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Literature and Meat Since 1900

Edited by
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Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature

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Various academic disciplines can now be found in the process of executing an 'animal turn', questioning the ethical and philosophical grounds of human exceptionalism by taking seriously the nonhuman animal presences that haunt the margins of history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology and literary studies. Such work is characterised by a series of broad, cross-disciplinary questions. How might we rethink and problematise the separation of the human from other animals? What are the ethical and political stakes of our relationships with other species? How might we locate and understand the agency of animals in human cultures?

This series publishes work that looks, specifically, at the implications of the 'animal turn' for the field of English Studies. Language is often thought of as the key marker of humanity's difference from other species; animals may have codes, calls or songs, but humans have a mode of communication of a wholly other order. The primary motivation is to muddy this assumption and to animalise the canons of English Literature by rethinking representations of animals and interspecies encounter. Whereas animals are conventionally read as objects of fable, allegory or metaphor (and as signs of specifically human concerns), this series significantly extends the new insights of interdisciplinary animal studies by tracing the engagement of such figuration with the material lives of animals. It examines textual cultures as variously embodying a debt to or an intimacy with animals and advances understanding of how the aesthetic engagements of literary arts have always done more than simply illustrate natural history. We publish studies of the representation of animals in literary texts from the Middle Ages to the present and with reference to the discipline's key thematic concerns, genres and critical methods. The series focuses on literary prose and poetry, while also accommodating related discussion of the full range of materials and texts and contexts (from theatre and film to fine art, journalism, the law, popular writing and other cultural ephemera) with which English studies now engages.

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Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature
ISBN 978-3-030-26916-6 ISBN 978-3-030-26917-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26917-3

Cover credit: Juniors Bildarchiv GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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Adrian Tait is an independent scholar and environmental critic. A long-standing member of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE-UKI), he has regularly published in its journal, *Green Letters*. He has also contributed to a number of other scholarly journals, including the *European Journal of English Studies* (2018), and to essay collections such as *Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Literary Ecologies* (2017), *Victorian Ecocriticism* (2017), and *Enchanted, Stereotyped, Civilized: Garden Narratives in Literature, Art and Film* (2018). He continues to explore the way in which nineteenth-century and early modernist fiction anticipates but also problematizes contemporary, ecocritical concerns.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Meat Critique

Seán McCorry and John Miller

It is no longer news that the intensification of animal agriculture since the beginning of the twentieth century is a major contributor to our current moment of mass extinctions and climate crisis. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization's landmark 2006 report "Livestock's Long Shadow" points out that "the livestock sector is a major stressor on many ecosystems and on the planet as whole", adding that animal agriculture "is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases and one of the leading causal factors in the loss of biodiversity".[1] These claims reached a wider audience in the second decade of the twenty-first century through their inclusion in the popular activist documentary *Cowspiracy*, which linked an environmentalist critique of the ecological impacts of animal agriculture to an explicitly vegan polemic against animal slaughter: "Each day, a person who eats a vegan diet saves 1100 gallons of water, 45 lb of grain, 30 sq ft of forested land, 20 lbs CO_2 equivalent, and one animal's life".[2] Animal agriculture, and the meat economy in particular, has long been a site of

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S. McCorry and J. Miller (eds.), *Literature and Meat Since 1900*,
Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26917-3_1

representational, moral, and political contestation, but this recent highlighting of its environmental costs has added a sense of acute urgency to debates surrounding the future of meat production.

In this collection, we explore the value of literary-critical perspectives as a complement to the more familiar ethical and political analyses of what Annie Potts calls "meat culture".[3] Our central premise is that the practices of our contemporary meat regime are shaped and reproduced as much by cultural and imaginative factors as by political contestation and moral reasoning. These cultural and imaginative factors are part of what Melanie Joy describes as "the invisible belief system [of] *carnism*" (original emphasis) through which meat-eating is made to appear as "a given, the 'natural' thing to do, the way things always have been and always will be".[4] Joy's diagnosis is resonant of Nick Fiddes' earlier identification of meat as a "natural symbol" that articulates "a principle of power over nature" and forms "an omnipresent thread" through Western culture. For Fiddes, this "is not an invisible thread, but we usually do not see it".[5] Meat in both these influential accounts is simultaneously ubiquitous and obscured. In an era of gradually intensifying ecological consciousness, meat remains somewhat underdetermined; its consumption is tied to myths and developed through histories that are at best insufficiently interrogated. Consequently, literary and broader cultural studies are necessary in order to continue to unravel meat's complexities, to examine its affective, aesthetic, and ideological components, and to imaginatively attend to the animal lives and deaths on which the meat industry is constructed. As such, developing the work of Fiddes, Joy and others, the volume centres on various versions of what we might call "meat critique"; the essays collected here all seek to unpack and to challenge dominant narratives of meat-eating and conceptions of animals as resources (albeit in different ways).

In order to better understand meat's role in the current crisis, and the place of literary representation from 1900 to the present in responding to our contemporary meat culture, we begin by offering a brief historical overview of meat culture as it has developed in the last century in the affluent capitalist democracies of Europe and North America. Our analysis largely focuses on this particular geographic context because it is in these countries that the characteristic form of modern (intensive, industrialised) meat culture first took shape, though some of our chapters engage with the global dissemination of Euro-American animal agriculture. Clearly, there is significant work to be done to thoroughly engage with the literary representation of meat cultures' development in national and regional contexts

outside of the West and in earlier periods, but that work has not been attempted here. The history of meat cultures leads us towards a survey of some of the ethical and representational questions that emerge from taking meat seriously as both an index of socio-cultural change and a scene of violence. In turn, this survey allows us to articulate the ways in which the volume aims to contribute to work in animal studies and the more recent and more sharply delineated field of vegan studies.

The history of meat production from 1900 to the present closely maps on to broader processes of modernisation, with technological developments stimulating a twofold process of intensification: first of all an intensification of speed, as farmers and slaughterhouse workers reared, killed, and processed animals for the market at an ever-increasing pace; and secondly an astonishing scaling up of animal agribusiness, with more and more corpses produced each year to satisfy the modern consumer market's growing appetite for animal flesh. Already by 1900, the productive forces that had been set in motion by the industrialisation of animal slaughter had achieved such levels of efficiency and velocity as to become valued as aesthetic spectacles, as Dominic A. Pacyga points out:

> At the turn of the twentieth century, a reported five hundred thousand people visited [Chicago's] Union Stock Yard annually. To modern sensibilities, to take a tour of the stockyard and the packing plants—even to bring small children to the hog kill—might seem repulsive, but through most of its history the Union Stockyard and the adjacent plants were major tourist attractions. Fascination with the new drew these visitors.[6]

This "fascination with the new" perfectly captures the surprising connections between the animal body and modernity. It is not that the meat industry passively reflected modernity's general impetus towards intensification and acceleration; it is rather the case that the techniques that would allow modern industrial production to increase its output were in fact devised in the slaughter business. Carol J. Adams is one of many writers who have noted the Chicago stockyard's signal role in inspiring new methods of industrial production, principally through its influence on Henry Ford, who borrowed the stockyard's strategies of spatial and temporal organisation for his own automobile factories: "Although Ford reversed the outcome of the process of slaughtering in that a product is created rather than fragmented on the assembly line, he contributed at the same time to the

larger fragmentation of the individual's work and productivity".[7] The animal body, then, is the surface on which capitalist modernity first perfected many of its characteristic techniques of alienation and rationalised violence. The slaughterhouse's strange conjugation of animal and working-class bodies shaped Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), an exposé of the Chicago stockyards in which the author "blends the fate of human workers with that of meat animals" (and which is considered by Ted Geier in this volume in relation to Franz Kafka's fiction).[8]

For authors living through the great political and military crises of the first half of the century, these crises seemed similarly to invoke this easy slippage between industrial assembly and disassembly, lively body and inert corpse. As Vicki Tromanhauser's chapter in this collection shows, the experience of the trenches in the First World War showed how the same techniques of modernity that had been elaborated in the slaughterhouse could be readily turned against human combatants. One of the effects of the war on the cultural imagination was a renewed awareness of how readily industrial technologies could shorten the distance between human and nonhuman animal life. The Vickers machine gun and its contemporary the captive bolt pistol both testified to modernity's adeptness for slaughter, and as Tromanhauser shows, the many wounds produced by new military technologies forced an uneasy confrontation with the fact of human bodily finitude—a recognition, ultimately, that the human is a creature of the flesh.

The carnage of the Second World War, too, would incite a turn towards the fleshly finitude of the human animal, not least in Francis Bacon's postwar "meat paintings", in connection with which the artist remarked: "Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher shop, I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal".[9] Confronted with the rapid expansion and globalisation of the market for animal flesh in the decades following the war, a number of prominent theorists and cultural critics were troubled by supposed affinities between the mechanised violence of the war machines and the lethal efficiency of postwar animal-agricultural production. Zygmunt Bauman imagined Nazi violence not as an aberration or a regression but as the culmination of a certain trajectory of modernity, pointing out that during the war, "the industrial potential and technological know-how boasted by our civilization […] scaled new heights in dealing with a task of unprecedented magnitude", namely, "the Final Solution".[10] The philosopher (and former Nazi) Martin Heidegger

brought this critique of rationalised violence to bear on the modern meat industry when in 1949 he notoriously pronounced that

> Agriculture is now a motorized food-industry—in essence, the same as the manufacturing of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of nations, the same as the manufacturing of hydrogen bombs.[11]

In this uncomfortable passage, Heidegger joins a chorus of writers who imagined intensive meat production as one of the symptoms of a technologically-saturated and fundamentally amoral postwar consumer culture.

Elspeth Huxley riffs on her cousin-in-law Aldous's best known novel when, in her *Brave New Victuals* (1965), she worries that the "ancient link between man and beast is being greatly weakened" by the techniques of intensified animal agriculture devised to meet the needs of a growing market.[12] Though she is by no means a feminist writer, Huxley anticipates later pro-animal feminist theory in identifying meat culture as a site of gendered labour, recording (in a somewhat mournful key) that "the ritual of father with the carving knife at the head of the family table is a thing of the past".[13] Rationalised meat production has replaced the spectacle of the animal body at the table with "the tender, convenient, quickly cooked little cut of steak in its oven-ready tray", a displacement of gustatory and familial authenticity by the needs of the market.[14] Huxley's attitude here evokes what Jovian Parry calls "the new nostalgia for meat", a now relatively widespread phenomenon in popular-culture gastronomy that complicates the "meanings of meat in post-modernity" by insisting on the "the spiritual benefits of raising and slaughtering one's own animals".[15] If post-modernity comprises in some senses the end of nature as a reliable conceptualisation of some distinct more-than-human realm, then "traditional" meat production and consumption appears as a mythic imaginary in which this lost, and deeply conservative, sense of nature might be recovered.

One year before the first publication of Huxley's critique of intensive animal agriculture, Ruth Harrison published her *Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry*. In her foreword to Harrison's exposé, Rachel Carson (the author of *Silent Spring*) situates the book's investigation of factory farming within a now well-established analysis of modernity: "The modern world worships the gods of speed and quantity, and of the quick and easy profit, and out of this idolatry monstrous evils have arisen".[16]

For Carson and others, the meat industry is a key indicator of the moral health of modernity, which simultaneously encapsulates the progressive dream of technological development and consumer abundance on the one hand, and a kind of pagan reversion to gratuitous violence on the other.

Authors like Carson, Huxley, and Harrison create a framework for criticising the perverse modernity of meat culture that would later in the century be appropriated by more radical vegetarian and vegan critics of animal agriculture. The novelist J. M. Coetzee bears the traces of this tradition when he writes of his experiences as a vegetarian in Texas: "Trying to live a life on Gandhian-Shavian lines [i.e. abstemious, non-violent, vegetarian] in the United States today" is impossibly dated, since "it is a way of life without a future", wholly obsolete in "an economy based on the personal automobile and on getting people to consume more each year than the year before".[17] Several essays in this collection engage with the diverse temporal imaginaries of meat culture. Coetzee extrapolates from the twentieth-century American experience in imagining that meat production will continue to expand as consumer affluence grows, the "chicken in every pot" of the 1920s becoming the monstrous over-abundance of animal flesh of the present and future. But this is not the only possible future for meat culture. As Seán McCorry shows in his chapter on *Soylent Green*, environmentally-attuned writers of speculative fiction worried that short-term abundance could turn to longer-term scarcity, with the disappearance of "meat animals" a key indicator of ecological health. And John Miller's chapter on in vitro meat shows how mid-century science fiction was already anticipating twenty-first-century debates on the aesthetics and political economy of artificial meat.

This is not to suggest that Coetzee is unreasonable in imagining our current regime of intensive meat production as basically secure for the foreseeable future. It is perfectly possible to imagine meat production continuing despite any future scarcity crises; meat holds such a prominent place in the imaginaries of patriarchy, individualism, and class power that it seems likely to survive even at the cost of accelerated environmental decline. Indeed, it is *already* surviving at the cost of accelerated environmental decline. Whether or not "artificial meat" is accepted on the consumer market, it is probable that animal flesh will continue to be sold as a pricy marker of authenticity and luxury consumption. Despite the growth of ethical veganism in the first decades of this century, the general tendency of meat production is towards continued expansion. According to the FAO's statistics, between

1961 and 2016 the number of pigs slaughtered globally nearly quadrupled, from 376,366,821 pigs to 1,478,167,073. Over the same period, the number of chickens slaughtered increased tenfold, from 6,577,869,000 in 1961 to an astonishing 65,847,411,000 killed in 2016.[18] The scale of all this killing is such that scientists expect that the waste generated (namely the bones of the slaughtered chickens) will leave a defining signature in the geological record of modernity, noting that "broiler chickens vividly symbolize the transformation of the biosphere to fit evolving human consumption patterns, and show clear potential to be a biostratigraphic marker species of the Anthropocene".[19] Given the current vogue for renaming our geological era (from Anthropocene to Capitolocene to Anthrobscene and beyond), it is tempting to offer the Carnocene as another alternative: ours is the epoch when the planet was profoundly and irrevocably damaged in order to accommodate an appetite for the flesh of other creatures.

The immense scale of the violence attributable to our current meat culture creates substantial representational problems for novelists and other creative artists who attempt to engage with the lives and deaths of so-called "meat animals". It is difficult to know how to even begin to represent 65 billion deaths within literary discourse, and this representational problem seems in many ways to follow from the conventions of literary representation itself. Amitav Ghosh has recently shown how the novel form struggles to respond adequately to climate change, arguing that the (bourgeois realist) novel's preoccupation with the regularities of experience, its commitment to individualism, and its pervasive anthropocentrism all contribute to a representational blind spot made apparent by its inability to represent encounters that are driven by extreme climate phenomena: "in these encounters", he writes, "we recognize something we had turned away from: that is to say, the presence and proximity of nonhuman interlocutors".[20]

Similarly, the economic and institutional contours of meat culture resist (at least in part) any attempts to capture them within literary form. The association of the novel with individualism, and the centring of most novels on the experience one or several individuated subjects (who moreover are nearly always figured as *human* subjects, at least in so-called serious fiction), creates significant difficulties with regard to the problem of scale. Since literary discourse has so far been preoccupied with representing individual experience, novelists lack the formal resources that would equip them to represent the lives and deaths of the 65 billion broiler chickens who are killed for meat each year.

Of course, one possible response to this is to evade the problem of scale altogether. The individualist tradition in literary representation is anthropocentric for reasons that are historically contingent rather than necessary, and a burgeoning field of empirical work is showing how nonhuman animals *are* individuals, and thus perhaps amenable to adaptations of familiar representational strategies.[21] This empirical work on animal individuality bolsters long-standing claims from animal rights philosophers that (most) animals are "subjects of a life that fares well or ill for them, logically independent of their utility for others", and that our moral obligations towards them ought to be revaluated on this basis.[22] In literary studies, this claim has been largely divorced from its liberal rhetorical framing but otherwise reproduced substantially intact by scholars who have followed Jacques Derrida's influential analysis of the "unsubstitutable singularity" of animal lives.[23] If one of the characteristics of literature as a cultural practice is its close attention to the texture of individual experience, and if one of the outcomes of this attention is a renewal of our sense of our ethical responsibilities to one another, then a post-anthropocentric literary practice is not entirely without resources for reshaping our attitudes to meat culture and the animal subjects who are caught in its violent embrace.

The idea of a post-anthropocentric literary practice is one that has been developing for some time now under the wider aegis of animal studies as a trans-disciplinary academic enterprise concerned with examining the manifold dimensions of human–animal interaction, often (though by no means always) with an underlying ethical and political commitment to animal lives. Literary animal studies scholars have made significant strides towards eroding literature's ostensible significance as a sign of human pre-eminence, locating moments of animal agency and identifying the ambivalences and instabilities of humanism. Given that the conversion of animal bodies into flesh for human consumption is a practice where relations of power between humans and nonhuman animals are reproduced in exemplary form, it is perhaps surprising that the literary representation of meat has not appeared more fully and more consistently in the foreground of literary animal studies.

Certainly, there have been significant discussions of meat in many of the formative works of literary animal studies over the last two decades or so. Nicole Shukin draws extensively on the material histories of meat production in setting out her conception of animal capital, particularly the ways in which "[a]utomotive and meatpacking plants" are "produced as parallel subjects of modern capitalism's time-motion

economies".[24] Susan McHugh includes a chapter in *Animal Stories* "examining how industrial meat narratives frame more widespread anxieties about the failure of representation regarding animal agency".[25] In *Animal* Erica Fudge provides an extended discussion of the cultural politics of meat-eating and the awkward line "between edibility and inedibility",[26] which she develops in a later essay explaining "Why It's Easy Being a Vegetarian": meat-eating by contrast is hard "because it is so rife with contradictions". Why in the West is a sheep "edible, while a dog is not" (and this is a tension that Joy also explores in detail)?[27] In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*, Philip Armstrong explores the disassembly line in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* at some length, while also engaging with meat in pre-1900 texts, most notably H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Despite the undoubted significance of meat in these (and numerous other) important contributions to literary animal studies there has not yet been a single volume devoted entirely to the specific question of the literary representation of meat in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (although it is worth noting that Ted Geier's *Meat Markets: The Cultural History of Bloody London* provides a thorough discussion of meat throughout the long nineteenth century). Moreover, neither Kari Weil's nor Mario Ortiz Robles' introductions to animal studies contains more than a passing reference to meat. In formulating a vegan studies Laura Wright has drawn attention to this dearth of scholarly, cultural studies of "the discourse of meat", a lack which provides an important invitation to this collection not least because Wright's own work has emphasised the need for more critical engagement with meat.[28]

Written from an avowedly pro-animal position, Wright's *The Vegan Studies Project* "seeks to disrupt the presentation of a homogenous notion of what it means to be a vegan", discovering instead a variety of pathways to veganism from diverse activist and cultural traditions.[29] Wright's book provides a corrective to later genealogies of animal scholarship, acknowledging the centrality of Jacques Derrida's work to recent research in human–animal studies while foregrounding a long-standing heritage of ecofeminist involvement in questions of dietary politics and meat critique. *The Vegan Studies Project* contains a productive typology of animal scholarship, emphasising the important distinctions to be drawn between critical or ecofeminist work (which is broadly oriented towards the abolition of meat culture) and human–animal studies, which is more interested in ethnographic description of existing patterns of entangled human–animal relationships, and which lacks the founding gesture of refusal that constitutes

the ethical point of departure for more critical approaches.[30] Wright draws connections between meat culture and national security, tracing the ways in which the post-9/11 security panic drew a clear line between (carnist, and especially pork-eating) American cultural norms on the one hand, and "foreign", dissident, or otherwise suspicious dietary norms on the other.

This perhaps surprising linkage supports a contention made by Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood in their collection *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture*: *Vegan Theory*, as they call it, might be conceived as an exercise in "discovering what vegan ways of being in the world might do to our practices of reading".[31] Although our collection is not conceived directly as an example of an emergent vegan studies, several essays in the collection engage with veganism and/or vegetarianism (most extensively Tom Tyler's chapter). More exactly, the kind of meat critiques the volume foregrounds comprises a similarly far-reaching endeavour to vegan studies and a form of critical practice that will, we hope, necessarily inform dissident perspectives on meat culture.

The volume begins with Vicki Tromanhauser's exploration of the testimony of women serving as non-combatants (principally as nurses or ambulance drivers) in the First World War. These women witnessed extraordinary, harrowing scenes of the human body's dissolution in the face of the war's industrial-scale slaughter; strikingly, they often described their experience in ways that foreground what Tromanhauser describes as the human body's ultimate "meatness". For Vera Brittain writing in her 1933 memoir *Testament of Youth*, wounded bodies gave the hospital in Camberwell a "butcher's-shop appearance". More specifically, Mary Borden in *The Forbidden Zone* (1929) sees a soldier's extracted knee as a "*ragoût* of *mouton*", while Irene Rathbone's 1932 novel *We That Were Young* identifies a swollen arm as a "nightmare German sausage". Tromanhauser draws on the work of Georges Bataille, Julia Kristeva and Mel Y. Chen to examine how the wounded human body's formlessness produces a state of ontological confusion in which distinctions between the human and non-human become difficult to cling on to.

Chapter 2 sees Ted Geier turn to the work of Franz Kafka and to the inescapable politics of the killing machines through which his characters are rendered as "meat objects". Kafka's work is consistently drawn to punishment—most famously in "The Penal Colony" (1914) and *The Trial* (1925)—and the elaborate attention to the mechanisms of slaughter suggest comparisons to Sinclair's great novel of the Chicago meatworks *The Jungle* (1910). As animals are processed into meat in Sinclair's visceral

descriptions of industrial slaughterhouses, so Kafka's characters are processed through violent, punitive systems towards unceremonious deaths. Ranging widely across Kafka's novels and stories and utilising Adorno's and Deleuze's thought, Geier traces modes of subjection produced by systems that appear as sources of wonder. In Kafka's fictional universe, characters arrive calmly at their deaths in a way that evokes Temple Grandin's contribution to the design of softer slaughter systems.

In Chapter 3, Adrian Tait applies Jacques Derrida's influential formulation of carnophallogocentrism to two closely connected novels: Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and Elizabeth Taylor's *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945). Derrida's emphasis on a sacrificial structure through which the virile human subject emerges through the slaughter of animals is represented in exemplary form in Woolf's novel, most notably through Mrs. Ramsey's triumphant *Boeuf en Daube* in the key dinner party scene. As Mr. Ramsey, that "arid scimitar", sits assuredly at the head of the table, Woolf dramatises meat's symbolic centrality in a patriarchal order, though Tait argues for a subtle refinement of this logic through Mrs. Ramsey's broader, more inclusive sense of hospitality. Emerging during a time of rationing, Taylor's war-time text lacks the sense of abundance Mrs. Ramsey cultivates in her *Boeuf en Daube* though there are some significant intertextual references to the earlier novel. Like Woolf, Tait argues, Taylor reconceives the operation of a carnophallogocentric structure, in part due to her preoccupation with the war's brutality and with the cruelty of the family unit.

Stewart Cole continues the focus on carnophallogocentrism in Chapter 4. Putting the poet W. H. Auden alongside the novelist and essayist George Orwell, Cole examines the ways in which, despite significant tensions between them (due in part to Orwell's homophobia), these authors are united by a suspicion towards vegetarianism. Both Orwell and Auden were involved in anti-fascist activism in the 1930s, though as Orwell saw it, in markedly different ways. Orwell styled himself as a man of action and conceived of Auden as distinctly less macho. Orwell's critique of Auden fits into a wider conception of masculinity that appears exemplary of carnophallogocentrism: the influence of "Nancy poets" and vegetarians is identified in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) as one of the chief problems facing socialism. Auden, in return was scathing or Orwell's fixation with the ordinary or the normal. But as the 1930s progresses and the biopolitical threat of fascism became more urgent, the anti-vegetarian rhetoric of Orwell and Auden comes to be indistinguishable. Auden's fetishisation of meat-eating

comes to be every bit as carnophallogocentric as Orwell's. Consequently, Cole argues, we should remain alert to the ways in which normative models of subjectivity can be reasserted even in otherwise liberatory causes.

In Chapter 5 John Miller turns to the invention of in vitro meat (IVM) over the last few years as a radical and alluring solution to the many ecological and ethical detriments of conventional meat production. While IVM (or clean meat as it is now sometimes called) appears as a hypermodern product of technotopian capitalism, it is actually a substance with a surprisingly long history, dating back at least to 1881 and Mary Bradley Lane's feminist utopia *Mizora*. After summarising IVM's literary history, Miller offers an extended analysis of Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth's 1952 novel *The Space Merchants*, a stinging critique of post-war programmes of agricultural intensification that revolves around Chicken Little, a decades-old "hundred-ton lump of grey-brown rubbery flesh" that grows unceasingly and supports a global industry. Although the novel nostalgically valourises a lost pastoral world of purportedly authentic human–animal relations, *The Space Merchants* is not a straightforwardly conservative text, however, but one which raises crucial questions about the cultural meaning and ideological function of IVM.

One of the key ambivalences of Pohl and Kornbluth's depiction of IVM is the way in which the separation of protein from an originary animal encourages a sense of meat as a designation which transcends species and so might encompass human as well as animal flesh. Such cannibalistic tendencies are taken up explicitly in Chapter 6 as Seán McCorry analyses Richard Fleischer's 1973 film *Soylent Green*. From the late 1960s through the 1970s, a new awareness of the extraordinary growth rate of the world population reenergised Malthusian themes in environmentalism and the environmental sciences. In the field of population ecology, the publication of *The Limits to Growth* (1972) and *The Population Bomb* (1968) heightened cultural anxieties around "overpopulation", and in the same period, a thriving subgenre of speculative fiction translated these anxieties into apocalyptic narratives of population crisis. McCorry situates *Soylent Green* within an analysis of the biopolitics of the contemporary scientific debate on population. *Soylent Green* testifies to the ambivalent position of the human in the biopolitics of population management, imagining the rediscovery of the edibility of the human body as the necessary corollary of a thoroughly modern discourse of population management, shorn of its vestigial commitment to human exceptionalism.

Chapter 7 takes the collection away from land as Dominic O'Key considers W. G. Sebald's depiction of herring fisheries and fish-eating in *Rings of Saturn* (1995). To date Sebald has received little attention from animal studies scholars with the dominant critical focus concerning the humanism of Sebald's project in the face of the holocaust. *Rings of Saturn* does, however, engage at some length with the North Sea fishing industry. Drawing on Adorno's formulation of "Natural-History", O'Key explores how Sebald presents nature and history as interlinked in two key scenes: the comic description of the consumption of a particularly bleak plate of fish and chips in Lowestoft and a historical narrative of herring fishery in which he is sharply critical of its ecological harms. Ultimately, for O'Key, Sebald can be seen as a figure who is significantly resistant to fish eating.

In Chapter 8, Rachael Allen turns her attention to some affinities between the position of women and the position of "meat animals" in contemporary poetry. Drawing on the work of Carol J. Adams and Nicole Shukin, Allen provides a close reading of the poetry of Ariana Reines and Selima Hill that explores the imaginative connections between women and cows. The ambivalent relationship between matter and sign is revealed to be a site of instability, with symbolic figurations impacting on our understanding of the body of the animal/woman, and vice versa: "Both Reines and Hill, through their varying poetics, ensure that the material consequences of an animal-made-symbol are foregrounded, for the figure of both the animal and the woman". Writing against attempts to posit the body as a symbolic and material resource for the use of others, Allen's poets seek to liberate the flesh from instrumentalisation and exploitation.

A crucial and under-examined aspect of contemporary meat culture is the way in which it exemplifies and reproduces the dominant role of the United States in world affairs, translating the "hard" violence of the animal agricultural system into the "soft" power of American cultural hegemony. In Chapter 9, Sarika Chandra explores the relationship between meat and the prestige of American culture in the global capitalist marketplace. Chandra focuses on Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* (1998), a novel which follows Japanese-American filmmaker Jane Takagi-Little as she directs *My American Wife*, a documentary and cooking show foregrounding a carefully curated image of (white, heterosexual) American domesticity. The purpose of *My American Wife* is to generate a market for American beef products in Japan. Chandra's chapter explores how meat figures in this intercultural encounter, following Jane as she constructs the artifice that defines the image of American meat culture on the global market, through her

repudiation of meat culture and her eventual turn towards making exposé films that take aim at the exploitative practices of large-scale agribusiness. The chapter concludes with some important insights into the limits of the exposé form as a mode of meat critique.

In Chapter 10, Sarah Bezan turns her attention to the materiality of meat through a reading of British novelist Jim Crace's *The Devil's Larder* (2001). Working along lines of thought established by the New Materialist theorists of recent years, Bezan's reading of the novel shows how food is no passive matter, but instead possesses its own agency and wilfulness, a fact reflected in Crace's fabulist narrative by the magical effects that food induces in the eater. With the key concept of "alimentary materialism", Bezan refuses to position humans as solitary actors and foods as simple surfaces upon which they act, a move which the novel imagines as a weakening of the human's (imagined) potency and uniqueness: "Crace deconstructs the literary field of food, which has often historically privileged the human as a superior entity in *tasting others*, rather than in *being tasted*". *The Devil's Larder* contests the boundary work that partitions the edible world into human/animal/vegetable, licit and taboo foods, such that these taxonomic categories lose their coherence, with instructive effects.

Chapter 11 sees Ruth Lipschitz confront the politics of death across species lines, reading the performance *Dance With Nothing But Heart* (2001) in the light of Jacques Derrida's zoontology. This performance—a collaboration between South African artist Steven Cohen and his partner, the dancer Elu—prominently features an ox's heart, which is at once a prop for Elu to dance with and a corporeal reminder of animal life and death. Lipschitz's chapter dwells on the question of mourning as it is variously posed for humans and for animals, ultimately discovering in Cohen and Elu's performance a complex interaction of sex, gender, and species that troubles any attempt to draw a clear, insuperable line between human and animal, loosening the hold of species taxonomies over the ethical work of mourning the other.

If it is not too early to speak of an emerging canon of meat texts, Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000) would certainly figure prominently in any such selection. In Chapter 12, Matthew Calarco builds on his previously published typologies of animal-activist strategies to produce a new reading of Faber's novel. The novel imagines an ironic inversion of human supremacy, with an alien race (who are named "human" in the text) arriving on earth to farm human (or "vodsel") males for their flesh, which is