

DISSERTATION

**THE ANIMAL PARADOX:
ANIMALS, SOVEREIGNTY AND THE POLITICS OF EATING**

**Submitted by
Katherine E. Young
Department of Political Science**

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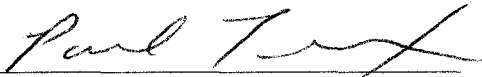
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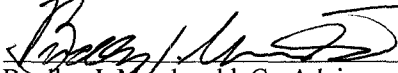
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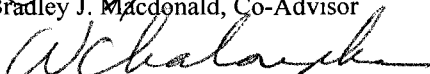
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Committee on Graduate Work


Paul Trembath


Eric Ishiwata


Bradley J. Macdonald, Co-Advisor


William J. Chaloupka, Co-Advisor


Robert Duffy, Department Chair

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION
THE ANIMAL PARADOX:
ANIMALS, SOVEREIGNTY AND THE POLITICS OF EATING

Looking at the history of political thought, it becomes clear that animals are the decisive political exception in Western politics. It is not that animals are simply excluded in the history of political thought, however, but that they are “inclusively excluded,” demarcating the constitutive outside of politics. In other words, animals are characterized as unable to differentiate themselves from their world because they are irrational, speechless and/or appetite driven, and for these reasons, they function as markers for the state of nature and the exit point of politics. Expanding the Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben’s work on the *state of exception*, it appears that the sacrifice of animal bodies—not simply the idea of animality—becomes vital to sustaining key political concepts like sovereignty, democracy and rights. More specifically, there is an underlying politics of eating that nourishes the Western canon. In the simplest terms, the politics of eating is a secular transubstantiation of sovereign power, in which meat is the material good (signifying the good life) that is consumed by political subjects to mitigate the tension between individual and state sovereignty. Of course, this economy of relations is exacerbated under late capitalism.

With the advent of the animal rights movement, however, animals are now drawn into this anthropological political space. Yet, because so many animal advocates (scholars and activists alike) embrace traditional understandings of rights, democracy and sovereignty, they inadvertently support juridical forms that undermine their projects. With this in mind, and given the exceptional political state of animals, it is timely to think about new political strategies that take seriously the irony of animals within the larger context of politics as well as restore the public spectacle of meat, in order to reveal and disrupt the sacrificial politics of eating, which includes both humans and animals.

Katherine E. Young
Political Science Department
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Term of Graduation 2008

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Chapter One

Introduction: Bear Politics

When the decapitated bodies of two black bears were sifted out of a Richmond, Virginia landfill in 2006, the city was catapulted into an emotional tempest. The bears, affectionately named Buster and Baby, were popular inhabitants of Richmond's Maymont Park, and the announcement of their deaths took the City by surprise. Richmonders demanded to know what happened: How could these two beloved residents of the City be dead? What is more, how could their bodies be thoughtlessly and secretly thrown in the dump with the rest of the trash? As the public would soon find out, the circumstances surrounding the bears' deaths were muddled, at best. Somehow, a four-year old boy accompanied by his mother had gotten close enough to the bears to get bitten by one of them—not seriously, just a small nip on the hand that did not require stitches. State law required the medical professionals who treated the boy to report the bite to the Department of Health and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, who then made the decision to kill the bears and test them for rabies. (According to state officials, the only other option was to treat the boy with a series of six rabies shots, which held the possibility of side effects.) The bears were promptly euthanized, their brains removed and tested for rabies. Both tests came back negative (Helderman, "Killing"). Of course, all of this happened very quickly and behind closed doors. When the news broke, Richmonders wanted answers.

Responding to massive public outrage, Richmond Mayor Douglass Wilder ordered an official investigation into the bears' deaths. City workers were directed to sift through the dump with a backhoe, find the bears' bodies and begin preparation of a

suitable memorial site. On March 4, 2006, 500 people watched as a Boy Scout troop escorted by a color guard lowered two bronze urns containing the bears' ashes into the ground at Maymont Park (Helderman, "Killing"). Mayor Wilder gave the eulogy. And the City cried. A few days after the funeral, members of the Virginia General Assembly celebrated their Annual Wild Game Dinner. The dinner, which always takes place at the start of the budget conference, is hosted by a group of hunters, fishermen, lobbyists and law enforcement types. And what did they serve? Well among other things, "Pot Roast of Black Bear" (Helderman, "Bear").

How did the events in this small southern city shift so quickly and quietly from bear politics to bear potluck? More specifically, what made the bears at Maymont so extraordinary to deserve a memorial service—and later a plaque, statue and two brand new replacement bears — and the bears on the dinner plates of state legislators to be an expendable gastronomic treat? In both events, the (dead) animal body is situated in a strange space where it is served in relation to political power; the difference between the two is how that service or sacrifice was rendered. How does one animal serve as beloved pet/exhibit/symbol and the other become served as dead meat? Perhaps it is that animals are intimately ironic: we (humans) read and write animal bodies in ways that often contradict their literal existence. Meat, of course, is the most obvious example: human nourishment, strength, health, economy and power, all at the literal cost of the animal. Yet, politics appears at first glance to be an unlikely habitat for the animal body. But it may be the most inherent, although paradoxical, animal territory of all, since animals occupy the threshold between "natural" and "civil liberty."

The story of the bears lends an intriguing introduction to what at first glance appears to be an antithetical and ironic politics of eating. I will elaborate on the details of this theory shortly. For now, we return to the bears. Why were Baby and Buster so important? After all, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which is based out of Norfolk, VA, has launched many campaigns in the Richmond-Metro area to save groundhogs or other animals that are to be the casualties of manicured communities. Aside from an occasional article in the local paper, these killings go largely unnoticed, and certainly do not bring the City together. The Maymont bears are different though. Before Baby and Buster arrived as an orphaned cub and two-year old “public nuisance”, they were preceded by almost a generation’s worth of black bears. Upon Baby and Buster’s deaths, Richmonders waxed poetic about their childhood visits to Maymont and bringing their own children to the park. It’s not that Buster and Baby were special; it was what they represented, in terms of Richmond’s identity that was so important—they were commodities worth more than money could buy; they were a romantic throwback to the Richmond community. Maybe that is why they were so quickly replaced after the memorial. Richmonders need their bears. Killing them was not really a crime against the animals; it was a commentary on the City. Mayor Wilder’s remarks on the killings reiterate this point: “Our job is to protect them. It’s the same horror you have if someone says to an urchin on the street, ‘Let me take you home, adopt you, keep you — and then beat you, abuse you and kill you’” (Helderman, “Killing”).

We can compare Wilder’s comments to those of PETA Director Debbie Leahy: “Everyone knows that the killing of these two bears—who did nothing wrong—was a heartless and needless act, but Maymont Park officials now need to admit that the

animals' empty, unnatural lives were also a problem." Note that both of their comments express a certain outrage at the death of the animals, but for very different reasons. For Wilder, the City had turned on its own—two animal bodies that were absorbed into the persona of Richmond; somehow, they embodied the life of the city. For PETA, on the other hand, the animals were wild outsiders, empty and lifeless forms of their true animal-selves. And, as Leahy's remarks imply, perhaps their deaths were an inevitable ending to a miserable existence. Naturally, PETA argued that this tragic event was cause to permanently close the bear exhibit at Maymont, while Richmonders asserted the need to have bears in their keep. From both points of view, the bears were imminently political, if only tacitly so: the bears simultaneously represented the City's identity and exclusion from it. In this sense, political strategy takes precedent. It marks the animal body within the political field. And, that mark is impending death, because it is in animal death that we see the fracture of animality and humanity, or the biological mortality of our own animal being; that is, the death of the animal body is the necessary precedent for our own political identity. More specifically, it is via the consumption of animals (generally, as meat) that we consummate our political identity. What this means is that both Richmonders and PETA were impelled to write the death of the bears in proper relation to their own political power.

As Jacques Derrida explains in "Eating Well or the Calculation of the Subject," animals embody the sacrificial structure of subjectivity, *carno-phallogocentrism*, which he explains "suffices to take seriously the idealizing interiorization of the phallus and the necessity of its passage through the mouth," both symbolically and actually in the case of the animal body (280). And to this point, Derrida comments that Western discourse has

failed to “sacrifice sacrifice.”¹ If we strip Western discourse to its bone, the animal is always already sacrificed before the law; it is the life-marrow that allows us to posit our own (political) possibilities. As Derrida aptly points out: “The subject does not want just to master and possess nature actively. In our cultures, he accepts sacrifice and eats flesh... I would ask you: in our countries, who would stand any chance of becoming a *chef d’Etat* (a head of State), and of thereby acceding ‘to the head,’ by publicly, and therefore exemplarily, declaring him- or herself to be a vegetarian? The *chef* must be an eater of flesh” (“Eating Well” 281). What Derrida is getting at is not simply the literal consumption of meat, but the need to sacrifice-the-other in order to reify one’s own subjective power in reference to sovereignty. “To eat well” is to embody the good political life—it is the regimen of the body politic—whether we literally or symbolically consume the flesh of the other.

In the case of the bears, their bodies were text to be written, interiorized, and symbolically eaten. Each voice presented its choice “to eat well” or craft a vision of politics for further consumption: for Wilder, a regional identity; for PETA, a justification for animal rights. Except that in the case of animals, symbolic and actual death coincide. The event of the bears’ deaths demonstrated the animals’ absence within the polis, while simultaneously bringing to bear our political presence. In other words, the bears’ interiorization into the polis demanded their (ironic) physical deaths. The legislative dinner, it seems, is a bit easier to swallow in terms of its sacrificial significance—a feast in which the exotic flesh of wild game was fodder for Virginia’s most powerful political

¹ Derrida points specifically to the canonized or hegemonic discourse of Western metaphysics and religion; in particular, he directs his comments at Levinas and Heidegger.

players. Yet, the irony of its menu as well as timing is not lost, importantly signaling the incongruous space in the borderlands of the polis that animals inhabit.

It is this space that is of particular concern to Giorgio Agamben, who locates the division of animality/bare life from humanity/the good life as the origin of politics (*Homo Sacer* 8-9). Like Derrida, whom he does not cite, Agamben unearths an economy of sacrifice; yet he distinguishes animality and humanity as two sides of a single human fracture. As such, the non-criminal killing of the animal body is naturalized in Agamben's texts, raising the symbolic sacrifice of animality—and its consequences for humanity—to utmost importance, all the while omitting the economic realm and, ultimately, the political satiation circulated via the commodity form of meat.² Yet, what is so significant about Agamben's analysis is that once this sacrificial logic is detected, even as a very philosophical symptom, it allows for the reading of a subtle animal subtext within the Western canon, one that works to legitimate political subjectivity. In different registers, Agamben begins this narrative by tracing the division of animality/humanity to Greek and Messianic thinkers. In particular, he locates the human embodiment of animality—homo sacer—as the sacrificial fodder for the anthropological machine, which continually separates bare life from political life and drives human history.

Yet, what Agamben does not do is tend to the placement and sacrifice of animal bodies—as both a literal and metaphorical subtext—within the canon of Western thought. This, of course, demands thought of the political economic context, which circulates this animal subtext as commodities; a point that Agamben fails to entertain. In this sense,

² Note that Agamben does not cite Derrida in his book *The Open*, where he specifically and exhaustively discusses the centrality of the animality/humanity fracture with regard to politics.

Agamben reiterates a (carno-phallogocentric) sacrificial structure that allows for the non-criminal killing of “the animal” in order to affirm the metaphysical reality of “the human.” More specifically, the transcendence of “the human” is permitted at the literal expense of “the animal” in all of its *différance*, which is consumed under the sign of “the animal” or animality in Agamben’s work (Wolfe 66).³ Instead, Agamben urges us to “let the animal be,” which implies embracing animal relations as they are.

As Derrida explains, it is not an issue of asking whether or not one should eat or what they should eat, but how to *eat well* or eat *the Good* (“Eating Well” 283). With the act of eating flesh—as it articulates our relationship with animals—we can locate the first division and instantiation of politics as well as the communion of individual and state sovereignty. In fact, Agamben does just this, by positing the messianic feast as the reconciliation of the anthropological machine at “the end of history.” Those attending the feast are the remnants of Israel, which have faithfully and patiently observed the prescriptions of the Torah; they have waited, “let the animal be.” And what do they eat? They feast on the meat of the Behemoth and the Leviathan, no longer having to worry whether slaughter was kosher or not (*Open* 1).

Agamben’s choice to frame *The Open* within the context of the messianic banquet is quite important because it underscores Derrida’s observation that the literal sacrifice or

³ Note that the reference is to Wolfe on Derrida, not Agamben. Illustrating my point, Agamben repeatedly refers to “the animal” to refer to all animals in *The Open*, executing the logic that Derrida describes. As well, in Chapter 11 of *The Open* Agamben discusses Jakob von Uexküll’s analysis of the three carriers of significance to which a tick is drawn. He then generalizes this desire-driven behavior to all animals: “The example of the tick clearly shows the general structure of the environment proper to all animals” (46). Agamben uses this logic to underscore the Heideggarian notion of animals’ openness yet inaccessibility to other beings and, therefore, their poverty-in-the-world. As discussed in Chapter 4 of this disertation, the experiments cited by Heidegger (the famous bee experiments) demanded the literal mutilation and death of the animals involved and were used to commonly describe animal behavior.

slaughter of the animal body sets the table for its metaphorical sacrifice and its codification and circulation into society. Perhaps ironically, by situating the animality/humanity fracture as the driving logic of politics—even while accepting the literal slaughter of the animal body—Agamben positions animal bodies critically within the framework of biopolitics. The sacrifice of animal flesh is integral to Agamben's political vision, if only tacitly so, for the reason that the metaphorical fusion of bodies, via the ingestion of meat, is the only way to embody divine law in the fractured political state: it is the choice to eat well, which becomes the secular consumption of commodities under capitalism. Although hidden or consumed as text, the animal body (like homo sacer) situated within the political threshold that Agamben describes is the absent referent in politics, the passive receptacle of juridical law.⁴ While Agamben sets into motion a conversation that forces the political animal to its margins, he stops short of considering animal bodies. However, with Derrida's insight (among others), it becomes possible to deconstruct the political animal to its flesh and bones—to the slaughter and sacrifice of animal bodies.

To be sure, to explode the concept of animality at its margins in this way appears illogical and absurd. After all, Western political thought has reserved politics as the

⁴ Carol Adams introduces animals the absent referents in meat-eating and “the images of women butchered, fragmented or consumable” in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Specifically, she proposes an ethical vegetarianism, in which an individual assumes a “vegetarian quest.” Specifically, this entails: realizing the nothingness of meat; naming one's relationships with animals to accurately reflect the realities of meat production, and rebuking a meat-eating and patriarchal world (Adams 28, 187-191). Arguably, Adams falls prey to contradiction by naturally linking animals and women in some sort of ontological web, while equally acknowledging the constructed composition of meat. Vegetarianism, conversely, becomes a totalizing, idealized, and closed female narrative, wherein added accounts of exploitation are overlooked. For example, Adams falls upon the promise of capitalism to stop the story of meat, but fails to adequately address the fallacies of the system itself. The logical result being, the myths of food production propagated by powerful corporate and government interests survive, even as individual accounts of meat are reconstructed from the feminist-vegetarian perspective. In other words, Adams tacitly assumes that all individuals are equal in their ability to seek out knowledge and to make food choices respectively.

exclusive domain of humans. This pedigree can be easily traced to the Greeks: in *Politics*, Aristotle exclusively designates humans, with their linguistic ability to judge right and wrong, as political animals. Importantly, within Aristotle's construct the state is a natural creation, meant to move humans from the primitive pursuit of bare needs to the pursuit of the good life (Norris 3). And it is the human who finds himself stateless that Aristotle considers either a bad animal or above humanity, "the tribeless, lawless, heartless one" (*Politics*). It is in casting humanity/animality in this way that Aristotle opens the limit for the political state, and, therefore, the state of exception.

Working from Aristotle's rendering of the political animal while also intensifying Michel Foucault's famous questioning of the political animal—that the object of politics has become bare life—Agamben expands biopolitics beyond the modern machine, locating it as the origin of politics.⁵ For Agamben, this incessant grappling of animality/humanity necessitates the sacrifice of others (humans) in order to substantiate the metaphysical reality of humanity, legitimate sovereign identity, and drive the death-march of history. The contemporary political result is the implosion of the Aristotle's distinction between *zoë* and *bios*, so that all life is sacred and all politics the exception, rendering the threshold that separates the two indistinguishable (Norris 2-3).

Although Agamben calls into question the ontological priority of humans, with regard to their existence as political animals, via his analysis, I would argue that he does retain a certain humanist hope for politics. Contra Derrida, Agamben does not afford

⁵ Foucault takes up the question of the political animal in the *History of Sexuality*, when he writes: "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a unique political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (143).

space for animals within language; rather, animals are an empty metaphor for humanity.⁶ Arguably, they become *bestie sacri*.⁷ Because Agamben accepts a structural difference between humans and animals, he bypasses any genuine consideration of animal bodies.⁸ More specifically, the initial act of consumption is already naturalized in language, and it is the metaphorical application of animality that draws his attention.⁹ What this means is that the *zoë/bios* distinction can only be articulated in language: animality is a necessary part of humanity, because humanity is what animality becomes, and what it is not (Norris 4). As such, it is the creative force of human life. And for Agamben, it is this articulation that defines the anthropological machine and necessitates violence (*Open* 37). In order to stop the machine, we must deny this creative force and *let the animal be*.

⁶ Animals, for Derrida, mark the instability, the trace of difference within human language that allows for constant play of language; for this reason, he opposes the philosophical tradition (of which Heidegger is a part) that denies the animal space within language. As Derrida explains in “The Animal that Therefore I Am”: “It would not be a matter of ‘giving speech back’ to animals but perhaps of acceding to a thinking, however fabulous and chimerical it might be, that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, as something other than a privation” (126).

⁷ In Latin, this translates into “sacred beasts.” Here I am playing off Agamben’s appropriation of the latin title *homo sacer*, or “sacred man” in English.

⁸ Specifically, Agamben is working from Heidegger’s construct of being in relation to animals’ poverty-in-the-world, wherein the (human) subject-object relationship defined by language simply as a veiled relationship to ourselves; (human) subjects do not exist in isolation to the world. Accordingly, the idea that an animal-other affects us as an objective-other is a misunderstanding of this relationship, because it is only humans that are world forming (Glendinning on Heidegger 63).

⁹ For Derrida, animals are living metaphors that project their own ends. Lacking language, animals function as its absolute limit because within language the animal can only appear as another expression — *metaphor* (Lippit 166). Akira Lippit explains Derrida’s insight in his book *Electric Animal*: “When the metaphoricity of the metaphor collapses, the concept becomes a metonymic thing that can be eaten” (170). This means that the animetaphoric figure marks the transition from actual to symbolic sacrifice, in that it is consumed literally rather than figuratively, locating the limits of language at the edges of the mouth (170). The concept of animetaphor appears to accurately describe the metonymic breakdown of the animal that we find in Agamben’s project; that is, the naturalization of animal sacrifice within language.

Agamben concludes his work at the juncture of modernity, arguably bringing Foucault's work on bio-power to dialectical resolution.¹⁰ However, the task remains to track the animal (the animal paradox) through the contemporary canon, particularly in critical post-structural and feminist narratives that recode the political animal via affirmative re-readings of animality. Gilles Deleuze, for example, positions *becoming-animal* as the affirmative movement of desire (the creative force of life, contra Agamben), while Hélène Cixous writes of an alternative economy of relations with animals emerging from powerful feminine desires. As well, contemporary politics may be reaching a rupture point with regard to the animal: the animal rights and liberation movements are situated at an awkward juncture of ethical, philosophical, scientific and political narratives, together which expose the specious (speciesist) foundation of political subjectivity. As the story of the bears demonstrates, when brought to the surface, the (dead) animal body has the potential to destabilize political narratives from margin to marrow.

Perhaps what is most interesting, if we consider the political and theoretical import of the "political animal" is the potential it holds to break free from hegemonic constructions of political subjectivity and rights. If, as Agamben asserts, the camp—the state of exception—is the fundamental paradigm of the West, its barbed-wire remains

¹⁰ Here we can turn to Peter Fitzpatrick's discussion in "Bare Sovereignty: Homo Sacer and the Insistence of Law" of the placement of both sovereignty and biopolitics in Foucault and Agamben. Specifically, he argues that while Foucault's scheme takes on a "vitalist excess," Agamben's work tends to the sovereign's dictate over the homo sacer, the body that can be killed without being celebrated as sacrifice: "Yet, for Agamben, Foucault has to be 'corrected,' or at least completed, in terms that would advance what Foucault supposedly neglected - a persistent and illimitable sovereign power dealing death" (49). More specifically, working from the logic of inclusion/exclusion outlined by Agamben, Fitzpatrick observes that rather than failing to provide analysis of sovereignty in relation to death, in Foucault's work provides a combination of biopower and sovereignty—"negating exclusion and encompassing inclusion"—that provides another, more pointed space for Agamben's characterization of sovereignty in relation to bare life (58).

hidden. Animal rights talk exposes speciesism by attempting to extend moral and/or legal consideration to non-humans, in effect bringing the political exception (the animal body) visibly into the polis. Despite the slippage produced via this repetition of anthropocentric ethics, however, what is revealed is the absurdity of extending rights to animals as well as the fictive nexus of rights talk. Why? As discussed earlier, within the political arena animal bodies are marked in such a way that they must be dominated and destroyed in order to confirm human power—they are the exceptions to the rule, the moral loophole. The visible fractures of animal bodies within contemporary politics brought to bear by the animal rights movement exposes power asymmetries that otherwise remain hidden by potent discursive formations.

Animal rights claims re-politicize the animal body, and in doing so, reveal the disjoint between politics and ethics, lay bare analytic incongruity which, in turn, open an imaginative point of departure for crafting new political strategies that would otherwise remain obscured. Yet, in its easy acceptance of the liberal (ethical-political) framework, animal rights discourse retains a kernel of the system of mastery it seeks to depose, a hidden animal subtext which undermines its political agenda. Given these ironies and contradictions, my primary aim in writing this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for exploring the animal question in politics: to consider the centrality of the *animal paradox* (or the animal body as political), as described above, in relation to the *animal rights paradox* that emerges as a result of this ironic political existence of animals; moreover, to reveal how this paradoxical political life *nurtures* and *naturalizes* a sacrificial politics of eating, which in turn, sublimates radical political desires.

Certainly, what I am proposing is an important endeavor for political thought and contemporary politics, even if at first glance it might appear strange and illogical.

Animals are literally and figuratively the meat that feeds politics, rendering the animal body consummately political. And, although there have been several explorations of the animal question as it relates to philosophy, cultural studies and feminist thought, the problematic of the animal paradox has yet to be fully explored, particularly in relation to the emergent animal rights paradox.¹¹ Notably, the paradox or irony of animal rights has gone virtually unnoticed by contemporary theorists writing on the animal question. One can speculate that solidarity is an important strategy for the animal rights and animal liberation movements (and the theoretical inquiries that support them): after thirty years, it may be too soon for internal critique. Or, perhaps it is simply a pragmatic reality, as Cary Wolfe suggests in his book *Animal Rites*: “Practically speaking, we must use what we have” (192).¹²

Of course, these types of responses are more than valid. *Millions of animals are killed, exploited and abused everyday, in every part of the world.* Animal liberationists

¹¹ See Wolfe (2003); Wolfe, Ed. (2003); Adams (1990); Lippit (2000); Baker (1993); Baker (2000); Atterton and Calarco, Ed. (2004).

¹² Engulfing the animal rights debate within the larger postmodern critique of humanism, Wolfe at least acknowledges the limitations of a rights-based argument, although perhaps not its paradoxical nature: “The model of rights being invoked here for extension to those who (symptomatically) ‘most like us’ only ends up reinforcing the very humanism that seems to be the problem in the first place. To put it very telegraphically, great apes possess the capacities that we possess, but in diminished form, so we end up ethically recognizing them not because of their wonder or uniqueness... but because they are inferior versions of ourselves, in which case the ethical humanism that was the problem from the outset simply gets reinforced and reproduced on another level. Now it’s not humans versus great apes, its humans and great apes — the ‘like us’ crowd — versus everyone else” (192). Yet, Wolfe proposes a pragmatic approach (combining Derrida’s work on language with Rorty’s pragmatism) that accepts the category of the subject as “formally empty” in the liberal tradition but “materially full” of inequalities. However, I would argue that without taking into account the power relations within linguistic subjectivity is enmeshed, Wolfe implicitly consents (perhaps even apologizes) to a pluralist, speciesist system which legitimizes sovereignty via the subjugation of the animal body (*Animal Rites* 8-9).

and animal rights activists undeniably save the lives of countless animals as well as bring critical public awareness to the dilemma of animals worldwide. Likewise, animal rights scholars have forced the animal question into a largely anthropocentric Western discourse and, in the process, have pushed rights talk to its margins. To be clear, the political animal paradox that I am presenting is not intended to labor in opposition to the work of animal advocacy groups that frame their strategies within traditional political discourses.¹³ Rather, my intent in exploring the animal rights paradox and its relation to the animal paradox, generally, is to dislocate an embedded narrative within animal rights discourses, in order to expose nuanced sacrificial elements that undermine their work. In other words, my aim in drawing out this connection is to locate and deconstruct their residual carno-phallogocentrism; that is, to call into question the value of their values by rendering suspect the privileged and original subject position of the “political animal.”

Of course, there is no guarantee that by embracing this kind of transvaluative openness that the world will become vegetarian. Although this type of anti-foundational

¹³ Note that this includes not only the liberal-democratic framework of mainstream animal rights groups like PETA, Farm Sanctuary and the Humane Society, but also the revolutionary discourses that drive animal liberation groups like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). To be sure, there are key differences in the goals and strategies of animal rights activists and animal liberationists. Most notably, liberationists blatantly refuse the objectification of animals under the law. They do not work within tradition political channels and actively break the law to free animals from abusive conditions. Whereas animal rights activists (although often applying guerilla-theater tactics to apply pressure to individuals, corporations and governments) work through tradition political channels and *with their adversaries* at times to invoke humane treatment for animals. However, both liberationists and rights activists work from the premise that animals do have the right, as subjects-of-a-life (that is, possessing consciousness, complex awareness, and form a psychophysical self over time) to not be harmed (see Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*). Fundamentally, there are two theoretical justifications that support the work of liberationists and rights activists: (1) we have an a priori obligation to uphold the natural rights of animals not to be harmed (deontology), or (2) animal rights are created by the law to maximize social happiness for all sentient beings (utilitarianism). Via both routes, animals enter the ethico-political space customarily set aside for humans. Moreover, animal rights push rights talk to its limits by forcing us to question why we value the interests of humans over those of animals — why we have speciesist institutions. And, in doing so, the work of these animal advocates gets us to look at animals differently, to question why they continue to be abused and exploited in our society.

freedom does hold open that possibility; in a Deleuzean sense, to be free is to embrace the contingency of life, the multiplicity of possibilities that arise once we open ourselves to life and the other. And there are certainly structural limitations with regard to the political economy of meat that demand presentist strategies. In short, an alternative politics of consumption or eating needs both types of strategies for the animal to thrive; by itself, this type of post-structural tactic runs the risk of reinforcing conservative and exploitative practices toward animals. At the same time, without a self-reflexive engagement with its own conspiracy with animal sacrifice, the animal rights movement is driven to a melancholic political reality of animal welfare.¹⁴ And, although the following chapters locate the animal rights paradox and offer (primarily) post-structuralist strategies for engaging the political animal paradox, I am mindful of the need to hold open the differential of presentist and anti-foundational political strategies—not simply for the possibility of novel politics, but for the defense of animal bodies within contemporary political arenas.¹⁵

¹⁴ “Animal welfare” refers to laws that ensure the human treatment of animals but do not challenge the institutional exploitation and slaughter of animals for human use. “Animal rights” refers to the philosophical and political platform that believes that animals, like humans, have fundamental rights to life and well being. More specifically, animal rights theorists and activists argue that institutional/structural changes to the legal system that protect the animals’ inherent rights are morally just and necessary to protect the moral rights of animals. However, some animal rights groups—like PETA—support short-term animal welfare platforms, believing that incremental changes will eventually lead to animal rights. Animal liberationists and more radical animal rights groups reject this pragmatic strategy as a type of “new welfarism.” For example Gary Francione argues in his book *Rain without Thunder*, that absent any disassembling of the property status animals, incremental changes produced by the ‘new welfarist’ movement work only to institutionalize animal exploitation (220-221). In particular, he points out that “new welfarism” is structurally defective. He argues that super-structural legal changes that promote a system based on private property (animals as legal objects) will not affect change in the economic base: anything short of the pursuit of animal rights only works to reify the pain and suffering inherent to our institutional system by reifying our alienation from animals (148).

¹⁵ Differential refers to the multiplicity of animal rights strategies that allow for the possibility of political action: it is akin to the Deleuzean, open-ended circulation of desire (in this case, affirmative desire for the animal other) that scrambles received codes of understanding—except in this context, it is applied

With this in mind, Chapter 2 looks directly at the interrelated discourses of animal rights, animal liberation and animal welfare and how they challenge the animal subtext of the Western canon. Animal rights talk poses a threat to rights jargon because it calls into question the foundation of human political subjectivity: animal sacrifice. Animals function as the constitutive outside of politics. In this sense, not only do we have a political paradox of sovereignty, as Agamben discerns, but also a political animal paradox. More specifically, it is the human exit from the state of nature that marks the formation of the rational political state, setting the threshold for political subjectivity. Illustrating this point, consider a passage from the most radical of the modern contract theorists, Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces in man a very remarkable change... It is only when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulse, and law succeeds appetite, that man, who till then regarded only himself, sees that he is obliged to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations.... he ought to bless without ceasing the happy moment that released him from it forever, and transformed him from a stupid, ignorant animal into a intelligent being and a man (*The Social Contract* 19).

As the above passage demonstrates, it is only with the exit from the state of nature, and the remission of natural liberty in favor of civil liberty, that the “political animal” emerges. Animals remain in the state of nature, dumb, happy and thoroughly excluded from politics. Simultaneously, they mark the limit of politics, as an “included exclusion,” in the Agambenian sense. Of course, this is characteristic not simply of Rousseau’s

directly to the political marketplace of ideas. In a sense, this holds open the possibility for untimely and, arguably, peripherally political strategies to assemble themselves productively with presentist tactics. More specifically, the differential of animal rights strategies retains the anti-foundational embrace of contingency, not simply in a theoretical sense, but within the realm of praxis. The situation of the animal body—as a living metaphor that attracts political desire—is literally and figuratively the space that retains this political opening; that is, it holds the potential via the multiplicity of animal-centered strategies, to capture both commonsense and untimely images of politics.

thought, but the entirety of the traditional Western canon. By arguing for the political rights of animals, animal advocates have reached the threshold of politics, in effect, disrupting the essential metaphor sustaining political sovereignty—the sacrifice of animal nature, of animals, from the polis—exposing the fictiveness of the entire system. Seemingly unaware of the irony of their arguments, however, animal advocates push forward with rights talk that reifies animal consumption. The political result is a system of animal welfare, which makes the choice to eat well (to consume, that is) more palatable and less guilty; sustains the happy consciousness of consumer; all the while continuing to mask the exploitation of animals (and humans, for that matter).

All of this points to the consumption of animals as a way to reconcile the paradox of sovereignty, the tension between the political multitude and the political state. Following this line of thought, Chapter 3 considers the history of political thought as consumed by the politics of eating. In the simplest terms, this politics of eating is a secular transubstantiation of sovereign power, in which *meat* (not simply food, but animals generally) becomes the material (consumed and consumerist) amelioration of the difference of free will and state sovereignty. In this way, meat (as sustenance) is a sign of the political paradox of sovereignty, which works to allay the intrinsic tension of homo sacer—the sovereign exception referenced by Giorgio Agamben—by offering apparent consummation of life and death.¹⁶ Although marginalized to the periphery of political thought (most notably, environmental political theory), the act of eating—the politics of

¹⁶Agamben describes the *exceptio* or the homo sacer in his book *Homo Sacer*: “He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable” (28). Note that Agamben is only evaluated peripherally in this chapter, in terms of his reiteration of a sacrificial politics of eating.

eating, here—is evident throughout the modern and contemporary canons, situated within the plateaus of prominent theoretical concepts like sovereignty, democracy, and political economy.

Chapter 4 directly considers the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, critically engaging their concepts of becoming-animal and the Body without Organs (BwO) in relation to animal consumption and the politics of eating. As limit figures, animals approach the threshold of desire, of animal abandonment. Recognizing this, animals become a powerful trope for the flow of human desire for Deleuze and Guattari, so that *becoming-animal* signals an openness of desire that transgresses the traditional limits of human subjectivity. Given their openness to desire—embodied by the animal that wanders or strays from human categories or expectations (i.e. bears that bite)—animals are able to break free of the ciphers that arrange them in a way that is mired in humans. In other words, animals are open to desire in a way that humans are not, because they do not interiorize the good life (values) and, consequently morality, via language. Instead, they passively receive and transmit the organizational codes given to them by us. In their exclusion, we can see our own political capture; that is what attracts us to animals, makes us desire them—in order to re-circulate those codes. But it is literally animal bodies that may be broken in the flight of becoming-animal, since they are living signs to be transgressed in the wake of desire. Consequently, and this is the central argument of the chapter, animals are always already at stake, even within this post-humanist line of flight, because their corporeality may be sacrificed in the flight of becoming-animal. Certainly this is reinforced within our contemporary political economy of meat, which commodifies animals into oblivion.

In this vein, Chapter 5 directly confronts the political economy of meat, which codes and circulates the sacrificial politics of eating by means of commodity fetishism. Following Marx, commodities substitute for human relations, taking on a life of their own; in this way, they signify the flesh and blood of labor, masking exploitation under capitalism. In this sense, capitalism is a monster that feeds off the flesh of humanity, but also creates its own monster in the very flesh that it wishes to conceal—the flesh of the multitude. Meat is where these two monsters collide—literally in the flesh of animals fed to the unruly multitude in order to satiate its political desires. Its value is surplus value, magically accruing from the vital labor of animals, their *death*. Meat fills the threshold of the political paradox of sovereignty, so that animals are the ultimate constitutive outside of politics. In this way, meat nourishes homo sacer by transferring the transubstantiation of religious communion to the state, in effect reducing homo sacer to a figure of passive resistance, *a martyr*. Without confronting the political economy of meat in this way, all the monstrous potentiality of the multitude is sublimated in the choice to eat well. But with its flesh debt, capitalism has also created a hungry monster that increasingly cannot be tricked with empty sacrifices; this is the vampire, the postmodern monster that re-circulates desire against the political economy of meat by restoring the bloodline of the people; vampires are the multitude, in all of its excessive and strange manifestations—including the very strange project of animal rights.

Contemporary animal rights groups literally bite into capitalism, even with a problematic moral discourse, by refusing to consume animal bodies. Here we can extend H  len   Cixous’s response to phallogocentrism to counter the carno-phallogocentrism of politics; specifically, the “active bite” of vegetarianism becomes a way to transvalue the

logic of sacrifice by reconfiguring “eating well.” If we accept the metaphoricity of animal bodies, this redefined relationship with the animal-other works at both the metaphorical (theoretical) level and the literal (political) level by refusing animal sacrifice at both moments. This is not to say that the vegetarian “sacrifices sacrifice” but that sacrifice is relocated as “self-sacrifice”—a form of political resistance that forgoes the politically bankrupt choice to eat meat by denying or restricting bodies of sustenance. In doing so, the vegetarian reclaims the “political animal” in herself and the animal-other via her choice to eat a new “good” that (more often than not) is not offered by hegemonic discourses.

By inverting sacrifice in this way, however, vegetarianism runs the risk of emaciating the human body in its protest. (Not to mention that it is virtually impossible to escape the political economy of meat, even with vegetarian food choices. After all, exploitation marks the entire context in which most vegetarians consume. Who picked the vegetables? Who processed the food? Who works at the store in which you shop? And so on.) Feminist scholars point to a similar danger associated with the ascetic idealism of anorexia and bulimia: self-starvation (anorexia) may be conceived as a form of social protest that paradoxically produces a more sovereign body, while bulimic practices may exemplify a kind of re-embodiment that ruptures Cartesian dualisms that contract bodily experience (Squire 18, 24). This type of somatic resistance is literally paid with women’s flesh. And, although veganism in the United States is practiced equally among genders, strict vegetarianism in a culture dominated by the political economy of meat may hold the same type of risk.¹⁷ This reinforces the vegetarian martyr-

figure, the “gastronomic homo sacer.” Let me be clear on this point: veganism is healthy. Yet, it does require nutritional knowledge as well as access to vegan-friendly foods, both of which are hard to come by in a meat-dominant culture. And when a vegan fails nutritionally in the United States —regardless of the reason—the cultural backlash is vicious, as the recent *New York Times* op/ed piece, “Death by Veganism” demonstrates.¹⁸ In short, although we should avoid over-signifying the vegetarian body, it is also necessary to avoid idealistic projections that ultimately reinforce the political economy of meat.

As well, there is a danger when accompanying strategies of animal rights (beyond dietary performances) drift into reactive moral language: moral vegetarianism rapidly becomes-reactive when it naturalizes politics that demand the exclusion of others. In other words, without deconstructing the value of our political values, moralizing in this way simply excludes the meat-eater as morally broke. Citing this type of “evolutionary” movement of values, Deleuze observes: “Thus it is characteristic of reactive forces to deny, from the start, the difference which constitutes them at the start, to invert the differential element from which they derive and give a deformed image of it” (*Nietzsche* 56). As a result, moral vegetarianism marginalizes itself within hegemonic systems while inadvertently undermining its own project of animal rights. As such, vegetarianism fails to shift from an individual practice of “purity” or a lifestyle choice, to a complex political

¹⁷ 1.4% of American men and 1.3% of American women are vegan (Stahler).

¹⁸ The article challenged the nutritional adequacy of a vegan diet, particularly for children. The text was prompted by the recent conviction of two vegan parents of murder, manslaughter and cruelty for the starvation death of their 3.5 pound, 6 week-old son (who was fed only soy milk and apple juice). What was interesting about the piece was that veganism, not neglectful parenting, was blamed for the infant’s death (Planck).

strategy that is open to other (non-vegetarian) forms of political action. In short, what is lost once again is the public or community aspect of resistance, which celebrates the strangeness of the multitude.

To craft a politics of eating in the way that I have suggested is to think, in some ways, an untimely politics; a temporal disjoint from the normal order of things, in the Bakhtinian sense. Instead of simply reversing the animal-human dichotomy or synthesizing animals into a larger category of “political subject,” the theory that I am presenting works to destabilize these categories by refiguring and celebrating bodies in all their forms, as the fleshy excess of the multitude. This type of approach, of course, does not disvalue contemporary animal advocacy projects that receive and work on the categories of the present in order to incorporate animals into our commonsense understanding of politics. In fact, to do so would inadvertently legitimate a certain thanatopolitics. Fully aware of this danger, what I am offering simply embraces the irony of animal rights, refiguring them as a pious parody of the orthodox logic of sovereignty. Simply put, our political edifice is laid of animal flesh. This is the miserable little piece of the Real that we encounter everyday. Once we know that, we are no longer held under the spell of commodity fetishism. Instead, we are free to laugh at such trickery—not foolish, hollow or frightened laughter, but the resounding and excessive laughter of tragic gaiety.

Chapter Two

Animal Rights Paradox

On February 2, 2007, two People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) employees were acquitted of felony animal cruelty charges and misdemeanor charges of obtaining property under false pretenses. Almost two years earlier, Adria Hinkle and Andrew Cook had euthanized between 60 and 70 local shelter animals in a van registered to PETA, and then dumped their bodies in a shopping-center garbage bin in Ahoskie, North Carolina. In the end, Hinkle and Cook were each convicted of littering, given a 10-day suspended jail sentence, 12-months probation, a \$1000 fine and \$3000 restitution, and 50 hours of community service. As soon as the news of the killings became public and the trial began, a dark cloud of irony befell the animal rights group. How could PETA, a group so committed to helping animals and a loyal advocate of animal rights, be involved in the deliberate killing of healthy, adoptable animals?

The organization responded that, “PETA seeks to solve the animal overpopulation problem in North Carolina by subsidizing spay/neuter services, but we do not and will not hesitate to roll up our sleeves and do the dirty work at our own expense.”¹⁹ Buried beneath PETA’s brand of justice are the bodies of the shelter animals unceremoniously killed by the organization every year. PETA justifies these killings in the name of compassion, presenting these animals as sacrificial lambs in the pursuit of its moral ends: “We know that we are also working at the roots of a problem, persuading people that buying puppies and kittens from pet stores and breeders means that other animals,

¹⁹“PETA Helping Animals in North Carolina.” <http://www.helpinganimals.com/f-nc.asp>.

literally dying for a home in a shelter, pay for with their lives.”²⁰ Shrouded in ethical language, and hiding behind “higher morality,” PETA has attempted to avoid addressing political critiques, particularly in the aftermath of this event²¹

The events in North Carolina have rendered suspect the ethical categories that PETA relies on to justify its actions. Animals are revealed as casualties of a larger political struggle, in which PETA’s ability to control (*kill*) the animal body works to substantiate the organization’s power. And the Ahoskie killings bring this secret truth to light. Of course, animal lives have already been wagered in this political battle. What is at stake is the centrality and “truth” of PETA’s core ethical claim that animals have innate rights to life and wellbeing that “cannot be traded away.”²² PETA sets up its animal rights claims around this moral certitude. But PETA’s actions tell a different story. PETA president Ingrid Newkirk’s response to the charges signals the negative impact that these killings are likely to have on the organization: “I think this is so shocking it’s bound to hurt our work” (Lindsay). All of this forces us (the public) to question why these animals were disposable in the fight for animal rights. After all, PETA made its name on making

²⁰ Please note that the italicization represents my emphasis. See www.peta.org for more on this comment from Daphna Nachminovitch, director of the Domestic Animals Issues and Abuse Department for PETA.

²¹ In response to the FAQ about the property damage caused by animal rights groups, PETA responds, “Throughout history, some people have felt the need to break the law to fight injustice. The Underground Railroad and the French Resistance are examples of movements in which people broke the law in order to answer to a higher morality.” See www.PETA.org/about/FAQ.asp.

²² PETA states its animal rights position on its website: “Supporters of animal rights believe that animals have an inherent worth—a value completely separate from their usefulness to humans. We believe that every creature with a will to live has a right to live free from pain and suffering.” See <http://www.peta.org/about/WhyAnimalRights.asp>.

Americans feel guilty about what they eat, wear, and buy. In the end, we are left to speculate. If meat is murder, what is the lethal injection of dogs and cats?

This is not the first time that PETA's stance on euthanasia has caused commotion. In his book, *Rain without Thunder*, Gary Francione recounts a 1991 incident in which PETA killed healthy rabbits and roosters at Aspen Hill sanctuary in Maryland. Similar to the recent event in North Carolina, PETA defended its stance on euthanasia as a practical and compassionate response to shelter overcrowding. For Francione, this kind of short-term concession is the defining characteristic of "new welfarist" groups like PETA, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Certainly these groups hope for animal rights in the future. But they also support short-term, incremental animal welfare regulations as a springboard for animal rights. For such groups, Francione argues, animal rights theory is too idealistic. This pragmatic response exemplifies the Achilles heel of the modern animal advocacy movement according to Francione. More specifically, animal welfare regulations simply reify institutionalized animal exploitation, but do little to chip away at the property status of animals. By Francione's account, enlightened advocates know the difference between rights and welfare and act accordingly:

The rights advocate, however, recognizes that what is at issue is not merely the incremental eradication of pain and suffering; indeed, the structure of legal welfarism makes it clear that pain and suffering will be permitted in virtually any circumstance in which they will facilitate the intended use of the animal. What will be considered "unnecessary" suffering may change from time to time, but the substantive content of the standard remains the same and is useful only in cases where animal use is truly gratuitous... The rights advocate recognizes that not all incremental measures are created equal and does not seek the incremental reduction of pain and suffering, but rather seeks the incremental eradication of the property status of animals (221-2).

Francione is onto something here. Irony, which defines the modern animal rights movement, presents for it a paradoxical existence. William Chaloupka explains that other social movements (civil rights and feminism are examples) were aware of their political tasks and self-consciously used moralism to achieve their goals. The animal rights movement, like its older step-brother environmentalism, is swaddled in an unspoken politics of truth and righteousness (Chaloupka 116). And when politics do enter the picture, they prefer to dress it up as ethics. Regardless of one's opinions about PETA's euthanization policy, it seems fair to say that their actions are an example of the tough compromises that have to be made in the democratic marketplace. Sure, PETA wants to dress up its politics with ethics, but Francione is no less guilty of self-righteousness when he denies this political reality and labels their actions a symptom of flawed philosophy (220).

By asserting that the animal rights movement will continue to move backwards as long as it applies rights doctrine politically, instead of substantively, Francione alienates potential allies and closes off political options (230). To be sure, PETA flaunts its place as the largest animal rights organization in the world. And while distinct from animal liberation groups like Animal Liberation Front (ALF), PETA lends its moral support to its more radical brethren. Simply put, the line that Francione draws does not exist. Not to mention that his appeal for pure philosophy to drive the movement is also flawed. Francione wishes activists to pursue only those tactics that chip away at the property status of animals. However, it is hard to imagine just how one is to dismantle the objectified legal status of animals without seriously critiquing the capitalist legal structure itself.

The problem with the animal rights movement is not the tension that defines its existence. No, its problem is its lack of politics and its inability to cheekily belly-flop into the center of the political arena. PETA's shortcoming is not that it embraces rhetorical and political strategies per se, but that it deeply and unconsciously relies on an ethico-political discourse that undermines its project. "The legume is holy, the predatory megafauna, divine" (Chaloupka 114). All the while animals are sacrificed in their name. Simply put, the irony of animal rights is what breaks open the chance of another democratic future. Yet the movement denies the political power of its own contradiction. As I will demonstrate in the course of this chapter, this paradoxical existence is both the problem and the promise of the contemporary animal rights movement. Is the pursuit of animal welfare an inevitable political necessity? Or, is there another compromise? The answer to these questions is neither straightforward nor simple. But this much is for sure: before new democratic bargains may be struck and other political futures imagined, the goods of sovereignty must be taken to market, allowed to spoil and deconstruct.

An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of the masked "other" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 88).

What the North Carolina event exposes is the irony of animal rights claims bounded within an ethico-political framework that tacitly denies animal bodies in politics. Is there any way to explain the strange and unfortunate turn of events in North Carolina? Perhaps answers are to be found in its theoretical recesses of the movement. PETA's theoretical

dogma certainly lends an easy answer: *the animals were better off dead*. As Peter Singer explains:

Where life taken would not, on balance, have been pleasant, no direct wrong is done. Even when the animal killed would have lived pleasantly, it is at least arguable that no wrong is done if the animal killed will, as a result of the killing, be replaced by another animal living an equally pleasant life (“Practical Ethics” 43).

Singer’s utilitarian proto-animal rights argument is based on animal sentience (animals’ ability to experience pain and pleasure), which is the condition that draws animals into the sphere of moral consideration.²³ For Singer, the subsequent moral goal is to maximize pleasure within the world and the purpose of the law is to protect human and non-human interests, all other things being equal (“All Animals Are Equal” 31). In order to satisfy the second caveat of this theory, Singer places all interests within a continuum, so that formal equality is adapted to differentiate what actions are justifiable for humans and animals (Ferry 34, “All Animals Are Equal” 36).

For his logic to work, Singer must settle human and animal differences, in terms of their capacities to suffer, along this continuum: “In this respect the distinction between humans and non-humans is not a sharp division, but rather a continuum along which we move gradually and with overlaps between the species, from simple capacities for

²³ Singer does not endorse “rights.” Rather, he maintains the moral obligation to calculate suffering, in total, under the law; the notion of individual rights is confounded because personal suffering may prove to be necessary to promote the general welfare of society. Here we find a common criticism, because this balancing allows for animal suffering in situations where the gross amount of animal pain is calculated to be less than the sum benefit that such activities provide to society in general (for example, certain forms of animal-testing). Theoretically the same is possible for humans (Singer, “All Animals Are Equal” 34). Given this logic, Singer walks a fine line in his analysis, one that may cast him as anti-human in certain respects - a point taken to heart in Germany, where he is banned from speaking because of his characterization of the mentally ill (Ferry 37). Despite Singer’s theoretical line, it is less than likely that the reverse situation (minimal human suffering) would actually take hold. Certainly, the heated debate over stem-cell research, which only touches upon this delicate issue, is a timely example.

enjoyment and satisfaction, or pain and suffering, to more complex ones” (“All Animals Are Equal” 36). Simply put, animals and humans share the ability to experience pain, although not in the same way.²⁴ To be sure, Singer constructs this spectrum in order to undo mass quantities of needless animal suffering (like agricultural caging and cosmetic animal testing) for which the gross amount of pain inflicted on animals outweighs the (petty) human pleasure derived from these practices (“All Animals Are Equal” 33).²⁵ To this extent, Singer’s motives are quite laudable. However, his calculus forces the question: Is the problem slaughter or suffering? For Singer, as well as PETA, animal suffering—not death—is cause for concern.

Of course, this lends palpable confusion to the movement, so that at times it is difficult to tell just who the real animal exploiters are (Francione 61). What happened in North Carolina exemplifies this type of misunderstanding. Surely, the animals killed by PETA were leading unpleasant lives. And even if they were not, their deaths could be justified in terms of the greater good of animal wellbeing, a point echoed in the comments of PETA attorney Kathy Guillermo, who responded to critics by saying: “Euthanasia is a better alternative to sitting in a stinking pound” (Collins). Yet, as

²⁴ According to this rationale, a human that is held captive during wartime suffers less than a wild animal held captive because the animal does not have the mental ability to distinguish an attempt to confine it from an attempt to kill it (Singer, *Animal Liberation* 16). As such, it is cruel to confine animals and to cause them unnecessary suffering. However, when the promise of death is added to the scenario, the matter becomes increasingly complicated. In this scenario, the human prisoner suffers while the animal does not, because humans are cognizant of the future. “In general, though, the question of when it is wrong to kill (painlessly) an animal is one to which we need give no precise answer. As long as we remember that we should give the same respect to the lives of animals as we give to the lives of those humans at a similar mental level, we shall not go far wrong” (Singer, *Animal Liberation* 21).

²⁵ In particular, Singer points to changes in the human diet, farming methods, animal experimentation, wildlife management, hunting, trapping and the wearing of furs, the use of animals for entertainment purposes (*Animal Liberation* 17).

Guillermo's comment reveals, the political reality of the situation was quite mixed up. What emerged in North Carolina was the wrestling of political control from government authorities to PETA and the resulting (re)inscription of the animal body in the wake of this struggle. PETA's "mercy killings" were not a logical extension of some moral argument, but the marked reorganization of (docile) animal bodies within the political sphere.

As Michel Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*, the public spectacle of the scaffold is where justice admits public responsibility for the violence embedded in the pursuit of its own power (9). Within this venue power becomes instantaneously reversible at the moment of execution, so that it is possible for a criminal to become a hero who momentarily embodies generally overlooked power asymmetries (*Discipline* 67). However, when punishment is hidden within the deep recesses of the penal system and stripped of the somatic experience of pain, the criminal loses this potential to be the "protagonist of subtle truths" (*Discipline* 69). Strategy is the exercise of power upon the body. It is the inscription of the body within the political field. Viewed in this way, PETA's actions reveal not the dismantling of power, but its transference. And within this strategic battleground, the animal is always already a minor force in relation to human power. What this means is that the act of killing is of much less consequence than its implementation. In effect, PETA pursues strategies similar to its adversaries by literally hiding its executions and the bodies of the condemned from public sight. And when confronted with public scrutiny over its tactics, PETA is forced to reveal animal bodies as the secret ingredient of its moral recipe (passed down from generations of Western

thought). Brought to the surface, this ordinarily concealed power asymmetry reveals animal sacrifice as the liminal condition of possibility for sovereignty.

The carnivalesque feel of the Ahoskie trial is strikingly similar to Foucault's spectacle of the scaffold in *Discipline and Punish*. Consider this report from a local newspaper:

It is a strange turn of events for PETA. The group's supporters have often been prosecuted for their radical efforts to protect animals -- breaking into fashion shows to throw blood on fur-wearing models, liberating lab animals, showing gory videos outside the circus -- but PETA has never been accused of hurting animals. Those who oppose PETA are seizing on the trial. The spectacle also has drawn a gaggle of lawyers, PETA staffers, reporters and curious onlookers to this rural county seat... (Collins).

Visibly, a reversal of power occurred as PETA's tacit political strategy spilled to the surface. No longer cloaked with a veil of ethics, PETA was forced to publicize its secret. In this sense, the animals PETA was charged with killing were redeemed of their "truth-telling" role—dead or alive, their bodies were rightly marked by PETA. And the irony of this "truth" is not lost on PETA's adversaries, who attended the trial and visited the dumpster where the bodies were discarded.²⁶ As one lobbyist commented, "Most people would not believe, if you told them two years ago, that PETA kills animals. They'd say, 'What? They're the bunny huggers'" (Collins). In the end, these observers gathered the common thread linking PETA and its opponents. Each reasonably sacrifices animals for the *truth*—whether for a cure, food or animal rights.

For critics like Francione, this type of ethical rationale points to why the modern animal advocacy movement cannot succeed. This is an especially poignant claim, given

²⁶ At the trial, this PETA's opponents consisted primarily of lobbyists for biomedical companies and meat producers.

the almost instantaneous identification of PETA with the animal rights movement by the American public. Like something that may have happened during the Great Schism of Chalcedonian Christianity, animal rights activists are divided over whom to follow. For some, Singer's theory does not lend the ideological weight necessary to guide the movement. And for Francione and other devout animal rights advocates, Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* is the new testament that provides the theoretical benchmark for the movement. Regan argues for animals' inalienable rights to life and, without a doubt, flatly rejects Singer's utilitarian logic. Instead, he contends that individual moral rights place a justifiable limit on what harm the group can do to the individual ("Animal Rights" 48).²⁷ More specifically, Regan's theory is founded on the premise of equal inherent value, where each individual in society has marked moral value apart from any intrinsic qualities. Accordingly, individuals with the intrinsic capacity to accept the moral contract (moral agents) have a legal obligation to protect those recipients of their actions who do not have the ability to understand morality (moral patients). Both are what Regan

²⁷ Consider the utilitarian and animal rights view of animal testing, respectively. The former allows for testing in situations where the overall benefit outweighs the overall harm. It is not the individual that is inherently valued but the quality that is represented in her (pain or pleasure) which then calculated to determine the sum presence of that attribute in society. The rights framework differs from this notion of aggregate harm because it rejects this use of an individual as a means to an end; that is, animal testing would be unacceptable because such a practice accepts a priori that animals can be treated instrumentally (Francione 18). More specifically, Regan's harm principle is Kantian by nature, wherein something of value should always be treated as an end and never as a means to an end. Although Regan draws heavily from Kant, he distinguishes himself by dismissing the reason criterion as a prerequisite for moral standing. This distinction allows moral rights to be expanded to a wide range of nonhumans possessing certain qualities. Utilitarianism is morally reprehensible within this construct, because it views individuals as little more than vehicles for the value of pleasure, while holding no value of their own (Francione 15-16; Regan, *Struggle* 55).

calls subjects-of-a-life: conscious, in possession of complex awareness, with the ability to form a psychophysical self over time.²⁸

Regan's theory escapes some of the criticisms to which Singer's is open since pain is not the deciding factor for whether an action is defensible. Recall that Singer's theory allows for painless animal slaughter. So long as death is painlessly administered, animals may be sacrificed to end perceived suffering or to serve dominant human needs. For Regan, pain is immaterial. Instead, what serves as grounds for moral consideration is the pursuit of life. As subjects-of-a-life, both humans and animals have basic moral rights that are by definition different from legal rights obtained by contractual consent. More specifically, basic moral rights remain universal while legal rights are often unequal and subject to change. What this means is that legal rights do not need to be the same for all humans and animals, but should uphold the basic moral rights of all subjects-of-a-life (Francione 16-7). In this sense, there is an ethical duty for humans to protect the moral rights of animals, even when legal rights fail to meet this burden. Contra utilitarianism, individual moral standing (not general societal welfare) is sacrosanct within Regan's theory.

Even though he argues that as subjects-of-a-life animals have inalienable moral rights, as a matter of political necessity, Regan's theory includes a sacrificial loophole. Pluralism demands that something or someone be sacrificed in the event of conflicting interests. And Regan recognizes that there are unlikely contexts that bring these exceptions to life; in fact, he concedes that "situations arise... in which, no matter what

²⁸ For example, as moral patients and subjects-of-a-life, children are not entitled to full legal rights, but retain moral standing before the law (Regan, *Struggle* 51).

we decide to do—and even if we decide to do nothing—an innocent subject-of-a-life will be harmed” (*Case for Animal Rights* xxviii). What is the moral directive in these situations? It is what Regan calls the worse-off principle: if a situation arises in which we must override the rights of either a few or many innocents, we should make that decision by comparing which would be worse off, irrespective of the numbers involved (*Case for Animal Rights* 308).

Of course, this principle works in the favor of most animals when applied to the usual suspects: vivisection, fur trade, eating meat, etc. However, when both human and animal lives are at stake, animals are the first to go. All subjects-of-a-life possess equal inherent value, but Regan concedes that the value of the lives that subjects lead clearly is not equal. A dog, for example, lacks certain rational abilities that make its life less satisfying than that of a human. For this reason, human life has an added source of value compared to that of the dog (Regan *Case for Animal Rights* xxxv). When faced with a hypothetical lifeboat situation, where five survivors (four normal humans and one dog) will perish if someone is not tossed overboard, special considerations aside it is the dog that should die because its loss would be less than that of the humans. Sadly, Regan admits that “In these tragic circumstances, it is the dog who should be sacrificed” (*Case for Animal Rights* xxix).

But if we recall the devastation of the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a very real thread of contradiction tears in Regan’s reasoning, a paradox that cannot be fully grasped if the conversation is limited to ethics. Regan clearly expects the worse-off principle to be applied against animals only in truly exceptional situations. In light of what happened in the Gulf Coast, however, we must call Regan to his words.

Indeed, the lifeboat situation was elevated from a theoretical exigency to a physical reality in the flooded streets of New Orleans. And, as so many news reports pointed out, federal and state-sanctioned rescuers forced victims to leave their companion animals behind due to limited space in rescue vehicles. And many refused saving for this very reason. Given Regan's theory, rescuers' decision to give priority to humans over animals in this life and death situation was morally acceptable. It was the *right* thing to do. But we cannot ignore the overwhelming public outcry and resistance against these efforts.

Responding to this call for action, animal rescue groups implemented a rescue mission of astounding proportions along the Gulf Coast.²⁹ Unlikely alliances were forged in the wake of this tragedy, and political strategies were crafted that could not be reduced to ethical terms.³⁰ It is not surprising that those who chose to risk their lives and stay with their animals were more often than not elderly, sick, indigent, and/or people of color. This very public theater of pain bought to bare power asymmetries that normally remain hidden in plain view—white/black, rich/poor, healthy/sick, young/old, human/animal.

²⁹ Groups included: PETA; HSUS; Muttsack, a project of the Heritage Foundation and a non-profit rescue organization and project of the Heritage Foundation; Animal Rescue of New Orleans (ARNO), a non-profit rescue group founded during the Hurricane Katrina tragedy and still working to help animals lost and injured animals in the area; the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA); the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; the Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; PETCO and PetSmart corporations, who worked with groups like the HSUS to raise funds to support relief efforts in the Gulf Coast; the North Shore Animal League of New York, the largest non-profit, no-kill shelter in the country, which helped with pet evacuation efforts as well as overcrowding in local facilities; Noah's Wish, a national non-profit rescue group based in California; Best Friends Animal Society, a non-profit animal rescue organization and sanctuary based in Kanab, Utah that works to rescue domestic and wild animals across the United States and sometimes internationally; the New Orleans Audubon Zoo and Aquarium; and Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT), a national group of vets and vet care workers organized into 5 regional teams (New England, North Carolina, Great Lakes, California, and Maryland) that assist local veterinary communities in times of crisis and disaster.

³⁰ One unlikely alliance was the cooperation between PETA and longtime adversary, PETCO.

Political struggle was rewritten in this spectacle, so that sovereignty was transformed from a politics of sacrifice to a politics of sharing.

Animal rights talk exposes animals' exceptional state through the lens of speciesism.³¹ Despite this enlightened perception, the movement as a whole is undermined by its own moral discourse (which is really only a pious parody). Moralism, or agency, is the mask (or costume) that we wear to hide and suppress the plurality of competing and disruptive forces that fabricate society; that is the multitude. "Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival," (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 94). And there is no doubt that New Orleans is a carnival city. From its open-air markets to its elaborate Mardi Gras celebrations, everything in the crescent city is up for grabs, including moralism. New Orleans deals in masks and costumes. Perhaps this is why its residents so quickly shed their masks in the event of Katrina. Conversely, moralism needs its all too human mask, rendering animal rights theory ill-equipped to deal with these bazaar performances.

Clearly animal rights claims are unable to really deal in this ever-changing political fete. Does this mean that animal welfare claims are the only way to navigate political turns? Animal welfare philosopher Bernard Rollin would surely argue yes to this question. For Rollin, animal welfare claims are dialectically derived from commonly held ethical beliefs (25). Similar to Francione's philosophical appeal, Rollin believes philosophy must

³¹ Speciesism is simply defined as "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species against those of members of other species" (Singer, *Animal Liberation* 6).

drive political action by leading one to “recollect, to draw from inside of you in a clear way that you don’t realize is there” (25). In other words, philosophy is a passkey for ethical knowledge, and the role of the philosopher is to impart that knowledge in an attempt to structure the world of politics.³² Science then reflects the ethical values dictated by philosophy.³³ The interwoven discourses of ethics and science guide politics towards its end goal: justice, or the ideal state. Within this teleology, the natural differences of humans and animals must be respected to maintain the health of the community. Every member of society, whether animal or human, has an end purpose, or telos that serves the larger community. Plato describes this humane edict in *The Republic*:

But does harming a horse or a dog mean making it a worse horse or dog, so that each will be a less perfect creature in its own special way? Yes. Isn’t that also true of human beings—that to harm them means making them worse men by the standard of human excellence? Yes. And is not justice a peculiarly human excellence? Undoubtedly. To harm a man, then, must mean making him less just. (13).

Expanding Plato’s argument, Rollin contends that animals’ telos must be respected for society to function correctly. More specifically, once the scientific community (guided by applied ethics) identifies an animal’s telos, animal welfare regulations ensure it can meet its civic potential.

³² Rollin is avowedly Platonist in his philosophical orientation. Note that Plato comments the recollection function of dialectics: “the method of dialectic is the only one which takes this course, doing away with assumptions and traveling up to the first principle of all, so as to make sure of confirmation there. When the eye of the soul is sunk in a veritable slough of barbarous ignorance, this method gently draws it forth and guides it upward, assisted in this work of conversion by the arts we have enumerated” (254).

³³Referring to paradigm shifts within the sciences, Rollin writes: “It was a change in how philosophical approaches are valued, one that was defended in valuational terms about what science ought to be, and in terms of the benefit to society...” (62).

Despite Rollin's claim otherwise, "Plato's beautiful metaphor" is just that—a narrative intended to map the political arena (Rollin 25). And with this ethical truth (substantiated by the biological/scientific imprint of *telos*), the community is forced into submission under the weight of its own ethical baggage. Animal welfare regulations do not mark truth, but power. Consider Rollin's comparison of applied ethics to judo, a form of physical combat in which an adversary is thrown off and defeated by the weight of her own force. Rollin advocates a similar strategy for animal welfare philosophy. Careful reading reveals a destructive play of forces in his directive: it is not the active and overreaching player who wins the battle, but the one who unleashes bad conscience or resentment (the reactive "no") in response to his adversaries (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 21-22). Animals are to be treated humanely because to do otherwise would be an injustice to both the animal and society. In reality this, of course, translates into painless animal slaughter.

Power is not simply repressive, but also productive (Foucault, "Truth and Power" 61). As we have seen, animal welfare regulations are the *laissez faire* production of entwined ethical and scientific discourses. But this proscriptive element of animal welfare regulations is complex and dispersed. To treat animals humanely is to repress violent human behavior, but this is simply one aspect of the disciplinary task of these regulations. Animal welfare regulations also limit all other possible relationships with animals by reifying animals' token role in society, while simultaneously making our exploitative relationships with animals more pleasurable. Sure, films like *Fast Food Nation* have brought the disturbing reality of the meat industry into America's living rooms. But Americans can still enjoy a *good* hamburger. Cage-free, organic meat is now a guilt-free

luxury, a sign of righteousness within the moral code of capitalism. Even fast food companies are starting to recognize this powerful new good. Chipotle (until recently, a subsidiary of McDonald's) being the most obvious example.

But this regulatory schema does not call into question the (sacrificial) value of meat. It simply makes us feel good about our choices. Never does it call into question the values of our values. Namely, why we continue to kill animals, why we eat meat in the first place. Temple Grandin explains the anthropological rationale that drives animal welfare regulations:

A lot of effort has been put into creating humane slaughter systems so the animal doesn't suffer. That part was easy, relatively speaking. If all you had to do to eliminate suffering was to make sure the animal died instantly, today almost all of our slaughterhouses would have to be considered humane.... We're responsible for slaughterhouse animals; they wouldn't even exist if it weren't for us. So we have to do more than just take away physical pain (189).³⁴

As Grandin's comment illustrates, dominion is never questioned within this regulatory frame. At least animal rights activists call our ontological priority into question, even if their moralism catches up with them in the end. They know, if only partially, that animal welfare laws reinforce hegemonic forces. Animal welfarists, on the other hand, passively accept all of the categories given to them. The act of killing, and how it works to substantiate our political virility, is never critiqued. We can certainly map our given knowledge of animals by creating humane slaughterhouses, like Grandin and Rollin suggest—a strategy that works to auspiciously and beneficially inscribe some animals. However, to get at the meat of the issue, we must scratch below surface knowledge to consider the violent fabrication of animal bodies.

³⁴ Temple Grandin is a leading animal welfare advocate who also works as a consultant for the meat industry. Like Rollin, she does not challenge the use-value of animals.

It is not a matter of simply facing *how* we manufacture animals, but *why*.

Knowledge is not the antithesis of power, but simply its surface effect. Moreover, power relations permeate the entire fabric of society (Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms" 8-10). Knowledge, as the product of relations of struggle and power, must violate what it claims to know (Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms" 11-12). So, to *know* an animal body, involves dominating, displacing, and/or destroying it to confirm (human) political power. Of course, animal experimentation is an obvious example of this will to domination. But it can also entail benignly spaying/neutering dogs and cats and, taken to its extreme, it can lead to euthanizing healthy animals, as in the North Carolina case. In this sense, animals serve as (metaphorical) markers of truth along the tableaux of society. But the truth they signify is by no means benign, given or stable; that is, there is no continuity between animals and what they represent. For this reason, the ability to control the animal body, via euthanasia or otherwise, becomes a means for both PETA and its adversaries to substantiate their power within a larger arena of struggle.

Is it even possible to actively confront this deadly arrangement? Animal rights fall short. Animal welfare regulations miss the mark completely. It seems that the last activists standing are the anarchists who comprise the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). It is worth noting from the start that even though ALF is anarchist in its orientation (resisting hierarchical organization and largely eschewing our capitalist system) it too legitimates its actions based on universal rights theory. As the ALF website notes: "FIGHT SPECIESISM! The struggle against speciesism (human chauvinism) is part of the

universal moral progress of humanity, alongside the fight against racism, sexism, nationalism and exploitation of every kind. Institute the right to life and liberty of all fellow animals!” Deliberately breaking laws to liberate animals, destroying property, inflicting economic loss on animal abusers, and (more and more often) physically assaulting abusers is a moral imperative for ALF activists.³⁵

To ALF members, animal liberation is not theoretically complex. In the words of the group, animal liberation does not require “a philosopher’s lifetime work to explain” or “years wrestling with your conscience to come to terms with its logic.”³⁶ For these activists, animal liberation is simply the ultimate liberation movement. Compared to mainstream groups, ALF takes animal advocacy to its extreme by directly attacking speciesist institutions that reify the political economy of meat, by breaking into labs and slaughterhouses, burning property, spraying graffiti, and freeing animals. Labeled eco-terrorists by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the mainstream media, ALF is closely aligned with other radical groups like the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) who actively fight those who wantonly destroy the environment. (Here it is crucial to pause, however briefly, to take note of this eco-terrorist label. Of course, “eco-

³⁵ Notably, Animal Liberation Front was founded in the UK after a long history of animal resistance movements there. ALF is loosely organized into affinity groups. ALF has a triad of policies that classify an action as liberationist: “(i) To liberate animals from suffering or potential suffering and place them in good permanent homes or, where appropriate, release them into their natural environment. (ii) To damage or destroy property and equipment associated with animal abuse which (a) took that property out of the arena of animal abuse so it could no longer cause harm and (b) inflicted economic loss on the abusers with the intention of driving them out of business. (iii) To take all reasonable precautions not to endanger life of any kind.” Anyone adhering to these policies can claim responsibility as an ALF activist and get their backing if caught. However, ALF recognizes that for many liberationists, liberation was moving all too slowly, leading even some dedicated ALF supporters to question the third policy: “The arguments presented in favor of inflicting serious injury, even death, upon animal abusers were quite straightforward. Do you believe in animal liberation? Do you therefore believe that speciesism is as indefensible as racism? {...} Gandhi said “Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.” See www.animalliberationfront.com.

³⁶ See www.animalliberationfront.com.

terrorism” is a loaded political marker, pushed by economic and political forces—i.e. the Bush Administration, ConAgra, Monsanto and others—wishing to secure their seat of power in the face of growing public sympathy for the environmental movement. Not to mention that these groups destroy only property and rarely, if ever, inflict harm on other living beings, making the label even more misleading.)

Notably, the liberation movement does not alienate its less radical allies.³⁷ As would be expected, their moralism is even more pronounced and their actions more extreme. PETA swims in the gray waters of politics, although it would prefer to mask its politics as ethics. ALF, on the other hand, does not deal in shades of gray. Pious to a fault, its political strategies are simple and reactive: take down exploiters, at whatever cost, in order to cripple capitalism and invert anthropocentric values. Notably, its goals are not primarily economic. As Timothy Luke describes in *Ecocritique*, contemporary social groups are post-Marxist in their politics and anti-Marxist in their dogma (30). In the case of ALF, economic sabotage is simply a means to its (moral) end—free and equal (diverse) earthly inhabitants. However, by dutifully embracing this moral dogma, it too tacitly reinforces the sacrificial structure of politics by taking for granted (ethico-political) concepts like agency, subjectivity, rights and (individual) sovereignty. This is not to say that its actions are in vain, but that they are missing the real target. What good is it to replace one set of values with another, if the sacrificial structure of sovereignty remains intact (Chaloupka 126)? Animal-centered politics not only require working on

³⁷ Ultimately, ALF acknowledges: “So many are working in so many different ways, the important thing is to work for the common goal and let your heart tell you what courses of action are right for you.” The implied message, it seems, is that all forms of resistance, from veganism to legal protest to direct action — so long as they truly work for animal rights to life and well being — are laudable efforts.

the categories of the present, but also taking on the antecedent values that drive our meat culture.

Certainly animal rights claims disrupt our commonsense understanding of animals. What animal rights and liberation activists do, in a way that animal welfarists cannot, is actively politicize animals. Speciesism makes the ontological fracture of animals and humans visible. More specifically, animal rights claims force us to examine why we value the interests of humans over animals within our ethico-political system. Although they take us to the marginal limits of our values, these claims fail to render suspect the value of those values: the all too human *political animal*, which exists at the expense of other animals. Without confronting this hidden animal subtext and the animal rights paradox it presents, the animal rights movement is fated to become a weak political force, unwittingly joined to hegemonic (and carnivorous) systems of power.

This, of course, begs the (Foucauldian) question: What function, in terms of propping up a particular power, do animal rights serve? Surely animals are not the beneficiaries of this power system. As the above examples clearly illustrate, animals are dead before the law and, therefore, always already at risk of being destroyed in wake of (human) political desire. Consequently, to understand the paradox of animal rights, we need to excavate the remains buried beneath the doctrine of rights and sovereignty; or, more specifically, to trace a brief genealogy of rights. Foucault's work on governmentality is instructive on this point. To the question of which powers rights serve, Foucault answers: "The essential role of the theory of right from medieval times onwards, was to fix the legitimacy of

power; that is the major problem around which the whole theory of rights and sovereignty is organized” (“Two Lectures” 95). Foucault goes on to explain that the discourse and techniques of rights have hidden the dominance of power in a two-fold manner: by legitimizing it in the various forms of sovereign government, and investing a legal obligation to obey it within a system of rights. What resulted is a legal and legislative discourse organized around the notion of public right, expressed in the social body and delegated within each citizen. However, its function is not to free the actions of individual citizens, but to provide disciplinary coercions, legal sanctions that assure unanimity within the social body (Foucault, “Two Lectures” 106). Legal rights then are another disciplinary technique, a technology of power aimed at creating a politically docile body.

So, what power does this rights framework support? Generally, the state and specifically, reason: “One of the Enlightenment’s tasks was to multiply reason’s political powers” (Foucault, “Omnes” 298). As Foucault explains, political rationality began with the pastoral state, where the sovereign was entrusted with directing the individual lives of his subjects as a matter of divine province. With the Enlightenment, reason was deflected onto the bureaucratic state (Foucault, “Omnes” 307, 325). Rights doctrines served to quell the tension between the two discourses, one that individualized (pastoral) and one that totalized (the state), by investing reason in both individuals and the government. This legal discursive formation then produced rational human subjects *and* a rational state—politically docile bodies sustaining an omnipresent government, respectively.

Within the contemporary liberal state, bureaucratic power is not simply commensurable with sovereign power, but dispersed to “managerial, normativizing,

regularizing, biopoweristic forms” which transfer/form sovereign discretion into (regulatory) micropower (Brown and Halley 13). Expanding Foucault’s claim, Wendy Brown and Janet Halley argue that this type of transmutation has both normalizing and disruptive effects on law. More specifically, law sets the standards for bureaucratic discretion, yet these standards are given content via the performances of administrators, whose interpretations are “mobile, shifting, highly momentary assessments” (14). In this sense, seemingly innocuous acts performed within an equal and inclusive juridical system have the very real effect of delimiting rights. What this means is that the emancipatory, egalitarian promise of left legalism and the ensuing identities it produces (for example, *woman, black, gay*) cut both ways: “they can be crucial sites of cultural belonging and political mobilization, but they can also be important vehicles of domination through regulation” (7). Simply put, it is not simply the prohibitive aspect of law, but its inclusive permissions that work to regulate political action (via veiled exclusions). It is the productive capacity of the law that Judith Butler describes in her book, *Gender Trouble* (1990). What Butler brings to light is the myth of subjectivity, of the pre-juridical subject or political animal that substantiates liberalism: “The prevailing assumption of the ontological integrity of the subject before the law might be understood as the contemporary trace of the state of nature hypothesis, that foundationalist fable constitutive of the juridical structures of classical liberalism” (5). Knowing the latent instability produced out of this productive necessity, Butler recodes subjectivity, via gender performances, as a site of political contestation.

As Foucault explains: “The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself” (“Truth and Power” 133).

Accordingly, and in line with Foucault's directive to liberate right from sovereignty, the challenge becomes one of reorganizing political strategies in light of the unstable signs of rights and subjectivity. This is an especially relevant point for the animal rights movement. Advocating on behalf of animals (by performing their mark of exclusion) animal rights, welfare and liberation platforms are reduced to animal welfare regulations organized around (human) property rights. Francione is correct to observe that speciesism allows us to see this fracture. Yet, as the above discussion demonstrates, the liberal legalism that Francione advocates carries its own baggage—namely, hostility toward open-ended political dialogues over values and possibilities for collective life (Brown and Halley 19). In order for “the animal” to be discursively represented (subjectively or objectively) within juridical systems of power, a multiplicity of animal bodies as well as political action must be sacrificed.

But this is merely the (anthropocentric) symptom of larger political animal paradox. Taking up Foucault's discussion of biopolitics and sovereignty, Agamben situates the paradox of sovereignty within the caesura of animality and humanity (mapping its origins not simply to the modern state, but to Aristotle's delineation of the political animal) and marks animality as the constitutive outside of politics. Agamben is quite clear that this is an exclusively anthropological project.³⁸ For Agamben, it is the

³⁸ In *Means without Ends*, Agamben is very clear on this point, noting that language allows humans alone to appropriate the open, to seize their own appearance and being, and transform “nature into face” (92.1). Although animal-others are in the open, they do not try to take possession of their own presentation in the world, instead live without caring. It is this appropriation, via language, that is the location of politics according to Agamben. Because animals do not separate themselves from the world, but simply live in it, they do not have politics. Agamben explains the anthropocentric nature of politics in the following passage: “Exposition is the location of politics. If there is no animal politics, that is perhaps because animals are always already in the open and do not try to take possession of their own exposition; they simply live in it without caring about it. That is why they are not interested in mirrors, in the image as image. Human beings, on the other hand, separate images from things and give them a name precisely

incessant grappling of this fracture that legitimates sovereign violence and drives the death-march of history. In order to stop the anthropological machine of history, Agamben urges that we “let be” the myth and mystery of human animality (Palladino 327).

Contra Aristotle’s distinction, Agamben strives for a Platonist reconciliation of *zōē/bios*, of animality/humanity. More specifically, concealed within Agamben’s seemingly de-centered vision, is (apolitical) essentialism: “all traditional forms of intermediary links and mediations would disappear along with political power. Surprisingly enough, Agamben comes very close to advocating the interpenetration and fusion of the social and the political: the coming sovereignless community emerges as seamless, one with itself, with no hostilities...” (Kalyvas 117-8). For now, the task at hand is to situate animals (as the locus of execution for the ideal political state) within the context of canonical ethico-political claims in order to grasp the weakness of animal rights claims, which take for granted concepts derived of the (sacrificial) structure of sovereignty and rights.

In Chapter VII of *The Republic*, Plato describes the transition from the primitive state to the luxurious state: the former a self-contained state in which all physical needs are satisfied; the latter a provincial state wherein regional commerce and economic development is entangled with unhealthy elements of luxury. For Plato, even the slightest changes were vital in the development of an ideal state that could cure the political

because they want to recognize themselves, that is, they want to take possession of their own very appearance. Human beings thus transform the open into a world, that is, into a battlefield of a political struggle without quarter. This struggle, whose object is truth, goes by the name of History” (92.3).

distemper of Athens, including the choice of what to eat. Notably, in the transition to the luxurious state, animals are incorporated into the economic life of Athens as a source of food. Prior to this change, animals are strikingly absent from the polis.³⁹ In fact, Plato describes the primitive city preceding the luxurious state as vegetarian: “And they shall roast myrtle-berries and acorns at the fire, while they sip their wine. Leading such a healthy life in peace, they will naturally come to a good old age” (60).⁴⁰ It is not until Chapter VI, in which Socrates describes the swelling of the polis, that animals are displaced as meat: “And then swineherds—there was no need for them in our original state, but we shall want them now; and a great quantity of sheep and cattle too, if people are going to live on meat” (61).

In *Timaeus*, Plato lends an intriguing addendum to his account of animals (as meat) in *The Republic*. In this later dialogue, Plato describes the universe as a perfect and immutable animal whose divine soul is composed of both humans and lower animals: “The world has received animals, mortal and immortal, and is fulfilled with them, and has become a visible animal containing the visible—the sensible God who is the image of the intellectual, the greatest, best, fairest, most perfect—the one only-begotten heaven” (518).⁴¹ Although Plato was not vegetarian, this divine relationship (to which only philosophers are privy) may explain his edict that philosophers be vegetarian (Armstrong

³⁹ This is with the exception of Plato’s peripheral discussion of animals in Chapter II, as noted in the earlier discussion of animal welfare.

⁴⁰ Socrates also describes the necessity of plough animals for a well functioning polis, and the importance of the farmer who spends “the whole of his working time in producing corn, so as to share with the rest” and “brings some of his produce to market” implying a vegetarian community in which animals and humans labor together (56-57).

⁴¹ Note that Plato depicts *Timaeus* as recounting the story of creation to Socrates on the day after Socrates’ conversation comprising the *Republic*, establishing an interesting link between the two texts (505).

and Botzler 2).⁴² Consuming meat may be perceived as divine cannibalism. Here Plato's ambiguity is both obvious and striking. On one hand, animal sacrifice (as meat) is a prerequisite for the ideal polis because it allows for the plebeian embodiment of politics. All the while, Plato implies that harming animals is unjust since it irreparably damages the divine soul. It seems that the political situation of animals is both essential and contradictory. Andrew Norris comments on Plato's addition of animals: "It is unlikely that Socrates believes pork to be strictly necessary to the feverish life of luxury. It is more likely that he says pigs were unnecessary in the 'healthy' city because, as Glaucon claims, the citizens themselves were pigs" (8). In spite of this reflection, markedly absent from Norris's analysis is how animal bodies, displaced as meat, figure into the ethico-political order of Plato's *Republic*.

As Foucault explains, dietetics was an important modality of medicine in Greece, "but it did not become an extension of the art of healing until the day when regimen as a way of life became separated from nature; and while it always constituted a necessary accompaniment of medicine, this was simply because one could not treat a person without rectifying the lifestyle that made him sick in the first place" (*Pleasure* 100). Sickness is introduced into the polis with the addition of meat. "And with this manner of life physicians will be in much greater request" (Plato, *Republic* 61). Once physicians are

⁴² Daniel A. Dombrowski notes that Plato was greatly impressed with vegetarian thought. Many ancient Greek philosophers were indeed vegetarian: Pythagoras, Empedocles, Theophrastus, Seneca, Ovid, Plutarch, Plotinus, and Porphyry, among others. Dombrowski notes that ancient thinkers practiced vegetarianism for four main reasons: (1) belief in transmigration, or that animals were or will become humans; (2) meat-eating as injurious to the health of the body or soul, which often translated into a commitment to moderation or asceticism; (3) concern for animals themselves; (4) some animals are, in fact, cognitively equal to marginal humans (for example, infants, mentally disabled, etc.) (141-2). Notably, elements of these claims can be seen in both *The Republic* and *Timaeus*, in Plato's discussion of the relation of the intelligible world to the polis and his comments on animals, specifically.

introduced, the state becomes concerned not only with simple breeding, but the political art of judging wellbeing and illness (Norris 8). And since meat is a prerequisite for healthcare, animals are essential for fabricating the political body to be judged. Introducing meat allows the state to classify healthy (human) political animals, in effect displacing other animals as absent referents of political power. Simply put, this carnivorous bond works to substantiate sovereign power at the beginning stages of the polis.

Of course, Agamben locates the genesis of the anthropological machine with Aristotle's demarcation of the political animal. On this point, there is a slight (albeit fundamental) difference between Plato and Aristotle's interpretation of animal nature that must be addressed. Recall Plato divinely links the souls of animals and humans in *Timaeus*. Human souls are comprised of the same elements of the universal design, while animal souls are only a portion (the other): "[God] took the three elements of the same, the other, and the essence, and mingled them into one form, compressing by force the reluctant and unsociable nature of the other into the same" (510). A virtuous soul is one that lives a good life. And since for Plato a good life is a just life, aristocratic politics—wherein the soul and the community are fused—is the closest material sign of the good life.⁴³ And in the earthly realm of politics, the metaphorical fusion of bodies, via the

⁴³ The ideal state of aristocracy here refers to an aristocracy of merit, which (in theory) presents a certain equality of opportunity, wherein natural differences emerge via merit and educational achievement. Only in the political community can we develop our human nature. Each member of the polis has different capabilities and we need each other to survive. This goes hand in hand with Plato's definition of justice: each doing what s/he is naturally inclined without interference from others. If we return to Plato's remarks about the injustice of harming (domestic) animals, we can infer that animals are given a certain moral consideration within Plato's teleology, as Rollin argues. However, since animals have already been consigned to subsidiary or sacrificial roles within the polis, this ethical directive is aimed simply at preventing cruelty, which would in turn harm the polis; that is, as soul and polis are divinely linked, to inflict cruelty on an animal is to peripherally harm the polis and oneself.

ingestion of meat, is the only way to embody divine law. Animals are granted minor ethical sympathy within the polis (as “the other” element of the divine pattern) yet they remain outside of politics. As such, herbivorous animality (as a human quality) becomes the constitutive outside of politics. Absent virtuous political life, and the introduction of meat, the community is reduced to a “city of pigs.” Except that in *Timaeus*, Plato takes this to the extreme of animal bodies, as a sort of reincarnate retribution for injustice:

But if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in the evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he followed the revolution of he same and the like within him, and overcame by the help of reason the turbulent and irrational mob of later accretions made up of fire and air and water and earth, and returned to the form of his first and better state (513-4).

Aristotle, on the other hand, makes no such insinuations regarding animality.

Aristotle’s is a pragmatic politics, where all matter develops into its own perfection or completeness. A virtuous life is one dictated by reasonable action, wherein humans shape their lives and political institutions to the end of human happiness and fulfillment. As justice can only exist between reasonable parties, animals are excluded from sharing in the camaraderie of government and justly relegated to serving human needs—this is their telos.⁴⁴ Accordingly, Aristotle rejects Plato’s claim that the human soul can be

⁴⁴ In *Politics*, Aristotle notes that both wild and tame animals should be under subjection of man. This dominion is justified because animals do not have reason: “for other animals have no perception of reason, but are entirely guided by appetite, and indeed they vary very little in their use from each other; for the advantage which we receive, both from slaves and tame animals, arises from their bodily strength administering to our necessities.”

reincarnated in other species.⁴⁵ This is an important distinction. As Aristotle explains in *De Anima*, the body becomes the ultimate expression of its telos: “It is manifest that the soul is also the final cause of its body. For Nature, like mind, always does whatever it does for the sake of something, which something is its end.” All political arrangements have the potential to actualize justice. Aristotle’s wholly human *political animal* represents the fulfillment and reconciliation of the ideal and the material state (Nelson 60).

No such worldly possibility exists for Plato. Notably, the vegetarian state that Plato describes in *The Republic* (and *The Statesman*) is representative of the peaceful “orphyic state” of the Golden Age of Greece—absent of property, war or social conflict—while the luxurious state is its worldly manifestation (Vidal-Naquet 132). But if we turn to the Book IV of *The Republic*, which depicts the fall of the ideal state, Plato describes less than idyllic animal-human relations, including the absurdity of animal “rights” and the irrational desires of the despotic man: “In phantasy it will not shrink from intercourse with a mother or anyone else, man god, or brute, or from forbidden food or any deed of blood” (296-7).⁴⁶ The comparison of dichotomous states—one of virtue and one of vice—raised the possibility of the civic order to descend (bestiality) or ascend

⁴⁵ “All, however, that these thinkers do is to describe the specific characteristics of the soul; they do not try to determine anything about the body which is to contain it, as if it were possible, as in the Pythagorean myths, that any soul could be clothed upon with any body -- an absurd view, for each body seems to have a form and shape of its own” (Aristotle, *On the Soul*).

⁴⁶ In Chapter XXXII of *The Republic*, Plato argues that democracy sets the stage for despotism, by inciting anarchy so infectious that even animals catch the “free spirit” of liberty (289). In a facetious tone, Plato writes: “No one who had not seen it would believe how much more freedom the domestic animals enjoy in a democracy than elsewhere. The very dogs behave as if the proverb ‘like mistress, like maid’ applied to them; and the horse and donkeys catch the habit of walking down the street with all the dignity of freemen, running into anyone they meet who does not get out of their way. The whole place is simply bursting with the spirit of liberty” (289).

(vegetarianism) in its transcendence. And the thread connecting these opposing states is that animals and humans are not (politically) separate, or this separation has ceased (Vidal-Naquet 135).

With the philosopher-king as shepherd, pastoral power is the earthly surrogate for divine perfection, in effect allaying the animistic contradiction of sovereignty, as Foucault explains:

To solve this question [Plato] uses the division method. A distinction is drawn between the man who conveys orders to inanimate things (for example, the architect) and the man who gives orders to animals (like a yoke of oxen) and he who gives orders to flocks; and he who gives orders to animal flocks, and he who commands human flocks. And there we have the political leader—a shepherd of men (“Omnes” 305).

Plato aptly recognizes the sensible world as one of both virtue and vice, making either extreme of animal-human relations untenable on earth. More specifically, politics becomes situated in the ambiguous space separating humans and animals. Animal bodies are sacrificed so that the political animal can be figured and collected. Statistics, in this sense, predate governmentality. Here it seems Agamben is correct to locate the genesis of biopolitics in antiquity, although he misreads its mark. It is meat that swells the state and individual bodies, creating the body politic that tends both life and death. Once the animals are introduced, Plato implicitly accepts biopolitics as thanatopolitics (Norris 8). At the risk of oversimplifying, meat and the corresponding pastoral state permit humanity to see its own animality, effectively releasing it from this imperfect animal life, while wresting it from complete animal abandon (notably, Heidegger describes two similar extremes). So, contra Norris’s comment, perhaps pork *was* necessary to the feverish life of luxury and the worldly representation of politics.

Of course, animal rights become an absurd abandonment of political desire in Plato's fallen state, with animals literally running amuck in the streets. As the above discussion implies, perhaps the most interesting aspect of Plato's zoophilic extreme is how the ontological priority of the human political animal begins to deconstruct when animals actively return to the polis. In casting the political animal as distinctly human, Aristotle delimited the civic state and the state of exception that Agamben describes. Yet, Plato set the groundwork for this essential delineation, even if in the shadow of his ideal state. Agamben is neo-Platonist in his depiction of bare life, which for him remains distinct from biotic life. Bare life, the figure of homo sacer, exists in a zone of "indistinction and continuous transition" between humanity and animality (*Homo Sacer* 109). In this sense, homo sacer is analogous to the loss of politics—the limits of sovereignty—in both the primitive and fallen states described by Plato (the implosion of Aristotle's distinction). This means humans are not transformed into animals outside the law of the sovereign but it is "as if" they are reduced to an (incomplete) animality once they are banned to the sovereign limit. Like Plato, Agamben suggests the only earthly way to resolve this sovereign paradox and embody the coming community is by allegorically partaking in political banquet of the righteous. In order to eat *the good*, Agamben's vague implication is that we must eat (clean) meat, at least until the behemoth (which literally means animals) is revealed at the messianic feast that celebrates the end of anthropological history (*Open* 3).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Although this will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, for now it suffices to say that Agamben hints in the beginning pages of *The Open* for a new (vegetarian) understanding of animal-human relations when describing the messianic feast marking the end of history as we know it: "In the Talmud, on the other hand, the passage of the tractate in which the Leviathan is mentioned as food at the messianic banquet of the righteous occurs after a series of Aggadoth that seem to allude to a different

Agamben's use of animal metaphors, especially his account of the werewolf, may provide some clue about this elusive carnivorous suggestion. Banned from the sovereign state, wandering between city and forest, the werewolf exists outside of politics.

Although the werewolf has its life and its human attributes, it does not have the sovereign protection of its life that renders it recognizably human. Banned from the city, the werewolf is "dead" in the eyes of the sovereign and may be killed by anyone (*Homo Sacer* 105). In the collective consciousness, s/he becomes a bestial monster that occupies the borderlands of the polis (*Homo Sacer* 105). Embodying homo sacer, the werewolf is stripped to its bare life. Not simply the fiction of biotic or natural life. Instead, close scrutiny reveals the state of nature as the state of exception:

All representations of the originary political act as a contract or convention marking the passage from nature to the State in a discrete and definite way must be wholly left behind. Here there is, instead, a much more complicated zone of indiscernability between nomos and physis (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 109).

More specifically, it is the ban (not the contract) that is the originary political act. Joining bare life and sovereign power, the ban justifies sovereign violence, and "because of this alone can the ban signify both the insignia of sovereignty... and expulsion from the community" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 110-11). In short, the political fracture of animality has never been definitive, but a myth used to bear sovereign power. It is significant that judgment in the luxurious state, as Plato describes it, turns to the literal sacrifice of animal bodies in order to announce the arrival of the political animal. And with this turn,

economy of relations between animal and human" (3). A few sentences later, his idealism is apparent when he comments that on the last day: "man himself will be reconciled with his animal nature."

animals are always already a part of the polis—as absent referents at the center of sovereignty, sacrificed to substantiate our metaphysical existence.

Agamben's werewolf certainly resembles Plato's caricature of the fallen state, one in which the despot (who, of course, perverts sovereignty) is transformed from a human-being into a wolf in his blood-thirsty quest for power (*Republic* 292). Both Agamben's and Plato's use of lupine imagery calls for pause. For Plato, the wolf-despot symbolizes the disturbed political soul wherein appetites (desire) have overridden reason. Comparing ideal and despotic states, Plato remarks that "The happiest man is he who is first in goodness and justice, namely the true king who is also king of himself; and the most miserable is the lowest example of injustice and vice, the born despot whose tyranny prevails in his own soul and also over his country" (*Republic* 306). According to Plato, despotic rule is a consequence of the anarchy resulting from democratic liberty. Originally delegated sovereign authority by the people in order to negotiate competing interests, the despot turns this remittance into absolute power and is reduced to animalistic temperament in his intoxication: "one who tastes a single piece of human flesh mixed in with the flesh of the sacrificial victims is fated to be changed into a wolf" (*Republic* 292). In the ensuing climate of terror, the despot continually fears for his life, as do his subjects (293-6). Applying Plato's teleological logic, wherein the soul and polis are divinely linked, not only does the despot become wolf, but so do his subjects.

Agamben continues this lycology by tracking the sovereign-wolf of Germanic law (Aravamudan 459). Appearing as the monstrous werewolf, Agamben's wolf is similarly adrift in a sea of terror (or, to be exact, *the state of nature*). Working from Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Agamben observes bare life as both the condition of possibility for

sovereignty and its limit; that is, the sovereign retains the power to do anything to anyone, while the subject retains the right not to be sacrificed. Homo sacer, described here as a werewolf, embodies this paradox of sovereignty: “And just as sovereign power’s first and immediate referent is, in this sense, the life that may be killed but not sacrificed, and that has its paradigm in *homo sacer*, so in the person of the sovereign, the werewolf, the wolf-man of man, dwells permanently in the city” (*Homo Sacer* 106-7, his emphasis). Like Plato’s wolf-despot, the werewolf is a sign of the bare life that is the constitutive outside or marginal limit of sovereign power. Or, as Hobbes describes in *De Cive*, man is wolf to man. What this means is that “the lupization of man and the humanization of wolf is at every moment possible” (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 106).

Here Agamben is expressly taking up the question of the political animal introduced by Foucault: “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a unique political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question” (*History of Sexuality* 143). Simply put, the object of politics in the modern state is bare life. Agamben expands Foucault’s thesis by tracing the liminal significance of bare life to antiquity, effectively situating the origin of politics within the caesura of *zoë/bios*. And it is here that the werewolf takes shape. It is the political animal, which emerges in the division of bare life from politics (the pursuit of the good life). Except that in the contemporary politics Aristotle’s separation has collapsed, arguably resulting in the fallen bestial state that Plato describes, so that all life is sacred and all politics the exception (Norris 2-3).

Politics are devastated by this politically broken animal, which may at any moment be devoured by sovereign power. Lupine imagery is particularly telling here. Jacques Derrida, in his last seminars on “The Beast and the Sovereign,” explicitly developed a genealogical theory of the wolf linking the wolf, the werewolf and the problematic of sovereignty, wherein wolf-werewolf-rogue are expressions of the sovereign state (Williams 3). Derrida’s lycology parallels his work on the carnophallogocentric structure of subjectivity in “Eating Well or the Calculation of the Subject,” which notably culminates with the carnivorous *chef d’Etat* (281). All of us are living metaphors that may be sacrificed and consumed, as Derrida explains. Cannibalism aside, this sacrificial ingestion (of the other, signifying the phallus, or sovereign head) is only grammatical for humans. But animals are consumed not only within language, but also as food. In this sense, they literally and symbolically nourish sovereign power, as we have seen. The wolf-werewolf-rogue imagery lodged at the core of sovereignty may, at any moment, deconstruct and devour itself. This is the paradox of sovereignty. In a word, there cannot be a sovereign that is not a wolf within this structure (Williams 8).

Returning to Plato’s wolf imagery, the wolf-sovereign can be seen as a betrayal of the ideal state, which must sacrifice life, the other, in the name of protecting it. As Derrida explains, this sacrifice or deceit of the other (of animality) in the name of truth is written into the autobiography of humans (“The Animal” 393). “Autobiography becomes confession when the discourse of the self does not dissociate truth from an avowal, thus from a fault, an evil, and ill” (Derrida, “The Animal” 390). Surely, the deceptive truth of the wolf-sovereign is deeply connected to an avowed morality, as we have seen in the classical rendering of the depraved animal state, or state of nature. It is the fleece; the

veiled wolf or political skin at the core of subjectivity; the reserve within the structure of juridical discourses (among others), for the non-criminal killing of the other (Derrida, “Eating Well” 278).

Here it is useful to Hobbes’s famous construction of Leviathan as an illustration:

Nature (the Art whereby God hath mad and governes the World) is by the Art of man, as in many things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal... For by Art is created that great Leviathan called a Common-wealth, or State, (in latine Civitas) which is but an Artificiall Man (9).

If we return to Hobbes’s comment in *De Cive*, the state is an artificial creation of man meant to suppress the wolf-like nature of men, the result being a “transcendent political apparatus” via the covenant of Commonwealth, which creates “God on earth” in the form of the sovereign ruler (Hardt and Negri 83). An avatar of domination, Leviathan is the wolf-sovereign, the artificial animal that represents all life. Hardt and Negri clarify this contractual enactment, which creates the (animal-human) amalgam that is Leviathan: “According to Hobbes, the single wills of the various individuals converge and are represented in the will of the transcendent sovereign. Sovereignty is thus defined both by *transcendence* and *representation*, two concepts that the humanist tradition has posed as contradictory” (84, their emphasis).

At first glance, this inner (paradoxical) animality lodged within sovereignty may appear as an opening for animal rights. Closer examination of *Leviathan* (like that of *the Republic*), nonetheless, reveals a sacrificial structure that not only suppresses (human) animality, but also denies the animal-other in politics. Foremost, animals lack reason and language, prohibiting them from assembling into the artificial body of the Leviathan. Animal rights are both meaningless and impossible.⁴⁸ On this point, Hobbes is very

specific.⁴⁹ But what is perhaps even more interesting is that Leviathan's artificiality is expressly set in opposition to the natural passivity of animals: "First, that men are continually in competition for Honour and Dignity, which these creatures are not; and consequently amongst men there ariseth on that ground, Envy and Hatred, and finally Warre; but amongst these not so. Lastly, the agreement of these creatures is Naturall; that of men, is by Covenant only, which is Artificiall" (94-95). What this passage implies is that brute force, guided by reason, heralds the (Enlightenment) promise of salvation from the ignorance, superstition and "darkness" of a patently anthropogenic state of nature (Johnston 363-4).⁵⁰ This avataristic transformation of superstition allows the wolf to both inhabit and attack the "soft underbelly of the Enlightenment" (Aravamudan 463). That is to say, it is the destructive/deconstructive kernel, the deceptive truth lodged at the center of sovereignty.

And fixed within this humanist bend in sovereignty is a classical appreciation of animals. A turn that is perhaps most evident in *The Prince* when Machiavelli describes two ways of fighting, via force and via law; the former properly belonging to animals, the

⁴⁸ Hobbes explains in *Leviathan* that animals naturally live in a peaceful state because, although sharing survival instinct with humans, they do not compete for power. Hobbes offers several interrelated explanations for this passive behavior: animals make no private/ public distinction; animals lack reason and language; and irrationality prevents animals from distinguishing injury from damage. This last characteristic keeps animals from being offended by others actions (20, 95, 116). Together, these innate qualities imply the absurdity of a covenant that included animals, for no such agreement would be needed, let alone understood. In some ways, we can say that Hobbes romanticizes the peacefulness of animal nature; this is not to say that there is no violence, but that it is not comprehended as such.

⁴⁹ In *Leviathan*, Hobbes explicitly states: "To make Covenants with bruit Beasts, is impossible; because not understanding our speech, they understand not, nor accept of any translation of Right; nor can translate any Right to another: and without mutuall acceptation, there is no Covenant" (77).

⁵⁰ In "Theory and Transformation," Johnston does not speak to the issue of animality. Rather, what he addresses is Hobbes's belief in the power of Enlightenment reason to transform superstitious, magic-fearing human beings into the enlightened, rational actors that they always had to potential to be, the practical realization of this vision, of course, being Leviathan.

latter to humans. Except that as reasonable humans, we are able to grasp both kinds of being. By this account, the sovereign must harness a certain animality (the fox and the lion) in order to keep the bestial and civilized forces of both his subjects and his adversaries at bay. In the following passage, Machiavelli displays characteristic contempt for the wolf, which then forms the basis of sovereign violence: “Hence a prince ought to be a fox in recognizing snares and lion in driving off wolves. Those who assume the bearing of the lion alone lack understanding. It follows, then, that a wise prince cannot and should not keep his pledge when it is against his interest to do so and when his reasons for making the pledge are no longer operative” (62). Like Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, Machiavelli’s *Prince*, is a synthetic or, more precisely, man-made animal fabricated to corral the human adaptation of brute force. Bred is the Aristotelian political animal, the body politic, as the following passage from *Politics* explains:

But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he has not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.

Animal-others, and their respective natural state, is not romanticized in this classical rendering. It is instead presented as an impoverished life, one that would be inapt and unnatural for humans. More specifically, Aristotle’s allusion to animality implicates a reasonable albeit unenlightened animality, but one that is distinctively anthropogenic. On this point, Agamben is correct to declare the practico-political mystery of separation,

which delimits this animality as the constitutive outside of sovereignty (*Open* 92). And it is this double bind that forces sovereignty, and the wolf-sovereign.

Derrida's choice to preface *Rogues* with La Fontaine's fable, *The Wolf and the Lamb* is telling.⁵¹ Seen as a greedy animal that covetously disrespected the social order, the wolf symbolized sullied nobility in fables, particularly those of the medieval period (Salisbury 53). In La Fontaine's fable, the wolf is not the *voyou* (the other) and neither is the lamb. Derrida's etymological analysis of the French (*voyou*) and English (*rogue*) terms for outlaw provides an insight into Derrida's line of flight here. Both *voyou* and *rogue* signify an outlaw. However, *voyou* is relatively new to the French dialect and is difficult to translate, while *rogue* is a more established English term. Perhaps most interesting is that while *voyou* applies only to human outlaws, *rogue* can be extended to animals that behave like outlaws "violating the customs and conventions, the customary practices, of *their own* community" (Derrida, *Rogues* 94, his emphasis).

As the sovereign force that gives law, the wolf can be only a rogue. Rogue conduct appears deviant or perverse. It is the fallen or evil state (to return to Plato), the illusory truth that demands the sacrifice of the other. And as a wolf among wolves—born differently, artificially—the rogue state may attack the pack at any moment (Derrida,

⁵¹ The text of *The Wolf and The Lamb*, as printed in *Rogues*: The strong are always best at proving they're right. Witness the case we're now going to cite. A Lamb was drinking, serene, At a brook running clear all the way. A ravenous Wolf happened by, on the lookout for prey, Whose sharp hunger drew him to the scene. "What makes you so bold as to muck up my beverage?" This creature snarled in a rage. "You will pay for your temerity!" "Sire," replied the Lamb, "let not Your Majesty Now give in to unjust ire, But rather do consider, Sire: I'm drinking — just look — In the brook Twenty feet farther down, if not more, And therefore in no way at all, I think, Can I be muddying what you drink." "You're muddying it!" insisted the cruel carnivore. "And I know that, last year, you spoke ill of me." "How could I do that? Why I'd not yet even come to be," Said the Lamb. "At my dam's teat I still nurse." "If not you, then your brother. All the worse." "I don't have one." "Then it's someone else in your clan, For to me you're all of you a cures: You, your dogs, your shepherds to a man. So I've been told; I have to pay you all back." With that, deep into the wood The Wolf dragged and ate his midday snack. So trial and judgment stood. (x).

Rogues 93). In French, the outlaw (*voyou*) retains a certain openness and instability, such that a voyoucracy constitutes a kind of counter-power or counter-citizenship (*Rogues* 66). And it is this insecurity that carries the possibility of a future (democracy) to come, “In this French expression of very recent date, ‘Etat voyou,’ which, as untranslatable as it is, as I said, will have been but an approximate translation of the Anglo-American rogue state, we do not know exactly how voyou should be heard or understood” (*Rogues* 79). What is remarkably absent from this voyoucratic turn, in this democracy to come, is the deceptive and sacrificial truth of animality.

Derrida reminds us that democracy appears in *The Republic* as the most open, beautiful and seductive of all political regimes (*Rogues* 26). Democracy is a bazaar or marketplace, “an emporium of constitutions” that lacks set constitution (Derrida, *Rogues* 26; Plato, *Republic* 282). As such, *democracy* has signified all kinds of political regimes and states:

And yet there have in fact been, in addition to the monarchic, plutocratic, and tyrannical democracies of antiquity, so many so-called modern democratic regimes, regimes that at least present themselves as democratic, that is, under and in the name, the always Greek name, let us never forget, of democracy (Derrida, *Rogues* 26-7).

What this means is that democracy is only defined by turns and tropes (Derrida, *Rogues* 37). And in its hollow center are animals. As much as we deny them, animals are always already at the center of politics (if only in their absence), and animal-centered politics are always already democratic.

What will democracy-to-come be like? Of course, we already have one model—*this animal which is not one*. But what is the next turn? Here it may be useful to consider the

democratic theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom Derrida cites in *Rogues*. Referring to democratic lack, Rousseau observes: “If there were a nation of gods, it would be governed democratically. So perfect a government is unsuited to men” (*Social Contract* 68). As Derrida explains, Rousseau’s *Social Contract* is a classical oeuvre with respect to its treatment of the forms of government. Rousseau (like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes and (arguably) Machiavelli) names the indivisibility of sovereign government (*Rogues* 74-5). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri make a similar point, noting that the social contract assembles the General Will, which “proceeds from the alienation of the single wills toward the sovereignty of the state. As a model of sovereignty, Rousseau’s ‘republican absolute’ is really no different from Hobbes’s ‘God on earth,’ the monarchic absolute” (*Empire* 85). This is not to say that Rousseau prefers absolute sovereignty to democracy. But, as Derrida points out, that it is the force of democratic desire, in its inevitable absence, which allows for the chance of democracy to come (*Rogues* 74).

The city, in particular, signifies the fallen state of democracy for Rousseau. In *Emile*, over-crowded cities are described as cesspools of disease and vice: “Of all creatures man is least fitted to live in herds. Huddled together like sheep, men would very soon die” (29). Certainly, this coincides with Rousseau’s description of the (primitive) clan in *The Social Contract*, wherein the chief appears the sovereign ancestor: “In this way, we have mankind divided like herds of cattle, each of which has a master, who looks after it in order to devour it” (7). More specifically, Rousseau accepts Jean Chardin’s characterization of Europeans as “carnivorous beasts, wolves” while also recognizing primitive states as best adapted for tyranny, so that “wild beasts reign only in deserts.” Here Rousseau is not talking about a literal desert, but the depopulation of the

countryside as a result of urban expansion. The city produces the desert around itself, and the more it usurps the population, the more it sets the conditions for tyranny (Hénaff 14). Enlightenment is said to fend off the (primitive) wolf, when in reality it disperses its voraciousness into the fabric of society with the growth of the metropolis (*Social Contract* 80-3). Marcel Hénaff describes this animalistic transformation: “What this bestiary and its metamorphoses tells us is that in the city man is less than a man; he is not even an animal; to be truly called an animal would not be an insult” (18). So, while savages fight wild beasts, citizens devour each other like cannibals in cities, “This is why we all flock to Rome, Paris and London. Human flesh and blood are always cheapest in the capital cities” (Rousseau, *Emile* 559).

In order to offset what he perceives as the downfall of the democratic state, Rousseau lays his political hopes on the dinner table, so that the feast or meal appears as the condition of possibility for democracy. (Democracy to come?) Derrida does not roguishly turn down this avenue, yet the trace is there, in the *Chef d’Etat* and *Etat voyou*. An ancient communion takes form at the fete, the celebratory table of politics. For Rousseau, the desire for freedom is not inherent to any form of government, but is found in the “heart of the free man” (*Emile* 586). And the choice of what to eat, to *eat well*, cultivates this desire. Like Plato, Rousseau imagines the natural state as peaceful and vegetarian:

It appears therefore that man, having teeth and intestines like the frugivorous animals should naturally be classified in that category, and it is not only anatomical observation which confirms this opinion, for as the classics of antiquity are also much in its favor: ‘Dicaearchus,’ says St Jerome, ‘relates in his books on Greek antiquity, that under the reign of Saturn when the whole earth was still fertile by itself, no man ate flesh but all lived on the fruits and vegetables that grew naturally’ (*Discourse* 143).

But this is an impossible state, one that must be abandoned with the enlightened awakening of civil society (*Social Contract* 19). “What then? Must we destroy societies, annihilate *meum* and *teum* and return to live in the forests with the bears?” (Rousseau, *Discourse* 153, his emphasis). For Rousseau, this original simplicity has been destroyed, and with it vegetarian society. Like Hobbes, Rousseau does not consider this a loss, but the virtue of Enlightenment, which allows us to fully understand the natural calling of humanity (*Discourse* 153). And *Emile* is the culmination of this anthropological project, the Enlightenment child that for Rousseau represents the promise of humanity. Emile is raised with an appreciation for nature, for animals, and for other humans; and it is this natural education that allows Emile to grow unspoiled, from a naturally peaceful (primitive) infant into a reasonable, honest and good man.

Rousseau’s naturalism is intriguing. Not only does it disclose a certain environmentalism embedded within his work, it also reveals eating as a central component of democratic possibility. Rousseau spends a considerable amount of time describing the value of young Emile’s diet for developing his true nature (24-8). And what does Emile eat? Both Emile and his nurse are to eat a vegetable (vegetarian) diet (28). But this changes with Emile’s passage into adulthood. Having been raised vegetarian, the adult Emile now has the freedom to choose his meals. And it is his natural sensibility that leads him to find pleasure in eating food indigenous to his estate. In this sense, meals are vital to sustaining his naturally free character in spite of modern society. This is perhaps best illustrated in Rousseau’s description of the pleasures derived from hunting:

I would fix my rustic abode in a district where game is not preserved, and where I can have my sport without hindrance. Game will be less plentiful, but there will

be more skill in finding it, and more pleasure in securing it. I remember the start of delight with which my father watched the rise of his first partridge and the rapture with which he found the hare he had sought all day long... better pleased with his day's sport than all your ordinary sportsmen, who on a good horse, with twenty guns ready for them, merely take one gun after another, and shoot and kill everything that comes their way, without skill, without glory, and almost without exercise... Whatever you do, you cannot torment men for ever without experiencing some amount of discomfort; and soon or later the muttered curses of the people will spoil the flavour of your game (*Emile* 422).

Emile, like animals, is to live according to nature (24). Contra Hobbes, Rousseau believes humans are by nature political, social and fraternal animals. Fittingly, the estate that Rousseau describes is not restricted. Anyone may hunt there. Fraternity is embodied in the hunt, the spoils of which are celebrated at the (political) feast; at the table, conflicts and class differences fade in the face of camaraderie (Hénaff 22).

Confined within the artificiality of Leviathan, the genuine political animal materializes at the dinner table, upon which animal bodies (as meat) are emblematic of the freedom within each of us. The choice to eat organically—to *eat well*, to eat the good—is symbolic of freedom (Rousseau, *Emile* 420). Consumed as meat, animals are dually valuable: literally and metaphorically, they allow us to ingest our true nature within the construct of civil society; and, in doing so they keep us from devouring each other (Hénaff 22). For Rousseau, humans must become carnivorous in order to nurture their political desire within the civil state; in other words, meat holds open the future of democracy. Not meat that is mindlessly or gluttonously consumed, to be sure: “in my food I will always choose what most owes its charm to [nature], and what has passed through the fewest possible hands on its way to table... my table shall not be decked with fetid splendour or putrid flesh from far off lands” (*Emile* 410-11). Only organic

(macrobiotic) meat can literally and metaphorically satiate voracious appetites and cultivate good taste, the desire to eat well.

Given Rousseau's logic, it is no surprise that during the siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War, food was a prime subject of conversation. Forty-eight newspapers appeared during the siege, depicting a carnival-like festival in which the choice of what to eat was at center stage: "Jaded flaneurs, republican heroes and enthusiastic children alike compare the bombardment to a fireworks display. On the way to fortifications, the route de Sevres was crowded with 'little tables surrounded by stools, and weighed down by large loaves of bread, bottles of wine and cups of café au lait—a series of open air restaurants'" (Sprang 754, 761). Rousseau certainly exhibits a certain disdain for Parisians, who selfishly and detachedly feed off the countryside: "I believe that Paris is fed by the provinces in more senses than one, and that the greater part of their revenues is poured into that town and stays there, without ever returning to the people or to the king" (*Emile* 580). During the siege, however, Parisians were their own provincials (Sprang 766). It is well documented that during the siege Parisians subsisted on "variety meats" like rats, cats and dogs. Once reserved for charlatan restaurateurs, these homespun meats took center stage during the five months of the siege. But the choice of Parisians to "eat the zoo" while besieged is perhaps most revealing. Upper class Parisians feasted on the elephants, yaks and zebras from Jardin d'Acclimation, sold in butcher windows on the posh Boulevard Haussmann (Sprang 757).

Alienated from the rest of France, the choice to eat meat, and especially the treasured animals of the zoo, not only reaffirmed Parisians (gastronomic-centered) identity, but also their freedom. If we apply Derrida's reading (of Rousseau) to the event

of the siege, it seems that freedom gained meaning in the experience of its perceived absence. Meat filled this lack, literally and metaphorically feeding Parisian sovereignty. Although hunger plagued the city during the siege, only comfortable Parisians could afford to eat meat at all, let alone that of the zoo animals (Sprang 757). Only the most enlightened, literary Parisians had the choice to eat well; that is, the choice to eat “the good” of meat. But this inequity was concealed in the formal transcription of the siege, which records the animals of Paris and the zoo animals in particular, as serving the whole city (Sprang 757). Surely, this is a critical footnote to the siege. Like the privileged Emile, only bourgeois Parisians are able to fully feast in their political desire. Yet, the fraternal hope of freedom is propagated in the myth of meat. A similar optimism swathes Emile’s rustic meals: “If some peasant comes our way, returning from his work with his tools over his shoulder, I will cheer his heart with kindly words, and a glass or two of good wine, which will help him to bear his poverty more cheerfully; and I too shall have the joy of feeling my heart stirred within me, and I should say to myself—I too am man” (420).

One never eats alone. And, as Derrida notes, “eating well” is always at stake during times of conflict and war (“Eating Well” 282). However, Emile’s democratic and carnivorous feast, as well as the eating of the Paris zoo, is only conditionally hospitable. “Rogues or degenerates [les voyous ou les roués] are sometimes brothers, citizens and compeers” (Derrida, *Rogues* 63). Differences of margin and center, libertine and voyou, are literally and figuratively pacified with *the good* or *the commodity* of meat. As Hardt and Negri have observed, European modernity and capitalism are inseparable (*Empire* 86). In this sense, to partake in the myth of meat is both a democratic and capitalist

performance. Derrida hopes for democracy to come, a voyoucracy of sorts, and one that implicitly does not rely on this carno-phallogocentric logic. This implies that the democracy to come must, in some sense, be vegetarian. What does it mean to be a political vegetarian? Of course, Derrida resists this line of flight, perhaps because he ate meat. Even so, this (rhizomatic) seed is already planted, beneath sovereignty and beyond the carnivorous political feast.

This, I believe, is the essential issue in the establishment of the art of government—introduction of economy into political practice.... To govern a state will mean, therefore, to apply economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising toward its inhabitants, and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and goods (Foucault, “Governmentality” 207).

Governmentality demands wolves, both to tend the flock and to define its perimeter: wolves are no longer simply above society or an outside threat, but within it and each of us as well. No doubt, the wolf-sovereign is emblematic of the rights doctrine that Foucault describes. And this passage to a general economy of discipline too engenders a political economy of meat. The choice to *eat well* is no longer a choice at all. As Luke describes, political choice is bankrupted within governmentality, so that institutional arrangements allow technical experts to structure politico-ecological decisions, which are then legitimized in the marketplace (*Capitalism* 96). We need only look to agri-business, the National School Lunch Program, and fast food corporations to see this megatechnical system at work. Americans have endless food options: McDonalds or Burger King? Free Range or Caged? Organic or Conventional? But these choices are not entirely meaningful. Rather, their cache is determined not by popular choice, but the global marketplace. Within this framework, the decision is not whether to eat meat, or to buy

into the good, but whether one choice is preferable to the other. Each choice is empty and exchangeable. Americans will always be able to enjoy a *good* hamburger, whether it is from McDonald's or Whole Foods. Simply put, meat is ubiquitous in contemporary American culture.

Of course, it is tempting to read sacrifice as symptomatic of capitalism. However, this is not the case. Sacrifice is clearly traceable at the genesis of Western political thought, as we have seen. Sacrifice and deceit were not lost to the Enlightenment, but instead became its defining mythology (Horkheimer and Adorno 10-12). And this mythology, which drives our carnivorous values, is buried deep beneath the promises of freedom and sovereignty. In other words, sacrifice is deeply embedded in our societal fabric, prefacing capitalism's exchange principle. Capitalism simply fetishizes its logic. Without doubt, the myth of meat is barely perceptible in everyday life. It is both micro-logical and micro-disciplinary. And absent any real critique of sovereignty and rights, even the savviest of animal rights strategies are no match for its omnipresence.

Does this mean that we should "let be" this mythology, as Agamben suggests? Such a move would certainly and indefinitely bury "the animal" beneath the debris of history, devastating any possibility of reading animals against the grain of sovereignty. As history turns, the aporia is not whether to eat, but what to serve at the coming political feast. And Agamben implies that the carnivorous feast (of the righteous) must persist until the great Leviathan is sacrificed at the end of anthropological history. But is this the only way? Or, is it possible for sacrifice to give way to an infinite hospitality of sharing. What has and what might a politics of eating look like?

Chapter Three

The Politics of Eating

On October 5, 2007, Topps Meat Company LLC announced that it was going out of business. Just one week earlier, the frozen meat “giant” recalled 21.7 million pounds of ground beef for E. coli contamination after U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) tests came back positive for the bacteria. By the time of the recall, at least 30 people in eight states had reported falling ill after eating Topps meat (Belson and Fahim). And in February 2008, the USDA ordered the recall of 143 million pounds of meat from Westland meat, the largest recall in the agency’s history, after undercover slaughterhouse footage revealed that the company allowed “downer” cows unfit for human consumption into the U.S. food supply. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) released the footage, which revealed blatant violations of USDA animal welfare regulations in the plant of one of Westland’s partner companies, Hallmark Meatpacking in Chino CA. USDA undersecretary for food safety, Richard Raymond, distinguished the Westland case from previous E. Coli related recalls by assuring the American public of the remote health hazards of the Westland meat that reached their dinner tables: “We feel there is a very, very remote possibility of health consequences from consuming this product” (Brown). But this was not enough to prevent 150 school districts, Jack in the Box, and In-and-Out Burger from ending their supply relationship with Westland as a preventive measure (Brown).

All of this comes on the heels of the hard-hitting film, *Fast Food Nation*, the fictional adaptation of Eric Schlosser’s exposé of the fast food industry. In the movie, Mickey’s (a fictional fast food chain) executive Don Anderson is sent to the company’s meat-processing facility in Colorado in order to determine the source of elevated fecal

content in Mickey's signature burger. For Anderson, the discovery of shit in the meat is both shocking and disruptive. But as he meets with the different characters involved in the meat production process, he gradually learns that shitty meat is little more than an open secret for meat industry insiders. A quick moving processing line on the kill floor, in which shit inevitably splatters from slaughtered cows' intestinal tracks, is the source of the contamination. Everyone in Colorado seems to know this: the ranchers, the distributors and especially the plant workers. Particularly telling is a scene in which Anderson meets with Mickey's meat distribution liaison, Harry Rydell, to inform him of the recent discovery, to which Rydell wittily responds: "There's always been a little shit in the meat... We've all gotta eat a little shit sometimes."

The film version of *Fast Food Nation* is hard to watch, perhaps because it possesses a biting realism that is less apparent in Schlosser's written account of the meatpacking industry. This is most evident in the gritty and realistic slaughter scene at the end of the film, which is likely to make the average meat-eating American wince—and perhaps think twice before turning into McDonald's for a Big Mac. Not to mention that there really is shit in the meat, as the massive Topps recall demonstrates. Notably, there are several themes that run through the movie, including exploitative labor practices, immigration, food production and security concerns, sexual exploitation, class divisions, and youthful idealism and rebellion. Any one of these themes could be considered important, but for our purposes, the most interesting and relevant concern is the driving theme of the movie: *there is and always has been a little shit in the meat*.

One never eats alone, as Derrida reminds us. When we eat, we are intimately involved with another. And in the dialectical tradition, eating is the embodiment of

sacrifice. We are what we eat, so to speak. And this most certainly has an underlying political premise, as we have seen. Eating both destroys and deforms one form to sustain another, allowing us to literally and metaphorically resolve our opposition with the empirical world. More specifically, it is in the act of eating animals that we momentarily suspend the animistic and political paradox of sovereignty: (1) by recognizing autonomy over an-other in the choice to eat and devour its form; and (2) by perceiving our own enlightened animality and commonality in recognizing that we too can be devoured at any moment by our peers and by the state (Mack 48-49). Of course, this is most evident during times of war (as Derrida also discerns). For example, we can contemplate Hobbes's contradictory notion of absolute sovereignty and the inalienable right to self-preservation, wherein self-preservation may be read as the sole criteria for determining whether to follow the laws of Leviathan. As Jean Hampton explains in "Hobbes and the Social Contract," citizens (not the sovereign) are the judges of their own actions, rendering the power of the state conditional to the will of the people, since it is the only they who decide whether legal obedience secures their protection. In Hobbes's *Leviathan*, this conflict of state and individual sovereignty manifests as homo sacer, or the life that may be killed but not sacrificed, as Agamben postulates. And it is this inclusive exclusion, or constitutive outside of sovereignty, which violently and destructively drives the anthropological machine of history.

In Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the nourishing and sacrificial aspects of the state mirror eating in such a way that animal consumption resolves the tension evident in Hobbes's work and in the political paradox of sovereignty, generally. More specifically, sovereign protection parallels the nourishing aspect of eating, while war brings to bear

the sacrificial element, so that the individual exists in “negative relation” to the state. In this sense, eating or nourishment (the feminine) is simply a means to fulfilling the sacrificial demands of the state (Mack 51-2). Politically, this realization of the sacrificial nature of autonomy within Hegel’s dialectical structure then permits the human citizen to take hold of political identity. As Michael Mack explains: “In a speculative scheme of things, however, these immediate moments [nurture and murder] overlap so that the eater realizes that his own empirical (in the sense of bodily) constitution could also turn into an object of consumption, or on a wider political plane, into an object of sacrifice” (48). If we take seriously Mack’s claim—which I will explicate in this chapter by way of the modern and contemporary theoretical canons—the result is the interiorization of a generalized politics of sacrifice, or politics of eating.

Of course, Hegel is speaking of eating both literally and symbolically. But this is precisely the type of interiorization of subjectivity that Derrida describes in “Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject.” As noted in the previous chapter, what Derrida points to—and what is important for our discussion here—is that the act of sacrifice substantiates power, both through the literal and symbolic consumption of flesh (281-2). This *carno-phallogocentrism*, which begins with the identity of “the animal” in language, enacts a sacrificial structure that allows for the non-criminal killing of “the animal” in order to affirm the metaphysical reality of “the human.” The resulting sacrificial ingestion (of the other-animal, the metaphor of the sovereign head) sustains sovereign power, as we have seen. As Derrida explains, it is not an issue of asking whether or not one should eat or what they should eat, but how to *eat well* or eat *the Good*, as discussed in the previous chapter (“Eating Well” 283). And it is precisely this emphasis on eating

well that makes both the Topps and Westland stories and *Fast Food Nation* so compelling. What is revealed in these events is the problematic nature of the (sacrificial) “political economy of meat” that allegedly works to ensure our political virility.⁵²

Meat is neither essentially pure nor good. And we cannot separate this apprehension from the realities of late capitalist society, in which the myth of meat is sterilized to the point of becoming imperceptible. Food choices are not simply empty and exchangeable in contemporary America, but also continually wagered on promises of safety and security, which are embodied in the form of meat. As Warren Belasco explains in his book *Meals to Come*, the Enlightenment hope of progress is made possible by the agricultural merger of good science and good government, culminating in the universal luxury of meat (6). For Belasco, this has opened up several different food futures, ranging from classical agricultural imperialism, modernist “frankenfoods” and, most recently, recombinant images that allay traditional food practices with absurd modernist food expressions such as the meal pill (219). Although Belasco does not name them as such, recombinant food futures appear distinctly postmodern, with consumerism, environmentalism, diversity, convenience and artisanship co-existing within the contemporary marketplace: “With their arrogant, take-it-or-leave-it homogeneity, both the classical and the modernist futures are served table d’hôte; reflecting uncertainty and ambivalence, recombinant futures come à la carte in the choice-maximizing menu of late consumer capitalism” (219). However, what becomes lost in Belasco’s *Meals to Come*,

⁵² Political economy of meat, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 5, points to the extent of embedded commodity fetishism, mass production and consumption of animals, and our daily engagement with meat commodities that works to sustain this mythology.

and his description of recombinant visions in particular is the myth of meat, which is effortlessly propagated in the promise of new futures and better technologies.⁵³

Of course, the myth of meat, the political logic of sacrifice and the ensuing politics of eating predate and nourish capitalist logic. Fetishized to oblivion, the myth of meat becomes traceable at the micro-logical (microscopic) level within contemporary consumer culture, where it is betrayed by its animistic specter. It is precisely these imperceptible configurations, in which animals newly and abruptly take form in microscopic assemblages (from GMOs to E. Coli, *a little shit in the meat*), which may undermine the sacrificial politics of eating. Simply put, the destructive/deconstructive kernel of animality is revealed in the contamination that occurs with ingestion of unclean meat, as *Fast Food Nation* and the Topps and Westland stories illustrate.

To consider these events as singular would be a grave mistake. As we know, food scares routinely dissipate and are absorbed into the normal *order of things*.⁵⁴ In fact, reading the book *Fast Food Nation*, one is reminded of E. coli outbreaks from decades past, which are now distant memories: Jack-in-the-Box and McDonalds are household

⁵³ Note that Belasco begins *Meals to Come* by emphasizing the role of meat in debates over food security in the works of Robert Malthus, William Godwin, and the Marquis de Condorcet as setting the tone for current debates over classical, modernist and recombinant food futures, respectively. However, as the book progresses, the importance of meat, and especially how it is buttressed by faith in technology and human progress, is overshadowed and eventually buried in the technological side of the debate, so that the myth of meat appears almost accepted as a futuristic certainty.

⁵⁴ Here I am referencing Michel Foucault's, *The Order of Things*. As Foucault explains in this text, with modernity, the strangeness of animals was removed from the circular procession of the show to a tabular and spatial orientation that both confirms and absorbs the disparity between things (the show or spectacle) and language, so that the singularity of the thing is eventually absorbed within the temporal-spatial normalcy of language or *natural history*: "It should unite in one and the same operation what everyday language keeps separate: not only must it designate all natural entities very precisely, but it must also situate them within the system of identities and differences that unites them to and distinguishes them from all the others. Natural history must provide, simultaneously, a certain *designation* and a controlled *deviation*" (138, his emphasis). In this sense, we can see a similarity with the explanation and absorption of the spectacle of contamination—the normally hidden animal trace—into the ordinary historical timeline.

names, despite major outbreaks that cumulatively sent hundreds of people to the hospital and left several dead.⁵⁵ Why is the system so resilient? Even when the symbolic purity of meat is in crisis, governmental institutions remain emblematic of purity: for example, by instituting a new USDA program that promises food safety or by promoting proper cooking techniques that cook the shit away.⁵⁶ And if that is not enough to quell concerns, we can always buy organic, hormone-free, free-range meat—the choice is ours. Or is it? Again, we are reminded of Foucault’s observation that the economy (or, the political economy of meat, for our discussion) is in each of us, as a form of self-disciplinary political practice—it is the public embodiment of the sovereign head, patriarch and the wolf (“Governmentality” 207). We devour (*meat*), so that we may be devoured by the state—this is the carnivorous center of politics. And like the wolf-sovereign who turns on his citizens, meat is a mutable sign of the good life: when its brute underbelly is exposed, the government must resume its role as head of the sovereign household and cleanse its stock.

As we discovered in the previous chapter, *meat is sovereignty served well*. Simply put, we cannot separate the myth of meat from our desire for democracy. Meat fills our

⁵⁵ In January 1993, the presence of E. coli O157:H7 in contaminated ground beef supplied by the Vons Companies, Inc. and distributed to Jack in the Box, where it was used for hamburgers led to several hundred people in four states falling ill, of which two hundred were hospitalized and four died. Jack in the Box almost went out of business, but did in fact bounce back in the years following and has now become the leading proponent of food safety among fast food corporations. In 1982, dozens of children fell ill from E. coli O157:H7 contamination, when they ate hamburgers at McDonald’s restaurants in Oregon and Michigan. Although McDonald’s cooperated with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in determining a link between their meat and the illnesses, they publicly denied that their hamburgers caused any illnesses (Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* 198-9, 209).

⁵⁶ Here we can think of the USDA’s discontinuation of the Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle (SIS-C) in 1993, after the Jack in the Box outbreak. The SIS-C program was originally launched in 1988 by the Reagan administration and was designed to reduce the number of federal inspectors within meatpacking facilities, so that the slaughterhouse employees assumed most food safety (Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* 206).

stomachs so that we may sublimate our collective desire for freedom; it is the sign that consummates our sovereign debt. It is also a sign that ironically excludes animals—its absent referents, the open center upon which politics are built. As we shall see in this chapter, we can never escape their presence. Animals are always already included in politics, if only as waste or *partial objects of desire* hidden beneath the sacrificial debris of meat. It is the latent volatility of meat, which affords democracy to come. In order to tap this secreted materiality, we must look not only at the sacrificial *logic* of politics, but its *politico-economic* reality. Derrida certainly points toward this line of flight, if only in a muted way, by calling into question carno-phallogocentric institutions. Without getting ahead of ourselves, the question remains: how might we destabilize these institutions (and, more generally, the political economy of meat) in a way that productively recodes meat, not as a sign of sacrifice, but of radical resistance?

Fast Food Nation as well as the Topps and Westland events, reveal the alternative (material) truth that there is and always has been a little shit in the meat. In doing so, they subvert the symbolic purity of meat, so that it is at once curative *and* deadly. And it is with the reality of this material overabundance, or residual animal trace, that we glimpse the open and grotesque whole of politics or “the ever regenerated body of the people” (Bakhtin 226). For Mikhail Bakhtin, this open and consumptive center of politics, embodied within his text *Rabelais and His World* as food (or, more specifically, animal bodies), is the material heart of communal or folk celebration:

All the images develop the theme of the feast: slaughter of cattle, disemboweling, dismemberment. The images continue to unfold along the lines of a banquet:

devouring the dismembered body. They are later transferred to the anatomic description of the generating womb. These images create with great artistry an extremely dense atmosphere of the body as a whole in which all dividing lines between man and beast, between the consuming and the consumed bowels are intentionally erased. On the other hand, these consuming and consumed organs are fused with the generating womb. We thus obtain a truly grotesque image of one single, superindividual bodily life, of the great bowels that devour and are devoured, generate and are generated. But this, of course, is not an 'animal' or 'biological' bodily life. We are looming beyond Gargamelle's womb the devoured and devouring womb of the earth and the ever-regenerated body of the people" (226).

As the above passage reveals, within the temporal suspension of Bakhtin's carnival, the line between devoured (animal) and devouring (human) is erased at the banquet table via the act of eating. Death, renewal and rebirth are endlessly cycled so that death—or, more specifically, animal slaughter and the resulting unclean meat—becomes pregnant with possibility. As opposed to the "perfect forms" of the classical aesthetic, the grotesque body is incomplete, bulging, and transgressing its own limits. In this sense, the power of the grotesque bodily image of folk culture resides in its relational nature, wherein borders between self and culture are dissolved. Here the grotesque body is both one and the other, a subject in processes of exchange that are both pleasurable and open to social or eco-systemic contexts (Stallybrass and White 248-9).

Bakhtin embraces the grotesque whole in all of its messy excess as an unconventional utopian critique, in effect opening space for an unorthodox politics of eating. Although carnival dissolves and mocks the symbolic significance of meat by exploding it to its margins, it does not expunge its political-economic reality. As Michael Gardiner explains in his essay, "Bakhtin's Carnival: Utopia as Critique," the folk laughter and symbolic destruction associated with carnival lend material, fleshy form to the abstract terror of the unknown by creating a "grotesque monster that was to be laughed

at and overcome” (257). In other words, by way of an overabundant utopian vision, carnival extends the hope of human renewal, in terms of a more radically democratic and egalitarian vision of society (Gardiner 259). And food is what makes flesh of fantasy within this construct. More specifically, within the folk culture that Bakhtin describes, food punctuates labor so that it often symbolizes the entire labor process (LaCapra 241). Refigured as the regenerative “womb” of old society, carnival refigures the consumptive center of society so that it becomes a regenerative “second life” for the people. And within this open and festive center is embedded everything that represents “becoming” and renewal. Arguably, this includes not only folk celebrations of agricultural and astrological cycles, but also irreverent mergers of the nourishing and sacrificial facets of eating (Gardiner 259).

For example, unlike Rousseau’s fraternal table, where class differences and conflicts are politely transcended in the choice to *eat well*, Bakhtin’s marketplace “table talk” is a profane and disruptive suspension of bourgeois niceties, a site for revolutionary possibility (Lachmann et al 123). Sacrifice and consumption, no longer displaced under the guise of bourgeois camaraderie and then projected onto meat, appear as the grotesque reality of society for Bakhtin. Except that within Rabelais’s world, and (unmistakably) within Bakhtin’s theory, the sacrificial politics of eating is deconstructed within a differential of low and high forces that temporally suspend and parody hierarchies: meat is both singular and deadly, as we shall see. Displaced to the private dinner table as in *Emile*, however, eating loses its disruptive social force and “ceases to be a site of actual struggle” (Wills 85). In this way, Bakhtin’s temporal-spatial milieu or *chronotope* of the carnival is devoid of use-value, of the utility of Enlightenment that characterizes

Rousseau's bourgeois celebration (Lachmann et al 133). Stripped of its official significance, meat becomes an open sign that challenges the sacrificial structure of politics.

Contra the Hegelian conception of eating, wherein renewal and nourishment are displaced for the price of sacrifice, Bakhtin celebrates the suspended "madness" of eating by affirmatively embracing the "beautiful soul" of the grotesque whole of society. As Hegel explains in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, lacking the power to externalize itself, the "beautiful soul" loses itself in the other and produces it as a hollow object that is empty of substance: "The hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore, with a sense of emptiness. Its activity is a yearning which merely loses itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above this loss, and falling back on itself, finds itself only as a lost soul" (400). Devoid of true universality, the beautiful soul claims "real" subjectivity, one that does not capture the other, dominate it, or know it (Milne 65).

Of course, for Hegel the result of this hysterical (*feminine*) disorganization of existence is madness (407). Bakhtin challenges this Hegelian (dialectical) trajectory by renewing a history of "the other" in his re-conception of death, and—in effect—the suspended hysteria of the carnival chronotope. Applying the folk festival in terms of feminist critique and a site for hysterical interruption in *The Newly Born Woman*, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément situate the hysteric (*woman*) as a figure of inversion that overturns the Symbolic order, one that is elevated and vociferous within the over-burgeoning space of the festival (23-4). Both the sorceress (unbridled woman) and the hysteric (symbolically or structurally captured woman) circulate things without inscribing

them and, as Cixous and Clément explain, this includes re-circulating partial objects (*waste*) by putting them to different uses. Except that within the context of modernity, the hysteric turns this fabrication inward, empowering and losing *herself* in the hollow waste of the Symbolic order:

As long as the sorceress is still free, at the sabbat, in the forest, she is a sensitivity that is completely exposed—all open skin, natural, animal, odorous, and deliciously dirty. When she is caught, when the scene of inquisition is formed around her, in the same way the medical scene later forms around the hysteric, she withdraws into herself, she cries, she has numb spots, she vomits. She has become hysterical. In the same way that Dora's cough is a castrating response to the seducer's kiss and that the sorceress can cast a spell of impotence with a knot, anesthetizing herself, the defensive woman, the castrating woman, takes refuge outside the world of men. It has become a radical overstepping; an irreversible separation (*Newly Born Woman* 39).

Festival, or carnival in Bakhtin's terms, provides a fleeting reprise of this creative feminine power, which is normally contained within the hysterical beautiful soul of the dialectic. And like Bakhtin, Cixous and Clément view this as the productive center of revolutionary possibility: "Festival and madness. The feminine figure who crystallizes around herself the swirling glances of threatened culture. And not far away—revolutionary myths, the figure of liberty" (26).

Bakhtin best illustrates this radical feminine potentiality in the figure of pregnant death. As Bakhtin demonstrates, death by itself has no value or meaning; that is, death gains value only in relational or differential terms (Pechey 166). Certainly this kind of interpretation deconstructs the Hegelian notions of death and consummation. For Hegel, consummation is ultimately concerned with mastery, so that consumption or eating (whether literally, in death, or symbolically, within language) ultimately is a form of seizing mastery, which then secures sovereign power. Accordingly, human perception of death allows for the interiorization of consummate or sovereign power (Lynn-George).

As Hegel describes, the self-conscious movement of spirit personified in the choice to die confirms sovereign power in the face of an apathetic totality of nature: “This movement falls, it is true, within the ethical community, and has this for its End; death is the fulfillment and the supreme ‘work’ which the individual undertakes on its behalf” (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 270). As we have seen, eating is a way to ingest or consume and, arguably, consummate individual and state sovereignty via the very mindful perception of death (of another and oneself).

And it is no surprise that within the Hegelian dialectic, women only consummate their limited awareness of this right within the institution of marriage. “Woman, on the other hand, has her substantive destiny in the family, and to be imbued with family piety is here ethical frame of mind” (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* 114).⁵⁷ Notably, within this construct women can never fully participate in the consummation of sovereignty, but must realize it within the context of sexual consummation. As Cixous and Clément succinctly observe in their book *The Newly Born Woman*: “The woman must circulate, not put into circulation” (53, their emphasis). If we apply this analysis to Hegel, we see that woman is first daughter, then sister and finally wife—continuously circulated within the familial construct in order to consummate sovereign and patriarchal power. Confined

⁵⁷ Here Hegel outlines the lesser ethical role of women, defined via the consummation of marriage: “The difference between the ethical life of a woman and that of a man consists just in this, that in her vocation as an individual and in her pleasure, her interest is centered on the universal and remains alien to the particularity of desire; whereas in the husband these two sides are separated; and since he possesses as a citizen the self-conscious power of universality, he thereby acquires the right of desire, and, at the same time, preserves his freedom to regard it. Since, then, in this relationship of the wife there is an admixture of particularity, her ethical life is not pure; but so far as it is ethical, the particularity is a matter of indifference, and the wife is without the moment of knowing herself as this particular self in the other partner” (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 275). As Hegel goes on to explain, man passes from divine law into human law, while woman (as sister, and eventually, wife) remains the guardian of divine law. With the consummation of marriage (husband and wife) and the familial blood bond (derived from the consummation of marriage, representing the relationship of brother and sister) the two sexes overcome natural being and realize their ethical meaning (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 275).

to the private space of the home within this dialectical structure, we can read the hysterical woman of modernity as over-signifying her own body and retracting into the space of the beautiful soul, so that the normally futile signs of the home are imbued with different meaning:

The hysteric feels disgust at glasses of water, plates full of meat and congealed fat, spittoons: anything like kitchen or body waste.... The hysteric keeps the secretion of *jouissance* for herself. Sometimes, in therapy, some waste product from a man would cure her; as if the role were reversed and man's emitting something other than semen would constitute a transgression strong enough to restore order (Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 36, their emphasis).

As this passage describes, the hysteric refuses to consummate her minor sovereignty by refusing to ingest—both literally and symbolically—objective substitutes for the masculine (sovereign) will to power (carno-phallogocentrism, or the sovereign head, in Derridean terms) that require to her to sacrifice herself for her family, for man, and ultimately, the state. It is not that these objects are hollow or empty, as Hegel claims, but that within the Symbolic order, they reify an oppressive structure, one that circulates and exchanges them in terms of false satiety.

For the hysteric, this emblematic waste is no longer curative but toxic, and she refuses to circulate her and the other in this sacrificial economy. In this sense, death is productive, in that it reconstitutes the differential of sovereign power so that it circulates outside of the logic of sacrifice: *death is not taken, communion is not received*. Fittingly, the hysteric tries to signify her desire, her productive power, by every somatic means because she no longer can no longer “cook up her affects” as the sorceress once did, but must signify them within the larger (carno) phallogocentric constitution (Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 36). The emphasis on meat is unmistakable, since it is by refusing what is served to her that she cooks up her sublimated desire—which, of

course, is coded as neurosis and even madness within the medicalized discourse of modernity.

It is not that the hysteric is unaware of death. In fact, she is quite aware of her own status as a sacrificial lamb within the official order. Consequently, not only does she literally refuse to consummate her feminine role (via the sex act) but she also refuses the transubstantiation of sovereign power via the ingestion of meat. Here we see the transmutation of religious asceticism to the modern conception of freedom. Consider the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic tradition, where the Eucharist (bread and wine) becomes the body and blood of Christ, the presence of Christ, or kosher dietary restrictions, which offer a similar metaphorical fusion of divinity and humanity.⁵⁸ Of course, in both of these theological traditions, food (and, specifically, Kosher meat in the Jewish tradition) is meant to quell the tension between one's human free will (sovereignty) and divine power, so that one becomes closer to divine power *within* oneself. If we return to our discussion of Plato in Chapter 2, meat similarly serves a divine purpose, so that divinity is linked to the healthy polis. With the Enlightenment, it is now sovereign power—the state—that is transubstantiated with eating well, eating pure meat. And it is this welcome sacrifice (*death*) that the hysteric discards and wastes,

⁵⁸ Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus notes that Jewish dietary laws regarding fit and unfit meat are the visible, public embodiment of the Torah (230). As Brumberg-Kraus describes, Kabbalistic dietary regimens symbolize the fusion of the divine and material aspects of reality (256). Explaining this sacrificial logic, he notes: "It is precisely in the sense that the *am ha-aretz* who does not engage in Torah, i.e., does not know the mysteries of Torah, cannot raise the soul energies contained in animal meat, while the *talmid hakham*, that is, the *maskil* ('enlightened one'), who does know them, can. Both the *zoharic* literature and R. Bahya rely heavily on the biblical priestly language of sacrifice to describe the 'secrets of the Torah,' especially the ideas that the *korban* ('sacrifice,' but literally, 'that which is brought near') draws the sacrificer, the sacrificial victim, and the sacrifice, God, closer together" (250).

recasting partial objects of desire (*objet petit*) as her own eros, in turn rendering them empty within the Symbolic order or the structure of sovereignty.⁵⁹

As George Bataille and Jonathan Strauss explain in their essay, “Hegel, Death, and Sacrifice,” Hegelian (dialectical) being is essentially temporal and finite. And it is only in death that the existence of this being is realized, since death dwells in humans as a “source of anguish”—one that he searches, desires, and freely chooses at times. Without this distinction, wherein we recognize and are frightened of our own negativity (death), humans would recede into the global animality of nature and “there would be no man or liberty, no history or individual” (12). In this sense, cognition of one’s death and the risk of one’s particularity anticipate the *thanatopolitics* that Agamben describes. It seems that the hysterical woman rejects this logic. In short, the hysteric rejects the compulsion to *eat well* or *eat the good* as a symptom of her own desire and, in effect, productively recodes onto herself its pathology: she is the carnival within the limited context of the Symbolic order, or perhaps, the official order of modernity (Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 24).

By embracing carnival hysteria, Bakhtin effectively subverts dialectical-sacrificial logic by recoding death or consummation in terms of productive possibility. As Graham Pechey avers in his book, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World*: “Bakhtin asserts the

⁵⁹ For Lacan, *le objet petit a* is “precisely the paradoxical object generated by language itself as its ‘fall-off’, as the material left-over of the purely self-referential movement of signifiers: *objet a* is a pure semblance of an object which gives body to the self-referential movement of the symbolic order” (Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* 145). The power of the hysteric is to make these partial objects circulate; except that within the case of the hysteric, she must operate within a system in which her desires are blocked, unspeakable—not for her, but for the psychiatrist or the inquisitor (Clément and Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* 36). Clément and Cixous note that the symptoms and contortions of the hysterical woman are manifestations of the festival within her body, so that she inverts her own body in order to re-circulate these partial objects in order to signify her eros within the limited context of the Symbolic order: “Having a headache, swinging like little girls or spiders at the end of their silk, having one’s feet on the wall, is outmaneuvering the Symbolic order, overturning it: it is festival” (*The Newly Born Woman* 24).

right to dialogue with other post-Hegelian voices which do not implicate the thinker in the materialism/idealism binary and which help him to question the very *form* of the dialectic itself” (326, his emphasis). More specifically, Bakhtin deconstructs the modernist conception of history, so that its pathology of consummation is not a goal in itself, but “the grace of an ending which comes down upon it” (Pechey 170). Hence, we find the re-absorption of folk celebrations into the official calendar. But within Bakhtin’s carnival milieu, the theme of pregnant death allows a fleeting glimpse of an-other, revolutionary present—a revisiting of the modernist pathology that Pechey describes by way of erotic amalgamations that challenge the Western logic of thanatopolitics.

How might we more fully understand Bakhtin’s radical line of flight in *Rabelais World*? Here it useful to consider Friedrich Nietzsche’s analysis of modernity in the *Genealogy of Morals*. Anticipating Bakhtin’s trajectory, Nietzsche similarly targets the pathology of modern life in the third essay of the *Genealogy*. It is in this essay that Nietzsche critically engages the nihilism of modernity by challenging the death impulse of self-sublimation or self-overcoming (94, 126). Like Bakhtin, Nietzsche reintroduces the values of sensuality and artistic creation (aestheticism), which are first lost with the ascetic idealism of Judeo-Christianity and then with the birth of modernity and the modern philosopher (74). Perhaps what is most interesting, however, is that Nietzsche parenthetically relates this loss to eating and, arguably, the sacrificial politics of eating and related fabrication of meat. More specifically, he responds to the ascetic priest’s

attempt to destroy or invalidate sensuality, by ironically doubting the self-starvation of modernity and the fictive salvation of meat:

[I]t is completely inappropriate to count the mere intention to starve out physicality and desire as symptoms of insanity (as a clumsy type of roast-beef-eating ‘free thinkers’ and Lord Christophers are wont to do). It is all the more certain that it leads, or can lead, the way to all sorts of spiritual disturbances.... for example, to ‘inner lights’ as with the Hesychasts of Mount Athos, to hallucinations of sound and sight, to voluptuous excesses and ecstasies of sensuality (the Story of Theresa) (*Genealogy* 103).

In this passage, Nietzsche is responding to the mislaid hysteria of the beautiful soul; that is, the soul consumed only in itself. As we have seen, the beautiful soul represents, for Hegel, a kind of misguided self-authorship, a figure that attempts to quell the emptiness of a modern morality lacking theological foundation (Milne 64-5). And to remain within the space of the beautiful soul is to sacrifice not oneself, but the political identity or unity of the state. As Hegel explains in his *Philosophy of Right*, this kind of resolve equates to futile death: “However beautiful such a disposition may be, it is nevertheless dead.... Only by resolving can a man step into actuality, however bitter to him his resolve may be. Inertia lacks the will to abandon the inward brooding which allows it to retain everything as a possibility. But possibility is still less than actuality” (228).

For Nietzsche, the nihilism of modernity turns inward the asceticism of theology—wherein the will, guided by the ascetic priest, denies itself in higher values—with the advent of Enlightenment and the subsequent repudiation of higher values by philosophy and science. And it is this nihilistic motor of history, which drives the death-impulse of humanity and the devolution of the autonomous, didactic “beast of burden.”

As Gilles Deleuze explains in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, this transference culminates in the modern “free thinker”:

First of all the ass is Christ: it is Christ who takes up the heaviest burdens, it is he who bears the fruits of the negative as if they contained the positive mystery par excellence. Then, when man takes the place of God, the ass becomes the free thinker. He appropriates everything that is put on his back. There is no longer any need to load him, he loads himself. He recuperates the State, religion, etc. as his own powers (181).

Nietzsche takes care to laugh at the this asinine figure, reminding the “highest men”

(free-thinkers) who had once piously worshiped the ass, to instead celebrate its

recreation: “Do not forget this night and this ass festival, you higher men. This you

invented when you were with me and I take that for a good sign: such things are invented

only by convalescents” (*Zarathustra* 316-7).

Here it is useful to compare Deleuze’s characterization of the Nietzschean ass, with regard to the weight of Christianity, to Bakhtin’s description of the *Feast of the Ass*, a medieval laughter play depicting Mary’s flight into Egypt with the infant Jesus: “The center of this feast is neither Mary nor Jesus, although a young girl with an infant takes part in it. The central protagonist is the ass and its braying. Special ‘asinine’ masses were celebrated” (*Rabelais and his World* 78). These mock feasts, celebrated in anticipation of official feast days, offered radical transgressions that laughed at the official order: *by way of farcical inversion, the people were revealed as oppressed Asses* (Cixous and Clément 26). And here is the Nietzschean analogy: the power of laughter, to laugh at oneself, the ass.⁶⁰ As Bakhtin notes, with modernity, the carnival loses this biting and ambivalent

⁶⁰ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, referring to Zarathustra’s creative disruption of the ass festival, the “ugliest man” comments: “‘Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughter’ —thus you once spoke. O Zarathustra, you hidden one, you annihilator without wrath, you dangerous saint — you are a rogue!’” (Nietzsche 315-6).

representation of the grotesque whole of society: “Unlike the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, which was directly related to folk culture and thus belonged to all the people, the Romantic genre acquired a private ‘chamber’ character. It became, as it were, an individual carnival, marked by a vivid sense of isolation. The carnival was transposed into a subjective, idealistic philosophy” (*Rabelais and His World* 37).

By unearthing Rabelais’s carnivalesque world, Bakhtin reveals the sacrificial center hidden beneath the patina of modern life—the animal-center, in which we are all sacrificial asses—and opens it up to radical promise. Again, we see the parallel to Nietzsche’s joyful edict at the end of *Zarathustra*:

What does joy not want? It is thirstier, more cordial, hungrier, more terrible, more secret than all woe; it wants *itself*, it bites into *itself*, the ring’s will strives in it; it wants love, it wants hatred, it is overrich, gives, throws away, begs that one might take it, thanks the taker, it would like to be hated; so rich is joy that it thirsts for woe, for hell, for hatred, for disgrace, for the cripple, for *world*—this world, oh, you know it!” (323, his emphasis).

And it is no surprise that upon this reawakening, Zarathustra is surrounded by his animals.

Two points related to Nietzsche’s analysis demand attention. First, the free thinker or highest man that Nietzsche describes, and whom Deleuze implicates in his passage on the Ass, is a mutation of the once “beautiful soul,” which no longer loathes the other, but only itself. However, for Nietzsche this kind of false piety (characteristic of the ascetic priests, the *judges* of society) is perhaps the foulest transmutation of morality:

They promenade in our midst... oh, how ready they are, in the last resort, to make others penitent, how they thirst to be hangmen! Amongst them we find plenty of vengeance-seekers disguised as judges, with the word justice continually on their mouth like poisonous spittle. among their number there is no lack of that most disgusting type of dandy, the lying freaks who want to impersonate ‘beautiful souls’ and put their wrecked sensuality on the market, swaddled in verses and

other nappies, as ‘purity of the heart’: the type of moral onanists and ‘self-gratifiers’ (*Genealogy* 96).

As the above passage describes, within the context of modernity the beautiful soul is not the creative center that Hegel fears, but the weakest sign or symptom of man. And here, the key term may be “man,” since Nietzsche, like Hegel, reactively equates the beautiful soul with the feminine: “In particular, the sick woman” (*Genealogy* 96).⁶¹

Let us pause for a moment to consider this misogynistic strain and clear contradiction in Nietzsche’s writing. As Cynthia Kaufman explains in her article, “Knowledge as Masculine Heroism or Embodied Perception: Knowledge, Will, and Desire in Nietzsche,” Nietzsche does not dismiss the necessity of this transmutation of morality under modernity; rather, he is quite aware that the myth of truth is needed for life (83). Yet, Nietzsche expresses his own masculine heroism in his writings and, Kaufman argues, his misogynistic prose is a dominating symptom of the will to power. Of course, this is opposed to a second manifestation of the will to power that is apparent in Nietzsche’s texts—the will to power as a sense of recurring energy (64). As Kaufman observes, both manifestations of the will can be read in Nietzsche’s texts, and each leads to a different theory of epistemological practices: the will to domination tends towards atrophy, only gaining vitality through sublimation and negation, while the active will grows out of its engagement with life (65). With regard to the role of women in

⁶¹ The full passage from Nietzsche reads, “Among their number there is no lack of that most disgusting type of dandy, the lying freaks who want to impersonate ‘beautiful souls’ and put their wrecked sensuality on the market, swaddled in verses and other nappies, as ‘purity of the heart’: the type of moral onanists and ‘self-gratifiers’ [die Species der moralischen Onanisten und ‘Selbstbefriediger’]. The will of the sick to appear superior in any way, their instinct for secret paths, which lead to tyranny over the healthy, - where can it not be found, this will to power the precisely weakest! In particular, the sick woman: nobody can outdo her refinements in ruling, oppressing, tyrannizing. The sick woman spares nothing, either living or dead, to this end, she digs up the things most deeply buried (the Bogos say: ‘woman is hyena’)” (*Genealogy* 96).

Nietzsche's texts, this means that Nietzsche creates a need for masculine knowledge in his work so that woman remains "the other" and an object of desire, allowing him a stable subject position: "If Nietzsche gets so close to woman that she begins to speak and show herself to also be a fluid subject, the curtain is removed from the mirror and the self is in danger of dispersing into the Dionysian flux" (Kaufman 81). For Kaufman, this is not a necessary move, as one can still reject Nietzsche's universalistic, masculine form of knowledge while embracing his anti-foundational approach to truth, and in fact use the latter to the advantage of feminist critique (84).

In this way, we can read Nietzsche's account of the *impersonated* beautiful soul of the "sick woman" as an unnecessary "othering" that allows him to maintain a stable (masculine) subject position in his critique of ascetic idealism. But this does not mean that Nietzsche's critique of the beautiful soul (and the roast beef-eating free thinker, for that matter) must be dismissed. Reading Nietzsche against the grain, rather than just literally, we can find insight into the "truth" of modernity that he critiques, despite his blatantly anti-feminine commentary. In this vein, Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook critique corporeal feminist claims that write the body as a negation of masculine thought and that *carte blanche* dismiss claims that see the (feminine) body as the other of representation. Describing this kind of thought, they note: "Thus, the task for feminists has been conceived of as constructing autonomous women's representations, and this task has appealed to an articulation of the female body. The body is, then, considered as that which has been belied, distorted, an imagined by a masculine representational logic. At the same time, the body has been targeted as the redemptive opening for a specifically feminine site of representation" ("The Haunted Flesh" 35). As Bray and Colebrook

explain, despite quite sophisticated attempts to deconstruct the mind/body dualism, corporeal feminist critiques inadvertently wind up privileging a silenced, negated, objectified and innocent pre-representational feminine body and, ultimately, reinforcing the dualism they are trying to escape (37).

For Bray and Colebrook, a Deleuzean understanding of the body—one that sees the body in terms its “becomings, connections, events and activities”—provides an alternative for feminist ethics (36). As Deleuze observes, a body is defined as a relation between dominant and dominated forces, so that all events constitute a body: “This is why the body is always a fruit of chance, in the Nietzschean sense, and appears as the most ‘astonishing’ thing, much more astonishing, in fact, than consciousness and spirit” (*Nietzsche & Philosophy* 39-40). This, of course, goes hand in hand with Deleuze’s reading of the Nietzschean will to power, where the active will—the will to difference—allows us to imagine what a body can do. In fact, for Deleuze this affirmative movement of the will is revealed in the *becoming-woman* of the will or desire. Perhaps we can read the public necessity of truth in Nietzsche’s work, which operates in contradiction to his masculine individualism but also consumes and expels it, as the *becoming-woman* of Nietzsche? Is this not the joy of oneself, which is revealed only within the context of the world, within the modern labyrinth of false necessity? We will return to this point shortly.

For now, consider the second point in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* that must be addressed: the transition from self-nourishment to sacrifice—that is, the movement from religious asceticism to philosophy—is only possible when meat pacifies the political paradox of sovereignty by allowing us to internalize sovereign power, culminating in the weakest *man*, the nihilist and the “roast beef-eating free thinker” that Nietzsche describes.

In order to deconstruct this sacrificial economy of meat, the one that Nietzsche and Bakhtin sense, demands the de-territorialization of bodies, human and animal, in order to decode the will to domination and unfetter the active will. Or, in Bakhtinian terms, create a profane mix of high and low, embodying the grotesque whole of society and opening space for revolutionary politics.

For Bakhtin, the material “truth” of carnival, literally ingested as tripe (ox intestines, *waste*), is folk or common knowledge, which is then devoured by the belly or womb of the grotesque whole and recoded within the temporal-spatial reprieve of carnival. Is this not a Deleuzian whim of the Body without Organs (BwO), which is at last a post-Nietzschean sign? In fact, Deleuze, with Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, cites Bakhtin in their discussion of order words (all words whose acts are linked to statements by a social obligation) as reconceived as collective assemblages that do not presuppose identity (79).⁶² But perhaps most relevant to our current discussion of Bakhtin is Deleuze’s study of eating in *The Logic of Sense*. As Deleuze explains, to eat and to be eaten is the active, passionate and operational model of bodies. While language, on the other hand, is the movement of this corporal energy to the surface, to ideational powers, and to disembodied events (29).

By ingesting words, we elevate the operation of bodies to the surface of language, and in doing so we deprive them of their former depth. At the same time, Deleuze explains, we risk the entire structure of language, since these are not two mutually exclusive poles, but two sides of a frontier linked by sense. And it is the difference

⁶²In an endnote in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write: “Bakhtin and Labov have stressed the social character of enunciation, in different ways. They are consequently in opposition not only to subjectivism but also to structuralism, to the extent that the latter ties the system of language to the understanding of an ideal individual, and social factors to actual individuals as speakers” (524, n.10).

between the two—to eat/to speak—that is articulated in the event (*Logic of Sense* 30). Since the oral, corporeal aspect (to eat and to shit) is endlessly fused and bottomless, it threatens the entire stability of the linguistic structure (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 227-8). In short, it is the endless abyss that destabilizes the signifier, creating a productive lack between the virtual and the actual for Deleuze.

For this reason, there is a structural impulse to displace our system of drives—preservation (the totality of preverbal being); sexuality (which produces partial objects of desire); and destruction (which reverses everything)—since it is within this system that our internal sensibility is one of being both destroyer and destroyed, eater and eaten (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 227). When our desire, our full sense is perfectly sublimated, we end up with: “The ideal little girl, incorporeal and anorexic, and the ideal little boy, stuttering and left-handed, must disengage themselves from the real, voracious, gluttonous and blundering images” (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 29-30). This kind of asceticism, as we have seen, derives from a will to domination, where the active sense is wrapped up in a system of nihilism and death, which manifests as the “beautiful soul” or the “ascetic priest” in Nietzsche and the ciphers of official time in Bakhtin.⁶³

⁶³ Deleuze also discusses this death impulse in relation to the three aforementioned drives, and how they are shifted via the death instinct. More specifically, the preservation drive recovers death as an internal bodily drive, while eternally preserving the dead body via metaphysics, while sexuality is born of itself (*Logic of Sense* 227-8). Deleuze later goes on to explain how the privileging of the abysmal terrain of death: “This initial movement is, as we have seen, the movement of Eros, which operates on the intermediary physical surface, the sexual surface, or the liberated area of sexual drives. But the forced movement which represents desexualization is Thanatos and ‘compulsion’; it operates between the two extremes of the original depth and the metaphysical surface, the destructive cannibalistic drives of depth and the speculative death instinct. We know that the greatest danger associated with this forced movement is the merging of the extremes, or, rather, the loss of everything in the bottomless depth, at the price of a generalized debacle of surfaces. But, conversely, the greatest potentiality of the forced movement lies in the constitution, beyond the physical surface, of a metaphysical surface of great range, on which even the devouring-devoured objects of the depths are projected. We can therefore name the entire forced movement ‘death instinct,’ and name its amplitude ‘metaphysical surface’”(Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 277).

It is important to consider the relational or public aspect of the activist resurrections of the “beautiful soul” that Bakhtin, Nietzsche and Deleuze each offer. Deleuze, in particular, is sensitive to a trajectory of “pure difference” becoming a new form of the (Hegelian) beautiful soul, plunging itself into the abyss, while the world around it suffers: “At this point, does the philosophy of difference not risk appearing as a new version of the beautiful soul? The beautiful soul is in effect the one who sees differences and appeals to them only as respectable, reconcilable or federative differences, while history continues to be made through bloody contradictions” (*Difference and Repetition* 64). Recognizing this destructive potentiality, Deleuze characterizes Nietzsche as having an “extremely beautiful soul” for the very reason that he contextualizes the will to difference in constant relation with the will to domination or destruction, so that affirmation is the chaotic and creative motor of eternal return, producing the negative that we take as truth simply as consequence (*Difference and Repetition* 66-7). This cyclical motion of the will to power, in short, is not an individual endeavor (an impersonated beautiful soul in Nietzschean terms) but the constant and violent motion from margin to center. Like Bakhtin, Nietzsche recognizes this public scene in the space of the festival, where joy emerges in the momentary inversion of power (Foucault, of course, reiterates this point in *Discipline and Punish*): “Everybody in antiquity is full of tender consideration for ‘the spectator’, people in antiquity form an essential public, essentially visible world, incapable of conceiving happiness without spectacles and feasts. — And, as already stated, severe punishment, too, has very strong festive features!” (*Genealogy* 49).

As noted earlier, truth is consumed and wasted within the cycle of eternal return. But this does not eradicate or dismiss the violence that the negative (truth) demands; to believe that we have somehow escaped the false but naturalized modernist pathology of consumption (the anthropological machine, in Agamben's terms) is to retreat to the hyper-feminized space of the beautiful soul. Contra this conception, perhaps *becoming-woman* demands that we embrace the hysteria of modernity, unbridle the desire of the sorceress in the world so that she may be wasteful in a productive way. It also seems that to embrace this re-conception or re-embodiment, one must actively engage the structure of politics, which is at its center the *becoming-animal* or the animal condition upon which humanity takes form; that is, we must laugh at the asinine spirit of the official order.

As we know, Nietzsche only hints at the possibility of this revived figure, which for him remains *impersonated*, characterized by the hubris of the phony deity of modernity or his own reactive vision of the hysteric woman. And certainly, Nietzsche resurrects this character in the overman or his protagonist *Zarathustra*, who rediscovers his hidden animal center as he departs from the ass festival and embraces the new day:

Thus had Zarathustra spoken to his heart when the sun rose; then he looked questioning into the height, for he hear the sharp cry of his eagle above him. "Well then!" he cried back; "thus it pleases and suits me. My animals are awake, for I am awake. My eagle is awake and honors the sun as I do. With eagle talons he grasps for the new light. You are the right animals for me; I love you. But I still lack the right men (325).

Who are the right men? Of course, for Deleuze this body emerges in the active and strange figure of becoming-woman or -animal, as we have seen. Yet Bakhtin offers the most political and public of profane rebirth of this figure by materially placing it at the banquet table, effectively disrupting the concealed violence normalized in the choice to eat well, to eat meat. Embracing the hysteria of becoming-woman (or becoming-

animal) that is the material belly or grotesque whole of society, Bakhtin liberates the official order of things. In doing so, Bakhtin disorders the sacrificial politics of eating that consummates the paradox of sovereignty. Referring to a passage from Rabelais's novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Bakhtin explains the significance of this re-circulated carnal knowledge in relation to the entropic disorganization of the grotesque whole:

Grangousier warns his wife about the danger of eating too much tripe, saying that there are no intestines without dung. In spite of this warning, Gargamelle consumes sixteen quarters, two bushels and six pecks of tripe; her bowels are inflated by these all-too-generous proportions. Here the author introduces the theme of dung, closely related to the concept of bowels in general and to intestines in particular, since even after thorough washing some excrement is retained in them. In this image, once more the limits between the devouring and the devoured body are erased; the contents of the animal intestines contribute to the formation of fecal matter in the human bowels. Animal and human organs are interwoven into one indissoluble grotesque whole (223).

Pregnant death—this is a predominant theme in Rabelais's work according to Bakhtin, as we have seen. With his recoding of necrotic metaphors, Bakhtin resists the nihilism of modernist thought by transvaluing and affirming the once-barren womb of society. Nietzsche's depiction of the "beautiful soul" and the "roast beef-eating free thinker" lend insight into Bakhtin's pregnant apparition: meat is neither pure nor good in Bakhtin's analysis, but poisonous fodder for the nihilistic motor of history. With the ingestion of meat, we are as devoured as the animal that was killed, and at any moment we can literally become poisoned by its entrails. What Bakhtin is able to do, in a way that Nietzsche falls short of emulating, is materialize and politicize this activist line of flight. Contra the sacrificial banquet in which Hegel, Rousseau, or Agamben partake, Bakhtin does not disclose consummation and universality at the carnival feast, but our own sacrificial consumption by the state. In short, meat is an unstable (and potentially lethal) sign at Bakhtin's festival table—one that eats away at the structure of sovereignty,

dynamically reconstituting the “beautiful soul” of society, or the Body without Organs in Deleuzean terms, so that we may glimpse its revolutionary promise.

Except that within the contemporary context, this kind of recoding alone does not dismantle the myth of meat, but simply opens new markets for consumption, so that its symbolic purity lives on in organic or other specialty goods, much in the way that Warren Belasco describes. Simply put, in the face of contamination—a little shit in the meat—we can always take a new *good*. Of course, this is especially true of the bourgeoisie, who can impenitently feed their political desire in the face of democratic lack: for example, whole and specialty goods, free-range meat, green lifestyle choices. In this sense, Carol Adams is right to suggest in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* that the fragmented animal form of meat renders it an absent referent; or, if we extend her argument, an empty form in the service of exchange value. And despite its openness, a rampant strain of individualism pervades this recombinant vision of eating, one that remises it of its revolutionary edge and reifies the sacrificial politics of eating naturalized by capitalism. As Bakhtin anticipated, consigned to the private dinner table, the ambivalent gaiety and utopian laughter of carnival is muted to a “mere holiday mood” that is deficient of renascence power (33).

As we have seen, politics are always already animal-centered, if only in their absence. We consume, so that we may be consumed, and in doing so we unwittingly become sacrificial asses. Not to mention that animals are *literally* and *figuratively* devoured within this construct. Following this line of flight, if we understand democracy as a bazaar or marketplace defined only by tropes and metaphors as Derrida does, then it

is the within the differential of individual food choices and communal celebration that democratic possibilities takes form within contemporary consumer culture. In other words, if we follow Bakhtin's trajectory as well as that of Nietzsche and Deleuze, we end up in the open center of democracy. It is precisely this type of democratic openness, in which ipseity or selfhood becomes a condition not of sacrifice, but of infinite rebirth, that the animal center of politics turns apparent. As Derrida senses, democracy calls into question "the very values of the ensemble" by reframing ipseity in terms of the false semblance or simulacrum of living together (*Rogues* 10-11). In order to gather our sovereignty within this democratic arrangement, there must be violence; that is, in order to assert sovereign power, one must take something in return. And it is the interruption of this disjoint, of individuality and democracy, within the fold of a specific event (wherein power is communicated or universalized via language) that holds open the possibility of another democratic future (Lawlor, *This is Not Sufficient* 65). In short, democracy is produced through sovereign lack, which is experienced in the public space of the political event.

How does this specifically relate to our current discussion of the politics of eating? What Derrida lends to the activist trajectory that we have been tracing is a radical questioning and reconstitution of the (carnivorous) sign, which fictively quells the apparent hostility of democratic life. It is his suspicion of carno-phallogocentrism as well as the wolf-sovereign that lurks at the open and bleeding heart of democracy, which calls into question the sacrificial politics of eating and the ensuing directive to *eat well*. For Derrida, this aporia involves the deconstruction of the illusory and sacrificial structure of subjectivity born within the periphery of sovereignty. And because there cannot be a

sovereign that is not a wolf within this structure, it also entails baring and calling into question its fictive carno-phallogocentric center (although Derrida only hints at this trajectory). In Deleuzian terms, perhaps to *eat well* is to *sense* democracy to come, as a productive lack or differential between what *I can* imagine and *I can* articulate, which in turn risks the carnivorous or sacrificial structure of sovereignty. More specifically, “I can” refers to the unstable, voyoucratic, giving center of democracy, *the one* that exists in contradiction with “another truth of the democratic, namely a truth of the other” (Derrida, *Rogues* 14). Derrida pays explicit attention to this communal facet, which disrupts the univocality of sovereignty: “On the horizon without horizon of this semantic disturbance or turbulence, the question of democracy to come might take the following form, among others: what is ‘living together?’ And especially: ‘what is a like, a compeer [semblable]?’” (*Rogues* 11). In this way, it is the eternal return of this political desire to *eat well* or eat *the good*, all the while living together, which is the productive center of democracy.

Nietzsche’s discussion of the *sovereign individual* in the second essay of the *Genealogy* lends clarity to this point. It is here that Nietzsche revalues the sovereign individual as one who has the right to make a promise to others, who bears responsibility out of his freedom and power over himself and his destiny (40). As this individual resolves his own measure of value, as opposed to relying on bad conscience, he is responsible for his promises, even when civic fortune is not in his favor:

[A]nd just as he will necessarily respect his peers, the strong and the reliable (those with the right to give their word), - that is everyone who makes promises like a sovereign, ponderously, seldom, slowly, and is sparing with his trust, who confers and honour when he places his trust, who gives his word as something which can be relied on, because he is strong enough to remain upright in the face of mishap or even ‘in the face of fate’ (*Genealogy* 40).

Debt remains within this idea of responsibility, as a liberating force. With the advent of Judeo-Christianity, and later modern philosophy, debt turns inward as a debt toward divinity, society or the state (Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* 141). This debt is not payable because it is a debt born not of responsibility, but *guilt*. Sovereignty under modernity is built upon the infinite sacrifice of oneself and one's sovereign responsibility (debt) to others as endless payment of our debt to society. As Deleuze explains, the give and take of politics is *taken over* within this construct:

History presents all the violence of culture as the legitimate property of peoples, States and Churches, as the manifestation of their force. And in fact, all the procedures of training are employed, but inside-out, twisted, inverted... Training procedures are used but in order to turn man into a gregarious, docile and domesticated animal (*Nietzsche & Philosophy* 138-9).

Contra the dialectic, Nietzsche's sovereign individual does not sacrifice sovereignty on either side of sense—corporeal/to eat/to take or linguistic/to speak/to give—but senses it as a creative power. As Nietzsche describes, the sovereign individual is the “ripest fruit on the tree, like only to itself” (*Genealogy* 40). Is this the voyoucracy, the state of outlaws or counter-power (political vegetarianism?) that Derrida describes? Where Derrida only gestures towards, even resists this line of flight, Nietzsche is more explicit: roast beef is traded for fruit. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche is quite direct in his attack on the carnivorous center of political-morality. In the section entitled “On Great Events,” he confronts the moralistic fire-hound or hell-dog, which he calls from the depths of the earth. It is no surprise that this canine figure is consumed with anger and envy when Zarathustra challenges imaginary freedom and justice offered by the fire-hound: “[The State] likes to speak with smoke and bellowing - to make believe, like you, that it speaks out of the belly of things. For the state want to be absolutely the most

important beast on earth; and it is believed to be so, too!” (132). Of course, Zarathustra encounters the mythical hell-hound (for example, Cerberus in Greek mythology), but in Ancient Greece a fire-dog was also a metal or ceramic rack that held skewers of meat above the hearth for cooking. “Smoking” from the belly or hearth of the earth, Nietzsche’s fire-hound is symbolic of the fleshy fire-dog; and here Zarathustra’s encounter with the fire-dog may be read as an attack on the carnivorous impulse of the state.⁶⁴ More specifically, the fire-dog represents a reactive and deformed (human) species activity, a superficial justice at which to be laughed (Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* 139-40). In this sense, the “highest man” that Nietzsche describes exemplifies the repudiation of sovereignty symbolized as the fire-dog. Surely he (the fire-dog and the highest man) is *homo sacer*—but this is a deformity of man, not the anthropological inevitability toward which Agamben points.

At the risk of oversimplifying, the tradition of Western political thought appears as a product of this differential of sovereignty, which is driven by ipseitic desire of *the good* (Derrida, *Rogues* 15). And animal bodies (as meat) are emblematic of this ipseitic desire within each of us. Although Derrida eschews the choice of *what* to eat, in favor of how *one can* eat the good, it seems that in our contemporary meat culture, the difference between the two is imperceptible. More specifically, the productive and revolutionary component of this differential is eclipsed by the hyper-individualism of our recombinant future. As Nietzsche senses, we endlessly repay or consume our sovereign debt in the artificial choice to eat well. We consume animals, so that we may be wolves among

⁶⁴ Notably, Deleuze refers to this figure as a fire-dog in his analysis of this passage from *Zarathustra* in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (139).

wolves; that is, placed on the sacrificial pyre (the fire-dog) of the artificial animal, of society, of the rogue that consumes us. And with the privation of modernity, the democratic marketplace is less a festival (that is, a communal celebration or spectacle) that brings to bare this violent political economy (of meat) and offers radical transgressions, but a naturalization of the (*guilty*) creditor-debtor relationship that Nietzsche describes.

What is commodity fetishism but the mystical desire for absolution, in the form of goods? Meat is *the good* that we consume in order to feed our sovereign debt. And it is a choice born not of responsibility, but compulsion. There has always been a little shit in the meat—this much is true. But the radical power of this animistic contamination is lost under late capitalism, which multiplies, *ex nihilo*, the *highest man*. Leviathan is the firedog, the all-consuming artificial State animal raised to divine proportions within our contemporary capitalistic context. And within this consumer context, we endlessly consume new goods in order to absolve ourselves of sovereign debt, sublimate political desire, and satiate political lack. In doing so, we too are consumed.

As Adorno explains in *The Culture Industry*, by constantly fusing old and new into a “new quality” that fills in all gaps by assimilating consumers from above, the culture industry administers sovereignty in the form of empty and exchangeable choices. And we value these new goods not for their content but for their exchange value (98-9). Certainly Adorno is nostalgic for the power of (high) culture to redeem late capitalist society, to disrupt its identity logic. But even the likes of Rousseau’s fraternal dinner table is rendered meaningless within this schema, since the culture industry provides a deceptive synthesis of high and low culture. As Adorno explains:

Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honouring them. In so far as culture becomes wholly assimilated to and integrated in those petrified relations, humans beings are once more debased. Cultural entities typical of the culture industry are no longer *also* commodities, they are commodities through and through (*The Culture Industry* 100).

What this means in terms of our current discussion is that even the *liberal* choice of meat, in the form of specialty and organic goods, is remiss of its sovereign edge. What is lost in this *petrified otherness* of green lifestyles and the like is the *living tradition* of politics.⁶⁵ This is not to say that Adorno's nostalgia for the redemptive power of "high culture" is right, but that even this assumed line of resistance is flaccid within our contemporary consumer context. After all, is not the choice to eat well the ultimate sublation of sovereignty? Certainly the above passage locates the civic inertia of culture under late capitalism, calling into question the radical cultural politics—the sovereign individual—that Nietzsche offers.

In other words, what is lost under capitalism and the political economy of meat specifically is the differential of high and low (cultural) forces that Adorno, Nietzsche, Deleuze and Derrida look to for resistance. Self-desire is not simply productive, but only so within the differential of particular social configurations, which are lost to the culture

⁶⁵ Here I am referring to Adorno's aphorism, entitled "Simple Simon," from his text *Minima Moralia*. In the aphorism entitled "Simple Simon," Adorno discusses the ideology of the individual, which reinforces the universality of commodity fetishism under capitalism: "In the midst of standardized, organized units the individual persists. He is even protected and gaining monopoly value. But in reality he is really no more than the mere function of his own uniqueness, and exhibition piece, like the foetuses that once drew the wonderment and laughter of children. Since he no longer has an independent economic existence, his character begins to contradict his objective social role. Just because this contradiction he is tended in nature reserves, enjoyed in idle contemplation... Succumbing to the universal mechanisms of competition and having no other means of adaptation to the market and making good than their petrified otherness, they plunge passionately into the privilege of their self and so exaggerate themselves that they completely eradicate what they are taken for" (135). Additionally, *living tradition* is a reference to Bradley J. Macdonald's text *Performing Marx*, which we will discuss momentarily.

industry. To think otherwise is to risk relapsing into the abysmal and privatized space of the beautiful soul. In this sense, desire for political alternatives is rhizomatic, shooting up in the gaps or interruptions of material and social codes of capitalism. As Bradley J. Macdonald explains in his book *Performing Marx*, it is only with this kind of “materialist conception of desire” that a revolutionary present may take form:

[D]esire is related to the totality of ways in which sensuous being attempt to engage and objectify their world, in the process aspiring toward plentitude and singularity. Moreover, Marx seems clear that desire and pleasure are continually diverted from their full potentialities under the horizon of political economy (for Marx, a political economy that is clearly capitalist). What this signifies is a more practical understanding of all of the ways in which desire and pleasure become invested in everyday life, be they practices related to the capitalist economy, patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality and/or other spheres of power that reside within our life-world and are neither clearly nor necessarily reducible to the economy (42).

Given our current discussion, it is appropriate to add *meat eating* to the list of compulsory everyday practices that Macdonald provides in the above passage. Although Macdonald distances himself from Deleuze and Guattari’s productive conception of desire, we cannot deny the affinity of his work to that of the contemporary theorists outlined in our present dialogue on the politics of eating. Arguably, it is the differential or gap between ipseity and the simulacrum of living together (liberal democracy) that continuously reassembles the everyday practices that Macdonald describes. Following this line of flight, we may understand individual food choices and literal dietary habits in terms of the social and material flows that satiate and corral (carnivorous) political desire.

Of course, this begs the question: How might we hold open a democratic and revolutionary politics of eating, without lapsing into fetishized carnivorous desire or simply inverting moralistic and sacrificial politics? Certainly, Agamben does the latter in *The Open* when he inverts the metaphorical significance of meat by raising kosher or

righteous eating habits into a stylized post-Hegelian politics of (sacrificial) resistance. Alternatively, the task is not simply returning to the political banquet table (or the Messianic table of the righteous) as Agamben does, but to the carnival atmosphere of the democratic marketplace or political fête. As Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and his World*, carnival is the antithesis of the righteous feast day that Agamben celebrates: “As opposed to the official feast, one might say that the carnival celebrated temporal liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal” (10).

Following Bakhtin, we may read animal rights as grotesque reality, a pious parody of left legalism. Yet to *sense* this joyous production, we must celebrate its untimely lack within our current (capitalist) liberal democratic framework. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. First, we must locate and positively refigure this lack or emptiness within the artificial construct of the decisive carnivorous animal—the State. How might we take on the great Leviathan in this way? We must trace our political desire for animals. So far, we have tracked a compulsory (sacrificial) politics of eating, as well as its gaps and interruptions, by way of excavating canonical works. The task remains to negotiate this common carnivorous craving at the loci of desire—within the assemblages, desiring-machines and bodies produced of this theoretical market.

Chapter Four

Becoming-Animal

On any given weekday in New York City's meatpacking district, the streets are bustling with a variety of bodies: models, celebrities, jetsetters, designers, butchers, factory workers, and the dead carcasses of animals in the meatpacking facilities that operate in the district. At night, the landscape of the neighborhood transforms as the butchers go home and the glamoratti arrive in full force. And, again, in the early morning hours, the different bodies that inhabit the district intersect again as the delivery vans arrive, the factory workers begin their day, and the partygoers depart for the night. This area, which runs from west 14th street to Gansevoort, was once one of the largest dressed-meat producing areas in the United States, housing hundreds of meat slaughtering and meatpacking facilities during its mid-20th century heyday. Today roughly 20 meatpacking facilities operate in the district, dotting the streets along with high-end boutiques, restaurants, and trendy clubs. In 2007, an article on cruelty-free fashion in the *New York Times* reported with little irony that a new vegan boutique had set up shop in the district. In this sense, the meatpacking district is a never-ending flow of bodies that intersect and interrupt one another in an amorphous flow with a seeming apathy, if not desire, for their differences (La Ferla). So much so, that as rents sky-rocketed at the onset of the 21st century, and the meat factories moved out and the meat markets moved in, boutique merchants pushed for historical district status in an effort to hold onto the 'grittiness' of the neighborhood. Yet, despite the nebulous mass of bodies that inhabit the district, one group remains largely hidden in plain view—the (dead) animals. Even as the meatpacking facilities leave the district, it derives its energy from the meat that once

drove its economy—operating in plain view during the day and, arguably, re-circulating in the size-zero leather and fur-clad bodies that lithely walk the streets at night.

What makes the flow of the NYC meatpacking district such an interesting vignette for introducing the animal question in Deleuze and Guattari is its strangeness: animal and human bodies collide in Deleuzian fashion to create a virtual reality of becoming-animal. (Perhaps most strange and Deleuzian of all is the fact that the district, once known as Gansevoort Market, was the workplace of Herman Melville for 20 years.⁶⁶) If we consider a street scene on a typical day in the meatpacking district, the flows of bodies assemble and disassemble depending on the day or hour. Yet the animal body is strangely missing from the configuration, only (absently) materializing in the form of meat or its image. For Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the animal figures as the impossible limit and the figurative possibility of the Body without Organs: the anti-organism that resists particular assemblage, significance and subjectification. For them, animals and humans exist as flows of molecules on a plane of consistency. And along that plane what Deleuze and Guattari seek to inspire is “A single abstract Animal for all the assemblages that effectuate it” (*Thousand Plateaus* 255). In other words, to become-animal is to neither copy nor reproduce the animal. It does not involve wearing an animal suit or assuming an animal form. Rather, becoming-animal materializes in the locus of the event, the relation of forces that constitute a body at a particular moment. The discussion of becoming-animal from *A Thousand Plateaus* can be onto the NYC street scene described above:

⁶⁶ Here we are reminded of Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion in *A Thousand Plateaus* of Ahab’s pursuit of the whale, as a manifestation of becoming-animal, in Melville’s novel, *Moby Dick*.

It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life. The street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into composition with the air, and the beast and the full moon enter into composition with each other... Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them and awaken with them... The becoming-evening, becoming-night of an animal, blood nuptials. Five o'clock is this animal! The animal is this place! (263)

It is important to note that in the scene that Deleuze and Guattari describe, a breakdown of the animal body attracts the (human) assemblage of becoming-animal: the wolf body concealed by the night, the pack; the horse beaten on the street to the point of near death; the dying rat. It is in the destruction of the animal body that becoming-animal transpires. In the meatpacking district, desire circulates and produces anomalous bodies that scramble the lines and codes of species. "The meatpacking district" is cut with blood, sweat, skin, and meat, simulated leather, and fur—a topographical animal body, all the while its center content remains empty like the meat for which it is named.⁶⁷ And this is the point: the animal is fragmented throughout the district but "present" nowhere except in its partial assemblages. In short, the "meatpacking district" is a living, volatile metaphor, which is shaped and transmuted by the multiplicity of desires that assemble within the area.

In this sense, "lack" is positively refigured and displaced onto animals via the figurative emptiness of becoming-animal, which certainly presents the chance for an intriguing alliance with animal rights projects (although this is by no means Deleuze and Guattari's intent). Emptiness is a central line of flight in their work, not as the negative-dialectical construction of lack, but as the condition of possibility for human life. More

⁶⁷ See Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

specifically, Deleuze and Guattari envision all life on a plane of consistency, in a continuous and temporal state of becoming, so that there is no distinction between humans and animals. Certainly this superficial re-figuration allows animals to take form in the most unexpected ways, potentially disrupting our molar understandings of animal nature (for example, as food, companions, scientific experiments). Yet, as the meatpacking district exemplifies, becoming-animal may have unforeseen consequences for animals, begging the question: how we can negotiate the actual (animal body) and the virtual (becoming-animal) within the context of Deleuze and Guattari. In other words, when Deleuze and Guattari write, “*anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool*,” they seem to be making a characteristically pungent aside about our molar understandings of animals (*Thousand Plateaus* 240, their emphasis). Do we take this as a symbolic rejection of Oedipal desire or something else—perhaps a narrow reading of the animal body that reduces it to a manifestation of repressed desire? Moreover, if unbridled desire is an ontological truth in their work, does this imply that animals embodying “repressed will” must be “destroyed” in the wake of this totalizing desire? Any potential alliance of Deleuze and Guattari with animal advocacy or a larger project of environmentalism demands consideration of not only their intended use of the animal (as the figurative possibility for life) but also their underlying image of the animal body as juridical limit to be consumed in the path of self-generating subjects of desire.⁶⁸

As we saw in the previous chapter, the (sacrificial) politics of eating demands this kind of consumption, particularly within the context of late capitalism. Surely we can read

⁶⁸ Here I am playing off Judith Butler’s argument in *Subjects of Desire* that Deleuze, following the Hegelian tradition, figures desire as the central feature of human ontology, one that is liberated when it is free of the constraints of prohibitive law (206).

the meatpacking district as a carnivorous feast where animals are continuously fabricated, consumed and regurgitated in the consumer choice to eat well, which is expanded beyond the literal consumption of animal bodies (meat) to a multiplicity of goods—clothing, haute vegan food, drinks, postmodern art, high end modern furniture—open for the take within the nebulous space of the district. But is it that simple? Certainly a quick read of *A Thousand Plateaus* lends this kind of rendering. However, to simply reduce becoming-animal (and becoming-woman, for that matter) to an overarching and violent notion of desire would be a misreading of Deleuze and Guattari's work, as we shall see in this chapter.

Arguably, the meatpacking district may be understood as a preliminary, albeit flawed, sign of a postmodern, carnivalesque atmosphere: of course, this kind of rendering discounts the bourgeois impulse of this space, with its exorbitant rents and price tags, but it is certainly an attractive line of flight! What the meatpacking district does, in a very Bakhtinian way, is radically transgress the sacrificial politics of eating by opening the sign of meat to other (vegetarian?) goods. The power of meat—the political economy of meat, even—is amplified but also radically changed in the process. Simply put, meat becomes something *different* within the festival-like marketplace of the meatpacking district. Conceding a similar point, Deleuze observes: “This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an ‘unrepeatable’. They do not add a second or third time to the first, but carry the first time to the ‘nth’ power” (*Difference and Repetition* 2). Ironically, capitalism is both the limit and the condition of possibility for this kind of transgression. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Anti-Oedipus*, capitalism is the terrain for schizophrenia (that is, becoming-animal and -woman), the condition of its production, since capitalism is what

produces the conditions of desire (of the other) as well as its own lapse at the marginalized spaces of social production (35). What this means with regard to our current discussion is that we must decode this destructive and totalizing potentiality of desire within their work, but also negotiate this desire within the larger context of capitalism. Of course these tasks are not mutually exclusive, as Deleuze and Guattari openly declare in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. But we must first begin with a quarry of Deleuze and Guattari's figuration of becoming-animal, situating the dialogue on the political economy of meat in the next chapter.

How does one become-animal? To create this line of flight, this movement of becoming-animal, Deleuze and Guattari create a loose hierarchy of animals in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)—Oedipal, State and demonic, in which the first two types point to the (egoist) regression and (heroic) mystification of the subject, respectively, and the third incites the assemblage of the Body without Organs. All center on ideas of animality, which either reify the deprivation of desire (lack) or provoke its plentitude and excess. In terms of the sorts of animals represented by each type, the categories are not reserved for any particular kind of animal—any animal considered “my little beast” becomes Oedipal and “even the dog” becomes demonic when constituting a continuously transforming population (241). Overall, the authors privilege demonic-becomings; in particular, although all becomings-animal run the risk of becoming mystifications, it is the demonic or diabolical idea of animality—wild, multiplying and transforming—that is the figurative possibility for escaping humanist classifications:

In short, between substantial forms and determined objects, *between the two*, there is not only a whole operation of demonic local transports but a natural play of haecceities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them (*Thousand Plateaus* 253, their emphasis).

What does this mean for the animal body? Deleuze and Guattari take care to explain the difference between molar (well-defined) and molecular (dynamic) conceptions of the body and their affects on becoming-animal. The former refers to what we clearly recognize as the body, or the “real” animal trapped in its molar form and endowed with certain organs and functions (and in the case of the human molar form, assigned as a subject) (*Thousand Plateaus* 275). The latter are the particles or molecules emitted by an organism that come into proximity with other particles within the context of an event. Becoming-animal, as with any becoming, flows between these molar and molecular poles. For example, the disintegration of forms, the unstable haecceities of one and the wolf pack that occurs with becoming-wolf, is a line of flight toward a molecular assemblage, whereas the becoming-dog associated with Oedipal and state animals (for example, the companion or breed) moves toward a molar form: “No one can say where the line of flight will pass: Will it let itself get bogged down and fall back to the Oedipal family animal, a mere poodle? Or will it succumb to another danger, for example, turning into a line of abolition, annihilation, self-destruction, Ahab, Ahab...?” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 250).

The relations of movement and speed that transpire in the vacillation to and from molar and molecular are the process of desire: “becoming is the process of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 272). It is a pack or swarm of molecules that spreads and multiplies via contagion. As Claire Colebrook explains in her book *Gilles*

Deleuze, becoming-animal describes the positive multiplicity of this movement of desire. Citing a child's encounter with a wolf, she notes: "the child's fascination for the wolf is not for what the wolf *represents* but for the wolf's entirely different mode of becoming: wolves travel in packs, at night, wandering" (*Gilles Deleuze* 134, her emphasis). In other words, the child desires not the single form of the wolf or what it represents, but the multiplicity of its potential actions (Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* 134). And within that moment, the child too trades ipseity for singularity. It is important to note that within this fluid composition of one and many, Deleuze and Guattari do not distinguish between humans and animals. Instead, we are all molecular bodies, more or less, passively or actively, inhabiting molar forms on a plane of consistency—the surface on which all events (becomings) happen (*Thousand Plateaus* 267).

But there is not simply one plane. Deleuze and Guattari use the image of the plane as the space of becoming, the plane of immanence, both in its molar and molecular capacities. In this sense, the plane of organization is the molar counterpart to the plane of consistency, in that it organizes molecules into a subjective form: "the plane of organization is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization, weigh them down, reterritory them, reconstitute forms and subjects in dimension of depth" (*Thousand Plateaus* 270). We can think of the planes of consistency and organization much like the tables of the earth and sky on which the Nietzschean dice-throw takes place: "But these two tables are not worlds. They are two hours of a single world, the two moments of a single world, midnight and midday, the hour when the dice are thrown and the hour when the dice fall back" (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 25). As Deleuze explains in

Nietzsche & Philosophy (1962), the dice throw is the eternal return of life. The two moments, in which the dice are thrown (earth) and the dice fall back (sky), symbolize the accident of life and the becoming of life, respectively. In other words, life enters the world on the plane of organization marked by its molar form. As bodies, we have been selected and organized by those in power: we are the dice. And collectively we (humans) are bad players because we want to repeat the combination of the first throw and reaffirm our subjectivity; that is, bring order to chaos through dialectical resolution. It is embracing the second throw, however, that allows us to overreach the dialectic and transvalue inherited values. In this sense, to be free is to embrace the contingency of history and becoming (Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* 129).

If we overlay the Nietzschean dice throw with becoming-animal, it is apparent that animals are open to assembling themselves with the world around them, to chance encounters. For example, dogs love to follow a scent, wherever it may lead (trash, a dead animal, another dog, etc.) creating assemblages that rupture their categorization as polite “pets”. At the crass event when it sniffs a rotting bird carcass, the dog enters into an assemblage (dog-carcass-maggot) that ruptures our Oedipal configuration of “the dog.” However, in order to perceive this difference, the dog must necessarily break (Oedipal) or reinforce (evolutionary or State) identities as “a dog.” In other words, the pack delimits the condition of possibility for the animal, since animals are rendered in groups, which then defines their being (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 131). As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, individuals or species are only symbolic entities of the pack.⁶⁹ More

⁶⁹ Here we can observe a certain affinity with Derrida’s work on the animal question. In a similar way, Derrida observes in “The Animal That Therefore I Am” that the “heterogeneous multiplicity of the

specifically, what is important for Deleuze and Guattari is the anomalous borderline of the pack. In this sense, an animal may demarcate difference as the leader of the pack, or redouble into the pack so that each and every animal occupies this position (*Thousand Plateaus* 245). This rereading of the group or pack in terms of the borderline allows the authors to transvalue humanist conceptions of animals. “It is now even possible to establish a classification system for packs while avoiding the pitfalls of an evolutionism that sees them only as an inferior collective stage (instead of taking into consideration the particular assemblages they bring into play)” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 245).

This is not to say that the pack cannot be cut by planes of organization in a way that they fall back into state or Oedipal forms (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 246, 260). Indeed, this is how animals are inscribed and read by humans; for example, a toy dog dressed up to be the object of one’s affection. As Steve Baker discerns in *Picturing the Beast* (1993), culture allows us access to received rather than unmediated understandings of animals. For this reason, he argues, we must realize that symbolic and rhetorical uses of the animal carry as much conceptual weight as the “real” animal (10). For Baker, the challenge to re-picturing animals is rendering animal bodies “abstract, conceptual, arbitrary, unstable, and not as the site of the fixed ‘real’” by amalgamating

living” is reduced to a concept of “the animal” that allows for an “original” human subjectivity (124-5). When Derrida comments, “I would like to have the plural of animals heard in the singular. There is no animal in the general singular, separated from man by a single indivisible limit. We have to envisage the existence of ‘living creatures’ whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of animality that is simply opposed to humanity” his retort may be comparable to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus* (125). Although he points to the reduction of “the animal” in language, Derrida reserves a strong critique for Heidegger (and Lacan’s) use of “the animal” arguably lending his work a different trajectory than that of Deleuze and Guattari (see also “And Say the Animal Responded” and “Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject” for a more comprehensive discussion of “the animal” in Derrida’s work).

them with images of the human body (*Picturing the Beast* 223). Likewise, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we reread and transvalue the animal form inherited from evolutionary classifications with a multiple and amorphous animality. From this transvaluation we can infer becoming-animal as the common denominator of life, or the will to power, that animates the eternal return of the Nietzschean dice throw.

Colebrook explains this rereading of the animal in terms of the transversal quality of becoming-animal; that is, the mutation or variance that occurs with each molecular event or encounter. “For Deleuze, transversal becomings are key to the openness of life. Life is not composed of pre-given forms that simply evolve to becoming what they are, as though becoming could be attributed to the coming *of* some being... What it *is* depends on the life it encounters” (Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* 133, her emphasis). The animal, reread as the borderline, becomes the figure for embracing tragic gaiety. As humans, we do not know what a body can do and “lacking this knowledge, we engage in idle talk” (Deleuze, *Spinoza* 17-18). More specifically, our bodies are stolen from us in order to “fabricate opposable organisms” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 276). In this sense, the becoming-animal of the human is recognition of the body as inscribed by a relation of multiple discursive forces that separate the body from what it can do. Although Deleuze and Guattari stay at distant theoretical remove from some questions, in terms of the cache of this animal metaphoricity, however, we must concede that there remains the ever-present danger of destroying “real” animal bodies for the (human) Body without Organs (a point to which we will return shortly).

For Deleuze, the actual world is the combination of virtual tendencies: what we perceive as actual or real is, in fact, one among many possible actualizations. In this sense, pure difference or becoming precedes our ontological understandings of the world. If we return to the anomalous border, it is the perception of the border that delineates an event and that contracts the flow of becoming (Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* 126-7). The plane of consistency is the flow of molecules that stretches from human to animal to molecular to particles, all the way to the imperceptible so that “[e]very fiber is a Universe fiber. A fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 249). What this means is that becoming-animal necessarily depends on the breakdown of our timely conceptions of animality; that is, it takes the categories of the present and makes them suspect. Freedom, in the sense of becoming-animal, is not aligned with a particular line of flight or end: there is no original or stable moral vantage point from which to judge actions. Rather, freedom is possibility itself: “the virtual opens up new and possible worlds for actualization, but such openings will not automatically lead in the direction of freedom. This is nonetheless what the virtual does: it opens possibilities for new experiences, for new encounters, for new steps to be taken” (Rushton, “What Can a Face Do?” 227).

More specifically, ethics replaces morality for Deleuze (*Spinoza* 41). Morality takes the active range of possibilities and presents it reactively, “as already determined through a system of immutable values — this *is* evil” (Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* 130, her emphasis). Ethics, on the other hand, recognizes: “In reality, we are never judged except by ourselves and according to our states” (Deleuze, *Spinoza* 40). Working from Spinoza

and Nietzsche, Deleuze conceives of the body as constituted out of a relation of active and reactive forces; the former combining and overreaching humanist categorizations and the latter separating active forces from this creative potential (*Nietzsche & Philosophy* 57). Ethics is the active reading of the body with regard to these forces. Accordingly, judgment is centered on a body's affective power, so that "badness" signals the decomposition or destruction of the capacity to be affected or the domination of the body by reactive forces (Deleuze, Spinoza 41; *Nietzsche & Philosophy* 57). According to Deleuze and Guattari, we can judge what a body can do only when it enters into relations with affects of another body: "We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body" (*Thousand Plateaus* 257).

Returning to becoming-animal, this kind of affective capacity eliminates any potential for empathy with animal-others, since compassion assumes a static moral vantage point. Instead, an animal is judged on its affective capacity, and becoming-animal is constituted out of difference or anomaly. Deleuze and Guattari's loose hierarchy of animals corresponds to this view of ethics: the image of the Oedipal pet or the mythic state animal must be overreached because it separates the body from what it can do. For humans, the Oedipal animal configuration invites regression into narcissistic contemplation, while the state configuration reinforces symbolic associations and orders that limit becomings (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 240, 248). Conversely, it

is the demonic animal that delineates the anomalous border and draws human perception, which seduces desire in a different, permeable way.

It is important to note that animal bodies are similarly rendered reactive, servile and submissive by means of Oedipal and state configurations. Only at the moment of death, when the limit of their affective capacity shines through, do these types of animals attract human desire. A passage from *A Thousand Plateaus* is instructive on this point:

Little Hans's horse is not representative but affective. It is not a member of a species but an element or individual in a machinic assemblage: draft horse-omnibus-street. It is defined by a list of active and passive affects in the context of the individuated assemblage it is a part of... These affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse 'can do.' They indeed have an optimal limit at the summit of horse power, but also a pessimal threshold: a horse falls down in the street! It can't get back on its feet with that heavy load on its back, and the excessive whipping; a horse is going to die! — this was an ordinary sight in those days (Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Nijinsky lamented it)" (257).

What this passage suggests is that the situation or event that brings to bare the threshold of the horse does so by revealing the forces that produce and animate its actions. As a beast of burden, the horse's body is the product of forces that load its back, similar to Nietzsche's camel or the self-loading ass discussed by Deleuze in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*. In this sense, the horse is a passive body: it is a figure of passive nihilism, a body that affirms nothing but the reactive forces which dominate it. Of course, when Nietzsche and Deleuze talk of beasts of burden, they intend to symbolize human action: the horse or camel or ass is the enlightened modern man who loads his own moral baggage via the displacement of religious or state values as his own power (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 26-27, Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* 181). We are unaware of our own passive nihilism as humans. Yet in witnessing the event of the horse being whipped, its consequences are no longer separated from its productive forces. More

specifically, there is recognition (which the psychoanalyst misses) of the affects or forces themselves—the animal is the production and limit in the relation of these forces (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 257-259).

Animals always already occupy this (passive) position in relation to humans. Animals lack language: they have no origin story and are not aware of the values that mark them. Cruelty, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) “is the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them” (145). And language is what allows for this inscription of signs into the “naked flesh” that codes flows and invests organs as part of the social machine (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 145). For this reason, humans are the sole purveyors of cruelty because it is only human values that inscribe and mark the body. Becoming-animal, for this reason, is a human-centered event that attempts to recoup the Body without Organs—the body before it is organized and dissected into Oedipal and scientific codes. Deleuze discusses this cruel transmutation in terms of animal nature in *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967):

It has been said that the senses become “theoreticians” and that the eye, for example, becomes a human eye when its object itself has been transformed into a human or cultural object, fashioned by and intended solely for man. Animal nature is profoundly hurt when this transmutation of its organs from the animal to the human takes place, and it is the experience of this painful process that the art of Masoch aims to represent (69).

In this passage, Deleuze describes the distinctly human touch of cruelty; that is, our painful passage into passivity. And for the masochist, animality is recovered, if only momentarily, in the fetishistic fantasy of the feminine ideal: Masoch’s *Venus in Furs* is becoming-animal, with its open-ended play of “flesh, fur and mirrors” (Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* 69). As Deleuze describes, this fantastic suspension of desire allows Masoch to disavow and invert its negative element in his work (*Coldness and*

Cruelty 71). More specifically, the masochist recodes cruelty onto his naked flesh in order to suspend, rupture and transform Oedipal desire. And it is in the event of this sensual encounter that the masochist transforms desire and transmutes cruelty, so that it becomes productive rather than repressive (Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* 54).

It is important to note that in *Coldness and Cruelty*, preliminary sketches of the Oedipal, state and demonic classifications emerge in Deleuze's account of the uterine (Aphroditic), Oedipal (Apollonian) and oral (Dionysian) mothers present in Masoch's novel. The becoming-animal of the masochist operates between the poles of the uterine and Oedipal mothers; that is, between the cold chaos of "mother nature" and the sentimentality of the degraded maternal form. Simply put, the masochist breaks down himself, via a recoded cruelty, so the oral mother may be born of his own (paternal) lack. Deleuze describes this flight of becoming that occurs within the masochistic fantasy in *Coldness and Cruelty*:

Most of Masoch's novels contain a hunting scene, which is described in minute detail: the ideal woman hunts a bear or a wolf and despoils it of its fur. We could interpret this symbolically as the struggle of woman against man, from which woman emerges triumphant. But this would be a mistake, since woman has already triumphed when masochism begins, the bear and the fur have already been invested with an exclusively feminine significance. The animal stands for the primitive hetaeric mother, the pre-birth mother, it is hunted and despoiled for the benefit of the oral mother, with the aim of achieving a rebirth, a parthenogenetic second birth in which, as we shall see, the father has no part (61).

Here we can view that oral mother as a demonic manifestation, who necessarily depends on the symbolic organization of nature (the pack, the Aphroditic mother) in order to recode Oedipal desires. What is intriguing about this passage, however, is the destructive impulse directed at animal bodies (the wolf and bear) and later displaced onto the masochist himself: the remnants of wild animals take on this powerful feminine

significance in the masochistic heroine, or the “becoming-woman” (as Deleuze and Guattari describe in *A Thousand Plateaus*) of the desiring machine suspended within the masochist’s fantasy.⁷⁰ In this sense, and as Deleuze concedes in *Coldness and Cruelty*, we can view Masoch’s three feminine types in terms of their suspension of the dialectical resolution of desire (52-3).⁷¹ Indeed, cruelty is recoded, and flesh becomes fantasy during the masochistic event. Yet this is heralded by the symbolic destruction of the uterine mother, literally as animal bodies, and then re-grafted onto the oral mother in the partial assemblage of “flesh, fur, and mirrors” that Deleuze describes. It is tempting to think of this kind of movement of desire as a productive manifestation, of *pregnant death* perhaps? But this is a very dangerous line of flight, as we shall see!

What remains suspect, in terms of becoming, is the “beautiful soul” at the displaced heart of Deleuze’s work (setting the stage for becomings in his later projects with Guattari).⁷² Of course, this appears a strange symptom, given Deleuze’s stance that the Hegelian dialectic crushes difference under the façade of identity. And whereas

⁷⁰ Here we can think of Deleuze and Guattari’s reference in *Anti-Oedipus* to the continual material flow, or relations of production, that drive the pure and empty space of desire or becoming (as they later describe in *A Thousand Plateaus*).

⁷¹ In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Deleuze notes that Masoch’s dream of Venus at the beginning of *Venus in Furs* was inspired by “Bachofen, as much as Hegel,” in terms of the progressive disintegration of the feminine principle (the Aphroditic era) to the degenerate Dionysian form with respect to the three feminine ideals (52). In this sense, Hegel’s “beautiful soul,” or the suspension of the negative that digresses into madness, is represented in the oral mother of the masochist fantasy [(for a more complete treatment of the beautiful soul, see Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (383-409)]. Of course, we know from the previous chapter that Deleuze chastises any contemporary regression into the space of the beautiful soul that does not take into account the (structurally induced) suffering and destruction of others. Yet, given his privileging of the masochistic fantasy, both in *Coldness and Cruelty* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze appears to overlook the destruction of animal others that occurs as a result of the schizophrenic recoding of desire.

Deleuze is more than willing to take what he wants from other philosophers in order to produce strange theoretical hybrids, Hegel is strangely missing in his work. As Brian Massumi observes in his foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Hegel is absent, being too despicable to merit even a mutant offspring” (x). But what if Deleuze is becoming-Hegel, as Slavoj Žižek argues in *Organs without Bodies*? And what if becoming-animal is yet another materialization of the logic of opposition or “the gap dividing the One from within, the inherent doublure, as the most elementary ontological fact” (Žižek, *Organs without Bodies* 68)? Although certainly more complicated than the space of this chapter will allow, what Žižek locates at work in Deleuze is a fundamental Hegelian logic of division and repetition. If we return to the virtual and actual in Deleuze, according to Žižek they represent two sides of the same Möbius strip (*Organs without Bodies* 92).⁷³ What this means is that the virtual is the caesura that separates us from the unconscious (Other), while the actual is the (empty) body that is constituted within the topography of this gap: “In this sense, One is the name of the Void. With the emergence of subjectivity, this void is posited as such—it becomes For-Itself—and the empty signifier, the mark of this void, ‘represents the subject for other signifiers’” (Žižek, *Organs without Bodies* 68). Everything, in sense, is a surface effect of desire concealed by the mask of subjectivity. And, far from reconciling this gap, language exacerbates it: “Language is the supreme example here, that is to say, it is only through the enjoyment provided by the very act of speaking, through the speaker getting caught in the closed loop of pleasurable self-

⁷³ Note that Žižek does comment on biopolitics and the homo sacer, briefly referencing Agamben, in his article “From Politics to Biopolitics... and Back.”

affection, that humans can detach themselves from their immersion in their environs and thus acquire a proper symbolic distance toward it” (Zizek, *Organs without Bodies* 144).

Applied to Deleuze, the “surface membrane” of subjectivity that delimits the actual and the virtual becomes active, or self-positing in the flow of becoming (Zizek, *Organs without Bodies* 118). Or, in Lacanian terms, it is the reflection of the subject via language that constantly disrupts the preverbal totality of being. In other words, the virtual represents the will to mastery and the actual represents the traumatic realization that we can never overcome fragmentation (lack). With regard to the symbolic castration from this trauma, Zizek explains that a fundamental paradox of symbolization emerges, in which the subject is radically de-centered via its self-identity so that “it can find itself only in a medium outside itself” (*The Indivisible Remainder* 47). And it is with this endless division and repetition of linguistic trauma, wherein we have the minimal freedom to act, that the subject emerges (Zizek, *Organs without Bodies* 68). As such, becoming (becoming-subject) is clandestinely Hegelian for Zizek: “In other words, the subject is a pure virtual entity in the strict Deleuzean sense of the term: the moment it is actualized it is changed into substance. To put it yet another way, subjectivity is the sight of ‘true infinity.’ No wonder, then, that when Deleuze asserts the infinity of pure becoming as the virtuality that encompasses every actualization, he is again secretly Hegelian” (*Organs without Bodies* 69).

With this secreted *raison d'être* comes a concomitant renunciation of animal bodies, sustained via language. Deleuzean freedom, in this Zizekian sense, is the minimal power to accept or reject being affected in a certain way: “‘Freedom’ is thus inherently retroactive. At its most elementary, it is not simply a free act that, out of nowhere, starts a

new causal link, but rather a retroactive act of endorsing which link/sequence of necessities will determine me” (Zizek, *Organs without Bodies* 112). Accordingly, when he argues that language feeds difference by allowing humans to move beyond acts of mere animal survival to perceive autonomous “partial moments” of desire, Zizek imagines language as both the limit and condition of possibility for (human) freedom (*Organs without Bodies* 143). Non-human organisms, too, have an innate power to produce rules, map relationships and limit their actions to a series of affects, but they are driven solely by their primal desires. Humans, of course, attach values to these desires via language, which allows them to take hold of the world around them.

Indeed, Zizek reads this “humanization” as paradoxical, since subsequent symbolic castration works to limit human freedom (as opposed to sustaining it). Note that Lawlor makes a similar claim in *This is Not Sufficient*, directly linking this kind logic (specifically working from Heidegger’s contention that animals have no hand and, therefore, cannot gather the world into language) to the subjugation of animals. More specifically, Lawlor contends that animals are seen as innocent because they lack the values derivative from a fall from grace and are, therefore, without “fault.” Our ability to ask questions—our alleged fault or defect—is then what marks animals inferiority to us, “the superiority of animals make them inferior to us” (Lawlor 67). Of course, Lawlor denies this distinction in an attempt to minimize our violence toward animals, yet the paradox delineated by him, Zizek (and Derrida, for that matter) elucidates the desire for becoming-animal.⁷⁴ Although Zizek is not explicit on this point, if we accept his reading

⁷⁴ Working from Derrida, Lawlor argues that this distinction, based out of human recognition of mortality—that is, understanding the possibility of mortality is what separates us from animals—is

of Deleuze, this means that becoming-animal is an attempt to break free of the fetishization of pleasure by embracing the (animal) *open*.⁷⁵

Here it useful to discuss, if only briefly, Heidegger's implication of animals, which parallels this arrest of animal abandon. For Heidegger, animals are defined by their affects: they are poor-in-the-world. In short, animals are open to other beings, but only in an instinctive way. More specifically, animals are held captive by the world because they only relate to it as an extension of themselves—no space or gap exists between the other and the animal. And because they have no conception of others as beings-as-such, this also means that they cannot take any position over and against that to which they are instinctually drawn (Calarco, "Heidegger's Zoontology" 23-25). Within Heidegger's framework, animals exist in the world only in a space of exclusion (Lippit, "Afterthoughts on the Animal World" 792). Lacking language, they do not divide the world or their bodies via concepts. Humans, on the other hand, lend order and meaning to their world via their choices; that is, only humans are world forming. And because the

superfluous because we do not really have access to death, other than as an impossibility. Lawlor goes on to explain that our fault has been generalized and, as a result, so has evil. Animals share this fault as well, which Lawlor (via Derrida) explains in terms of a staggered analogy: "There is a nonsimultaneity between us and them, between us and the other. This nonsimultaneity comes with time or rather 'from time'" (69). According to Lawlor, what this means is that there is a fault (in terms of our perception of death) but there is no fall: "The fault that divides, being there in us, means that all of us are not quite there, not quite *Da*, not quite dwelling, or, rather, all of us are living out of place, in a sort of nonplace, in the indeterminate place called *khora*, about which we can say that it is neither animal nor divine—nor human—or that it is both animal and divine—and human. Indeterminate, the nonplace contains countless divisions, countless faults. All of us living together in this nonplace, we see now, is based in the fact that all living beings can end" (69-70).

⁷⁵ Specifically, this is a reference to Giorgio Agamben's text, *The Open*, which will be discussed in greater detail shortly. For now, we can turn to Žižek's comment on the human fetishization of desire in *Organs without Bodies*: "In short, the zero-degree of 'humanization' is not a further 'mediation' of animal activity, its reinscription of a subordinated moment of higher totality (say, we eat and procreate to develop higher spiritual potentials) but the radical narrowing of focus, the elevation of a minor activity into an end-in-itself" (141-142).

linguistic “subject” believes it is affected by encounters with autonomous “objects” (animals, or others generally), it lives in isolation to the world. What this means is that this objective liaison is simply a veiled relationship to us, one that works to ban our worldly (and distinctly human) experience as well as close down human freedom. Granting this schema, animals become amalgams of the forces to which they are drawn because they only sense affects as extensions of themselves; that is, they are *bodies without organs*. Here we can see the parallel of Heidegger and Deleuze.⁷⁶ As Žižek senses, language grants us a paradoxical sense of freedom. Becoming-animal is recognition of this paradox, the embrace of animal openness, which is sensed through the recoded assemblages of human bodies and their worlds. Yet as Žižek discerns, this is a distinctly human endeavor, since animals simply live in the open, but cannot take hold of it. In fact, careful reading of Deleuze and Guattari reveals they too concede becoming-animal as an anthropocentric event:

Man does not become wolf, or vampire, as if he changed molar species; the vampire and werewolf are becomings of man, in other words, proximities between molecules in composition, relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between emitted particles. Of course there are werewolves and vampires, we say this with all our heart; but do not look for a resemblance or analogy to the animal, for this is becoming-animal in action, the production of the molecular animal (whereas the ‘real’ animal is trapped in its molar form and subjectivity)” (*Thousand Plateaus* 275).

⁷⁶ Matthew Calarco, in a subsection (aptly titled “Body without Organs”) of his essay “Heidegger’s Zoontology,” reveals this link between Deleuze and Heidegger. Note that Calarco does not reference Deleuze in the text. Although ‘body without organs’ certainly and literally refers to Heidegger’s consideration of the bee whose stomach has literally been removed, the reference to Deleuze seems obvious. Specifically, he cites Heidegger’s appraisal of an experiment, in which the abdomen of a bee was removed to test whether the animal would continue to feed on honey unimpeded. Not only did the bee fail to recognize the presence of too much honey, it failed to notice the loss of its abdomen, leading Heidegger to conclude that the bee was held captive by its food (Calarco, “Heidegger’s Zoontology” 25). The bee was literally the body without organs that Deleuze and Guattari describe.

And this is precisely Giorgio Agamben's point in his book *The Open* (2002), wherein he uses Heidegger's principle to cast animality and humanity as one and the same, "two sides of a single fracture"—similar to the way that Žižek portrays the actual and virtual as two sides of same Möbius strip (Agamben, *The Open* 36). For Agamben, to "let the animal be" would mean realizing this relationship for what it is—the creative force of human life. In this sense, Deleuze's becoming-animal falls back on the dialectical and paradoxical logic of politics that Agamben delineates, and Žižek gathers in terms of psychoanalytic theory: to exceed the limits imposed upon us by language—to live in the Deleuzian sense—is contingent upon our possession of language. As such, animals serve as the constitutive outside of the human world, excluded via their lack of language but included as figures that affect our human existence; that is, the animal is the borderline, receding or emitting from the pack, breaking or reifying molarity. Becoming-animal is contingent upon the over-reaching (exclusion) of molar animal forms, by destroying and taking them to their bodily limits. For the masochist, as we have seen, cruelty is recoded via the physical re-inscription of human flesh. Yet, as described above, the masochistic fantasy is a self-reflective and anthropocentric event preceded by the literal breakdown of animal bodies. Here we can return to Deleuze and Guattari's description of Little Hans's (as well as the masochist's) fascination with the various horse-producing assemblages (draft-horse-omnibus-street) representing the threshold of what a horse "can do" (*Thousand Plateaus* 257). Except that in the case of the masochistic fantasy, the bit, bridle and sheath re-circulate what the masochist's body can do by annulling some organs "so that their liberated elements can enter into new relations from which the becoming-animal, and the circulation of affects within the machinic

assemblage, will result” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 260). Of course, this destabilizes and re-territorializes human (and animal) bodies, by calling into question the trajectory of “natural” history, similar to the way that Alphonso Lingis describes Nietzsche’s evolutionary transvaluation (13).⁷⁷

As Judith Butler explains in *Subjects of Desire*, the liberation of desire from its negative and repressive (Hegelian) elements insists not only that the law can be broken, but also that it *must* be broken in order to transform our human genealogy (205-207). And as we have seen, given the paradoxical “nature” of “humanization” this too entails breaking down, literally and figuratively, molar animal forms. And taken to its limits, this *spells* death for animal bodies. Given their implicit anthropocentrism, Deleuze and Guattari must become accountable to the contemporary political project of animal advocacy if we are to re-circulate desire *for animals*. In other words, without negotiating Deleuze’s inscriptive line of flight with a lived animal politics, wherein animal bodies are always already at stake, we run the risk of once again becoming human, all too human.⁷⁸

A provocative example of the danger of becoming-animal for animals is illustrated in Akira Lippit’s book *Electric Animal*. Here Lippit takes becoming-animal to

⁷⁷ In “Nietzsche and Animals” Alphonso Lingis describes the Nietzschean account of evolution as an eternal return of “ancient instincts and pleasures that produces new excellences” (13). More specifically, the atavistic survival of animal instincts (whose evolutionary goals have diminished to the point of being imperceptible in human bodies) manifests as “gratuitous expenditures of energy” or *re-bridled* desire in Deleuzian terms (13).

⁷⁸ More specifically, I am working from the two broad theoretical approaches outlined in Elizabeth Grosz’s book *Space, Time and Perversion*: the inscriptive approach (the likes of Foucault, Deleuze, Nietzsche) which views the body as a surface on which values are inscribed; and, the lived body approach, which refers to the lived experience of bodies, always already in terms of their social coding (33-37).

its farthest limit—extinction. For Lippit, animals serve as the imaginary position in human speech, as metaphors that exist outside the realm of ontology (*Electric Animal* 26). More specifically, animals are pure medium, pure text, pure ideas, and “fleshy photographs” that are able to disrupt the flow of figurative human speech. How do they do this, according to Lippit? Lacking language, animals are incapable of determining or regulating the discourse that they transmit (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 21). Consequently, animals serve as living metaphors. To arrive at this position, Lippit expands Derrida’s claim that animals function as absolute limits of language, since within language they can only appear as another expression—metaphor (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 166). More specifically, sacrificing molar animal imagery via becoming-animal allows us access to the space proscribed by reason and language, while concurrently releasing us from the realm of morality (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 181). In this sense, becoming-animal entails the destruction of bodies that encapsulate or transmit categorizations that separate us (humans) from what we can do.

All of this parallels the Deleuzean configuration of freedom. As Lippit explains, the multiplicity of the pack, which ultimately defines an animal, is also what lends an animal its immortal property. Using the death of a dog as an example of this eternal return, Lippit explains in *Electric Animal*: “Thus the dog is immortalized, preserved (taxidermically) in the slaughterhouse of being, language” (48). In other words, it is animals’ lack of language that allows them the power to molecularly transpire back into the pack: “Undying, animals simply expire, transpire, shift their animus to other animal bodies” (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 187). Animals become pure image, literally photographs (film images) in Lippit’s analysis. And it is the “animetaphoric” ingestion of animals via

the media that allows the sacrificial moment—the imaginative flash—to live beyond the extinction of animal bodies in the modern world. As pure text, the absence of the actual animal body becomes trivial, since this re-circulated animal medium survives in a new habitat of technological media (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 25).

More specifically, as nature recedes and animals become increasingly extinct, changes in language via media provide another realm for animals to inhabit: “It is a space made possible by the extinction of a certain form of language. The technological media can be seen as the afterlife of that language—animals survive language in the cryogenic topographies of technological reproduction” (Lippit, *Electric Animal* 161). Surely, Lippit wishes to acknowledge and refigure traces of animality (and animals) that destabilize human subjectivity (*Electric Animal* 25-6). However, taken to its extreme, what we find in this Deleuzian call of the wild is an affirmation of (human) life founded in (animal) death. Arguably, Lippit seems to celebrate the annihilation of actual animal bodies and the emergence of the “electric animal” as a Deleuzian assemblage that permits another economy of the gaze, identification, and becoming (*Electric Animal* 179). Once unearthed, however, this morbid fascination exposes the narcissistic gaze of a refigured (human) subject, who writes and destroys animal bodies only to reinvent and multiply its own power. Simply put, animal bodies become newly and familiarly inscribed, freshly packaged and sold in the slaughterhouse of the rhetorical and political economy: dead meat.

Lippit stands out in his representation of the electric animal. Yet he is not alone in testing the (impossible) limits of the postmodern animal. Steve Baker, for example, similarly explores the becoming-animal of postmodern art, although with a quiet

acknowledgement of the discord between its somatic and figurative implications, “the politics and philosophy of animal rights have little in common with postmodern art’s representation of the animal, with its apparent refusal to draw the line even at bestiality or butchery” (*Postmodern Animal* 174). For Baker, becoming-animal is imaginative thought that challenges the complacency and consensus thinking of contemporary politics (*Postmodern Animal* 18-19). It is postmodern art’s serious engagement with animals—its willingness to represent animals in new and dangerous ways—that marks its promise in terms of becoming-animal. Whether or not this leads to a better future for animals, or more or less humane priorities in our relationships with animals is only secondary to the type of freedom that it promises (Baker, *Postmodern Animal* 25).

A quick read of Deleuze and Guattari can certainly point to this line of flight. But to work on the surface in this way is to slip back into a complacency that is, at its roots, anti-Deleuzian. Deleuze and Guattari are clear on this point: rhizomes emerge within the plateaus of our inherited molar concepts, and freedom is contingent on rupturing or cutting across molarity: “A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed. Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees” (*Thousand Plateaus* 9). As this passage demonstrates, animals awkwardly populate these plateaus. Contemporary animal rights projects surely push the limits of traditional political discourse. Yet, if we assemble animal rights within a politics of becoming, it is clear that in accepting our juridical system as given, they do not

go far enough. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari may lend a much-needed sense of openness and possibility to these projects by forcing them to take on the value of their political values. And at the same time, scratching beneath the surface of becoming-animal reveals its destructive impulses with regard to animals, as we have seen. Without these kinds of negotiations, it is easy, all too easy, to think that we can fully escape our complicity with a larger structure of domination. Becoming-animal opens a multitude of virtual possibilities for animal-human relationships, an entire (minoritarian) politics of becoming-animal, which challenges our rote knowledge of animals—not to escape it, but in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, to put it to “strange new uses” (*Thousand Plateaus* 15).

Strangeness comes full circle in Werner Herzog’s documentary, *Grizzly Man*, an account of the life and death of grizzly bear activist Timothy Treadwell. In October 2003, Treadwell’s thirteenth summer in the Alaskan Peninsula, he and his girlfriend Amy Huguenard were attacked and eaten by a grizzly bear. The film is an account of what Herzog characterizes as the cold and indifferent thrust of nature, directed in opposition to Treadwell’s optimistic but often delusional fantasy of nature. Much of the film is Treadwell’s own footage of his isolated summers in the Alaskan wilderness, soberly interpreted by Herzog. And with Herzog’s assistance, we discover an oft-distraught man hiding under Treadwell’s self-stylized veneer as lone protector of the grizzlies.

It becomes abundantly clear over the course of the film that Treadwell’s dangerously close trysts with the grizzlies are less a testimony of his ability to commune

with nature than a wresting of his own demons. Is Treadwell's descent into nature a symptom of the yearning beautiful soul that Hegel fears, and even Deleuze suspects? Or, is it a recoding of animal-human affairs embodying schizophrenic desire, becoming-animal? Perhaps it is a little of both. Returning to our discussion of Deleuze and Guattari, Treadwell may be a contemporary sign of the self-absorbed beautiful soul that Deleuze admonishes in *Difference and Repetition*: in this way, he was betrayed by his sense of fabricated isolation, literally at the expense of those who would ultimately suffer alongside him—most notably, his girlfriend and the bear destroyed for killing and consuming them

Consumption literally turns carnivorous and deadly in the turn of events that would end Treadwell and Huguenard's lives; in a Bakhtinian way, the (sacrificial) politics of eating was momentarily reversed in the carnivalesque event of their deaths so that meat (the bear body) literally became fatal. But what was absent, at least until the point of their death, was an appreciation of the very public assemblage of difference that allows for revolutionary possibility and actively works to destabilize the sign of meat, in this case the bears. As Deleuze explains, what is lacking in the sort of contemporary manifestation of the beautiful soul that Treadwell bared in his video testimonies is an awareness that this kind of desire (for the other) becomes powerful only when it opens itself to the structure that wishes to suppress it:

The beautiful soul is in effect one who sees differences everywhere and appeals to them only as respectable, federative contradictions, while history continues to be made through bloody contradictions. The beautiful soul behaves as a justice of the peace thrown into a field of battle, one who sees the inexpiable struggles as only simple 'differends' or perhaps misunderstandings (*Difference and Repetition* 64).

Of his own admission, Treadwell believed that he had escaped the “evils” of society during his summers in the Alaskan wilderness. And one could certainly see Treadwell as a self-appointed ursine “justice of the peace,” presiding over grizzly fights, mating rituals, and fishing expeditions—often shooing the bears away or chastising their actions.

Living with the grizzlies, one could also argue that Treadwell had lost touch with the violent and differential flow of nature that would eventually consume him. However grizzlies play in the human sphere, in terms of reinforcing or rupturing molarity, wildlife biologists have long reached a consensus on how those humans who spend time in proximity with grizzlies should understand them: grizzlies are carnivores, for no other reason than survival; they do not kill wantonly or prophetically. But they do kill when they are hungry. Perhaps he lasted as long as he did among the grizzlies because he descended into their world during the lush summer months, when they were normally satiated. But his decision to return to the Alaskan wilderness late in the season, after many of his bear “companions” had retreated into hibernation, would prove ill fated. The only bears remaining were hungry and destitute, and even Treadwell’s Disney-like hallucination of nature could not save him from the desperate survival impulse of one of those bears.

Returning to our discussion of Deleuze and Guattari, Treadwell had immersed himself in an imaginary fantasy in which he fashioned the bears and himself in precisely the manner against which they advise. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, becoming-animal represents nothing and produces nothing but itself; and it is when we extract a segment from the flows of becoming and fill it with meaning that we risk playing the Oedipal animal:

But to break the becoming-animal all that is needed is to extract a segment from it, to abstract one of its moments, to fail to take into account its internal speeds and slowness, to arrest the circulation of affects. Then nothing remains but imaginary resemblances between terms, or symbolic analogies between relations (260).

In short, we find Timothy Treadwell playing the “kind warrior”—a self-appointed leader of the bear community and a visibly paranoid member of the human community.⁷⁹ His desire to create harmony and order amongst the bears was a simple manifestation of his own narcissistic meditation. What Treadwell failed to perceive (as we all do) is the *black hole* that would seize him and the bears: in this case, the vast and far-reaching codes and territories of the political economy of meat. Imagining that he had somehow eschewed his own sovereign debt by thumbing his nose at society and the park service—in other words, believing that he had escaped any collusion with a larger structure of power—Treadwell was consumed by his delusional fantasy. And, although Treadwell (and his girlfriend, to whom we will return momentarily) lost their lives, it was the rogue bear that ultimately paid Treadwell’s obligatory tithe. Despite Treadwell’s public profession that he would never carry a gun or kill a bear, even to protect his own life, the bear had to pay with its life for Treadwell’s transgressions. Why? Because without *sensing* the differential between what I can imagine and what I can articulate (that is, what is possible within our molar configurations), we eventually descend into the black holes of sovereignty that code and territorialize the entirety of earth—including the pristine and

⁷⁹ Here we can consider Deleuze and Guattari’s comments on the difference between mass or crowd multiplicities (paranoia) and pack multiplicities in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Among the qualities of a mass, in Canetti’s sense, we should note large quantity, divisibility and equality of the members, concentration, sociability of the aggregate as a whole, one-way hierarchy, organization of territoriality or territorialization, and emission of signs. Among the characteristics of the pack are small or restricted numbers, dispersion, nondecomposable variable distances, qualitative metamorphoses, inequalities as remainders or crossings, impossibility of a fixed totalization or hierarchy, a Brownian variability in directions, lines of deterritorialization, and projection of particles” (33).

isolated Alaskan wilderness. In doing so, we fall short of responsibility, in the Nietzschean sense.

In this way, Treadwell's failure to embody the sovereign individual of whom Nietzsche writes is most evidenced in the *irresponsible* deaths of Amy Huguenard and himself—Treadwell had thrown himself and his girlfriend onto his sword (or phallus) with this fatal event. And in the telling of the grizzly scene recounted by Herzog, the coroner and the pilot who discovered their bodies, we are reminded of the carnival, the Bakhtinian moment in which meat (the transubstantiation of the sovereign head) literally became deadly. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman” (277). It is no accident that Amy Huguenard was almost entirely absent from Treadwell's videos, even though she accompanied him into the Alaskan wilderness for two summers. Huguenard was his lover, his companion, and his crew during their stays in Alaska. And it was her illusory absence that sustained his Oedipal (and carno-phallogocentric) narrative as solitary protector of the grizzlies. She was the excluded “other,” feeding his stable (masculine) subject position and allowing him to avoid dissolution into the chaos of nature. Sadly, it is only through her fatality that Huguenard becomes a present and active force in Treadwell's narrative—it is she who calls into question Treadwell's masculine heroics. Without her death, we may never have known of her hidden power. And it is Huguenard's death that is truly alarming. Conceivably, *Grizzly Man* viewers might be able to explain or rationalize Treadwell's death as Darwinian justice upon a madman. But the brutal and meaningless death of his girlfriend scrambles all familiar codes, so that the becoming-woman of *Grizzly Man*, sensed through Huguenard's death, is both disruptive

and productive. The audience is faced with the question: “Stand by your man” in the Alaskan wilderness? A silent whisper responds to the audience, “No way!” as the skewed dynamics of their relationship become apparent over the course of the film: social, gender, and labor norms no longer make sense within the suspended vortex of *Grizzly Man*.⁸⁰

Death disintegrates into a (molecular) literal re-circulation of bodies, all passing through the becoming-woman of the event. Treadwell, Huguenard and the bear, if only momentarily, dissolve into the “primitive, savage unity of desire and production” of the earth (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 140). This is the BwO for Deleuze and Guattari; that is, the plane of immanence or the eternal return of the will in Nietzschean terms. And even in the most primitive (human) context there simultaneously emerges a *cruel* social machine that “codes flows, invests organs, and marks bodies” (*Anti-Oedipus* 144). Deleuze and Guattari explain this transformation from the BwO to the social subject in *Anti-Oedipus*:

The essence of the recording, inscribing socius, insofar as it lays claim to the productive forces and distributes the agents of production, resides in these operations: excising, incising, carving, scarifying, mutilating, encircling, and initiating... Not only is the criminal deprived of organs according to a regime (ordre) of collective investments; not only is the one who has to be eaten, eaten according to social rules as exact as those followed in carving up and apportioning a steer; but the man who enjoys the full exercise of his rights and duties has his whole body marked under a régime that consigns his organs and either exercise to the collectivity (the privatization of the organs will only begin with “the shame felt by man at the sign of man”) (144, their emphasis).

Is this not vivisection taken to its pathological limit, the pathology of consumption? Here we can contemplate Herzog’s calculated division of man and nature, a dichotomous

⁸⁰ This irresponsibility was perhaps reinforced by Treadwell’s educational work (his presentations to school children in the winter months) where he disseminated his warped sense of subjectivity.

break, which sustains the tragic force of the film. Clearly this fracture is challenged by the literal dissolution and dismemberment of Treadwell and Huguenard at the claws of the bear, an event that spanned uterine and Oedipal poles—perhaps a masochistic recoding of desire (for the other, bears) taken to its somatic threshold? And here we are reminded of the destructive impulse of becoming-animal *for the animal*. Not to mention that this line of flight is tempered by Treadwell's hyper-masculine impulse, as we have seen.

As Deleuze and Guattari deftly observe, the plane of immanence (the stage of all becomings) is a plane of contagion and it “has nothing to do with evolution, the development of a form or filiation of forms” (*Thousand Plateaus* 267). In this sense, the brief flash of becoming-woman and—animal materialized in the event of Treadwell and Huguenard's deaths was eclipsed and resolved by the literal remembering of their bodies: the bear was decapitated and splayed open so that human subjectivity could be restored and the consummation of sovereignty (via death) could be achieved. More specifically, the state—here, represented by the forest service and related governmental offices—was compelled to cleanse its stock and destroy the bear so that its (fecal) contamination would not spread. *Blood nuptials*, perhaps? Certainly the animal was this place, this time: not simply the bear, but the strange assemblage of bear and humans (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 263). And there could not be a risk of contagion, of humans literally becoming excrement as a result of this other, profane consummation; that is, these human “subjects” could not be recast as partial objects of desire, stripped of their value and re-circulated against the political economy of meat. Instead they had to be properly fabricated. Ironically, the event of their deaths disrupts Herzog's portrayal of nature. In

one foul swoop, nature is revealed not as cold and indifferent, but as the guilty other, the antagonist in a larger narrative of sovereignty.

What is evident in the tragedy of *Grizzly Man* is the potentially destructive impulse of becoming, especially for animals (although it is certainly not limited to animals, as we saw with Amy Huguenard). Without recognizing the molar plateaus that define and contour our world, the schizoid possibility of becoming risks devolving into narcissistic delusion—and in this event, with deadly consequences for three living beings. In order to transgress molar animal forms, it seems that those forms must be destroyed by and for a larger structure of domination in order to attract the kind of demonic desire that Deleuze and Guattari appreciate. Here the rogue bear that killed Treadwell and Huguenard was killed, decapitated, and its gastro-intestinal organs removed in order to reconstruct the remnants of humanity within it. Simply put, it was killed and literally rendered a partial waste object (BwO) for the sake of both Treadwell's delusional wish to become a bear and the state's desire to maintain its symbolic and political economy (of meat).

What this means is that the potentiality of becoming-animal *for animals*—that is, an untimely minoritarian politics of becoming productively aligned with more traditional leftist agendas—must seriously engage the exploitative and disparaging structures (class, gender, species, to name a few) with which it plays. More specifically, becoming-animal *must* contextualize itself within the contemporary reality of the political economy of meat that defines the concepts within which animal activists and liberationists work. Let me be clear, the political economy of meat to which I refer is not simply “the economy, stupid,” but a complex differential of cultural, symbolic and economic reiterations of the

sacrificial politics of eating described in Chapter 3—although Marxian tropes like commodity fetishism, alienation and exploitation do, at times, take center stage. As we shall see, it is with this apparently nefarious (at least, for righteous activists) and carnivalesque situation that political vegetarianism, democracy to come in the Derridean sense, becomes perceptible within our contemporary political context. At its root, this kind of mutant political bargain is perhaps the most Deleuzean and politically productive line of flight for the contemporary animal rights movement—a theme that we will explore in the next two chapters.

Chapter Five

The Political Economy of Meat

As we have seen, when animals bite or consume on their own terms, they too must be killed and consumed in order to feed the myth of sovereignty—the sacrificial politics of eating—which is naturalized and exponentially circulated under capitalism: this is the reality of the political economy of meat, which is the structural realization of an ancient mythology of sacrifice. In a directed effort to disrupt the logic that drives this sovereign rite, Giorgio Agamben traces its origins to Ancient Rome, in the figure of the *homo sacer*. As he explains, this human life that could be killed but not sacrificed marks the somatic point of representation for the paradox of sovereignty, the “included exclusion” that sustains sovereign power. More specifically, Agamben resurrects this obscure figure of Roman law in order to bring to bear the implicit Thanatos of politics, because it is this political *exceptio* that embodies the walking dead of the polis; that is, he is the legally condemned man living in anticipation of his own death.

Of course, Agamben only hints at the politics of eating that results from this legacy of sacrifice. In his book, *The Open*, Agamben portrays the consumption of meat as a material act of consummation of the soul and the community, of oneself and the law—a necessary exchange, perhaps, in the absence of authentic political power. In this way, Agamben reifies the political economy of meat as a compulsory “economy of relations” existing in anticipation of the restoration of the *homo sacer*, or broken righteous figure that is restored at the end of history. Yet, the unilateral movement of sovereignty that Agamben describes directs history so that the possibility of an alternative economy of relations with animals rests solely upon the utopian reconciliation of life and law. Consider a passage from *The Open*:

In the Talmud, on the other hand, the passage of the tractate in which the Leviathan is mentioned as the food at the messianic banquet of the righteous occurs after a series of *Aggadoth* that seem to allude to a different economy of relations between animal and human. Moreover, the ideas that that animal nature will also be transfigured in the messianic kingdom is implicit in the messianic prophecy of Isaiah II:6.... It is not impossible, therefore, that in attributing an animal head to the remnant of Israel, the artist of the manuscript in the Ambrosian intended to suggest that on the last day, the relations between animals and men will take on a new form, and that man himself will be reconciled with his animal nature” (*The Open 3*, his emphasis).

If we read Agamben closely in this passage, the political economy of meat is the implicit constitution of sovereignty, the earthly structure within which we sublimate our political desire via proxy; more specifically, in the case of the messianic feast that Agamben describes, this economy is represented in the substitute of kosher meat, culminating with the feast of the Behemoth and Leviathan. It is no accident that at the end of history that Agamben anticipates, homo sacer is restored in the consumption of the synthetic animal that is government—the great Leviathan—that becomes, in the end, the perfect reconciliation of the sovereign paradox. In other words, according to the logic presented by Agamben, sovereignty (and especially social contract theory) demands a juridical structure that corrals political desire in the manufactured choice to eat well or eat the good all the while sublimating one’s political desire.

Here we can briefly return to Hobbes’s state of nature in *Leviathan*. In line with Agamben, we find Hobbes’s state of nature not as an actual historical hypothesis, but a *logical* premise about how civilized men would act if all law and contract enforcement were lifted, so that the natural man that Hobbes describes is simply civilized man—with all of his modern appetites and desires—devoid of legal restrictions. In this sense, the state of nature is not the negation of civil society, but an anarchical state reached by successive degrees of abstraction from civilized society, culminating with the state of war

(Macpherson 22-29). In this way, we find the state of exception that Agamben describes redeemable with this view of Hobbes's state of nature: homo sacer is a meta-historical and extralegal figure that precedes social life, but given the logic of the sovereign exception, is neither entirely nor simply natural or social life (Fitzpatrick 52). Citing Hobbes specifically, Agamben explains that sovereign power appears at the threshold of the homo sacer's right to *not* sacrifice his life (natural life) for the sovereign state and the state's absolute power (social life), manifested in the right to punish or kill this sovereign exception (*Homo Sacer* 106). Casting the sovereign exception in this way, Agamben consequently must accept Hobbes's notion of the state of nature as a logical construct in which the ban (of law), not the historical context of governance, constitutes the originary political relation (*Homo Sacer* 109). Although he ultimately paints natural rights as flaccid, in doing so, Agamben naturalizes the modern liberal view of rights as a negation of state sovereignty (Kalyvas 116). Moreover, we can view the pre-judicial form of homo sacer, suspended within this judicious state, as always already exhibiting the modern desires of the sovereign subject, regardless of historical situation. As we shall see in this chapter, for Agamben, homo sacer is the messianic remnant that haunts sovereignty. But, and this will be a central argument of our discussion, homo sacer is not a transhistorical figure as Agamben suggests, but a distinctly modern monster born of capitalism.

If we accept Agamben's political theology, the history of Western politics becomes a "history of repeated failures" and successive historical movements of absolute sovereign power, culminating in the modern, permanent state of emergency that is the camp (Kalyvas 112-113). In effect, this dislocation allows both democracy and

totalitarianism to exist as fallen states of sovereignty (Macdonald, “Revisiting Marcuse” 19). What this logical schema does, more specifically, is cast a dialectical relationship (of bare life and political life) in which history becomes the *time of sovereignty*—one-dimensional, unidirectional and uninterrupted synthesis of history and philosophy—and homo sacer becomes the remnant or remembrance of another divine, messianic arrival (Kalyvas 111). Remarkably, this time of sovereignty approaches the *permanent enemy* driving the technological-rational impulse of late capitalism, so that the administered society described by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* for example, serves as a modern and expansive notion of the camp. (Except that in the case of Marcuse, this one-dimensional trajectory is both distinctly modern as well as perforated with the hope of liberation born of this modernity).

Contra this logical-philosophical conception cultivated by Hobbes and implicitly embraced by Agamben, C.B. Macpherson explains in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* that within this kind of lawless yet distinctly modern state of nature, man exists in a competitive marketplace in which his actual value is dependent on others’ assessment of his power (38). With regard to Hobbes, Macpherson characterizes this state as a “possessive market model” aligned with the historical conditions of 17th century English society, but also distinguishes two other general historical models in comparison: a *customary or status society* where labor force is tied to the land, there is no market in the land, and the productive and regulative labor of this land is authoritatively divided and distributed by groups, ranks, classes or persons; and a *simple market society*, where individuals retain control over their labor and market exchange is only between products (49-53). Of course, Macpherson detaches these models from a program of general

sociological or historical analysis, but what he does provide for our current discussion—contra Agamben—is an alternative historical vista from which political economy and the state of exception traverse.

Aligned with Marx's account of historical materialism (for example, changes in the means and relations of production from primitive society to capitalism discussed in *The German Ideology*), this kind of historicity allows us to call into question the divine and meta-historical *nature* of homo sacer, in effect releasing sovereign bio-politics from the unilateral desire of sovereignty and returning it to the historical context of Roman status society.⁸¹ Consigned to the "time of sovereignty," however, Agamben must cast homo sacer as a trans-historical figure, a tragic protagonist of the fallen myth of sovereignty. Here we are reminded of the philosopher-king of Plato's *Republic*, who must endure successive states of failure—from timocracy to democracy and finally despotism—in anticipation of divine reconciliation and immortality.⁸² Of course, this is not to say that the state of exception is not a historical reality, but to disentangle it from the theological-historical debris that conceals its radical promise. As we have seen, this debris or waste is the myth of *meat*, which at once signifies the consummation of the

⁸¹ Eugenics etymologically refers to the Greek lineage of sovereignty, which seeks the wellborn, beautiful and good political state; in other words, the fabulous or ideal state (Negri, "The Political Monster" 193).

⁸² Note that in each of these fallen forms of governance, the soul moves farther away from its just and perfect state (reason and philosophy) by concentrating governance in the hands of those driven by their appetites: "To conclude, then, each part of the soul will not only do its own work and be just when the whole soul, with no inward conflict, follows the guidance of the wisdom-loving part, but it also will enjoy the pleasures that are proper to it and the best and truest of which it is capable; whereas if either of the other two parts gains the upper hand, besides failing to find its own proper pleasure, it will force the others to pursue a false pleasure uncongenial to their nature... There are, it seems, three kinds of pleasure, one genuine and two spurious." (*Republic* 314). Of course, Plato is referring to the demise of the ideal state or the philosopher-king into timocracy (rule by the spirited and less reasoned of society) and finally despotism (rule by the bodily or bestial).

sovereign paradox and the discarded hope of liberation in the choice to eat well. This sacrificial politics of eating sustains the sublation and sublimation of political desire and, consequently, calls for the consecration of the state of exception. More specifically, within the contemporary context of late capitalism, this sanctified system of exchange becomes the secularized political economy of meat. Here we find the overlay of the political economy, which constructs, codes and circulates life into death—that is, nourishes the cataclysmic myth of sacrifice, of homo sacer—in the commodified form of meat.

Without a doubt, within contemporary administered life meat is everywhere, and so is the specter (a little shit in the meat) of its gothic disruption. What does it mean to revisit this specter of animal life? Certainly the specter remains in Agamben's preferred monster, the werewolf, which exists in the purgatory of the state of exception. Too, the divine and philosophical reconciliation of this brute paradox of sovereignty lingers in the sacrificial politics of eating, so that meat satiates and sublimates our animalistic desire to devour one another while simultaneously transposing that desire into an acceptance of our own death at the hands of the state: as we shall see, the werewolf consumes himself and is restored to the bare minimum of sovereignty. No longer a wolf, as Hobbes reminds us in *De Cive*, the diabolical desire of the werewolf is exorcised and is returned to the "naked life" that is homo sacer. By privileging the divine in this way, Agamben resurrects a specter of religion that demands consummation, or transubstantiation. It is no surprise that the passive resistance of bare life lands squarely on the table, the dinner table that is, in Agamben's work—at the messianic feast in *The Open* and the banquet

table in *State of Exception*. But there is no menu of what to eat—missing from the table are the very commodities that embody the paradox of sovereignty.

In this way, we are reminded of Derrida's call in *Specters of Marx* to retrieve the supernatural or the metaphoric spirit haunting the works of Marx—for Derrida, this critical spirit is messianic, but not theological or divine—and to invite this transformative and radical spirit of his critique to politics, opening history to infinite and eternal returns. This *messianicity* is the hope or remnant of justice outside of any materialization of subjectivity (Moreiras 73). As Derrida explains, the ghost is historically different because it is unfettered from the present, no longer bound to the established order of the calendar. Given this temporal dissociation, the ghost calls into question the very nature of ontology—if it exists, if it has a name or a soul, if it is living or dead—invoking justice in the metaphorical and linguistic oeuvre (the *work* of the ghost) of the spectral moment (*Specters* 9). With the ghost arrives responsibility to the future, present and the past, those not yet born and already dead that suffer the panoply of violence that exists in our world (Derrida, *Specters* xix). This responsibility entails an understanding of the form that this violence takes in the present (commodities) and the ghost that haunts that form (flesh and blood sacrifice of bodies). Derrida explicitly defines this relationship in terms of religion: “If the objective relation between things (which we have called *commerce between commodities*) is indeed a phantasmagoric form of the social relation between men, *then* we must have recourse to the *only analogy possible*, that of religion” (*Specters* 167, his emphases). But religion plays a contradictory role in Derrida's analysis, as it is both the limit and the condition of possibility for the ghost. In this way, the specter of religion and all that it entails under capitalism, is the ghost of past of exploitation; a

contradiction of which Marx is keenly aware, as expressed in his famous commentary on religion: “Religious suffering is the expression of real suffering and at the same time the protest against real suffering. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (“Toward a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction” 28). If we take Derrida’s critique to heart, the point is not to exorcise the ghost of religion, but religion from the ghost; that is, to release the messianic from the doctrine of religion.

Meat—the commodity form of animal flesh—is the remnant of this original messianism, which haunts our contemporary political economy, subverts and alienates us from collective action (the true work of the ghost). In this sense, there are two messianic spaces, two historical ghosts; the first is fated, a remnant of the divine and miraculous, while the other is open, a remnant of the material and revolutionary (Derrida, *Specters* 167-9). And within the contemporary political economy of meat, they collide in the living ghost, the empty and sanguine form of meat. When we eat meat, the ghost possesses us, and we become a monster. But as there are two kinds of ghosts, there are two kinds of monsters. The first is strangely beautiful; it is a reminder of the sublime, of paradise lost; a fallen angel. The second is revolting; it is the temptation of the fantastic, of earthly joy; a demonic beast. Under capitalism, the beautiful begets the revolutionary as the monster that is the multitude. In his essay, “The Political Monster,” Antonio Negri describes this appearance of two potential kinds of monsters under capitalism:

It’s thus that in contemporary genetic engineering a will to power gets expressed that scandalizes the pious, and, on the other hand, excites the evil: there is the possibility of creating monsters/bodies that are born outside the autonomy of the genetic subject and that can be modified or corrected according to necessity—or, further, pieces of the body that can help modify other bodies, sometimes to correct genetic or pathological defects, other times to correct nature. There is the

possibility of creating monsters, not those that power feared because they subverted it, but those who are useful to eugenism so that the system of Power may function and reproduce itself such as it is" (211).

In this sense, capitalism creates the werewolf that Agamben describes, as a degraded form of the good life; this joyous and rebellious monster of the people is then isolated—the lone wolf—relegated to the periphery or borderlands of politics. Enter homo sacer, the werewolf transformed, exposed and naked at the gates of heaven, now the gates of the polis. Naked (and powerless) he must remain, lest he bear his wolf-skin and devolve into the revolutionary monster to possess the community with his bite (of contagion).

In a Negrian way, the naked or bare life of the werewolf-qua-homo sacer is a biopolitical monster that is useful to eugenism; it dissolves the revolutionary monster by reducing the multitude to the “walking dead” who must simply survive the state of nature, or the capitalist market (Negri, “The Political Monster” 210). Of course, this is dependent on the right bite; more specifically, this kind of survival depends on eating *the good* of meat, or the consummation of sovereign power. Meat is the lifeless resistance of the homo sacer. For the masses, this is the “whopper” they are fed at Burger King, and for the bourgeoisie, it is the pure and beautiful filet mignon for sale by Whole Foods. But it is in the choice to *eat well* that capitalism serves up en masse to the multitude, in order to redeem them from this *damaged life*, that the revolutionary monster of the people may be reawakened. It is in the material good of meat that the *body of the people* (the multitude or inside of politics) and the bodies of animals (the excess or outside of politics) collide.⁸³ As we shall see, capitalism needs the werewolf and homo sacer, but

⁸³ See Theodore Adorno's, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*.

has created the vampire—the political monster of postmodernity that no longer needs the myth of animality, but only itself—in the flesh of the multitude.

Political excess is channeled into the myth of meat so that under capitalism, animal flesh is exchanged in proxy for the flesh of the people. This is a manifestation of the religious messianism that Derrida describes. Of course, Marx takes on the specter of religion, but how does it become so transformed in his work, as another kind of messianicity? In order to dislodge this productive paradox, we must look carefully at another Shakespearean character that wanders through Marx's work—Shylock, the central character of *The Merchant of Venice*. Marx, of course, dwells on the flesh debt that Shylock demands, characterizing him as a “Mr. Moneybags” of sorts, but the legal resolution of that debt is perhaps more interesting—it was a legal loophole that prevented Shylock from spilling any blood in the collection of his debt, which then released Antonio from his debt of flesh to Shylock, ultimately casting the merchant of Venice (*Shylock*) as the rapacious villain who must be punished by the state.⁸⁴ Because the

⁸⁴ In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the Jewish merchant Shylock demanded a pound of flesh from Antonio for his services. Upon default of his debt, Antonio is taken to the court of the Duke of Venice, where he is found responsible for his actions. At the moment that Shylock is to literally cut into the flesh of Antonio, two young lawyers (both women in disguise) find a legal loophole in the contract, which prevents Shylock from spilling a drop of blood in collecting his debt and, consequently, releases Antonio from his legal obligation. In turn, Shylock assumes monetary payment of the debt from Antonio, for which he is denied. More specifically, the Duke requires Shylock to forfeit his own property for the crime of attempting to take the life of another citizen. As a result, half of Shylock's fortune is awarded to the government and the other half to Antonio. The fate of Shylock's life is left to the mercy of the Duke, who subsequently pardons his life. As the story concludes, Antonio asks for his share of Shylock's fortune in use (interest of the principal only) until Shylock's death and, ultimately, the Duke grants remission of the state's half of the fortune, but upon the condition that Shylock convert to Christianity and will the entirety of his fortune to his estranged daughter (who has converted to Christianity) and her new husband.

fabrication of life and death of citizens is the prerogative of the state alone, as we shall see, Shylock made the mistake of demanding actual human flesh, rather than accepting the money that Antonio offered him after defaulting on his debt.

Human flesh or *meat*, in this sense, is traded for the universal exchange value of money, as Marx explains in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, so that the “good” man is the one who is able to pay; Shylock missteps simply because he refuses the surrogate of money and directly demands flesh. Marx outlines this transition, defining credit as the economic means of judging the morality of humans:

In credit, the *man* himself, instead of metal or paper, has become the *mediator* of exchange, not however as a man, but as the *mode of existence of capital* and interest. The medium of exchange, therefore, has certainly returned out of its material form and been put back in man, but only because the man himself has been put outside himself and has himself assumed a material form. Within the credit relationship, it is not the case that money is transcended in man, but that man himself is turned into *money*, or money is *incorporated* in him. *Human individuality*, human *morality* itself, has become both an object of commerce and the material in which money exists. Instead of money, or paper, it is my own personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social virtue and importance, which constitutes the material, corporeal form of the *spirit of money*. Credit no longer resolves the value of money into money but into human flesh and the human heart (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*).⁸⁵

By defiling the mystical power of money and instead demanding the “incorporated flesh” that Marx describes in the above passage, Shylock must be disciplined or made docile and servile by the capitalist juridical system. And this is done not by marking Shylock’s flesh, but his conscience. Shylock is stripped of his worldly flesh (money) at his trial and is exposed as “bare life” by the state. Although he is immediately spared his life, in order to retain a portion of his fortune, he is given the *choice* to renounce his Judaism and cast his fortune in the right direction by surrendering half of it to the government and willing the other half to his estranged daughter, who has converted to Christianity. Notably,

Christians during this time were forbidden from lending money for profit (Critchley and McCarthy 8). For this reason, money lending represented an important Jewish contribution to the Venetian economy, but always as an included exclusion. Set within the Jewish ghetto of Venice (where all Jews were forced to live between the 16th and 18th centuries), *The Merchant of Venice* illustrates this paradoxical relationship in the character of the Shylock, who is a “necessary stranger” within the political economy of Venice (Kitsch 148).

Marx’s earlier work, “Toward a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” lends some insight into this application of bio-power upon the Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. In this essay, Marx expressly characterizes German philosophy as a Shylock, but a servile Shylock that “swears on its bond, on its historical bond, its Christian-Germanic bond, for every pound of flesh cut from the heart of the people” (29). In other words, the state and the force of law under capitalism is a transmutation of Christian asceticism, which renders speculative philosophy impotent, since it casts the flesh and blood sacrificed by the people (in war and revolution) as a necessary choice in completing the German historical ideal (universal history, the consummation of the universal and particular in the Hegelian sense), which is simultaneously a secularized Christian morality. Consider Marx’s comments on the influence of the Protestant reformation on German criticism:

For Germany’s revolutionary past is theoretical—it is the Reformation. As the revolution then began in the brain of the monk, now it begins in the brain of the philosopher... [Luther] emancipated the body from its chains by putting chains on the heart. But if Protestantism was not the true solution, it was the true formation of the problem. The question was not longer the struggle of the layman against the priest external to him but of his struggle against his own inner priest, his priestly nature (*Critique* 34).

With this passage, we are reminded of Walter Benjamin's observation that this kind of *universal history* reads historical events "like the beads of a rosary," effectively suppressing revolutionary violence ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" 263). In this sense, the character of the Shylock chips through this totalizing vision of history by restoring this violent resistance. Considering this function of the Shylock, Aaron Kitch notes that "[f]ollowing Paul, Christians revised the literal and exclusionary act of circumcision into a spiritual covenant with God that depends on the heart rather than the external mark of the flesh" ("Shylock's Sacred Nation" 140). Again we may recall Marx's comments on the spirit of money—"Credit no longer resolves the value of money into money but into human flesh and the human heart"—which relates this transition from flesh to heart directly to capitalism.

Shylock rejects this material conversion by refusing to accept a cash payment as a substitute for flesh, and justifies his vengeance by citing his allegiance to a power higher than that of the Venetian state:

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven.
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice (Shakespeare 123; Act 4, Scene 1).

Here, Shylock represents the "statelessness" of the Jewish trading nation. Although Jewish commerce was vital for the Venetian political economy, it was simultaneously a force that transcended sovereign boundaries and could never be fully captured by the state. As Alexander Garcia Düttman points out in his book *The Gift of Language* Jewish faith has no content and is not a form of knowledge; in this sense, a Jew does not believe in *something*, but is himself the belief (21).⁸⁶ With this in mind, we can view Judaism as a

paradoxical counter-force to sovereignty: it is politically excluded in Venice and elsewhere in Europe, but coexists with Christianity in the economic sphere; indeed, the Christian state could not exist without both denying Judaism (in faith and politics) and including it (in commerce). Shylock is fully aware that although his life has been spared, it has not truly been pardoned, since his property is all that sustains his existence, his life within Venice (Kitch 152):

Nay, take my life and all! Pardon not that!
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house. You take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live (Shakespeare 129; Act 4, Scene 1).

At this juncture, we discover that the Duke's mercy is really a perversion of Shylock's own ironic existence—he is stripped of any political or religious rights, but is granted a portion of his wealth (Kitch 153). And even this mercy is conditional upon his choice of Christianity (for himself and, via his will, for his daughter), which in effect is an attempt to end his bloodline and his attestation to Judaism. Here we should note that *merces*, which means reward or payment, is the Latin root of both mercy and merchant, indicating the coincidence of spiritual and material payment in *The Merchant of Venice* (Critchley and McCarthy 4). More specifically, what we find in the dramatic reconciliation of the “servile Shylock” is that vengeance is displaced by the *subjective* choice to consume *the good* via monetary exchange (mercantilism), while bio-power (mercy, or the power over life and death) is reserved exclusively for the political purview of the state:

Tarry, Jew,
The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien

⁸⁶ Here Düttman is referring to the thought of proclaimed Jewish scholar Franz Rosenzweig.

That by direct, or indirect, attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods, the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state,
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice (Shakespeare 128-9; Act 4, Scene 1).

Nonetheless, Shylock's resistance during the trial calls this bio-power into question. Even Antonio acknowledges this before the trial, by proposing that any denial of Shylock's claim would ultimately demoralize the power of the state because of the profit that "strangers" like him bring to city (Shakespeare 100; Act 3, Scene 4). And this is precisely Shylock's defense during the trial. When pressed to explain why he should be shown mercy, when he has shown none to Antonio, Shylock points to his property as a basis for legal standing: Venetians show no mercy to slaves or animals, of which it is their right to extract labor of the flesh, so he too should be able to exploit his property, in line with the spirit of mercantilism. With this comparison, Shylock exposes the flesh and blood sacrifice (of labor) that feeds seemingly compassionate law (Kitch 150):

What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchased slave,
Which like your asses, and your dogs and mules
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them. Shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burthens? Let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
Be seasoned with such viands, you will answer
The slaves are ours. So do I answer you.
The pound of flesh which I demand of him
Is dearly bought, 'tis mine, and I will have it (Shakespeare 116; Act 4, Scene 1).

In this scene, Shylock reveals that money is simply analogous to flesh—whether from a slave, animal or debtor—in effect, bringing to bear the implicit cruelty common to payments of mercy and mercantilism. And this speaks directly to the paradoxical

economic role of Jews in Venice, who are always at the mercy of a Christian political system during this time. Bringing this incommensurability to light, Shylock famously asks: “If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should be his sufferance be, by Christian example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction” (Shakespeare 78; Act 3, Scene 1). Shylock’s villainy is called into question with this passage; it is his very refusal to internalize asceticism, and instead perform its innate cruelty, that casts him more as a victim than a villain (Rose 15-16).

As Foucault detects in *Discipline and Punish*, the internalization of religious asceticism and discipline occurs via the technology of the soul, so that the soul is “is in the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (30). Once again we are reminded of Nietzsche’s discussion of sovereign debt, which manifests as a politics of eating (or consumption, generally) in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Posing the question of where this history of punishment finds its origins, Nietzsche answers: “In the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor, which is as old as the very conception of a ‘legal subject’ and itself refers back to the basic forms of buying, selling, bartering, trade and traffic” (43). With modern contract theory, in particular, we relinquish our “sovereign individuality”—that is, our right to make promises and the responsibility that entails—with our consent of sovereign power to punish us via the law. Of course, this does not remove our excess political desire, but simply displaces it into the false necessity of consumerism, so that cruelty and violence underwrite the value of compensation (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality* 45). Echoing *The Merchant of Venice*, Nietzsche depicts a scene similar to Shylock’s trial in *The Genealogy of Morals*, when he

describes the fate of those who come to exist outside of the peace of the social contract as a result of their recalcitrance against the law:

The lawbreaker is a debtor who not only fails to repay the benefits and advances granted to him, but also actually assaults the creditor: so, from now on, as is fair, he is not only deprived of all these valued benefits, - he is now also reminded how important these benefits are. The anger of the injured creditor, the community, makes him return to the savage and outlawed state from which he was sheltered hitherto: he is cast out — and now any kind of hostile act can be perpetrated on him (50).

Shortly after this passage, Nietzsche describes how mercy comes to mask this cruelty of the basic exchange between debtor and creditor, individual and community. We can consider Shylock as the literary representation of this constitutive exclusion that Nietzsche describes; in this sense, he is a Nietzschean character who exposes the cumulative morality (and cruelty) of our juridical and commercial systems under capitalism (Critchley and McCarthy 3).

Of course, Foucault extends a similar argument in *Discipline and Punish* when he suggests that it is the juridical subject manufactured by contract theory that allows for the radical dissemination of (sovereign) power over the people as a contractual choice, a “chimerical granting of the right to punish” (303). In a Machiavellian sense, the state appears at all times merciful when it is cruel through the institution of law, in effect neutralizing the economy of violence (the threshold between juridical violence and pure violence that Walter Benjamin describes in his essay “Critique of Violence” and Agamben analyzes in *State of Exception*) that normally holds juridical violence in check.⁸⁷ For this reason, we find the indelible suspension of the normalcy of law, a

⁸⁷ See Sheldon Wolin’s *Politics and Vision* for a complete discussion of Machiavelli’s concept of *necessitas*, or the economy of violence

permanent and impending *state of exception*, as Agamben suspects. In other words, our political fortune under capitalism is one of unremitting seduction under commodity fetishism, which veils the cruelty of exchange that is embedded within the logic of sovereignty, and *repressively desublimates* our political desire. Administered life, as Herbert Marcuse outlines in *One-Dimensional Man*, is life in the state of exception, wherein the threat of the permanent enemy (the lawbreaker that Nietzsche describes or the Shylock that Marx invokes) nourishes our endless compulsion to buy into the good life, to repay our sovereign debt in the *choice* to consume (*or eat*) well. Shylock signifies the limit of juridical rights, but squarely within an economic context, which as we shall see shortly, is the political economy of meat.

Meat signifies the original division of labor that marks bodies as commodities—we see this in status, simple market and possessive market societies (as slavery or feudal bondage, transferable labor, and the proletariat workforce, respectively). But in order to understand this phenomenon, we need to realize that political rights are imaginary props that support alienation and exploitation under capitalism, as Marx explains in “On the Jewish Question”:

By its nature the perfected political state is man’s species-life in opposition to his material life. All the presuppositions of this egoistic life remain in civil society outside the state, but as qualities of civil society. Where the political state has achieved its full development, man leads a double life, a heavenly and earthly life, not on in thought or consciousness but in actuality. In the political community he regards himself as a communal being; but in civil society he is active as a private individual, treats other men as means, reduces himself to a means, and becomes the plaything to alien powers. The political state is as spiritual in relation to civil society as heaven is in relation to earth (9).

In this way, the citizen simply wears a “political lion skin” according to Marx, which is really a metaphor for actual corporeal sacrifice that occurs via the commodity-exchange

of labor; thus we have the contradiction between the individual and his community, political life and civil society (“On the Jewish Question” 9). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno trace the progression of this living contradiction under capitalism by looking at the transformation from sacrificial exchange to universal exchange value under capitalism. They observe that sacrifice is an ancient and magical practice that analogizes human life in order to deceive the divine, originally by way of dubious exchange of an individual life for the societal good, and eventually via animals and material items exchanged in proxy for human life (50). In this way, sacrifice is an irrational and fear-driven exchange, codified in law, which enslaves us to accept the interests of those in power as our own (deity, tribal elders, the state). Within the context of late capitalism, sacrifice secretly remains in the false resolution of the collective and the individual, which emerges as *subjectivity*, or the right to relinquish oneself to another (*Dialectic* 56). As Marx explains in *Capital, Volume 1*, this hidden *magic* legitimizes surplus value, as the worker *chooses* renunciation under capitalism.⁸⁸ Shylock exposes this bourgeois ratio of flesh to money, and for this transgression is sacrificed against sacrifice itself.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ As Marx explains it mystery of commodity fetishism and the origin of surplus value in *Capital, Volume 1*: “The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore in the simple fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things... It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (232-233).

⁸⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno explain this logic that demanded that Shylock convert to Christianity (sacrificing his identity) and stripped of all of his possessions upon exposing the irrationality of the system: “But society demands that the man who tries to escape from universal, unequal, and unjust exchange, and

The specter of communism that haunts Europe, which Marx proclaims in the *Communist Manifesto*, is a dramaturgy of the great unifying projects of modern Europe, inspired by Marx's sense of Shakespeare: this is Derrida's claim in the opening pages of *Specters of Marx* (5). Of course, Derrida is speaking of Marx's references to *Hamlet*. But Marx's references to Shylock, which are no less interesting, go unnoticed by Derrida. As we have seen, Shylock is an intriguing figure that is characterized as contemptuous, but perhaps absurdly powerful, by Marx. What does Marx mean when he refers to Shylock as "servile"? Shylock, in all of his hunger, represents a powerful counterforce that emerges from within capitalism; his minimal political identity is defined only by his capital, of which he is stripped bare. Impenitent of his actions, Shylock is denied any concept of the sacred beyond his material wealth at his trial, and is forced the penance of sacrificing that wealth in the name of religious piety—he is oppressed both for and by religion, in this sense (Kitch 154). As we know, Shylock is spared his life along with a portion of his wealth, but only if he *chooses* to renounce his otherness (as a Jew) and circulate himself as part of the Christian-capitalist economy of Venice. Here we find Shylock as a monster born of capitalism, but one that must seek deliverance from his reprehensible spirit. Shylock becomes homo sacer, *redeemed*, because in the end he chooses correctly in front of the law, donning the "right" political lion skin over bare life. But it is the specter of Shylock, the broken and unrepentant Shylock that haunts Marx's work, as a revolting monster of capitalism. So dreadful, he includes him only as a literary sign of the surplus

not renounce but immediately seize the undiminished whole, must thereby lose everything—even the miserable leavings that self-preservation allows him. This immense though superfluous sacrifice is required—against sacrifice itself" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 55).

desire of capitalism. Ironically, it is Shylock's displacement within the same capitalist system that creates his desires that displaces the system itself, opening possibility for political transformation (Macdonald, *Performing Marx* 40).

Shylock is the political monster that signifies the irony of life under capitalism; except that with modernity, Shylock is no longer a literary specter, but the flesh and blood of political resistance born of capitalism—the multitude (Negri, “The Political Monster” 200). Once monstrosity could only inhabit the political field only as a metaphor for mediating the multitude (Negri, “The Political Monster” 194, his emphasis).⁹⁰ Leviathan, for example, serves this function. With the advent of biopolitics and the ensuing collapse of the “outside” of sovereignty, however, the monster is flesh, it is the biopolitical *subject* of capitalism. We do not produce Leviathan; it produces us as docile bodies; objects of knowledge; naked life. With modern statistics, we see the full-scale production of homo sacer or the “included exclusion,” as human capital. Foucault takes care to describe this biopolitical reform in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*:

The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable (141).

⁹⁰ Hardt and Negri define the multitude as an political life force composed of “innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity of single identity—different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires” (*Multitude* xiv). For this reason, the multitude is challenged to communicate and act communally retaining this internal difference (*Multitude* xiv). Here we can see that the task is not to exorcise the monster (which is the conglomerate of this difference), but to move give the monster a new body—one not consigned to the lower bodily stratum (although this certainly remains a part of the monstrous) which becomes integrated into the state of empire and the official calendar, but remains a constant force of resistance, a jouissance of life that reclaims bodily subjectivity (Negri “The Political Monster” 216-7).

As the above passage demonstrates, Foucault is quite aware of the importance of capitalism in relation to disciplinary power. Thus, the docile body that Foucault locates in *Discipline and Punish* is, for all intents and purposes, analogous to the ancient Roman figure of the homo sacer that Agamben describes. But whereas Foucault historicizes the body politic—the body as an object of knowledge, whether tortured at the spectacle of the scaffold or regimented by the penal system—and, in doing so, finds its economic antecedents, Agamben already invests the subject-content of modernity in homo sacer, rendering it an untimely Messianic figure, in the Benjaminian sense.⁹¹ Of course, as Agamben discerns, bio-power extends to antiquity (*Homo Sacer* 111). But it is only within the context of modern capitalism and the social creation of transcendent sovereignties intended to capture the “monstrosity” of the multitude (for example Hobbes’s *Leviathan* or Rousseau’s *General Will*) that bodies become the direct prerogative of state (statistics) and that bio-power becomes the content of transcendental sovereign power, and consequently, produced inside of politics.

Here, the “inside of politics” is value and social production defined by capital (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 85). With the “mobile and flexible controls” of democracy, which transfer political-economic rights to the multitude, the monster is released from its allegorical existence as the deformed and excluded face of sovereignty (for example, the Shylock) and becomes common (Negri, “The Political Monster” 205). Arguably, Agamben prematurely collapses the inside and outside of politics by imbuing the ancient figure of homo sacer with modern subjective content, and in doing so casts this figure as

⁹¹ Here we can consider homo sacer as a utopian anomaly within the context of empirical history, which is the linear course of events, “the beads of the rosary,” of universal history. More specifically, as the walking dead and the legal exception, homo sacer is the embodiment of revolutionary force in relation to juridical force.

powerless, as evidenced in the extreme figures of the Muslim, the refugee and the neomort. As Foucault points out in several of his works, but especially in *Madness and Civilization*, confinement or the state of exception in everyday life is a distinctly modern affair that captures and confines the creative freedom of the “mad” or “unreasonable” figures of the classical and Renaissance periods (64).

Prior to this, during the classical age, madness was a powerful *monster*, a brute figure that existed in opposition to reason:

In the Renaissance, madness was present everywhere and mingled with every experience by its images or its dangers. During the classical period, madness was shown, but on the other side of the bars.... Madness had become a thing to look at: no longer a monster inside oneself, but an animal with strange mechanisms, a bestiality from which man had long since been suppressed (Foucault, *Madness* 70).

Even within the dungeon of classical internment, the monster was not completely silenced, but engaged in a muted dialogue of struggle in which its oppressor was clearly visible (Foucault, *Madness* 262). With the modern asylum, this monstrosity becomes a generalized category of deviance, a condition to be overcome, not by visible torture and criminal confinement, but guilt and shame for failing to meet the societal standards of the liberal economy (Foucault, *Madness* 258-9). As Foucault explains, this generalized madness was conceived as a social failure, an epidemic that captured all of degenerate qualities—indigence, laziness, vice and madness—related to poverty and unemployment. Of course, this categorization portrayed most of the working class and poor of society, so that “[h]enceforth, the essential madness, and the really dangerous one, was that which rose from the lower depths of society” (260). This normalized content of the liberalism, this deliverance of madness, recognizes the monster en mass by converting medical practice into justice and a mechanism of social conformity (266-8). As Michael Hardt and

Antonio Negri explain in *Empire*: “Without this content, which is always implicit, always working inside the transcendental apparatus, the form of sovereignty would not have been able to survive modernity, and European modernity would not have been able to achieve a hegemonic position on a world scale” (*Empire* 85-6).

It is this transition from the outside to the inside of politics, from the figurative to the material that, in effect, moves the monster from the realm of corruption and decay (the deformed face of eugenics reduced to metaphorical function, as in the state of nature, or the allegory of the cave) to its own productive force. And this inherent doublure or sovereign paradox is the continuous pressure of the multitude, which refuses to be silenced. Here we can consider a passage from Negri in “The Political Monster”:

Better said: the monster has been inside all the time, because his political exclusion is not the consequence, but the premise, of this productive inclusion. The hierarchical instruments of bio-Power define and fix him into an ambiguous position—labor power within capital, the citizen within the state, the slave within the family.... And this is in force, works, goes on until the biopower of the monster breaks the hierarchical connections.... Today, however, rather than yet another continual revolt of power against Power, we are facing the common affirmation and victory of power (probably irreversible). Here the political monster is right up front (“The Political Monster” 207).

Of course, this calls into question the images of the werewolf and homo sacer in Agamben’s work. More specifically, the werewolf is the revolutionary monster—the unreasonable man—that defies the sovereign state and, as a result, is thrust into the “possessive market model” to fend under the invisible hand of capitalism. For this reason, capitalism needs the werewolf, the man without peace, for its continued existence. Tamed at the foot of the sovereign bed, via the social contract, the werewolf chooses his servitude in exchange for the minimal humanity of bare life, becoming homo sacer. In this sense, homo sacer is the eugenic monster of capitalism—ripped of its life force, its

affects, its becoming-political—so that it can be a docile body, a legal subject in the service of capitalism. By casting the figure of homo sacer anachronistically, Agamben strips these bodies not only of their politics, but their history: “What ‘naked life’ denies is the power of being, the capability of spreading into time through cooperation, struggle and constitution. But not only is the hypothesis of ‘naked life’ false: above all, it’s correlative to the affirmation of a eugenic constitution of being, against the monster’s possible power” (Negri, “The Political Monster” 209). We might also add that the cooperation and struggle denied by “bare life” is the “political lion skin” or the commodity flesh that Marx describes; in other words, it is the lived contradiction of political and civil society that heralds revolutionary possibility and holds the chance of democracy to come.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri describe two modes of modernity: the revolutionary process of becoming or immanence of the Renaissance, and the counterrevolutionary or molar process of the Enlightenment, which attempts to capture the first force (69-90). As Foucault avers in *Madness and Civilization*, compared to the classical era, the image of Renaissance monstrosity is no longer a lesson in anguish, but fascinating in its freedom. For example, Foucault explains that gryllos (fantastic animal-human figures, like those shown in the work of the Renaissance artist Hieronymus Bosch) were depicted as tormented human souls imprisoned by beasts during the classical age, yet were transformed into figures of liberation during the Renaissance: “It is madness become Temptation; all it embodies of the impossible, the fantastic, the inhuman, all that suggests the unnatural, the writhing of the insane presence on the earth’s surface—all this is precisely what gives the gryllos its strange power” (20). These Renaissance figures

depicted by Foucault are very different than the theriomorphous Gnostic images that Agamben prefers in *The Open*. These latter figures, according to some interpretations, are figures of the remnant of Israel (the righteous) who are alive at the time of the Messiah's coming. In this sense, they are anything but mad or liberated; instead they sit in waiting, outside of the time of sovereignty. Within the context of modernity, any attempt to know this remnant of animality leads to torturous and deformed forms of madness, like the tormented gryllos. With modernity, madness is organized around guilt: "In other words, by this guilt the madman became an object for punishment always vulnerable to himself and to the Other; and, from the acknowledgment of his status as object, from the awareness of his guilt, the madman was to return to his awareness of himself as a free and responsible subject, and consequently to reason" (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* 247).

To illustrate this point, consider that werewolves are not only hunted by the sovereign, but also haunted by their own blood lust during their human days. As such, the werewolf is the perfect modern monster, as both an object of the state and an object of his own self-loathing and discipline. In short, it experiences itself *as terror*. For Agamben, the solution to the contradictory and horrifying life of the werewolf is to let the animal be, or remain outside of being—as a zone of non-knowledge—lest he remain tormented (*The Open*, 91). What does this mean for politics? It points to naked life, homo sacer stripped of his political lion (in this case, wolf) skin. But this fleece is his contradictory narrative, the blood-soaked reminder of his lived antagonism, the Shylockean pound of flesh, is it not? Without this kind of historical skin, as Negri points out, the monster is dissolved from within and rendered an object of humiliation and pity; or, in the case of

Marx's Shylock, an object of mercy ("The Political Monster" 210). With homo sacer, biopower meets the sublime, so that terror moves from the outside in, from the sovereign gaze to petrifying self-discipline.

Consider Slavoj Žižek's discussion of the sublime in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*:

Hegel's position is, in contrast, that there is nothing beyond phenomenality, beyond the field of representation... Where Kant thinks that he is still dealing only with a negative presentation of the Thing, we are already in the midst of the Thing-in-itself - for this Thing-in-itself is nothing but this radical negativity. In other words - in a somewhat overused Hegelian speculative twist - the negative experience of the Thing must change into the experience of the Thing-in-itself as radical negativity. The experience of the Sublime thus remains the same: all we have to do is to subtract the transcendent presupposition - the presupposition that this experience indicates, in a negative way, some transcendent Thing-in-itself persisting in its positivity beyond it" (206).

Obviously, Žižek is comparing the Hegelian conception of the sublime with the Kantian. As the above passage implies, for Hegel the sublime is the quest of the unhappy consciousness, which first demands priestly mediation in order to transcend the emptiness of earthly vice, and then, via reason, looks inward to find itself as the intermediary of *World Spirit* (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 126-138). For Žižek, this Hegelian form of sublimity dismisses the Kantian aspect of the sublime that finds terror in a life lived in the shadow of the beautiful, which remains a positive and unattainable entity beyond the field of representation (*Sublime* 205). Sublimity is instead experienced as pure negativity or emptiness in our experience of the world and for this reason, Žižek argues—and here he is presenting a radical reading of Hegel—sublimity is not the product of a grand dialectical process of mediation-sublimation, but the experience of some "miserable, radically contingent corporeal leftover" (*Sublime* 207). With this movement, the sublime is released from its aesthetic and metaphorical dimension (artistic alienation or religious

suffering, for example) to wander into everyday life of the multitude under capitalism, as the *sublime object of ideology*.

In terms of our discussion in this chapter, the key is to perceive this boundless “monster,” this terrifying multitude, for what it is—and here, it seems, is a parallel between Žižek and Negri. Žižek begins his analysis with the Greek religion of beauty (or eugenism for Negri), which accepts a certain transparency of meaning between the universal and the particular. In doing so, eugenism immediately excludes the monster from its ontology, as Negri suspects, relegating monstrosity “to a nightmare for those who are ‘beautiful and good’: it can exist only as a catastrophic destiny that must be atoned, or as a divine event” (“The Political Monster” 194). Here we are reminded of Plato’s assertion in Chapter XXXIII of *The Republic* that despotic desires first emerge in dreams (of everyone, not simply wicked souls), representing a deformity of the soul that justice must atone. As one might suspect, this defect is the maddening desire of animalistic consumption (296-7).⁹² Aestheticism and philosophy are one and the same in this construct, so that crafting a beautiful society demands “scraping the canvas clean” of all deformity (Plato, *The Republic* 209; Chapter XXII). For Žižek, this kind of immediacy is the first movement—*positing reflection*—in the Hegelian logic of “reflexive determination,” which ultimately empties subjectivity of all essential content. Anticipating this movement, as Negri observes (although not in direct conversation with Hegel or Žižek), the Greek world can imagine this kind of revolting desire only as

⁹² The exact passage reads: “Those which bestir themselves in dreams, when the gentler part of the soul slumbers and the control of reason is withdrawn; the wild beast in us, full-fed with meat or drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts” (Plato, *Republic* 296).

nothingness or the limit or ontological being ("The Political Monster" 194). Something must fill this void, and in the case of Plato's *Republic*, it is the act of *eating well*, which allows the multitude, in its pre-subjective and pre-modern representation, to attest to the common Good.⁹³ Surely this amounts to the first sacrifice or trick of rationality in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as noted earlier.

With modernity, the monster continues its trek as the sublime or gothic, the terrifying "other" that increasingly finds its way into the political field, but only as a metaphor or silent companion to modernity, which is both the limit and production of the law (for example, the noble savage, the hysterical woman and the beast). This *thought of the outside* is the alluring discomfort faced in our encounter with others. We are drawn in by these monstrous others, who mark a terrifying duplication of life outside of the normalcy of law—the death of the subject, or the ghostly figure of something past yet not quite yet present (Foucault, "Thought of the Outside" 146-169). In Gothic literature, this strange companion takes a variety of forms, but generally represents an unknown presence that brings to bear terrifying freedom; for example, the violent, insane and colonial character of Bertha, the confined and hidden wife of Edward Rochester, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. But this kind of literary monster remains, at the very least, a violent doppelganger, the ghost of concrete political resistance that haunts the bourgeoisie mind; hence the strange and uncomfortable pleasure of reading Gothic literature, which provides a glimpse of something outside of ourselves. If we return to the movement of "reflexive determination," this secondary movement of *external reflection*

⁹³ Again, we return to Žižek's analysis of Greek religion: "Noble-minded consciousness occupies the position of extreme alienation: it posits all its contents in the common Good embodied in the State — noble-minded consciousness severs the State with total and sincere devotion, attested by its acts. It does not speak: its language is limited to 'counsels' concerning the common Good" (*Sublime* 210).

away from the beautiful or eugenic constitutes a necessary reflection, but risks plunging into the depths of the *beautiful soul*; that is, the retreat of the unhappy consciousness into fantasy and, ultimately, madness. And to remain in this space, this literary fantasy is to languish in passivity:

By means of a purely formal act, the 'beautiful soul' structures its social reality in advance in such a way that it can assume the role of passive victim; blinded by the fascinating content (the beauty of the role of 'suffering victim'), the subject overlooks his or her *formal responsibility* for the given state of things" (Zizek, *Sublime* 217).

What does this mean in terms of our current discussion? As Zizek explains, this kind of reflection offers a "gamut of historical interpretations conditioned by different social and other contexts," but in which we can never ascertain a true meaning, which is really lost forever. In other words, this kind of external reflection provides a way out of the standstill of judging between different historical claims (which is the problem inherent to the first movement of reflection, *positing*) by letting be "the Thing-in-itself." To do otherwise is to "present distorted reflections, partial aspects deformed by our subjective perspective" (*Sublime* 213). As such, all that we can know is the chain of historical events leading to the present. We simply perform our actions, with guilt but not responsibility in the Nietzschean sense. More specifically, the beautiful soul recedes into itself, feels guilty for its desires and sacrifices those desires in relation to the Symbolic order. Zizek explains this phenomenon in terms of typecast of the "suffering mother":

The meaning of the mother's incessant groaning is a demand. 'Keep on exploiting me! My sacrifice is all that give meaning to my life!', so that by exploiting her mercilessly, other members of the family return to her the true meaning of her own message. In other words, the true meaning of the mother's complaint is: 'I'm ready to give up, to sacrifice everything.... everything but the sacrifice itself!' (*Sublime* 216).

Feminist critiques aside, this example forces the difficult question of responsibility. Without self-reflexive action, as we shall see, resistance becomes a passive embodiment or transmittance of the law within the context of the sublime. Negri no doubt strikes a similar chord to Žižek when he criticizes the “naturalistic innocence” of naked life, which inevitably reinforces the imaginary of the founding myth of capitalism (“The Political Monster” 209-10).

Arguably, Agamben remains indebted to this kind of sovereign logic. His discussion of the form of law in *Homo Sacer* is particularly instructive on this point:

We have seen the sense in which law begins to coincide with life once it has become the pure form of law, law’s mere being in force without significance. But insofar as law is maintained as pure form in a state of virtual exception, it lets bare life (K.’s life, or the life lived in the village at the foot of the castle) subsist before it. Law that becomes indistinguishable from life in a real state of exception is confronted by life that, in a symmetrical but inverse gesture, is entirely transformed into law... Only at this point to the two terms distinguished and kept united by the relation of ban (bare life and the form of law) abolish each other and enter into a new dimension (55).

If we apply Žižek’s logic of reflection to this passage, what Agamben fails to do is move to the third moment of reflexive determination—*determinate reflection*—which, together with the first two movements, reveals the meaninglessness of the world, cumulatively reinstating a sense of active responsibility in the world (*Sublime* 213-7). Without this moment—that is, to remain in the sublime moment of external reflection—is to wait powerlessly in the face of terror. Following Kant, Agamben finds the form of law empty and therefore, simply, the expression of a “thinking being’s” relation to an “absolutely indeterminate thought” (*Homo Sacer* 52). What this means is that the form of law is not determined by any particular content, but is a formal requirement allowing for its universal applicability in every practical situation (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 53).

Here we are reminded of Kant's famous formulation of the categorical imperative in his *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law," or that humanity should be considered an end in itself, and as such I should never will anything that regards others as means to individual ends; in this sense, the law must be formally applicable to everyone. Consider Agamben's discussion of the Kantian pure form of law:

It is truly astounding how Kant, almost two centuries ago and under the heading of a sublime "moral feeling" was able to describe the very condition that was to become familiar to the mass societies and great totalitarian states of our time. For life under a laws that is in force without signifying resembles life in the state of exception, in which the most innocent gesture or the smallest forgetfulness can have most extreme consequences (*Homo Sacer* 52).

In the above passage, we find the "sublime" as the feeling of terror in the face of the law, which in its totalizing applicability is revealed as formal means to an impossible and unknown morality, in relation to which it always fails. In this way, homo sacer exists within the threshold of the divine, between juridical law and juridical violence, as we shall see. In short, homo sacer is the bodily remnant of divinity, a fallen and earthly angel, who elicits feelings of terror (sublimity), both in himself and others, in his very existence. To remain within this space is to sacrifice true political power, to render impotent the revolutionary monster that Negri describes, because we do not perceive the affliction of the multitude under commodity forms; or if we turn to Žižek, we are cast under the spell of sublime objects, which fill out the void (or threshold in Agamben's terms) between the subject and its own signifying representation (lack) (*Sublime* 212-215). As we shall see, meat is the ultimate filler of this subjective lack.

Deleuze and Guattari similarly observe the emergence of the revolutionary monster, which spreads via blood contagion, in *A Thousand Plateaus*. “It is in war, famine, and epidemic that werewolves and vampires proliferate,” they note (243). Negri would prefer to leave this kind of monstrous imagery within the bindings of literature and simply consider the flesh and blood monstrosity of the multitude that materializes during troubled times. But it is not that simple, especially when we consider the political economy of meat. As we have seen, meat represents the original division of labor that marks bodies as commodities. When Negri speaks of the multitude, he is talking about the human *meat* of capitalism, or Frankenstein’s monster, which defies the sovereign master it was created to serve. This is the magical element of capitalism, which has taken on a life of its own. Negri admits that we cannot destroy the monster—to do so would mean destroying the world (“The Political Monster” 218). Yes, the monster is our future. But the monster has always been flesh, the fleshy fantasy of meat—the “living dead” that under capitalism exceeds its myth, in the surplus value of the commodity that brings objects to life. Decadent monstrosity; meat is the first and final bone thrown to the revolting monster. Or, if we briefly return to Žižek, it is the performance of the Hegelian notion that the “spirit is a bone,” in that meat serves to fill the void or essential lack of political subjectivity. “Let them eat cake” are the infamous words that sparked a revolution. Cake or bread, Marie Antoinette or Maria Theresa of Spain—regardless of who said it and what was offered, bread was not enough to soothe the plebian desire for sovereignty. The revolutionary monster that Negri describes demands blood, the same blood that all other political monsters demand—the desire for *new goods*. Consequently,

we find two monsters of modernity—one sublime and one revolting—and potentially two kinds of politics of eating.

Two monsters, and two kinds of eating, one inside of politics and the other outside, but it is in the commodity form of meat that the two collide. Simply put, there is mysterious value (seductive and mythical power) attached to meat commodities that is literally extracted from animal labor (*death*), but manifests within the capitalist system as the lawful product of its owners. Here we find labor and death (a perversion of pregnant death, perhaps?) collapsed into one in the private moment of consumerism. Marx himself was quite aware of the captivation that occurs in the face of commodities, directly relating this blindness to our denial of the monstrosities of capitalism in *Capital, Volume I*: “Perseus wore a magic cap so that the monsters he hunted down might not see him. We draw the magic cap down over our own eyes and ears so as to deny that there are any monsters” (218). Perhaps each of us is Perseus, free from death yet blinded by our petrifying self-discipline in the face of Medusa (the monster). Monsters are among us, as Marx suspects and Negri confirms, but they are invisible to the eyes of the all too human multitude of late capitalism. Moreover, we should add that the monster is literally in us, in the form of meat, and in the sacrificial politics of eating. Truly this is the last attempt under capitalism to liberally feed the monster it has created in order to tame it. It is the last hidden metaphor fed to the people; and since it is so necessary—of course, we must eat and eat well!—it is the most difficult to purge.

Enter the sublime in Marx, via his notion of commodity fetishism. Here we find commodities as proxies for human relations, so we have only indirect or sublime access to human essence through these objects, which magically take on lives of their own

(Parker 659-660). As we have seen, commodity fetishism, as the change of substance to essence or a secular transubstantiation, becomes the compulsion to absolve our sovereign debt by consuming or eating goods. Commodities are the drugs of choice, which feed our happy consciousness in the administered world, in an endless cycle of the materialist conception of desire. As Macdonald notes in *Performing Marx*, this modern-day *passion play* is experienced as *suffering*, resulting from this insatiable desire in the face of sublime objectivity (41). In *Capital, Volume 1*, Marx uses the example of a wooden table to illustrate commodity fetishism:

The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will (164).

Why is the table so important, particularly for our discussion? A table is a stage, as Derrida discerns (*Specters of Marx* 149-154). Arguably, the table is the commodity fetish par excellence, the stage of capitalism. We eat at the table; exchange food and ideas at the table. And, as Marx observes in the above passage, a table is more than wood—it is a powerful symbol, tableaux of the good life. Who is to sit at the table? Which table? What are they to eat?

Certainly tables bring people together and keep people apart; they are far from the objective spaces they present themselves to be. Reminiscent of Rousseau's fraternal table in *Emile*, the years following the French Revolution saw an attempt to dissolve the relationship of cuisine to class—that is, the lavish meals of the French Court—via communal meals staged at endless tables on Bastille Day (Strong 275). Historian Roy

Strong describes the scene of these celebratory feasts: “A huge procession wound its way to the Place de la Révolution, upon which a vast statue of Liberty had been erected. Part of the ceremonial was a ritual meal, echoing the mass, during which a ‘cup of regeneration’ was shared. A ‘frugal repast’ on the ground of the Champ de Mars followed” (275). With their religious remnants, these communal tables call forth the sublime experience of a modern day last supper, the chance for sovereign reconciliation. French republican thought, in particular, retained a remnant of the medieval Catholic belief in *corpus mysticum*, but in civil terms (Behrent 221). Rousseau’s discussion of civil religion in *The Social Contract* is particularly instructive on this point. Here, Rousseau is very clear that one of the positive attributes of a princely state—where divine worship and the love of laws are conflated, making citizens devoted to serve their state as they would “the guardian deity”—is both martyrdom and the creation of the *sacer esto*. As well, Rousseau praises the sublime aspect of the Gospel, which creates a lasting social bond amongst brethren; the major fault that he finds with this kind of religious thinking is that it remains detached from the body politic via its renunciation of all earthly things (133-4).⁹⁴ In other words, there must be a material substitute that bonds the people while keeping them from devouring each other—a way to consummate the General Will. As noted in Chapter Two, for Rousseau this kind of shared meal or communion is a prerequisite that culls the desire for democratic liberty.

⁹⁴ In Chapter 8 of *The Social Contract*, entitled “Civil Religion,” Rousseau evokes a secular sense of corpus mysticum: “The second is good so far as it combines divine worship with love for the laws, and, by making their country the object of the citizens’ adoration, teaches them that to serve the state is to serve the guardian deity. It is a kind of theocracy, in which there ought to be no pontiff but the Prince, no other priests than the magistrates. Then to die for one’s country is to suffer martyrdom, to violate the laws is to be impious, and to subject a guilty man to public execration is to devote him to the wrath of the gods: Sacer esto” (134). Rousseau continues that the major problem with this kind of theocracy is its intolerance, which thrusts it into a natural state of war with all other nations (134).

But in the years after the French Revolution, these calendared public banquets were criticized as superficial, a fact that was evident in the complete disjoint of these holiday tables from the tableaux of everyday life (Strong 275). No longer sublime, these meals became revolting as the multitude, which came to life around the table, came to embody the gross inequities of capitalism. And the tables soon turned—a feast fit for a king was available to anyone who could afford it, and the table became a private display of wealth for the bourgeoisie (Strong 276, 303). We see the contemporary affects of this gastronomic shift all around us. Now the masses feast on Burger King—instant gratification. All the while, the bourgeoisie take stock in the *slow foods movement*. “Supermarket Pastoral” is the new food chic, and despite its fictive quality, even the likes of Michael Pollan cannot resist its enjoyment, despite his displeasure in knowing the truth of its production (134). For the rich, food is still quite sublime.

Within our postmodern context, we still hold onto the vision of beautiful food, even if it is in the fleeting bliss of eating free-range Buffalo or wild raspberry compote—surely this is what the slow foods movement is trying to capture, if only as bourgeois respite from the damning reality of our material world. Contra this vision, there is the festival excess that Bakhtin describes. It is no coincidence that Rabelais’s world is a Renaissance world filled with monsters, meat, and merriment. Within the temporal suspension of the carnivals of *Rabelais and His World*, the peasant multitude challenged capitalist monstrosity—they gathered at the *festival table*, around the lower bodily stratum, where they transgressed the sacred limits of life and death, restoration and decay, piety and worldliness in the material overabundance of meat and other animal metaphors; for example, asinine plays, cowbells attached to banquet guests, the insatiable

consumption of tripe. At the carnival celebration, people were not afraid of the world—they *ate the world* in their radical and monstrous transgressions, which defied the limited, greedy and private body (*subject*) of capitalism (Bakhtin 292-6). Commodities were powerless; they took on their meaning in the act of consumption, in the radical reflection of the peasantry. Meat was served; not beautiful cuts, but grotesque animal remains. And the peasants gleefully revolted in their excess, draining meat of its seductive power in the nausea of their gluttonous consumption—resulting in a newly born feast, a revolutionary politics of eating.

Whereas the figures of merriment and foolery that Bakhtin describes—popular festive forms like giant sausages and “gay monsters” with protruding bellies, gaping mouths and giant phalluses—mocked the official order of capitalism, now we take sovereign communion in the private and enlightened choice of what to eat: the festive choice of eating *en masse* loses its hyperbolic quality under capitalism, the very property that tied the multitude to the “the ancestral body of the people” (Bakhtin 29). Holiday celebrations are now a mere ghost of this once revolutionary jouissance, storied tables of years gone by filled with commodities that signify the good life and, in a brief moment of gastronomic heaven, let us taste the sublime. Our postmodern table is a table-in-waiting, set for homo sacer.

Who is homo sacer, or the sacred man of Roman law? In the simplest of terms, he is the man who has been turned over to the people by the state, so that the plebiscite may judge him to be impure or bad and, if so deemed, kill him with impunity (Agamben,

Homo Sacer 71). For Agamben, this sovereign exception, which has been turned over to the wolves—the multitude, which is hungry for blood—marks the threshold or limit of the Roman social order. His sacredness refers to his possession by the gods of the underworld as the consequence of his spiritual impurity; as such, he is dead in the eyes of religious law. There is no saving homo sacer; he is beyond redemption. But he is still alive, still human. Homo sacer is the walking dead. But, as Agamben asks, if he is property of the gods, how could anyone kill him without committing sacrilege? And this is where it gets tricky. This sacred man, at least as Agamben employs him, is a modern apparition. More specifically, the theory of bare life that informs Agamben's figure of homo sacer mirrors the contractual founding of Leviathan (Negri, "The Political Monster" 210). In a Hobbesian sense, homo sacer has violated his moral obligation to the multitude with whom he has entered into the Leviathan. And the source of this obligation is not divine, but man-made. Simply put, he has broken his contract, not with the sovereign, but the multitude. His covenant lies outside of juridical law, but is also the foundation of it. Moreover, his morality is now worldly and secular, as he has cast his allegiance to the city of man, simultaneously casting him outside of divine providence. Homo sacer remains, in the biblical sense, in a threshold of indistinction between the sacred and the secular, the paradoxically *sacred man*. Since the mere protection of his life is the basis of sovereign power over him, the sovereign is barred from sacrificing him, and instead must return him to the judgment of the people: "This is the Law of the Gospell; Whatsoever you require that other should do to you, that do ye to them. And the Law of all men, Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris" (*Leviathan* 73).⁹⁵

Alfred Whitehead famously said that all of philosophy is a footnote to Plato. More importantly, for our discussion, it seems that Agamben is indebted to this philosophical tradition. We have been tracing the genealogy of political thought, which is most evident in the preserve of animal remnants that populate and nourish the Western canon.

Agamben, of course, recognizes these animal remnants in *The Open*, as we have seen, yet as something to be left alone and in waiting. Although it is somewhat hidden in his prose, in appealing to this remnant of religion, Agamben also evokes the two very ancient roots of Western culture, the Bible or the love of God, and philosophy or the love of knowledge. Clearly, both seek to explain the world, but in different ways: seduction and desire (the Tree of Knowledge) and piety and correct belief (God's Law). Agamben is certainly not the first philosopher to do this. Leo Strauss recognized the eternal and irreconcilable conflict of the Bible and classical philosophy, a contradiction that he viewed as the secret motor of Western culture (Luz 264). Surely this sounds remarkably like the anthropological machine that Agamben describes?

What leads to a productive political understanding of this conflict, according to Strauss? It is the spirit of Socratic agnosticism, or openness to the transcendent or the whole, "the mystery that is imminent in the whole" (Luz 267). Where Hobbes fails, according to Strauss, is in his renunciation of the statesman, the *sovereign weaver* of the moral fabric of society.⁹⁶ Modern historicism crafts history in a way that assumes we can understand more about our ancestors than they did about themselves, in light of our

⁹⁵ Translated from Latin: "Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself" (*Leviathan* 73).

⁹⁶ See Andreas Kalyvas's essay "The Sovereign Weaver" for a discussion of Agamben's use of Platonic metaphors.

present historical knowledge. In taking this position, we also advance a certain atheism that denies the miraculous events of the Bible. Given these modern influences, if the only unconditional moral fact in Hobbes's *Leviathan* is the individual's right of self-preservation, then civil society can no longer impose natural duties upon individuals according to Strauss; what is just is what is here and now, in the court of public opinion:

What is required to make modern natural right effective is enlightenment or propaganda rather than moral appeal. From this we may understand the frequently observed fact that during the modern period natural law became much more of a revolutionary force than it had in the past ("From Natural Right and History" 322).

Contra this view, Strauss argues that openness or immanence allows us to listen and learn from our ancestry, despite our differences, binding us to a community larger than and transcendent of ourselves via a reminder or remembrance of what is already there (Luz 267). This also implicitly relates to the Bible. Since we cannot rationally prove whether or not God exists, we must not discredit the authenticity of the Bible in terms of miraculous events. For Strauss, the Bible is not an historical text to be proven or disproved, but a link or remainder of common ancestry. And we can discover this remnant only through the spirit of Socratic agnosticism (Luz 272). According to Strauss, the modern and contradictory experience of non-Orthodox Jews best illustrates this conflict, because they hold two conflicting allegiances—to modern rationalism (the state) and to the miraculous word of the Bible (Luz 266).

But there is a danger in this kind of thinking. As Strauss concedes in the passage above, the paradox of modern sovereignty allows for the very possibility for revolutionary force; and homo sacer is its biopolitical monster, the embodiment this contradictory life in the state of exception. But under Agamben's construct (and Strauss's

for that matter) homo sacer is bare life, an isolated and powerless figure stripped of this revolutionary potential and clinging to its singular hope of salvation.⁹⁷ Negri reminds us of this: “It’s a scream of impotence, which resounds within a mass of defeated individualities, to make this defeat eternal, to transfer it from the individual to the singular, from the mass to the multitude” (“The Political Monster” 210). Homo sacer is the eugenic or beautiful monster, the righteous body in waiting for the *star of redemption*.⁹⁸ Arguably, Agamben resurrects homo sacer as an apparition or reminder of the Biblical or moral remnant embedded within modern liberalism. In other words, he appreciates homo sacer in terms of his miraculous and contradictory existence, which defies his logical and historical placement.

In early Rome, to be declared *sacri* and consequently killed without impunity, was reserved for those convicted of treasonous acts, or affronts to the social and religious order like arson, parricide, breaking patronage by defrauding a client, moving boundary

⁹⁷ Illustrating Strauss’s intersection with Agamben on this point, Strauss comments that within Hobbes’s construct of natural rights, “Death takes the place of the telos,” so that only the right to self-preservation is the only moral fact and there are no natural duties; in other words, the sole concern of the state is over life and death, with no moral duty to one’s community outside of this narrow concern (“From Natural Right and History” 321).

⁹⁸ See Franz Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption*. In this text, Rosenzweig begins with the reality of the Star of David, where Judaism is the Eternal Life or fire emanating from within the star and Christianity are the rays that emanate from the star, lighting the Eternal Way. In this sense, there are two paths that lead to the star of redemption: A Jew is born Jewish, so the Eternal Life requires intense self-examination to become more of a Jew; Christians are born pagan, and in order to become Christian they must be baptized and flee the self. Both Christianity and Judaism, in their difference, are needed to restore the fragmented Star of David. Alexander Düttman explains Rosenzweig’s logic in his book *The Gift of Language*: “So the eternal way is this becoming that eternal life has never known and will never know. There are reasons for becoming Christian, for becoming something which becomes, which is not yet ‘really God’s people,’ but there is no reason to become Jewish, since one is either Jewish or one is not, in an immediacy which precedes the time of the way. Jewish ‘reason’ is to be sought in an ‘attestation’ (*Bezeugung*) which is produced through ‘generation’ (*Zeugung*)” (11, his emphasis). Both paths are needed and double into each other, and it is the very process of straying, in their difference that we return, that we are redeemed (Düttman 28-34). In fact, Agamben calls to mind the imagery of the star in *The Open*, when he discusses the theriomorphous images of Gnostic Judaism: “By way of the Gnostic doctrine in which the bodies of the righteous (or, better, the spritual), ascended through the heavens after death, are transformed into stars and identified with the powers that govern each heaven” (2).

stones, etc. Reminiscent of Shylock, in some cases, creditors might cut flesh shares of debtors condemned as *sacri* (Kyle 41). But in order to understand the phenomena of homo sacer, we must understand the de facto legal inequities of Roman status society; simply put, Roman law held legal privileges in relation to social status. Via a dual penalty system, lower class Romans convicted as criminals (*humiliores*) suffered brutal punishments in comparison to their elite counterparts (*honestiores* or men of status). However, conviction for treason brought a death sentence, regardless of social status; and with execution, the property of the condemned was confiscated, his body was denied burial, and his name and monuments were eliminated from memory (*damnatio memoriae*). And these *damnati* were often condemned to the arena (Kyle 98-9). Because they could not be sacrificed, these *sacri* could be killed brutally, publicly, and by any contender in the arena; gone was the requirement for a pure and unblemished victim and a ritual burial. Homo sacer was literally “meat” killed in sport to feed the plebian blood lust and, in some cases, literally fed to the lions (Plass 47).

The spectacle of the arena harbingered an inordinate amount of death in Rome. In AD 107, for example, twenty-three days of arena games saw the death of 11,000 animals and 10,000 people (Kyle 35). *Damnati* came in all stripes of social outsiders and convicts, including slaves, captives, deserters, and heinous criminals (Kyle 91). Although gladiators and Christians received the most attention in the arena, nameless convicts doomed to death (*noxii*) suffered the greatest losses (Kyle 78). All of these non-citizens existed outside of the normal Roman rights and obligations, but the *noxii* suffered the worst kinds of death in the area. *Noxii* were “no contest” contestants in the games who received no gladiatorial training and were often cast naked or nearly naked into the arena

(Kyle 92). As the nameless and nude victims of the games, *noxii* were literally bare life—stripped of their political status and their clothes, their fate held in the gaze of the arena, the spectacle of the games.

What is so interesting, but strikingly absent from Agamben's image of homo sacer, is the vital role that the *noxii* (the common name for homo sacer or *damnati*) played in the Roman political economy. As Donald G. Kyle notes in *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*: "For Rome *noxii* were a surplus commodity, a leisure resource, a by-product of imperialism. They were totally at Rome's disposal, for Rome's amusement" (92). More specifically, these poor, foreign or menacing criminals and slaves—cumulatively the *noxii*, or the damaged and broken of society—were forced to face a damning fate in the arena (Kyle 95). Likewise, professional gladiators (war prisoners, kidnapping victims or slaves, and recruits from the *damnati*) were profitable investments that, according to Cicero, were to be rewarded and not wasted (Kyle 83). Nonetheless, even the most successful gladiators existed in a state of ambivalence within Roman society—despite fame or money, they could never become citizens and could never will their fortune or be willed anything themselves (Kyle 84).

In terms of the Roman plebiscite, the games were an important tool for maintaining Roman social order. With the admission of successful plebian families into the political sphere, Roman elites could no longer rely on birthright to ensure their political power. For this reason, they increasingly turned to public displays of military power in the form of triumphs, venationes, and blood shows (*munera*) to secure their power as well as appease the underemployed multitude (Kyle 47). Notably, these games were a key component to the popularity of emperors (Kyle 52). Perhaps most important

of all, the arena games exploited the state of exception so that the spectators felt a sense of power in condemning those who had broken social norms (Kyle 54-5). However, the greatest numbers of victims in Roman games were animals. Animals were captured and transported from all over the Empire and sent to Rome. So, for economic reasons related to Empire, animal hunts (*venationes*) were far more frequent than gladiatorial matches (Kyle 77). And the meat culled from these *venationes* was given to the Roman people to gain political favor; additionally, the Roman elite gave out gifts of food to be scrambled for by the people. Within the walls of the arena, the meat of the beasts literally served the Empire as a sign of wealth and spoils to be shared with the people, while the human flesh torn of the *noxii* during the mock battles was a keen reminder of the imperial force of Rome.

All of this points to the political economic context of *homo sacer*. Certainly *homo sacer* existed in a state of exception, but his ambiguous existence was a vital part of the Roman economy, for the reasons noted above, but also for the obvious economic interests of Empire. All of this was characteristic of the status society in which *homo sacer* existed, where the *noxii*—like slaves in the private realm—were handed over to the public, bequest to the spectacular service of the Roman people mostly in the games, but also to labor for life in the mines or public works (Kyle 53). In short, *sacri* constituted the surplus value of Roman society; they were indebted not only to the Empire, but to the Roman political economy. This is the political economic dimension that Agamben discounts, but is so vital for understanding the potential political force of *sacri*. Consider the gladiator, for example. Owners invested time and money in training gladiators, and gladiators then used this training to gain riches, and in some cases buy their freedom.

Over time, gladiators existed paradoxically in Roman society, as debased men who rose to new heights as thrilling performers with loyal constituencies. As a captive, rebel or criminal that now held the favor the Roman people, the gladiator represented a potential threat to sovereign power. As Kyle explains: “The gladiator’s hold on the Roman imagination was inseparable from his marginal social status and his proximity to blood, death, and pollution. Thus he was the perfect symbol of the fascinating but threatening power of the prohibited” (85). Anticipating the *spectacle of the scaffold*, here we find homo sacer not naked and powerless, but fully armed and ready for battle in the figure of the gladiator.⁹⁹

We can compare the gladiator with another historical representation of homo sacer, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, but not through his order. Instead Pilate handed Jesus over to the people, who demanded his death. As Lars Ostman explains in his essay, “The Sacrificial Crisis,” the crucifixion of Jesus, which is theological-political, is truly an exceptional death in terms of sacred and sovereign law: “The crucifixion itself illustrates this institutional crisis. Even though Jesus is guilty by sacred law, his death is political, profane. He is executed by the Roman state yet not by Roman law” (108). The homo sacer that Agamben employs is a messianic figure; indeed, Agamben crafts a link between Benjamin’s kabalistic conception of “messianic time” and the Christian Pauline Epistles, echoing Rosenzweig’s dialectical linking of Judaism and Christianity in *Star of Redemption*.¹⁰⁰ More specifically, the homo sacer that Agamben presents is an immanent figure that connects modernity to its ancestral past; in doing so,

⁹⁹ See Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*.

¹⁰⁰ See Giorgio Agamben’s *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*.

Agamben accepts the miraculous and biblical history of the messianic, in a way closely aligned with Strauss's agnostic directive.

But what does this mean for politics? Here it is useful to consider Agamben's discussion of anomic feasts in *State of Exception*:

That is to say, the anomic feasts point toward a zone in which life's maximum subjection to the law is reversed into freedom and license, and the most unbridled anomie shows its parodic connection with the nomos. In other words, they point toward the real state of exception as the threshold of indifference between anomie and law. In showing the mournful character of every feast and the festive character of all mourning, law and anomie show their distance and, at the same time, their secret solidarity (73).

Considering Jesus within the context of the state of exception, Olsen explains that Jesus is revolutionary in his existence, at the intersection of nomos and logos: "Jesus's violent revolution consists in the parable, language itself, not relating violence to anything other than human communication and interaction. Jesus as logos, language itself, incarnates nomos as he freely lets law become his body" (115). In this sense, and following the Biblical example of Jesus, anomie is a violent and living parable of the established order that replicates the cruel rituals of exclusion, where the participants dramatize the law (although in contradiction) with their bodies (Agamben, *State of Exception* 71).

Returning to the context of ancient Rome, whereas the gladiator fought and reversed his position (fortune) within the Roman political economy of meat, Christian martyrs, on the other hand, relished in it as a spectacular fight of good and evil. As Catherine Edwards explains in her book *Death in Ancient Rome*, Christian martyrs took joy in their sacrificial role: "But when Christians failed to play the role scripted for them, whether in the course of the trial or, once condemned, in the arena, showing themselves not terrified victims but joyous collaborators, the meaning of the ritual was redeployed,

appropriated to serve a new purpose” (210). Echoing this sentiment, St. Paul encouraged martyrs to see themselves as performers, and to rise to the challenge of the arena much like the gladiator (Edwards 211). But whereas the gladiator fought for his life and his freedom from the belly of the beast, the spectacle of the Christian martyr relished the perverse joy of death: “Every wound matters and must be scrupulously recorded. The truth of God is written on the martyr’s body, to be transcribed for all eternity in the texts which celebrate him (or her)” (Edwards 213).

An invocation of the messianic—this is what Agamben presents to us. For a brief moment, the werewolf emerges within the coliseum, but the beast is expelled in the *sacri* performance, which is simply a path leading to the revelation of juridical violence in the face of divine resolve. The werewolf falls at the sword of the sovereign, and naked life emerges, beautiful and redeemed. Romulus and Remus are restored! Indeed, even Machiavelli celebrates this kind of reconciliation of fortune:

It is a sound maxim that reprehensible actions may be justified by their effects, and that when the effect is good, as it was in the case of Romulus, it always justifies the action. For it is the man who uses violence to spoil things, not the man who uses it to mend them, that is blameworthy (*Discourses on Livy* 132).

Where do we go from here? If there is a revolting monster roaming through the world, how do we know what to look for? Certainly not the werewolf or homo sacer—they are already dead, invisible to all too human eyes. The monster must have a new mark, a new bite. Indeed, “Werewolves become vampires when they die,” as Deleuze and Guattari discern in *A Thousand Plateaus* (249). Yes, *the vampire* is the hysteria of the multitude, the uncontrollable desire born of capitalism. Capital is dead labor; capital is

meat; capital is vampire! Not in a dreadful way, as Marx described in several of his works, but rather as the productive or revolting monster of capitalism, the reserve of excess desire that is the multitude.

Marx famously concluded in Chapter X of *Capital, Volume I*: “the vampire will not let go ‘while there remains a single muscle, sinew or drop of blood to be exploited’” (416). Of course, for Marx the vampire is the capitalist; the soul of whom, as Marx describes earlier in the same chapter, is capital, which he likens to death: “Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (342). Commenting on Marx’s vampires in *The Postmodern Marx* (1998), Terrell Carver takes a somber tone, arguing that Marx used the vampire metaphor to illicit an ominous feeling in his readers, to bring the deadliness of capitalism to life in a terrifying yet clearly fictional figure that can be overcome or defeated by the people (18-20). Carver’s argument, it is worth noting, is in response to Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, which he finds to be too textual; instead, Carver argues that Marx’s vampires are simply parodic tools used to render the familiarity and accord of capitalism as “strange (requiring explanation) and problematic (requiring political action)” (20).

Needless to say, Carver misses the indelible mark of these monsters in the social imaginary. What does one do with vampires? We kill them, don’t we? This is certainly the premise of many a vampire movie, and it is the underlying message in *Capital* and Carver’s analysis of Marx. But no matter how many times we kill them, they always seem to return; the vampire genre never dies. If anything, it gets stronger. Vampires are everywhere: gothic vampires (Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*); hideous vampires (*30 Days of Night*); varsity vampires (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*); openly homoerotic vampires

(*Interview with the Vampire*); multi-cultural vampires (*The Vampire Huntress*); hip indie vampires (*Nadia*); comic vampires (*Love at First Bite*); blaxploitation vampires (*Blacula*); heroic vampires (*Underworld*); redeemed vampires (*Blade*); lesbian vampires (*The Hunger*); and the list goes on. Vampires are the multitude, in all of its strangeness, queerness, and fleshy excess (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 193).

Vampires and werewolves are classic monsters, but there is a key difference between the two: the werewolf remains in a state of exception, between his human and animal lives, while the vampire, once infected, creates a new order from his human life. In fact, werewolves *do* become vampires when they die, as do sorcerers, witches, excommunicates, and humans who die unnatural deaths like suicide (Oinas 48). All of these others were unsuitable for religious burial and for their offenses are resurrected as vampires. Hardt and Negri explain this alluring and transformative power of the vampire in terms of the *Multitude*: “And more important, the monsters begin to form new, alternative networks of affection and social organization. The vampire, its monstrous life, and its insatiable desire has become symptomatic not only of the dissolution of an old society but also the formation of a new” (193). Underscoring this point, vampires reproduce outside of sexuality, and in doing so threaten the patriarchal order of the family, which is likewise reproduced in the state. But perhaps most important to our current conversation, according to most legends, vampires lack an animal origin—they are the unnatural life of humanity, produced from our own bite into the forbidden.¹⁰¹ In

¹⁰¹ Note that vampires do appear as bats to the Slavs, but this is not necessarily their origin (at least in terms of the vampire myth), as it was added after to the European myth of the vampire after knowledge of a sanguineous bat was brought back upon Cortez’s exploration of the New World. But within its original indigenous context, these animals were not seen as human forms, but rather had a strong effect on Caribbean beliefs, in some cases leading to a bat deity (Oinas 49).

this sense, vampires are unclean, much like the sorceress and her modern daughter, the hysteric. This is why the image of the vampire is powerful, in Marx and in contemporary culture. Yes, vampires are the living dead, but their power and seduction lies in the very fact that they are beyond good and evil in the Nietzschean sense.

It is worth noting that the vampire legend emerges from the rubble of a decaying aristocracy in Europe. Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, was inspired by the 15th century Romanian prince Vlad Tepes (or, Vlad the Impaler, who was known in Western Europe for sadistically torturing his enemies) and the 16th century Blood Countess of Hungary, Elizabeth Bathory, who cruelly tortured her servants and allegedly bathed in the blood of her young peasant maids.¹⁰² As a remnant of the debauchery of the nobility, inflicted upon on the common people, there is no doubt that the vampire was a particularly menacing symbol for Marx. That vampire folklore was mixed up with the demonic and the occult, casting vampires as terrifying figures of the imagination, anticipated the captivating power of commodity fetishism. Capitalism simply extended this wickedness into the everyday currency of European society by creating a "bloodless" aristocracy in the bourgeoisie, which could legally, unrepentantly and gluttonously feed off the life of the people.

But what Marx did not anticipate is that a legend once intended to strike piety in the hearts of the peasantry would become a threat to all forms of hierarchy, including capitalism. Referring to the Gothic short story *Vampyre* written by John William Polidori, Emma McEvoy observes the de-individualizing nature of the vampiric: "The Vampyre,"

¹⁰² Barbara Creed notes that although Bathory was not officially part of the *Dracula* plotline, Stoker's unpublished papers contain countless notes on the Bathory case (63).

... is one of a series of Gothic texts that deliberately reverse the trope of the withering eye, discussing it in terms of the victim, deprived not of life (as happens in *Vathek*) but of will, self-control and sense of individuation" (26). The Gothic-sublime represents the terrifying presence of something greater than oneself, the outside and the outsider. Consigned to Gothic literature, however, the sublime evokes feelings of alienation and sobriety, as Bakhtin observes in *Rabelais and His World*: "The world of Romantic grotesque is to a certain extent a terrifying world, alien to man. All that is ordinary, commonplace, belonging to everyday life, and recognized by all suddenly becomes meaningless, dubious and hostile. Our own world becomes an alien world. Something frightening is revealed in that which was habitual and secure" (38-9). Whereas in Gothic literature this kind of monstrous encounter is a secret moment, a private engagement with this foreboding thought of the outside, the postmodern monster, the multitude, must laugh in the face of its common future under capitalism in order to defeat it.

At its core, the vampire demystifies commodity fetishism by creating an enduring and powerful lifeline of the people. Vampires do not need wealth, although they may certainly accumulate it. And vampires are immortal, so their ventures are not about life or death (biopower) but sensuous contact, connecting with people in the most intimate way. But it is not a patriarchal encounter (as with the state, the family or the church), since it does not rely on sex; the vampire erection is instead bisexual, through its teeth, through its mark. But it is another economy of relations, a different politics of eating: vampires do not eat; and, they cannot be deceived by animal flesh and blood. It simply will not do. Vampires laugh at such tricks—the laugh of the Medusa, beautiful and smiling, which

strips Perseus of his magic cap.¹⁰³ Death is gone. Everything is re-circulated, against the political economy of meat. By their transgressions and their desires, vampires threaten to dissolve the geography of the body politic from within.

In *Slayers and their Vampires*, Bruce McClelland describes this disruptive political power of vampires:

The invisibility of the vampire—or, in some tales, the lack of any simple way to distinguish a vampire from other people—has an interesting consequence: ordinary systems of justice and authority provide no method for preventing or reversing the harm done by the vampire. Not only is the vampire effectively unpunishable; he is also impossible to identify (24).

Vampires are molecular, receding into the immanent flesh of the multitude. Unlike werewolves, vampires do not wait for the full moon or the redemption of the Sun—vampires are not broken images in need of liberation. No, the vampire is the ghost made flesh; it is a remnant of justice outside the law that calls into question the very nature of ontology, in a Derridean sense. In this way, vampires turn rights talk on its head—a premise that is explored in the television series *True Blood*. Set in present-day Louisiana, *True Blood* examines what would happen if vampires came out of the coffin (that is, the political imaginary) and appeared in real life. What if they demanded political rights? In the series, vampires are fighting for the Vampire Rights Amendment (VRA) in an attempt to mainstream into society, *to coexist peacefully and enjoy the same rights and freedoms as everyone else*. In *True Blood*, the violence of history—racism, southern culture, and political identity—forcefully converges with the present in the vampire character Bill Compton, a confederate soldier that never returned from the Civil War, who is now a supporter of the VMA and trying to mainstream into liberal society. In short, vampires

¹⁰³ See Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa."

are not naked; they wear the history of political struggle into the present and circulate this debris against the established order. In doing so, vampires reveal the absurdity of the law, since they are a complete inversion of biopower, of *homo sacer*.

Vampires are a wonderful trope for postmodern life, since their genetic mutation allows them to circulate against the political economy of meat that created them, consequently offering an alternative politics of eating, which disrupts the normal order of things (civil society, religion and patriarchy). Although vibrantly populating the political imaginary, however, vampires are an alternative *fantasy*, science fiction played against sovereign fiction. But one thing is very real. We are all vampires, but perhaps the kind of vampires that Marx feared—gluttonously and compulsively performing the sacrificial politics of eating. As Macdonald discerns in his essay “Marx, Animals and Anti-Capitalist Politics,” animals and humans are mutually deformed as living commodities under capitalism; we are all *sacri* (13). Animal rights activists certainly do not escape this conundrum of capitalism. But they *do* have the power to transform the sublime to the absurd.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: The Empire Has No Clothes

What does it mean to *be* a political monster? Yes, this is an ontological question, but it is also an epistemological one as well; after all, if we know that we *can be* monsters, than certainly we could think about how to know ourselves as such. At first glance, it seems preposterous to even propose the question. Monsters are no good, right? And they are particularly silly things, hiding out in children's closets and graveyards on Halloween night. It turns out that the word "monster" has an erudite meaning that is a bit more interesting than that of ghouls and goblins. *Monere*, the Latin root of monster, means to warn, to advise or to instruct; it is only its religious conjugation, the Latin word *monstrum*, which refers to an omen or a bad sign. If we take it at its Latin root, to be a political monster means to advise or instruct others. Vampires do just that—they spread the fleshy excess of the multitude throughout history via contagion; and in the process they teach us something about ourselves. Indeed, Anne Rice probably has the most aptly titled Vampire novel, *Interview with the Vampire*, for this very reason. Embracing the vampire entails exchanging one fiction for another, liberalism for voyoucracy, in order to realize subjectivity for what it is—our everyday encounters in everyday life that disrupt our sense of self and, in the process, guide us along. Vampirism is against commodity fetishism, not for moral reasons, but because commodities (*meat* in the broadest sense) terrorize us with their piteous, religious and passive remnants. Sovereign communion—commodities beg us to wait at the table of the good life for something better, yet the only things that ever seem to arrive are more commodities. Dig in or opt out, be a sinner or a saint; but either way you are damned (and must continue to seek redemption, via your consumption or lack thereof) under capitalism.

Vampires, on the other hand, are public creatures. They roam freely in almost all spaces, with the exception of private homes; there they must be invited to celebrate. Vampires are a threat to individualism: we must welcome vampires into our lives, embrace the blood narrative pulsing through their veins and risk contagion; otherwise, vampires cannot enter. And when they do, they never eat at the table. In this way, nothing is taken for granted by the vampire; there is no time to wait, nothing to wait for. For them, tableaux are empty. Everything *becomes* in the seductive moment, the event and the encounter. If anything, the vampire is always too late, but always too early; a remnant of the past and a glimpse of the future that disrupts the tranquility of home life, of homo sacer—a figure beyond good and evil for whom we are unprepared but hospitable, in the Derridian sense (*Specters* 168).

Vampires guide us from the blinding and terrorizing light of sublime objects of ideology and into the shadows of reality. Blood is blood. It is just a matter of what you do with it. Of course, this begs us to consider just what vampires *do* politically: Are all vampires revolutionaries? Are all revolutionaries vampires? Vampires are voyous, this much is for sure; the multitude is a voyoucracy. As we know, voyous are outcasts, rebels, hellions, scoundrels and villains; and perhaps most important of all, the voyou milieu is the city (Derrida, *Rogues* 66). Werewolves are country monsters, tied to the land and populating the outskirts of the polis; in this sense, they are caught in the threshold of modernity. Vampires, on the other hand, are thoroughly urban, postmodern creatures. And they demand postmodern politics: voyous do not come from animals, nor do vampires—and neither do their politics. Surely this is revolutionary, but ironically lacking in blood. *There is nothing to do with it.*

What might this look like? Consider the example of the radical anarchist group, Food Not Bombs (FNB), the basic objective of which is to provide free vegan meals to the community at large. Recovering most of the food that it prepares from the end-of-the-day spoils of local restaurants, bakeries and food markets, FNB literally re-circulates this food waste against the profit-motive of capitalism. “Money for food not bombs.” In 1980, this was the slogan that anti-nukes activists spray-painted on sidewalks in front of grocery stores in their neighborhood in Seabrook, New Hampshire. From this anti-militarization agenda, FNB emerged during the 1980s in a very public resistance to the military-industrial complex, providing free public meals to everyone in the community, but especially those in need, in order to demonstrate the great disjoint between military and social spending.

At its very core, FNB is committed to nonviolence, egalitarianism, and social justice; and at its meals (which are provided weekly at parks and other public spaces in large cities like San Francisco and Denver, but also at rallies and other activist events all over the United States) every kind of social “outcast” is welcome to eat and participate directly in meal preparation and service. Living off the urban landscape, FNB meals suggest a sort of post-Rousseauian fraternal table at which class differences are momentarily erased and the revolutionary bond of the people is reinforced. But what is most intriguing about FNB is the how the U.S. government perceives this non-violent group as a violent threat. Feeding the hungry seems like a benign, even admirable, mission. Churches do it all the time; so do all kinds of charities. But it is not that simple. FNB is guilty by association; it has been a target of government investigation since its inception, and is now on the FBI’s terrorist watch list. Anarchists, like militias, neo-Nazi

groups and fundamental Islamic organizations, are considered domestic terrorists by the FBI; and, so the argument goes, even though FNB has a peaceful sounding name, the group is affiliated with anarchists and anti-globalization protests and, consequently, may support extreme political tactics (Riccardi). In the mid-1960s, Herbert Marcuse witnessed a similar infiltration of all things radical, presenting a striking critique of the modern welfare-warfare state in his book, *One-Dimensional Man*. His critique is fairly simple: social production and military production are directly related; in fact, it is rational to pursue both, the former to increase our standard of living by producing socially necessary waste (planned obsolescence, fueled by advertising, public relations and indoctrination) and the latter to protect our comfortable existence from outside threats, the *Permanent Enemy* (50-53).

Nourished by an unending stream of commodities, we are satiated and oblivious to continued societal suffering, since individual interests and the general interest of society are folded into profit-motive, and driven by the rational need to defend ourselves; in this sense, our collective “happy consciousness” never experiences the negative affects of capitalism:

The conflict perpetuates the inhumane existence of those who form the human base of the social pyramid—the outsiders and the poor, the unemployed and the unemployable, the persecuted colored races, the inmates of prisons and mental institutions (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* 53).

As the above passage implies, these “deviants” are the human-waste of the military-industrial complex, those individuals whose wellbeing is traded for military armaments. Reading *One-Dimensional Man*, the radical words of Marcuse resound with the political prescience of Dwight D. Eisenhower in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1953 (anticipating his critique of the military-industrial complex in his 1961

presidential farewell address):

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking (Eisenhower, "Chance for Peace").

Indeed, FNB strikes at the same logic as Marcuse and Eisenhower. In fact, so do all anarchists—except now the military-industrial complex has been re-named the corporate-state machine. FNB, along with a variety of anarchist groups, wants to bring to bear this hidden connection. But, rather than challenging the empty seduction of everyday life, as Žižek suggests for example, these groups offer an alternative ideology with which to color the world. They simply flip the order of things; food NOT bombs. Not just any food; waste transformed into *beautiful* vegan food; and vagrants transformed into political subjects in their choice to *eat well*. Let me be clear: FNB is a valuable asset to the communities in which it works. But there is a deeper issue at stake, one that strikes at the politics of eating. The homeless and indigent of the community—those who depend on FNB's meals (its mostly white, young, middle class, college-educated members are likely to go to the food co-op or farmers market for their regular meals) are empty receptacles for the anarchist political message, but they are not empowered in and of themselves to spin their own politics.

Here we are reminded of the Bastille Day feasts in post-revolutionary France, which were revolting in their inequities. Except that FNB members do not realize their

own elite societal status; they take themselves a bit too seriously. Memorably, a *Seinfeld* episode laughs at this kind of charity. In it, Elaine convinces her former boss to start a bakery that sells muffin tops, which he names, “Top of the Muffin to You!” After all, isn’t the best part of the muffin the crunchy favor-filled top? But this poses a problem: what do you do with all the muffin stumps? Well, Elaine figures, give them to the homeless! She quickly finds out that the homeless don’t want the stumps. After discovering that Elaine is the one dropping off the stumps, a shelter worker finally confronts her: “I know what you thought. They don’t have homes. They don’t have jobs. What do they need the top of a muffin for? They’re lucky to get the stumps” (*Seinfeld*). As the episode makes laughably clear: Who wants to eat garbage? Sure, it proves a point, but it’s just a bit too literal and a bit elitist. It is still a sacrificial politics of eating, but ironically classist in its piety.

All of this points to the importance of cultural politics; life is not simply about the political economy, the welfare-warfare state. Marcuse is acutely aware of this point; strangely, at least in *One-Dimensional Man*, he returns to the sublime; that is, the powerful terror of artistic alienation felt in the experience of high art. Like Adorno, his critique of the culture industry points to an ironic elitism, much in the same way that many eco-anarchists eschew material goods in an effort to dismantle the corporate-state machine, but are only able to do so because of their profound bourgeois estrangement. Pure life; martyrdom; the homo sacer—all point to an anorexia of the soul; this is what eco-anarchists are selling, *a new good*, but one that does not necessarily reflect the heterogeneity of the multitude. Certainly, this is very distracting for politics. After all, vampires are not scavengers; they celebrate their desires and own their decisions. In this

way, the multitude is excessive in its flesh, not ascetic. And this is the problem with FNB, eco-anarchists and eco-activists, including animal rights activists and animal liberationists—they do not realize their ironic existence (on a variety of levels, including race, class, gender and species). Instead they nod their heads, and say, “I know better,” and turn away from the complexities of popular culture.

All of this is reminiscent of the familiar children’s fairy tale, “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” As every child knows, the main character of the story is an emperor who is consumed by his appearance, so much so that everyone in his empire knows to flatter him for his clothes. Realizing this, two swindlers convince the emperor that they can craft the finest garments for him, but that they will be so exquisite that they would be invisible to all those who are too stupid or unfit for their posts. Only those with the right knowledge would be able to see the emperor’s new clothes. Pretending to labor for days on end, the swindlers pocket all of the gold and fine materials requested for the garments. And in anticipation of the great processional in which the emperor is to debut his new clothes, his aides are enlisted to preview the garments. Of course, they cannot see a thing, but none of them dare admit it and appear stupid or unfit for their posts. On the day of the processional, the king tries on his new clothes. Sure enough, he cannot see them. But certainly he is not stupid or unfit for his post? So he proceeds naked in front of his people. Everyone remains silent, lest they appear stupid, until a little boy exclaims: “The emperor has no clothes!”

This well-worn fairy tale gets tossed around often. Yet it is quite fitting for our current conversation. In the story, the swindlers claim to have created the most beautiful garment, adorned with the most gorgeous patterns and made of the finest linens.

Everyone plays along because they know better than to admit that the loom is empty; instead they describe what they see as the most beautiful clothes in accordance with what they think is right. Silence is rewarded in the face of sovereign force. But as Derrida points out, democracy is like the most beautiful and seductive tapestry, composed of a vast array of fabrics and constitutions. It exists only in our political imaginary; this is its power, fueling democracy to come. However, as soon as we speak of sovereignty in order to give it meaning in relation to democracy, we compromise its imperviousness. Sovereignty and democracy are both inseparable and contradictory in this way. As Derrida explains in *Rogues*: “A pure sovereignty is indivisible or it is not at all...” (101). In other words, pure sovereignty does not exist, “it is always in the process of autoimmunizing itself, of betraying itself by betraying the democracy that can nonetheless never do without it.” (Derrida, *Rogues* 101).

Here Derrida is speaking of the imperial quest for global super-sovereignty aligned with the spread of liberal democracy, which then produces conflicting rogue states. What is important for our current discussion, however, is that this quest for security silently assumes that sovereignty is in line with a universal democracy that does not exist, because democracy is multiple, *the multitude*. Whereas the sovereign is silent, the multitude cannot be silenced. It is the multitude that reveals that the empire has no clothes, bringing democracy to bear.

However, this does not mean that the multitude is naked life, waiting at the threshold of politics. As Negri observes, naked life is ideological (“The Political Monster” 209). If we are naked, it is because we wear the invisible clothes of sovereignty, an ideological political skin that covers every pound of flesh sacrificed

under capitalism. Like the vampire, the multitude is invisible in the modern mirror of society, which reflects only the image of sovereignty. But the multitude is not naked; it wears all of its history, its blood, its sweat, its tears and laughter. Our societal mirror—which takes for granted a certain kind of compensation and exchange under capitalism—does not reflect the grotesque images of the multitude; only the “beautiful clothes” are reflected. The monstrosity of the multitude, in all of its rich and colorful excess, is excluded in this economy of relations. As with Shylock, capitalism cannot exist without denying the multitude in its diversity, while also including it within the universal exchange value that drives the political economy of meat. The homogenous comfort of administered life is symptomatic of this invisibility. We can literally buy lots of clothes, gadgets and fancy foods, or abstain from buying them, but this does not change the moral coding of capitalist exchange and compensation, which sustains the sovereign choice to *eat well*, as we have seen.

And animals? Good or bad, they are our mirrors in society; in their suffering we see our own, and in the absurdity of placing them in “people situations,” we are able to see our own absurdity (Berger, “About Looking” 14-18). What does this mean for contemporary animal advocacy projects? Certainly they should not abandon their serious legal work; but they should also be able to make light of and embrace their own juridical lack—this is their true political power. Whether they know it or not, their embrace of liberal rights jargon is simply a finely spun political animal skin that reinforces the myth of sovereignty and reifies the consumption of commodity-flesh, human and animal. It is only via the strange representation of animals, in very human political situations, that this sacrificial reality is reflected. Consider the examples of the PETA Ahoskie trial and

Hurricane Katrina in Chapter 2. In both cases, animals were markers of human politics; this was their truth-telling role. Viewing animals in this way, we accept their difference all the while linking them in a differential relationship with ourselves. As John Berger explains in *About Looking*, we become aware of ourselves by looking at animals and in this exchange animals do not confirm us, either positively or negatively, in the way that other humans do via language (3). With this, we are reminded of Deleuze and Guattari's observation that morality and cruelty are solely the foray of humans. Animals are spectacles or, perhaps, speculums that mirror humanity in all of its narcissistic (and beautiful) contemplation, in effect revealing codes of oppression otherwise invisible to this gaze.

For example, consider the Michael Vick dog-fighting trial. In December 2007, star NFL quarterback Michael Vick was sentenced to 23-months in federal prison and 3-years probation for his role in a dog-fighting ring—bankrolling the dog-fighting ring on his Virginia property and fronting money for fight bets; Vick also admitted to killing pit bulls on the property. In addition to his legal sentence Vick, quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons, was also indefinitely suspended from the NFL. Many in the Black community are saying that the punishment does not fit the crime and, they argue, while Vick's actions toward these animals is by no means excusable his excessive punishment reflects a racist judicial system (Goldwert). As a result, and despite his charity work and success, Vick was deposed as a role model to Black kids across America.

Clearly, nobody wants to see dogs electrocuted, drowned, hanged and otherwise brutally killed. Of course, anyone who treats animals in this way should be held responsible and punished for their actions. But this is not the point. Rather, the issue is

whether Vick was unduly targeted and excessively punished for animal cruelty on the basis of his race. After all, why not put the CEOs of Tyson, Con-Agra and other animal-exploitative corporations in prison for their roles in orchestrating the deaths of thousands of animals every day? The answer is obvious—agricultural animals are literally the fodder of the political economy of meat; and it is this commodity fetishism that naturalizes a plethora of oppression under the happy consciousness of administered life. Agricultural animals, in particular, reflect the social invisibility of the exploited groups that are forced to kill them (most slaughterhouse workers are poor, immigrant, female and people of color) as well as the masses of the multitude, which receive instant gratification and a fictive sense of empowerment in the choice to eat them.

What about Vick's pit bulls? Despite dogs' privileged role as "man's best friends," pit bulls have been banned from cities (for example, pit bulls are banned in Denver) and along with other "dangerous dogs" they are often prohibited in apartment complexes and other rental housing. Of course, this conceals the fact that pit bulls and other dangerous dogs are often associated with racial minority groups and the poor who might venture to live in these areas. Not to mention, pit bulls are often euthanized immediately at shelters simply because of their breed. Yet the pit bulls in the Michael Vick case have achieved celebrity status. Why? Vick's case is especially complicated in relation to the issue of wealth. Dennis Courtland Hayes, CEO and Interim President of the NAACP noted: "[Vick] may in fact be being treated better than some African-Americans and Hispanics who don't have the resources and financial means that he has" (Goldwert). But, like Shylock, Vick's enormous wealth appears as his only political cache and works to conceal the implicit racism of the capitalist juridical system; and the

source of that wealth, his NFL career, was taken away from him so that he might redeem himself in the eyes of the law. In fact, we could take this one step further: Vick was involved in an illegal flesh exchange via the dog-fighting ring, one that operated and profited outside of the sacrificial logic of sovereignty, and for that he had to be punished. All the while, the dogs themselves became particularly valuable within the political economy of meat, embodying mercy at the hands of the state as well as the promise of redemption. Either way, pit bulls are a distorted reflection of society, mirroring both kinds of political monsters, sublime and revolting; and depending on the value of their reflection, they can be killed or pardoned depending on their political proxy.

Of course, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was quite satisfied with the outcome of the Vick trial, having morally condemned Vick for his animal cruelty, advocated for the harshest sentence possible during the trial, and lobbied the NFL for his suspension. Blinded by their moral fortitude, PETA simply could not see the political, economic and cultural complexities of the issue; and certainly they could not acknowledge their own complicity in relations of exploitation. Illustrating this point, in response to the actor Jamie Foxx's support of Vick, PETA president Ingrid Newkirk commented:

Black leaders like Russell Simmons and Dennis Courtland Hayes, head of the NAACP *would* agree, as does PETA, that it is cheap and dirty and wrong to call this a cultural thing—unless Foxx believes that cruelty is a black thing when it isn't. It may be his thing, but it is not a black thing. PETA encourages people to watch our anti-dogfighting PSA with world heavyweight boxer Lamont Brewster at PETATV.com (<http://blog.peta.org/archives/vick/>, my emphasis).

Rather than admitting the deep effects of racism within American society, Newkirk reinforces it—by *condemning* a Black man who disagrees with her and *speaking for* other Black men who are sympathetic to her cause. Not to mention that Newkirk fails to see the

irony in touting Lamar Brewster's Public Service Announcement for PETA, when boxing is as violent, demeaning and exploitative as dog-fighting (except that fighters *choose* their exploitation under capitalism, unlike dogs, as the PSA announces). Notably, PETA similarly fails to see its own complicity with sexism when it promotes women protesting, painted and naked in cages, and displays ads with Playboy Playmate Pamela Anderson.

Let me be clear: the point is not to be dismissive of PETA, FNB, or other “radical” groups that advocate on behalf of animals and the environment. The point is simply that none of us are innocent; we are all guilty because we are all caught up in the web of sovereignty and the political economy of meat. Instead, we need to think about how to be responsible—in an active and Nietzschean way—for cruelty and oppression from our own standpoint, even if it does not directly affect us as an individual. Here we are reminded of the work of feminist scholar Bell Hooks, who calls for a politics of solidarity that takes seriously gender, racial and class differences.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, we are reminded of Deleuze's call to take seriously the violence of history, in order to withstand the sanctuary of the beautiful soul. Otherwise, *lifestyle choices* (for example, green consumerism and veganism) simply assuage our guilt and compulsively drive us to repay our sovereign debt via commodity fetishism. In effect, we are left with a private politics of purity, which reinforces the morality of capitalist exchange: “I am a good person because I belong to the local CSA, buy organic vegetables at Whole Foods and wear Patagonia.”

We all exist in the state of exception; this is irony of postmodern life, since it is this very biopolitical existence that renders the multitude a public force with which to be

¹⁰⁴ See Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

reckoned. We do not need to feel guilty about this, only responsible—for taking political action and celebrating our incongruity in the face of modernity—in order to craft a new kind of politics and new relationships of exchange based on joy, abundance and hospitality, instead of mourning, sacrifice and cruelty. As for animals, they are our guides in this flight of becoming. If vampires are impossible to identify, because they recede into the multitude of the pack and are invisible in traditional societal mirrors, then we must follow the animals that reflect them. Of course, this means that we must be hospitable to animals as well. Simply put, animals are a part of the multitude, if only as a symptom of its modern pathology and a guide to democracy to come.

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