imitation of adult relationships by attracting "one or two little *wives*" (47). Victor's desire for

³⁰ Mirroring the ambiguous depiction of orgasm or death at the hands of a supernatural creation as found in Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting "The Nightmare," Elizabeth's death both alludes to female pleasure as much as it negates it. This provides a mirror to Victor's destruction of his half-formed female creature.

scientific achievement comes to embody a queer desire, refusing accommodation within the sphere of the bourgeois family home, and standing in opposition to a compulsion toward heterosexuality. However, Victor also overconforms to such a compulsion, relating egoistic rationales for reproduction to the production of monsters. In this sense, the creature stands as the monstrous embodiment of a patriarchal mode of child-rearing, noted by Hatlen, that neglects the significance of nurturance, support, and nourishment to become a self-sufficient individual.

As well as a critique of tyrannical parenting, I argue that the destruction of an idealised representation of childhood, represented by William and his treasured place within the household, also highlights the resistance of Victor's experiment to a certain construction of childhood. His monster, whilst hideous, enacts a return to a primitive mode of being but is frustrated in his assumption that William, as child, will be "unprejudiced" to his appearance, having "had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity" (116). Contrary to the creature's hope, William fulfils the same prejudices experienced elsewhere by the creature with his horror, as I detail above, expressive of fears of cannibalism and related to a social and economic context of colonialism. In contrast, the creature's description of his initial experiences after fleeing Frankenstein's laboratory finds him ruled by his sensations: "No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rung in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me" (80). Mellor notes that he appears as "a creature no different from the animals, responding unconsciously to the needs of his flesh and the changing conditions of his environment" (Mellor 47). The vegan monster, born fully grown, is a monstrous child that offers a form of natural man that highlights the corrupting influence of human civilisation.

This reversal of progressivist narratives provides a direct contrast to the work of Shelley's father, William Godwin. Godwin's faith in the perfectibility of man through

education suggests that humans had emerged from a primitive state and progressed to a superior realm of knowledge and reason. However, proto-evolutionary discourses of the time had begun to suggest that humans might have descended from apes.³¹ The creature's merging of the human and the nonhuman laterally resists notions of continual human reproduction, progress, and perfectibility, as defined in opposition to the nonhuman, and disturbs a teleological version of evolutionary progress. The creature's desire to return to Eden, subsisting on acorns and berries ripened by the sun, acts as an invocation of a past, before the fall, suggesting instead a cyclical temporality in which one can recover a lost prelapsarian past. However, it also positions him as a new Adam, the product of Victor's usurpation of the role of deistic creator, with the potential to repopulate the earth. The fear of this possibility sees Victor abandon the creation of a female monster, anticipating that "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (138). The advent of a monstrous vegan hybrid of human and nonhuman animal parts here signals the threat of human extinction. Indeed, this is enacted in microcosm through the creature's destruction of the idealised child, William, and Victor's bride Elizabeth, preventing generational succession.

In addition, the creature's lateral growth into a rational being (being full size at birth he certainly does not grow *up*), appears as a schooling in multiple forms of human vice. His development revolves around his education, a reflection on what Alan Richardson refers to as the "obsession" (8) around theories of education throughout the Romantic period, increasingly viewed as a significant factor in one's character. However, the creature's self-education alongside the De Lacey family fails to grant happiness, with his grasp of language and culture proving of little value in ending his isolation. Instead, the creature learns of the violence and

³¹ See, for example, Ritson (13-15).

destruction characteristic of mankind. The violence of an anthropocentric human society is further suggested before the creature's literary education, at the point at which he discovers three books: *Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter*. He finds the volumes in a "leathern portmanteau" (103). The inclusion of "leathern" as adjective here provides a seemingly superfluous description in a novel otherwise far more concerned with emotions and internal states than descriptions of the physical world, particularly in relation to the world of objects and commodities. This anomalous descriptive detail draws attention to the fact that his education into human society emerges from the skin of a slaughtered cow and establishes his distance from a state of nature in communion with the natural world. The creature's slaughterhouse origins suggest his skin and flesh is almost certainly part-cow, intimating an uneasy cannibalistic association with this receptacle and indicating a further way in which the creature is taught to distance himself from interspecies sympathetic engagement.

The creature also becomes a cipher for Victor's dead mother by the end of the novel, suggesting both a backwards motion of re-creating a lost love and a circular repetition. The portrait of Caroline Beaufort hanging over the Frankenstein family fireplace shows her "in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father" (58). The creature comes to recreate this tableau onboard Walton's ship: "Over [Victor] hung a form which I cannot find words to describe ... he hung over the coffin ... When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror" (186-187). In Homans's terms, the mother who is destroyed in order for the male subject to enter into the symbolic order might be seen to haunt the final pages of the novel, a monstrous return that grieves over the body of the man who destroys her through the imposition of a symbolic order. The creature would thus figure in this reading as a return to a lost mother.

Much critical scholarship has focused on the absent mothers that haunt *Frankenstein*. However none has paid any close attention to the one living mother present in the narrative: the De Lacey cow.³² Whilst there is little evidence of a specific vegan diet amongst the Romantic vegetarians, with nearly all valorising the benefits of a diet including milk and cheese, Ritson's 1802 tract shows clear signs that dairy was often considered to be problematic. For example, he denigrates the carnivorous feasts of the nobility, describing them dining on "stinking venison and the exquisite stench of rotten and maggoty cheese" (Ritson 54). Whilst this could be read in relation to the revulsion inspired by the culture of luxury and excessive consumption of the upper-classes and nobility, we must also note his pains to stress that the eating of cheese, in his idealisation of the vegetarianism of Ancient Greece, was "fig-cheese" (Ritson 70), an alternative to animal rennet primarily used in the period before Christ. He further attests that as well as not having touched flesh, fish, or fowl for thirty years, he has also never "to his knowledge, prepare'd in or with these substances or any extract thereof" (Ritson 201). This must be appreciated in relation to the widespread use of animal-based rennets and a vegetarianism that is more than simply an aversion to flesh. Colin Spencer's history of vegetarianism asserts both Shelley's and Percy's rejection of butter and eggs and sparing use of milk and cream. Furthermore, the early nineteenth century saw cheese-making beginning to take place on ever larger economies of

³²Adams is the exception here, arguing that the creature's observation of the cow and his "reference to the demands that one cow puts on food resources echoes the modern ecological vegetarian position" (*The Sexual Politics* 102). It might also be argued that Margaret Saville constitutes a further living mother, with Walton writing of her "lovely children" (181). However, Margaret is never fully actualised in the narrative, only as an addressee of the narrator, aligning her with the reader as much as, through their shared initials, Mary Shelley.

scale, with the proliferation of co-operatives and associations seeing cheese factories in use globally by the end of the century.³³

The lone cow that lives on the De Lacey land produces the milk that, along with the vegetables grown in their garden, provides the sole source of nourishment for the impoverished family. However, her absence from critical analysis of the novel is perhaps unsurprising given the limited references to her within the novel itself. For example, the cow is absent from the milking process observed by the creature, with Agatha disappearing from view with an empty pail until after “about a quarter of an hour she returned bearing the pail, which was now partly filled with milk” (84). The cow acts here as that which Adams refers to as the absent referent of the milking process. The only direct reference made to her is in the creature’s description of the family’s hardship, where the cottagers subsist “entirely [on] the vegetables of their garden and the milk of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely produce food to support it” (88). The refusal to grant personal pronouns here sees the creature’s narrative choose instead the objectifying term “it.” This description of the De Lacey diet mirrors the meat-free subsistence of the rural communities described in the novel. For example, when Victor resides in the Orkneys, he equally finds that the residents subsist entirely on oatmeal, implied as milk-based, through the keeping of “a few miserable cows” (136). However, despite their hardship, the De Lacey familial bonds and selfless sacrifice of what little they have to support their elderly father presents an idyllic vision of vegetarian love and charity. These familial sentiments immediately attract the creature’s admiration.

³³ Six years after the publication of the first edition of *Frankenstein*, Gompertz published his pioneering inquiry, advocating a rejection of all exploitation of nonhuman animals. Answering his own hypothetical debate, responding to the argument that “When the calf is taken away from its mother, it is then a kindness to relieve her of her milk,” he succinctly states: “the calf should *not* be taken away” (97).

In contrast, the creature's inability to see the cow as a fellow sentient being is striking. For example, he expresses concern over the family suffering from "the pangs of hunger very poignantly," with no regard for the suffering of the cow, who we know also has "scarcely" enough food (88). Whereas when living in a state of nature in the forest the creature's affinity with birds sees him attempt to mimic their sounds, the cow receives no attention other than in relation to how much milk she can produce for the creature's beloved De Lacey's. Thus, just as the creature bemoans his inability to garner human sympathy due to his monstrous physicality, he too fails in these observations to allow the cow a claim to sympathetic engagement.

The creature's angry rage upon his rejection from the one family with whom he had hoped and longed for kinship, results in his destruction of their cottage—with the Promethean tool of fire—and sees him lament, "unable to injure anything human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects" (113). This focus on "inanimate objects" is significant given his description of destroying "every vestige of cultivation in the garden" (113) and thus the implied burning of living plants and the lone cow, reducing all life that is not human to object status.³⁴ I contend, therefore, that Adams misreads the novel when she argues that "By including animals within its moral circle the Creature provides an emblem for what it hoped for and needed - but failed to receive - from human society" (*Sexual Politics* 110). Instead, the extreme isolation experienced by all three of the principle narrators, who each describe their literary education as formative to their development, is symptomatic of a culturally conscripted patriarchal order in which the taxonomies of species, gender, and race prevent meaningful engagement and sympathy between living beings.

³⁴ The death of cows is a key feature of Shelley's account in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, where we find an uncanny mirror to the creature's burning of the De Lacey house and lone cow in the description of the horror of war-torn France: "the distress of the inhabitants, whose houses had been burned, their cattle killed ... has given a sting to my detestation of war" (19).

Tied to the idea of the cow entering the realm of “inanimate objects” is the apparent inaccuracy of Shelley’s rural knowledge. That it is just one sole cow living with the family is emphasised to draw attention to their impoverished state. However, this raises several pertinent questions: Where is the bull who must have impregnated her for her to keep lactating year on year? Where is the calf, or calves, for whom the milk was destined? Why does Shelley imply it is food, rather than pregnancy and birth, that effects milk production across the years? The structure of the absent referent denies the existence of the calves necessary for the continuation of the milk supply. Just as the creature views the pail as magically filled, maintaining a mysterious shroud over the milking act, the cow remains as an objectified body outside of the realms of suffering and human pain, producing solely for human consumption.

The cow's production of milk is the only acknowledgement provided of her maternal status as we must assume her calves have been forcibly removed. The De Lacey cow can thus be read as a counter to Victor’s male appropriation of the female reproductive role. However, she is maintained within industrial discourses as a body objectified as a milk machine, unseen and unrecognised. Victor tears up his sexually threatening half-formed female creature. Her monstrous hybrid identity, feared reproductive autonomy, and challenge to the borders of the human parallels the position of the cow as a non-threatening female machine, whose reproductive capacities remain under human dominion.

“I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper”

Shelley's reading list whilst composing *Frankenstein* was extensive and the novel reflects her attempts to incorporate, rewrite, and clarify a range of literary predecessors. The novel’s focus on the act of creation draws directly on the influence of Christian theological doctrine and, in particular, its expression in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. For example, the creature’s iconic lament

“Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come?” (104) mirrors the reflection of Milton’s Eve on her own creation:

That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awaked, and found myself reposed
Under a shade of flowers, much wondering where,
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how (IV. 449-452).

The creature’s questions might then be read as a textual deferral, acquired from his own reading of Milton’s epic poem, suggesting the difficulty, or indeed impossibility, of unmediated communication once initiated into the sociosymbolic.

In addition, *Paradise Lost* is as concerned with Christian creation narratives as with its own creation as poem. As Hatlen notes, “As a poem about creation, *Paradise Lost* ... becomes a poem about its own creation—a process in which the poet becomes both (consciously) an imitator and (unconsciously) a rival to God” (27). For example, the speaker calls on the Spirit to provide “aid to my adventurous song” (I. 13), and for instruction and illumination that he may “assert eternal providence,/And justify the ways of God to men” (Milton I. 25-26). Such concerns frame the fourth element that I define as distinct to the monstrous vegan: an intimate relation to the literary and acts of literary creation.

Shelley’s novel is obsessed with literacy. Memories from Walton’s childhood see him “read with ardour the account of the various voyages that have been made” and describe himself as “passionately fond of reading” (6). Similarly, Victor’s account of his life begins with a history of his reading, perusing a volume of works by Cornelia Agrippa “with the greatest avidity” (23). In both cases, childhood reading comes to determine adult ambitions. This is mirrored in the life of the creature, whose discovery of works by Milton, Goethe, and Plutarch marks his initiation into human vice and descent into violence and misanthropy. In addition, Shelley’s iconic phrasing in the preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* sees her refer to her novel as “my hideous progeny” (10), making explicit the link between Victor’s

laboratory experiment and Shelley's sense of literary authorship as unleashing a monstrous creation upon the world. This relation can also be found in the novel itself, where Walton describes that "Frankenstein discovered that I had made notes concerning his history: he asked me to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places ... 'Since you have preserved my narration,' said he, 'I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity'" (179). The mutilated text here comes to mirror the mutilated remains that compose his creature.

The creature has been read by many critics as an embodiment of Romantic literary production. However, he might also be read as an embodiment of vegetarian tracts: idealistic utopian and pacifist ideals contained within the hideous deformed body of the literary. As such, we might ask whether the creature presents a *return* to the vegetarian prelapsarian body, instinctively choosing to eat acorns and berries over the offal left by the beggars, or whether, as argued above, the telling of his vegetarianism manifests only after, and as a result of, his reading of *Paradise Lost*. The latter embeds understandings of bodily desire within discursive frameworks. Furthermore, that the creature's introduction to meat-eating coincides with his discovery of fire posits him within a pre-existing Promethean narrative. As such, his eschewal of meat might also be read as determined and mediated by narrative discourses such as Percy's.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar situate *Frankenstein* within a genealogy of women writers who must grapple with their relation to the patriarchal poetry of Milton: "Since the appearance of *Paradise Lost* ... all women writers have been to some extent Milton's daughters, continually wondering what their relationship to his patriarchal poetry ought to be and continually brooding upon alternative modes of daughterhood" (219). *Frankenstein* is positioned as the least radical of such a search for alternatives, a novel which enacts a docile submission to Milton, taking "the male culture myth of *Paradise Lost* at its full value ... and

rewrit[ing] it so as to clarify its meaning” (Gilbert and Gubar 220, emphasis in original). The roles of Adam, Eve, Satan, and Sin are seen to shift continually between characters, with the creature often aligning with Eve, as a deformed and lesser being than man. Evidence for this is found during the scene in which Victor’s creature first looks upon his reflection in a pool of water, interpreted as a grotesque parody of Eve’s narcissistic gaze in Milton’s Eden. For Gilbert and Gubar, “Mary Shelley’s conscious or unconscious awareness of the monster woman implicit in the angel woman is perhaps clearest in the revisionary scene where her monster, as if taking his cue from Eve in *Paradise Lost* book 4, first catches sight of his own image” (240). This, for Gilbert and Gubar, has a twofold expression. Firstly, as a corrective to Milton, forwarding the notion that as the second, and inferior, creation, Eve could only ever have seen herself as monstrous. Secondly, as an ironic comment on Eve’s narcissism, exposing her moral deformity, reflected in the creature’s vision of himself as hideous wretch. As such, the creature’s occupation of the position of Eve serves to highlight a wretched existence and moral inadequacy, reversing the beauty of her image to highlight the inevitable monstrosity of the female condition.

I argue that we can trace an alternative literary genealogy of the pool scene through Milton back to Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*.³⁵ In *Paradise Lost*, Eve’s recognition of her beauty in the pool alludes to the myth of Narcissus, who falls deeply in love with his reflection. In

Ovid’s portrayal of Narcissus:

The boy lay down, charmed by the quiet pool,
And, while he slaked his thirst, another thirst,
Grew; as he drank he saw before his eyes
A form, a face, and loved with leaping heart
A hope unreal and thought the shape was real.
Spellbound he saw himself, and motionless
Lay like a marble statue staring down (III. 414-420).

Similarly, in *Paradise Lost*, Eve describes:

³⁵ Shelley’s diaries show that she read *Metamorphosis* twice during the composition of *Frankenstein*.

As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the watery gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed
Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire (IV. 443-447).

In *Frankenstein*, by contrast, Victor's creature offers the following account of his experience:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity (90).

As a perverse parody of Eve-as-Narcissus, the creature's instinct to recoil from his deformity, in juxtaposition to Eve's vain desire, is seen by Gilbert and Gubar to signal "a corrective to Milton's blindness about Eve. Having been created second, inferior, ... how could she possibly, this passage implies, have seemed anything but monstrous to herself?" (240). Moreover, they suggest that this parody "supplements Milton's description of Eve's introduction to herself, for ironically, though her reflection ... is as beautiful as the monster's is ugly, the self-absorption ... is plainly meant by Milton to seem morally ugly, a hint of her potential for spiritual deformity" (Gilbert and Gubar 240).

However, to return to Ovid, whilst Narcissus is the most famous example of the perils of vain self-absorption, *Metamorphosis* is saturated by multiple other moments of response to one's reflection. Before "Narcissus and Echo," the experience of seeing oneself reflected in water reveals transformations from human to animal, for example in the stories "Io" and "Diana and Actaeon." In the story of Io, the young virgin is raped whilst attempting to flee the advances of Jove. When Jove fears that Juno will find out, he "transformed poor Io/Into a sleek white heifer (lovely still/Although a cow)" (I. 609-610). The creature's relation to Io as cow is, as we have seen, explicit given his composition from the remains of the

slaughterhouse. Furthermore, the description of Io first seeing her transformed reflection runs as follows:

She reached her father's river and the banks
Where often she had played and, in the water,
Mirrored she saw her muzzle and her horns,
And fled in terror from the self she saw (I. 640-643).

Not then a reversal of Narcissus's self-love, or parody of the pride of Milton's Eve, the mortification of the creature mirrors Io's transformation into a cow, the fatal effects of which see her unable to communicate her condition to those around her and sent, like the creature, "a cowering fugitive through all the world" (I. 726-727).³⁶

In addition, akin to the creature, Io manages to illicit a sympathetic connection from others, despite her animalistic appearance, through the use of language. In her metamorphosed state, she is able to use a stick to trace the letters "I" and "O" into the ground and therefore illicit her father's recognition of his lost daughter. The term "io" is primarily an exclamation of joy or triumph in both Greek and Latin, providing a sense of comic irony, for which Ovid is famous, given Io's despair at this point in the tale. However, it also functions as an illocutionary act, with the writing of her name signalling a triumph over her bestial silence.³⁷ The written word is seen here to provide a means of exclamation otherwise foreclosed from her in her transformed state, a transformation from human to cow as well as from virgin to whore. The heifer is here the embodiment of the status of raped or ruined woman.³⁸ The means of speaking from this position is granted through the written word, a form that transcends species boundaries, and enables recognition as kindred. Similarly, the creature in *Frankenstein* is humanised through Walton's writing of the tale as told to Victor by the

³⁶ A. D. Melville's translation from Latin here emphasises the comic over the tragic in this transformation, with the pun on "cowering."

³⁷ In the Italian first person singular, "io" translates to the English "I," providing a serendipitous claim to subjectivity. Io here is recognised as *not* animal—or at least not only animal—by both writing her name and claiming herself as "I."

³⁸ Thanks to Professor Diane Purkiss for her input on these ideas.

creature. It is through this first-person account that he becomes more than creaturely. However, the creature's narrative is also evidence of the idea that subjectivity is always multiply mediated, with the creature at the centre of a concentric circle of male narrators narrating on behalf of others. As I note above, Safie's letters are written as translations by an aid, then copied out by the creature, positing the written word as vulnerable to error and editorial corruption, whilst Victor's narrative itself is mediated through Walton's transcriptions.

The novel's reflections on acts of literary creation intersect with its representation of vegetarianism in several ways. As the natural man before discourse, the creature's vegetarianism is a corporeal disposition. However, this bodily vegetarianism nonetheless invests in the Promethean visions of a vegetarian Golden Age at the origins of man derived from late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century writings. Furthermore, the creature's vegetarianism, whilst enacted initially through his choice of plant-based fare, later becomes articulated through discourse. As I argue above, his declaration that "my food is not that of man" (120), is mediated via Milton and through Victor's telling of the tale to Walton, and Walton's letters to his sister. Vegetarianism thus appears in the novel as a multiply mediated discursive expression. The original prelapsarian vegetarian body exists as a mythic core at the centre of multiple narrations.

Comedy and Camp

This chapter has established four key traits associated with that which I define as the monstrous vegan, providing the scaffolding for the analysis to follow in the proceeding chapters. Across two hundred years of Anglophone literature, monstrous vegans generate often inexplicable anxieties both within and beyond their literary worlds. This final section argues that such anxieties are often entangled with the comic, in ways that will come to

fruition in the concluding chapter of this thesis. In chapter four, I demonstrate J. M. Coetzee's and Alan Hollinghurst's reparative reclamation of the monstrous vegan trope as a means of performing or camping vegan identity. I suggest here that *Frankenstein's* position as literary precursor to these contemporary writers is informed by the performative embrace of the spectacle of human exceptionalism implicit within Shelley's text.

Whilst *Frankenstein* is typically categorised as a Gothic horror or proto-science fiction novel, many critics have noted its comic elements. An 1818 review in *The Quarterly Review*, for example, described Shelley's novel disparagingly as leaving the reader in "a struggle between laughter and loathing" (Croker), whilst it was described by *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* as "one of the productions of the modern school in its highest style of caricature and loathing" (Scott). In this juxtapositions of both "laughter" and "caricature" with "loathing," we get a sense of the proximity of Gothic horror and Romantic fiction to parody.

For Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnick, comedy is intrinsic to the Gothic: "If the Gothic text demonstrates the horror attaching to such a shifting and unstable world, it also, in its comic dimension, celebrates the possibilities thereby released" (9). Merging the conservative with the revolutionary, parody is seen to provide "a fresh perspective on a changing world, one of accommodation rather than terrified apprehension" (Horner and Zlosnik 12). For Gilbert and Gubar "*Frankenstein* is ultimately a *mock* of *Paradise Lost*" (230, my emphasis) with the creature's initial inarticulate attempts at speech a means by which to "parody and subvert" (236) those uttered by Milton's Adam. Similarly, Butler, in her introduction to the 1993 Oxford World's Classics edition, describes Shelley's "serio-comic representation" of contemporaneous scientific debates (xxi).

In addition to its parodic relation to *Paradise Lost*, the numerous puns often neglected in scholarly criticism signal a linguistic playfulness throughout the narrative. For example,

upon Victor's arrival in the northern highlands in preparation for the creation of a female creature, he describes:

I . . . fixed on one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of my *labours*. It was a place fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock, whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves. The soil was *barren* (136, my emphasis).

Here, allusions to labour and barren soil provocatively forebode Victor's second aborted attempt at creation juxtaposing the terminology of childbirth to his ill-fated scientific experiments.

In addition, the puns employed in relation to the un-named captain upon Walton's ship are worth noting in detail here because the wordplay offers a reflection on vegetarianism as a mode of self-effacement. The captain is described as remarkable for "his gentleness, and the mildness of his discipline," and exceptional because "he will not hunt (a favourite, and almost the only amusement here), because he cannot endure to spill blood" (9).³⁹ In addition, the captain's self-sacrifice sees him give up his wealth and accept exile abroad in order that the young woman with whom he is in love does not have to honour their engagement. The creature's vegetarianism provides a striking juxtaposition to this combination of concern for the nonhuman and self-sacrifice, in which the former's refusal to consume animals is associated with misanthropic violence. Both vegetarianism and a concern for nonhuman animals therefore appear untenable as a sign of moral virtue without a rigid asceticism that requires separation from the social sphere. There is something to be said then for the relation between a sympathetic engagement with nonhuman animals and anxieties around self-abnegation. This can be seen in Walton's lament that he finds the captain, despite his virtue, unable to satiate his desire for companionship. He describes that the captain "has scarcely an idea beyond the rope and the shroud" (10). This lexical pairing appears to refer to a singular obsession with maritime activities, with the shroud being part of standard rigging. However,

³⁹ This detail is not present in the 1831 edition of the novel.



Fig. 1: “Joseph Ritson.” Courtesy of the British Museum.

“the rope and the shroud” also function as a pun on death, whether as suicide or execution by hanging. Here, the captain becomes associated with self-abnegation and death, a state repellant to Walton.

Beyond these examples of linguistic play, the creature’s insistence on a corporeal vegetarianism can be considered as a central part of the novel’s comic dimensions. Certainly,

the contrast between a gigantic, hideous monster who murders Victor's family (excluding Ernest)⁴⁰ and his diet of physically small foods—acorns, nuts, roots, and berries—provides a particularly stark juxtaposition. Such juxtapositions are found in contemporaneous satires of famous vegetarian radicals. For example, *Fig. 1* shows an 1803 satirical portrait of Ritson that aptly demonstrates the spectacle made of vegetarians within the period. Ritson is comically portrayed as a sandal-wearing hypocrite, dipping his pen in gall with an emaciated cat chained to the wall alongside a book proclaiming “Abstinence from Animal Food a Moral Duty.” The caption running along the bottom of the print proclaims “Ritson. the infamous murderer of the meek and amiable,”⁴¹ a satirical comment referencing Ritson's vitriolic criticism of other writers despite his pacifist vegetarianism. Here, as with Victor's creature, vegetarianism accompanies misanthropy.

Adams refers to this etching along with several contemporaneous reviews of Ritson's *Essay on Abstinence* as proof of his mockery at the hands of journalists. For example, she quotes *The Edinburgh Review's* reference to “the bloody, murderous, carnivorous ritson [sic], a newly discovered animal of anomalous order” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 89). She further notes a review in the *British Critic*, which gibes at Ritson's temper, referring to “his tranquility of soul, which has led him to maintain a restless and envenomed warfare with the whole human race, and chiefly with the most respectable part of it, cannot be too strongly

⁴⁰ Victor's brother Ernest is mentioned intermittently throughout the narrative of both versions of the novel. However, he appears to excite little fondness from Victor. Following the death of their father, Victor no longer appears to fear for Ernest's safety, despite appearing as the last remaining familial target of the creature's vengeance. It is perhaps for this reason that scholars such as Paul Cantor seem to entirely forget about Ernest's presence, concluding that “everything [Victor] loves” is destroyed (124). And yet, the novel ends with Ernest alive, the last remaining progeny of the Frankenstein family. In the 1818 edition, Elizabeth writes of her desire to encourage him into a farming career, with the cultivation of the earth seen as a virtuous pursuit. For Mellor, this ending signals a possible conscious harmony with nature into the future, with nature “nurtur[ing] those who cultivate her and who work toward the welfare and sustenance of others” (124). By contrast, in the 1831 edition, Ernest's future becomes determined by fate, rejecting study as an “odious fetter” (1831, 66), seeing Elizabeth and her father forced to submit to his desire to pursue a military career, in fear of him otherwise “becom[ing] an idler” (66).

⁴¹ This caption is visible on the print preserved at the British Museum and is signed by the poet Henry Kirke White (1785-1806).

pressed on the reader's notice, as one of the happy effects flowing from a total abstinence from animal food" (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 89). Such reviews utilise sarcasm to emphasise the hypocrisy and inconsistencies associated with Ritson's vegetarianism.⁴² Subjected to ridicule as a vegetarian, the depictions of Ritson here stand uncannily close to descriptions of Shelley's monstrous creation.

The comic juxtaposition posed between the creature's "gigantic stature" (12) and modest fare of "acorns and berries" (120), and between murderous actions and pacifist words, sees that which is horrifying come to resemble an unthreatening vegetarianism ridiculed in the mainstream imagination. At the same time, the satirical spectacle of vegetarianism becomes itself horrifying. For example, the creature's declaration that "I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite" (120), comes just one chapter after he has murdered the infant William. William's "sportive" (116) entrance into the recess of the forest within which the creature is hiding conjures an animalistic depiction. The use of "kid" as a signification of a young child was in use in this period as low slang, whilst the choice of infant animals in lamb and kid implicitly refers back to the recent murder which the creature has perpetrated. William's murder undoubtedly provokes horror. However, the contrast of the creature's insistence on a harmonious vegetarianism, expressed through puns that link the death of kids and William, generates a darkly comic undercurrent within the narrative.

The monster then, as vegetarian, and the vegetarian as monster, becomes a possible site of humour and comic juxtaposition, presenting a mode of vegan identity characterised by self-contradiction and farce. Whilst the comedy of the novel is often forgotten or left unnoticed by the reader on first interacting with the text, humour forms a connective thread to

⁴² Ritson wasn't the only vegetarian of the time to be critiqued in the same manner. Oswald was also regularly attacked in the popular press for the apparent incongruence observed between his vegetarianism and role in the French Revolution. Oswald responded to such charges of hypocrisy with the argument that "peace and equality in society could not be achieved without first purging the world of tyrants" (Stuart 298).

the comic elements of the writing of H. G. Wells and Atwood, as I explore in the chapters that follow, in which veganism is both monstrous and farcical.

Shelley's novel might also be situated within a mode of camp aesthetics, characterised by spectacle, masquerade, and farce. The novel's enduring cultural legacy arguably has much to do with the theatrical adaptations that followed its release, immensely popular among contemporary audiences across Britain and France. From 1823 to 1826, for example, fourteen dramatic variations of *Frankenstein* appeared, in both English and French.

The first dramatisation, in 1823, Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein*, was met with the following review from *The Morning Post*: "To Lord Byron, the late Mr. Shelley, and philosophers of that stamp, it might appear a very fine thing to attack the Christian faith ... and burlesque the resurrection of the death" (Forry 5). "Burlesque" here functions both in its form as adjective and noun, referring to the physicality of the stage performance being described, in the *OED*'s definition of "an action or performance which casts ridicule on that which it imitates," ("Burlesque, adj. and n.") and as transitive verb, a "grotesque imitation of what is, or is intended to be, dignified or pathetic" ("Burlesque, v."). Whilst *Presumption* was not itself categorised generically as "burlesque," it inspired four burlesques between 1823 and 1824, reinforcing the saturation of its reviews with such an epithet.

As Steven Earl Forry's detailed study of *Frankenstein*'s adaptations on the stage, the resurgence in critical interest in Shelley's novel in the 1970s coincides with a series of dramatic spoofs and musical comedies on stage, including *I'm Sorry the Bridge is Out, You'll Have to Spend the Night* (1970), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1973), *Frankenstein's Follies* (1977), *Dr. Crankenheim's Mixed-Up Monster* (1974), and *Frankenstein Crankenstein; or, Body Building for Beginners* (1981). These adaptations attest to the fact that something about the narrative of *Frankenstein* speaks to the camp sensibilities of the late

twentieth century. Indeed, camp appears throughout the early filmic adaptations. Adams, for example, makes the bold claim that “Dr. Pretorius, a character invented for the 1935 [James Whale *Frankenstein* movie], is the vehicle for introducing some of the first camp thematics in any movie” (*Companion to Frankenstein* 156).

Whilst Horner and Zlosnik’s monograph unpacks the comic turn within the Gothic genre, they make no attempt to address the potential camp elements of such humour. References to camp appear only within quotation from other scholars, and the term itself is glossed over. For example, noting Richard Davenport-Hughes’s analysis of the “consistently camp” exclamatory dialogues in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Horner and Zlosnik suggest “camp” as merely a synonym for the comic, and go on to detail Walpole’s further elements of “humour, fakery and melodrama” (6). And yet, their descriptions of such humour intersect significantly with key tropes associated with camp aesthetics amongst queer theorists. The Gothic is noted as a genre often castigated for “embracing surface rather than depth and delighting in excess” (Horner and Zlosnik 7) and typified by an “ironic detachment” (Horner and Zlosnik 13). The comic turn in the Gothic is described as providing “a position of detachment and scepticism” (Horner and Zlosnik 3), and, at its most extreme, signals “that nothing is to be taken seriously” (Horner and Zlosnik 15).

Susan Sontag’s 1964 “Notes on Camp” is perhaps the most famous attempt to articulate what it is we mean when we talk about “camp.” For Sontag, camp is a sensibility that manifests as a “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (259). It converts the serious into the frivolous, seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon and revelling in stylisation and extravagance; “To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role” (Sontag 263). However, Sontag’s work has been widely criticised for its “de-gaying” of camp. Not only does she suggest that had homosexuals not more or less invented camp, someone else would have, she argues that in its privilege of style over content,

it is disengaged politically. For critics such as Esther Newton, camp is an intrinsically homosexual taste. However, she argues that “Masculine-feminine juxtapositions are, of course, the most characteristic kind of camp, but any very incongruous contrast can be campy” (Newton, “Role Models” 103). I argue that the contrast between the murderous and the vegetarian combines with the creature’s confusion of gender and racial classifications to produce a form of vegan camp humour. This manifests as a conservative reaction against vegetarianism, but might also be read, as Hollinghurst’s engagement with the monstrous vegan trope in chapter four demonstrates, as a productive site for the camp reclamation of a monstrous identity that rejects restrictive modes of being human.

This risks the appropriation of camp for a radically different subculture and oppression that negates its origins in homosexual persecution. However, as Ann Pellegrini summarises in an article defining Jewish camp, camp’s political power, in contrast to Sontag’s critique of its apolitical tendencies, can function as a re-imagining of the world and creation of queer social agency, expressive of resilience and imagination in the face of vulnerability. It offers, in this formulation, an invitation to “laugh at situations that do not seem all that funny” (Pellegrini). Camp is proposed as a creative recycling of the past in order to produce a different relation to the present and future. Whilst camp is not inherently political, its context matters for Pellegrini and allows for the conversion of damaging stereotypes into witty commentary on social realities. Such stereotypes broaden the scope of queerness to consider wider questions regarding what it means to be human.

This is not to say that *Frankenstein* and the Gothic do not also incorporate elements of a more conventionally queer or homosexual idea of camp. In Matthew Tinkcom’s assessment of camp as a means by which commodities betray knowledge of their own destiny of inutility, the Gothic’s recyclability and association with the low-brow, with lack of moral instruction, and with a decline in literary value, emblematises this idea of a taste that acknowledges its

own status as trash. *Frankenstein* has invited numerous camp remakes that emphasise the homoerotic subtexts of the novel, from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, featuring transvestite scientist Doctor Frank 'N' Furter, to Paul McGuigan's 2015 film *Victor Frankenstein*, which foregrounds the homoeroticism of the relationship between Victor and his laboratory assistant and explores cultural anxieties around queer reproduction. For Philip Core, camp is "a peculiar way of seeing things, affected by spiritual isolation, but strong enough to impose itself on others through acts or creations" (Core 82). This speaks to a recent article in the *New York Times* which argues that queers identify with the isolation of Victor's misfit creature driven out of society, and that "there's something about this story of unhallowed arts that makes it darkly resonant for queer artists beyond any other group" (C. Fox). I would add that the creature's non-normative desires for a meat-free existence at the borders of the social further aligns him with a queer utopian expectation of a means of desiring differently, beyond the confines of heteronormativity.

In addition, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick registers, *Frankenstein* can be situated within the early classic Gothic tradition that manifests anxieties attendant to heterosexuality, part of a series of novels "about one or more males who not only is persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male" (*Between Men* 91). Furthermore, Butler notes that Victor's failure to recognise the threat to Elizabeth on his wedding night: "As a portrayal of male inattentiveness, this is satirical, in fact comic" ("Introduction" xli). Following Elizabeth's death: "The remainder of the third volume can be read as a blackly funny homoerotic mime, with man chasing man through a world where the loved women are all dead or far away" (Butler, "Introduction" xliii).

If camp requires a refusal of sincerity or deep reading, to revel in surfaces, then Frankenstein's monster provides an apt model for camp aesthetics, in which his interiority is

ignored or refused in favour of a surface that is seen to constitute his entire being. The monster's physical appearance is constitutive of how others view him, with his narrative enclosed within the concentric circles of the novel that frame him as monstrous and savage. His vegetarianism, as a disposition that cannot but fail to be inscribed faithfully upon the corporeal body thus becomes forgotten in favour of a focus on his murderous deeds. The monster then is reduced, through the visual, to that which he eventually becomes. This effacement of selfhood results in the death of both the idealised child William, and Victor's wife Elizabeth.

Furthermore, the creature's confusion of conventional binary classifications between human and animal, male and female, savage and imperialist, and good and evil, sees a challenge to human identity that makes way for a performance of monstrosity. First ruled by sensation, akin to Rousseau's natural man, the creature's observations of the De Lacey family sees him enculturated into the discursive realm. Entry into human community is posited as reliant on a grasp of language where through his education the creature passes as a fellow being to the blind De Lacey. Humanity thus appears able to be convincingly copied, learned, repeated, or performed through language. The creature's later anti-social turn, vowing vengeance on mankind, appears as its own misanthropic performance of exclusion. Certainly, comparing himself to Satan, "I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me" (111), his rebellion against Victor requires the reading of *Paradise Lost* rather than emerging as an instinctive or inevitable revenge.

Understanding the creature's monstrosity as a failed performance of humanity will be of particular importance in chapter four. It might be considered here in the context of the Romantic period, which, as Morton argues, marked the birth "the consumer" as an economic subject. For Morton, the early nineteenth century saw consumption remodelled as performance, offering "a selection of choices and acts from a repertoire of roles" (*Cultures of*

Taste 2). Where consumption, both economic and gustatory, could be politicised, vegetarianism becomes a performative practice “that challenged or parodied the official forms of nascent consumerism” (Morton, *Cultures of Taste* 6).

As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, the creature presents a challenge to normative constructions of desire and self-conception. His vegetarianism might then be seen as comic, through the use of wordplay and juxtaposition of murderous intentions with a desire to eat only acorns and berries. However, I contend that we might also read humour into the narrative by an appreciation of its nascent and proto-camp sensibility, in which the creature’s refusal to consume “the food of man” burlesques conventional desires, both heterosexual and carnivorous.

Chapter Two

H. G. Wells and Monstrous Vegan Desires

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Oscar Wilde's proto-homosexual and self-confessed animal lover Dorian is situated in a novelistic world in which no-one appears to eat anything but salads and omelettes. Stephen's coming to terms with her "sexual inversion" in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) is accompanied by a rejection of hunting and an emotional affinity with her male horse Raftery. And, in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), Humbert Humbert's resistance to the harm of animals during his childhood provides an ironic contrast to his later exploitation of the pre-adolescent Lolita, associating sympathetic relations with the nonhuman to arrested sexual development. These are just a few examples of the vast smorgasbord of literary characters from the turn of the twentieth century onwards whose empathetic connection to nonhuman animals is inextricably and repeatedly linked to abnormal sexual appetites.

The relationship between sexual desire, alimentary appetite, and veganism is repeatedly contested in modern and contemporary discussions, representations, and derogations of vegan identity. This was evident when, in January 2008, the American Dialect Society shortlisted "vegansexual" for the 2007 "most unnecessary word of the year" award. "Vegansexuality," a term used to describe vegans primarily sexually attracted to other vegans, emerged as a result of a report on the dietary practices of New Zealanders published in early 2007 by Annie Potts and Mandala White. An initial story picked up by *The Christchurch Press* led to a highly sensationalised explosion in international media coverage, becoming the top story on Australasian news sites *Yahoo* and *Stuff* and subsequently picked up by a wide range of British and North American publications.

The several thousand violent and vitriolic online responses to the media sensationalisation of “vegansexuality” provides a pertinent crystallisation of the misogynistic and homophobic politics of mainstream depictions of vegans. Potts and Jovian Parry have noted the staunch public backlash—particularly from heterosexual, meat-eating men—that catalysed the public “coming out” of self-identified “vegansexuals.” Veganism, and the preference of a vegan partner, is associated with women and castigated, primarily by meat-eating heterosexual men, as little more than “a superficial cultural veneer of misguided abstinence, beneath which powerful, ‘natural’ carnal urges roil unabated” (Potts and Parry 60). In this conception of female desire as a tempest of carnal longing for men and meat, veganism is reduced to a humanist restriction that denies supposedly natural and beneficial appetites—carnivorous and heterosexual—in favour of a misguided asceticism. However, the subsequent embrace of the term by many vegans, choosing to publicly self-identify as vegansexual, attests that for individual practitioners there is often a converse relationship between veganism and desire, functioning as an active reclamation, and refiguring, of the latter.

The sensationalist media representation of vegansexuality is addressed here to exemplify veganism’s often ambiguous relation to desire in the popular imagination. As this dissertation establishes, veganism is not just about what we eat. It represents a composite of modes of relating to nonhuman animals, a queer positioning that destabilises previously fixed ideas of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and questions what it means to be a “speciesed” subject. Vegansexuality thus offers the possibility of a queer potentiality that recodes the desirability of gendered bodies. Potts recovers the term from the public vitriol directed against it to promote vegansexuality as an “embodied ethical form of sexuality” (Potts). However, as Rasmus Rahbek Simonsen critiques, vegansexuality also risks perpetuating a conservative dynamic that expels the supposedly “unpure” body. Simonsen critiques vegansexuality as a

“means by which a specifically vegan scheme of community and reproduction is produced in opposition to the omnivorous identity according to the same ‘expulsion-repulsion’ dynamic that frames the vegan as ‘other’ in anthronormative discourse” (60). By actively rejecting omnivorous bodies, vegansexuality marks often the most economically or racially disenfranchised members of society as undesirable. Furthermore, positioning vegansexuality as a queer resistance to heteronormativity is arguably a distinctively Western privilege, where, for example, vegetarianism in India has been appropriated to enforce religious and caste-based social divisions.

H. G. Wells’s wide-ranging literary output provides a textual legacy for contestations around vegansexuality. This chapter argues that his rewriting of Mary Shelley’s foundational monstrous vegan figure in *Frankenstein* explores the complex alignment, and crucially, misalignment, of alimentary and sexual desires. Margaret Atwood, suggesting a patrilineal model of literary inheritance, posits Wells as “a writer who is surely the granddaddy of us all” (Atwood, “In Context” 513). The ambiguity of “us” broadens the scope of Wells’s contribution to contemporary culture, declared as the “granddaddy” not simply of science fiction writers, or writers more broadly, but of the encompassing “all” of humanity. If Wells is considered by Atwood as the “granddaddy of us all,” this chapter considers both his inheritance from Shelley and establishes the significance of his first generation of literary progeny. The monstrous vegans that populate his early fictions, particularly *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and *The Time Machine* (1895), provide a way of thinking through the complexities of marking bodies as desirable and undesirable.

In the preceding chapter on the monstrous veganism of *Frankenstein*, I argue that Frankenstein’s creature is biologically herbivorous, conjuring a return to a prelapsarian ideal of the corporeal body and positing meat-eating as a fall from Grace or Promethean corruption. The emergence of vegansexuality two centuries later presents an analogous desire to return to

a Romantic conception of the essential vegan body. Vegansexual identification might then be read as a remedy to veganism's enmeshment in the often chaotic and contradictory realm of identity politics. The move from defining veganism as a series of ethical choices or dietary restrictions to unconscious sexual attraction—described by respondents in Potts and White's initial report in relation to touch, smell, and taste—exemplifies a desire to position “the body,” over ethical abstraction or social identification, as the fundamental locus of vegan experience. However, it also signals the ways in which conceptions of sexual identity and alimentary desire can become inextricably intertwined.

Whilst Wells ostensibly presents that which Peter Kemp has argued as an “increasing impatience” (15) with vegetarianism, vegetarian characters and ethics nonetheless feature as a source of both anxiety and utopian aspiration throughout his fiction. The monstrosity of Wells's vegetarian characters is engendered by the failures and inconsistencies of their plant-based diets. Throughout this project, monstrous vegans are defined as uncanny hybrids of human and animal origin, sired outside of heterosexual reproduction, that generate an inexplicable anxiety in both the reader and the characters in the novels. They are created as redemptive figures, spawned from desires to reinvent mankind, and yet appear doomed to failure, horror, and the concomitant risk of human extinction. Turning to Wells's multitude of monstrous vegan figures allows for an exploration of the ways in which literary veganism comes to signify, in the wake of Darwinism and evolutionary discourses, both simultaneous progress and degeneration. Vegetarianism, as a marker of identitarian categories and politics, conflicts with an emphasis on the futility and porosity of such categorisations, particularly as it comes to make meaning in embodied persons, rather than disembodied ideals. Stagnancy and insecurity thus form part of the monstrous vegan's refusal to transmit stable or definitive meaning.

Building on Shelley's depiction of the biologically herbivorous body and the notion of a return to a vegetarian Golden Age, this chapter explores Wells's active critique of such temporal gestures, with monstrous veganism the result of linguistic modes of disciplinary power subjecting the body to biopolitical power. Wells's vegan monsters provide a pertinent mode of thinking through the anxieties attendant to vegan desires and the negotiation of pleasure within vegan modes of being. I situate Wells's writing within the context of late nineteenth-century vegetarianism and unpack the significance of a range of vegetarian characters that populate his expansive oeuvre, exploring their relation to meat, masculinity, and sexuality. The remainder of the chapter focuses primarily on *Doctor Moreau*, establishing the Beast People as monstrous vegan figures whose embodiment of veganism as discursive code relates to Wells's positioning of himself, as author, as a Frankensteinian creator. I turn also to their relation to broader Darwinian concerns of "the beast within" and representations of visibility, comparing acts of looking and witnessing in *Doctor Moreau* to those detailed in the previous chapter in relation to *Frankenstein*. Finally, I consider the monstrous vegan figures in *The Time Machine* before comparing Wells's early scientific romances to his attempts to domesticate and neutralise the threat of such monsters in his later fiction.

Late Nineteenth-Century Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism was a discursively legible category of personal and collective identity by the time Wells began his literary career in the early 1890s and occurs with considerable frequency across his novels and short stories. The *OED* locates the first use of the term "vegetarian" in an 1842 article of *The Healthian*, an organ of The Concordium (a vegetarian group established at Alcott House). The formation of the UK Vegetarian Society followed shortly after, in 1847. Vegetarianism had a primarily urban appeal in this period, a consequence, perhaps, of the increasing distance of nonhuman animals from city life, urban access to a

variety of alternative foodstuffs, and a middle-class focus on the cultivation of reason and intellect. As Gregory James notes in his study of Victorian vegetarianism, vegetarianism was also increasingly associated with quackery, with the extension of earlier Romantic conceptions of vegetarianism as a panacea for all social ills providing a target for ridicule. The concerns with purity amongst its practitioners, which generally predominated over concern for animals, saw it aligned with herbalism, hydropathy, homeopathy, mesmerism, the anti-vaccination movement, advanced teetotalism, and public health reform.⁴³

Wells's fiction explicitly incorporates his scientific training into romance narrative conventions, and his vegetarian characters draw out relations between animal slaughter, meat-eating, degeneration, and Darwinist theory. Such links increasingly emerged in the late nineteenth century. For example, Abel Andrew, in *Vegetarianism and Evolution*, a little known tract delivered at a Vegetarian Society conference in 1895, positions meat-eating alongside animal instinct and savagery.⁴⁴ Whilst not dissimilar from the vegetarian rhetoric of Romanticism, in which meat-eating signals the origin of sin, Andrew's polemic explicitly links vegetarianism to Darwinian evolution, suggesting the regenerative potential of evolution:

The human wild beast is rampant. Evolution and education have done much to subdue the animal and develop the human. Vegetarianism shall complete the process. ... In the future Vegetarianism and Evolution shall go hand in hand (Andrew 9).

For Andrew, vegetarianism is an inevitable and progressive outcome of human evolution.

Andrew's tract is particularly relevant here as it provides an explicit vegetarian gloss on the thwarted ambitions of Moreau in *Doctor Moreau*, to be explored in detail below. He argues, for example, that "There is much of the wild animal in all of us, but the confirmed Vegetarian

⁴³ For more on these connections see G. James *Of Victorian and Vegetarians*, and Rod Preece *Sings of the Flesh*.

⁴⁴ Andrew's tract is explored further in Michael Parrish Lee *The Food Plot*

leaves the original savage behind” (Andrew 8). However, whereas Andrew confidently asserts that evolution will provide the means of achieving “the perfect human being” (3), there is an ambivalence in Wells’s fiction about how such a transformation should come about. Whilst vegetarianism is indeed the gradual product of evolutionary change in *The Time Machine*, it is also presented as a degenerative weakness. In *Doctor Moreau*, vegetarianism is imposed through a series of discursive Laws, however, these too fail to control or repress carnivorous appetite. In both, a meat-free diet appears as a monstrous destabilisation of identity rather than a neat resolution to wider social problems.

Concurrent to the rise in vegetarianism over the course of the nineteenth century was a prominent anti-vivisection movement. This was dominated by major metropolitan societies, particularly in London, including the preeminent Victoria Street society led by Frances Power Cobbe. The dominance of women within the movement has been widely noted, with anti-vivisection arguments often linked to feminist resistance to male violation of women’s bodies. Contemporary responses to vivisection often relied on notions of bodily response, a much denigrated realm associated with femininity, savagery, and a rejection of scientific rationalism. For example, responses to vivisection in the periodical press, the *Anti-Vivisectionist* and *Home Chronicler*, saw opposition based not on objective ideas about animal rights or inutility, but the painful response it inspired within the individual activist’s body: “Since I have known what vivisection is, and how it is practiced, I have moved and slept, eaten and studied, under the shadow of it, and its effluvium has poisoned for me the very air of heaven” (French 390). However, despite their seemingly natural affinity, there was often little relation or co-operation between the anti-vivisectionist and vegetarian cause.

Whilst its association with women, emotion, and the body threatened the legitimacy of the anti-vivisection movement, Richard French, in his study of the historical relation between

anti-vivisection and medical science, argues that the late nineteenth century was witness to “the greatest threat to the actual existence of experimental medicine in any major country” (12). In French’s view, Victorian anti-vivisection agitation is of interest for its demonstration of “the tensions surrounding the roles of science and medicine in society” (408) rather than for its relation to ideas about cruelty to animals. Many protests relied on attacks to the medical profession more broadly, arguing, for example, that questions of morality should be judged by the common man rather than the qualified doctor, or of vivisection’s harmful impact on human life, by normalising violence and cruelty. Such cruelty was seen to result in moral decline and linked to fears of degeneration, therefore implicating anti-vivisectionist discourses in disciplinary attempts to regulate individual bodies, often along class lines.⁴⁵

A further relevant context for the concerns of this chapter is the influence of Sylvester Graham, an American dietary reformer, on late nineteenth-century vegetarian ideals on both sides of the Atlantic. The legacy of Grahamism, as Carol J. Adams writes, associated vegetarianism with abnormal sexual appetites:

nineteenth-century vegetarian popularizer Sylvester Graham bequeathed to feminism a mixed legacy. On the one hand, the predominantly vegetarian diet that gained his name and gave him his reputation proved immensely popular to the feminist reformers of his time. On the other hand, the emphasis that he and his medical followers gave to meat’s supposed influence on the male sexual organs has caused these ideas to be exposed as yet another instance of the buffoonery of dissenting ideas. That followers of Graham called meat ‘animalized protein’ suggested to critics that vegetarians were denying their animal nature. From this the idea was extrapolated that other aspects of our “animal” nature were feared, i.e., sexuality. Fear of the body was then corroborated by Graham’s focus on controlling male sexuality. ... His position implied that those concerned with eliminating meat from their diets might be unduly obsessed with sexual concerns (*Sexual Politics* 144).

⁴⁵ For more on the class politics involved in the rise of animal rights discourses in the nineteenth century see Hilda Kean’s *The Animal Estate*.

The relation between meat-eating and sexual appetite in Wells's fiction contributes to the controversy surrounding Graham's ideas as well as to Wells's often ambivalent relation to vegetarianism, as both repressive "buffoonery" and utopian aspiration.

Wells's fiction repeatedly explores the relationship between vegetarianism and sexuality, with vegetarianism and veganism repeatedly rubbing up against lesbianism, frigidity, and hysteria, and associated with the negation and repression of both sexual and alimentary desires. For example, in *Ann Veronica* (1909) the suffragette movement is disparagingly aligned with female sexual repression. The former's representative, in the figure of Miss Miniver, expresses: "When I am leading a true life, a pure and simple life, free of all stimulants and excitements, I think - I think - oh! with pellucid clearness; but if I so much as take a mouthful of meat - or anything - the mirror is all blurred" (Wells, *Ann Veronica* 145). If the suggestive connotations attached to the idea of a "mouthful of meat" are not ham-fisted enough, through the punningly orgasmic "oh!", then the conflation of Miss Miniver's rejection of carnivorous appetite to a suppression of female sexual appetite is explicit in her frantic renunciation of sexual contact: "Bodies! Bodies! Horrible things! ... We are not animals. If ever I did meet a man I could love, I should love him ... platonically" (Wells, *Ann Veronica* 144). Female sexual desire is equated with a desire for meat, and Miss Miniver's vocal vegetarianism with militant feminism and a repressive illusion of transcendent chastity.

Veganism's association with a renunciation of female sexual appetite finds it correlative in the relation drawn throughout Wells's fiction between male desire and carnivorous, or cannibalistic, appetite. In *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island* (1928), for example, Arnold describes his desire to violate his fiancée Olive. With Olive stripped and struggling, he experiences an "intensity of desire ... [he] had never known before" (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 49), and grapples with his mind's ambivalent response to such violent sexual impulses:

One part of my brain was scheming and planning how I would go back to Oxford and catch Olive Slaughter tripping—and beyond that it was utterly careless of consequences—while most of the rest of me was still demanding, in forms I cannot recall, what had happened to my soul and why my world was damned (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 49).

Following this incident, Arnold leaves England on a ship bound for the previously colonised cities of Pernambuco and Rio, is left for dead by the crew, and finds himself stranded on a previously uncharted island inhabited by cannibal savages. However, the island itself is later revealed as a psychotic delusion repressing the true horror of wartime England. The cannibalism he condemns on the island is revealed as a metaphor for the violent consumption of human bodies through war and sexual domination. The two are linked by “a mentality whose one clear delight was triumph—the coarse male triumph over a woman’s submission, the bought woman’s submission, or the triumph over an outwitted adversary going to his death” (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 247). Conflated here is the consumption of human bodies through the cannibalism of the savages, sending young men to war, and male desire for female sexual submission. Sexual desire and meat-eating are thus conjoined in their exposure of humanity’s cannibalistic urge to triumph over the other as much as it links women, the young, and animals as consumable objects of desire.

Arnold’s fear of losing his humanity and becoming savage is punctuated at two key moments in the novel. The first emerges from the realisation of his desire to rape Olive. Olive’s forename marks her consumability as a *hors d’oeuvre*, whilst her surname, “Slaughter,” aligns her with the processes of meat production and, as we discover at the novel’s conclusion, she eventually marries a pork butcher.⁴⁶ Olive enacts a deliberate performance of gendered stereotypes around the sexual politics of meat, in which her pretence of feminine modesty and sensitivity sees Graves recount that “She’s quite nice about it.

⁴⁶ Also worth noting is that the first chairman of the Eugenics Education Society, in 1907, was a Dr. Slaughter.

Whenever [her husband] kills a pig, she told me, she *has* to put her fingers in her ear” (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 263). The italicisation of “*has*” emphasises the performative and melodramatic dimension of Olive’s refusal to listen to the sounds of animal slaughter. It also alludes to the infamous scene of pig slaughter described in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In this earlier text, the brutality of Jude’s wife Arabella, whilst encouraging Jude to bleed their pig to death, precedes the revelation of her deceptive performance of femininity. In both cases, Victorian ideals about feminine sexual modesty unravel during instances of animal slaughter.

The second of Arnold’s existential crises occurs at the moment at which he chooses to drink blood instead of boganut milk—also referred to as “vegetarian milk” in the novel—on his initiation into the savage tribe of Rampole Island. His choice gains him acceptance into the group but leads him to question “Had I become a savage also?” (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 145). The rejection of carnivorous desire, represented by the provision of boganut milk as an alternative to blood, offers an alternative to rampant consumption or pretence of faultless innocence. However, it is an alternative that would necessarily destabilise traditional gender roles and related ideas about the performance and embodiment attached to sexual desire. It risks, as Miss Miniver demonstrates, absenting oneself from the realm of desire altogether.

Wells’s early scientific romances have been read in late twentieth-century criticism as a backlash against vegetarianism’s popularity that utilises its faddish associations for comic effect. However, this did not prevent their appropriation at the turn of the twentieth century as pedagogical vegetarian conversion texts. For example, an October 1897 edition of *The Vegetarian* magazine reads Wells’s *War of the Worlds* (1897) as a creative alignment of the tyranny of the martians against humans to our everyday tyranny against nonhuman animals. Whilst for Kemp “vegetarians in Wells tend to seem as nutty as their diet” (15), comparisons between human and nonhuman animal oppressions abound across his work. In *War of the*

Worlds, for example, the narrator responds to the revelation that the invading martians feed on human blood by explaining to the reader that “The bare idea of this is no doubt horribly repulsive to us, but at the same time I think that we should remember how repulsive our carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit” (Wells 125). Furthermore, in *Mr. Blettsworthy*, Arnold finds himself “thrown down among a lot of recently caught fish, most of which were still wrigglingly alive” (Wells 137) before struggling to communicate with a savage who “took no more heed of my attempt to communicate than a butcher does of the bleating of a sheep in his yard” (Wells 140). In less stark terms, Mr. Polly’s sense of social and economic entrapment in *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910) is equated with the idea that “A young rabbit must have very much the same feeling when ... it finds itself at last after a long night of floundering effort and perplexity in a net—for the rest of its life” (Wells 60). Such comparisons provoke sympathetic connections between white British men and victims of meat production and bloodsports.

In addition, representations of meat-eating and butchery frequently accompany discussions of moral degeneration. In *The Time Machine*, for example, the social transparency of the red-haired Filby sees the narrator comment offhand that even “a pork-butcher could understand Filby” (Wells 12). This casual derogation of pork-butchers at the simplest level of society posits them as the direct ancestors of the monstrous cannibalistic Morlocks that populate the future world of 801,701. Similarly, in *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), the greater intelligence of the Selenites, as perceived by the vegetarian Cavor, sees those engaged as “butchers, fleshers, and the like” (170) resemble one another physiologically, as a distinct race of non-intellectual Selenites, who “tak[e] at last no interest in the deeper part of the moon” (Wells 176). In *A Modern Utopia* (1905) universal education is seen to render animal slaughter obsolete. As one of the voluntary elite expresses: “In all the round world of Utopia there is no meat. ... we cannot stand the thought of slaughterhouses. And, in a population that

is all educated, and at about the same level of physical refinement, it is practically impossible to find anyone who will hew a dead ox or pig” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 357).

Vegetarian and vegan identity thus occupy a precarious and ambivalent position across Wells’s fiction, as both a stagnating retreat from desire and an aspirational investment in a utopian future vision. This chapter argues that Wells uses monstrous vegan figures to emphasise the complexity of the relation between utopian visions of futurity and the gradual and unpredictable pace of evolutionary change. The corporeal body appears to lag behind the ideational. This finds its apt scientific counterpart in the conflict between the Darwinian concepts of natural and sexual selection, in which the *longue durée* of evolutionary time, gradual species adaptation, and environmental change comes into contact with the supposedly unconscious mechanisms of human desire in the present.

Wells’s Frankensteinian Heritage

Doctor Moreau tells of the eleven months spent by protagonist Prendick following the shipwreck of the *Lady Vain*, in the near future world of the novel between February 1887 and January 1888. Prendick contemplates cannibalism with his fellow survivors before their purportedly accidental deaths leave him stranded in the Pacific Ocean. Miraculously rescued by the *Ipecacuanha*, Prendick befriends Montgomery, a medical man banished from London for unspoken transgressions, and his peculiar assistant, M’Ling. The two are travelling with an assortment of exotic animals, about which Montgomery is notably secretive. Later thrown overboard by the drunk captain of the vessel, Prendick is brought ashore to a mysterious island. Here he encounters a series of further uncannily strange men. The familiarity of M’Ling’s appearance to Prendick is mirrored by the familiarity of Moreau’s name, revealed as a famous vivisector who, like Montgomery, has been exiled from London. In Moreau’s case,

this was the result of a media exposé of the cruelty involved in his laboratory experiments on animals.

Prendick fears initially that Moreau has been operating on men and transforming them into animals. Distressed by the possibility of losing his humanity, Prendick flees Moreau's enclosure and temporarily lives among the Beast People. During this period he learns of Moreau's quasi-Divine hold over them, reciting his Law through fear of a return to the "House of Pain" from which they emerge. However, it is subsequently explained that Moreau's project aspires toward the opposite outcome: endeavouring to transform wild animals into human beings capable of rational thought. Whilst his creations possess rudimentary language skills and follow his dictates of bipedalism and a plant-based diet, Moreau laments that he is unable to stop their animality from eventually returning. Following Moreau's death, at the hands of his unfinished female puma victim, the revolt and reversion of the Beast People results in the death of both Montgomery and M'Ling. Prendick must survive alone among the creatures before his eventual rescue by a Coleridgean boat populated by a dead crew and a "great white bird" (Wells, *Moreau* 127). On his return to London, he feigns amnesia to prevent being labelled insane and, like Swift's Gulliver, struggles to rehabilitate himself to civilisation, seeing in the veneer of London society little more than Beast People in disguise: "animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls" (Wells, *Moreau* 130).

Doctor Moreau is an overt rewriting of *Frankenstein* with Moreau occupying the role of Frankensteinian male scientist, siring a series of monstrous creations. Both Victor's and Prendick's accounts are framed by the narration of others and their respective improbable rescues at sea. Moreau, Montgomery, and Prendick's occupation of a desert island recreates the all-male spaces of Victor's education and experiments, and the mutilation of the Puma Woman that haunts the narrative faces the same fate as Victor's aborted female creation.

In addition, Robert Philmus's work on the changes made between numerous drafts of *Doctor Moreau* establishes *Frankenstein* at the forefront of Wells's mind during its composition. For example, two deleted references to "Frankenstein" are found when Prendick is restored to life "by a kind of Frankensteinian miracle" (Philmus 2). Furthermore, in the preface to *Scientific Romances*, Wells groups his brand of science writing along with *Frankenstein*, in the sense in which neither can claim plausibility, functioning instead as an "exercise of the imagination in a quite different field" ("Preface" 240). He further suggests that while Frankenstein "used some jiggery-pokery magic to animate his artificial monster," the implausibility of magic in the late nineteenth century saw him substitute it in favour of a "scientific patter" (Wells, "Preface" 241-242) that sought to maintain, albeit only temporarily, an illusion of reality for the reader.⁴⁷

The story within a story structure of *Frankenstein* is said by J. Jack Halberstam to disassociate Shelley's novel from the natural and organic, a structure that "signifies the machinic, the productive, the technological" (*Skin Shows* 49). Whilst I am skeptical of the potentially limitless scope of the claim that narrative framing devices connote the technological, the frame narrative of *Doctor Moreau* does emphasise a move towards a scientific ordering of the natural world. For example, the opening sentence of the novel, in which Prendick's nephew glosses the source of his uncle's unlikely tale, is characterised by specificity: "On February the 1st, 1887, the *Lady Vain* was lost by collision with a derelict when about the latitude 1° S. and longitude 107° W." (Wells, *Moreau* 5). This focus on latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates frames the novel in relation to accurate record keeping and printed maps. Furthermore, the novel is comprised of an arguably gratuitous quantity of chapters given its length: twenty-four chapters break up its one-hundred-and-twenty-nine

⁴⁷ Whilst this seems a misreading of *Frankenstein*, with many scholars seeing Shelley's novel as embedded within contemporaneous ideas of scientific vitalism rather than "jiggery-pokery" magic, it makes clear Wells's own sense of the value and purpose of his early scientific romances.

pages. The structural emphasis on its fragmented, assembled status formally resembles its Frankensteinian heritage as much as its technicity demonstrates, as I argue below, the rejection of a biological veganism. The veganism of the Beast People instead aligns with the artificial, as a linguistic appendage that must be continually recited. As well as such narrative similarities, the Beast People of *Doctor Moreau* manifest a Frankensteinian legacy through their monstrous veganism, iterating the four key traits of the monstrous vegan as identified in chapter one: a meat-free diet, unclear taxonomic status at the borders of human and nonhuman animal definition, creation outside of heterosexual reproduction, and intimate relation to the literary.

“Not to Eat Flesh or Fish, that is the Law”

Firstly, prior to their reversion to carnivorism, the Beast People eat a solely plant-based diet with their abstinence from meat enforced by the dictate of Moreau’s Law “Not to eat Flesh or Fish” (Wells, *Moreau* 59). The island setting upon which they live is almost entirely devoid of native animal life. As a result, Montgomery imports rabbits to satiate his carnivorous desires. His call for them to “Replenish the island” because “Hitherto we’ve had a certain lack of meat here” (Wells, *Moreau* 30), suggests either a lack of native mammalian life or the ecological destruction wrought by his and Moreau’s invasion.

The implausible infertility of the island—a parody of the fecundity of life Darwin famously discovered among the Galapagos archipelago—mirrors Wells’s exploration of veganism in *The Time Machine*, in which the childlike Eloi eat nothing but fruit, with the year 801,701 marked by the extinction of all domestic animals, where “horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had followed the Ichthysaurus into extinction” (27). These landscapes align veganism with dark satirical visions of the Garden of Eden, in which the advent of the peaceable kingdom is seen to require the total extinction of nonhuman life. Distorting the Romantic vision of return

to a communion between human and nonhuman animals, Wells exposes the carnivorous logic of such visions and their refusal to acknowledge the reality of nature “red in tooth and claw.”

In *Frankenstein*, as I detail in chapter one, the creature’s vegetarianism recalls a prelapsarian past, marking a cyclical return to Eden. The vegetarianism of *Doctor Moreau* also appears as a relic of the past, as a linguistic appendage and pre-existing discourse and mode of disciplinary power. Victor’s creature, whose “food is not that of man” (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 148), is reincarnated in the Beast People of *Moreau* who assert the humanity of their diet. They chant in unison:

Not to go on all-Fours; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?*
Not to suck up Drink; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?*
Not to eat Flesh or Fish; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?*
Not to claw Bark of Trees; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?*
Not to chase other Men; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?* (Wells, *Moreau* 59)

In addition, we are made aware of further prohibitions of the Law beyond this list. Prendick distinguishes between those listed above as “acts of folly” and subsequent unspecified Laws: “the prohibition of what I thought then were the maddest, most impossible, and most indecent things we could well imagine” (Wells, *Moreau* 59). The consumption of flesh and fish here is marked as both a foolish indiscretion and bestial habit. Prendick begins to associate himself with the Beast People, marked by the use of pronouns in his description of the hypnotic, unifying power of the Law: “we gabbled and swayed faster and faster, repeating this amazing law” (Wells, *Moreau* 59, my emphasis). However, the reader is left to imagine the “most indecent things” for themselves. That the indecent remains unwritten sees it protected as a realm free from discursive discipline and mechanisms of power. This asserts that such things *are* imaginable and latent within the human imagination, encouraging an acknowledgement of humanity’s reliance on similarly proscriptive Laws and prohibitions to police and enforce a sense of shared civility.

The omission from the text of the “maddest, most impossible, and most indecent things we could well imagine,” is mirrored by the contemplation of cannibalism in the dinghy of the *Lady Vain*. Prendick describes how “we were already thinking strange things with our eyes” before “Helmar gave voice to what we all had in mind” (Wells, *Moreau* 8). Cannibalism’s literal absence from the text, only ever referenced implicitly, encourages the reader to share complicity in its contemplation. That which appears “maddest, most impossible, and most indecent,” becomes inevitable in the face of brute survival. Cannibalism is no longer secure as the defining feature of humanity’s constitutive outside, a contingent moral limit that comes into conflict with survival instincts. And yet, cannibalism remains outside of discursive representation, figured as unrepresentable, in narrative form, where questions of survival and appetite transcend the limits of language.

Nevertheless, Moreau’s *Laws* also gesture towards a presumed correlation between civilisation and a reduction in violent impulses. T. H. Huxley, a major influence on Wells, argued of the shift in evolutionary development, in which a new dawn of “ethical evolution” would allow the “ethically best” to survive over the physically “fittest.” In this sense, enforcing moral laws that restrain and redirect animal instinct is an ethical act. Certainly, in *A Modern Utopia*, restrictions of freedom are worthwhile for the greater good: “Prohibition takes one definite thing from the indefinite liberty of man, but it still leaves him an unbounded choice of actions. He remains free, and you have merely taken a bucketful from the sea of his freedom” (Wells 222).

“The creatures I had seen were not men, had never been men”

Secondly, the Beast People are hybrid compositions—the mutilated remains of multiple nonhuman animals surgically wrought into human shapes—that destabilise species taxonomies and the binary divisions drawn between the human and nonhuman animal. Some

“irresistible suggestion of a hog, a swinish taint, the unmistakable mark of the beast” (Wells, *Moreau* 42) characterises each, and they are named and distinguished by Prendick in relation to their visual resemblance to one or more distinct species, whether Leopard or Hyena-Swine. This generates epistemological uncertainties for Prendick, questioning of the Leopard Man, “What on earth was he - man or animal?” (Wells, *Moreau* 43). Whilst the composition of Frankenstein’s creature from slaughterhouse parts means that, as Adams argues, “at least a portion of the Creature was anatomically vegetarian” (*Sexual Politics* 104), the victims of Moreau’s vivisection are explicitly carnivorous. He dismisses his initial choice of sheep as making poor experimental subjects: “These animals without courage, these fear-haunted pain-driven things, without a spark of pugnacious energy to face torment - they are no good for man-making” (Wells, *Moreau* 75). In juxtaposition to Frankenstein’s creature, the carnivorous appetite of Moreau’s experimental creations, as it surfaces following the waning influence of the Law, is presented as an inevitable reversion to origins.

The ambiguous status of the Beast People, existing at the borders of human and nonhuman animal definition, is also accompanied by their racialisation throughout the novel. For example, when he first encounters a group of Beast Folk, Prendick describes: “They seemed to me then to be brown men, but their limbs were oddly swathed in some thin dirty white stuff down even to the fingers and feet. I have never seen men so wrapped up before, and women so only in the East” (27). Described with brown faces and associated with Eastern traditions, the Beast People are positioned as racially other. Moreover, comparing their bandaging to the coverings worn by Muslim women, Prendick imposes an imperial conception of the beastliness of Eastern tradition.

Prendick’s visual consumption of these racial and animalised others draws attention to his desiring gaze. The Beast People’s coverings highlight Moreau’s penetration of their bodily insides. However, this also functions as a layer of protection against Prendick’s penetrating

stare. Edward Said, in his seminal *Orientalism*, posits an imperial gaze in which the masculine Western subject seeks to penetrate that which is feminine, powerless, and sexually available, to possess its resources. Just as Moreau literally penetrates bodies with his surgical instruments, Prendick's looking seeks to classify in terms of species, gender, and race. However, in their bandaged state, the Beast People resist any definitive interpretation as determined by their bodies. In this sense they refuse, at least temporarily, the consumptive gaze of the imperial subject.

In addition, the sexual connotations attached to Moreau's desires to fashion such bodies conjures that which Joseph Allen Boone characterises as the homoerotics of Orientalism. Boone applies Said's critique to explore dominant Western myths of sexually submissive Eastern boys. Several critics have noted the eroticism of Moreau's investment in the Puma Woman. However, such connotations can also be observed in Moreau's description of his first successful creation, a modified gorilla: "I thought him a fair specimen of the negroid type when I had done him, and he lay, bandaged, bound, and motionless before me" (Wells, *Moreau* 76). Here, his desired creation is described in relation to sexual passivity. The ambiguous connotations of "done" in this context highlight the incapacitation of the victim, himself "done" or exhausted by the process, and encourages homoerotic connotations of the passive, effeminate receiver of a virile masculine desire. Doing here functions as a disciplinary force where penetration of the body becomes a means of control. Furthermore, Prendick first takes in their faces—jaws, eyes, hair—before describing that "their bodies were abnormally long and the thigh part of the leg short and curiously twisted" (Wells, *Moreau* 27). This movement of his gaze, down from the face to the torso and groin, surveys the body before stopping to examine the intimate area of the upper thigh which signals, for Prendick, their ultimate otherness, as much as it marks their similarity to him and the locus point of his imperial gaze.

Whilst the ethnic and sexual otherness of the Beast People marks their monstrosity, the reflection that “Never before had I seen such bestial-looking creatures” comes as Prendick confronts those whose “skins were of a dull pinkish drab colour, such as I had seen in no savages before” (Wells, *Moreau* 41). The implicit whiteness of this “pinkish” hue ironically associates the most monstrous with the most ostensibly European. And indeed, as described above, the meeting of eyes between Prendick and his fellow survivors on board the dinghy of the *Lady Vain* presents a mode of looking that reveals the savagery inherent to the colonial invader. In this uncovering of cannibalistic urges, the human becomes edible, disruptive to a hierarchy of consumption that privileges man.

As in *Frankenstein*, the threat of bestiality also lingers as a potent subtext to Moreau’s experiments. The hybrid physicality of the Beast People alludes to their status as products of bestial copulation. Furthermore, whilst Moreau, Montgomery, and Prendick occupy the island as human men, women are only found among Moreau’s creatures. However, unlike *Frankenstein*, no overt anxiety is expressed about their possible propagation of a “race of devils” (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 138). From the outset, the novel’s frame narrative promises the extinction of the Beast People in the present, where sailors landing on the island in 1891 find “nothing living thereon except certain curious white moths, some hogs and rabbits, and some rather peculiar rats” (Wells, *Moreau* 5). Moreover, any threat posed by the Beast People’s ability to reproduce is tempered by the fact that their offspring “generally died” and show “no evidence of the inheritance of the acquired human characteristics” (Wells, *Moreau* 82). Prendick admires the surviving offspring of the Beast People, suggesting that they “might provide a convenient substitute for the common rabbit in gentlemen’s parks” (Wells, *Moreau* 85).

“*Monsters manufactured!*”

The third way in which the Beast People fulfil the trope of the monstrous vegan is through their origins outside of conventional heterosexual reproduction. As in *Frankenstein*, Moreau's creatures bypass the role of women in the reproductive process and threaten a radically altered future for humanity, in which the human form refuses to partake in the logic of reproductive futurity and its relentless repetition of sameness. The Beast People reflect instead an evolutionary temporality through their degenerate atavism. The parallel temporal trajectories of evolutionary and sexually reproductive time emphasise the disjuncture in the relation between desire and futurity, a misalignment between bestial urges and utopian fantasies.

Elaine Showalter notes the sexual sadism underlying Moreau's treatment of his final victim, the Puma Woman. If the Puma represents "a kind of New Woman figure" (Showalter 179), Moreau's decadent science for science's sake separates reproduction from female sexuality, with the fin-de-siècle an age in which "Women's social or cultural marginality seem[ed] to place them on the borderlines of the symbolic order ... inhabitants of a mysterious and frightening wild zone outside of patriarchal culture" (Showalter 8). Moreau's project is ultimately terminated by the Puma Woman, and the rebellion against his Law originates among his female creatures—"the pioneers, I [Prendick] noticed with some surprise, were all females" (Wells, *Moreau* 123)—suggesting a distinctly female resistance to his enforced version of civility and humanity. The domestication and submission of Moreau's asexually reproduced subjects makes manifest a male desire for control. The desire to consume and overpower also comes to play in the treatment of Montgomery's unspoken but implicit homosexuality. Whilst we never discover the reason behind Montgomery's exile from London, Moreau's chastisement that "I wish, Montgomery, you had kept your taste for meat in hand" (Wells, *Moreau* 88), punningly alludes to the alignment of carnivorousness with sexual transgression.

As a sexuality that is managed and chaste, veganism in Wells challenges and disrupts dominant sexual norms. Its manifestation in characters such as Miss Miniver in *Ann Veronica* or Aunt Phyllis and Aunt Phoebe in *Joan and Peter*, for example, sees a turn to celibacy or suspected lesbianism respectively: subject positions which refuse the injunction on the feminine to reproduce. This presents a challenge, to some extent, to heteronormative standards, refusing, in Lee Edelman's terms, to bind the hope for the social order in the promise of futurism.⁴⁸ However, Moreau's vegan beasts suggest that this reproductive failure results in regression. The offspring of the Beast People are foetal in appearance, "little pink animals" (Wells, *Moreau* 85) and, according to Prendick, well-suited to serve an upper-class milieu, an improvement on British rabbits since "it never destroyed the turf by burrowing, and was very cleanly in its habits." In addition, "its teeth were too feeble to inflict more than a painless pinch" (Wells, *Moreau* 85), suggesting an imprinted corporeal veganism as a form of degeneration. Indeed, in addition to their "feeble" defence mechanisms, the little pink offspring are self-destructive and fated to causing their own extinction: "[Montgomery] had fancied they might serve for meat, but a rabbit-like habit of devouring their young had defeated this intention" (Wells, *Moreau* 85). Veganism, in its attempted negation of human carnivorousness, is presented as an aspirational future that constructs non-desiring female victims as childlike and degenerate, ready subjects for patriarchal dominance.

"What could it mean?"

At the close of chapter VII, Prendick reflects on his position on the island and asks "What could it mean? A locked enclosure on a lonely island, a notorious vivisector, and these

⁴⁸ As Benjamin Kahan argues, celibacy has appeared throughout history as a "site of radical politics, of feminist organizing, of black activism, queer citizenship, and other leftist interventions" (153). Celibacy, for Kahan, has the power to subvert codes of respectability "from the inside in order to launch a full-scale assault on a deeply inequitable sex/gender system" (8).

crippled and distorted men?” (Wells, *Moreau* 35). Laying out the key elements of the novel’s plot thus, Prendick’s narrative is reduced to a series of narrative tropes waiting to be unravelled in order for meaning to emerge. However, as in *Frankenstein*, the intimate relation of the Beast People, as monstrous vegans, to the act of writing and literary creation complicates any straightforward notion of narrative transmission.

In *An Experiment in Autobiography*, writing of his early disillusionment with religion, Wells derides popular conceptions of Jesus Christ as little more than “a dressed-up inconsistent effigy of amiability, a monstrous hybrid of man and infinity” (68). This telling description associates monstrous hybridity with religious tradition as much as the revelations of Darwinian evolution and endless variation. Wells further advises his readers not to pursue his early work chronologically, dismissing *Doctor Moreau* as “rather painful” (“Preface” 240). Signalling his embarrassment over his first inexperienced forays into literary creation, the choice of “painful” also alludes explicitly to the “House of Pain” at the centre of the novel’s vivisection plot. This positions both Wells and his readers as Moreau’s experimental subjects, with Wells’s younger self as Moreau.

The conflation of Moreau, as Frankensteinian scientist, and young Wells, as aspiring author, is further encouraged by the symmetry of their scientific discourses. Wells ventriloquises much of his scientific journalism through Moreau. For example, in his essay “The Limits of Individual Plasticity” (1895), he promotes a form of proto-posthumanism, in which contemporaneous developments in the use of skin grafts, cosmetic surgery, and blood transfusions provide the possibility of individuals being “moulded and modified” even as far as to be considered new varieties of being (36). Contrary to the tone of *Doctor Moreau*, in which the evocation of the myth of Frankenstein encourages a condemnation of Moreau’s hubris, Wells attaches positive and progressive importance to alternatives to conceptions of heredity and natural selection as predestined evolutionary futures:

We overlook only too often the fact that a living being may also be regarded as raw material, as something plastic, something that may be shaped and altered, that this, possibly, may be added and that eliminated, and the organism as a whole developed far beyond its apparent possibilities (Wells, "Plasticity" 36).

Furthermore, in "The Province of Pain" (1894), Wells prophesies of the diminishment of physical pain as man's intellect increases. Suggesting physical pain as an instinctive warning of danger or threat, "the coming man will not feel pain, because the warning will not be needed" (Wells, "Province" 198), where such alerts are replaced by foresight.

Chapter XIV, "Doctor Moreau Explains," grants space for an extended elaboration of Moreau's philosophy. Akin to Wells's scientific journalism, Moreau explains that "to the study of the plasticity of living forms - my life has been devoted" (Wells, *Moreau* 71), and dismisses pain as a relic of our ancestral past that must be eliminated by the tide of progress: "So long as visible or audible pain turns you sick, so long as your own pains drive you, so long as pain underlies your propositions about sin, so long, I tell you, you are an animal, thinking a little less obscurely what an animal feels" (Wells, *Moreau* 73). However, the disparity in tone confuses the otherwise direct alignment of Wells and Moreau, and there are a series of ironic double movements which further complicate the distinction between literary and scientific monsters. For example, just as the original subtitle of *Doctor Moreau*, "a possibility," inspires the credulity of the reader, Wells's essay "The Limits of Individual Plasticity" domesticates the fantastic, which future vivisection could make possible:

taking living creatures and moulding them into the most amazing forms; it may be, even reviving the monsters of mythology, realizing the fantasies of the taxidermist, his mermaids and what not, in flesh and blood (38-39).

Wells, as author, further transitions into the role of Frankensteinian creator in the suggested possibility of reviving Frankenstein's creature, bringing him from page to flesh. However, whilst Wells, as scientific journalist, writes of the reality of bringing to life the fantasies of the mind, his ventriloquism through Moreau transforms such ambitions into the fictional world of

scientific romance. Literature itself becomes analogous with Frankenstein's creation: a hybrid composition of the Cartesian division between the animal body, that physically writes, and the human mind, responsible for imagining fictional worlds.

The novel, *Doctor Moreau*, thus becomes Wells's Frankensteinian creation. His role as author brings to life a hybrid creature that challenges the boundaries of the human. This is encouraged by Wells's later comment in *A Modern Utopia*, describing the organisation of his imagined Utopia, as a moral monster State created from his "Frankenstein of reasoning" (*Modern Utopia* 330). This implicates the reader in such Frankensteinian experiments through their willing consumption of the literary text. The monster is both a character within the novel and a metaphor for the novel itself, forcing the reader to undergo a painful vivisection, with the text exposing them to their own bestial instincts beneath the surface veneer of humanity.

As dietary practice and discursive identity, veganism is divorced from the body in Wells's fiction. As pure text, it cannot and will not consume anything; however, it can, and will, be consumed by others. For example, the refrain "Are we not Men?" that follows the repetition of each of Moreau's prohibitions explicitly mimics the abolitionist adage of the period, "Am I not a Man and your Brother?" This refrain is a translation and transmission of the vocabulary of the French Revolution's Universal Rights of Man, which, as David Ketterer notes, is associated with Frankenstein's monster as a possible allegory of the violence of the French Revolutionary Terror. This revolutionary phrasing was also transported to a colonial context in the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue. I thus suggest a parallel between the transmission of the creature's vegetarian words through the Beast People and the movement of revolutionary words across political contexts. The stunted sentence "There was no fire" (Wells, *Moreau* 58) in the midst of Prendick's description of their living conditions further hints towards a pre-Promethean and thus pre-flesh-eating world. This fits with the Ape

Man's assertion of Moreau's imperative to "Eat roots and herbs - it is His will" (Wells, *Moreau* 60). Veganism thus appears as a Romantic return to human origins as much as it signals a future moral revolution. What it means to be a human being is here exposed as reliant on multiple discursive iterations of what it means to be a raced and gendered subject of language.

Moreau's Laws do not arise "naturally" from animal instinct, nor do they appear as natural laws.⁴⁹ They represent instead the imposition of discursive laws from without. In *Frankenstein*, the creature's assertion that "My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb or kid to glut my appetite" (Shelley 120), signals his biologically herbivorous body and discursive understanding of that which is right for man to eat. The Beast People's iteration of what it means to eat like man, with "man's food" (Wells, *Moreau* 55) described as "variegated fruits, coconuts and others" (Wells, *Moreau* 57), ironically reverses the dietary categories of Frankenstein's creature, positing a herbivorous diet as right for man. Dietary choices, however, are distinct from desire. This literary veganism, appearing across Wells's later fiction as utopian aspiration and prophecy, is corrupted by its containment within the all too bodily figures of the Beast People.

Being confronted with the impossibility of the vegan body, the vegan "word made flesh," comes to mean something different here to that which Adams argues in *The Sexual Politics*. For Adams, recovering the vegetarian messages of literary texts can initiate a reader's vegetarian conversion: "Their own vegetarianism becomes a way of making the

⁴⁹ This stands in contrast to the comparable jungle of Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Here "The Law of the Jungle" functions as a moral code that preserves the biodiversity and cohabitation of multiple animal species. For example, it "forbids every beast to eat Man except when he is killing to show his children how to kill." This is not seen to relate to any innate superiority in man but because "man-killing means, sooner or later, the arrival of white men on elephants, with guns, and hundreds of brown men with gongs and rockets and torches. Then everybody in the Jungle suffers" (15). The Law, passed from the bear Baloo to the wolf-boy Mowgli, both rigorous and often absurdly specific, is said to "never orde[r] anything without a reason" (14). Law here is seen to emerge spontaneously, from nature, as a harmonious system of checks and controls that orders and makes sense of the circle of life.

vegetarian word flesh” (*Sexual Politics* 69). Here, Moreau’s Law becomes flesh in the bodies of his monsters. However, his monsters remain within a literary framing, doubling back on the discursive nature of vegetarian renunciations, and suggesting the monstrous results of such words being inculcated in the control or policing of desire.

Veganism, as discursive inscription on the body, is an impossible attempt to circumscribe future desire, reliant on iterations and recitations from the past that break down in the present. As Moreau laments, he is continually defeated and thwarted in his efforts in one specific regard: “least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere - I cannot determine where - in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear” (Wells, *Moreau* 78). Moreau’s continued desire to “make a rational creature of my own” (Wells, *Moreau* 78) implies the necessary elimination of both the body and desire in order to perfect humanity.

Metatextual comments on the misalignment between discursive tradition and embodied desire are also found in *The Time Machine*. For example, in the Palace of Green Porcelain, a crumbling monument to Victorian invention and machinery, the Time Traveller discovers a library:

The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of [the gallery] I presently recognized as the decaying vestiges of books. They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of print had left them. But here and there were warped boards and cracked metallic clasps that told the tale well enough. ... the thing that struck me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified (Wells, *Time Machine* 67-68).

Words lose the power to make meaning in the future, where it is the “warped boards and cracked metallic clasps” that are described as putting across the story lost in the disintegration of the printed word.

Certainly, in the year 801,701, the linguistic abilities of the Eloi—a beautiful, childlike and frugivorous descendent of man—have been reduced to a rudimentary level, where it is only from the observations of their bodies and resemblance to humanity that the Time Traveller is able to interpret their evolutionary history. Without language, Eloi veganism is seen as a purely biological or corporeal phenomenon. However, rather than a return to a non-carnivorous state of man, as expressed through *Frankenstein*'s Romantic ideology, this is part of a forward movement to a degenerate state in which humanity no longer stands distinct from the animal kingdom, having lost language, reason, and control over the natural world. If veganism appears in *Doctor Moreau* as a discursive or literary descendent, its place within a future world is here suspect, with words coming to mean little. The alternative of evolved bodily states forewarns of the extinction of mankind and the ruin of all he has come to value within the Palace of Green Porcelain.

The Beast Within

Wells's engagement with the myth of Frankenstein associates the hubris of Moreau with reckless scientific endeavour. As such, the novel appears, at least on the surface, in the guise of an earnest anti-vivisection tract. The Puma Woman's cries of pain haunt Prendick throughout the narrative and he finds himself unable to escape from the resonance of her screams. The description that "The crying sounded even louder out of doors. It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice" (Wells, *Moreau* 38) provides a haunting description of the horrors undergone in the depths of Moreau's laboratory. However, whilst the focus on animal pain and the degenerate appearance of Montgomery and Moreau suggests Wells's anti-vivisectionist sympathies, this is contrary to his later public support of animal experimentation.

A 1927 debate in *The Abolitionist* sees Wells critique that which he sees as the common hypocrisies and inconsistencies of an anti-vivisectionist position. For instance, he addresses the hypocrisy of campaigners who seem to care only for animals commonly kept as domestic pets and ignore the fact that pet-keeping itself is a form of violence. He highlights also that few of the protesters are vegetarian. In addition, he suggests that hunting causes as much pain as experimental techniques without the justification of scientific purpose and that campaigners mislead the public with sensationalised accounts by ignoring the supposed fact that vivisection commonly employs anaesthetic and involves “very little pain” (Wells, “Experiments” 3). Undermining anti-vivisectionists thus, Wells argues that the former are not campaigning against pain or cruelty, but against the abstraction and lack of awe or tenderness they associate with scientific study. In their desire to protect “a cherished and necessary world of fantasy,” anti-vivisectionists are said to appeal to “our deep instinctive self-protection,” maintaining their personal happiness through illusion (Wells, “Experiments” 8). In short, they enforce a partial blindness that ignores the structural oppressions with which they are complicit. Furthermore, such an illusion of compassion functions as an impediment to scientific knowledge and discovery.

However, vivisection, as a means of increasing scientific knowledge, is shown to have only monstrous results throughout the novel. Ron Broglio notes, in relation to animals in modern art, that the logic of the early modern philosopher Francis Bacon, highly influential in the development of the scientific method, seeps into much artistic representation of animals. Bacon's influence sees nature presented to the spectator as an intelligible object. If God granting Adam the right to name the animals allowed him to *know* animals deeply, for Bacon “banishment from Eden resulted in our inability to perceive animals and thus through perception, understand them” (Broglio 7). Science had to therefore intervene where perception failed and vivisection was seen to provide a means of returning to a prelapsarian

state of knowledge. I argue that such logic also seeps into the narrative of *Doctor Moreau*.

The return to Eden envisioned by Frankenstein's creature, as an exile from the human social world, is accelerated by Moreau's vivisection, with his experiments proposing to use vivisection to transform both physical and psychic processes. However, the knowledge of animals thus gained serves only to reveal the horrifying truth of humanity's repressed bestial desires and the necessity of external disciplinary Laws.

The Laws policing the Beast People's desires define humanity in relation to an absence of carnivorous appetite, affirmed via the refrain "Are we not Men?" (Wells, *Moreau* 59). Prendick continually seeks to define his own humanity in opposition to the Beast People. Akin to the reader's literal distance from the page, Prendick seeks to establish an objective distance from the Beast People whilst chanting with them: "Superficially the contagion of these brute men was upon me, but deep down within me laughter and disgust struggled together" (Wells, *Moreau* 59). Repetition, senseless babbling, and adherence to Moreau's Law are here marked as signs of bestial contagion. And yet, laughter and disgust, as emotions experienced by Prendick in response to the Beast People as much as by the reader in response to the novel, mark Prendick's *inhumanity* earlier in the narrative. For example, in the dinghy of the *Lady Vain*, his two companions fall overboard whilst fighting and instantly sink to their deaths. Prendick remembers "laughing at that and wondering why I laughed. The laugh caught me suddenly like a thing from without" (Wells, *Moreau* 9).

Prendick later draws explicit attention to the conflict between sensorial experience and objective rationality in relation to human morality:

It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice. Yet had I known such pain was in the next room, and had it been dumb, I believe - I have thought since - I could have stood it well enough. It is when suffering finds a voice and sets our nerves quivering that this pity comes troubling us (Wells, *Moreau* 38).

The ability to divorce himself from bodily sensation gestures to an ability to surpass a base animal nature. Pity is not seen as the product of rational reflection on the rights of animals, but an instinctive bodily response. For example, on hearing the cries of the Puma Woman, Prendick describes that “I flung aside a crib of Horace I had been reading, and began to clench my fists, to bite my lips, and pace the room” (Wells, *Moreau* 38). Pacing and gnashing see his engagement with canonical literature give way to an inarticulate animalism. Furthermore, Prendick’s pity does little to improve the lot of the islanders. Will Abberley suggests that it is not by transcending the instinctive babble of the Beast People that Prendick survives, but by being able to read instinctive signs: “The human ascendancy comes of a combination of instinctive and conventional signs, instead of one obliterating the other” (85). He notes Prendick’s response to the Puma Woman’s screams of pain as sustaining a sympathetic connection. However, on hearing the Puma’s screams, Prendick evacuates Moreau’s enclosure rather than attempt to halt the experiment. Moreover, he shoots the Leopard Man between the eyes after “the fact of its humanity” is revealed by the sight of its “imperfectly human face distorted with terror” (Wells, *Moreau* 94). This realisation of shared terror and Prendick’s increasing reversion to animality upon the island does not result in sympathetic communion but, instead, an increasing desire for distance. In shooting the Leopard Man, Prendick symbolically makes the animal part of himself abject. The Puma Woman represents an untameable female sexuality, refusing to submit to Moreau’s patriarchal Law, and the Leopard Man carnivorous appetite, as the first of the Beast People to start killing rabbits.

To turn away, or, in the case of the Leopard Man, to shoot “between its terror-struck eyes” (Wells, *Moreau* 94), sees Prendick refuse to see himself in these creatures and aligns the act of looking as a concession of equality. However, sympathy, in the sense of understanding the suffering of another, and compassion, as acting upon that sympathy, are not in

straightforward alignment, particularly where the former meets with a desire for survival. The threat of becoming animal, generated by Prendick's assumption that Moreau has been operating on human beings, sees him turn to suicide before learning of the true motivations behind Moreau's experiments. Recourse to his own death posits only *human* life as of value, a life that requires the abjection of animal desire in order to sustain itself.

This abjection is characteristic of the fear of "the beast within" that haunts the novel. In addition, the discourse of the ape and the tiger come to the fore in Wells's conceptions of the animalistic nature of man. Evaluating the place of morality in the future of humankind, Huxley's "Evolution and Ethics," part of his 1893 Romanes Lectures, speaks of the "ape and tiger" within man:

Man, the animal, in fact, has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is, in virtue of his success in the struggle for existence. ... For his successful progress, throughout the savage state, man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organization; his cunning, his sociability, his curiosity, and his imitateness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is roused by opposition.

But, in proportion as men have passed from anarchy to social organization, and in proportion as civilization has grown in worth, these deeply ingrained serviceable qualities have become defects. After the manner of successful persons, civilized man would gladly kick down the ladder by which he has climbed. He would be only too pleased to see "the ape and tiger die." But they decline to suit his convenience; and the unwelcome intrusion of these boon companions of his hot youth into the ranged existence of civil life adds pains and griefs, innumerable and immeasurably great, to those which the cosmic process necessarily brings on the mere animal. In fact, civilized man brands all these ape and tiger promptings with the name of sins; he punishes many of the acts which flow from them as crimes; and, in extreme cases, he does his best to put an end to the survival of the fittest of former days by axe and rope.

I have said that civilized man has reached this point; the assertion is perhaps too broad and general; I had better put it that ethical man has attained thereto. The science of ethics professes to furnish us with a reasoned rule of life; to tell us what is right action and why it is so. Whatever differences of opinion may exist among experts, there is a general consensus that the ape and tiger methods of the struggle for existence are not reconcilable with sound ethical principles (51-53).

For Huxley, the "ape and tiger," as signifiers of animal instinct, have been central to man's past evolutionary progress and survival. However, standing for the dual impulses of curiosity

and sociability, on the one hand, and violence and ruthlessness, on the other, such instincts must be disciplined and restricted as “sins” in order to maintain the progress of morality. Ethics requires the relinquishing of natural impulses and an appeal to the supposedly higher instincts of man.

Taken from the directive of Tennyson’s 1850 *In Memoriam* to “Move upward, working out the beast,/And let the ape and tiger die” (CXVIII, 27-28), an ode to human progress, the ape and the tiger reappear as figures of human baseness throughout the late-Victorian period. For example, an 1885 tract, by prominent anti-vivisectionist W. S. Lilly, argues that the disregard of morality in vivisection “eliminates from man all but the ape and tiger” (French 387). Vivisection here, contrary to its lofty ambition as the zenith of scientific endeavour and progress, is seen to result in man’s degeneration. Furthermore, Andrew satirises the logic that man should eat animals because they have been sent by God to be eaten, equating such rationale with the “man-eating tiger of India” and the savage cannibal (5). Here the tiger plays into imperialist ideologies in which the racially other represents a primitive and degenerate form of man. Howard Williams, in a footnote to his encyclopaedic 1883 history of vegetarianism *The Ethics of Diet*, critiques the “confusion of thought and logic” involved in arguments against vegetarianism that focus on humanity’s supposed innate carnivorousness: “The too obvious fact that a large proportion of animals are carnivorous neither proves nor justifies the carnivorousness of the *human* species. The real question is, is the human race originally *frugivorous* or *carnivorous*? Is it allied to the Tiger or to the Ape?” (140). In this rhetorical question, Williams emphasises that the ape and tiger, contrary to their presentation as a conjoined symbol of a human evolutionary past, are two distinct modes of being, and more specifically, two distinct modes of eating.

The motivation behind Moreau’s experiments, to transform the animal into man, mirrors Tennyson through that which Carrie Rohman argues as Moreau’s desire to

“exterminate animality by creating and policing the boundaries of rationalist humanism” (70). Rohman argues further that “Moreau’s rationale reinforces the text’s suggestion that actual violence against animals is a displaced violence that vainly attempts to exorcise animality from the human psyche” (71-72). Whilst this is convincing, we might also consider that the Beast People of *Doctor Moreau* gesture towards both the extermination of the animal and the artificial and paradoxical merging of ape and tiger, or vegetarian and cannibal.

As I note above, Moreau chooses to operate on carnivorous animals at the top of their respective food chains—leopards, tigers, hyenas, and pumas—before enforcing vegetarianism through his Law. To trespass somewhat beyond the bounds of suspended disbelief in the scientific validity of the narrative, it is to be inferred that Moreau must make adaptations to his carnivorous creatures in order for them to subsist, physiologically, on fruit alone. As such, at the same time that their vegan diet appears as little more than a series of prohibitions that artificially civilise the inherent animalism of man, it must simultaneously be understood as a bodily disposition. However, a herbivorous digestive system does not prevent carnivorous desire from resurfacing. The physiological requirements of the digestive system aligned with the ape forms an antagonism with the instinctual trend toward violence and mastery that is aligned with the tiger. The result leaves no bodily referent from which to build or ground an ethical position.

As Rohman argues, violence against the nonhuman is not about biological necessity in *Doctor Moreau*, but the psychic consequence of attempts to police the divisions between the human and the animal. The Beast People must continually exercise self-control, lacking inherent disgust at meat-eating. This subjects the desire to move beyond the animal to satire, with their animality physically evident under Prendick’s gaze. Prendick is introduced as a life-long abstainer, implying his upbringing within teetotal and vegetarian circles, given the intersections between the two movements. However, he finds himself unable to deny his

desire for meat, contemplating cannibalism and stocking his escape vessel with rabbit meat. The body appears resistant to any stable categorisation as frugivorous or carnivorous. The breakdown of relation between alimentary needs and desire for meat suggests an internal conflict between the ape and the tiger.

Moreau's vegan Law, as linguistic refrain, comes from without. Complicating Huxley, the resultant ethics functions as a means for Moreau, as God-like deity, to remain all-powerful. Moreau's creatures are hideous malformations of the human form whose language skills, and eating habits, degenerate rapidly in the absence of a grand master narrative. An analysis of the permeation of ape and tiger discourse into the narrative of *Doctor Moreau* emphasises the ways in which alimentary desires become encoded into ideas about the nonhuman animal body in Wells. Veganism's inability to be straightforwardly written onto the body, as herbivorous appetite, reflects on the symbolically carnivorous nature of our relation to others more broadly. Wells's vegan monsters emphasise the misalignment between desire, appetite, and biological necessity. If meat-eating is anxiety inducing because of its relation to animal instinct and appetite, the dual conception of ape and tiger refuses to allow a plant-based herbivorism to remain beyond or before discourses of animality. The biologically herbivorous form of Moreau's Beast Folk conflicts with their seemingly irrepressible desire for flesh and blood. Vegan possibilities here refuse biological essentialism as much as a series of moral laws and restrictions appear as the tyrannical fixations of Moreau. Veganism can thus not be approached neutrally as a utopian vision. We are left then with a sense of the instability of subjectivity and the inability to know, in Derrida's terms, what it means to "eat well." Veganism serves as a spectre of the future in Wells's science fiction texts, a utopian aspiration corrupted by its contact with the animal body.

The Beast People's evocation of the instability of gendered, raced, and classed identities challenges Prendick's sense of his own humanity. Representative of fears around

degeneration, they regress under Prendick's supervision, as children that refuse to grow up. However, veganism here is not a degenerate trait attached to monstrosity but is transfigured as an attempt to counteract such queerness and instability, to force into a recognisably human shape those whose forbidden desires speak too closely to our own. In a logic structurally akin to the way in which the legibility of a specifically homosexual identity simultaneously exposes the instability of heterosexuality whilst policing and containing same-sex desires,⁵⁰ the writing of veganism within monstrous bodies follows its own logic of both errancy and containment.

Neither Prendick nor the reader see anything of the vivisection undertaken by Moreau, striking in a novel obsessed with eyes and looking. The literal deconstruction of bodies and refiguring of the human form thus takes place within a different realm, namely, the imagination. The refashioning human is situated within the imagination, whilst the visual is revealed not, in the humanist tradition, as a way in which the human masters space, but as the way in which the human is subjected to its own desires. For example, mutual looking between Prendick and his companions upon the dinghy of the *Lady Vain* reveals their cannibalistic desires. Moreover, following Prendick's shot, the Hyena-Swine immediately "flung itself upon [the Leopard Man] with an eager cry, thrusting thirsty teeth into its neck" (Wells, *Moreau* 94), emphasising that such animality is predisposed toward self-interest and the satisfaction of desire through consumption of the other. This is compounded by the use of "thirsty" to personify the Hyena-Swine's bite, alluding to Prendick's contemplation of cannibalism at sea, where he is "tormented by an intolerable thirst" (8).

In chapter one, I note the obsession with eyes and looking throughout *Frankenstein* and its relation to anxieties about being looked at by the other. In Wells's late nineteenth-century reworking of Shelley's novel, eyes also appear with frequency. The visual sense

⁵⁰ See Foucault *The History of Sexuality*.

dominates *Doctor Moreau*, typically found in the empirical gaze of a male gendered science. However, the ways in which eyes and the act of looking feature throughout the novel is also one of the ways in which Moreau's Beast People queer and destabilise the subject of Western humanism. The visual becomes a sign of untameable desire rather than a means of containing the world.

Whilst infrequently remarked upon in criticism of *Doctor Moreau*,⁵¹ eyes appear eighty-five times over the course of the novel's one-hundred-and-twenty-nine pages. This number would increase exponentially if it included the proliferation of descriptions of looking, watching, glaring, peering, staring, seeing, surveying, and regarding. Suggestive of the empirical gaze of modern science, such obsessive looking also points towards the humanist logic underpinning Moreau's experiments, in which sight, and the ability to see and survey all, secures the subject as purveyor of the world. Certainly, the end of the novel sees Prendick critique the degenerate society of London, where "weary pale workers go coughing by me with tired eyes" (Wells, *Moreau* 131). This degenerate eyesight makes him doubt his sanity: "And even it seemed that I too, was not a reasonable creature, but only an animal tormented with some strange disorder in its brain, that sent it to wander alone like a sheep stricken with the gid" (131).⁵²

The power of sight, as that which transmits messages to be interpreted by the rational mind is continually displaced throughout the novel. For example, the frequency with which transitive verbs describe the movement of eyes depicts vision as an independent sense quite separate from the conscious mind of the narrator. Prendick's eyes wander, travel, and follow, suggesting continual movement and purpose. On first encountering M'Ling, Prendick

⁵¹ An exception to this is Patrick Parrinder's analysis of eyes in Chapter Four of *Shadows of the Future*.

⁵² "The gid" in sheep is a condition that lists not just disorientation but partial blindness as one of its symptoms.

describes “staring at him almost against my will” (Wells, *Moreau* 13). Furthermore, rather than objects of accurate empirical observation, Prendick’s eyes frequently fail him. They are subject to partial blindness, from “Blotches of green and crimson” (Wells, *Moreau* 56) obstructing his view, to being “blinded” by the artificial light of the house (Wells, *Moreau* 48). As he escapes the island at the close of the novel, he describes how “The ocean rose around me, hiding that low dark patch [the island] from my eyes” (Wells, *Moreau* 128). Here, the horrors of the island, unveiling the animalistic nature of the human, can be forgotten—Prendick must pretend to not remember his time on the island to avoid being labelled mad—by falling outside of his field of vision.

There is a stark juxtaposition between the eyes of human men encountered by Prendick and those of Moreau’s Beast People. The iconic scene in which Frankenstein’s creature first comes to life sees eyes used in order to amplify Victor’s sense of his inhumanity, described as “watery” and “dull” (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 38). These same adjectives pointedly reappear in the opening description of Montgomery’s “watery grey expressionless eyes” (Wells, *Moreau* 10), and the drunken ship captain’s “dull and solemn eyes” (Wells, *Moreau* 15). Moreover, Moreau’s eyes “had that odd drooping of the skin above the lids,” and are described as a “brilliant black under his heavy brows” (Wells, *Moreau* 26-27, 29) an oxymoronic alliteration that emphasises an inhuman negation of colour. In contrast, the eyes of the Leopard Man are described with “an emerald flash,” and “luminous green” (Wells, *Moreau* 43, 95). It is the instance at which Prendick sees the “light gleaming in its eyes” (Wells, *Moreau* 94) that he recognises their shared humanity. Further descriptions of the Beast People’s eyes include the adjectives “extraordinary” (9), “luminous” (35), “bright” (55), and “glittering” (Wells, *Moreau* 128), evoking not simply their liveliness but their appeal to Prendick.

Whilst Prendick does not initially lack human companions, he struggles, like Shelley's Walton, to find anyone whose "eyes would reply" to his (*Frankenstein* 8).⁵³ With Moreau, Prendick describes that "When my eyes met his he looked down at the staghounds that sat between his knees" (Wells, *Moreau* 26). Moreau's aversion to Prendick's gaze suggests a withdrawal from human society as a result of his absorption in experimental science. Prendick meets Montgomery's eyes twice in the novel. The first time Montgomery "looked [him] squarely in the eyes," however as soon as he does so "His eyes, which had seemed animated a minute before, went dull" (Wells, *Moreau* 49). In the second instance, Prendick describes how Montgomery "opened his eyes again, staring silently at the dawn, and they met mine. The lids fell" (Wells, *Moreau* 112). The falling lids prevent any further engagement and signal his death moments later. These failed meetings of eyes stand in contrast to the successful gaze held between Prendick and the Leopard Man, who regards Prendick with a "steadfast stare" (Wells, *Moreau* 40), and the Hyena-Swine, with whom Prendick stands "eye to eye" (Wells, *Moreau* 114). These two scenes position the meeting of eyes as a means of asserting dominance and to intimidate rivals. They are to be used in the same way that transitive verbs attach themselves to Prendick's eyes: to travel and follow rather than allowing for a sympathetic alignment of souls.

In *Doctor Moreau*, meeting the eyes of the Beast People is a dehumanising experience and sight itself becomes an errant and wild animal. When Prendick first begins to live among them, the visual functions as an equalising force, where he is misrecognised as one of Moreau's experimental subjects. This provokes an instinctive anxiety, of which Prendick's shooting of the Leopard Man, described above, becomes a pertinent symbol. Moreau's

⁵³ In Shelley's novel, Walton articulates his desire for "the company of a man who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine" (8).

experiments suggest that we cannot trust the visual as a marker of humanity, nor can we trust the visual, as a meeting of eyes, as a moral sense.

Acts of looking reveal desires whilst the errancy of the gaze, as a wild animal in its own right, emphasises that such appetites are unmasterable. Moreau and Montgomery's avoidance of the gaze here performs an attempt to negate animal desire, associated also, through the hints provided about Montgomery's exile, with homosexuality. The narrative of *Doctor Moreau* thus draws attention to the predatory instincts at the heart of the human condition: "the beast within" that collapses the boundaries between human, animal, and savage. Veganism, for the Beast People, appears as logical praxis and stands in contrast to Prendick's response to the cries of the Puma Woman—non-rational, emotional, and bodily—aligning his resistance to vivisection as a gendered refusal of scientific rationality. As in Wells's critique of the anti-vivisectionist movement, horror at violence does not translate into ethical veganism. Instead, Prendick's response is expressive of horror at the realisation of his own animal nature, rather than a compassionate response to the call of the other. Veganism too, as ethical abstraction divorced from the corporeal body, results in the failure to acknowledge the reality of human desire and the inescapably cannibalistic nature of our relation to others.

Whilst, as noted above, his teetotalism suggests a possible adherence to a vegetarian diet before arriving on the island, Prendick appears pathetically unable to support himself on a frugivorous diet. Suggesting urban vegetarianism's absorption in rational abstractions, Prendick acknowledges that he "was too ignorant of botany to discover any resort of root or fruit that might lie about me; I had no means of trapping the few rabbits upon the island" (Wells, *Moreau* 53). In mock-grand British style, he questions the Beast People "I say ... where can I get something to eat?" (Wells, *Moreau* 55), a parody of imperial impotence. Veganism appears here as the obverse of "natural" laws and desires, aligned with restrictions

and privations that extend to a refusal of enmeshments in cycles of life and death. At the same time, it aspires to a highly rational, disembodied life, with carnivorous desires characteristic of a beastly atavism. Frankenstein's monster, as I argue in chapter one, embodies a temporal return to vegetarian origins of man within Christian theological tradition. In contrast, Wells's monstrous vegans undermine attempts to demarcate the "essential" human body and its desires. *Doctor Moreau*, as consciously irreligious text, described by Wells as "an exercise in youthful blasphemy" (Wells, "Preface" 243), places the struggle for survival as key to understanding human and nonhuman animal interactions.

The blasphemous resonances of *Doctor Moreau* are explicit in Moreau's Godlike role creating life that is doomed to suffer, the imposition of his Law which mimics the "Thou shalt not" of Christian theology, and Prendick's observation on returning to London, that "it seemed that the preacher gibbered Big Thinks even as the Ape Man had done" (Wells, *Moreau* 131). Prendick's extended lament on the suffering of Moreau's hybrid creatures offers an explicit satire of belief in the Divine beneficence of God:

Poor brutes! I began to see the viler aspect of Moreau's cruelty. I had not thought before of the pain and trouble that came to these poor victims after they had passed from Moreau's hands. I had shivered only at the days of actual torment in the enclosure. But now that seemed to be the lesser part. Before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand; their mock-human existence began in an agony, was one long struggle, one long dread of Moreau - and for what? (Wells, *Moreau* 95).

When Montgomery brings rabbits to the island for sustenance, Moreau forbids the Beast People from eating them and threatens their return to the "House of Pain." This functions as a further allegory of Christian theology, in which God has provided nonhuman animals for humans to eat, but punishes humanity for their indulgence in such appetites, with carnivorous desires forcing an acknowledgement of the reality of our animal nature. To accept Christian theological teachings, to raise the human above the animal through the imposition of ethical

paradigms, is thus to treat biological urges as sin. In this sense, the veganism of the Beast People is monstrous and anxiety-inducing for the attention it draws to an inability to fully withdraw from carnivorous appetites.

Domesticating the Monstrous Vegan

The separation of the frugivorous ape, sociable and inquisitive, and the carnivorous tiger, ruthless and violent, is explored in detailed in Wells's *The Time Machine*. When the Time Traveller arrives in the year 801,701, he finds the human race divided into two distinct species: the childlike vegan Eloi, and the hideous cannibalistic Morlocks. Steven McLean suggests that Wells turns against Huxley here, where rather than evolution favouring the "ethically best" over animal selection, "Since the protagonist's [of *The Time Machine*] 'primitive' energy helps defeat the Morlocks, this would appear to suggest that Wells sees something of the 'ape' and 'tiger' as necessary to human progress" (40, my emphasis).

The veganism of the childlike Eloi marks the loss of an instinctive fear of others that has led them to be consumable objects, "mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon" (Wells, *Time Machine* 62). This stands in contrast to Prendick's anxiety in the presence of M'Ling, signalling the return of the "forgotten horrors of childhood" (Wells, *Moreau* 20). As Charles Darwin argued, the ancestral memories contained in childhood included an instinctual fear of the animal as a form of self-preservation, presenting childhood as a stage typified by horror and anxiety in the face of danger.⁵⁴ In *The Time Machine*, a childlike relation to animals represents a possible evolutionary future in the history of mankind as much as it signals an alternative view of childhood as typified by an instinct love for, and companionship with, nonhuman animals. However, I argue that the Eloi offer a satirical take on this latter nostalgic ideal of childhood.

⁵⁴ See *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*.

In particular, it is worth noting the sexual desirability of the Eloi under the Time Traveller's gaze. The Traveller's initial perception of the Eloi centres around their childlike status, in regard to their appearance and rudimentary language skills. After rescuing Weena from drowning, this paternal regard takes on an air of sexual attraction. Weena is initially described as "exactly like a child," where her "friendliness affected [him] exactly as a child's might have done" (Wells, *Time Machine* 42). However, whilst her blind devotion positions her as innocent, the Traveller's paternal affection takes on an air of sexual lust. Desiring to bring her back to the past with him and kissing and caressing her, fatherly love for the innocent child merges imperceptibly with adult desire. The childishness of the Eloi thus reverses the standard trajectory from innocence to corruption or child to adult, where their naiveté is seen as an acquired trait which reverts in the face of the Morlock's cannibalism. For example, the Traveller speaks of how the Eloi are learning an "old lesson anew. They were becoming re-acquainted with Fear" (Wells, *Time Machine* 58). The Traveller himself is implicated in this process: catching sight of a Morlock looking out at him from the darkness, he describes how "The old instinctive dread of wild beasts came upon me" (Wells, *Time Machine* 45). And yet, he sees himself as superior to the Eloi: "however helpless the little people in the presence of their mysterious Fear, I was differently constituted. I came out of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race, when Fear does not paralyse and mystery has lost its terrors" (Wells, *Time Machine* 58).

The Traveller uses a hollowed-out vision of childhood innocence to reinforce his sense of self. For example, in relation to Weena, he describes how "until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me," providing him with "almost the feeling of coming home" (Wells, *Time Machine* 43), with the home as a symbol of national and personal identity. Furthermore, Weena reappears in intertextual literary form in *Mr. Blettsworthy*, with Arnold saving the human Weena from drowning. Once again, the rescue elicits a form of

paternal relation in which Arnold, like the Traveller, is positioned in the role of protector and saviour. The language is mirrored in the first person accounts of the respective narrators: the Time Traveller describes “I caught the poor mite, and drew her safe to land ... I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however, I was wrong” (Wells, *The Time Machine* 42), whilst in *Mr. Blettsworthy*, Arnold describes how “It was a friendless failure and a hunted thing I pulled out of the water. And also it had in it, locked away and untouched, that treasure of gratitude, possessive love, loyalty and tenderness” (Wells 225). This sense of the untainted innocence of childhood devotion appears as an attraction in each case, with Arnold going on to marry Weena. Confining women as “mite[s]” and “things,” vulnerability here becomes a mode of reinforcing masculine triumph and complicates Darwinian ideas of sexual selection by suggesting the appeal of weakness. Here, male desires contribute to the decline of the human as a species.

Described by Wells’s narrator as “frugivorous” and “strict vegetarians” (Wells, *Time Machine* 27), the plant-based diet of the Eloi distinguishes them from the Morlocks. However, they are presented as naive and vulnerable to attack. Initially interpreted by the Traveller as the inevitable evolutionary consequence of class conflict, the Eloi are revealed as prey to the cannibalism of the Morlocks. Furthermore, the Traveller describes how, “while I was with them, in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also” (Wells, *Time Machine* 27). This seems a scarcely-veiled pun on the sexual desires that infuse his relationship with Weena that nevertheless remains chaste.

Eloi veganism is suggested as a quality not simply evolved through natural selection, but one that has been methodically acquired by the selective breeding of the Morlocks. The Traveller speculates that “These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of” (Wells, *Time Machine* 62).

This allusion to the industrialisation of farming posits the Eloi as subject to a breeding

programme in order to produce the best meat and implies that the Morlocks have consciously bred out any lingering carnivorous instincts, providing a fully manipulable food source. The suggestion of artificially selected veganism gives way then to a generation of children whose evolutionary history has been determined by their edibility. In removing the agency of the Eloi in their own reproductive futures, the Morlocks themselves become Frankensteinian scientists, and are linked to industrial machinery. The Eloi thus become further monstrous vegans, akin to Victor's creature and Moreau's Beast People, in the creation of a veganism that seeks to embed itself within bodies.

James Kincaid argues that in imagining that the child offers nostalgia, escapism, or return, we "seem to have looked past the formulations of erotic Otherness in these complex images" (275).⁵⁵ In the prelapsarian Eden of the future, the Time Traveller sees the reality of pre-Fall illusions and nostalgia, and finds its inscription on the body to be debilitating, emptied of meaning and filled by his own desire toward Weena. Whilst he is horrified by the degeneration of mankind and cannibalism of the Morlocks, his complicity in the evolution of such a future is exposed by the remnants of his desire for that which was previously socially inscribed as the innocent and asexual vegan child. In desiring the child, the Traveller exposes the illusion of the innocent child protected by the paternal father as a lust-fuelled desire rather than innocent affection devoid of personal interest. He situates himself, therefore, as cannibalistic consumer.

The destruction of this nostalgic vision of childhood innocence is exemplified by Weena's death, left to burn in the forest as the Traveller flees from the Morlocks. Chapter one

⁵⁵ Kincaid looks at the representation of children in Victorian texts to argue that "what we think of as 'the child' has been assembled in reference to desire, built up in erotic manufactories, and that we have been laboring ever since, for at least two centuries, both to deny that horrible and lovely product and to maintain it" (4). If "A child is not, in itself, anything" (5), Kincaid suggests it is the product of a process of hollowing out, purifying, exalting, and abusing. This hollowing out allows for a projection of adult desires and places a heavy burden on the child, where "Innocence is not ... detected but granted, not nurtured but enforced; it comes at the child as a denial of a whole host of capacities, an emptying out" (Kincaid 73).

notes the Promethean introduction of fire to the narrative of *Frankenstein* as leading to the creature's descent into meat-eating and misanthropy. The Traveller describes the forest fire that kills Weena as "my *first* fire coming after me" (Wells, *Time Machine* 75, my emphasis) signalling a similarly Promethean gift of fire in the future world that also leads to death and destruction. Whilst he protects the idealised innocent child from being eaten—the Traveller seeks comfort in the idea that by burning alive she will have avoided being fodder for the Morlocks—she must nonetheless die. The Promethean gift thus signals the end of the Eden ideal. However, it also functions as an attempt to exorcise the Morlocks who perish in the fire. Simon James suggests that "the basic Promethean technology of fire, produced by the handful of matches in the Time Traveller's coat pocket, proves crucial in the Time's Traveller's quest to see, and read, the future correctly" (55). Light appears here as a symbol of knowledge, and darkness as ignorance. However, the Traveller's match reveals more and more darkness; "he discovers how little he, and humanity, actually know" (S. James 56). As such, fire, as representative of the advent of meat-eating, symbolically destroys the mythic ideal of the vegan body.

In the above examples, veganism is inextricably tied to notions of social control, and the disciplined, consumable body. How, we might ask, do vegans choose not to consume without as a result becoming consumable themselves, as in Arnold Blettsworthy's tortured lament "I will not eat! Oh! I will not eat!" (Wells, *Mr. Blettsworthy* 275). The principle tension evoked by the monstrous vegan in Wells lies in the disciplinary function of veganism as discursive Law. If vegan monsters are always in some sense aborted selves, they appear as the attempt to transfer utopian aspirations onto a body that one cannot control.

I have argued thus far that veganism appears in Wells's early fiction as a disciplinary mechanism and utopian aspiration that sits uncomfortably within the corporeal body, resulting in vegan monsters. However, veganism and vegetarianism also appear in Wells's fiction

beyond such monstrous characterisations. The move from the monstrous body to a renunciation of the body can be loosely mapped onto Wells's transition as a novelist, from the scientific romance genre to the more traditional novel form and an increasingly polemical register.

Monstrosity, Halberstam argues, "always unites monstrous form with monstrous meaning" (*Skin Shows* 11). This stands at variance with Wells's interpretation of the pedagogical function of the modern novel, emphasising the importance of transmitting a clear unadulterated message. His autobiography positions "the novel" as a guide to conduct rather than an art form: "I had very many things to say and ... if I could say one of them in such a way as to get my point over to the reader I did not worry much about finish" (Wells, *Experiment* 497). He further elaborates that "What we [Wells and his readers] wanted was a ventilation of the point at issue" (Wells, *Experiment* 497). His long novels, as guides to personal conduct, align with such polemic. However, they also mark a concerted move away from his earlier fictions. As John Glendening notes, whilst the frame narrative of *Doctor Moreau* employs latitudinal co-ordinates, precise dates, and narrative control, the text itself is characterised by chance and uncertainty that undermines order and knowledge throughout (571). Wells's desire for a clear message might then be positioned as akin to Moreau's attempts to transcend animality: both expose the impossibility of controlling the transmission of meaning.

The shift in thinking on veganism from the monstrous body that cannot be tamed, to the utopian ideal of a future social world is exemplified in *A Modern Utopia*. Wells's two central protagonists here function as conduits for his socialist vision, finding themselves, "in the twinkling of an eye ... in that other world" (*Modern Utopia* 211). During their travels through this new world they encounter a stranger who refuses the conventions of classical utopian fiction. He is described as a "poseur beyond question ... a most consummate

ass” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 266) and provokes the ire of the narrator by disrupting his idealised image of this alternate society: “One expects to find all Utopians absolutely convinced of the perfection of their Utopia, and incapable of receiving a hint against its order. And here was this purveyor of absurdities!” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 270). By critiquing utopia, the stranger is presented as an anomaly within the general population, part of a sub-sect of men who will fail to co-operate in whichever society they find themselves. A key part of his purveyance of “absurdities” is his promotion of “Natural diet,” proposing a strict vegetarianism and an end to doctors and sanitation in order to provide a healthy constitution the “natural” way (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 267).

However, vegetarianism is not simply present as a comic derogation anomalous within Wells’s socialist vision. The stranger’s diet accords closely in fact with the narrator’s later lesson on the strict regimen of food prescribed to the voluntary noblemen of utopia, known as samurai. A samurai teaches him that “In all the round world of Utopia there is no meat” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 357). The stranger's philosophy of diet maintains a strict separation between animal and vegetable kingdoms. For example, he lectures “No animal substance inside, no vegetable without; - what could be simpler or more logical? Nothing upon me but leather and all-wool garments; within cereals, fruits, nuts, herbs, and the like” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 268). In contrast, he is highly critical of the utopian world, “filled and covered with confusion” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 268). The samurai, by contrast, refuse to associate their vegetarianism with logic. When questioned by the narrator why the utopians eat fish but not flesh, a samurai responds “*It isn’t a matter of logic*. In our barbaric past horrible flayed carcasses of brutes, dripping blood, were hung for sale in the public streets” (Wells, *Modern Utopia* 357, my emphasis). The inconsistencies of a vegetarianism that refuses logic is thus based on ideas of refinement and disgust, of the desire not to see

flayed bodies, or to commit acts of violence. A cultivated disgust, as a property attached to increasing levels of education, dictates their herbivorism.

A Modern Utopia thus critiques the identitarian politics of vegetarianism and veganism, associated with an aspiration for purity that refuses to acknowledge its own hypocrisy and inconsistency. The stranger ignores the narrator's question of whether he doesn't sometimes live in a house, and is wearing multiple leather items in an arbitrary distinction between inside and outside. Instead, the vegetarianism of utopia requires cooperation, a sense of felt, rather than logical, resistance to violence, and a universal education that nurtures and improves moral conscience. In contrast to his earlier monsters, vegan sensibilities are here rationalised as an inevitable moral step, part of a progressive social evolution that transfers from ethical abstraction to embodied experience. Whilst resistant to the logical arguments for vegetarianism, as embodied in the man described as talking and lecturing too much, Wells here domesticates the monstrous vegan from his earlier scientific romances. Vegetarianism appears as both a gradual progression and utopian inevitability of a socialist society. This effectively neutralises the destabilising impact of vegan monsters in relation to race, gender, and sexuality, as laid out above, allowing veganism to become part of a logical step forward in a social teleology of progress toward socialism.

Wells's fiction thus develops the monstrous vegan figure established in *Frankenstein* as a symbol of the frustrations of corporeal and biological reality with utopian abstractions. He also asks questions of our relation to desire more broadly, drawing connections between sexual and alimentary desires. Vegan monsters confront the nature of our relation to others and the need to continually imagine utopian forms of relation beyond an evolutionary paradigm of survival-of-the-fittest. Veganism appears as a forever prolonged utopianism, a future potentiality that cannot be brought to fruition in the present. The monstrous vegan, in Wells, occupies the realm of near-future speculative fiction, existing in a liminal position

between present and future, the looming spectre of evolutionary transformation. If desire presupposes a relation to futurity, whether by eating to survive or reproducing to perpetuate the species, then vegan desire represents an alternative relation to futurity, a means of desiring differently.

Chapter Three

Margaret Atwood and Monstrous Vegan Words

As I outline in the introduction to this thesis, Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* offers a template for identifying texts that "bear the vegetarian word," whether through allusion to the words of previous vegetarians, presenting characters who recall historic vegetarians, translating vegetarian texts, utilising language that identifies the structure of the absent referent, or when individuals are prompted by their reading to stop eating meat. She connects the dismemberment of vegetarian texts to the dismemberment of animal bodies, arguing that "If the fate of the literal text parallels the fact of the literal animal—both becoming dismembered and consumed—then there is a parallel in wanting to preserve the integrity of an original text and being a vegetarian" (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 85). As such, vegetarian futures appear intimately connected to the textual, where "the authority of previous vegetarian texts authors new vegetarians who take vegetarian words literally" (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 69). However, the conception of vegan or vegetarian words, as a form of remembering that recovers nonhuman animals from symbolic abstraction and preserves a sense of original textual integrity, has come under challenge in the previous two chapters. Whilst Adams promotes vegetarian words as "eviscerating the entire narrative" which ends in consumption (*Sexual Politics* 79), her theory relies on a model of original textual meaning and its faithful transmission and reproduction. However, in both *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, the transmission and reproduction of vegetarian words manifests only monstrous results.

In this chapter I argue that the recognition of historic *vegan* words, in the service of greater visibility and recognition, risks circumventing the complications and contradictions inherent to their transmission. Whilst a unifying definition and cohesive vegan movement is

necessary—politically, economically, and socially—my analysis highlights the importance of a simultaneous deconstruction that resists veganism’s ossification into a fixed master narrative. Vegan words obey a different type of law to that outlined by Adams. In order for veganism to maintain its efficacy as a mode of engagement with, and response to, the nonhuman world, I argue that it must remain fragmentary and hybrid, akin to the monstrous vegan creatures explicated thus far. If reading for veganism requires its misrecognition as a coherent and stable practice and identity, it is important to complicate Adams’s desire to “preserve the integrity of an original text” (*Sexual Politics* 85).

This chapter explores how notions of preservation and integrity are disrupted by the messiness of veganism and vegan lives, as much as by the messiness of literary transmission more broadly. I turn to the multitudinous vegan identities and practices presented in Margaret Atwood’s critically-acclaimed *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-2013) in order to deconstruct veganism and its attendant narrative constructions. I argue that the trilogy draws attention to the difficulties of writing veganism, and the concomitant risk of turning both nonhuman animal bodies and ethical vegan responses into objects of discursive consumption or generic signification. As I outline in the introduction to this thesis, the risk of vegan identity politics devouring the lived experience of the nonhuman animals it purports to protect is a key concern that must be addressed within the nascent field of vegan theory. Atwood’s engagement with the legacy of both Mary Shelley and H. G. Wells enacts a deconstruction that exposes the complications and insufficiencies of bearing the vegetarian word.

Atwood explicitly engages with the trope of the monstrous vegan as it has been defined over the previous two chapters. The genetically modified humanoid Crakers iterate the embodied veganism of Victor Frankenstein’s creature, ironising Shelley’s brand of Romantic veganism as a biologically determined relation to the body, whilst the eco-Christian

God's Gardeners resemble the Beast People of *Doctor Moreau*, their veganism a mode of self-discipline that represses an innate carnivorism. In both cases, Atwood's monstrous veganism appears as a discursive and linguistic appendage, from the genetic coding that renders the Crakers biologically vegan to the sermons and songs of the Gardeners that proclaim "No meat! No meat! No meat!" (Atwood, *Flood* 48).

The first section of this chapter contextualises the trilogy in regards to Atwood's vast oeuvre. I draw attention to her works of literary criticism, self-identification as an author of Canadian fiction, and the frequent appearance of both nonhuman animals and vegetarian and vegan characters across her work. I then situate the *MaddAddam* novels in relation to contemporary ecological concerns before unpacking their allusion to a wide body of vegetarian and vegan philosophy, from the Ancient Greeks to the Romantics. Having established the textual dimensions of veganism across the trilogy, I move to close textual analysis of the Crakers and God's Gardeners respectively, elucidating the ways in which they destabilise Shelleyan and Wellsian depictions of veganism. I conclude with an exploration of alternative sites for revising veganism's ossification into narrative prescription, focusing on the figure of the child. The theoretical "vegan child" stands at a critical juncture in Atwood's thinking about veganism, providing a means of responding to the world between the poles of the primitive and emotional, on the one hand, and the rational and universal, on the other. Moments of childhood anxiety within Atwood's text are suggested as sites of vegan potentiality that resist reproduction or faithful transmission through discourse. However, I acknowledge that such an attempt to redeem the trilogy in the service of an ethical vegan politics is limited, establishing the necessity of developing alternative and reparative modes of reading, as I provide in chapter four.

Animals, Canadians, and Vegetarians

Oryx and Crake (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), offer a hybrid engagement with the myth of the last man,⁵⁶ as well as Gothic and science fiction traditions. Utopian, dystopian, and apocalyptic elements emerge as the denouement of Atwood's long-standing interest in the end(s) of humanity. For example, the theme is in evidence in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), where mass sterility results from a botched experiment in the gene-splicing of mumps. Furthermore, the conjecture of humanities student Fish, in *The Edible Woman* (1969), of the need for another Black Death, functions as a prescient foretelling of the existence of the Crakers, imagining "millions wiped from the face of the earth, civilization as we know it all but obliterated, [so] Birth would be essential again, [and] we could return to the tribe, the old gods" (Atwood 200).

In *Survival* (1972), Atwood glosses the seeming obsession with such apocalyptic scenarios in Canadian literature, posing "survival" as the central unifying and informing symbol of Canadian national identity. Manifesting in literature through a failure to survive or failure to achieve anything but survival, this bleak national conscience is seen to generate "an almost intolerable anxiety" for Canadians, encouraging a collective identity of victimhood (Atwood, *Survival* 33). Atwood explicates this victim complex in *Survival*, characterising it in relation to four key positions. First, denying you are a victim. Second, acknowledging you are a victim but seeing this as an inevitable and thus unalterable state. Third, acknowledging you are a victim and refusing inevitability by identifying, and directing anger towards, the real causes of your oppression. And fourth, a creative non-victim as a viable position for ex-victims. The non-linear oscillations between, and simultaneous occupation of, these four positions is a structuring trait of Atwood's fiction, where she stresses the role of Canadian

⁵⁶ For more on this trope, see Fiona Stafford's comprehensive study, *The Last of the Race*, where she traces the collective myth of the last man from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Wells's *The Time Machine*.

literature as both a conscious examination, and symptomatic expression, of the national conscience.

Whilst Atwood has resisted the reduction of her works to little more than expressions of victim mentalities,⁵⁷ the *MaddAddam* trilogy actively encourages the reader to occupy the third position: abandoning a sense of helplessness by acknowledging the true causes of their oppression. Atwood presents a complex array of causes and contingencies that have led to the political, social, and ecological catastrophe of her speculative future. For example, the apocalyptic destruction of mankind is presented not simply as the result of Crake's ingenuity, reducing the cause to a singular antagonist, but is intimately connected to a web of interrelated causes, from unregulated scientific endeavour to late-stage capitalism. The pre-apocalyptic world is characterised by sunken cities, dustbowls, extreme heat, economic inequality, and widespread exploitation. Solar products abound, from "solar whirlpool purifying towers" (Atwood, *Oryx* 343), to a "combo ethanol-solarvan" (Atwood, *Oryx* 61), and a "solar-battery robodog" (Atwood, *Oryx* 271). However, these appear as limited corporate concessions that have come too late. The novels thus encourage an acknowledgement of our complicity in overarching systems that allow ecological destruction to continue unabated.

In *Survival*, nonhuman animals are suggested as a key literary symbol through which the Canadian national conscience manifests. Canadian animal stories, Atwood argues, position nonhuman animals solely as victims, projecting a deep-seated cultural fear based on a shared sense of threat, from humans, US hegemony, and extinction (Atwood, *Survival* 79). This trope appears in the *MaddAddam* trilogy in multiple guises. For example, Crake's destruction of the human race, leaving behind his genetically engineered Crakers, finds its direct corollary in the

⁵⁷ In the 1984 documentary *Margaret Atwood: Once in August*, to director Michael Rubbo's prompt that her books feature "a lot of victims," Atwood responds dismissively that "If I hadn't written that book of criticism [*Survival*], nobody ever would have seen any of those things."

mass extinction of nonhuman animals in the pre-plague world, succeeded by genetic hybrid creatures including pigoons, wolvogs, and rakunks. This doubling is ironically referenced by the naming of the surviving human characters after nonhuman animals that have become extinct in the diegetic world, emphasising the now endangered status of *homo sapiens*. For example, *MaddAddam* features characters such as Swift Fox, Manatee, Ivory Bill, Tamaraw, Lotis Blue, and Black Rhino.

The relationship between the victimisation of women and nonhuman animals is a consistent theme across Atwood's fiction, from the connection Marian draws between her boyfriend Peter's disembowelment of a rabbit and his marriage proposal in *Edible Woman*, to the association of the lynched heron in *Surfacing* (1972) with a performance of American masculinity. In both of these texts, Atwood's female narrators must reconcile their horror at the violence enacted against nonhuman animal bodies with their own complicity in such violence, as part of their gendered and national self-realizations. In *Edible Woman*, Marian's resistance to marriage, as a restriction of female agency, accompanies a confrontation with a steak: she "suddenly saw it as a hunk of muscle. Blood red. Part of a real cow that once moved and ate and was killed" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 151). This revelation of the absent referent animal, previously presented to her as "all pre-packaged in cellophane ... like buying a jar of peanut butter" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 151), is further significant given the fact that female bodies are symbolically aligned with cows throughout the novel.⁵⁸ Akin to Laura Wright's argument that *Surfacing* sees its female narrator abdicate her complicity and sensibility in a sense of self determined by "the civilizing construction of her world through

⁵⁸ For example, Ainsley's desire to become a mother is reminiscent, to Marian, "of a farmer discussing cattle-breeding" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 42). Marian "was made uneasy by thoughts of farmers and cows" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 60) when having sex in public and, reflecting on the use of music in supermarkets to encourage female consumerism, remembers "an article she had read about cows who gave more milk when sweet music was played to them" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 172).

images and language” (“National” 82), Marian here resists the impulse to name and visualise embodied human and nonhuman animals as indistinguishable cuts of meat.

Similarly, in *The Blind Assassin* (2000), slaughtered animal bodies are consistently linked to gendered bodies. For example, Iris’s marriage to the middle-aged business tycoon Richard whilst still a teenager sees her fear the site of her trousseau and the finality it suggests: “It sounded like trussed - what was done to raw turkeys with skewers and pieces of strings” (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 238). Furthermore, the description of her ermine and white chiffon evening cape, showcasing her wealth and status as Richard’s wife, is tainted by its association with male desire: “The contrast of fragile veil and rank animal pelt, that’s what appeals to the gentlemen. Delicate flesh, then the shrubbery” (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 340). Nonhuman animal bodies are the sites at which Iris confronts her self-sacrifice, relating her status in a patriarchal world to that of exploited and commodified animal bodies. As J. Brooks Bouson notes, the novel expresses “women’s cultural blindness to, and thus collusion with, their own victimization as well as the victimization of other women” (251). Iris’s collusion with female oppression, particularly in regards to her sister Laura, is linked to the structural oppression of, and violence enacted against, nonhuman animals. Slaughtered animal bodies also function as symbols of class inequality in the novel, centred around the fashions of early twentieth-century Canadian high society. The power and authority associated with wealth is imbued, for example, through alligator shoes, pheasant hats, and fox scarves. Moreover, the use of nonhuman animals as highly visible, fashionable conveyors of class identity is juxtaposed throughout to the obfuscation of the manufacture and production of such commodities. For example, the bone and cow horn buttons produced in protagonist Iris’s grandfather’s factory are obtained “for next to nothing from the several abattoirs in the vicinity,” which combine with “cheap labour” to ensure his business success (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 53).

In addition to her use of animal metaphors, much has been written on Atwood's use of food and eating as symbols of power, where appetite is used across her fiction "to figure escapism, power/lessness, commitment, connection, and transgression, and lack of appetite to signal dysfunction and protest" (Sceats 118). For example, *Edible Woman* explores the limits of female mobility and autonomy as Marian grapples with a series of increasingly restrictive corporeal aversions towards meat, dairy, and, eventually, "anything that had once been, or (like oysters on the half-shell) might still be living" (Atwood 178). Despite her attempts at rationalisation, "Everyone eats cows, it's natural; you have to eat to stay alive, meat is good for you, it has lots of proteins and minerals" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 152), following her boyfriend Peter's unexpected proposal, Marian's body refuses to acquiesce to her ostensibly conscious desire to "become again a carnivore" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 173). Veganism here circumscribes vegan praxis onto the body of the unsuspecting carnivore, untethered from conscious ethical decision-making.

However, Marian's temporary veganism pathologises disgust as a hysterical symptom of an unarticulated horror at the limited roles available to women beyond that of wives and mothers. Calling off her engagement with Peter, the novel ends with her triumphant consumption of steak before gorging on an effigy of herself made from cake. Her refusal to consciously acknowledge or articulate the fear of her own dissolution in marriage sees symptoms of nausea not at animal suffering per se, but the identification of the animal body as metaphor for her own fragmentation. To name her desire for wholeness beyond the pre-established boundaries of female utility would be to acknowledge the necessary instability of subjectivity itself. Marian's hysterical symptoms can thus be read as a desire to be undesiring, neither an agent of desire nor object of desirability.

Numerous scholars see positive and radical moments of refusal through Marian's hysterical veganism. However, this is only when such refusals are defined as anorexia,

betraying an investment in the idea that vegan dietary practices are comprehensible only when accompanied by vegan intentions or identity politics. For example, Sarah Sceats suggests that Marian's condition functions as a "peculiarly symbolic form of anorexia" (98) giving the body a subversive voice. Similarly, Tracy Brain suggests that Atwood's use of obsessive refusals provide a feminist revision of Freudian hysteria, where the female body reveals a legitimate anger and revolutionary protest through anorexic symptoms. Nevertheless, Marian's recovery of the absent referent functions, as Adams argues, as a recognition of a fundamental similarity between the experiences of women and nonhuman animals. Contrary to typical understanding of disgust's abjection of fleshly existence she comes closer to her own animality through vegan refusals. Marian's hysterical vegan symptoms reveal an alternative world of subjectivity beyond the linguistic, understanding her body in relation to instincts divorced from a disembodied rationality and developing an attuned sense of location and mapping that posits language and sight as secondary senses: "She took the right directions and turnings almost automatically, as though she was trailing somebody by an instinct that was connected not with sight or smell but with a vaguer sense that had to do with locations" (Atwood, *Edible Woman* 135).

Veganism appears, however, as only a temporary resistance to "carnophallogocentrism" that serves to emphasise the universality of its law, with Marian ostracised and pathologised by those around her. Against the controversial championing of a literary anorexia, Chloë Taylor, looking to Atwood's narrative as a demonstration of the Foucauldian normalisation and pathologisation of aberrant alimentary appetites, suggests that vegetarianism and veganism appear throughout Atwood's fictions as delusional fantasies of victimisation. Perceived identifications with nonhuman animals are "not presented as ethical in any admirable sense, but as neurotic and self-deceived" (Taylor 134). Marian's return to meat-eating is presented as a return to reality and an abandonment of the delusional victim

complex that manifests as an identification with the nonhuman. The repression of disgust is a way in which Marian re-enters civilisation, recognising complicity in her own victimisation. The recovery of the absent referent animal becomes a false projection, an alignment with innocence and victimhood that must eventually be abandoned.

As the above examples demonstrate, vegetarian and vegan characters abound in Atwood's fiction. Jovian Parry describes Atwood's "fondness for linking meat-aversion to issues of female disempowerment" (253). However, Atwood vehemently resists veganism's efficacy as a mode of feminist resistance. Her wry assertion in *Survival*, that in supporting the need for the humane treatment of animals "[she] may simply be demonstrating [her] own Canadianism" (Atwood 81), makes clear the inherent relation she sees between a resistance to carnivorousness and victim complexes. Certainly, if animals are seen only as symbolic victims in Canadian literature, it is perhaps unsurprising that vegetarianism and veganism so often appear in Atwood's fiction as a failure to acknowledge the reality of a carnivorous food chain.

In *Blind Assassin*, we encounter vegetarianism in direct alignment with female oppression and victimhood. The younger sister of protagonist Iris, Laura refuses to eat animals, proclaiming that "You'd have to be a cannibal" (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 167) to do so. Laura's vegetarianism is repeatedly linked to the oppression of women, with Iris describing how her sister refused to eat rabbits because "They looked like skinned babies" (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 167). Akin to the little pink rabbit-like offspring of Moreau's Beast People that I note in chapter two, this reference links Laura's dietary refusal to memories of their mother's miscarriage, where both girls are exposed to the half-formed foetus, mistaking it at first for a "kitten" before comparing it to the sight of "a squashed animal" (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 92). The horror of her mother's miscarriage links to further acts of reproductive violence detailed in the novel: Iris's father's role in their mother's death, enforcing relentless pregnancies against medical advice; Iris's own multiple miscarriages

following the aggressive intercourse enforced by her husband; and the abuse suffered by Laura, coerced into an abortion after being raped by Richard.

Our access to Laura is mediated through Iris's account, and that which at first appears as Laura's posthumous memoir, included as fragmented extracts from the diegetic "Blind Assassin" novel, is later revealed as the imaginative work of Iris. That the two women are doubled throughout, for example through the ambiguous authorship of the "Blind Assassin" text, their shared exploitation at the hands of Richard, and position as objects of desire for the communist Alex, suggests Laura as an aspect of Iris's complicit attitude towards her own victimisation. However, such a reading of Laura risks reducing her to a mere symbol of Iris's self-discovery. This risk is highlighted, for example, by hints throughout the novel that, by speaking for her, Iris has undermined Laura's agency as a vegetarian. For example, graffiti in a toilet cubicle occupied by Iris, written by fans of Laura/Iris's book, reads "*Fuck Vegetarians — 'All Gods Are Carnivorous' — Laura Chase*" (Atwood, *Blind Assassin* 84). That we only get access to fragments of the "Blind Assassin" text within the *Blind Assassin* novel means we remain ignorant of the passages of the story that promote an anti-vegetarian message. That Iris's decision to write as Laura prevents the transmission of Laura's vegetarianism addresses the nature of literature as a form of carnivorous appetite in itself, a violence that erodes agency and difference by seeking to speak for the other. Certainly, we learn of Iris's childhood with her sister with only passing allusions to Laura's sexual abuse at the hands of both their private tutor and Richard. Iris's eventual ability to articulate Laura's victimhood, towards the end of the novel, thus means little without her simultaneous admittance of her authorship of the "Blind Assassin" text, with her memoir building towards an acknowledgement of her collusion with Laura's abuse. By speaking for Laura, in an attempt to give her the agency she was denied in life, Iris cannibalises her experiences. The link between the suggestion that "*All Gods Are Carnivorous*" and the notion of authors as deities, in their world-forming capacities,

seems clear. The novel thus raises questions about the difficulty of literary representations of vegetarianism, as a medium inherently carnivorous in its appropriation of both the human and nonhuman animals into linguistic formations. Whilst, for Laura, vegetarianism functions as an act of personal resistance to male oppression, Iris's narrative exemplifies the difficulty of articulating ideas of shared pain and embodiment without a violent incorporation that consumes the other.

In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the complexities of literary production and consumption come to the fore and the composition of monstrous vegans from the remnants of past literary veganisms inflects such a dilemma. The combination of utopian and dystopian elements avoids a polemical or programmatic model of change,⁵⁹ in favour of an evaluation of the potential of literature to imagine such change. As Atwood argues, "Literature is an uttering, or outering, of the human imagination" and "Understanding the imagination is no longer a pastime or even a duty but a necessity, because increasingly, if we can imagine something, we'll be able to do it" ("In Context" 517). Her speculative future presents itself as a speculative textual world, implicating literature both in our current imaginings of the world and our power to reimagine our place within it. Whilst many scholars have noted the trilogy's overt intertextuality with canonical texts, little has been made of Atwood's explicit use of the fictional worlds constructed in her previous fiction.

The Robber Bride (1993), for example, shares much with the *MaddAddam* trilogy, from formal techniques, such as multiple narratorial perspectives and shifting tenses, to thematic concerns, including childhood trauma, parental failure, and sexual assault. However, that which has gone unnoticed in existing criticism is the interpenetration of fictional brand names and characters across the two narrative worlds. The *Scales & Tails* strip-club that

⁵⁹ Atwood defines the trilogy as "ustopian"; a combination of utopia and dystopia which acknowledges that each "contains a latent version of the other" (Atwood, *Other Worlds* 66).

appears across all three novels of the trilogy, for example, is also present as brand name printed on sweatshirt worn by protagonist Tony's husband West in *Robber Bride*. That "tails" is a homonym of "tales" hints at the significance of storytelling and narrative here. The passing narrative description in the latter text defines *Scales & Tails* as an "organization devoted to the saving of amphibians and reptiles, which - Tony imagines - doesn't have a very large membership, yet" (Atwood, *Robber* 10). The "yet" points to a future in which species extinction becomes a populist concern. However, it also portends to the re-emergence of *Scales & Tails*, in the world of all three *MaddAddam* novels, as a luxury chain of brothels and strip-clubs. The transformation of an animal protection charity into a multi-million dollar sex industry sees endangered reptiles represented via the sexual availability of women, resembling wild animals waiting to be tamed by rich men. The "yet" of Tony's skepticism refers then to the capitulation of ethical issues to the dictates of biopolitical capitalism, preceding the ways in which the *Scales & Tails* of the *MaddAddam* series commodifies female bodies, with women dressed so as to physically resemble endangered animals. Certainly there is little in the later establishment that seeks to challenge destructive attitudes to women, or reptiles, instead seeking simply to commodify their bodies for the service of the capitalist market economy. Furthermore, West, in *Robber Bride*, falls victim to the attractions and manipulations of antagonist Zenia, an enigmatic figure presented as an exploiter of male desires for female vulnerability, suggesting an alignment between purported desires to save particular ideals associated with both Nature and women. As ecoconsumer and aspiring male hero, West must learn that his idea of Zenia as victim is an artificial construct, alluding to the negative cultural construction of women as victims in need of saving, as much as to Nature as an innocent victim, reinforcing patriarchal and anthropocentric control.

A further link between the two diegetic worlds can be observed through the character name Bernice. In *Robber Bride*, Bernice appears as a minor character who belongs to the

“Peace movement and in some church or other” (Atwood 251). In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Bernice is the name given to a dedicated God’s Gardener. That Bernice appears in *Robber Bride* as part of a network providing shelter for Americans escaping the draft of the Vietnam war suggests the transference of peace movements from mid-twentieth-century anti-war protests to the urgency of the contemporary fight against environmental destruction in the undated speculative future. These examples provide evidence of the ways in which the trilogy’s model of the future is embedded within a textual realm: a speculative model of what would happen if the world of *Robber Bride* were to continue along its current path as much as that of the “real” world.

Speculative Futures

Atwood defines the *MaddAddam* novels as works of speculative fiction, fiction which “employs the means more or less to hand, and takes place on Planet Earth” (“In Context” 513). For Atwood, speculative fiction, unlike science fiction, explores “things that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the book” (*Other Worlds* 6). The speculative has different possibilities than the “novel proper,” making graphic the consequences of new technologies, and both utopic and dystopic thought. The trilogy presents a speculative future as determined by the impact of genetic engineering, species extinction, and climate change on life on earth. Veganism emerges, perhaps inevitably, as a central thematic concern.

The first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, is narrated by Jimmy, referred to as Snowman in the present tense, the last known survivor of a global epidemic that has eliminated human life on earth. Living exposed to the elements in an ecologically damaged world, Snowman relives his traumatic childhood and adolescence, unravelling the mystery of his position as the revered prophet of a humanoid genetically engineered species known as the Crakers. His memories

recount a dystopian near-future scenario resembling our current late-capitalist society and build towards the revelation that the plague was a manufactured hemorrhagic virus produced by his childhood friend Glenn/Crake. Despairing of what he viewed as the genetic flaws of humanity, leading to violence, war, and ecological destruction, Crake sought to wipe out the human race, to be succeeded by his genetically engineered vegan creatures. The second novel, *Year of the Flood*, covers the same period of time as *Oryx and Crake*, through a pair of parallel narratives that chart the survival of two female characters: Toby and Ren. Both women reflect on their respective pasts, revolving around their experience in the God's Gardeners. Interspersed with the teachings and songs of the Gardeners, the narrative builds to reveal multiple survivors of the plague. The final novel, *MaddAddam*, charts the progress of the surviving humans as they learn to adapt among the crumbling ruins of modernity and negotiate their responsibilities towards the Crakers. It follows Toby's experiences in the present alongside the memories of Zeb, leader of the eco-sabotage group "MaddAddam." The novel ends with the account of the Craker child Blackbeard, describing the birth of the first Craker-human hybrid children and the Crakers' adoption of conventionally human traits: learning to read, write, and adopt the myths invented by Snowman to tell stories about their origins.

The trilogy is consciously postmodern in form, drawing attention to the limitations of narrative form in an age of late capitalism. For example, all three novels rely on a diverse mesh of intertextual references, with multiple scholars noting the trilogy's allusions to a wide range of myths and canonical literature from *Robinson Crusoe* to *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, as I detail below, the novels engage with much contemporary environmental activism, ecocriticism, and cultural theory. This presents the reader with a strong sense of familiarity with the work. Atwood encourages this familiarity, providing reading lists on a website dedicated to *Year of the Flood*, advertised as "the books it is thought may have influenced the

founders of the God's Gardeners in their youth" ("Reading List"). In addition, she has donated boxes of newspaper cuttings and research that influenced the novel to the Thomas Fisher Library at the University of Toronto, and published non-fiction criticism on the novels.⁶⁰

The merging of multiple genres across the trilogy—incorporating elements of folklore, the Gothic, the *Bildungsroman*, and dystopian, utopian, and apocalyptic fiction—further attests to Atwood's postmodern breakdown of the hierarchies of high-, middle-, and low-brow culture. Despite this generic hybridity, the novels are most often categorised as works of science fiction. The science fiction genre, as I detail in the introduction to this thesis, is defined by Brian Aldiss as "*the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science)*" (25, emphasis in original). Moving away from the implicit philosophical abstractions of such a formulation, Atwood's conscious play with market imperatives and literary form suggests that what it means to be human is inseparable from the economic and social conditions of global capitalism. For example, in the acknowledgements to *Oryx and Crake*, she recognises "the auction-winning owner" of the name Amanda Payne, who won the chance to appear in the novels through a charity auction raising funds for torture victims. Given the narrative's focus on the futility of the human quest for immortality, Freedom from Torture's "Immortality Auction," which sells character names in the upcoming novels of prominent authors, initially appears as an ironic, contradictory intrusion into Atwood's writing that refuses to allow literature, as art, to stand in distinction from capitalist production. The capitalist framing embeds science fiction within notions of rampant consumption and, as I demonstrate, intersects at crucial points with representations of veganism to question the ability of literature to critically intervene in questions of ethical abstraction.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Atwood's monograph *In Other Worlds* and article "The Handmaid's Tale and *Oryx and Crake* 'In Context.'"

The novels engage explicitly with contemporary environmental issues, whilst Atwood's near ubiquitous intertextuality complicates and distorts the distinction between reality and fiction. This is signalled by her engagement with the writings of environmental activist and author Bill McKibben. In *The End of Nature* (1989), McKibben laments the psychological and spiritual toll of climate change: "We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence *is* its meaning; without it there is nothing but us" (54). His polemic against human intervention into the natural world ends with a return to Christian morality, promoting the idea that "we could limit ourselves voluntarily, *choose* to remain God's creatures instead of making ourselves gods" (McKibben, *The End* 198). In his later *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age* (2003), McKibben writes of the possibility of losing "the last remaining fully human part of us" (57) in an age of genetic engineering, and argues that "We need to survey the world we now inhabit and proclaim it good. Good enough" (112).

Atwood draws explicit attention to McKibben's influence on her work, listing him on her online reading lists and analysing his work in detail in her exegesis on the science fiction imagination, *In Other Worlds* (2011). McKibben, ruminating on the end of Nature as the death of human ideas about the world as eternal and separate, fears the nausea-inducing future of genetic engineering, featuring "[h]eadless chickens, [and] tree-eating men" (*The End* 152). This nightmare vision is directly realised in Atwood's speculative future, populated by ChickieNobs, chickens grown for the fast-food market that lack eyes, beaks and faces, resembling "an animal-protein tuber" (*Oryx* 238), and the chlorophyll-digesting Crakers. The novels are further saturated in McKibben's speculations. For example, in *The End of Nature* he predicts that environmental catastrophes will increase fanatical religious sects and doomsday prophesies, reflected in the listing of "fringe cults" in *Year of the Flood*, from the warring factions of the Lion and Wolf Isaiahists to the God's Gardeners (Atwood 47). In

addition, he draws attention to the significance of backpacker Jim Stolz's experience in "bear territory," learning to view himself as part of a larger food chain, which mirrors Zeb's experiences falling from his Bearlift "'thopter" into bear country in *MaddAddam*.

Furthermore, McKibben's detailing of the ecological sabotage techniques of the radical environmental group Earth First!, manifest through the tactics of the "MaddAddam" activists, whilst his fear, in *Enough*, of a growing class divisions between the GenRich and GenPoor, in a world of unrestricted genetic modification, reflects the division of Atwood's pre-flood world between the Compounds, powering scientific discovery, and the economically disadvantaged Pleeblands.

This fictionalisation of McKibben's work highlights Atwood's engagement with contemporary environmental debates. His influence also signals her interrogation of the narrative strategies of such writing, with McKibben's work merging the polemical with the factual, imaginative, speculative, and spiritual. In addition, I argue that the explicit borrowing from McKibben functions to retrospectively situate his work as a prescient foretelling of the *MaddAddam* novels. Atwood's artificial attribution of environmental prescience suggests the ability of language and literature to construct its own apocalyptic scenarios and raises questions about how to disrupt conventional narratives of environmental doomsday.⁶¹

Vegan and Vegetarian Words

Veganism is also situated in relation to a textual history across the trilogy. References to vegetarian and vegan writing, myth, and practice abound, each appearance of veganism within the narrative continually referring back to, and finding itself embedded within, a textual realm. Toby's questioning, in *MaddAddam*, of whether "anyone in the future [will] be

⁶¹ As Gerry Canavan notes, "the ideological assumptions of capitalism have now become so utterly naturalized, and our imagination of any possible alternatives to what currently exists so totally impoverished, that we cannot imagine even the mechanism by which some alternative might emerge" (138).

interested in the doings of an obscure and then outlawed and then disbanded green religious cult” (Atwood 166) acts therefore as a metafictional aside that raises questions about Atwood’s engagement with such textuality. It is not simply an interest in the practical “doings” of a vegan cult that Toby is questioning, but whether recording them in written form will be of appeal: acknowledging that whether anyone will have an interest in the Gardeners is first reliant on the question of whether anyone in the future will be able to read. Atwood’s incorporation of vegan literary histories can be situated in relation to Toby’s authorial quandary, directly questioning the role of the literary in re-membering vegan practices. The lack of access to veganism as anything other than a textual referent exposes the construction of vegan narratives and questions their ability adequately to respond to individual human and nonhuman animal lives.

Vegan and vegetarian writing, myth, and practice are particularly prevalent in the myths Snowman invents about the Crakers’ origins. For example, he utilises the teachings of the Ancient Greek Orphics, a group who “held that animal sacrifice was murder and that to eat meat was compounding that murder” (Spencer 54) and whose teachings have parallels to the later vegetarian cult surrounding Pythagoras. Snowman blurs and distorts various elements of Orphic myth and Ancient Greek cosmology, such as the notion of Ether and Chaos, used throughout *Oryx and Crake* to describe the world before the waterless flood: “In the beginning, there was chaos” (Atwood 118). He also uses Orphic ideas to explain the Crakers’ veganism, describing that “The people in the chaos were full of chaos themselves and the chaos made them do bad things. And they were eating up all the Children of Oryx ... They were killing them and killing them, and eating them and eating them” (Atwood, *Oryx* 119). Whilst theologians such as David Fergusson offer interpretations of the Bible in which God can be seen to have created the world out of a primeval chaos, Snowman’s additional notion of Oryx laying two giant eggs (Atwood, *Oryx* 110), and Toby’s later reinvention of the

Paradise dome in which the Crakers begin their life as a giant egg (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 11-12) highlights the relation between the Crakers' cosmology and a distorted version of Orphic myths of the primal egg.

The trilogy also incorporates the vegetarian history of the nineteenth century. For example, the God's Gardeners, living on a rooftop garden designed to imitate Eden, draw directly on the organisation of the Danielites: an obscure vegetarian sect set up by Lt. Col. T. W. Richardson in 1876. The Danielites have been labelled as "dotty" (Spencer 293) and eccentric by the few scholars that do draw attention to their historical existence, and are described in remarkably familiar terms to the Gardeners: "a group which took the Garden of Eden as their model, organising into gardens and groves with members titled Senior or Lower Gardener" (Spencer 293). Furthermore, the Danielites, akin to the polemics of Percy Shelley and Joseph Ritson, as I detail in chapter one of this thesis, associated vegetarianism with prelapsarian ideas of a pacifist Golden Age and Promethean fall from Grace, linking meat-eating and the use of fire. These ideas are suggested in the Gardener leader, Adam One: "According to Adam One, the Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating ... from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry ... Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and distant future" (Atwood, *Flood* 224).

Bringing such beliefs out of historical obscurity and articulating multiple discourses around our relation to the nonhuman dislodges the centrality of scientific rationality and anthropocentrism to the progress narratives of Western civilisation. Displaying key tenets of Adams's "vegetarian word," the trilogy's incorporation of the textual histories of plant-based lives could be read as promoting the power and liberation of story-telling to rewrite our relation to the world. However, the novels also offer a direct challenge to Adams's work by pointedly distancing vegan ideals from ethical responses and affectivity through the

intermediary of discourse. In rewriting vegetarian philosophies through the Gardeners, Atwood enacts a shift in register, satirically transforming their polemical earnestness into a cult described in Richard Alan Northover's analysis in relation to their "inconsistency and comical aspects" (88). This shift is emphasised in Atwood's undermining of our certainty regarding Adam One's sincerity as a spiritual leader. For example, in convincing Toby to join the ranks of the Eves, he expresses the idea that belief itself is less important than action, "You've been acting as if you believe, dear Toby. *As if* - those two words are very important to us" (Atwood, *Flood* 201), where religious dogma is positioned as a means of "push[ing] popular sentiment in a biosphere-friendly direction" (Atwood, *Flood* 288). The allusion here to Pascal's Wager suggests the pragmatism of the Gardener's veganism, a "better bet," where the finite loss of some pleasures avoids a much greater scale of environmental devastation. The teachings of the God's Gardeners combine with Snowman's drunken ramblings to remember a plethora of historic vegetarian philosophies that appear as textual practices divorced from meaningful or effective ethical responsiveness.

Furthermore, contrary to Adams's promotion of the liberatory potential of bearing the vegetarian word in women's fiction, Snowman's appropriation of Orphic vegetarianism emphasises the construction and contingency of myths of edibility. For example, he blames his inebriation, "He must have been stupefied with drink when he was laying down the laws," for failing to sanction meat-eating: "He should have made rabbits edible" (Atwood, *Oryx* 110). Snowman's desire to cannibalise vegetarian discourses for his own purposes aligns him with both Montgomery and Prendick's carnivorous desire for rabbits in *Doctor Moreau*. Snowman's rehearsal of Orphism sees their relation to veganism, as a genetically programmed biological fact, mediated through a linguistic understanding of their diet, in relation to *Oryx* as mother of the animals. Snowman's re-writing of vegetarian myths is thus analogous to his carnivorous desires for meat in the face of brute survival, implicating the regurgitation and

repurposing of vegetarian words within an appropriative cycle. This throws into question, as Wright observes, “how one justifies crossing or refusing to cross the various lines designated by one’s supposed belief system in order to survive in a world where that belief system breaks down” (*Vegan Studies* 86). The notion of “break down” is particularly apt here, with Snowman symbolically breaking down, consuming, and regurgitating such systems.⁶²

Snowman’s prophetism thus explicitly rehearses the mechanisms Adams critiques in the conventional treatment of vegetarian words, subjecting them to a process of objectification and fragmentation. However, his scrambled cosmology, which requires continual amending and revising as he loses track of his appropriations of vegetarian myth, also highlights that the literary is a realm in which interpretation cannot be contained or controlled. Whilst Adams fights to halt the “story of meat” through the recovery of vegetarian words, there are two points worth making about the impossibility of such recuperation when it comes to hybrid vegan monsters. Firstly, Gothic monsters have a tendency, as J. Jack Halberstam argues, to unite monstrous form with monstrous meaning, embedding multiple interpretations within the text itself; “part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that meaning itself runs riot” (*Skin Shows* 2). Secondly, as J. M. Coetzee’s iconic literary vegetarian Elizabeth Costello notes, as I explore in depth in chapter four, “hybrids are, or ought to be, sterile” (Coetzee, *Costello* 30). These two points risk a mutual cancellation, in which riotous excess of meaning can run only laterally, finding itself unable to propagate. Furthermore, such symbolic sterility risks embedding a conservative impulse within ideas of hybridity, solidifying, for example, the binary drawn between the human and the animal.

The emphasis on a textual veganism through Snowman and the eco-philosophy of the Gardeners raises questions about the role of, and need for, practical action. Karen Armstrong’s *The Case for God*, appearing alongside McKibben on Atwood’s online reading lists, suggests

⁶² See also Sara Salih’s essay “Vegans on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.”

a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning of faith, belief, and religion in the age of modernity. Armstrong argues that religion is not about weighing up truth or falsehood, as encapsulated in the modern understanding of the term “belief,” but requires the finding of truth through practical action: “You will only discover [religion’s] truth - or lack of it - if you translate their doctrines into ritual or ethical action” (4). She thus suggests the “delight in unknowing” as having been a central part of the human experience, in opposition to “Our scientifically oriented knowledge [which] seeks to master reality, explain it, and bring it under the control of reason” (Armstrong 5). Veganism, in Atwood’s trilogy, is implicated in such scientific structures of knowledge which delimit and restrict ethical decisions. Whilst Atwood has utilised vegetarian and vegan characters throughout her fiction, their appearance in the *MaddAddam* texts engages directly with the trope of the monstrous vegan, appearing, as I demonstrate below, as a monstrous denial of ethical response.

The Crakers

As an overt re-writing of Frankenstein, the genetically determined herbivorism of the Crakers, with veganism written into their DNA, directly aligns them with a conception of veganism as bodily disposition. Their ability for extra-linguistic communication with the pigeons, and relation to instinctual corporeal behaviours such as urinating to mark their territory, aligns them with a sutured vision of an original unity between mind, body, and nature. They function, therefore, as the fulfilment of that which German philosopher Peter Slotjerdijk suggested in the 1990s as the promise of genetic engineering: providing an answer to the question of “what will domesticate man when humanism fails as a school of domestication” (quoted in McKibben, *Enough* 199).

The Crakers appear, on the surface, as a successful revision of Frankenstein's creature, immune to the corruptions that taint the latter and lacking the anxieties of personhood that result in his despair. However, rewriting the veganism of Frankenstein's creature through the Crakers, the *MaddAddam* texts enact a critique of Romantic vegetarian and vegan ideals and suggest the impossibility of accessing an original state of man. As the introduction to this thesis establishes, the Romantic focus on the body before culture permeates much contemporary vegetarian and vegan scholarship. For example, Brian Luke suggests that an animal liberation position allows for the occupation of a "semiwild state on the boundaries of hierarchical civilization," recovering the innate compassion and outrage tamed by industries of animal exploitation (313). Similarly, Michael Allen Fox aligns "meat insight experiences" with "inborn ways of reacting" (57). I argue that Atwood's Crakers align the impulse to return to the body as the fundamental locus of vegan experience with an evasion of its often complex and problematic enmeshment in identity discourses, providing as it does a sense of fixity and essentialism within an otherwise amorphous and self-contradictory realm. The Crakers undermine the notion of veganism as a pre-social relation to the body, or, as it often manifests, relation to childhood innocence, by exposing the violent male desires embedded within such fantasies.

As with the creature in Shelley's novel two centuries earlier, Atwood's Crakers are presented as a vegan species whose ambiguous taxonomic status sees them challenge the limits of human definition. Artificially created outside of heterosexual reproduction at the hands of a hubristic male scientist, the Crakers consciously allude to Shelley's iconic text and its subsequent cultural legacy. As Jackson Petsche argues, Frankenstein's creature presents the characters of the novel with anxieties over the boundary between the human and nonhuman animal by animating the alienated products of the slaughterhouse. The diegetic world of the *MaddAddam* texts, in which the majority of food is genetically modified and nonhuman

animals have been replaced by splices produced in labs, sees genetic engineering succeed the slaughterhouse. The Crakers embody the reality of the modern meat industry of Atwood's speculative world. Their veganism evokes related cannibalistic anxieties given their status as amalgamations of numerous species of nonhuman animal genetic material. They pose no threat to humans, as chlorophyll-digesting herbivores, and yet are classified as inedible due to their uncanny relation to the human. This in turn raises questions about how edibility is determined, providing a contrast to intimations of cannibalism in the pre-plague world, in the suggestion, for example, that human flesh comprises the secret ingredient of the ethically dubious SecretBurgers fast-food chain.

Furthermore, just as Walton initially interprets Frankenstein's creature as "a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 13), the Painballers, three violent criminals who have survived the plague, initially cast the Crakers as tattooed, cannibalistic "savages" (Atwood, *Flood* 500). This distinction from white, Western identity as the marker of full human status, is later compounded when they are explicitly referred to as "Frankenpeople" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 28) by the surviving humans, a designation that highlights their ambiguous taxonomic status.

The Crakers are also consciously situated within Romantic vegetarian ideology, mirroring the creature's desire, in *Frankenstein*, to live in meat-free exile where "the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 120). Their genetically determined herbivorism, ability for extra-linguistic communication with the pigeons, and "amazingly attractive" appearance, "each one perfect" (*Oryx* 8), sees them embody an idealised, harmonious, and sutured vision of Nature. However, the Crakers are seen to draw away from this perfected unity, with the surviving MaddAddamites observing that "Their brains are more malleable than Crake intended. They've been doing several things we didn't anticipate during the construction phase" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 331). The Crakers thus make

clear, as in *Frankenstein* and *Doctor Moreau*, that even the perceived scientific control over genetics is not immune to unpredictable forces of life. A metafictional comment on the nature of literary reception and afterlives, the hyper-rationalism of scientific manipulation of genes is positioned here as susceptible to outside influence. That the Crakers are fundamentally changed by their contact with human adults, learning to read, write, worship, invent stories, and even ritually kill fish, complicates the separation of bodily responses and discursive models and challenges narratives that situate veganism as an inherent disposition that belongs to a pre-cultural realm.

As well as their relation to Frankenstein's monster, the Crakers also function as a direct rewriting of the childlike Eloi from Wells's *The Time Machine*. As I discuss in chapter two, the time-travelling scientist of Wells's scientific romance finds himself in the year 801,701, in which the human race has been divided between the beautiful vegan Eloi and monstrous cannibalistic Morlocks. Interpreted by the Traveller as the inevitable evolutionary consequence of class conflict, where the comfort of the Eloi is reliant on the underground labour of the Morlocks, he positions the former as childlike livestock that sustain the latter's cannibalistic appetites. Similarly, in *Oryx and Crake*, the Crakers are repeatedly described in terms of their beauty and benevolence, "like retouched fashion photos" (Atwood 115) or "statues" (Atwood 183). This aligns them with the beauty of the Eloi, described by Wells's narrator with a "Dresden china type of prettiness" (*Time Machine* 20). Furthermore, immediately noted by Wells's narrator as being "frugivorous" and "strict vegetarians" (*Time Machine* 23), the Eloi and the Crakers are associated with plant-based diets that distinguish them from their respective Gothic doubles: the Morlocks and Snowman. Snowman is repeatedly described in contrast to the beauty of the Crakers, "he's gamy, he reeks" (Atwood, *Oryx* 7), with "thickening yellow toenails" (Atwood, *Oryx* 11) and his eating habits, akin to the cannibalism of the Morlocks, present a "spectacle of depravity" (Atwood, *Oryx* 117). In

addition, whilst the Crakers are well adapted to the extremities of an altered global climate, Snowman struggles to survive in the heat, dreaming of “a cave, a nice cave” in which to live (Atwood, *Oryx* 47). This aligns him with the monstrosity of the Morlocks, described as of a “dull white” colour with “flaxen hair on its head” (*Time Machine* 39), a satirical comment on the decline of the Western humanist ideal. The cannibalistic appetite of the Morlocks triumphs throughout the trilogy: from the overt cannibalism of the Painballers, criminals who fight to the death in televised displays, to the suspected consumption of human beings via SecretBurgers, the near future world of Atwood’s novels presents human beings as ultimately consumable.

The body, as a point of origin for a corporeal veganism, thus reveals itself as an always prior textual invention. This can be further demonstrated in relation to the Crakers’ childlike qualities. Veganism is critiqued throughout the trilogy as a discourse that retreats to a realm of assumed faultless childhood innocence and non-complicity, reliant on an image of an original connection to nature that undermines moral responsibility and ethical agency. The Crakers, for example, can be read as a projection of adult fantasies onto the realm of childhood, representing the cultural memory of two centuries worth of idealised representations of children. In the first instance, the Crakers possess a primitive connection to language. Freud, often taken as the foundational thinker in work on the child mind, connected primitive man and the unconscious to the child, linking “the dreamer, the child, and the savage” (*Totem* 89). Jacqueline Rose builds on Freudian psychoanalysis to suggest that children’s literature represents a projection of adult fantasies of a pure language. Realism across children’s fiction, she suggests, promotes an innocent form of language as the best mode of expression, using language that reduces our awareness of it to an absolute minimum, expressing “an *ethos* of representation, characterised by its basic demand for identity in language, that is, for language as a means to identity and self-recognition” (Rose 139,

emphasis in original). Rose notes the development of educational policies in the twentieth century as promoting an elementary education that places a high regard on the directness and simplicity of children's language, "a vocabulary based on concrete objects" (120). The Crakers are designed to possess language facilities that will never surpass this elementary stage associated with early childhood: "It was one of Crake's rules that no name could be chosen for which a physical equivalent ... could not be demonstrated" (Atwood, *Oryx* 8). In genetically engineering a reduced propensity for abstract thought, Crake realises this myth of childhood language, suggesting that, from the biopolitical exploitation of bodies to ecological collapse, the corruptions of the human social world are reliant on the abstractions encouraged by linguistic signification.

In addition, the Crakers' embodiment of contemporary myths of faultless childhood innocence can be observed through the representation of their sexuality. Genetically engineered so that sexual arousal is determined solely by female ovulation and reproductive instinct, the Crakers promise a future of "No more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, no haggling over the price, no pimps, no sex slaves. No more rape" (Atwood, *Oryx* 194). However, contrary to the aim of "No more rape," *MaddAddam* begins with an instance of nonconsensual intercourse between the Crakers and Amanda and Ren. This incident is referred to by protagonist Toby as a "major cultural misunderstanding" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 22), premised on the notion that the Crakers have acted only out of instinct. However, the male Crakers' actions here turn against their programming, where Crake had intended that only the blue coloured abdomen of the Craker women would incite male sexual interest. Instead, the Craker men speak of being able to smell, rather than see, blue in the surviving women as they begin to ovulate. Rape, rather than disappearing in this posthuman world, simply has its terms reframed, where the Crakers are endowed with sexual instinct but denied sexual agency. This sense of reframing the terms of rape is foreshadowed in the first

chapter of *Oryx and Crake* when Snowman's internal monologue reflects on a colonial past of sexual exploitation. Snowman's vision of European colonial conduct manuals: "They would have been told to ... refrain from raping the natives. It wouldn't have said *raping*. refrain from fraternizing with the female inhabitants. Or put some other way . . ." (Atwood, *Oryx* 5). "Rape" is here positioned under discursive male control, with the choice of verb "fraternize" emphasising terms of relation between men. The attempt to confine Craker sexuality within the scope of their genetic programming demonstrates a mode of patriarchal control that desires to preserve a certain ideal of childhood sexual innocence.

The association of veganism and cultural conceptions of childhood is not a surprising critical move. For example, the idealised innocence promoted by the contemporary cult of childhood shelters children from the reality of institutionalised abuses of the nonhuman, fostering affectionate bonds through pet-keeping and the rampant anthropomorphism apparent across children's culture.⁶³ Children are linked to Romantic conceptions of vegetarianism, in possession of a seemingly innate sympathetic connection with both nonhuman animals and the natural world, divorced from adult uses of reason, rationality, and language. Furthermore, for Carol Gilligan, models ascribed to childhood development have been central to the advancement of universal ethical models, with female ethical responses, often grounded in subjective, relational responses and an ethics of care, denigrated as a failed form of development. The alignment of development with markers of increasing separation in psychological literature means that "Women's failure to separate ... becomes by definition a failure to develop" (Gilligan 9), associating attachment and interdependence with the maligned realms of femininity and immaturity. As such, childhood is positioned as an undeveloped feminine ethics and primitive mode of response.

⁶³ See, for example, Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart's *Our Children and Other Animals*.

There is a substantial body of academic work dedicated to literary and cultural representations of children and childhood. Whilst a comprehensive outline of the field is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth touching upon the continued persistence of Romantic, Victorian, and Freudian ideas about the child into the contemporary period. The cult of childhood, often said to have originated in the Romantic period, establishes childhood as a time of primordial innocence, credited with untrammelled imaginative capacities, a “transhistorical holy time of innocence and spirituality, uncorrupted by the adult world” (McGavran 12). Marina Warner posits such an ideal as one of the six key myths of our time, where children continue to be “perceived as innocent because they’re outside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, akin to unspoiled nature” (44). Furthermore, Sally Shuttleworth highlights the influence of Victorian thinking on our conceptions of childhood, positioning the child at the heart of nineteenth-century discourses of gender, race, and selfhood as “a figure who is by turns animal, savage, or female, but who is located not in the distant colonies, nor in the mists of evolutionary time, but at the very centre of English domestic life” (4). Thus, whilst departing in some sense from Romantic ideals of purity and innocence, nineteenth-century thinking about childhood wildness maintains a clear line between the child and the adult by positioning the former as akin to the pre-social origins of human culture.

Reading the Crakers as a projection of just such fantasies of faultless childhood innocence is supported by an analysis of Crake and Jimmy’s obsession with Oryx, an enigmatic presence throughout *Oryx and Crake*. Oryx initially appears as an eight-year-old girl in a pornographic film watched by the boys as teenagers. She is a figure who makes Jimmy feel “wrong” and “culpable” for his desires: her gaze out from the screen is able to look “into the secret person inside him. *I see you*, that look said. *I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want*” (Atwood, *Oryx* 104). Oryx appears later in the novel as an adult

woman engaged in a sexual relationship with both Jimmy and Crake but refuses to confirm the former's certainty that she is the same girl, "It might be me. Maybe it is. Would that make you happy, Jimmy?" (Atwood, *Oryx* 105). This forces Jimmy to grapple with the desire to reconcile his earlier feelings with a now consensual, adult relationship. However, Oryx continually subverts such attempts, refusing to view the adults by whom she was sexually exploited with the same contempt as Jimmy. For example, she pointedly questions "Why do you think he is bad ... He never did anything with me that you don't do" (Atwood, *Oryx* 166). By subverting traditional narratives of victimhood, Oryx makes clear that there are wider social, economic, and environmental factors that play a role in her violation, refusing to narrow its cause to a singular monstrous adult.

Oryx continually refuses the terms with which Jimmy would like to classify her experience. His failure to acknowledge the alignment of his adolescent sexual desires with Oryx's abusers, and culpability in her exploitation by downloading the videos of her abuse, results in attempts to locate her history in a specific time and place. However, Oryx refuses to corroborate Jimmy's attempts to situate her story. She responds to his obsession with locating her past in a specific city, for example, by asking "Why do you care? ... I don't care. I never think about it. It's long ago now" (Atwood, *Oryx* 136). Undermining his obsession with fixing her history within a spatial location, Oryx belongs only to "Some distant, foreign place" (Atwood, *Oryx* 133). Jimmy's desire to have Oryx admit her exploitation within a specific temporal-spatial environment, that which is elsewhere, manifests as an anxiety and refusal to admit his collusion in her abuse. In addition, it draws attention to his inability to possess her narrative, admitting that "There was Crake's story about her, and Jimmy's story about her as well, a more romantic version; and then there was her own story about herself, which was different from both, and not very romantic at all" (Atwood, *Oryx* 132-133).

Oryx, an immigrant woman from an unnamed Third World country, forces both Crake and Jimmy to confront their complicity in global networks of exploitation and subverts traditional narratives of blame. For example, she refuses to blame her mother for selling her, the man who bought her, or the American filmmaker recording the porn films. Oryx's narrative, told through Snowman's memories, suggests that there are numerous factors that play a role in this violation. In refusing to place blame for her abuse on individuals, its causes must be seen as part of a wider social structure, of which Jimmy and Crake, as voyeurs, are undoubtedly a part.

Whilst we get little access to the impact the image of Oryx as a child has on Crake, we learn that he, like Jimmy, has kept hold of the printed screenshot of her haunting gaze, as a young child in a pornographic film, since their adolescence. Furthermore, he seeks her out through his university's prostitution service, resulting in her reappearance in the Paradise Dome as an adult woman. I argue that Crake's refusal to acknowledge his complicity in Oryx's exploitation manifests in his attempt to recreate the ideal of childhood innocence that her narrative destabilises. Certainly, Snowman's listing of "No more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children ... No more rape" (Atwood, *Oryx* 194), as Crake's desired goals in manufacturing the Crakers, suggests an attempt to reconcile, and prevent the repetition of, the trauma that the men locate in Oryx's past. Crake's utopian vision for the future of humanity thus recreates a heterosexual model of time that valorises the child as the emblem of futurity. As Snowman bitterly suggests, realising that his survival had been part of Crake's plan, "he's served his evolutionary purpose ... He's saved the children" (Atwood, *Oryx* 125), echoing a popular environmentalist discourse that promotes the child in service of the logic of reproductive futurism.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The term "reproductive futurism" comes from Lee Edelman's *No Future*, as I explore in the introduction to this thesis. See also Rebekah Sheldon's work on the figure of the child in environmental discourses in *The Child to Come*.

That veganism has been written into the Crakers as part of their DNA sees their bodies inscribed with a patriarchal language that valorises scientific rationalism. In addition, their inability to see other animals as a threat to their personal security necessitates their reliance on the protection of Crake's human double, Snowman. In assuming control over the genetic make-up of the Crakers, Crake fails to interrogate the moralistic simplicity of his venture and its implication in the very structures he seeks to dismantle: the impulse to control bodies and negate agency beyond pre-established, patriarchal terms. Funded by multi-national corporations as desirable consumer goods, Crake's project relies on the biopolitics of late-capitalism. For example, he describes the results of his market research, concluding that the "vegans are highly interested" (Atwood, *Oryx* 359) in the chlorophyll-digesting elements of his engineered species. Positing genetic coding as the aetiology of a posthuman veganism, and the guarantee of its continued reproduction, the veganism of the Crakers is unburdened from any reliance on ethical decision-making, individual response, or contingency. Craker veganism is not a narrative with multiple potentialities, but a code that seeks patentable results.

Oryx, like many of Atwood's female characters, reinforces the link between the oppression of women and nonhuman animals. Reflecting on the porn film featuring *Oryx*, Jimmy remembers the moment at which "she looked over her shoulder and right into the eyes of the viewer - right into Jimmy's eyes, into the secret person inside him" (Atwood, *Oryx* 104). The narrative describes that "Jimmy felt burned by this look - eaten into, as if by acid. She'd been so contemptuous of him" (Atwood, *Oryx* 104). The gaze of the other generates anxiety here and mirrors Jimmy's memories at a bonfire of infected cows and sheep and pigs earlier in his childhood: "he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out

of their burning eyes ... because he'd done nothing to rescue them" (Atwood, *Oryx* 20). Here women, children, and animals form an amalgam of victims who Jimmy fails to protect.

The desire for unity with Nature, for a return to a realm of "wildness" outside of domestic civility, is linked to both women and children throughout the trilogy, from the success of the *Scales & Tails* strip club, featuring women transformed into reptilian animals, to Zeb's desire for Katrina WooWoo, an Asian acrobat who performs with a python. Describing the male desire for seeing women as animals, Zeb explains to Toby "We like to think you're wild animals ... ferociously out of control, in a good way" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 211). This is countered by Toby with the suggestions that "You mean stupid? Or subhuman?" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 211), descriptors that appear both as a justification for exploitative male treatment and an apt summary of the attitudes adopted in relation to the Crakers in the post-apocalyptic world. By aligning a patriarchal desire for animalised women with the subhuman status of the Crakers amongst the remaining human survivors, Crake's scientific endeavour overlaps with his past paedophilic desire for Oryx. This overlap allows him to position himself as her indirect saviour whilst refusing to acknowledge complicity in her exploitation.

Oryx's narrative, as mediated via Jimmy, exemplifies an erotic fixation on innocence. That the vegan Crakers are a mechanism of power on Crake's part, allowing him to deny his own erotic attachment to Oryx, and position such eroticism as a manipulatable DNA sequence, suggests veganism as a refusal to acknowledge the pervasive nature of such power relations or, indeed, the hollowing out of nonhuman animals as an emblem of ultimate innocence that warrants total and universal protection. The Crakers' relation to both Frankenstein's monster and the abused body of a child thus reinforces the link between the vegan body, idealised innocence, and the symbolic violence of aspirations for purity and wholeness. The Crakers deconstruct desires for a return to a Golden Age of pre-linguistic

simplicity by drawing links between the cultural constructions of nature, animals, women, children, and ethnic others, on one end of the spectrum, and white, male, Western identity, on the other.

Furthermore, Oryx's diet stands in contrast to the veganism written into the Crakers, aligned with the trend across Atwood's previous fiction of eating as a means by which women can assert agency in a patriarchal world.⁶⁵ Eating pizza with Jimmy, Oryx picks and chooses toppings, "anchovies, no pepperoni" (Atwood, *Oryx* 136). Her rejection of meat-eating appears to have no direct link to her views on animal ethics, but centres around her response to the cameraman of the child porn films, who "smelled too strong, because he was a meat-eater. He ate so much meat!" but didn't like eating fish (Atwood, *Oryx* 164).⁶⁶ Her pescatarian diet functions here as a refusal to assume the values of American men and associated carnivorous, paedophilic desires. In contrast to the Crakers' innate veganism, Oryx's dietary choices can be read as a form of protest against Western, meat-eating masculinity. Crake's genetically modified kudzu-eating Crakers are devoid of feminist protest or agency. As a result, they are situated in a complicated bind, where Crake's genetic coding functions as a form of writing determined by a carno-phallogocentric system at the same time that such coding seeks to absent them from this economy. Oryx's vegetarian protest is depicted as a relational practice rather than an identity, a response to the reality in which she is situated.

As I have demonstrated, the Crakers function as an overt re-writing of the Frankenstein myth. Despite such explicit allusions, drawing on a trope in widespread cultural circulation, the texts make continual heavy-handed gestures towards the myth from which it

⁶⁵ For example, as discussed above, both Brain and Sceats suggest that Marian's dietary refusals in *Edible Woman* grants her body a subversive voice, figuring a mode of female empowerment outside of patriarchal discourse. However, this "peculiarly symbolic form of anorexia" (Sceats 98) leaves open the question of how Marian might harness this alternative discourse, of how she might live "without either being consumed or becoming a predator" (Sceats 99).

⁶⁶ This distinction has, of course, its own important relation to the sexual politics of meat.

has spawned. For example, in *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy must distinguish a clip from a “movie remake of *Frankenstein*” and laments “Where’s my bride of Frankenstein?”, positioning himself as the victim of Crake’s experiments (Atwood, *Oryx* 303, 199). Furthermore, the prefix “Franken-” proliferates in *MaddAddam*: from “Frankenbacon” to “Frankenpeople” and “Frankenbabies” (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 28, 265). These somewhat redundant recollections of the myth from which the novels draw emphasises the impurity of its textual origins: Jimmy/Snowman refers to film adaptations of the novel, whilst “Franken-” hybridises words to expose perceived fault lines between nature and culture far beyond those explored in Shelley’s original text. The trilogy’s relation to *Frankenstein* is thus emphasised in such a way as to refuse direct transmission, stressing the multitude of divergent references for a continually mutating cultural myth.

By rewriting the veganism of Victor’s creature through the Crakers, Atwood deconstructs Romantic ideals of veganism to suggest the impossibility of accessing an “original” or authentic conception of humanity in the postmodern world. The Crakers expose the implication of such desires for a return to a unified connection with nature with adult fantasies that repress complicity in systems of violence, and posits vegan identity as a commodified, consumable identity or simulacra for a perception of lost innocence. The Crakers can also be read as a critique of vegan ideals that unwittingly fulfil patriarchal, humanist discourses. Reading the Crakers as an analogy of literary veganisms, genetic coding is a form of writing inscribed on their bodies that determines ethical response. Literary veganisms here risk losing their ability to relate to singularity and agency, a desire to present disciplinary master narratives under the guise of ethical origins.

Similarly, Crake fails to take account for that which cannot be pre-determined as the Crakers morph beyond his blueprint. As an analogy for the monstrous progeny of literature

that cannot be contained, they raise complex questions for the transmission of vegan words, with the literary unable to contain or delimit ethical responses. The Crakers increasingly act in ways contrary to their genetic programming, killing a ritual fish for Jimmy to eat each week, for example, suggesting the futility of a model of consumption that does not allow space for the power of imagination in engaging with, and responding to, the nonhuman other. However, there is a conscious irony here, with the Crakers positioned as the subjects of Atwood's authorial creation, thus situating them within a linguistic system of control that has always already sacrificed their individual response to the other.

The God's Gardeners

A Christian cult who live by strict ecological principles, the God's Gardeners are the principle focus of *Year of the Flood*. Parodying veganism as an ascetic restriction that aspires to an impossible purity, the Gardeners, in juxtaposition to the genetically determined veganism of the Crakers, promote a form of vegan practice reliant upon the denial of seemingly innate urges. In spatial terms, before the advent of the plague, the Gardeners occupy an almost undetectable territory within the hyper-visibility of the city, described in states of disguise, hiding, and body modification. Furthermore, and akin to the dictate "Not to Eat Flesh or Fish" (Wells, *Moreau* 59), as compulsively repeated by Moreau's Beast Folk, individual Gardeners struggle to reconcile their desires with their purported beliefs, presenting a dissonance in which bodily urges are repeatedly sacrificed to the textual: corporeal desires are overwritten by a discourse of songs, sermons, and prayers. Seeking to absolve themselves from the environmental destruction wrought by consumerist society, the Gardeners persistently border on that which Timothy Clark summarises as the damaging moralistic simplicity of much contemporary environmentalism: an "off-putting stance of righteous indignation and blame, blind to the depth of its own complicity in what is happening to the world" (101).

In *MaddAddam*, the HelthWyzer staff barbecue offers a variety of choices with varying ethical relations to nonhuman animals: “pork ribs for the carnivores, SoyOBoy products and quornburgers for the vegans. NevRBled Shish-K-Buddies for those who wanted to eat meat without killing animals - the cubes were lab-cultured from cells” (Atwood 285). The trilogy repeatedly draws attention to distinctions between substitute food products, and real “fake” meat, raising questions about what it means to eat meat if one’s ethical qualm is nonhuman animal suffering, as opposed to broader questions about what it means to think about our relation to flesh as edible.⁶⁷ Certainly, the Gardeners embody the moralistic tone associated with denigratory representations of veganism in contemporary culture. In Atwood’s speculative landscape, questions of what it means to eat animal or human flesh become increasingly incoherent. Cora Diamond argues that the cannibalistic taboo against human flesh is based on a fundamental concept of inedibility, reliant on human feelings of pity and fellowship. She uses this argument to suggest that the “nagging moralistic tone” (Diamond, “Eating Meat” 323) associated with vegetarianism is no coincidence but relates to the failure of a universal, rationalising morality as an adequate discourse for discussing who and what we should eat. In a world in which the boundaries between the edible and inedible cease to exist, with cannibalism implicit, human qualities are submitted to the values of a biopolitical capitalism and the universalising dogma of the Gardeners appears increasingly futile as a conception of morality. This is signalled, as I explore below, by its dissolution in the post-apocalyptic landscape.

The Crakers function as an overt re-writing of Frankenstein’s act of creation, whilst the Gardeners align with Wells’s retelling of Shelley’s narrative in *Doctor Moreau*. As discussed in chapter two, *Doctor Moreau* charts the experience of Prendick, finding himself

⁶⁷ For more on the representation of real, fake, and “real artificial” meat in Atwood’s trilogy see Susan McHugh “Real Artificial.”

on an island populated by the scientist Moreau, his assistant Montgomery, and a host of uncanny Beast People. Sven Wagner suggests clear parallels between this narrative and that of *Oryx and Crake*, with Snowman, the only human survivor amongst the Crakers, acting as a reincarnation of Prendick, the only surviving human on Moreau's island following the death of both Moreau and Montgomery. As in *Doctor Moreau*, Snowman finds himself threatened by the increasing reversion to origins of the modified creatures around him, including the pigeons that "were supposed to be tusk-free, but maybe they were reverting to type now they'd gone feral" (Atwood, *Oryx* 43). Furthermore, Snowman constructs a mythology around Crake as theistic creator, he who "did the Great Rearrangement and made the Great Emptiness" (Atwood, *Oryx* 119). This alludes to the experiences of Prendick, who finds himself constructing a religious dogma to pacify the Beast People, deifying the much despised Moreau: "The Master you cannot see. Yet even now he listens above you" (Wells, *Moreau* 120). In both texts, the invention of a theistic god-as-creator leads back to a flawed and mortal scientist, whilst the world-building of dogma finds its origins in the incoherent ramblings of last men figures.

If veganism is read in the Crakers as a design feature that distinguishes them from the rest of humanity, then canivorism is suggested as a fundamental human disposition,⁶⁸ aligning the surviving Gardeners with Moreau's Beast People. As detailed in chapter two, Moreau asserts control over his Frankensteinian creations through his vegetarian Law. The return of the Beast People's carnivorousness towards the end of the novel suggests the ultimate failure of Moreau's project, presenting vegetarianism as a violent legacy of the Enlightenment that

⁶⁸ Whilst the inverse of an unquestioned veganism might be a biologically determined carnivorousness, it is important to stress the Crakers' veganism as more than simply a rejection of animal flesh. Their interspecies communication - both with the surviving humans and the pigeons - see them refuse traditional species boundaries and ideas of subjectivity, embracing a cross-species pacifism that resists multiple forms of exploitation. This inbuilt openness to responding to the presence of the irreducible other must have its only direct inverse in an inbuilt, or conditioned, speciesism, that insists on rigid distinctions and borders between species, resulting in violence and sacrificial structures.

desires to transcend an inherent animality. Certainly there is an irony to the fact that the dictate not to eat Flesh is followed by the rhetorical question “Are we not Men?” (Wells, *Moreau* 59), given that Moreau and Prendick are described feasting on raw and bloody meat throughout the novel. The enforced restriction against flesh appears as an attempt to transcend natural, and beneficial, appetites and functions as a means of control that ensures the continued reign of the human islanders. Similarly, the continual self-domestication required of the Gardeners’ is revealed in the narrative of Toby, who, presuming herself the sole survivor of the plague, is unable to prevent her carnivorous desires from surfacing. The body of the pig she kills to protect her garden appears as “a great temptation” transforming in her mind from a rotting corpse to “a bacon sandwich” (Atwood, *Flood* 22). Her ambivalence towards this act of violence is clear: “You ought to feel guilty. Still, she thinks of going out with one of the kitchen knives and sawing off a ham” (Atwood, *Flood* 22). What she “ought to feel,” as dictated by the VegiVows oath taken upon joining the God’s Gardeners, comes into conflict with her carnivorous desire, emerging as survival instinct. This distinction embeds her ethical responses within the disciplinary mechanisms of the Gardeners’ politics of eating.

In addition, after stepping on a beetle Toby begins to say a short prayer: “Even though no one’s watching her, it’s hard to break such ingrained habits” (Atwood, *Flood* 18). Universal respect for life becomes a mere habit in the post-apocalyptic world, where its meaning was previously generated by the disciplinary judgement of her fellow Gardeners. These moments expose the contingency of Toby’s veganism whilst suggesting that an innate carnivorous appetite has been suppressed by the Gardener oath. Without the disciplinary eye of the Gardeners, universal inedibility fails to provide a workable model for relating to the nonhuman animals around her. Toby’s post-plague transition thus mirrors Prendick’s suspicions, on his return to London, that its citizens are merely Beast People in disguise: “the

intent faces over the books seemed but patient creatures waiting for prey” (Wells, *Moreau* 131).

Furthermore, the sporadic intervention of Adam One's sermons into the narrative of *Year of the Flood* marks a shift towards carnivorism as the Gardeners face threats of persecution by the authorities. Whilst initially preaching universal pacifism and benevolence in the first half of the novel, by the end he acknowledges that “Some of you have chosen to allay suspicion by courageously eating the flesh of our fellow Creatures” (Atwood, *Flood* 328). In addition, sermonising to an unknown congregation of followers who have survived the plague, Adam glorifies the predatory nature of mankind and blesses the rats who have “donated their protein” (Atwood, *Flood* 413-414). As the will to survive encourages the consumption of animal flesh, the veganism of the Gardeners appears as a self-fashioned discourse of sustainability that fails to meet the needs and requirements of survival. The Gardeners increasingly align with Wells's literary conception of vegetarianism, as both the dictate of a humanist discourse that seeks to erase animality and an impossibly aspirational ideal that insufficiently masks the self-interest that dominates our instinctive relation to the nonhuman. The Gardeners' ethical principles appear contingent on a repression of carnivorous desire, a desire that surfaces in the post-apocalyptic landscape. Critiquing a model of veganism that appears as a universalising set of principles and cultish practice, the trilogy suggests its immediate breakdown in the face of survival, in which ethical boundaries are in a state of flux.

The Gardeners' dogmatic approach to veganism, enforced by religious texts and the leadership of Adam One, situates their ethical principles within a universalising system that demands a rational utilitarianism. Both the Crakers and the Gardeners can thus be read as the result of Romantic desires for wholeness and unity between mind and nature. Similarities between the two groups are evident throughout the novel; for example, by the young Glenn/

Crake's avid interest in Ren's experiences when she returns to school in the Compounds. She recounts that "Glenn already knew quite a lot about the Gardeners, but he wanted to know more. What it was like to live with them every day. What they did and said, what they really believed. He'd get me to sing the songs" (Atwood, *Flood* 271). This hints at his use of the Gardeners as a model upon which to construct the Crakers, with both groups appearing as strict vegans, living communally, and singing songs in an oral culture. The Gardeners, when first encountered by Toby, are described in uncannily similar terms as when the Crakers are first introduced to the reader via Snowman's narrative in *Oryx and Crake*. For example, the Craker children "pick up flotsam ... keeping some items, discarding others; their treasures go into a torn sack" (Atwood, *Oryx* 6), whilst the children of the Gardeners participate in "Young Bioneer scavenging day" which involves "gleaning for the Gardeners' recycled-material crafts" (*Flood* 82). In both cases the children are also singing and encompass a range of racial identities, with the Crakers described as "each one a different skin colour" (*Oryx* 8), whilst the Gardener children are of "all colours" (*Flood* 48).

Just as the utopian aims of Crake's project are structured by the same Cartesian rationalism he seeks to eradicate, the Gardeners' universalising dictates mask their reliance on, and collusion with, dominant capitalist systems. For example, when Toby is promoted to a leadership role, that of Eve Six, she discovers that the Gardeners own both a van and laptop, contrary to their polemical attack on modern technology. In each case, access to the products of capitalism is vital for engaging in resistance work: using the laptop to store codes for deadly viruses leaked from the Compounds and the van to transport political radicals. This suggests that effective opposition to a destructive system requires residence in the very structures they condemn. These parallels with the Crakers encourage an interrogation of dominant modes of discourse about veganism that critique its universalising ethical proscriptions and desire to relinquish complicity in systems of violence and oppression.

A further example of the interplay between collusion and critique in individual activism is found when Ren draws attention to her frequent visits to the campus Happicuppa franchise “because they had vegan muffins” (Atwood, *Flood* 342). Happicuppa is presented throughout the trilogy as a deeply problematic environmentally and socially exploitative corporation. Ren’s veganism appears in *Year of the Flood* as a dietary preference that does not incorporate a political stance on broader political, economic, and social structures, standing in opposition to her schooling amongst the Gardeners, who vehemently condemned the franchise. This raises the question of the distinction between veganism as an act of bodily refusal, to not eat animal products, condemnation, as a form of passive sermonising, and consumer protest, to engage politically in fighting structures of oppression.

Ren’s memories of her morning trips to the franchise include an unexpected confrontation with her childhood companion from the God’s Gardener, Bernice. Having not seen each other since both leaving the cult in early adolescence, their divergent levels of commitment to radical environmentalism are made clear, with Ren’s consumerism juxtaposed to Bernice’s picketing of the store, part of a group described as “extreme fanatic ultra-greens” (Atwood, *Flood* 342). On approach, Ren experiences a wave of guilt that shocks her “like a jolt of electricity” (Atwood, *Flood* 342). First introduced in *Oryx and Crake* as a “fundamentalist vegan” (Atwood 221) who burns Jimmy’s mock-leather sandals in a fit of righteous indignation, Bernice generates anxiety for Ren, associated here with a sense of her own political inadequacy.

However, the guilt Ren feels upon confronting Bernice is later explained as resulting from her belief that she was complicit in the murder of Bernice’s father, Burt. During their shared childhood in the Gardeners, Ren helped to spread a rumour that Burt was having an affair, leading Bernice’s mother to report his illegal trade in marijuana to the CorpsSeCorps police force and his subsequent murder. Their brief exchange outside the Happicuppa shop

sees Bernice reveal that her mother's informing was in fact the result of her own disclosure that Burt had been sexually abusing her and several other female Gardener children. Ren's guilt is thus shown to have been misplaced, with the sense of her own centrality to the situation having prevented her from acknowledging Bernice's trauma. That this revelation occurs alongside the contrast between Ren's consumption of vegan muffins and Bernice's political protest aligns Ren's veganism with her failure to acknowledge Bernice's hidden suffering in favour of, as Bernice derides, "feeling so self-important" (Atwood, *Flood* 346). This realisation challenges Ren to confront the convoluted relation between a sense of ethical agency and a failure to recognise latent violence.

The juxtaposition between Bernice's activism and Ren's waning political commitment draws attention to the difficulties and often futility of resistance. Whilst Ren is presented as failing to confront wider social problems beyond her personal experience, Bernice's activism serves to absent her from human experience and connection. The incident with Jimmy's sandals, where, despite his protest that they hadn't been real leather "she said they'd been posing as it, and as such deserved their fate" (Atwood, *Oryx* 221), demonstrates her disregard for the boundaries between real and symbolic violence and sacrifice, in this case serving to efface the exploitative practices behind the referents. Furthermore, following her refusal to consume either Happicuppa coffee or bottled water, Bernice concedes that she will drink an "organic mix in a recyclable carton made of pressed kudzu leaves" (Atwood, *Flood* 343). This aligns her with the Crakers who exist solely on a diet of kudzu-leaves. Her desire to absent herself from capitalist structures thus leaves her susceptible to an idealised romantic fantasy of innocence and a childlike, primitive connection to Nature, as much as positioning her as thriving only after the post-apocalyptic decimation of human life. The fatalism of this dramatic reduction in human population alludes to the ambitions of the Deep Ecology

movement,⁶⁹ with Atwood critiquing a rhetoric that lacks a productive means of change without beginning anew.

The interrogation of vegan complicity across the novels can be seen in *Oryx and Crake*, where vegans are explicitly referenced as consumers within a capitalist marketplace. Initially designed under the auspices of designer children, the Crakers are positioned as a commodity and veganism as both a marketable feature that appeals to a GenRich class who have embraced the developments wrought by biopolitical capitalism. However, the plot of *Oryx and Crake* builds to the revelation that Crake's aim had not been to market the Crakers as a form of designer children but to leave them as the sole survivors of his manufactured hemorrhagic plague. Veganism undergoes a transition through these rhetorical discourses, appearing as a set of quasi-religious dictates, a gene that can be created in a lab, a marketable commodity in a consumer-driven society, and finally, a form of superior adaptation. Crake's conception of veganism in the Crakers is disassociated from ethical agency, negating the complexity of ethical decision-making. Destroying human life and symbolically cannibalising Gardener identity, the Gardeners too become a consumable image of ecological responsibility within the text itself, as a written and consumable part of the narrative for both Crake and the reader. Indeed, their often comical and contradictory attitudes ensure that they are not to be seen as a realistic blueprint for the future.

The representation of the Gardeners' veganism, as an illusory utopian desire to occupy a place outside of the current system, is reinforced by the hints provided throughout the novels that Adam One has been directly involved in Crake's genocidal scheme. Crake acts as the key source of the Gardeners' collection of classified genetic codings stolen from the Compounds throughout *Year of the Flood*. Subsequently, in *MaddAddam*, Adam is seen in possession of the deadly virus that eventually forms the hidden component of the BlyssPluss

⁶⁹ For an overview of the Deep Ecology movement see George Sessions *Deep Ecology*.

pill. Zeb questions “Who’s this *we*?” that Adam positions as storing the virus (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 310), with the enigmatic “we” leaving open the possibility of his collaboration with Crake, further supported by the accuracy of his apocalyptic prophecies. Such ambiguities sees Atwood incite paranoid reading practices, with the narratives of each of the three novels forming an all-encompassing conspiracy.

In contrast to the fatalism and residual humanism of the Gardeners, the eponymous “MaddAddam” group, run by Zeb, represents an attempt to undermine and destabilise global biocapitalism by actively engaging its tools. The MaddAddamites use genetic engineering to splice porcupines and beavers, creating hybrid beings that will destroy fan belts in cars and weevils that will decimate Happicuppa coffee plantations. In adopting modern technologies for the purpose of resistance to the system that has created them, the MaddAddamites refuse the pretence of innocence associated with the Gardeners. Wright suggests that the survival of the Gardeners into the post-apocalyptic world suggests that veganism, whilst contextual and negotiable, “can perhaps foster a new mythology upon which to rebuild society after the apocalypse” (*Vegan Studies* 87). However, whilst the fragmented extracts of Adam One’s sermons featured throughout *Year of the Flood* suggests the survival of a small group of Gardeners, the MaddAddamites emerge as the principle surviving group. Adam One’s sermons suggest that the surviving Gardeners eventually perish whilst *MaddAddam*, as the title itself proclaims, is populated by numerous former members of the MaddAddam resistance group, whose future reproduction is secured through an embrace of the Crakers as sexual partners.

By utilising the tools of modern science against itself, the MaddAddamites embrace their involvement in the overarching system of biocapitalism as a way to fight oppression whilst refusing a victim position. This ensures their survival in the post-apocalyptic world. Moreover, in contrast to the VegiVows of the Gardeners and the genetic veganism of the

Crakers, the MaddAddamites eat meat. The final novel of the trilogy ends with the domestication of the genetically engineered Mo'Hairs in order to harvest their milk, as the MaddAddamites establish a new human community amongst the ruins of the postapocalyptic world. As Parry argues, the books invoke a nostalgia for "real" meat and subsistence farming that triumphs such employments over the biopolitics of late-capitalism. This points towards a speculative future in which anthropocentrism remains as a pervasive and undeniable requirement for human community. However, this is not without some ostensibly positive changes. The MaddAddam survivors negotiate an alternative set of relations to the pigeons, vowing not to eat them. The decision to not eat pigeons is based on a shared sense of justice and respect established through psychic communication. Thus, in contrast to the universalism and impracticality of the Gardeners' VegiVows, the MaddAddamites decision not to kill or eat the pigeons is seen as an act of care based on lived experience and relationality.

It could be argued, however, that the inedibility of the pigeons is determined solely by their similarity to humans, having been genetically modified with human neocortex brain tissue. This forms a contrast with the Mo'Hairs, who are used by the MaddAddamites for their milk and meat, reinforcing a line of demarcation between beings worthy of rights and those designated as killable. Furthermore, that it is pigeons chosen for a universal dietary taboo amongst the humans conjures associations with traditional prohibitions of pork within Judaism and Islam. This relation to the nonhuman in accordance with traditional religious belief hints at the cyclical nature of the apocalypse, re-establishing existing structures.

Atwood uses the God's Gardeners to critique a model of veganism that takes up a conscious position of victimhood, denying complicity and collusion in overarching structures of oppression. Gardener veganism is embedded within Wells's critique of a humanist mode of domestication. The contingency of their universalising principles, losing meaning in the post-apocalyptic world, suggests carnivorousness as an innate human trait. The VegiVows come to

mirror the genetic coding that controls the Crakers' choices, suggesting both as disciplinary master narratives that dictate an impossibly coherent and fixed relation to desire. This posits veganism as a restrictive projection of innocence that results in a moralistic simplification of the complexity of our relation to those who are othered by the dominant social order.

Furthermore, the impracticality of many of their choices introduces a comic tone that supports that which many critics see as Atwood's denigratory tone towards their ecological vision. The extremity of their commitments masks their complicity within various wider structures, including a residual anthropocentric humanist ideal. Finally, their relative disappearance in the post-apocalyptic world, in distinction from the MaddAddamites, suggests that working with available technologies, acknowledging their utility over blanket condemnation, ensures future survival and a productive space from which to negotiate relations to others. As Rebekah Sheldon's reading of the "problem of eating" across the trilogy suggests, the novels stress the need to acknowledge that "Some thing's survival is always some other thing's loss" (139).

Vegan Children

As the above analysis of the Crakers and the God's Gardeners demonstrate, the trilogy appears skeptical of veganism's utopian commitment to a world free from all forms of exploitation. However, I argue that Atwood's deconstruction of veganism as genetic code or linguistic refrain is not an unthinking return to essentialism. As I demonstrate, Atwood continually subverts attempts to access "true" human nature, emphasising instead the importance of literature in continuing to rewrite and imagine our relation to the nonhuman.⁷⁰

One of the recurring thematics of the *MaddAddam* novels is the question of individual agency and the role of patriarchal discourses in negating individual ethical responses. This

⁷⁰ The importance of the literary to such questions is highlighted by Atwood's decision to include plot summaries at the beginning of *Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*. Framing the novels in such a way, both as part of a larger narrative and as attempts to condense such narratives into easily interpretable and accessible shorthand, draws attention to the historicising tendencies of mankind.

chapter argues that at the core of Atwood's deconstruction of veganism is its relation to a pretence of innocence. I now turn to Atwood's depiction of children and childhood across the trilogy, arguing that veganism breaks free from the models presented by the Crakers and Gardeners when adopted by children. The irony of children's relation to adult projections of innocence is key to the harnessing of this potential, providing an alternative model of utopian longing in the *MaddAddam* novels that resists the ossifying narrative constructions demonstrated by the Crakers and Gardeners. The theoretical vegan child is thus not a "child" in our current cultural conception of the term, nor a steadfast commitment to futurity, but offers momentary glimpses of ways of responding to the world that stand between primitive childhood innocence and adult conceptions of the world based on the development of reason and universal moral principles. Furthermore, I suggest that the children of the trilogy challenge critiques of veganism as an exemption from complicity in over-arching systems, as with the God's Gardeners, by directly addressing the anxieties such complicity generates.

All three of the *MaddAddam* novels contain a narrative of child exploitation and abuse. However, in each case, the exposure of abuses obfuscated by the social order is mediated through its telling. For example, in *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx's past, exposing the ways in which Western capitalist expansion and the Americanisation of the world rides on the back of mass abuse of children in the Third World, is told in fragments as part of Snowman's memories. Similarly, in *Year of the Flood*, Ren's narrative grants us partial access to the experiences of both Bernice, revealed to have been sexually abused by her father, and Amanda, an orphan who trades sex in order to escape the Texas dustbowl. In *MaddAddam*, Zeb's history is related to us through Toby's recantation, focusing on the patriarchal tyranny of his father, violently abusing him and his brother Adam.

In each of these examples, however, children are not presented solely at the mercy of exploitative adult desire. In contrast to the faultless innocence embodied in the Crakers and

performed by the Gardeners, children possess an agency, both sexual and economic, that undermines such myths of innocence. Whilst children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence, adults are presented as vulnerable to the manipulations of children by blindly assuming their innocence and naiveté. Key to Atwood's queering of normative conceptions of childhood is the fact that their knowledge of adult realms is not simply a repressed unconscious that haunts their adult lives and allows them to stagnate as victims, but functions as a means by which they can express agency that resists normative models of development. Negating, as across the span of her literary output, the idea of childhood as an unblemished space of innocence, Atwood suggests its potential for castigatory and prescient knowledge of seemingly adult problems.⁷¹ For example, children are represented as in possession of highly technical knowledge that outstrips those of the adults around them, with the mirrored pairings of Jimmy and Glenn in *Oryx and Crake* and Zeb and Adam in *MaddAddam* hacking the computers of their respective parents. They have access to adult secrets, where Crake, in *Oryx and Crake*, reveals that his father's supposed suicide was orchestrated by the Compounds and Adam, in *MaddAddam*, recalls witnessing his mother being buried in the garden. Furthermore, countering the narratives Jimmy attempts to construct of Oryx's past, both Amanda and Oryx are able to utilise adult desire for their gain: the former trades sex for power and mobility, and the latter for English language lessons and migration to America.

Before escaping from their family home, Adam reveals to Zeb that his mother, Fenella, did not desert him but was murdered by their father. Adam's knowledge is explained by his "clear memories" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 152) of witnessing her body being buried in their garden. Zeb initially acts incredulous, not wanting to believe Fenella is dead, having spent his childhood fantasising, as in the convention of the Freudian family romance, about her as his

⁷¹ As Carol Osborne notes, in relation to Atwood's pre-1995 fiction, her engagement with psychological trauma and childhood memories "works against the simplicity and romanticism within many psychotherapies by showing children as other than innocent, carefree beings" (188).

“real” mother. He suggests Adam may have simply dreamt about witnessing the event because “Kids make stuff up” and that he “must’ve been fucking fetal!” (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 151). Adam insists on the reality behind this memory whilst ironically protesting that “I was only four” when Zeb seeks further details (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 153). This exchange between the brothers engages with Freudian notions of psychoanalysis, where the child mind is seen as able to absorb images, which become repressed and inarticulate until able to be grasped by mental processes that come with adulthood. That Fenella’s body is later found in the rock garden, as specified by Adam, secures the credibility of his memories within the diegesis, emphasising that children throughout the novel, both consciously and unconsciously, possess knowledge of family taboos, secrets, and corruptions. Adam refuses to fix the vision of his four-year-old self to any definitive model of ignorance or knowledge. The incident suggests different ways of perceiving the world that intermingle in the perception of a coherent sense of self, where images stored in the child mind or unconscious are later articulated through the language of the adult world.

The relation between childhood and veganism comes to the fore in Jimmy’s description of the trauma of his earliest memory at a bonfire of diseased cows, pigs and sheep. His anxiety upon witnessing their mass death is compounded by the subsequent anxiety generated by the duck faces printed on his rubber boots, where wading through disinfectant after the bonfire sees him worry “that the poison would get into the eyes of the ducks and hurt them” (Atwood, *Oryx* 17). As I note above, the reproachful look of the burning animals, and Jimmy’s feelings of guilt and responsibility, mirrors the affect of Oryx looking out at him from the porn film and burning into his conscience “like acid” (Atwood, *Oryx* 104). The link made between the acidic quality of Oryx’s gaze and the fear of disinfectant burning the eyes of the duck image draws parallels between Jimmy’s inability to reconcile the boundaries drawn between real and symbolic violence. Jimmy fails to view Oryx as simply an image on a

screen, just as the ducks cannot be reduced to mere pictorial representation, forcing him to confront his symbolic consumption of others.

If the veganism of the Gardeners and the Crakers serves to reduce the singularity of nonhuman animals to an objective realm of inedible, hollow projections of innocence, and veganism to an ossified identity category, then these moments of childhood difficulty for Jimmy, by contrast, suggest a reality that contradicts the master narrative of adulthood and linear, heteronormative development. Jimmy's responses stand in contrast to the boundaries between real and symbolic violence drawn by the adults around him. Just as he is unable to believe that the ducks on his feet "weren't real and had no feelings" (Atwood, *Oryx* 17), he is unable to reconcile his father's assurance that the burning animals are simply "steaks and sausages, only they still had their skins on" (Atwood, *Oryx* 20). Similarly, the porn film featuring Oryx is accessed by using Crake's stepfather's password, implying that "Uncle Pete" has experienced sexual arousal from the images, along with those in receipt of the sexual gratification presented in the film. Jimmy finds himself at variance to these adult male responses, unable to avoid the power of Oryx's gaze that confronts him with the violence of his desires. Childhood is presented as a space in which the corruptions of the adult world can be exposed, intercepted, and manipulated. This makes clear that moments of difficulty or anxiety are not simply naive responses to a world as yet undecipherable. Children are presented in possession of greater intelligence, and often power, in a digital age, than the adults around them.

In Jimmy's moments of anxiety we access a response to individual bodies that moves beyond pictorial or linguistic signification, a response that suggests a mode of perceiving the world outside of the dominant model in which he is living. In contrast to these early experiences, Snowman desires to kill and eat transgenic rabbits and dogs in the post-plague world, suggesting a definitive shift, and normative trajectory, from childhood squeamishness

to carnivorous adult desire.⁷² However, this apparent loss of childhood anxiety is dictated by his change of name, the Abominable Snowman, a figure he envisages as prey to mountain tribes, eaten at special feasts “all the more exciting ... for bordering on cannibalism” (Atwood, *Oryx* 8). Here, the anxiety associated with boundaries of edibility is transformed into a pleasurable excitement premised on an unclear taxonomic status that embraces his corporeal vulnerability. “Snowman” is the adoption of a new identity on the borders of the human, “existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape” (Atwood, *Oryx* 8). Akin to the first appearance of Frankenstein’s monster in the extremities of the Arctic, such a figuration fails to take into account that the Abominable Snowman is a mythological creation composed of ritualised re-tellings, an indigenous myth appropriated and cannibalised by Western explorers, rather than an uncomplicated relation to animality. This draws him back into the realm of the textual rather than providing unmediated access to instinctual appetites. Certainly, that Snowman desires to eat nonhuman animals typically associated with Western pet-keeping traditions —such as rabbits and dogs—highlights the contradictions in contemporaneous justifications for meat-eating and their refusal to fit neatly into binary models of predator and prey.

This duality also fails to fit with the reality of Snowman’s responses to the post-apocalyptic world, for example, in the description of his “sudden, inexplicable surge of tenderness and joy” at the sight of a caterpillar (Atwood, *Oryx* 46). Snowman is situated at “zero hour,” positioning him within a new temporal arrangement, frozen in the present without a past, and an uncertain future (3). Cast out of conventional temporality, the absence of fellow human beings throughout the novel fails to grant a continued temporal logic premised on reproductive futurism. However, in this moment of euphoria we gain access to

⁷² For more on the narrative in which relation to the nonhuman is a childish affect abandoned through maturity see Cole and Stewart *Our Children* and Fox *Deep Vegetarianism*.

the potential of expanding the emotional and affective needs and affiliations realised through alternative modes of response. Watching the caterpillar, he reflects: “There will never be another caterpillar just like this one. There will never be another such moment of time, another such conjunction” (Atwood, *Oryx* 46). Losing the present to the past results in “flashes of irrational happiness” (Atwood, *Oryx* 46), moments, I suggest, of vegan potentiality, envisaged as joy rather than anxiety within an alternative temporal arrangement.

Potentiality, in José Esteban Muñoz’s terms, is not simply the possibility of an event happening in the future, but the existence of that possibility within the present: “a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense” (9). Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia* positions queer as an “ideality” that we have not yet reached, a utopian longing and performative doing *for* the future, that is “essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1). Moments of refusal, breakdown, and emotion, characteristic of vegan negotiations with the world, might equally signal such utopian potentialities, suggestive of the possibility of an alternative world. I suggest that veganism, as practice, enacts potential futures which renegotiate our current exploitative relations to nonhuman animals whilst acknowledging the inevitable disappointment of such visions.

That these moments fail to make any concrete changes to Jimmy’s desires or actions is no disparagement of veganism per se, so much as a reformulation of veganism as a site of potentiality, and the imagining of alternative worlds, rather than as an endpoint at which we can hope to successfully arrive. It suggests a mobile and continual refusal to meet the signifiers of mature, successful adulthood and its compulsory carnivorousness. Whilst it may seem a wilfully optimistic theoretical leap to link vegan lives to a resistance to heterosexual marriage and reproduction, such lives do, as the introduction to this thesis demonstrates, implicitly carry a challenge to a carnivorousness that scholars such as Derrida and Adams have

linked to the construction of the virile male subject of carno-phallogocentrism. If veganism is conceptualised as a refusal to grow *up*, a concomitant refusal of narrative closure suggests that vegan words cannot be transmitted through their faithful reproduction, but might offer a way of reading texts that stand, as David Wood suggests in relation to vegetarian praxis, as “a site of proliferating resistance to [the] reproduction [of carnophallogocentrism]” (33). Rather than the vegetarian words of Adams, the vegan word might be defined here as a way of reading that draws optimism from moments of unrealised possibility that are never fully articulated or transmitted through the narrative: resisting closure, whilst unravelling the Frankensteinian assemblage of ideas that seeks to produce vegan identity as a coherent, stable, and unified subject.

Important in my reading of Jimmy/Snowman is the emergence of alternative modes of perception that reveal moments of vegan potential whilst not resulting in a fixed sense of ethical identity. Similarly, in *Year of the Flood*, despite returning to meat-eating in her early teenage years, Ren describes that “It still makes [her] feel sick” (Atwood 168) to remember the body of the skinned rabbit presented by Zeb as part of the children’s survival training, with the taste akin to eating a “nosebleed” (Atwood 169). Ren’s inescapable nausea is generated by the act of witnessing a recognisable nonhuman animal being transformed into a piece of meat and its relation to her own bodily vulnerability. Furthermore, in *MaddAddam*, the Craker child Blackbeard, as he repeats the rituals established and dictated by Snowman, is unable to overcome his disgust at eating the ritual fish required before reciting the Craker mythology. Despite his faith in Snowman’s teachings that this stage is required to gain access to Crake’s voice, the transition of the fish from religious abstraction to physical being sees Blackbeard describe placing the fish in his mouth before instantly removing it, apologising that “I am sorry for making the noises of a sick person” (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 436).

In each of these examples, the inability to separate the embodied nonhuman animal from its status as meat is emphasised. Moreover, the inarticulate responses of children, expressed through anxiety and nausea, stand at variance to the example set by adults, most often men. Rather than embodying a mode of essential veganism, I argue that witnessing the animal bodies behind the absent referent, for both Jimmy, Ren, and Blackbeard, functions as a witness to the construction of a patriarchal order and a protest against its dictates. The power of the queer child for veganism then is not in its attempts to define what it means to be human, but in its breakdown of a coherent trajectory that relates ethical response to adult maturity and of its insistence that our ideas of innocence are bound to complicity in oppressive systems.

I argue that the innate carnivorousness of the human characters of Atwood's novels, as with Toby's desire for a bacon sandwich, is revealed through the representation of veganism as an artificially constructed nostalgia. However, whilst Atwood critiques veganism as an identity that refuses ethical responses by portending to an idealised innocence, she equally challenges the idea of carnivorousness as an innate response. Firstly, the concept of authentic carnivorousness is undercut by the presentation of childhood squeamishness, addressing veganism as an anxiety generated by a confrontation with adult responses. Secondly, the contingency of human veganism is presented as much a survival response as a confrontation with the reliance on discursive mechanisms to fashion our relation to the world.

In an age in which veganism is on the rise, its spread via the transmission of vegan messages in the literary sphere plays a central part in the formulation of vegan futures. Atwood's novels iterate the trope of the monstrous vegan whilst consciously reflecting back on her literary antecedents. *The Crakers*, aligned with the vegan elements of *Frankenstein*, and *The Gardeners* with *Doctor Moreau*, embed this textuality within ideas of monstrous

vegan children. I argue that by drawing on a vast number of historical vegetarian discourses, Atwood deconstructs their anthropocentric biases and suggests the limitations of a literary veganism written within this tradition. However, “the vegan” remains a source of anxiety in the novels, maintained as a literary trope connected to an uncertainty about the boundaries between the human and nonhuman animal. Veganism can be viewed as a source of anxiety to the novels, as novels, questioning the cannibalistic and carnivorous nature of the act of writing itself.

Atwood’s use of multiple narrative forms to reimagine humanity can be seen a site of effective opposition to dominant discursive frameworks. The inclusion of imaginative possibilities, including sermons, songs, myth, and memoir, suggests the possibility of multiple and fragmented forms working together to produce a diverse narrative of interdependent parts. In this hybrid literary form, analogous to the hybridity of the monstrous vegans that populate this thesis, I suggest we might best identify vegan thinking: utopian glimpses of vegan responses that are necessarily hybrid, impure, and multiple. However, whether the writing of veganism in this way, and deconstruction of prevailing assumptions, is an approach to veganism that engages adequately with the scope of violence enacted against nonhuman animals and the environment, or helps to enact meaningful change, does not appear to be Atwood’s concern. Instead, interrogating a textual veganism is seen to open up a broader range of possibilities for ethical action and reveal the damaging structural commitments that are maintained if we do not continually challenge and imaginatively reinvent our ways of being in the world.

The end of the trilogy thus leaves us with the question of accountability. In depicting an ethics that must acknowledge collusion whilst taking notice of sites at which change and resistance can develop, the trilogy suggests the need to deconstruct existing ethical models

that determine what we eat. Atwood's literary depiction of veganism critiques previous attempts to use it as a mode of discipline acting upon the human body, as herbivorous or carnivorous, employing intertextuality and multiple forms and genres to suggest a contingent model that acknowledges the simultaneous power of language to adapt and bring to view the fluidity of human identity.

By deconstructing various dominant literary models of veganism, acknowledging their status as textual, commodified identities, Atwood's novels invite us to question our complacencies in conceiving of and writing veganism, presenting a form of speculative realism that brings metafictional attention to the nature of texts in constructing our ethical lives. However, my reading for moments of vegan potentiality itself risks a wilful attempt at redemption that has little stock in the texts itself. Children's responses offer a sense of horror, disgust, and abjection in the face of exploitative practices, however they tend to stagnate as affective states, traumatic memories that are distinct from the requirements of survival. In the chapter that follows I provide alternative modes of vegan resistance enacted through the literary transmission of the monstrous vegan trope. Turning away from a focus on anxiety and confrontation, the ways in which both J. M. Coetzee and Alan Hollinghurst engage with the trope of the monstrous vegan gestures towards the possibility of performing monstrous veganism, as an alternative survival response that incorporates elements of joy, pleasure, and play.

Chapter Four

J. M. Coetzee, Alan Hollinghurst, and Monstrous Vegan Performativity

The preceding three chapters chart the iteration and mutation of the monstrous vegan across the work of Mary Shelley, H. G. Wells, and Margaret Atwood. Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy is offered as the culmination of the trope, providing a deconstruction of the textual legacies of veganism. There is, however, little redemption offered by this deconstruction. My reading for moments of "vegan potentiality" attempts to recuperate the novels as part of a vegan reading practice, reliant on a mode of reading that prioritises fleeting moments that cannot be incorporated into the momentum of the end-driven plot. This aligns in many ways with that which Carol J. Adams's sees as vegetarianism's potential to eviscerate the story of meat, aligning narrative, which "by definition, moves forward toward resolution," with the creation of meat, in which "the closure, the final summing up" is associated with "the consumption of the animal" (*Sexual Politics* 77). As such, drawing on moments of potentiality offers an ethical reading practice, even if it appears, like vegetarianism, as "a feminist story that goes nowhere and accepts nothingness" (79). However, this is a limited mode of reading that provides little to no workable position from which to occupy a vegan identity. This chapter offers an alternative and reparative mode of reading, providing a more nuanced range of vegan reading practices and a means by which to productively inhabit a monstrous veganism.

The monstrous vegan is identifiable as a hybrid composition of human and animal parts that does not eat meat. It is the product of male acts of creation and intimately related to acts of literary creation. This chapter argues that the monstrous vegan trope surfaces in the work of J. M. Coetzee and Alan Hollinghurst as a performative identity, or staged ethics. Coetzee's and Hollinghurst's respective engagements with monstrosity offer alternatives to the seemingly inevitable polarity in vegan-oriented scholarship, as I discuss in the

introduction to this thesis, between suspicious paranoia or irresponsible naiveté. The literary staging of veganism as performance enables a reclamation of joy, pleasure, and optimism, affective states often abandoned in order to bear witness to violence against nonhuman animals. In addition, performative enactments of a monstrous vegan identity provide an important refusal of moral purity or the claim of “the beautiful soul” by acknowledging self-interest and an entanglement in the violence of representational strategies.

Coetzee and Hollinghurst are two contemporary authors rarely, if ever, studied in tandem. Positing both as writing within an extant vegan canon, I expand, in the following readings, the concept of the monstrous beyond its confines in Gothic and science fiction traditions. The use of Coetzee within animal studies criticism and animal philosophy has become somewhat of a hackneyed critical gesture. The vegan theoretical possibilities offered in Hollinghurst’s novels, by contrast, have yet to be explored in literary criticism. My illumination of the significance of the monstrous vegan trope that lies dormant within such work establishes alternative modes of reading for veganism and contributes new insights into Coetzee and Hollinghurst scholarship.

Following Judith Butler’s conception of gender performativity in her seminal *Gender Trouble* (1990), I suggest vegan performativity as a mode of species trouble that challenges the supposed naturalness of omnivorous appetite “not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep” not only gender, but the concept of humanity itself, “in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity” (*Gender* 44). My reading of Coetzee establishes the performative dimensions of veganism and its subversive potentiality. In Hollinghurst, I argue that the performance of a hyperbolic vegan identity is productively inhabited as camp spectacle. Alimentary and sexual desires are destabilised through such camping, marking human identity as burlesque, and offering the

monstrous vegan as a viable position from which to enact utopian alternatives to normative values.

This chapter begins by addressing the limits of Josephine Donovan's "aesthetics of care," as an exemplar of the focus within vegan-centred scholarship on the necessity of bearing witness to violence. The chapter is then split into two parts. The first looks at Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello texts (1999-2005) and suggests that his staging of ethical identity provides a reparative counter to Donovan's argument, as a means of safeguarding oneself against traumatic knowledge. The second turns to Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) and *The Sparsholt Affair* (2017), explicating the ways in which the performance of monstrosity utilises that which I define as "vegan camp."

An Aesthetics of Care

As I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, Donovan's 2016 *The Aesthetics of Care* theorises the relationship between aesthetics and ethical veganism. Formulating a theory of art that incorporates the moral commitments of the latter, Donovan argues of the necessity for an "attentive love directed toward animals as moral beings—as subjects—in literature and art" (10). She is critical of representational strategies that fail to attend to nonhuman animals, "requir[ing] the sacrifice of the animal as an independent being to human aesthetic interests" (Donovan 48). Ethical and aesthetic judgements, Donovan argues, should orient towards a relation of that which philosopher Martin Buber terms "I-Thou," as opposed to "I-It," with the former recognising the animal as an ethical subject in its own right. An aesthetics of care, as Donovan defines it, "means *being with* the subjects, seeing through their eyes, feeling through their bodies" and "not standing apart as an outside observer but integrated into the same world as the 'observed'" (Donovan 92-93, emphasis in original). For Donovan, this provides the means by which to extricate the subject from the imaginative frameworks of

anthropocentric culture, promising an awakening to the value of nonhuman animals as moral beings. This aligns with a popular trope in contemporary vegetarian and vegan thought in which veganism is assumed to follow from the revelation of violence. In this formulation, veganism is an awakening to, and recovery of, hidden knowledge. Meat-eating is posited, by contrast, as an acquiescence to a speciesist culture that is reliant on the concealment and obfuscation of reality in order to sustain itself.⁷³

Aesthetics of Care builds on Adams's work in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, with Adams's conception of the "absent referent" providing a template for understanding the ways in which animal lives are literally, conceptually, and metaphorically repudiated. For Donovan, the objectification of nonhuman animals can be reversed, and their embodied subjectivity made present, through an attentive love that facilitates a suspension of the imaginative constructs responsible for their absence. This results in the provision of dignity to human and nonhuman animal lives, "offering a utopian glimpse of a nondominative world" (Donovan 93). As such, Donovan's recovery of the absent referent animal, through the proposition of an aesthetics of care, dismisses the metaphorical use of animals altogether, since "in their transposition of an ethical subject into an aesthetic object, [metaphors] require the sacrifice of the animal as an independent being to human aesthetic interests" (48). This polemic against the presence of animals in figurative language leaves little scope for a nuanced theorisation of the sacrificial nature of representational strategies tout court. The latter is a moral dilemma explored throughout the work of Coetzee and explains, in part, Donovan's emphatic critique

⁷³ Restrictive "ag-gag" laws in the United States over the past few decades forbid activists from recording or documenting what happens in a slaughterhouse. This is justified as a protection from the economic damage that assumed to follow such footage and therefore provides an example of the ways in which the logic of concealment is also deeply embedded within the meat industry itself. As Adams comments, the host of libel trials, laws, and legal suits across the US in the 1990s "illustrated a pattern of seeing information as so dangerous that it must be contained" (*Burger* 77).

of his “very bleak vision” of the future (182).⁷⁴

Without a secure position from which to stake a claim about human relations to ethics and appetite, Donovan draws on Buber’s religious and spiritual philosophy to promote “the unknowable” as an openness to the other that manifests as a vegan relationality. Buber situates the *I-Thou* relation as an inborn facet of childhood, part of primal human nature, before consciousness of the self and entry into language. He establishes that “In the beginning is relation—as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mould for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, the *inborn Thou*” (Buber 19). A child reaching out for its Teddy-bear is described as expressing “the instinct to make everything into *Thou*, to give relation to the universe, the instinct which completes out of its own richness the living effective action when a mere copy or symbol of it is given in what is over against him” (Buber 19). By privileging the spiritual wholeness of childhood, Buber promotes the Child as a pre-discursive site of faultless innocence. This mirrors dominant trends in animal studies criticism regarding childhood, typified by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin’s assertion that children possess an inherent ability to view animals as “moral equivalents of themselves” (194). However, as scholars such as Lee Edelman and James Kincaid note, such idealisations often function as mere projections of adult anxieties. In addition, positing spiritualism as a means of return to an inherent openness to otherness, Buber’s *I-Thou* model risks a reductive essentialism. Moving away from a teleological narrative trajectory in which veganism is an inherent sensibility lost through its encounter with the expectations of adulthood,⁷⁵ this chapter turns to veganism's

⁷⁴ Coetzee’s exploration of the difficulties of representing otherness has been noted by many scholars. See, for example, Derek Attridge *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, Cora Diamond “The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy,” and Laura Wright *Writing out of all the Camps*. Donovan suggests that Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) abnegates “the possibility of redemptive ‘wit(h)nessing’” (182), in which being an attentive witness to violence allows for a being *with* the animal other.

⁷⁵ This is not to say that such a narrative doesn't carry persuasive traction, as Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart’s work in *Our Children* demonstrates.

precarious status as a subject position that fails to secure a definitive origin narrative through which to understand our ethical commitments.

My principle critique of Donovan's argument concerns its alignment with that which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines as paranoid criticism. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Sedgwick argues that "In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to theorize out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious, or complaisant" (126, emphasis in original). The equivalent paranoid revelation of violence within animal studies is typified by Adams's drive to recover the absent referent animal from practices of exploitation that render them invisible. Veganism is thus posited as a compulsion towards making suffering visible. For Donovan, anything less than exposure and recovery is an acquiescence to violence. However, as Sedgwick highlights, in opposition to paranoia's negation of reparative motives of pleasure and amelioration, "To be other than paranoid ... , to practice other than paranoid forms of knowing does *not*, in itself, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression" (127-128). When it comes to the aesthetic experiences of ethical vegans, Donovan's assertion of the importance of "seeing through [animal] eyes" and "feeling through [animal] bodies," risks a relentless and often intolerable confrontation with horror, despair, and pain at the scale and extent of the human brutality inflicted upon nonhuman victims. Sedgwick argues that whilst paranoid reading can be useful and politically necessary, it is only one way "among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge" ("Paranoid Reading" 130). She critiques the ways in which paranoid reading practices place too much faith in exposure, as if making visible were akin to solving. Furthermore, she challenges the notion that such violence is always invisible, with the implicit paranoia of such assumptions relying on the seemingly "infinite reservoir of naiveté" associated with those to whom violence is revealed (Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading" 141).

The rise of “locavore” movements and popularity of “raise your own meat” campaigns over the past decade pose a direct challenge to presumptions of such infinite naiveté within carnivorous culture. As Erica Fudge notes, the prevalent celebration in contemporary meat advertising of the relationship between meat and the animals from which it originates undercuts the structuring role of the absent referent. Fudge defines the current cultural moment as in thrall to a “new anthropocentrism,” “a defence against th[e] growing move towards vegetarianism, the fact that meat-eating is the eating of an animal has to be advertised, not lionized” (Fudge, *Animal* 44).

In a later article, Fudge suggests that the act of giving up meat, and identifying as vegetarian, resists the multiple meanings of meat that are seen to transcend its materiality. She argues that if “We legitimate the myth of who we are when we consume animal flesh” (Fudge, “Being a Vegetarian” 151), then vegetarianism necessarily destabilises what it means to be human: “Without meat-eating there is a possibility that we would no longer be human as we currently understand the term” (Fudge, “Being a Vegetarian” 161). By disturbing the categorical differences that support human dominion and forcing an acknowledgement of our status as meat, “If we were all vegetarians that would bring with it a radically new sense of who it is that we imagine ourselves to be” (Fudge, “Being a Vegetarian” 162). For Fudge, refusing meat is a gesture that resists the centrality of animal bodies to the representation, legitimation, and authentication of human dominion (“Being a Vegetarian”). Tacit in Fudge’s writing is the significance of gestural refusals and vegetarianism’s necessarily performative interpellation. If vegetarian resistance to anthropocentrism is problematised by the fact that “even as the myth makes natural what is cultural, it makes opposition invisible, even to the opposers” (Fudge, “Being a Vegetarian” 151), we can infer the importance, for Fudge, of making vegetarian opposition itself visible. The terms of Adams’s argument are shifted to emphasise the perlocutionary effect of vegetarian refusals and the performative force of

vegetarian non-ingestion, defamiliarising the cultural myths that structure our relationship with nonhuman animals. That which is made absent by culture is not simply the nonhuman animal, but also the attempts made by individuals to resist the dominant power structures that support the exploitation of the former.

This chapter dwells on what it means to embrace the performative as a possible form for such resistance and provides an alternative mode for understanding and inhabiting vegan identity that challenges Donovan's call for attentive-love. Whilst my readings of the De Lacey cow in *Frankenstein* in chapter one and the caterpillar encountered by Snowman in *Oryx and Crake* in chapter three, offer a sustained focus on the nonhuman animal presences often ignored in scholarly criticism, my primary focus on hybrid monsters prioritises the identity politics of the human vegan. This risks an effacement of the lived reality of the nonhuman animals undergirding contemporary ethical vegan praxis. The nonhuman animals whose oppression we are witnessing are not the subjects of aesthetic or political discourse. We can only ever speak for and on behalf of animals. Therefore, rather than striving towards Donovan's notion of "being with," I argue that we might utilise our detachment from the animal to critically evaluate our relations. This involves pleasure and enjoyment derived from satirising human exceptionalism as much as an acknowledgement of our implication within its structures. This chapter suggests the productive potential of a vegan identity that embraces parody and performativity: a mode of asserting agency, and fun, in the face of relentless violence. Examining the ways in which a monstrous veganism is performed in the writing of both Coetzee and Hollinghurst, I stake out the possible survival strategies available to individual vegans and offer a more nuanced and realistic theorisation of vegan aesthetics.

J. M. Coetzee and Monstrous Vegan Knowledge

The Lives of Animals (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), and *Slow Man* (2005), comprise a

series of novels by Coetzee that, alongside a number of short stories and articles, can be loosely categorised as his Elizabeth Costello texts. In each, the fictional Elizabeth Costello, an elderly Australian author, and vegetarian, appears with an implicit but often ambiguous continuity to her previous incarnations.⁷⁶ The three main Costello novels draw out the key points of analysis over the previous three chapters, providing a useful coda for summarising the significance of the monstrous vegan. I focus in particular on Costello's appearance in *Elizabeth Costello*, as the collation of a series of Costello texts delivered and published by Coetzee across a range of contexts. Originally delivered as part of Coetzee's Tanner lectures at the University of Princeton, the earlier *Lives of Animals* has been established a foundational text in contemporary animal studies. It appears in *Elizabeth Costello*, a compilation of "Eight Lessons," as Lesson 3 and Lesson 4, "The Philosophers and the Animals" and "The Poets and the Animals." Invited to lecture at the fictional Appleton College, in a metafictional confusion of speaker, author, and protagonist, Costello speaks, via Coetzee, on the subject of animal rights, delivering a provocative lecture and seminar discussion on the nature of our embodied relation to the nonhuman and the limits of literary representation.

Sherryl Vint's work on animal alterity employs the arguments of Elizabeth Costello, as they appear in *Lives of Animals*, as a means to support and justify the significance of the science fiction genre. Vint posits science fiction as having the power "more than any other literature" to "defy [the human-animal] separation because its generic premises enable us to imagine the animal quite literally looking at and addressing us from a non-anthropocentric perspective" (6). She argues that Costello supports the idea that "only the worldbuilding of fiction, something at which sf excels, is adequate for conveying the fullness of life before it

⁷⁶ An entertaining aside here is that Adams was in fact accused, in a 1990 review of *The Sexual Politics*, as "a gigantic Nabokovian practical joke, written by some male academic, no doubt an emigré from eastern Europe, whose misogyny is so enormous that it can find adequate expression only by posing as a madwoman trying to establish common cause between the two separate causes of radical feminism and evangelical vegetarianism" (Waugh).

has been contained within the reductive categories we used as shorthand to constrain the complexity of the world into units that can be grasped by rational thought” (Vint 6-7). This is a surprising critical move, despite Costello’s regular citation across literary animal studies, because Coetzee’s metafictional reflection on the ability of literature to think its way into the being of others is resolutely not science fiction but a modernist play on the academic novel and realist genre.⁷⁷ Whilst Costello addresses issues of animal rights, cognition, and embodiment, the various texts in which she finds herself—across Coetzee’s essays, novels, and articles—confront the impossibility of adequately conveying the experience of individual animal being beyond language.

Costello, like the monstrous vegans explored thus far, addresses the question of the nonhuman animal by drawing attention to her discursive construction through Coetzee and the consequent difficulty of understanding her relation to her body and desires. The metafictional nature of the novel speaks to the difficulties of literary representation, in opposition to Vint’s valorisation of literature’s ability to convey “the fullness of life” before discourse. Vint places faith in science fiction’s “aspiration that humans might interact with an intelligence other than our own and be transformed by it” (226). However, as Barbara Smuts points out in her contribution to the four essays, or “Reflections,” composing the epilogue of *Lives of Animals*, Costello’s transformation is not the result of a confrontation with any real animals: “in a story that is, ostensibly, about our relations with members of other species, none of the characters ever mentions a personal encounter with an animal” (Coetzee, *Lives* 107). Instead, akin to the experience of Frankenstein’s monster, Costello’s despair stems from an acknowledgement of the cruelty of human beings.

I argue that Coetzee’s characterisation of Costello as emotionally tortured reveals the

⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of the modernist dimensions of Coetzee’s work see Stephen Mulhall *The Wounded Animal*.

psychic and bodily suffering consequent to the modes of reading proposed by scholars such as Donovan and Adams. For example, Costello foregrounds the disorientating experience of confronting suffering when, in a much discussed scene, she breaks down in her son's arms:

I no longer know where I am. I seem to move around perfectly easily among people, to have perfectly normal relations with them. Is it possible, I ask myself, that all of them are participants in a crime of stupefying proportions? Am I fantasizing it all? I must be mad! (Coetzee, *Costello* 114).

Knowledge of the suffering of nonhuman animals becomes a contaminating form of knowing throughout *Elizabeth Costello*. Costello's choice to excise a description of animal suffering from her lecture—"I will pay you the honour of skipping a recital of the horrors of their lives and deaths" (Coetzee, *Costello* 63)—forms a direct analogy to Coetzee's decision to skip such a recital within the novel itself. Consequently, confrontation with the question of the animal requires a form of self-preservation that reflects on how we confront *knowledge* of animal suffering rather than the suffering of the animal itself. As Cora Diamond writes, in her analysis of the limits of human knowledge as demonstrated in *Lives of Animals*, literature and poetry are forms through which philosophy can grapple with the psychic and bodily trauma associated with knowledge of violence without deflecting from reality. Diamond posits Costello's recognition of a shared bodily vulnerability between herself and animals as a wounding acknowledgement, where "The wound marks [Costello] and isolates her" ("Difficulty" 3). She uses "woundedness" as a synonym for "hauntedness" or "a terrible rawness of nerves" and makes clear that "What wounds [Costello], what haunts her mind, is what we do to animals" (Diamond, "Difficulty" 4). The term "wound" here signifies a form of pain, that is both physical and mental, and a mark or inscription that cannot be erased. For Diamond, Costello experiences a "difficulty of reality": a philosophic experience which provides "a sense of being shouldered out from our ways of thinking and speaking in a torment of reality" ("Difficulty" 20).

The problem of how to adequately deal with knowledge that wounds is explored throughout *Elizabeth Costello*. For example, in “Lesson 5: The Humanities in Africa,” Costello describes herself as “too old and weak” to withstand the sight of dying children in Zululand and suspects that her sister Blanche might have “tucked the worst cases away out of sight” (Coetzee, *Costello* 134). Similarly, in a 2007 talk for Australian animal rights charity Voiceless, Coetzee critiques the ways in which people “arrange their lives in such a way that they need be reminded of farms and abattoirs as little as possible,” in order to avoid the sense of feeling “a little sickened, a little queasy” when they think of what happens at such institutions (Weaving). Furthermore, in his essay “Remembering Texas,” Coetzee recounts undertaking graduate studies in Austin during the Vietnam war. When a friend asks why he stays in the United States if he dislikes the war so much, he responds: “But he misread me. Complicity was not the problem—complicity was far too advanced a notion for the time being. The problem was with knowing what was being done. It was not obvious where one went to escape knowledge” (Coetzee, “Texas” 51). The verb choice “misread” posits the young autobiographical Coetzee as text, open to discursive construction and interpretation. Confronting traumatic knowledge is distinguished from acknowledging implication within its structures. Rather than geographically distancing himself from that which he abhors, Coetzee suggests wounding knowledge as inescapable, and, in many ways, paralysing.

The question of how to articulate and approach traumatic histories is raised again in “Lesson 6: The Problem of Evil” which focuses on the nature and value of literary representations of violence. The lesson centres around Costello’s struggle to articulate her opposition to Paul West’s *The Very Rich Hours of Count Von Stauffenberg* (1980), a novel that imaginatively constructs the brutal execution of German rebels under Hitler. Costello’s vehement resistance to the representation of evil sees her link the meaning of obscenity to that which must not be performed: “To save our humanity, certain things that we may want to see

(*may want to see because we are human!*) must remain off-stage” (Coetzee, *Costello* 169).

Dilemmas over the ethics of representing violence are linked to carnivorous culture here, with Costello suggesting that knowledge of violence should remain hidden “like what goes on in the slaughterhouses of the world, if one wishes to save one’s sanity” (Coetzee, *Costello* 159).

In addition, the formulation “off-stage” highlights the performative dimension of exposing violence and establishes the all-knowing humanitarian subject who therefore takes possession and control over the inarticulable suffering of others. Bringing a recital of violence *on-stage* risks presenting it as a spectacle to be performed for, and consumed by, the viewer or reader. However, as I explore below, whilst Costello’s vegetarianism fails to provide an escape from the wounding acknowledgement of animal suffering, the performance of a monstrous vegan identity does provide a temporary antidote to its haunting affect.

Costello iterates the monstrous vegan trope in relation to the four key traits observed across this dissertation.⁷⁸ In the first instance, she does not eat animals. Her vegetarianism generates often inexplicable anxieties in those who encounter her and is one of the principle concerns of Lesson 3 and Lesson 4: provoking the ire of her daughter-in-law Norma, keeping her physically and emotionally distant from her grandchildren, and the subject, in part, of her lecture at Appleton College, initiating debate during the subsequent university dinner. Whilst the herbivorism of Frankenstein’s creature is a biological disposition that alludes to a prelapsarian Golden Age of mankind, and for Doctor Moreau’s “Beast People” vegetarianism is a discursive law used to repress and contain seemingly “natural” appetites, Costello explains her ethics in relation to more ambiguous notions of salvation. For example, she states

⁷⁸ Scholars such as Philip Armstrong have previously noted Coetzee’s engagement with *Frankenstein*. For example, he posits the animal shelter in *Disgrace*, along with the Compounds of *Oryx and Crake*, as Frankensteinian workshops, “created by and for the purpose of experimentation with the organic world” (Armstrong 181). Furthermore, he relates David Lurie’s “abstractionism” to that of Victor Frankenstein, whilst in *Elizabeth Costello*, “Costello’s feeling for the Dulgannon frogs recalls the Romantic theory of organic sympathy and the Creature in whom Mary Shelley embodies it” (Armstrong 222).

that she has “never been much interested in proscriptions, dietary or otherwise” (Coetzee, *Costello* 82) and when asked if her vegetarianism comes out of moral conviction, responds that “It comes out of a desire to save my soul” (Coetzee, *Costello* 89). In response to the respect conferred on her by the University President, she asserts “I’m wearing leather shoes ... I’m carrying a leather purse. I wouldn’t have overmuch respect if I were you” (Coetzee, *Costello* 89).

Secondly, like her monstrous predecessors, Costello is a hybrid assemblage of human and nonhuman animal parts. In “Lesson 1: Realism” she is repeatedly described, through the narrative focalisation of her son John, in relation to her ambiguous taxonomic status: “He thinks of her as a seal” (Coetzee, *Costello* 3); “What creature is she, really? Not a seal: not amiable enough for that. But not a shark either. A cat. One of those large cats that pause as they eviscerate their victim” (Coetzee, *Costello* 5); “the dying whale” (Coetzee, *Costello* 6); “which is she, the fish or the fowl?” (Coetzee, *Costello* 10); “ape or woman” (Coetzee, *Costello* 19); “my mother has ... been a dog” (Coetzee, *Costello* 22). As well as her evocation of multiple species, her gender identity subverts traditional binary categorisations. For example, John describes that “my mother has been a man,” in reference to the characters represented in her novels, whilst the discussion of whether we need to reclaim “women whom we think of as having been given a voice by male writers” (Coetzee, *Costello* 14) reflects on Coetzee’s position as a male author writing as an elderly female subject.

Much like the Gothic doppelgängers that permeate the monstrous vegan narratives established thus far, Coetzee’s performance of *Lives of Animals* as part of his Tanner lectures encourages a conflation of himself and Costello. However, this alignment is complicated by the inclusion of his forename John for Costello’s son, suggestive of multiple alter egos, begettings, and a confusion of readerly expectations to impose clear meaning and draw out the “true” views of the author. Metaphorically established as a hybrid of human and nonhuman

animal, whether seal, cat, or dying whale, Costello confuses the divisions between man and woman, and the real and the fictional, questioning the ability of the other to be understood other than textually.

Thirdly, the metafictional form of *Elizabeth Costello* draws attention to her status as a literary text conceived by Coetzee, associating Elizabeth with the results of male, non-heterosexual reproduction. Considering his mother's status as a famous novelist, "It unsettles and dizzies [John] to think that the same being that engendered *Eccles Street* [Costello's most famous novel] engendered him" (Coetzee, *Costello* 11). This dual sense of "engendering" distinguishes between the body (as female, reproductive body) and mind (as creative imagination). That "engendering" refers both to creative and biological engendering encourages an equation between the two, emphasising the entanglement of the two modes of production: the creation of others through our own perceptions and significations as much as through their corporeal reality. Coetzee's close attention to linguistic effects should also be borne in mind when we consider the pun of "engendering" and "gendering," in a chapter that explicitly addresses the challenge of representing a gender different to one's own. What it means to be a gendered self takes the French "en," as "in," to be *in* a gender as to inhabit it, as a shell, rather than an essential core. The choice of the word "engender" is further significant because, as listed in the *OED*, it can refer to a female parent conceiving, bearing or giving birth; the production that gives rise to feeling; or, "Of a male parent: to beget (a child or offspring); to father; to sire." This paternalistic derivation is significant given Costello's status as the offspring of Coetzee as male author.

Finally, Costello draws attention to the nature of the literary in constructing our ethical lives. Costello might be read as a device through which Coetzee is able to distance himself from, or fail to take responsibility for, a radical animal rights position. Such a critique is encouraged by his response to an interviewer, published in Swedish newspaper *Djurens Rätt*

(Animal Rights), when asked about his own vegetarianism: “Yes, I am a vegetarian. I find the thought of stuffing fragments of corpses down my throat quite repulsive, and I am amazed that so many people do it every day” (Satya). This mirrors Costello’s response when asked about her vegetarianism, encouraging the conflation of Coetzee and his fictional creation: “You ask me why I refuse to eat flesh. I, for my part, am astonished that you can put in your mouth the corpse of a dead animal, astonished that you do not find it nasty to chew hacked flesh and swallow the juice of death wounds” (Coetzee, *Costello* 83).

However, rather than a device through which to simply and uncritically distance himself from an explicitly pro-animal position, I argue that the future iterability of Costello’s words is coded into the text of the novel itself. Costello’s words, encouraging a visceral response in her audience through her evocation of “hacked flesh” and “the juice of death wounds” (Coetzee, *Costello* 83), is designated by John and Norma as her “Plutarch response,” a reference to Greek philosopher Plutarch’s famous reproach against meat-eating:

What [John] dreads is that ... someone will come up with what he calls The Question - ‘What led you, Mrs Costello, to become a vegetarian?’ - and that she will then get on her high horse and produce what he and Norma call the Plutarch Response ...

The response in question comes from Plutarch’s moral essays. His mother has it by heart; he can reproduce it only imperfectly. ‘You ask me why I refuse to eat flesh. I, for my part, am astonished that you can put in your mouth the corpse of a dead animal, astonished that you do not find it nasty to chew hacked flesh and swallow the juices of death wounds’ (Coetzee, *Costello* 83).

The “Plutarch response” is here located in reference to its origins in Plutarch’s moral essays before being recited by Costello.⁷⁹ Costello’s recitation, however, is not provided within the text itself. We are offered only its reproduction, produced “imperfectly” by John. Coetzee’s

⁷⁹ Plutarch questions: “Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstaining from flesh? For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of soul or mind the first man who did so, touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, he who set forth tables of dead, stale bodies and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. How could his eyes endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limb? How could his nose endure the stench? How was it that the pollution did not turn away his taste, which made contact with the sores of others and sucked juices and serums from mortal wounds?” (Plutarch 541).

own recitation of the Plutarch response in *Djurens Rätt* draws further attention to the imperfect transmission of vegetarian words. Like the monstrous vegans before her, Costello confuses the categorical divisions that seek to stabilise the self, emphasising the discursive construction of both her own, and Coetzee's, ethical commitments.

That the self is always already a fiction, the performance of a fictional self, is emphasised in "Lesson 8: At the Gate." Here, a distinction is made between belief, as the performance of ethical identity, and the corporeal body: "That at least she does not have to invent: this dumb, faithful body that has accompanied her every step of the way, this gentle, lumbering monster that has been given her to look after" (Coetzee, *Costello* 210). Whilst the body is positioned as that which exists beyond and before imagination, that which "she does not have to invent," the conception of Costello's body as a "gentle, lumbering monster" relates back to Shelley's vegetarian creature. This allusion to *Frankenstein* serves to emphasise the corporeal body's subjection to discursive construction. The repetition of textual origins in *Costello* draws attention to the constructed nature of ethical limits, as neither fixed nor determinable, and the difficulty of relating to both human and nonhuman animal others beyond existing cultural formations.

Throughout *Elizabeth Costello*, sentiments and emotions typically characterised as natural or innate are repeatedly posited as performative. For example, John's sense of duty to his mother is described as follows: "He stands by her because he is her son, her loving son" (Coetzee, *Costello* 3). The repetition of his status as Costello's son to include the qualifier "loving," sees the adjective attach itself unwittingly to the referent of son and functions to reward his obligations towards his mother. Love appears both obligatory and inescapable, used to validate and replicate a sense of filial duty. As a social convention, enacting loving gestures turns John into "her trainer," positioning Costello as "an old, tired circus seal" (Coetzee, *Costello* 3). Here filial duties appear as self-constituting gestures,

creating the idea of the “loving son,” as much as the idea of the “mother” who generates this love. Not insignificantly, both are also metaphorically bound to the exploitative relations maintained between human and nonhuman animals.

Numerous critics have noted the importance of performance in Coetzee’s texts, perhaps inescapable given Coetzee’s literal performance of the text of *Lives of Animals* at Princeton. For example, Laura Wright reads Coetzee’s narratives as “performative examinations of the nature of imagined identification with the other” (*Writing* 12), in which “the text performs various positions rather than . . . one controlling subjectivity and the audience is alternately invited to participate in the performance” (*Writing* 11). For Wright, Coetzee’s use of performance is mimetic rather than a usurpation of the voice of the other. Costello’s lectures, in *Lives of Animals*, show that “to embody is to perform, and the acknowledgement of the mimicry inherent in the performance of another gender is also an acknowledgement of the limitations of the sympathetic imagination” (Wright, *Writing* 102). As such, the enactment of the sympathetic imagination is always already a parody at best. Drawing on Butler’s work on gender performativity, I argue that we might define Costello as enacting a doubly mediated performance, with Coetzee parodying a gendered identity category already exposed as parodic. This double layering further destabilises any stable referent for identity or selfhood. However, this does not pose an ethical dead end for Wright. Instead, she argues that “While one can never *be* the other, Coetzee’s performance indicates, on an ethical level, one must continue to attempt to imagine the subjectivity of that which one is not” (Wright, *Writing* 119), with the potential for ethical action existing in spite of the limits of the sympathetic imagination. Such performances allow for a mode of sympathetic engagement that does not negate the systems of power and submission inherent to the adoption of social categories of identity.

Butler’s *Gender Trouble* offers the perhaps best-known account of performativity as it

relates to the naturalisation of a gendered self. Gender performativity is, for Butler, not a singular act, but “a repetition and a ritual” (*Gender* xv). Such repetition, she suggests, is both necessary and inevitable, “bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities” (Butler, *Gender* 42), where “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler, *Gender* 44). The inevitable situation of all within discourse, and the impossibility of accessing any original body before discourse, leads Butler to suggest that making “gender trouble,” destabilising the supposed naturalness of gender identity, is enacted “not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity” (*Gender* 44). Gender, as a “parodic repetition of ‘the original’” thus “reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original” (Butler, *Gender* 41).

Adams’s work in *The Sexual Politics* draws attention to the relationship between gender performativity and meat consumption. She argues that “The male prerogative to eat meat is an external, observable activity implicitly reflecting a recurring fact: meat is a symbol of male dominance” (Adams, *Sexual Politics* 56). Adams’s statement that “In many ways, gender inequality is built into the species inequality that meat eating proclaims, because for most cultures obtaining meat was *performed* by men” (58, my emphasis), draws attention to the performativity of meat-eating in order to destabilise the supposedly natural or essential nature of a hunter-gatherer culture. With this in mind, I argue that as well as overtly playing with gender performativity, by drawing metafictional attention to Coetzee’s role as male author, Costello parodies the idea of “original” carnivorous appetite through the appropriation of vegan stereotypes and represents an attempt to imaginatively identify as vegan.

This is observable via John and Norma's derogation of Costello's "Plutarch response" as "a real conversation-stopper" (Coetzee, *Costello* 83). Here, Costello's vegetarianism manifests as a speech act and figures her as a socially disruptive presence amongst omnivores. That the Plutarch response, as originally conceived, is a description of visceral disgust is also significant. At the university dinner following her lecture, fish is served. This conflicts with the implication earlier in the text, in regard to her grandchildren, that Costello will refuse to have meat served at the same table as her. Here, visceral disgust is posited as contingent both on species and social situation. Costello's refusal to eat at the same table as her grandchildren can thus be read as a staged rendition of repulsion.

However, the novel's implicit references to Costello's ethical inconsistencies also encourage a reflection on the wilful ignorance of non-vegans. Norma's ethical obtuseness, for example, is overt in her exasperation that her children are upset by eating meat, associating it with the plight of veal calves: "I'm tired of having them pick at their food and ask 'Mom, is this veal?' when it's chicken or tuna fish" (Coetzee, *Costello* 114), implying that chicken or fish are unworthy of their moral consideration. Furthermore, the contingency of a visceral disgust response is explored in relation to meat-eating cultures when Norma refuses to accept Costello's animal rights position as sincere, arguing that "It is because she has so little insight into her motives that she seems sincere" (Coetzee, *Costello* 113). John responds: "I don't see any difference ... between her revulsion from eating meat and my own revulsion from eating snails or locusts. I have no insight into my motives and I couldn't care less. I just find it disgusting" (Coetzee, *Costello* 113). John's disgust at snails or locusts, gastropods and insects widely eaten beyond his immediate social context, draws attention to the cultural determination of disgust. Rather than a universal bodily response, disgust, as a means of regulating both vegetarianism and carnivorous desire, appears primarily as a product of cultural scripting.

Costello's vegetarianism fulfils the trope defined as the "disappearing vegan" by Benjamin Westwood and outlined by Wright in relation to the proliferation of cases of "death-by-veganism" reported in the mainstream press (*Vegan Studies* 100).⁸⁰ This construction sees the refusal to partake in animal sacrifice as an inevitable retreat from the social. In *Slow Man*, for example, Costello insists that she eats little and consequently deteriorates over the course of the novel: "she has lost weight, the flesh on her arms hangs, her face is pallid, her nose peaked" (Coetzee 160). Her later "mystifying" lecturing leads the third person focalisation to ask "Is she light-headed from fasting?" (Coetzee, *Slow* 182). She is also described as "starved for love" (Coetzee, *Slow* 237), ambiguously referencing both her isolation from her children and her physical starvation as the consequence of her love for other beings. Furthermore, in Lesson 5 of *Elizabeth Costello*, Costello retracts her initial explanation that her fainting fit had been caused by the realisation of "Too many continents ... Too many burdens" to suggest instead that "I haven't been eating properly ... That must be the explanation" (Coetzee 143). The emotional trauma caused by suffering is deflected onto questions of nutritional deficiency.

Whilst, as I note above, Costello refuses to detail the horrors of the slaughterhouse in her academic lecture, the narrative implies no such reticence when it comes to transmitting knowledge to her grandchildren. Norma accuses Costello of undermining her "with her stories to the children about the poor veal calves and what the bad men do to them ... It's nothing but a power game" (Coetzee, *Costello* 113-114). "The children" appear only at the peripheries of the novel. They eat at a separate table to Costello during dinner, with Norma's insisting on having them sit separately to eat chicken, rather than serve a vegetarian meal. As well as exposing Norma's assertion of control, this division also stages a protest, where, akin to the

⁸⁰ See, for two exemplary instances of the "disappearing vegan," see Margaret Atwood *The Edible Woman* (1969) and Han Kang *The Vegetarian* (2007/2015).

Jewish academic Abraham Stern's refusal to "break bread" with Costello, to share a table is seen to signal tacit acceptance. The children's exclusion from vegetarian food here signals the performance of Norma's parental control as much as it seeks to assert the essential nature of meat to their diets and a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of Costello's vegetarianism.

Costello fails to conform to John's desire that her vegetarianism remain a private affair, protesting that "If she wants to open her heart to animals, why can't she stay home and open it to her cats?" (Coetzee, *Costello* 83). Instead, her vegetarianism is made public repeatedly, leading to a series of uncomfortable exchanges. This is most overt at her lecture at Appleton college and the subsequent dinner, at which her diet is extensively discussed. In distinction to Norma's family table, as part of the private sphere of the home, this is a public dinner hosted by a public institution. Furthermore, the most candid expression of Costello's personal response to animal suffering, which, as I quote above, sees her break down in her son's arms, takes place on a public roadway.⁸¹

Robert McKay argues that vegetarianism appears, in *Lives of Animals*, "as a performative animal ethics that emerges as part of a network of many interrelated discursive contexts" (71). Costello's vegetarianism is presented as "utterly inextricable ... from the discursive contexts through which it is voiced in the text" (McKay 76), with the novel's morality an effect of the discourses it contains: "Elizabeth's ethical vegetarianism is just one of these; the moral lecture, seminar analysis, and argumentative debate she is asked by the college to offer are others" (McKay 80). Furthermore, McKay notes that whilst Costello avoids being prescriptive or authoritarian, Norma experiences Costello's pro-animal position as a personal attack. This, I argue, exemplifies the role of the monstrous vegan across the texts explored over the course of this thesis, confronting those around them with violence,

⁸¹ Similarly, in *Disgrace* (1999), David Lurie's emotional breakdown happens on a public roadway: overcome with emotion after long days putting down dogs, he "actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake" (Coetzee 142-143).

inconsistency, and the intangible nature of human desire. For McKay, Norma's relentless focus on the exclusionary nature of vegetarianism "fails to recognize the way that such exclusionary power is at work in the carno-phallogocentrism that underpins her own attitudes toward Elizabeth" (83). Recognising Costello's lack of power towards the end of *Lives of Animals*, he argues that "The conclusion to be drawn from the text's sharing of exclusionary powers across both vegetarian and carno-phallogocentric discourses is that ethical reasoning needs more precision than simply ascertaining which discursive practices are exclusive and which not, since all are" (McKay 83). This is the crux of McKay's argument, in which the metafictional nature of Coetzee's text reveals the universality of exclusionary practices operating within discourse, as well as highlighting the relative disparity of power between the pervasive influence of carno-phallogocentric discourses and ethical vegetarianism. McKay thus notes the ways in which the performance of moral discourse emphasises alternatives to carno-phallogocentrism.

The anxieties that Costello generates in those around her form part of a mutually self-constituting nexus. For example, as already noted, Costello's disruptive "Plutarch response" does not occur within the diegetic world of the narrative but as an imperfectly remembered recital by John. Similarly, the narrative's focalisation through John informs us that "The children are eating separately because Elizabeth does not like to see meat at the table" (Coetzee, *Costello* 60). As I mention above, this provides a stark contrast to Costello's reticence when fish is served at the university dinner. Furthermore, Costello's apparent power play with Norma's children is evidenced in the dialogue between Norma and John. The transmission of knowledge of the fate of veal calves once again stands in contrast to Costello's refusal to detail the horrors of the slaughterhouse in her lecture. The construction of Costello as a socially disruptive threat to childhood innocence is transmitted through the narrative via the thoughts and feelings of others. The constitution of the monstrous vegan by

the anxieties of meat-eaters is emphasised in the text, implying the dual construction of meat-eating identities and becomings. Coetzee's staging of Costello thus highlights both the performance of veganism and the ways in which discourse works to produce such a figure. Her vegan identity is enacted by the reading of that performance by those around her, already preconceived as a disruptive and antagonistic threat to social norms.

Butler argues that "existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be" (*Psychic Life* 21). Developing her thesis of gender performativity to suggest that power and subjection is central to becoming a subject, she argues that "power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity" (Butler, *Psychic Life* 3). As such, she explores the central ambivalence within identity discourses, in which subjectivity is simultaneously an effect of subjection, submission to power, and a presupposition of agency: "the condition for and instrument of agency" (Butler, *Psychic Life* 10). Social categories are seen to express an explicit *desire* for subjection, in which even as such categories work in the service of subjection, they guarantee a social existence. This can be used to unpack the logic underpinning the common critique of veganism as an impossible quest for purity. If identity categories always "exploit the desire for existence," the existence of "the vegan" might therefore be seen to exploit a desire for human existence, perpetuating an anthropocentrism which negates the lived experience of nonhuman others.

However, Butler resists a therefore pessimistic dismissal of the possibility for political agency. Instead, she suggests that the ambivalent relationship between agency and submission is significant because "the subject emerges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition of possibility* for a radically conditioned form of agency" (Butler, *Psychic Life* 15, emphasis in original). By acknowledging, and ultimately embracing, this ambivalence, Butler

refuses the binary of either sanctimonious fatalism or naive optimism when envisaging resistance to dominant power structures. I argue that in performing vegan identity through Costello, Coetzee provides a formal means of answering the question “What would it mean for the subject to desire something other than its continued ‘social existence’?” (Butler *Psychic Life* 28). Through Coetzee’s writing, Costello performs her alignment with a monstrous vegan identity. Her social existence is both immortalised in the text and emptied of meaning through the self-referential emphasis on Costello’s status as text. As such, the desire for a vegan mode of responding to nonhuman animals is articulated, whilst the desire for vegan existence, of Coetzee claiming his own vegan identity, is negated. I contend that this is a redemptive and reparative practice that, by embracing stereotypical vegan derogations, highlights the related anxieties and instabilities of meat-eating. Reading Costello as the performance of a monstrous veganism acknowledges that our desires and relation to nonhuman animals are inextricably bound to literary and discursive constructions of identity. It offers a response to this acknowledged insufficiency, in which a self-conscious adoption and performance of veganism emphasises the performative nature of carnivorous culture and acknowledges complicity and hypocrisy whilst maintaining an intimate connection between ethics, reason, emotion, and the body.

Through the performative nature of Coetzee’s fiction as event, as expounded by Derek Attridge, the novels elucidate a key theme running throughout this dissertation: that veganism cannot be sutured to definitive meaning or directly transmitted through literary narratives. For Attridge, Coetzee’s novels emphasise the singularity of the act, or event, of reading, where reading itself is a staged performance, and singular interaction between the individual reader and text. As such, the meaning transmitted is “not something carried away when we have finished reading it, but something that happens as we read or recall it” (Attridge 9). The otherness this approach imbues in the literary addresses an ethical demand to the reader,

whereby we are asked “to respect [the text’s] otherness, to respond to its singularity, to avoid reducing it to the familiar and the utilitarian even while attempting to understand it” (Attridge 11). With regard to *Elizabeth Costello*, the final lesson “leaves us strongly aware that what has mattered for Elizabeth Costello and for the reader, is the event — literary and ethical at the same time — of storytelling, of testing, of self-questioning, and not the outcome” (Attridge 205). As such, the performance of the monstrous vegan enables a transmission of messages which refuse, and are inherently resistant to, the consolidation of secure and stable meaning.

The performance of a monstrous vegan identity also provides a means of reconciling Coetzee’s dilemma in “Remembering Texas,” of where to go to “escape knowledge.” In Costello’s emotional response to the knowledge of violence which goes seemingly unnoticed by those she loves, veganism prompts a wounding knowledge that is inescapable. However, by detailing Costello’s breakdown, Coetzee, as author, liberates himself from the burden of confronting horrifying knowledge, excising it from the text itself. Similarly, the knowledge of the veal industry that Norma criticises Costello for conveying to her grandchildren, is only implied rather than transmitted by Coetzee’s narrative. We see only its effect, in the children’s question “Mom, is this veal?”, an effect chastised by Norma as “nothing but a power game ... It’s a sick game, and I’m not having the children play it against me” (Coetzee, *Costello* 114).⁸²

The refusal to transmit horrifying knowledge through the narrative suggests that one way to escape from wounding knowledge is to inhabit a performance of ethical identity that focuses on the socio-cultural effects of knowledge. The performance of the monstrous vegan trope acknowledges its necessary complicity within existing structures. For instance, by refusing to directly address animal suffering, Coetzee’s narrative inhabits the state of wilful ignorance that Costello critiques in the citizens of Germany who lived alongside death camps

⁸² The inclusion of the term “sick” is apt here, connotative of the association of vegetarianism with purging and nausea, sickness through a deficiency in nutrients or protein, and the relegation of vegans and vegetarians to the realm of the perverse and freakish.

during the Holocaust. Performing disgust sees emotional breakdown as one means of enacting an ethical refusal, drawing attention to injustice whilst choosing not to stage violence. It also offers an escape from the consumption of violent knowledge. Rather than launch a frontal assault on violence against nonhuman animals, Coetzee performs a vegetarian identity that consciously embodies the exclusionary, inconsistent, and artificial nature of the human. Performed to an audience, both Appleton college and Princeton, rather than the cats to whom John wishes she would confine her proselytising, Costello's lecture therefore implicitly suggests the importance of motivating collective action beyond the aims of paranoid criticism.

As Coetzee suggests in an interview with David Attwell, "The novel ... allows the writer to *stage* his passion," differing from the prose essay form through which he "can't be passionate without being mad" (*Doubling* 61, emphasis in original). The performance of generic tropes of vegan identity enables the staging of an ethical identity which both prevents individual breakdown and presents a coherent, if fictional, sense of self to the reader. If veganism, as the introduction to this thesis argues, is to be defined as a messy and complex web of inconsistencies, failures, and utopian drives, the staging of vegan identity as a performance of ethics enables the occupation of a temporary stability.

Costello does not conform to normative expectations of the desiring subject. The mediatory figure she places between Coetzee and animal rights disrupts the idea that we can access an originary realm of desire, providing a stage from which vegan identity appears as an alternative model to adopt, a model that desires differently, not based on the existing models to which we yield. As Coetzee suggests in his essay "Triangular Structures of Desire in Advertising," the modern consumer yields the autonomy of their desires to a mediating figure, desiring what the model desires. This fundamental mistrust of the self and its desires is posited as the result of the mediating function of language. To yield to the monster is to gain monstrous desires. However, as Coetzee's performance as Costello demonstrates, such

yielding is inevitable. The performance of veganism enacts a form of agency that submits to an assemblage of literary history and discursive heritage. Costello's situation within the literary tradition of the monstrous vegan positions veganism as a mediator of desire that cannot be reduced to a singular or autonomous mediating model. Costello is a hybrid literary creation, a *mise en abyme* of mediations. However, this deconstruction does not result in futility. It offers Costello as a figure through which to expose the performative nature of desire and to suggest ways of desiring differently.

Coetzee's writing resists Donovan's call for an aesthetics of care that facilitates "emotional interaction with living entities ... transmitting their realities with minimal intervention" (73). I argue that his exploration of the sacrificial nature of representation is an important means of critically evaluating a vegan positionality. Costello resists transmission into futurity, suggesting the malleability of a vegan identity that, like gender, is fluid rather than fixed, and cannot be transmitted as a definitive moral code but as a series of acts and articulations. She speaks of the inevitability of books once treasured being forgotten in the future: "And properly so. There must be some limit to the burden of remembering that we impose on our children and grandchildren. They have a world of their own, of which she should be less and less part. Thank you." (Coetzee, *Costello* 20). This final "Thank you" marks both the end of her talk, in standard academic convention, and functions as a perlocutionary act, exaggeratedly signalling her withdrawal: both from the world of future children and from the lectern. Costello draws attention here to the performative nature of her animal rights sentiments, which rely on the spectator, or reader, witnessing an event which forces a thinking-through of our relation to animals but that fundamentally refuses to be taken forward as a definitive moral code, withdrawing from future thought.

The vegetarianism of Costello enacts the performative gestures of a veganism coded into the cultural imaginary via the monstrous vegans explored across this thesis. Whilst Costello offers the possibility of a parodic reading of the presumed earnestness of vegan identity, there is little pleasure invested in Coetzee's solemn reflection on the difficulties of philosophical reflection and the task of confronting nonhuman animal suffering. In Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *The Sparsholt Affair*, a similar exposure of the performative nature of humanity can be observed. Employing the trope of the monstrous vegan, Hollinghurst draws attention to the historical relation between non-normative sexualities and monstrosity.⁸³ His novels offer the potential of embracing derogatory vegan stereotypes as a means of challenging normative scripts of desire through that which I define here as a vegan camp aesthetics.

Swimming-Pool Library follows the first-person account of young gay protagonist, Will. Set in 1980s Britain, the realist form is interspersed with the 1920s diary entries of Lord Nantwich detailing his time at public school and later experiences as a colonial officer in Sudan. A further prominent secondary character is James, Will's best friend and fellow Oxford graduate. He appears as Will's double, reversing the traits he admires in himself, a gay vegetarian doctor who appears unable, first comically, and eventually tragically, to satisfy his sexual desires. James functions as a further manifestation of the trope of the monstrous vegan. Firstly, he does not meat. As Will notes, "One of the slight bores about James was that he was a vegetarian" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 28). Secondly, as I demonstrate below, the human-animal hybrid physicality of the monstrous vegans explored thus far manifests as anxieties surrounding HIV/AIDs and the human body as a host for HIV, a hybrid of man and virus. Thirdly, James subverts the compulsions of heterosexual reproduction through his queer

⁸³ Monstrosity has long been associated with the queer. Critics such as J. Jack Halberstam in *Skin Shows* and Sedgwick, in *Between Men*, have elucidated the relation between the nineteenth-century Gothic and anxieties around sexual deviancy.

identity. We gain no information about his familial background, instead appearing as Will's Frankensteinian creation. Described as Will's "other self," James chastises him for his hedonism in ways that feel "as if one half of [him] were accusing the other" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 7). James's status as Gothic doppelgänger is most explicit in relation to the juxtaposition of his and Will's sexual and alimentary desires, with his vegetarianism both tedious and antithetical to Will's rampant carnivorous appetite, acting as an explicit metaphor for James's continually frustrated sex life.

Finally, akin to the monstrous vegan's intimate relation to the act of writing, the doubling of James and Will draws attention to what it means to write the self. Barbara Johnson notes the autobiographical impulses running throughout *Frankenstein*, in which:

Victor Frankenstein ... has twice obeyed the impulse to construct an image of himself: on the first occasion he creates a monster, and on the second he tries to explain to Walton the causes and consequences of the first. *Frankenstein* can be read as the story of autobiography as the attempt to neutralize the monstrosity of autobiography. Simultaneously a revelation and a cover-up, autobiography would appear to constitute itself as in some way a repression of autobiography (4).

Similarly, James provides an external commentary on Will, *for* Will, via the former's diary. These entries provide Will with that which he describes as an "account of [him]self" and often amount to a questioning of his ethical commitments, where James writes: "does Will care about anybody? does Will ever really *think*?" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 7). Akin to the function of the monster in cultural discourse, the two are sustained in an act of mutual self-creation, as enacted through writing. Will's first-person narration is an act of self-constitution. However, it is through his reading of James's diaries that he finds his "true" self. Furthermore, Will comes to a level of self-awareness, in the revelation of repressed family secrets, by reading Nantwich's colonial diaries. Acknowledging his grandfather's role in the historic gay purge responsible for Nantwich's incarceration, the act of writing Nantwich's memoir, a task he eventually abandons, provides the means by which Will acknowledges historical

continuities in homosexual oppression. This is later exemplified by James's arrest in the present. Will's sexual success and hedonistic lifestyle here encounters the shadow of a repressive homophobic culture through acts of reading and writing for others.

James's vegetarianism positions him as an outsider within mainstream culture, structurally akin to Will's belated recognition of the ways in which political and legal frameworks suppress and contain the subversive possibilities of his own gay identity. For example, Will acknowledges, at the close of the novel, that despite a surface-level acceptance, his grandfather has kept him at "at a hygienic distance" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 379). Homophobia and the assertion of meat-eating masculinity intermingle in Will's grandfather, with James having to force a "disgusted smile" in response to the former's jokes about bloody meat (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 168). James is further described as "pretending indifference" one New Year "as chargers of pheasant, goose and almost raw beef were borne in by the staff" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 168). Smiles and feigned indifference cover for a seemingly inherent revulsion, muting the socially disruptive potential of his vegetarianism, as much as metaphorically signalling the superficial pretence of tolerance enacted by Will's grandfather and maintaining the existing dynamic between the powerful and the marginalised.

Rather than a straightforward alignment therefore following between gay and vegetarian identity, queer desire is repeatedly figured in relation to meat-eating throughout the novel. In chapter two, I explore the ways in which Wells posits sexuality as reliant on frameworks of domination, consumption, and predation. Wells posits the young, women, and animals as consumable objects of desire. In Hollinghurst, such connections are placed at the centre of queer desire with puns repeatedly aligning raw meat with cocks and bums. Furthermore, the artist Ronald Staines picks up male models at Smithfield market, conscripting immigrant butchers into pornographic movies, whilst Will's grandfather jokes to James that his meal was "swimming in blood" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 168),

symbolically aligning red meat with the Corinthian club swimming pool at which Will picks up men.

Sexual desire, as a means of looking at and symbolically consuming others, is figured in relation to predatory models of seduction. Will describes that “As my eyes roamed across the room they came to rest on Abdul, who stood abstractedly sharpening his knife on the steel and gazing at me as if I were a meal” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 60). The transitive verbs attached to Will’s active looking turns Will’s gaze back onto himself, rendering him consumable. Coming from a position of racial and economic privilege, Will fetishises this threat to his autonomy as a masochistic fantasy. The scarcely veiled pun of Abdul sharpening his knife encourages the interpretation of this gesture as a masturbatory act, introducing bawdy humour to the scene. The conflation of meat-eating and gay desire is offered as a satiric performance, with Abdul’s knife-sharpening accompanying descriptions of “thick juicy slices” of pork and the contrast the all-too-feminine trout that Will attends to “with a kind of surgical distaste,” provoked by its “slightly open barbed mouth,” resembling the mythic vagina dentata (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 57).

Abdul appears later in the novel performing in a pornographic film. Will describes that “With his scarred black skin inside the thick black fur [coat] he struck me ... like some exquisite game animal, partly skinned and then thrown aside still breathing” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 270). The visual performance of male sexuality for the purposes of pornographic eroticism is achieved through a “sumptuous calf-length fur coat” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 270) that animalises Abdul. This focus on the erotics of power explicitly ties into the colonial resonances that saturate the novel as Will is forced to confront the relation

between Nantwich's sexual trysts in Sudan, his own fetishisation of black men,⁸⁴ and his grandfather's role in a historic gay purge.

James, as Will's other, presents the monstrous results of abnegating colonial and sexual desires of mastery: the end of sexual fulfilment altogether. Akin to Wells's alignment of vegetarianism with a chaste sexuality, whether lesbians, spinsters, or sterile monsters, vegetarianism is used as an explicit metaphor for failed or frustrated desire throughout *Swimming-Pool Library*. Hypothesising as to the reasons for James's disappointed sex life, Will concludes that "he didn't project sex enough, he was too subtle a taste for the instant world of clubs and bars" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 29). The use of "taste" here is key as Will metaphorically compares a distinction between the "instant" gratification of the club scene and the distinguished palate that, in James's case, relies on moral codes. If eating is akin to fucking in Hollinghurst, the fact that "going out to dinner with [James] required careful planning" (*Swimming-Pool* 28) removes the spontaneity that Will relishes in cruising.

The narrative's derogation of a vegan cafe as having the air of "high-principled disappointment" mirrors James's involuntary celibacy (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 329). His vegetarianism becomes a metaphor for the futility of his desires, with his diary offering a disparaging assessment of his diet, dining on a "Miserable supper of old tofuburgers" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 312). The tofu performs a contrast to the throbbing, bloody meat of the male member, an apt metaphor in its literal similarity, in texture and form, to a flaccid penis. This "miserable supper" precedes an attempt to suppress his jealousy of Will's promiscuity by dismissing the latter's inability to sleep with anybody with a

⁸⁴ Will's sexual desires are implicated in colonial desires to master the other. He fetishises black men, for example, with his discovery of "a taste for black names" as "a kind of time-travel" anticipating his reading of Nantwich's colonial diaries (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 2). However, these "black names" evoke for Will a particular era of romance. Previously associated in his mind with "the denial of romance . . . they bespoke personalities unflecked by sex or malice" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 2), his sexual involvement with Arthur—"beautiful, cocky, sluttish Arthur" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 2)—allow for him to work within existing discursive frameworks of Edwardian romance to subvert heteronormative expectations and incorporate queer and interracial desires.

university education. However, the implication of higher, more refined standards unravels to reveal his own “longing for someone poor, young and dim to hold [him] tight” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 312). Eating tofuburgers whilst having pretensions for richer, older, and better-educated men, James’s sexual desires are confined to porn subscriptions, gazing at men in swimming-pool showers, and a seemingly pathological obsession with “big cocks” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 26). The latter functions as an explicit parody of his vegetarianism: unable to put the meat he craves in his mouth. This is made explicit by the fact that one of Will’s only sexual failures, replicating James’s disappointment at a bar a few nights previous, follows his discomfort at hearing explicit details of butchery and subsequently finding his “eyes resting with momentary respect on the chalked-up menu of alfalfa-sprout salad, chickpea casserole, lentil and parsnip pie” (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 335). Vegan catering distracts here from descriptions of bloody dismemberment and results in Will losing his chance with a potential conquest.

Associating meat-eating with gay sex through puns and metaphors sees Hollinghurst reappropriate the sexual politics of meat for the writing of queer desire. In reclaiming the raw and bloody, meat becomes a metaphorical return to all that has been made abject by mainstream society. To be disgusted by meat is presented as a form of internalised homophobia. As Martha Nussbaum argues, disgust has a prominent role in male homophobia and misogyny, in particular relation to fears surrounding penetrability and becoming a receptacle of animal products. Will’s carnivorous homosexuality functions as an anti-homophobic gesture, refusing the moral disgust levelled at gay sex. A return to the predatory nature of meat-eating, as opposed to the sanitised version displayed on supermarket shelves, signals an embrace of a sexual freedom that refuses protective sheathing and medicalised discourses. In appropriating the sexual politics of meat to write queer desire, Hollinghurst works within existing structures to reformulate what it means to be a desiring subject. This is

mirrored in his revision of high literary culture, turning the bourgeois form of the social realist novel into a graphic depiction of gay sex.

By contrast, James's revulsion towards meat appears as a hysterical response to anxieties around bodily dissolution. As well as facing legal persecution for sexual freedoms revelled in without consequence by those around him, James suffers psychologically from his anxieties around sex. For example, whilst he must overcome disgust at the sight of a half-decomposed human body, in one instance, to meet his professional obligations as a doctor, his disgusted vegetarianism functions as an outlet for anxieties about his own corporeal vulnerability. Will describes pictures of illness in James's doctor's magazine as showing weeping wounds with "the high tonality of well-hung game" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 307), a pun that relates game birds to well-endowed men. This is illuminated by the shadow of HIV/AIDs that overhangs the freedom of Will's sexual adventures, described in apocalyptic terms as "the last summer of its kind there was ever to be" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 4). Will's sexual success has as much to do with his evaluation of his own good looks as his embrace of all that is conventionally disgusting. Over the course of his relationship with Phil, he describes multiple accounts of oral and anal sex, as well as splurging his tongue into his ear, squirting beer into his mouth, and having sex in a puddle of urine. These penetrations of the body, outside of the exceptions made for heteronormative reproductive sex acts, sees him embrace moments of non-normative erotic pleasure. Will's refusal to be disgusted by the sharing of bodily fluids with the men he picks up stands in contrast to James, who foretells an altered relation to sex in the wake of the AIDs crisis. Behind James's veil of ethical protest lies a rampant desire for meat that is thwarted by a fear of dissolution that has penetrated his unconscious.

As I argue in chapter one, Frankenstein's creature is a composition of herbivorous animals from the nineteenth-century slaughterhouse who longs for a return to Eden. For

Moreau's *Beasts*, as chapter two establishes, vegetarianism is a discursive law that must be continually recited. For James, it seems as much about disgust, as fears of his own bodily dissolution, anxieties about AIDs, and a sense of exclusion from normative discourses of desire. The monstrous creations of Frankenstein, Moreau, and Crake are transposed by Will's narration onto the body of the vegetarian queer, a cultural production of homophobia that aspires to escape from the violence of normative discourses of desire.

José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* posits cruising as an engagement with the multiple potentialities available within the past and present of the social. However, the "cruising" referenced in his title refers neither only nor primarily to the cruising of queer sex, with Muñoz appropriating the term's association with alternative sexual practices to refer to a "cruising for the varied potentialities that may abound within [the social]" (18). If queer cruising for sex is one form of utopian potentiality, Hollinghurst's narrative simultaneously draws attention to its implication in the oppression structuring Will's present. As such, furthering Muñoz's exploration of the multiple utopian potentialities that offer themselves within the present, "objects and moments that burn with anticipation and promise" (26), I suggest that veganism, whilst ostensibly unrelated to cruising, offers a mode of desiring differently, beyond the confines of straight time and its nominal gestures of inclusion for non-normative desire.

The erotic pleasure generated by the novel's explicit sex scenes implicates the reader within carnivorous desire, and encourages them to laugh at crass jokes at the expense of vegans. However, drawing on Foucault's aphorism that "Sex is not a fatality; it's a possibility for creative life" ("Sex, Power" 163), we might draw attention to the moments at which veganism signals the possibility of conceiving of desire beyond normative frameworks of predation in *Swimming-Pool Library*. This can be observed via Will's gradual transformation

over the course of the narrative, where acknowledging his grandfather's role in a historic gay purge is accompanied by an increasing sympathy with veganism. For example, he takes "special care to stuff some aubergines and make a bitter and original little salad" following James's arrest (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 407). In contrast to predator-prey models of seduction, in which the "chalked-up menu of alfalfa-sprout salad" offers a space for resisting objectification, Will finds comfort in vegan acts and practices: "One could potter pathetically with one's chicory and watercress and enjoy an almost *creative* feeling" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 407, emphasis in original).

As Will comes to terms with his grandfather's involvement in Nantwich's persecution, and the repetition of historical oppression through James, there is a creativity found both in rampant carnivorousness and plant-based cooking. For Will, taking "special care to stuff some aubergines and make a bitter and *original* salad" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 407, my emphasis) sees veganism offered as a creative re-writing of desire beyond predatory metaphors. The creativity implicit to the expression of queer desire, imagining ways of being and desiring others beyond compulsory heterosexuality, manifests as an ability to move beyond discursive frameworks of hunting, predation, and dismemberment. The writing of veganism as performative identity comes to reveal the performative nature of human desire more broadly, particularly its implication in the violent consumption of the desired other. This allows for critical re-writings, in which veganism offers itself as an alternative and playful discourse operating within the conventions of the traditional novel form.

In Will's narrative, creative revisionism sees predatory metaphors appropriated to forge a space for queer desire. The impure origins of cultural constructions of heterosexuality, that posit the vulnerable and passive woman as prey, are utilised to figure gay desire. Veganism nonetheless appears as a possible alternative, though one that is not readily incorporated or accepted into mainstream social discourses. Through the sympathetic

presentation of James's stigmatised gay identity, the relationship established between a resistance to meat-eating, a resistance to sex, and anxieties around infection, posits queerness and veganism as modes of being that cannot always or readily be assimilated into the mainstream. As Butler argues, resignification might be accomplished through a performativity that “describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a ‘pure’ opposition, a ‘transcendence’ of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure” (*Bodies* 184).

James’s proto-vegansexuality leaves him frustrated and chaste. His vegetarianism provides a hyperbolic demonstration of the sense of exile consequent to a desire to desire differently. The aspiration to not consume others results in the seemingly inevitable impossibility of sexual consummation. This is akin to the ageing female body, marked as undesirable, through which Coetzee enacts an ethical vegetarian identity. However, I argue that the playful camp sensibility that manifests in Hollinghurst’s prose, particularly through the imagery of meat-eating, also offers a style and sensibility through which vegans can claim a stake in power. Rather than a non-power and passivity signalled, as we see with both Costello and James, Hollinghurst’s vegan camp aesthetic is a means of asserting agency through the occupation of an often difficult, complex, and monstrous ethical identity.

Whilst James appears cripplingly unable to satisfy his desires, the meaty imagery of the text sees Will embrace the punning and coded sexual imagery within the overdetermined realm of dead animal bodies. This signals both an ingratiation into heteronormative structures of desire and an embrace of *raw* meat, over indistinguishable supermarket produce, as a reclamation of unsanitised, non-monogamous sex. I suggest that reading James’s vegetarian as a performative negation of desire, allows for a camp revelling in the ways in which desire

is coded within an object or signifying chain, and cannot be controlled or confined within sexual or alimentary categories. Inhabiting vegetarianism thus enacts an embodied critique of the heteronormative constraints that control and police desire.

In a vegan camp reading, laughter, joy, and pleasure take precedence over despair and horror. Camp provides an appreciation of surfaces and offers a survival strategy that negates an explicit acknowledgement of despair. As I note in chapter one, for Susan Sontag, camp is a sensibility that manifests as a “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration” (259). It converts the serious into the frivolous, seeing the world as aesthetic phenomenon and revelling in stylisation and extravagance. Across Hollinghurst’s oeuvre, language takes on this frivolity, always at risk at degenerating into bawdy innuendo. As one reviewer for the *Financial Times* notes, the inclusion of “arshol” in plain sight on the cover of *The Sparsholt Affair* is emblematic of Hollinghurst’s embrace of pun and euphemism (Day). Here, stereotypes of gay male promiscuity are embraced, turning everything and anything into sexual play.

From Schoedsack’s *King Kong*, to feather boas and “a woman walking around in a dress made of three million feathers” (266), spectral animal presences inform many of Sontag’s examples of camp. The respective works of Adams and Donovan, as we have seen, highlight the need to recover and re-member the animals absent from such discourses: the birds, for example, from whom the three million feathers would derive. However, to do so would be to contradict that which Sontag sees as the essence of camp: a disengaged refusal to see content beyond surface, expressive of a love “of things-being-what-they-are-not” (262). Rather than therefore seeing camp as antithetical to an ethical vegan aesthetics, we might interrogate the centrality of the overdetermined significations of dead animal bodies to much queer camp. If queer camp exposes the artificial and exaggerated stylisation of that which has traditionally been seen as the immutability of gender, vegan camp seeks to further disrupt

ideas about what it means to be human.

The prominence of fake fur, PVC, and plastic feather boas within queer camp performances already gestures towards its engagement with the artifice of the binary division between the human and nonhuman animal. The reproduction of products of exploitation in kitsch plastic substitutes destabilises their seemingly fixed referential value as markers of gender, class, or race. Vegan camping involves a refiguring of our modes of looking, seeing the world as a satirical spectacle designed to reinforce and encourage a commitment to cruelty-free living, rather than force a retreat into a paralysing sense of horror because of its impervious nature.

Whilst queer camping is predominantly associated with an embrace of stereotypes of gay male femininity, I associate vegan camping with the derogatory figure of the sexless vegan woman who secretly desires meat. This is typified, for example, by the media sensationalisation of “vegansexuality” in late 2007, as I detail in chapter two. I define vegan camp as a political aesthetic that transforms the trauma of recognising the exploitation of animals into witty commentary on anthropocentric attitudes. It is a utopian gesture that looks towards a future in which exploitation no longer has the power or capacity to wound. Vegan camp offers the possibility of enjoying that which one is expected to repudiate, a queer mode of being and desiring that hyperbolically performs its failure to stand outside of existing structures of pleasure.⁸⁵

In *Swimming-Pool Library*, whilst Will’s colonial impulses see the replication of exploitative modes of desire, James’s frustrated vegansexuality suggests that absenting

⁸⁵ Utilising Sara Ahmed’s conception of the “feminist killjoy,” Richard Twine coins the term “vegan killjoy” and explicates the ways in which this figure exposes a normative order of happiness as anthropocentric, and “In willfully speaking up ... may engender anxiety, discomfort, guilt, and risks exclusion for doing so” (625). If the undermining of normative happiness figures as an important performative refusal, vegan camp works towards Twine’s optimism for the potential of the killjoy figure: “In performing a practice that attempts to *re-construct* happiness, pleasure and politics the vegan killjoy does what all politically wilful killjoys attempt to do: create new meanings and practices that underline the shared joy in living outside and beyond social norms once thought fixed” (638).

oneself from such problematic dynamics entails denying oneself sexual fulfilment. A vegan camp reading suggests that within the performativity of chastity and non-desire exists pleasure and enjoyment that capitalises upon such failures: the ability to see the world differently and hope for a different future allows one to live within, and laugh at, the futility of the present.

When Will's eyes wonder from a beautiful man to an alfafa salad, a certain hyperbolic, ham-fisted play on the meatiness of male objects of desire is suggested. Similarly, James, as vegetarian, is presented as an archetypal vegansexual woman through the rampant sexual desire that lies behind his pretensions toward a more refined sensibility. He is childlike, described with "still mottled, childish hands" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 251). His profession as a doctor sees his days spent in "long concentration on illness and misery" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 170), offering a satire of veganism's association with negativity and focus on animal suffering. Furthermore, Will's purported lack of jealousy regarding James's feelings for Phil, is explained because he conceptualises the former as a harmless parasite: James "had clearly fallen parasitically for him at once; but I saw no danger there" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 203). This parasitic clinging to Will's conquests links to his failure to appear as a desirable being in his own right. James in fact appears chronically undesirable: "No one ever wants to fuck me," he laments, as Will's first-person narration acknowledges that he "found him very slightly repellent" (Hollinghurst, *Swimming-Pool* 315).

If vegan camping revels in the idea that vegans secretly desire and long for products of exploitation, an appreciation of James as the object of vegan camp offers a critique of speciesist culture by exposing to ridicule the desire to enforce the supposed naturalness and necessity of exploiting animals. James resists both human and animal flesh whilst presenting an internal tempest of carnal longing. However, Will's converse sexual fulfilment is entangled

within colonial legacies, in which desire is shaped and structured by racial and sexual modes of oppression and domination. I argue that in this complication of desire, and its relation to consumption and predation, Hollinghurst appropriates vegan stereotypes as a way of problematising exploitative desires more broadly. In contrast to the humour Atwood attaches to veganism, Hollinghurst posits veganism as a subject for ridicule *and* productive site for creative queer revisionism. That which is inherent to the text is a playful emphasis on the centrality of predation and consumption in discourses of desire, and the seemingly inextricable connection established between meat and sex. Applying an additional vegan camp lens to the text allows for an enjoyment of James as sexless vegan monster,⁸⁶ providing the vegan reader a humorous indulgence in veganism's own failures in the face of a pervasive anthropocentrism.

The performance of an exaggerated veganism, as a way of highlighting the mutual inconsistencies and instabilities of carnivorous and heterosexual desires, is also observable in Hollinghurst's *The Sparsholt Affair*. Whilst *Swimming-Pool Library* sees the novel itself embrace the satirical spectacle of veganism as a failure to put the meat you crave in your mouth through the use of metaphor, the vegetarianism of Johnny in *The Sparsholt Affair* is linked to a personal refusal and rejection of the "intolerable meaning" (Hollinghurst 278) of discursive constructs of identity and its relation to heteronormativity.

Akin to the often comic representation of vegetarianism in *Swimming-Pool library*, vegetarianism is the target of satirical spectacle in *The Sparsholt Affair*. For example, Johnny's seven-year-old daughter Lucy, with Johnny's sperm used by her lesbian mothers in order for them to conceive, fears questioning whether her lasagne has been made with Quorn or mince. Disarmed by the similarity to mince of the unspecified contents of her meal, "She

⁸⁶ In a different context, Brenda Cooper argues of James's appeal to the reader. Whilst Hollinghurst is seen to only partially identify with Will, James "receives tremendous authorial approval and empathy" (Cooper 204).

thought she had better not mention it, in case Pat [Johnny's partner] had made a terrible mistake, and they would have to go upstairs and make themselves sick, which had happened more than once, apparently, when they were in hotels abroad" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 314). Making themselves sick appears as a performance of a disgust at meat that emphasises the insecurity and unfixed nature of desire and abjection. That neither Lucy, Pat, nor Johnny, on the multiple occasions inferred here, can tell the difference between real and mock meat further emphasises the complexity of desire, in which it is what the food *means*, as a product of slaughter, rather than what it tastes like, that matters. Mock meat offers, in the world of vegan camp, an ambiguity between the real and the fake that provides a performative space for knowingly deceiving meat-eaters, proving that their attachment to meat is based on ideological constructs rather than any inherent properties of the animal bodies themselves. In Hollinghurst's novel, this potentiality of Quorn is turned back on unsuspecting vegetarians, whose forced vomiting signals a conscious, rather than visceral, creation of abjection in the face of "real" meat.

Furthermore, Johnny is described through the third person focalisation of Lucy as having "his deaf-to-all-arguments vegetarian face on" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 314). This putting "on" of a fundamentalist vegetarian position is both a performance of a stereotypical notion of vegetarian identity as much as it requires a refusal to acknowledge alternative points of view in order to sustain this version of himself. Through the physical abjection of meat eaten abroad, Johnny maintains the boundaries defining his selfhood, a sly nod to the relation between desire and colonial oppression, made explicit in *Swimming-Pool Library*, through a focus on the abjection of meat in relation to the broad signifier of ethnic otherness in the term "abroad."

Vegetarianism intrudes into the narrative alongside the scandal involving Johnny's father, the David Sparsholt referenced in the novel's title. Whilst David's repressed

homosexual tendencies emerge in his middle-age affairs, by the end of the novel he has remarried with a woman. The only partial access we gain as to the effect of this on his self-conception is via his attitude to Johnny's vegetarianism: "That his son was a vegetarian was something [David] fully accepted, he took a practical interest in it, and complained about menus and kitchens as sternly as if he'd been one of that troublesome minority himself" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 378). The ironic humour here references their shared sexual experiences with men as much as it posits vegetarianism and meat-eating as two alternative ways of expressing homoerotic desires: Johnny marries a man and they raise a child together whilst David's conventional heteronormative family life is punctuated by illicit homosexual affairs.

Just as sexual desire is conflated with carnivorous desire in *Swimming-Pool Library*, it is knowledge and intrusion into personal identity that becomes associated with predatory urges in *The Sparsholt Affair*. For example, when Johnny first encounters Ivan, he "felt the attraction of his soft pale face and brilliant dark eyes ... His small white teeth leant inwards in a moistly *carnivorous* way. 'So how *is* your father?' He said" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 174, my emphasis). Carnivorous appetite is here aligned with a desire to penetrate Johnny's secret history, his father's past, and Ivan's gntrophilic desire for David. In contrast, vegetarianism appears as an attempt at self-definition and to refuse classification by others. For example, agency is associated with Johnny's vegetarianism: "He thought there were countless things he could do nothing about - being gay, and dyslexic, and in Ivan's eyes far too young. But this was a pure choice, it had the beauty of action, unlike the long compromise of being acted upon" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 279). The label "gay," and the assumption of being unable to do anything about being labelled as such, implicitly references a Foucauldian notion of sexuality as discursive construction.⁸⁷ Similarly, the diagnosis of "dyslexic" refers to a distinct

⁸⁷ See *The History of Sexuality*,

medical discourse that labels non-normative modes of learning as pathological. Such categorisation by others is resisted, at least for Johnny, by a personal decision to eschew meat.

However, rather than vegetarianism therefore offering Johnny a deconstructive freedom or liberation from the restraints of discourse, its performative nature highlights Butler's argument that there is no constitutive outside of discourse. Whilst there is a sense that "Sometimes meat disgusted him" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 252), Johnny's decision to become vegetarian is accompanied by the admission that "He loved meat" and that "It wasn't the taste but the intolerable meaning of food that came from slaughter that he wanted to excise from his life" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 278). Such a performance is a refusal to have "intolerable meaning" foisted upon him. The proliferation of meanings encouraged by Hollinghurst's use of meaty metaphors draws comic and hyperbolic attention to the overdetermined significations attached to animal bodies.

Johnny's decision to become vegetarian follows a discussion of the fact that Ivan has been asked to donate his sperm in order for Fran and Una to have children. When Johnny expresses that he likes small children "a few minutes later, as he dropped in the soft triangles of liver and the cold blood sizzled in the oil he thought two things: that there was a great deal about him Ivan had never heard of; and that after this week, perhaps even after today, he was never going to eat meat again" (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 278). Desiring to have children biologically sees him abandon a raw, meaty life associated with sexual freedom. The rejection of meat is a gesture inextricably bound to Johnny's desire for children and family life. Whilst Lucy is also raised by her two mothers, Johnny takes a paternal role, caring for her on intermittent weekends. The gender-ambiguous name of his male partner Pat provides the illusion, in the signification of Johnny and Pat as married couple, of a conventional heterosexual set of parents. Furthermore, when Johnny meets an old friend for dinner following Pat's death from prostate cancer, "Graham had forgotten Johnny was vegetarian, or

perhaps thought, now Pat was gone, he would revert to common sense, or taste” (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 418). Here the end of his monogamous married life sees the assumption of an end to his vegetarianism. Vegetarianism thus appears as much about heteronormativity, and the incorporation of homosexuality into normative kinship structures, as it does about providing alternative models for desire.

Johnny’s relationship with Pat is presented as stale and passionless, where homosexual desire fails to provide an escape from the tedium often associated with heterosexual marriage. For Johnny, vegetarianism grants him agency within structures of meaning, rewriting the heteronormative script of marriage and family life to include space for two men-who-love-men. However, in distinction to the queer possibilities I locate in the monstrous vegan, vegetarianism is domesticated by those who tolerate and placate its otherness. For example, the description of Briony, a local chef, serving Johnny a vegetarian dish and insisting simultaneously on the great trouble she has gone to prepare it, sees the admission that “Vegetarians often gave their hosts a new sense of their own virtue” (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 403). This acts as an extended metaphor for a heteronormative society that expects praise for a nominal inclusion of queerness within its own terms, providing only a comically inedible attempt to make room for other identities: the much troubled-over dish contains salmon. Vegetarianism, as a resistance to a predatory models of desire, functions here as a means by which difference can be incorporated within existing structures. For Johnny, this provides a setting for the performance of difference within heteronormative culture, and allows for a tacit, though often misguided, acceptance. David, by contrast, is seen to play the role of heteronormative patriarchal father, a performance seemingly exposed by his extra-marital affairs with men. The difficulty of distinguishing between real and fake meat, in the confusion over Quorn or mince, is here akin to the exposure of the “real” homosexual David, as in the

“Sparsholt affair” of the novel’s title, revealed as duplicitous in his performance of the role of dutiful straight father.

Positioned as an absence of desire, and therefore a sanitised version of heterosexuality, the writing of a hyperbolic vegetarianism highlights the performativity of desire more broadly. Johnny’s vegetarianism grants him the agency to resist “the long compromise of being acted upon” (Hollinghurst, *Sparsholt* 279), to carve a space for himself within existing social structures. Vegetarianism here polices, in some sense, the borders of that which is possible, a performance of desire that can only work within existing structures. However, this is an important reparative practice that seeks pleasure alongside an implicit critique of oppression.

Hollinghurst’s use of meat-based metaphors provides the possibility of embracing veganism as a performative spectacle of identity. In this sense, I argue that Hollinghurst engages with the camp possibilities of vegan being. In *Swimming-Pool Library* James’s frustrated desires express a hyperbolic satire of repressed desire, where the equation of homosexual desire with carnivorous consumption equates his plant-based diet with undesirability. His longing for the meatiness of “big cocks” insists that of course vegans secretly desire and enjoy these products. However, in the world of vegan camp, embracing James’s veganism as a rigid abstinence and non-consumption turns the gaze back on omnivores, forcing a simultaneous confrontation with the limits and instability of the carnivorous appetites undergirding their desires.

In *The Sparsholt Affair*, vegan camping, as a monstrous performance of otherness and projection of anxieties about normative desires, is complicated by its simultaneous association with agency and conformity. Here we see a literary expression of that which Butler argues as the double-thinking necessary for inclusion and recognition, requiring a level of sublimation in order to be accepted into the category of *human*. Veganism is not a pre-discursive, outside

position that resists the hierarchical categories of gender, race, and species. Instead, it functions as a domesticated form of otherness that is constructed as an absence of supposedly conventional desires. The performative dimension of Johnny's vegetarianism destabilises this norm of desire, revealing its own anxieties in the face of non-conformity and showing the ways in which monstrous vegans are domesticated by discursive terms, their radical queerness made abject.

As I argue above, Donovan's aesthetics of care threatens a relentless confrontation with horror. By requiring a continual exposure of hidden violence, Donovan's approach occupies a paranoid mode of reading, in Sedgwick's terms, to which vegan camp provides a necessary reparative antidote. By refusing a necessary seriousness in the face of the all-too-real gravity of the global animal-industrial complex, I suggest that Hollinghurst's camp aesthetics offer a survival strategy for individual vegans and a way of exposing the instabilities and incongruities of a speciesist world. A vegan camp reading emphasises the performative nature of human identity as it pertains to the assertion of human exceptionalism. However, whereas queer camping is often invested in a reclamation and survival strategy of gay men, *for* gay men, there is a distinction to be drawn between camp as a performance of a stigmatised vegan self and a performance of the stigmatised selfhood of nonhuman animals. Vegan camping, as it is defined here, is resolutely invested in the human, and vegan identity politics. As such, it risks ignoring the nonhuman animals veganism seeks to protect. This focus on the vegan over the animal is perhaps a necessary way of avoiding the symbolic consumption of the nonhuman. In the ironic detachment of vegan camp we see only the absurdity of a human speciesism that fails to understand nonhuman animals through an obsession with killing, consuming, and displaying their slaughtered bodies.

Ethical veganism often results in an inability to ignore the absent referent animals behind practices of animal exploitation. It is a peculiar way of seeing the world in its radical

misalignment with cultural norms. However, this does not necessitate a renunciation of desire. Vegan camp is offered as an invitation to recognise motives of pleasure implicit to paranoid reading practices; a reparative practice that foregrounds alternative forms of knowing beyond an often debilitating focus on the immensity of global animal suffering.

Camp thus provides an important critical perspective on the feelings of guilt and complicity interwoven into vegan modes of life. The moral condemnation and critique that might accompany an analogous attempt to formulate camp as a response to human rights violations risks implying that the incorporation of camp into the realm of animal rights diminishes their moral status and fails to take seriously the scale of their suffering. However, the ironic detachment required in camp aesthetics is possible because of an unavoidable mediation of affect attached to animal products. Whilst Donovan stresses the importance of “not standing apart as an outside observer but integrat[ing] into the same world as the ‘observed’” (92-93), camp, conversely, reduces everything to aesthetic phenomenon.

In Hollinghurst, this involves reading and deriving pleasure from a satire of human exceptionalism whilst acknowledging implication within its structures. The humour and pathos that co-mingle in the representation of structural inequalities contributing to the suppression of a carnivorous conception of queer sexual freedom for James and Johnny, can be read through a vegan camp lens as a reflection on the difficulties of living and desiring in a non-vegan world. Further, refusing a certain investment in the multiple meanings invested in meat, as in Johnny’s desire to resist such “intolerable meaning,” sees an incitement for surface reading. From Abdul’s “sumptuous calf-length fur coat” to meals “swimming in blood,” an investment in predatory metaphors is read as hyperbolic spectacle, encouraging a critical and skeptical consideration of the idea of a consumptive gaze that is naturalised as the foundation of sexual desire. Vegan camp is not, therefore, an evasion of responsibility but a declaration of self-interest in representing the nonhuman animal other. If, as Susan Sontag argues, one is

drawn to camp when one realises that “sincerity” is not enough (271), camp offers a way of embracing the monstrous vegan as a style and sensibility by which to live.

Conclusion

The Monstrous Vegan: Reading Veganism in Literature, 1818 to Present presents a literary-historical account of veganism that challenges its association with faddish dietary restrictions and provides a theoretical framework for thinking about and conceiving of veganism and vegan identity. This thesis establishes the foundations for an evaluation of veganism’s literary genealogy across a range of national and historic contexts through an explication of the trope of the monstrous vegan.

The monstrous vegan originates in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and can be traced through the fiction of Wells, Atwood, Coetzee, and Hollinghurst. This thesis asserts that the trope is pervasive across the works of these authors and beyond. It is also found, for example, in Shelley’s lesser known novels, such as *Valperga* (1823). Beatrice, believing herself a prophet, seeks to prove the wretched state of humankind by condemning their use of animals.

Speaking to Euthanasia, she proselytises:

I tell thee what; there is not an atom of life in this all-peopled world that does not suffer pain; we destroy animals;—look at your own dress, which a myriad of living creatures wove and then died; those sables,—a thousand hearts once beat beneath those skins, quenched in the agonies of death to furnish forth that cloak (Shelley, *Valperga* 343).

Here, exposure to the violence perpetrated against nonhuman animals is a means of challenging the Christian foundations of the Italian society with which she is part. Euthanasia, otherwise presented throughout the novel as the epitome of feminine virtue, is revealed as complicit in violence and cruelty through her choice of dress. Akin to Satan in Milton’s

Paradise Lost, Beatrice faces exile and laments the fate of humankind's subservience to an unjust God:

Oh! surely God's hand is the chastening hand of a father, that thus torments his children! His children? his eternal enemies! look, I am one! He created the seeds of disease, marena, thirst, want; he created man,—that most wretched of slaves; oh! know you not what a wretch man is? and what a store house of infinite pain is this much-vaunted human soul? (Shelley, *Valperga* 342).

In addition, the description of the witch Mandragola implicates her in a monstrous vision of vegetarian exile: “a woman with grey hair and decrepid limbs; she is clothed in rags, and feeds upon acorns and wood-nuts” (Shelley, *Valperga* 377). She is described as “short, almost deformed, shrivelled and dried up ... the flesh of her cheeks ... seemed hardly human; her hands were large, bony, and thin; she was unlike every other animal, but also was she unlike humanity, and seemed to form a species apart, which might well inspire the country people with awe” (Shelley, *Valperga* 378). This hideousness, mirroring that of Frankenstein's creature, sets her apart from the world of the human, a monstrous and heretical alternative characterised by a flesh-free diet. Shelley returns to the monstrous vegan here as a figure that embodies a contradictory assemblage of ideas at once utopian and apocalyptic.

The subsequent iteration and mutation of the monstrous vegan trope across the Anglophone literary canon over the past two centuries provides a focus for understanding the historical resonances of veganism, allowing me to trace the queer potentialities they offer. The monstrous children of the fallible scientists detailed across this thesis are also the literary creations, or “hideous progeny” of their authors, bringing issues of utopianism, futurity, and failure within vegan thought to the fore. In addition, monstrous vegans provide moments of queer possibility through a destabilisation of conventional understandings of what it means to be human.

Frankenstein's creature, as monstrous vegan, generates anxieties about it means to define oneself as human. The Gothic doubling throughout Shelley's novel combines with the monster's hybrid human-animal form and rejection of meat-eating to provoke anxieties about gendered, racial, and species definition. Shelley relies on Romantic vegetarian arguments about the relation between meat-eating and a Promethean fall from Grace. In contrast, Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* transposes the monstrous veganism of Victor Frankenstein's creature onto Moreau's Beast People: carnivorous hybrid assemblages whose vegetarianism is the product of a disciplinary Law designed to repress their animality. Drawing on the intersections between alimentary and sexual desire, Wells suggests the cannibalistic nature of our relations to others. Women, animals, and the young are linked throughout his fiction as consumable objects of desire. Whilst veganism appears as the inevitable result of political progress toward a utopian socialist future in Wells's later fiction, its monstrous transposition onto bodies in his earlier science fiction texts is suggestive of a temporal lag between utopian aspiration and the corporeal body. The evolutionary logic implicit here suggests the need for a moral evolution alongside the biological, and positions veganism as an external discourse that becomes monstrous when inscribed onto the physical body. Assertions of what it means to be human, to live humanely and to assert one's membership of humanity, is presented as a discursive construction fundamentally challenged by evolutionary discourse. Veganism comes to be associated with monstrous, uncontainable, and degenerate bodies.

Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy consciously rewrites the veganisms of Shelley and Wells to suggest their ultimate futility. Her formal complicity in mass culture comes to mirror the impurity of discursive veganisms, which cannot escape complicity in violence and draws attention to the inaccessibility of the body before discourse. This suggests the ultimate futility of veganism as an ethical model. Whilst I seek to redeem Atwood's narratives by suggesting

moments of vegan potentiality in her novels, such a quest for redemption might suggest itself as a wilful or futile scholarly endeavour.

Hollinghurst and Coetzee offer, by contrast, an alternative mode of redemption for reading vegan monsters, where veganism appears as a performative identity. It signals a temporary escape from wounding knowledge through the performance of horror, an alternative to predatory models of desire, and a nominal inclusion within normative structures. Veganism appears inextricable from its situation within discursive contexts and cultural meanings. Its performance is both an assertion of agency as much as a submission to, and expression of, complicity in dominant trajectories of desire. In therefore negating essentialist notions of desire, the performative emerges as a mode of comprehending ethical vegan identity that allows for complexity, inconsistency, and insufficiency to co-exist alongside a queer and utopian investment in what it might mean to understand one's sense of being human otherwise.

My readings of Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello texts suggests what we might *do* with the pessimistic approach to vegan identity beyond a resignation to its deconstruction or futility as a mode of being to adopt, embrace, or inhabit. Hollinghurst's play with vegan stereotypes, whilst re-writing heteronormative codes of sexual desire and carving a space for the expression of queer desire within the traditional realist novel, provides a further redemptive and reparative performance of a hyperbolic vegan identity. If performance in Coetzee offers a way of inhabiting the complexity and contradictions of our sense of self as ethical subjects, reading Hollinghurst through a vegan camp lens allows for the expression of agency alongside an acknowledgement of complicity. This draws on the queer appropriations of *Frankenstein*, particularly in filmic and theatrical adaptations, which suggest an implicit camp quality to Shelley's story of man-making, lending itself well to an exposure of the humorous excesses of human exceptionalism.

This dissertation adds detail and nuance to the ways in which veganism is understood in the contemporary imaginary. It offers modes of reading that encourage the utopian aim of an end to human violence inflicted upon nonhuman animals whilst acknowledging the depths of our complicity within the presently inescapable confines of speciesist culture. Vegan monsters provide alternative forms of knowing beyond a paranoid reading of, and an often debilitating focus on, the immensity of global animal suffering. I establish that if veganism, and its manifestation in the monstrous vegan trope, exists as a literary and discursive trope inscribed onto bodies, it might also be consciously inhabited as an excessive and parodic performance.

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