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HAUNTED BY THE SPECTER OF THE ANIMAL OTHER: READING BEYOND THE HUMAN IN KATE ATKINSON'S JACKSON BRODIE SERIES

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Abstract

This article offers a close literary analysis of Kate Atkinson's Jackson Brodie novels through the theoretical rubric of Critical Animal Studies. I demonstrate how animals haunt the texts and how serious and respectful scholarly engagement with the specter of the animal other allows fresh insights and ways of thinking to emerge. As the analysis develops, I deploy the conceptual tools of Vegan Studies to suggest that meaningful multispecies relationships require us to devise radically innovative terminological, epistemological and ontological frameworks. The questions that arise when reading beyond the human in these novels create pathways that allow us to take some tentative steps towards a world that is more just for animals and more reflective of the "love" most people profess for the animals with whom they share their lives and homes. This article is an interrogation of literary representations and the assumptions that are embedded in those representations, a provocation to read beyond the human and a political plea for a more just world for all members of our societies. As a necessary first step, I argue that we must, at the very least, "see" the animal other when we read.

Key words

Dogs; anthropocentrism; Critical Animal Studies; Vegan Studies; Jackson Brodie series

1. Introduction

Kate Atkinson is a prolific writer who consistently accomplishes that rare feat of garnering both critical acclaim and broad popular appeal. As part of her oeuvre, she has written five novels that can be categorized as belonging to the genre of crime fiction. These novels are, in order of publication dates, *Case Histories* (2004), *One Good Turn* (2006), *When Will There Be Good News?* (2008), *Started Early, Took my Dog* (2010) and *Big Sky* (2019). Collectively, these texts are known as the Jackson Brodie novels, named after the endearing, albeit at times problematic, main character. Atkinson's texts offer rich analytical opportunities for scholars with an interest in crime fiction and, more specifically, for those who wish to explore the literary

spaces where gender and crime intersect in the Jackson Brodie series (children, girls and women are, in various ways, vulnerable and violated in all the novels). While much can be gained from pursuing such a research agenda, my focus in this article is very different. By applying a theoretical lens of Critical Animal Studies (CAS) and, later in the article, mobilizing conceptual tools from the emerging field of Vegan Studies, I will be teasing out the representational dynamics of the myriad ways in which animals, particularly dogs, feature in the novels. The human characters Atkinson develops are mostly well-rounded and engaging and it would be all too easy to focus one's reading on them, to the exclusion of the numerous other animals that populate these books. Dogs crop up in each of the books and many other animals are represented as well. In addition, in every book, there is at least some tangential reference to characters who choose not to eat animals. Rather than occupying spaces front and center in the central plotlines, Atkinson's animals seep through between the more important seeming lines, they hover at the margins of the main plots and, in some cases, their deaths cast a specter from the opening to the closing pages.¹ Yet, for a reader who is deeply concerned with animals, they haunt the entire reading experience. By using texts aimed at a general readership within which to anchor my analysis, I demonstrate that CAS and literary scholarship can meaningfully intervene in both popular and academic conversations about animals and how they are represented. Animal lives are deeply interwoven with those of humans and, by analyzing these selected texts, it becomes clear that they always have something to say, whether they are prioritized by authors or not. It is merely a matter of paying attention to their presences.

In an attempt to grapple with the "tensions" that complicate and continuously challenge questions around what the proper project of Animals Studies is and should be, Lori Gruen (2018: 2) asks:

Is the project of Animal Studies to take animal representations seriously within literature or to take animals seriously as subjects or to come to new understandings by recognizing the difficulties and possibilities of moving beyond the human as the only subjects of cultural knowledge?

My response to all three these sub-questions would be resoundingly affirmative. For the purposes of this article, and from my location as a literary scholar working within a theoretical framework of CAS, my primary focus will be on the first question. In other words, I will offer an analysis that engages seriously with the representation of animals in the selected literary texts. Throughout the article, I will demonstrate how such a scholarly exercise will necessarily also speak to the remaining two sub-questions that Gruen raises above. From my analysis it will emerge that, when we engage seriously and respectfully with the animals in texts, we necessarily reach a space of "excavating and examining our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be" (Wolfe 2009:571). The notion of interrogating construction of the "knowing subject" signals one of the central tenets of CAS, namely its commitment to challenging speciesism. In their conceptualization of speciesism, Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson (2018: 1) suggest the crucial role of a theoretical framework like CAS:

speciesism is an ideology that legitimates a particular social order and it is necessary to understand the oppression of animals in terms of a theory that recognizes the necessary factors of economic exploitation, unequal power, and ideological control.

Although the last few years have witnessed a distinct “animal turn” in the Humanities and Social Sciences, as recently as 2014 Robert McKay (637) reflected on the paucity of scholars who “were concerned with the near omnipresence of non-human animals in literary texts or how they formed part of a much larger story about creatural life that the humanities, in dialogue with other disciplines, could document and interpret”. Catherine Parry (2017: n.p) uses the image of haunting that I deploy in my title when she advocates “questioning of the ethical and philosophical grounds of human exceptionalism by taking seriously the animal presences that haunt the margins of history, anthropology, philosophy and literary studies”. Her formulation resonates strongly with my own project because, in addition to the image of haunting, the animals in the Brodie series never move beyond the margins of the texts. Although barely a chapter goes by without an animal body appearing on a page, these animals remain spectral presences that shape (and, I would argue, profoundly enrich) the reading experiences of all who is willing to look beyond the human characters.

2. Theoretical and conceptual considerations

Before proceeding with the rest of the analysis, some theoretical and conceptual clarifications are in order. This is all the more important since I am venturing into a field that is still relatively new and in development. This is itself a contested notion with scholars such as Margo DeMello and Kenneth Shapiro (2010) tracing Human-Animal Studies back decades.² In addition, I will not be using the concepts of haunting and spectrality in their usual literary senses. Some pre-emptive clearing up of confusion will thus facilitate a smoother reading experience. I find Lori Gruen’s explanation of Animal Studies useful for its ability to incorporate the importance of animals into the analytical frame while also acknowledging how such a maneuver simultaneously necessitates new ways of thinking about what it means to be human. Gruen (2018: 7) notes that “Animal Studies provides insights into the ideologies and frameworks according to which some forms of life are enabled to thrive while others are oppressed and destroyed”. She goes on to explain that, in “human-centered scholarship, animals are relegated to the background” (Gruen 2018: 7). The intervention that Animal Studies offers by “bringing other animals to the fore as sentient beings who can have meaningful lives and relationships, presents challenges to our own ways of living” (Gruen 2018:7).³ To be clear, although Atkinson does at times seem to be suggesting that animals have meaningful relationships with humans, a close critical reading reveals these “relationships” to be superficial at best and manipulative (by the human characters) at worst. In addition, I will demonstrate how her characters mostly fail to rise to the challenge of letting animals reconsider their “ways of

living” (Gruen 2018: 7). Atkinson by no means represents the animals in the Brodie series as creatures who have the capacity for leading rich lives and having reciprocal relationships. To the contrary, she deploys almost every available cliché when she represents these animals, from focusing on their loyalty to their dumb docility and their general role as sidekicks that somehow humanize the main characters driving the plot. Despite this critique, throughout the novels, she raises questions that prompt the reader to consider issues around the inner lives of the animals. Although the novels mostly fail to capitalize on these moments to move our understandings of literary animals forward, they do deserve closer scrutiny. In the analysis, I will mobilize the critical and analytical tools of CAS both to challenge problematic animal representations and to explore the glimpses the novels provide of alternative ways of thinking about animals. Some central concepts that need to be elucidated for the purposes of this article are “haunting”, “spectrality”, “anthropocentrism” and “anthropomorphism”. I will offer a brief overview of each concept in the next section before fleshing them out as I integrate them into my analysis of the selected primary texts.

David Ratmoko (2006: 1) reminds us that the original meanings of “haunt” were “to provide a home” and “to get home”. I will show that, even when they are treated as beloved “pets”,⁴ the animals in these novels find themselves in spaces that are profoundly *unheimlich*. What constitutes a home for humans tends to be structured in ways that are fundamentally alien or even hostile to the needs of the animals that are made to inhabit them. As we read these novels through the lens of CAS, we cannot help but notice the lack of meaningful homes for animals and, together with the animal characters, we are haunted by their search for a home, broadly conceptualized. In their translation of Nicolas Abraham’s 1975 “Notes on the Phantom”, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1987: 171–175), admittedly engaging with very different contexts and topics, write that “[w]hat haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others ... The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within us”. It is indeed often the living animal that haunts the reading experience here. Atkinson’s animals leave gaps in our understanding and secrets in the texts, because little attempt has been made to know them. This is partly caused by the inevitable inaccessibility that results from the lack of a common language but, I argue, the main obstacle to understanding is that they are simply not represented as significant enough to warrant getting to know better. They are also, in a very literal sense, dead and buried within the human bodies of flesh-eating human characters, which is an aspect of the literary analysis that I will engage with more comprehensively towards the end of the article. At this stage, it is sufficient to note that the animal other, whether dead or alive, haunts both the reader and the other characters in the Brodie series.⁵

In a cogent analysis of spectrality in cinematic representations of animal deaths, George Ioannides (2013: 104) argues that “[t]he visual animal attests to spectrality as well as materiality, signaled by its absent presence (and present absence) in today’s human–animal entangled condition”.⁶ In her exploration of animals as specters of nature, Pat Siebel (2015: 1) notes how “most allusions to the non-human animal, though ubiquitous, fail to signify the actual agent”. Although

haunting and spectrality are concepts that are mostly deployed in readings that focus on the Gothic and the uncanny, this will not be how I am using them in this article. My focus will be on exploring how these animal characters are relegated to almost ghostly presences at the margins of the texts and how their presence haunts the entire reading experience. They are impossible to ignore and, any attempt to do so, risks ignoring the fundamental entanglement between humans and the other species with which we share the planet. This is a missed opportunity that impoverishes our understanding both of what it means to be human and how we can engage ethically with the environment we share. While my primary focus will be on the animals, rather than on what they can teach us (and thereby exacerbating the problematic notion that animals exist to serve our needs, whether these be practical, emotional, epistemological or ontological), I am insisting that taking animal characters seriously changes the reading experience while also having potentially much more wide-reaching benefits.

The last two concepts I will briefly define are “anthropocentrism” and “anthropomorphism”. Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2018: 47) explains anthropocentrism as “a form of human centeredness that places humans not only at the center of everything but makes ‘us’ the most important measure of all things”. As with all systems of oppression, anthropocentrism is all the more pernicious because it is made to seem natural while shaping everything from structures, systems and institutions to the very way we think (Probyn-Rapsey 2018). The politics of anthropocentrism is contested in the field of CAS. Any claim that we can be completely beyond our subject positions as humans is as untenable as claims of pure objectivity. However, this does not mean that we need to capitulate to what Probyn-Rapsey (2018: 48), drawing on Gruen’s work, refers to as “inevitable anthropocentrism” and she warns instead against “arrogant anthropocentrism”. Our human location “should not preclude an openness to [animal] others” (Probyn-Rapsey 2018: 53). Given the paucity of our understanding of the inner worlds of animals, the best we can do is to take seriously an “imagined animal perspective” (Probyn-Rapsey 2018: 57), always with the caveat that these imaginings are constrained and must come from a space of placing ourselves in a position of vulnerability and learning in relation to an other we can never fully know. A related, but conceptually distinct, term is “anthropomorphism”. At its most basic level, we anthropomorphise animals when we project or attribute human characteristics, motivations and emotions onto animals (Wylie 2018: 6–7). Although there is a long tradition of maligning anthropomorphism in Animal Studies, this has been changing to allow for potentially positive uses. Maurice Hammington (2017: 55) explains this epistemic rehabilitation of anthropomorphism as follows:

Although anthropomorphism is often invoked as a human error of self-centered projection onto nonhuman animals, it can also be viewed as an effort at imaginative understanding of the interior motivation and will of animals in the absence of straightforward narrative explanation. The challenge of alterity, the presence of others and other minds that we cannot know because we can never be those others, is exacerbated in human-animal relations because of the absence of language.

Drawing on the work of Thomas Nagel, Hammington (2017: 55) continues to explain that “we are limited to the resources of our own mind, and this limitation is manifested in anthropomorphism”. While I find these definitions useful for the engagement with the texts that will follow, the problems emerge when we project our own imaginings onto animals with a lack of respect and with the chauvinistic assumptions that our understandings are correct.

3. Self-reflections on researcher location

As a starting point for my reading of the Brodie novels, I thus acknowledge that I can only read the animal characters from my human subject position but I also insist that these animals deserve the same attention and scholarly respect as the human characters. I will thus read beyond the human and engage in continuous self-reflection to ensure that my own anthropocentrism does not slip into arrogance. In addition, I recognize the complexity of reading animals respectfully when we have made them entirely dependent on human wishes and whims. I will thus continuously draw on the conceptual tools and theoretical guidance of CAS to offer a reading that is as respectful of the animal characters as possible. In an attempt to flesh out the subject position from where I am starting this analytical engagement, I need to reflect on the role of the dogs with whom I share my life. Bofa, Nougat and Boomer are basset hounds and it is my relationships with them that prevents me from averting my scholarly gaze when other dogs are represented in any text. They haunt my reading as much as Atkinson’s dogs haunt the margins of her central plotlines. These animals matter to me in ways that resist articulation because these relationships are not yet adequately accommodated by available conceptual frameworks. Here I agree with Haraway’s (2003: 96) contention that we “need other nouns and pronouns [and, indeed, much more expansive terminological innovations] for the kin genres of companion species”. Catherine Oliver’s work on veganism and multispecies geographies has shaped my thinking and I will return to this later in the article. At this point, I want to reflect on how her references to haunting resonate with my own reading experience. Oliver shares her life and home with chickens and she finds that, although she does what she can to keep them safe and to facilitate lives that are “far removed, physically, from the deaths at the slaughterhouse” (2022: 112), these realities “could never be entirely disconnected”. My first forays into CAS and Vegan Studies were prompted by my concerns about the acute vulnerability of Bofa, Nougat and Boomer in a world that does not value either their lives or wellbeing in any meaningful sense. I quote the following section from Oliver in full because it illuminates both my own experience of haunting and the political impetus behind my research:

In mourning the chickens who I lived with, the realities of the chickens I don’t know is haunting. All that is possible is to reach beyond these present temporalities for a politics that makes a difference, refashioning interspecies affiliations (Vermeulen, 2017). Here, veganism is not the end

point of an interspecies friendship, but one approach that allows us into the worlds of other animals and to theorise and cultivate spaces beyond the human. (Oliver 2022: 112)

Through the process of mourning Bofa after his death two years ago and while loving the other bassets I live with, I am haunted by the other animals I do not know. What I do know is that it is not enough to care for the dogs I know and love. Meaningful multispecies relationships demand what Oliver refers to as the cultivation of “spaces beyond the human”.

4. Representations of animals in the Jackson Brodie series

In *When Will There be Good News*, we meet a dog on the first page and learn his name at the very end of the novel. Although the name is only revealed on the second last page, I am more comfortable referring to him by his name even though he is called “the dog” throughout the novel. He is also referred to as “it” until the final pages where the male pronoun is used. Since Scout is a gender-neutral name, the reader is left with the object pronoun throughout the reading process. I have selected to refer to Scout with male pronouns throughout. Scout is killed in the first chapter in a particularly gruesome murder of a young mother and two of her children. The third child, Joanna, is the only survivor and most of the ensuing narrative revolves around her. I will recap the central plot very briefly, in order to offer the reader some context for the critical analysis of the representation of Scout and the other animals in the text⁷. Joanna grows up to become a doctor with a husband, Neil, and a baby of her own. The household also contains a beloved German Shepard called Sadie and a nanny, Reggie. Jackson Brodie becomes embroiled in their lives after Reggie saves him from a train crash and he ends up assisting her as she tries to locate Joanna and her baby after they have gone missing. In the opening chapter, it is easy to gloss over the references to Scout as the reader’s attention is firmly monopolized by the knife wielding stranger who murders most of the family members who are out for a walk. One of the murdered children, Jessica, is eight and, as the eldest, we are told that “she was the one who always got to hold the dog’s lead” and “[s]he spent a lot of her time training the dog” in what is described as basic obedience commands (Atkinson 2008: 3). The confinement of the lead is represented as being in Scout’s own interest as they “had to keep the dog on the lead and stay close to the hedges in case a car ‘came out of nowhere’” (3). What ends up coming “out of nowhere” (11) is the murderer and the family first noticed the threat “because the dog growled, making an odd, bubbling noise in his throat that Joanna had never heard before” (11–12). Scout “ran in front of the man and started barking and jumping up as if *it* was trying to block the man’s path” (12) [emphasis added]. The murderer kicks Scout away, and Jessica is eventually found “lying with her arms around the body of the dog and their blood had mingled and soaked into the dry earth...” (13). Joanna manages to run away and, “[l]ater, when it was dark, other dogs [who are part of a police search party] came and found her” (14). This brief and dramatic first chapter

ends with Joanna reflecting that it “was funny but now, thirty years later, the thing that drove her to distraction was that she couldn’t remember what the dog was called” (14). One of the main characters thus expresses a very real sense of being haunted by the absent presence of the lost animal other.

From a CAS perspective, these first twelve pages offer a great deal to be unpacked and teased out. Although it is grammatically correct to refer to a dog as “it” when one does not know the sex, it is ethically problematic. *Society and Animals: Journal of Human-Animal Studies* specifically includes the following section in their instructions to potential contributors: “Contributors should use language that is respectful of our relation to animals of other species. For example, use personal pronouns such as ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘his,’ ‘her,’ ‘who,’ ‘they,’ ‘them,’ and ‘whose’ but not ‘its’ or ‘which.’” (Brill n.d.: 6). Animals and humans are not the same and the question of animal personhood is one that has occupied CAS scholars for some time. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to delve into these debates, it is worth noting that the casual objectification of Scout into a nameless “it” matters. Colin Dayan (2018: 272) explains that the stakes are so high in decisions around personhood because “proof of personhood has become the threshold between life and death for nonhuman animals, for if they possess personhood, they are also granted the rights associated therewith”. Clearly personhood did not protect the lives of the murdered family, but Scout is the first to suffer the murderer’s violence and his killing is represented with a casualty that serves to heighten the reader’s anticipation regarding the fate that will befall the human members of the family. Scout and his death become mere plot devices in a way that the human characters do not. His name is only revealed at the end to tie up the narrative loose ends and to signal Joanna’s healing from the traumatic day that presumably caused her to forget Scout’s name for decades, though she never had any difficulty remembering the names of her mother, sister and infant brother who were killed on the same day. The brother is still young enough that he “hadn’t had any birthdays yet” (8) and we learn that he is a week away from turning one. Although we are not told Scout’s age, it is likely that Joanna would have known Scout for longer than baby Joseph. Trauma and traumatic memory work in unpredictable ways,⁸ but it is interesting that Scout’s is the name that eludes her. The brief, one-and-a-half-page final chapter is titled “And Scout”, as if Scout’s story was an ongoing one that has simply been picked up at this point of the plot. The first lines of the chapter continue in a structurally coherent manner from the chapter title to reinforce this feeling of an unbroken flow in the narrative with “Was the name of their dog. ‘I couldn’t remember for the longest time,’ she [Joanna] said” (465). After working through her traumatic childhood loss, Joanna is finally home. Scout, however, remains dead and very much unknown to the reader since he never had a role, beyond hovering like a specter at the edges of Joanna’s memory, and he never had a story to be picked up. Despite his prominent role in the opening scene and in the final chapter, he was never allowed to move beyond the margins of the text even as he, and specifically his lost name, haunted Joanna’s memories of that fateful day.

The other element of canine representation in the opening chapter that demands attention when reading through the theoretical rubric of CAS, is the

confinement of Scout who is kept on a leash. His movements are constrained by Jessica and the human control over his location in space is represented as something that is for his own good (lest he should be run over by a car). Jackson's reflections on the good behaviour of dogs are a recurring theme in all the novels that require problematization. The conceptualization of a "good dog" signals the extreme inequality in the power relations that structure all multi-species households in the Brodie novels. When *Will There Be Good News?* starts with numerous references to the eight-year-old Jessica who "spent a lot of her time training the dog, 'Heel!' and 'Sit!' and 'Come!' Their mother said she wished Jessica was as obedient as the dog" (3). This is all represented as endearing, and it serves to set up the enormity of the loss when this child is killed. Once again, Scout's subjugation becomes a mere narrative device. When Joanna finally remembers Scout's name at the end, the memory does not prompt any meaningful engagement with Scout as an individual who was lost. Rather, Joanna precludes any such engagement with the statement that "He was *such* a good boy" (465) [emphasis in original]. The entire opening chapter speaks to the cognitive dissonance (a concept that was coined by Leon Festinger in 1957) that characterizes our thinking about animals in general and about "pets" in particular. Scout is simultaneously infantilized to such an extent that a human child determines where he may walk and yet he is represented as intuitive enough to spot the danger and as brave enough to stand up to a man with a knife. As noted above, we are not told Scout's age but there are certainly no indications that he is a puppy. If he had been, this would have been highlighted in the text because, if there is anything sadder and more startling than the murder of a mother, children and a dog, it would surely have been the murder of a mother, children and a puppy. It is thus fairly safe to assume that Scout was a fully grown dog.⁹ Christine Overall (2017: xxiv) notes the implications of treating an adult animal like a child as follows: "Infantilizing an adult of any species fails to acknowledge the intrinsic value of the adult and its capacity for self-determination". It epitomizes the failure to treat animals seriously and to engage with them respectfully, which are two of the core tenets of CAS scholarship. Here it is important to note that I am not suggesting that the danger of Scout being run over by a car is not real or that no animal should ever have his movements contained (though I am not denying this as an ideal, I am not, in this article, concerned with utopian constructions that ignore our contemporary lived realities). What I am suggesting is that these representations raise specific questions and dynamics when they are read with a focus that extends beyond the human and I am insisting that these are issues that deserve serious scholarly attention. We might ask, for instance, why it is necessary for the adult Scout to be leashed while the young Jessica and Joanna are not at similar risk of injury (baby Joseph is in a pram so his movements are fully controlled by his mother, and he is thus not relevant to this particular discussion). In the paragraph below I explain how excellent Scout is at following basic instructions, so the explanation cannot simply be that he would be unable either to understand danger or to listen to his human companions if they warned him to get out of a car's way. In fact, it is suggested below that he would be more likely to respond to the mother's instructions than Jessica would. Tony Milligan (2017: 203–217)

offers some useful reflections on the ethical implications of animal training that help us to think through the lingering sense of discomfort that the representations of Scout's training left me with. He argues that, when we think that it is commonsense that dogs need to be trained and subjugated, the problem is that these "are thoughts that presuppose a basic level of legitimacy for the institutions of companionship and training" and the "troubling" fact is that, "upon reflection, the reasons these institutions are legitimate are not entirely obvious" (Milligan 2017: 205). Regardless of how well or kindly a dog is trained, Milligan (2017: 205) reminds us that "they will never grow up to be our social equals" and we "cannot prepare them for a post-independence state". The power relations between humans and dogs are so profoundly and irredeemably unequal that "there is something servile or at least undignified about the predicament of even the most well-cared-for companion animals" (206) and I agree with Milligan's assessment that we are left with a "sense of liberal unease about domination and control, but without any reasonable way to comprehensively remove either, and with some plausible narratives in favor of sustaining this sense of unease" (215).¹⁰

Probyn-Rapsey's (2018: 47) exposition of anthropocentrism and its consequences also offer useful guidance here when she thinks around the ways in which the very space we inhabit is structured according to the needs and desires of human beings:

My home is designed and built on a human scale, with spaces and structures for ease of human use, just like the town and city more generally, where encounters with animals are also conditioned upon them fitting into structures and places that are not designed with them in mind. These structures are not just architectural in the strict sense, they are also manifestations of cultural beliefs about our place in relation to the other animals, that they fit in with us and not the other way around.

In the novel that precedes *When Will There be Good News?* in the Jackson Brodie series, *Stared Early, Took My Dog* (2010), Jackson is repeatedly compelled to engage with the human-centered realities of urban spatial planning. Jackson is left homeless himself at the end of the preceding novel because the woman he thought was his wife turned out to be a fraudster. Through much of this novel, he is thus moving between hotels and other forms of rented, temporary accommodation. Although there is some resolution of the central plot elements (which are not important for the purposes of this analysis), the final few pages see Jackson reflecting that "he was still looking for a home, he had to lay his head somewhere every night" (465). Over the course of the novel, his itinerant lifestyle is further complicated by the presence of the dog in the title, a border terrier called The Ambassador, whom Jackson rescues from a violent stranger near the beginning of the text (46–51). He is somewhat taken by surprise by The Ambassador's needs and, when he has to return to his hotel, "sensing animals would not be welcome in the Best Western he had snuck the dog in, concealed in this rucksack" (89). Jackson is mostly represented as kind and attentive to The Ambassador and this newly found entanglement prompts him to start thinking around some of the

ways in which the environment is structured to ignore the needs of dogs. These thoughts and *The Ambassador* serve to humanize and round out Jackson's character and, as in the other novels in the series, readers could easily gloss over these issues as they follow the compelling plot involving the human characters. By reading beyond the human, however, new questions and concerns emerge for the reader, as they do for Jackson. Although his reflections on these questions never extend beyond the superficial, Jackson finds himself struggling to make sense of the spatial exclusion of dogs. CAS allows for a reading that recognizes the extent to which these realities will always fail to make any sense. How does one negotiate the fact that humans domesticated pets and purposefully bring them into our world, yet structure the world in ways that fundamentally ignore their needs? To avoid detaching ourselves from these questions and slipping into Gruen's conceptualization of "arrogant anthropocentrism", respectful reflection is a useful starting point. Atkinson represents some tentative steps on this direction with the following extract from *Started Early, Took my Dog*:

[s]muggling a dog in and out of places was proving easier than Jackson would have imagined, not that it was a topic he had ever give much attention to before now. He couldn't believe the number of places that dogs weren't allowed. Kids – not that he had anything against kids obviously – kids were allowed everywhere and dogs were much better behaved on the whole (2010: 204).

Jackson's framework of care¹¹ is expanding through his interactions with *The Ambassador* and, for the reader who is willing to extend the analytical lens beyond the human, these representations offer ways of expanding our own epistemologies in ways that radically challenge anthropocentric worldviews.

The murder that needs to be solved in the first novel of the series, *Case Histories* (2004), tangentially features another dog, this time a terrier called Rascal. This plot revolves around the murder of a little girl, Olivia, whose surviving sisters, Amelia and Julia Land, decades later recruit Jackson to help them find answers in this unsolved case. Rascal is simultaneously claimed as a member of this family by the description of him as "the family terrier" (11) and represented as someone whose movements are severely circumscribed: "It was *absolutely forbidden* for Rascal to sleep in the bedrooms..." (11) [emphasis in original]. This first novel's representations of animals, however, are more interesting for two other reasons. First, it represents characters who explicitly reflect on the inner lives of animals and, second, it signals an important critique of the racialized dimensions of talking about the wellbeing of animals. Amelia and Julia are both shown to engage in respectful and nuanced strategies of care in relation to Sammy, who is old and dies peacefully at home in the first quarter of the novel. Amelia not only reflects on the dreams Sammy might possibly be having, but she adjusts her own behaviour in an attempt to treat this animal dreamscape respectfully. Sammy

began to whimper in his sleep. His tail thumped excitedly on the eiderdown, and his paws made ghostly scabbling motions as if he was chasing

the rabbits of his younger days. Amelia would have left him to his happy dream but then the thought struck her that, rather than chasing something, perhaps he himself was being chased, and the noises he was making were the sounds of fear rather than excitement ..., so she hauled herself into a sitting position and stroked his flank until he was soothed back into a calmer sleep. (Atkinson 2004: 101).

Interestingly, it is the other Land sister, Julia, who most explicitly challenges the anthropocentric exclusion of dogs from human epistemological frameworks in the latest novel in the series, *Big Sky* (2019). Both Land sisters become recurring characters in the series but Julia features more prominently as she and Brodie start dating. By the time their relationship crops up in *Big Sky*, they have dated, split up and share custody of a teenage son called Nathan. Jackson also ends up sharing Dido's care and the readers are introduced to her as "Julia's dog ... a yellow Labrador" who was introduced to Jackson by Julia as follows: "Jackson, this is Dido - Dido, this is Jackson" (16). Later in the same novel, when Jackson returns Nathan and Dido after a visit, Julia's greeting elicits the following exchange: "'My two favourite people!' she exclaimed when she appeared. Jackson felt quite pleased until he realized that she was referring to Nathan and Dido. 'Dogs aren't people,' he said. 'Of course they are,' she said" (146). In this brief line, Julia asserts that Dido is as valued and worthy of care as her child is.

Even as it signals alternative, more entangled ways of thinking about dogs through the Land sisters, *Case Histories* raises issues that will resonate with scholars who grapple with the complexities that characterize conversations about the wellbeing of animals. In a section of her monograph entitled "Dreaded Comparisons", C. Lou Hamilton (2019: 30) reminds us that

[c]omparisons have a long and controversial history in the movements for animal welfare and rights. For over two hundred years, animal advocates in the West have relied on comparisons between the maltreatment of animals and oppression of certain groups of human being.

The most widely circulated comparisons include those that liken the contemporary treatment of animals to the oppression of black people under slavery, women under patriarchy and Jewish people during the Holocaust. Such comparisons are extremely problematic when we consider the fact that the discursive dehumanization of these groups has historically served as justifications for their subjugation. In a call for "greater presence of non-Western epistemologies in maturing the field [of Animal Studies]", Maneesha Deckha (2018: 280) reminds us "how ideas about humans, animals, humanness, and animality shaped the racist belief in Western civilizational superiority and white normativity that propelled imperialist missions". In *Case Histories*, the character of Binky Rain prompts the reader to consider the uncomfortable presence of racism in animal welfare debates. Binky is represented as the stereotypical mad cat woman (68)¹² who cares for numerous stray cats, and she is also an overt and unrepentant racist. Some of Binky's cats go missing and she hires Jackson to track them down. One of these cats is

black and “called Nigger”, a moniker that a shocked Jackson notes that “Binky Rain thought that was all right!” (69). Binky is represented as someone whose privileged race and class position enables her to spend, what Jackson regards as an inordinate amount of, resources on cats. Jackson notes that she “had been brought up in colonial Africa”, she treated everyone “like a servant” (68) and that “the most challenging journey she had undertaken was the voyage from Cape Town to Southampton in first class on the *Dunnottar Castle* in 1938” (70). In addition to facilitating the explicit introduction of race into the analysis of animal representation, Binky’s character encourages us to broaden the focus by introducing another ethical issue that has long concerned CAS scholars, namely the vast difference in the treatment of so-called domestic pets and factory animals. In a brief phrase that is intended to flesh out Binky’s character without advancing the central plot lines, we learn that Binky fed the cats tinned food, which Jackson describes as “the cheap stuff that was made from the parts of animals that even burger chains shunned” (69). Jackson’s comment about Binky touches on a crucial challenge in animal welfare debates, namely the disproportionate amounts of resources that are spent on ensuring the wellbeing of domestic “companion” animals (mostly dogs and cats) while largely ignoring or actively contributing to the largest group of animals enduring the worst human treatment, those who are used in factory farming¹³. Even though Binky is characterized and mostly dismissed as eccentric at best and insane at worst, she is by no means unique in feeding processed animals to other animals. Josh Milburn (2017: 187) sums up this “paradox” confronting people who “share their lives with nonhuman companions for whom they feel deep love and affection” as follows: They

typically contribute to more nonhuman animal (NHA) death and suffering than they would if they did not keep companions. This is because dogs and cats ... will typically be fed large amounts of NHA flesh, and this flesh is the product of practices that inflict pain and suffering as a matter of course.

Atkinson demonstrates an astute awareness of the politics of food in all her novels, particularly in relation to the food that her human characters consume. At times vegetarians and vegans are caricatured and at times their eschewal of meat serves to emphasize a basic goodness in the character. The repeated return of the issue at the very least signals to readers that the inclusion of meat in the human diet is neither a natural nor inevitable choice. Like everything else, it is a political decision with far reaching ethical implications. The first reference to the meat people eat crops up in *Case Histories* when Julia and Amelia recall that they had eaten “ox heart as children” as well as oxtail soup, the latter of which Julia remembers with particular disgust as she asks “Was it really made from a *tail*?” (90) [emphasis in original].¹⁴ In the same novel, Julia describes a convent and its members by comparing them to “some hippy order ... [t]hey go around barefoot in the summer and make their own sandals in the winter, and they keep animals as pets and they’re all vegetarians” (213). In *One Good Turn* (2006), the prominent character of Martin is very committed to a vegetarian diet and will eat “[n]othing with a face” (73). When he finds his requests to go to a vegetarian

friendly restaurant ignored, he is exposed to the “flesh-feeding frenzy” (75) of his dining companions. At the same meal, he finds some meat in what was supposed to be a vegetarian meal and his reflections reveal both the extent to which he is haunted by the idea of the dead animal on his plate and his keen awareness of the problematic political dynamics and cruelty through which the animal came to be on his plate. Martin knows that there is nothing neutral about meat consumption:

He removed it [the piece of chicken] from his mouth as discreetly as he could and put it on the side of his plate. The last gristly remnant of some poor, abused bird that had been pumped full of hormones and antibiotics and water in a foreign country. He could have wept for it (77).¹⁵

In the same novel, the character of Gloria falls short of explicitly identifying as a vegetarian, but she notes that, after her emotionally abusive husband died, she “hadn’t eaten anything that breathed” (417).

In the next novel in the series, *When Will There Be Good News* (2008), the character of Reggie describes how her deceased mother was haunted by her experiences of working at a chicken factory.¹⁶ The lasting impact of this job is reflected in her diet, which Reggie describes as follows: “Mum loved meat – bacon sandwiches, mince and tatties, sausage and chips – but Reggie never once saw her eat chicken ...” (35). Reggie finds this particularly striking because one of her mother’s boyfriends “could get Mum to do just about anything. But not eat chicken” (35). This is also the novel in which Jackson’s daughter, Marlee, to whom he is devoted, “announced her conversion to the vegetarian cause” (64). Marlee’s choice is mostly dismissed by her mother who notes that “[b]ecoming vegetarian seems to be a rite of passage for teenage girls these days” (64) while Jackson rather flippantly tells her “I know, I know, meat is murder” (64). In the same novel, the recurring character of Louise Monroe finds that her body responds to a particularly stressful event when she loses her appetite for meat: “She hadn’t been able to eat meat in days, couldn’t stomach the idea of putting dead flesh inside her live flesh” (269). In her theorization of the embodied implications of meat consumption, Catherine Oliver (2022: 26) offers the following reflections that help us to understand Louise’s inability to consume animal flesh:

The boundaries of the body are permeable, absorbing, and constituted beyond the contours of ourselves. Within these same bodies that we feel as so solidly defined, there are processes beyond our control. When we eat, our body is implicated with what (who) we eat, the processes of production of what we eat, and simultaneously is working beyond us, beyond our control. When we eat, our bodily and embodied choices, practices, and processes can be implicated in violence, or liberation, or many positions in between.

We are, according to Oliver (2022: 79), “complicit in who we consume, and how we came to consume them” and the violence of the dead animal flesh is not something Louise, or Gloria, can handle at moments of their narratives, when these narratives themselves are suffused with violence.

The threat posed by eschewing meat is captured in the experiences of a very minor character, Leslie, in *Started Early, Took my Dog* (2010).¹⁷ Leslie describes a family meal at the home of a new boyfriend where the mother “heated up an individual ‘Vegetarian Lasagne’ ... for her while the rest of them ate chicken” (12). She finds that her boyfriend’s “mother was defensive, worried that Leslie would carry her son off to a faraway continent and that all her grandchildren would have accents and be vegetarians” (12). At times, in this fourth novel in the series, the literary engagement with the politics of meat appears to demonstrate greater nuance than the earlier novels. Later in this same narrative, the consumption of meat, rather than its refusal, becomes associated with threat and danger. Jackson describes a tangential encounter as follows: “He caught the primitive smell of searing meat. At the sight of Jackson, the adults in the group looked uneasy and one of the men raised his voice, ready for belligerence, a pair of barbecue tongs clutched in his hand like a weapon...” (67). Despite these reflections, Jackson himself identifies strongly as a meat eater and he asserts that he “had no qualms where meat was concerned, he could eat his way from snout to tail without any queasiness” (294). One of the main characters in the plot of this novel, Tracy, describes “the lowing and bleating and crowing that ultimately signified the abattoir and slaughter” (376) and she follows this description by noting that she “was seriously considering becoming a vegetarian” (377). Although Atkinson does not follow up on this aspect of Tracy’s character as the plot draws to its conclusion, it is noteworthy for its explicit linking of animal suffering and the individual choice to consume meat.

In the latest installment in the series, *Big Sky*, the character of Reggie reappears, and she is now a vegan. She notes that she had been a vegan for “nearly ten years, before celebrities made it fashionable” (93). This line signals the problematic implications that arise when a radical movement for change seeps into the mainstream and, while there is not scope to delve further into these debates here, it is worth noting Haifa Giraud’s (2021: 105) concerns about what happens when “veganism’s status as a social movement has been overshadowed by more individualistic modes of plant-based capitalism”. It is also significant that veganism’s mainstreaming has done little to change the rising global rates of meat and dairy consumption (Sans and Combris 2015: 106). Despite its increasingly fashionable status in popular culture, Reggie articulates the hostility that continues to emerge in response to refusing meat. She negotiates this by telling people that she does not eat meat because of allergies but she makes her real reasons quite clear to the reader: “What she really would have liked to say was ‘Because I don’t want to put dead animals inside my body’ or ‘Because cow’s milk is for baby cows’ or ‘I don’t want to add to the death of the planet’ ...” (93). She refrains from voicing these opinions because “for some reason people didn’t like it when you said that” (93). Reggie’s embrace of veganism is significant for the purpose of this article for two reasons. First, after raising vegetarianism in various ways in the preceding four novels, this is the first time that Atkinson engages with veganism. Second, she explicitly links the consumption of animal products to environmental concerns. In doing so, she extends the politics at play from individual ways of engaging with animals to much broader concerns. Later in the novel, the distinction

between vegetarianism and veganism is again raised in an off-hand comment by the minor character of Rhoda. Rhoda manages a bed and breakfast with her husband and, while she is cooking bacon, sausages and eggs for the guests' breakfast, she describes an annoying complication by telling her husband that "the vegetarian lesbians in Rockall are now claiming to be vegans" (208). In this novel, Atkinson makes it increasingly challenging for the reader to disengage meat products from either the animals whose bodies were used to produce them or from the suffering that this production entailed. When the character of Crystal is making a sandwich for Tommy, the animal involved in the interaction does not remain an absent referent. After taking "a pack of cooked chicken slices from the fridge" (250), Crystal "wrinkled her nose at the smell of the meat". This description is followed by the single phrase sentence: "Dead animal" (250). As Tommy eats the sandwich, "Crystal spared another thought for the chickens. God only knows what they had gone through in order to keep Tommy Holroyd fed" (253). The specter of the chicken and the embodied suffering of those chickens are raised here to emphasise the unworthiness of Tommy whom Crystal describes as "an evil bastard" (455). Yet Crystal's description of what goes into his sandwich also actively works to make the absent referent present in the text. In her reflections on the challenges of "[h]ow to write about and for animals", Oliver notes how, in her own monograph, "animals have occupied a space just beyond the boundaries of the writing: the absent referent around whom we are orbiting but have yet to reach" (2022: 93). In the final chapters of her book, she seeks to reach that absent referent and she describes her *modus operandi* as follows: "I slow, watch, and listen towards and for animals, rethinking our togetherness as a 'quasi-us'" (Oliver, 2022: 93). To this list of actions, I add "I read" as a way of explaining why it matters when the reader focuses on how Atkinson represents Crystal's mundane activity of making a sandwich.

5. Conclusion

Vegan Studies is a burgeoning field of scholarship that speaks to the politics and ethics of eating animal products in ways that facilitate radically new ways of engaging with other animals and with the world more broadly. Eva Haifa Giraud (2021: 33) posits an understanding of veganism as a "disruptive conceptual approach, that highlights and troubles existing anthropocentric norms". For characters like Reggie, Louise, Gloria and Crystal, the consumption of meat challenges how they think not just about other animals, but also how they understand themselves and their worlds. This opens up possibilities for veganism to interrogate "preexisting norms surrounding what it means to be human" (Giraud 2021: 34). For Emilia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood (2018: 2), vegan thought and theory offer new imaginings of "a world that has normalized and industrialized the exploitation of nonhuman life" (2018: 2). As in all human societies, the characters in the Brodie novels all, in various ways and with different levels of conscious engagement, inhabit multispecies worlds. As signaled in the title of her monograph (*Veganism, Archives, and Animals: Geographies of*

a *Multispecies World*), Oliver encourages us to think of our co-habitation with other animals in conjunction with veganism.

Even when the characters in these novels do not question the ways in which they live with other animals, these animals “speak” and haunt readers from the margins of the texts. Atkinson’s characters might not always listen to these voices (though some, as I have demonstrated, attempt to do so), but we, as readers and as scholars who engage with the work, cannot ignore the specter that the animal other casts over the reading experience. Oliver (2022: n.p) seeks to introduce “novel insights into the complexities of caring beyond the human”. This article has explored how reading beyond the human compels us to consider new aspects of the Brodie novels and this, I hope, will open up avenues for engaging more consciously and respectfully with the other animals that share our worlds.

Notes

¹ Although an engagement with paratextual elements is beyond the scope of the article, it is worth noting that an animal is the sole image on each of the Penguin Random House editions of the Jackson Brodie series (a dog on the cover of *Case Histories*, a bird on the cover of *One Good Turn*, a bird on the cover of *When Will There Be Good News*, a stag on the cover of *Started Early, Took my Dog* and another bird on the cover of *Big Sky*).

² For a useful overview of the development of CAS, theoretically and institutionally, as well as reflections on the potentially problematic implications of this institutionalization of the discipline, see the introductory chapter of Nik Taylor and Richard Twine’s *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre* (2014). Their introduction also offers a succinct account of the crucial conceptual distinctions between a number of other disciplinary focus areas that grew over the course of the last few decades, often in tandem with the development of CAS. These include Animal Studies and Human-Animal Studies. Taylor and Twine (2014: 1) draw on the work of several other scholars to emphasise the central fact that CAS “is not only concerned with the ‘question of the animal’ but also with the *condition* of the animal” [emphasis in original]. Taylor and Twine go further to argue that the activist and critical dimensions are at the heart of CAS in ways that are not equally apparent in the other disciplines they mention. They articulate this as follows: “CAS is concerned with the nexus of activism, academia and animal suffering and maltreatment. This makes CAS more overtly political than the often wholly academic AS”. In addition, “CAS takes a normative stance against animal exploitation and so ‘critical’ also denotes a stance against an anthropocentric status quo in human–animal relations, as demonstrated in current mainstream practices and social norms” (Taylor and Twine 2014:2).

³ Taylor and Twine (2014) recognize that there are significant overlaps between the work and motivations of many scholars who identify with Animal Studies and with CAS. I regard Gruen as one such a scholar, which is why I find it unproblematic to use her work here, even though she embraces the term Animal Studies as one that offers a sufficiently “expansive field of study” (2018: 11) to accommodate the more explicitly political and critical aspects of scholarly engagement with animal subjects.

⁴ The word “pet” often appears to signify love, but I find it too problematic to use. Christine Overall (2017: xix) succinctly sums up my concerns about this term: “... to call an animal a ‘pet’ simultaneously expresses both fondness and condescension. It suggests a hierarchical relationship of a particularly insidious kind, in which the

animal so labelled is both signaled out for special favor and also expected to be submissive and obsequious". When these dynamics are at play and we insist on using love to describe our relationships with animals, I suggest that we need to interrogate thoroughly what we mean by the word "love", though such an exercise is beyond the scope of this article. In order to avoid the problematic nature of the concept of the "pet", many people nowadays prefer "companion animals". This, as Overall explains, simply raises a whole new set of problems as it "misleadingly implies a kind of equality between human being and animal that does not exist" (Overall, 2017: xxii). This brief note should have made it clear that we do not yet have adequate terminology to speak about animals meaningfully and respectfully, and developing such a terminology is part of the larger project of CAS. The dogs in the Brodie novels almost all have names, so I will refer to them by their given names wherever possible.

5 The image of haunting is also productively deployed in Hayley Singer's analysis of Han Kang's fascinating novel, *The Vegetarian*. Singer (2018: 69) explores how the text offers "ways to stray from the bounds of carnist knowledge, while keeping in touch with the ways animals live, how they die, and why they haunt".

6 For a nuanced engagement with, and critique of, the concept and theoretical foregrounding of entanglement, see Eva Haifa Giraud's *What Comes After Entanglement? Activism, Anthropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion* (2019).

7 At the risk of stating the obvious, humans are also animals and I agree with the argument that "'animality' has long served as a foil to reflect what we consider to be human uniqueness; we often refer, for instance, to 'humans and animals' as though they are quite separate from us and quite homogeneous" (Birke, Bryld and Lykke 2004:168). They are neither. What it means to be an animal is as much a social construction as what it means to be a human and, like with humans, the constructions of animals are hierarchical. This allows for the greater oppression of certain animals than of others with, for instance, "pets" being cherished and the suffering of factory animals being blithely ignored. There is a tendency in Animal Studies to attempt to acknowledge the animality of humans by referring to animals as "nonhuman animals". I do not find this particularly helpful and I follow C. Lou Hamilton's (2019: 6) guidance by referring "collectively to nonhuman species as animals" and attempting "to avoid lumping all other-than-human animals together by being specific, wherever possible, about which species I am referring to".

8 For important scholarly explorations of the dynamics of trauma and memory, see *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996) edited by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek; Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996).

9 Lest anyone should doubt Atkinson's awareness of the emotional power of deploying dog images in her fiction, consider the following extract from *One Good Turn* (2006), the second novel in the Jackson Brodie series. The extract contains Jackson's reflections about his partner: "The mention of a dog, any dog, always provoked an emotional reflex in Julia but the idea of a dead dog upped the ante on the emotion considerably. The idea of a dead, *faithful* dog was almost more than she could handle" (41) [emphasis in original].

10 It is important here to note that there is a difference between training and socialization of dogs and, although the latter is not at all unproblematic either, it is a prerequisite for the construction of multispecies households and societies as long as dogs and other animals live with us. The same questions about the legitimacy of companionship and inequality arise here, but a step in the right direction would be to heed Milligan's reminder that socialization of both humans and dogs are required: "They need to learn how to live with us, and we need to learn how to live with them" (2017: 212). Donna Haraway, who regards training dogs as potentially useful for their flourishing, makes useful points about the multi-directional obligations of companionship with dogs. She articulates this as follows: "There cannot be just one

- companion species; there have to be at least two to make one. It is in the syntax; it is in the flesh. Dogs are about the inescapable, contradictory story of relationships – co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all” (Haraway 2003: 12). While I cannot shake my lingering unease about her descriptions of participation in dog agility courses or about the references to working dogs and breeders, *The Companion Species Manifesto* offers a real attempt to grapple with the possibilities of living with dogs in a way that recognizes both their otherness and our responsibilities (rather than just our power).
- ¹¹ In *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for our Relationships with Animals* (2015), Gruen expands Carol Gilligan’s foundational work on the ethics of care into a framework that she regards as useful for thinking more ethically and respectfully about our relationships with other animals.
- ¹² For an excellent exposition of the crazy cat woman as a “gendered cultural trope that is mobilized in both negative and positive ways to exemplify the feminization of concern for human–animal relations” (2018: 175), see Fiona Probyn-Rapsey’s chapter called “Crazy Cat Lady” in the collection *Animaladies: Gender, Animals, and Madness*, which she also co-edited with Lori Gruen.
- ¹³ For a text that offers a detailed exploration of the cognitive dynamics that come into play to allow us to claim “love” for some animals while actively perpetuating the brutal suffering of other animals, see *Why we Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism, the Belief System that Enables us to Eat Some Animals and Not Others* (2010) by Melanie Joy.
- ¹⁴ These reflections resonate strongly with Carol Adams’s important work on the absent referent, which is a structure that involves the mental and emotional separation between the flesh one eats and the animals from whose bodies that flesh originates. Adams (2020: 50) explains that the “absent referent is the literal being who disappears in the eating of dead bodies. While eating animals requires violence, the absent referent functions to put the violence under wraps: there is no ‘cow’ we have to think about, there is no butchering and no fear, just the end product”. As a child, Julia was able to disassociate the ox and the ox’s tail from the soup she was eating by rendering the actual animals absent and invisible. As an adult, these images return to shape (or haunt) her retroactive engagement with her childhood food consumption.
- ¹⁵ In addition to this description, Martin also continues to be haunted by the rabbits who were shot and skinned during a childhood hunting trip. A flashback brings back images that have a visceral impact on him. He reflects how the “memory of the glistening candy-pink carcass hidden beneath the fur was still enough to make [him] nauseous, even now” (159).
- ¹⁶ For an unflinching account of what happens behind the walls of chicken farms and factories, see the various entries in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Eating Animals: Should We Stop?* (2009), but particularly the section titled “The Life and Death of a Bird” (129–137).
- ¹⁷ In their study on perceptions of not eating meat, Cara MacInnes and Gordon Hudson (2015: 2) find that, “at least in Western society, vegetarians and vegans represent strong threats to the status quo, given that prevailing cultural norms favor meat-eating. Specifically, vegetarians and vegans can represent symbolic threats”.

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