

CARING FOR POSTCOLONIAL ANIMALS

By

REBECCA BRINGS

Bachelor of Arts in English Studies
Rheinische-Friedrich Wilhelm Universität
Bonn, Germany
2014

Master of Arts in Comparative Literature
University College London
London, UK
2016

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Dissertation Approved:

Katherine Hallemeier

Dissertation Adviser

Timothy Murphy

Andrew Belton

Apple Zefelius Igrek

Name: REBECCA BRINGS

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Abstract: “Caring for Postcolonial Animals” hopes to show that institutionalized discourses of animal welfare in the postcolony and the kind of representations these produce make it difficult to think of its many “humane” ideologies as institutionalized violence as well as an extension of colonial, imperial modes of governing. Animal welfarism’s western dominance and explicit advocacy agenda often overwrite alternative and non-capitalist relationalities with the animal including black ecological perspectives not based in welfarism. Particularly in the reconciliation with national development, governmental policies and their instituting discourses increasingly mark the centrality of the animal for economic growth and global articulations of postcolonial nations. In this network, non-capitalistic or non-extractive relationships appear unreasonable in light of the animals’ potential for the alleviation of poverty, equity, and green futures. The limitations of animal welfarism, and other discourses that accept the increasing enclosures, manipulation, and disposability of the animal in light of the ostensibly sustainable redesign of global extractive processes, are irreducible. Animal welfare and other instituting narratives of sustainability are deeply imbricated by what I call the necropolitics of the animal. The discourses’ emancipatory vision relies on the adaption of human organized relationality and the hope of global moral unity in more just futures. Animal advocacy, I suggest, is overrepresented through animal welfarism and animal rights’ focus on inclusion; the violent and invisible integration of the animal into the global-capitalist apparatus consumed for world- and live-making. This shapes the representation and conceptualization of the animal, the ideological frameworks of its care, and how such care is reconciled with efforts and pathways for decolonization.

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PREFACE

“Caring for Postcolonial Animals” grows out of a deep, personal care for and commitment to animals. I have shed countless tears for animals I have never met and many times I have wished I could stop caring. I am mourning the 18,000 cows that died April 10, 2023 in a dairy farm explosion in Texas;¹ I am mourning the future of the chickens that will be produced in poultry giant Tyson’s planned 131,000-square-foot, 70 million dollar hatchery (McCarthy); and I am mourning the laboratory animals genetically altered to become better indicators for studies of human diseases.² I am mourning these purported ‘casualties’ of our current worldmaking. I have been haunted by the devastating violence I see circulated across digital and traditional media with millions of empathetic and outraged consumers – to no avail. I hear all the voices that call animal lovers who embrace direct action, monkeywrenching, or demand veganism as a global attitude as radical, extremist, and unreasonable.³ Caring about animals, however, is fundamentally unreasonable if the pathways of integration require animal lovers to be rational about the violent commodification of the animal in ever-new ways. It is unreasonable because it is fool-hearted to demand justice knowing justice demands animal death to be normative.

¹ In a statement from April 13, 2023, Texas Agricultural Commissioner Sid Miller states: “While devastating, I’m grateful that there were no further injuries of Ag workers or any loss of human life.” The other losses counted in the statement are the financial losses for the farm owners. The 18,000 lives of cows that were lost aren’t counted in the statement.

² See for example, Fan et.al “Genetically Modified Rabbits for Cardiovascular Research.”

³ See *Modern American Extremism and Domestic Terrorism: An Encyclopedia of Extremists and Extremist Groups*.

Caring for animals thus also means having to account for the ways in which even animal lovers with the best intentions participate in systems of control and that care takes all kinds of forms. The majority of the animal encounters within structures of ‘care’ in this project are deadly or otherwise ‘life-altering’ in many ways comparable to the recent devastating examples acknowledged above. The people who work or volunteer in institutionalized animal welfare sites (including those criticized in the following pages) genuinely love and care for animals. Yet, the same people participate in and sometimes advocate for systemic violence against animals in the name of humanity. Most of these consumers of animal suffering trust the institutionalized frameworks of care, found everywhere from public benefit organizations, municipal shelters, to national governing and public media, to act in the interest of the animal. They trust them to cultivate a practice of care. This project thus explicitly targets institutionalized discourses of care, in particular animal welfare, conservationist, and sustainability discourses that produce shrinking enclosures for animals both spatially and ideologically. The ideologies of ‘humane’ treatment that frame these discourses, I argue throughout, enable the unhindered exploitation of the animal. The grammar of ‘humane’ overwrites the injustice of *systematically* killing animals and forecloses on the hard, uncomfortable, devastating work of imagining otherwise.

I particularly focus on animal welfare through a postcolonial lens and in the context of the postcolonial nations’s forceful integration into global markets. The humane grammar of animal welfare narratives at its intersection with national restructuring highlights deepened modes of colonial governing. African wildlife repackaged as tourist attractions and national resources for the alleviation of poverty, as well as, the “rapid changes that a Western-style meat

industry has brought to African countries” (Mwangi vii),⁴ brings the animal into the public periphery. Institutionalized animal welfare consideration for African animals gerrymanders the modes of integration in favor of neoimperial imaginaries. The individual animal - the real animal - remains invisible in attempts to reconcile development and justice. These forms of integration require the animal to be legible (or visible) as a stable category which violently shapes the animal with no regard for its embodied realities.

So, instead of articulating alternative categories, tenets, or other pragmatic frameworks of improved animal care, instead of providing a roadmap to animal liberation through rights and ethics, this project aims to show the limits of these frameworks often overrepresented as care itself. I care about animals being animals. This means letting go of animals, to let them occupy unruly territory. This project is admittedly been preoccupied with making visible the colonial legacies that continue to affect the ways in which the animal is instituted in postcolonial national development and global practices. The future of this project lies in the more explicit focus on non-western, local perspectives on care outside of the welfarist frameworks to begin the difficult work of imagining alternative, unruly territories for the animal.

⁴ One example of “Western-style” approaches to meat production in African countries is vertical integration and is further discussed in the introduction.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

AT THE "EDGE OF LEGIBILITY": ANIMAL WELFARE AND NEOIMPERIAL WORLDMAKING IN THE POSTCOLONY

Introduction

The challenge of caring for postcolonial animals in our current moment lies in the recognition of the singularity and simultaneous multiplicity of animal suffering. Animal suffering is singular in the sense that the extent and scale of its commodification are incomprehensible and unparalleled. Moreover, animal death remains overwhelmingly invisible or unmournable.⁵ While scholars in the field of animal studies or adjacent discourses have attempted to find an analog to animal suffering, such attempts are often limited or otherwise “dreaded” (Spiegel 14). Marjorie Spiegel, for example, takes up the comparison of transatlantic slavery and the oppression of animals in industrialized societies (23-26) and J.M. Coetzee’s Elizabeth Castello references the Holocaust to mark the ‘efficiency’ of global industrial meat productions (21f). Such comparisons have limited success in the attempt of including the animal in historically distinct systems of oppression to which the animal is only ever adjacent and passive. Caring for postcolonial animals requires a unique analytic that pays attention to the ways in which the animal animates and is animated by forms of worldmaking. Thus, while animal suffering is singular in its form, it

⁵ In *Mourning Animals: Rituals and Practices Surrounding Animal Death*, Margo DeMello stresses the toll of “how animal lovers suffer from the vast unmourned deaths of animals” (xviii).

is also multiple as the animal faces its entanglement with modes of domination through discourses of humanism, imperialism, and, as I argue, welfarism. The proliferating literary, legal, scientific, and environmental representations of the animal often uncritically highlight the animal's potential for economic, political, and social change. The forceful integration of postcolonial nations into global markets implicates the animal in contradicting narratives of economic *and* environmental justice.

Animal advocacy discourses, in particular, are often bound to narratives of sustainability in which the consumption and conservation of animals are not apparent contradictions. Preserving biodiversity, in fact, is relative to global market needs and sustainable growth. Public media and government policies concerning the illicit abalone trade in South Africa, for example, focus on the preservation and sustainability of wild abalone as a species in which artificial conditions of fostering life (e.g. aquacultures) are considered sustainable ways forward.⁶ Other forms of sustainability and care renegotiate modes of consumption and engagement, such as the move from whaling to whale watching that Phillip Armstrong describes as a “repackaging of the wild for eco-tourist” (416).⁷ The shaping, positioning, and integration of the animal across literary, socio-political spheres and in legal and extra-legal ways signal modes of authority and control that show little regard for the limits of the animal. The narratives, rhetoric, and visual culture of animal welfare and sustainability discourses create a complex fabric of mappable and unmappable patterns of integration that play central roles in positioning the animal at what Jackson calls the “edge of legibility” (4). Jackson's useful metaphor signals the generation of “unruly” (4) conceptions of being that are difficult to read within dominant frameworks of

⁶ See Kimon De Greef and Simone Haysom. “Disrupting abalone harms: Illicit flows of *H. midae* from South Africa to East Asia.” and Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the illicit abalone trade and its impact on coastal communities (including humans, animals, environments, materials etc...).

⁷ See Chapter 3

inclusion and assimilation. Working towards a better understanding of the animal in the postcolony, thus, necessitates scrutinizing over-easy narratives of inclusion and advocacy that promise emancipation and simultaneous economic growth through the animal. Many of the texts included in this project negotiate ‘unreasonable’⁸ relationships with the animal alongside covert capitalistic and extractive relations signaling an uneven, racialized integration of animals into neoimperial worldmaking.

Amidst these global networks of economy and governance, however, animal welfare seems to offer a prescriptive framework for animal care. Animal welfarism, as an approach to animal care, accepts the consumption of animals and animal death as long as they are treated and killed humanely (chapter 2). The humane ideologies of animal welfare and animal rights discourses negotiate how the animal may live, what rights animals have, and how they must die. These processes of assimilation shape not only the physical body of the animal itself but also affirm ideologies of integration which, despite their verbal or legislative commitments to the animal category, continue to ignore the material reality of animal life. This blind commitment to a category rather than the individual organism forms both ideological and physical enclosures. For example, in visions of national development in South Africa, preference is given to the survival of the genus over the survival of the individual, closing off the possibility that care is external to biodiversity and welfarism (See chapters 3 and 5). In visions of alternative African futures, biomimicry, and other biotechnological approaches, take over the integration of the animal into extractive modes of worldmaking (Chapter 4). Thus, under the guise of sustainability and welfare, the disorienting surplus of legal and extra-legal representation becomes the default language of care. These opaque, distracting modes of relationality depend on concepts of the

⁸ They are unreasonable in the sense that they resist assimilation into dominant frameworks of human-animal relationality.

animal as legible, or otherwise visibly consumable within neoimperial systems of worldmaking. Throughout this project, I wrestle with the overt presence and simultaneous invisibility of the animal within the postcolonial literary and visual narratives included in this study.

“Caring for Postcolonial Animals” hopes to show that institutionalized discourses of animal welfare in the postcolony and the kind of representations these produce make it difficult to think of its many “humane” ideologies as institutionalized violence as well as an extension of colonial, imperial modes of governing. Animal welfarism’s western dominance and explicit advocacy agenda often overwrite alternative and non-capitalist relationalities with the animal including black ecological perspectives not based in welfarism. Particularly in the reconciliation with national development, governmental policies and their instituting discourses increasingly mark the centrality of the animal for economic growth and global articulations of postcolonial nations. In this network, non-capitalistic or non-extractive relationships appear unreasonable in light of the animals’ potential for the alleviation of poverty, equity, and green futures. The limitations of animal welfarism, and other discourses that accept the increasing enclosures, manipulation, and disposability of the animal in light of the ostensibly sustainable redesign of global extractive processes, are irreducible. Animal welfare and other instituting narratives of sustainability are deeply imbricated by what I call the necropolitics of the animal. The discourses’ emancipatory vision relies on the adaption of human organized relationality and the hope of global moral unity in more just futures. Animal advocacy, I suggest, is overrepresented through animal welfarism and animal rights’ focus on inclusion; the violent and invisible integration of the animal into the global-capitalist apparatus consumed for world- and live-making. This shapes the representation and conceptualization of the animal, the ideological

frameworks of its care, and how such care is reconciled with efforts and pathways for decolonization.

Put differently, this project aims to scrutinize narratives of animal inclusion that readily use the animal to articulate universalizing environmental perspectives and alternative futures without any real regard for the animal. I proceed by defining the necropolitics of the animal to demonstrate the ways in which welfarism navigates animal death and disposability. Animal welfarism and its humane ideologies are overrepresented as global ethics of care and consequently take global dimensions. Thus, I will exemplify the transnational dynamics of welfare in the global food industry in the increasing industrialization of postcolonial nations. Such transnational dynamics build on the animal as a resource for more even development in which the language of sustainability relies on biotechnology promises. The concept and implementation of vertical integration demonstrate the violent ideologies that undergird the integration of animals into global economies. Moreover, this introduction aims to mark the limitations of inclusion and legibility in existing discourses of animal studies (broadly speaking) and postcolonial animal studies. Both fields of study have intersecting interest in animal care invoking animal welfare,⁹ animal rights, and animal ethics to extend rights and care to animals which I ultimately suggest requires the animal to be legible in institutional frameworks of global justice. Finally, I will outline the overarching, entangled, and disciplining modes of care weaved through the postcolonial animal archives and the following chapters of this project.

⁹ Throughout this project, animal welfarism functions as a blanket term for approaches of conversation, preservation, animal rights and otherwise discourses that, I argue, focus on the well-being of animals within industrial, neoliberal structures.

Animal Necropolitics: Sustainability, Plasticity, and Other Modes of Inclusion

Looking at animal necropolitics in postcolonial literary representations, transnational systems, and visions of biotechnological futures shows that imagined pathways to decolonization are often fraught with the continued instrumentalization and control of the animal for human ends. Animal necropolitics are an extension of Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics which considers politics and sovereignty to "[reconstitute] itself as a form of organization for death" (7). In the capitalistic-imperial apparatus, such forms of organization determine who gets to live and who must die, and in what ways. Biotechnology and bioscience, for example, are complicit in enabling "economic" agriculture breeding and production practices, such as vertical integration, that determine the conditions of allowing and disallowing animal life. These practices, I argue, are necropolitical. While Mbembe focuses on revealing power dynamics that exercise control over human existence, the foundational dynamics of sovereignty and organizational authority similarly assert control over the ways in which animal existence is instituted. Animal welfare's humane ideologies determine how the animal should die, but not whether it should or shouldn't die. Alternatives to "humanely" euthanizing homeless animals, such as catch and release, are respectively unreasonable in light of the purported overpopulation of feral animals and lack of (welfarist) care (see chapters 2 and 5). With the vast majority of animal death as both invisible and unmournable, animal necropolitics as a lens, pays attention to the otherwise illegible violences of the radical integration of the animal into neoimperial worldmaking. In 2022, Carl Death termed the concept "wild necropolitics" (241) to highlight the divisive potential of "'wild nature'—wind, water, fire, and earth— [becoming] central features of the deployment of the means of destroying life" (247). Animal necropolitics, while scrutinizing the deployment of animals for political economies, is interested in the counter-knowledges that the animal produces

in death and sees nature as an active rather than a passive agent. The postcolonial literary texts in this project, some more explicitly than others, represent animals and animal relationality that produce counter-knowledges to a global knowledge economy that accepts their disposability.

Animal welfare as a global politics of care, as well as its instituting organizations, claim authority not only over feral animals but those animals that never escape industrial enclosures. Considerations of animal welfare and the adherence to animal rights in the global-industrial apparatus reflect expressions of animal necropolitics on a planetary scale. The purportedly sustainable and humane approaches to meat production that seemingly reconcile animal welfare and the global food industry thus require particular scrutiny. The perpetually ‘efficient’ global production methods, such as vertical integration in poultry processing widely implemented in the Global North, are increasingly adopted and instituted by multiple African countries.¹⁰ I intend to demonstrate the global dimension of animal necropolitics, not hindered but enabled through animal welfare and other global politics of care, by tracing the approach of vertical integration from the US to several African countries.

In poultry processing, vertical integration aims to streamline and control supply chains leveraging sustainability as a form of organization for animal death. Chickens, in particular so-called “broiler chicken” bred exclusively for economic poultry processing, are considered among the most abused animals on the planet¹¹ and, at least in part, this is due to the proliferation of vertical integration in agricultural sectors around the world. However, not only the detrimental impact of vertical interactions justifies its consideration in this study, but looking at vertical

¹⁰ See Phumzile Ncube’s “The southern African poultry value chain: Corporate strategies, investments and agro-industrial policies,” 2018. More in the discussion below.

¹¹ The World Animal Protection organization identifies chickens as one of the most abused animals on the planet by the sheer number at which they are bred and processed. In an article from 2019, World Animal Protection suggests that this “chicken crisis” is “exploding around the world” (“Chickens”).

integration illustrates the effect of “sustainable” development that drives postcolonial nations’ integration into global economies. It captures the overt market presence of the animal and simultaneous invisibility within industrialized structures and their ostensibly progressive institutional frameworks that I suggest throughout this work signal the facelessness of certain animals. In the global food industry, between the chickens sliced into lunchmeat, pressed into chicken nuggets, fragmented into wings, or sold headless as ‘whole’ chickens, the chicken cannot escape its facelessness, not even in death. The category of faceless animals implies animals as fixed in a hierarchy of animacy and sentience in which some are more sentient than others. Mel Chen considers such animacy hierarchies as a legacy of western philosophies of knowing that established life, organisms, and materials on a value-priority scale. Such organizations of life, Mel suggests have “broad ramifications for issues of ecology and environment, since objects, animals, substances, and spaces are assigned constrained zones of possibility and agency by extant grammars of animacy” (13). In vertical integration, chickens are quite literally “constrained [to] zones of possibility” (13), physically and ideologically, through their value for global economies and their simultaneous low priority in the face of global food insecurities. Moreover, the fixing of possibility and agency assumes the animal is static and thus legible ostensibly evidenced in animal welfare rhetoric and sustainable ideologies. Lastly, vertical integration also demonstrates the ways in which the animal is molded and otherwise plasticized in disregard of the chicken’s bodily integrity. The shaping, manipulation, and legislating of the animal violently integrate the animal into neoimperial worldmaking.

In a postcolonial context, these ‘green’ or otherwise more economical industrial practices are considered solutions to widespread protein deficiency. While effectively addressing food insecurities, critical attention given to vertical integration unveils the increasing enclosures for

animals in transnational industrial and ideological structures. These structures are barely visible in narratives of sustainability, the alleviation of poverty, and ethics of humane killing. In the following, I am paying particular attention to the “extant grammar of animacy” affirmed through animal welfare and sustainability rhetoric. Living in the vicinity of one of the largest global producers of poultry meat forces some of the otherwise invisible violences into my immediate periphery. Springdale, Arkansas, is home to both George’s and Tyson poultry processing. Tyson poultry is the second-largest poultry processor and marketer, largest exporter of beef (Tyson), and, according to The Guardian, “Tyson accounts for the single largest share of chicken plants across the US, processing 2.3 billion birds in 2020” (n.pag.). George’s, while not quite as large as Tyson, is “among the top ten largest vertically integrated chicken producers in America” (George’s). According to The National Chicken Council (NCC), the approach of vertical integration refers to the “combining [of] production stages into large vertically integrated firms able to take advantage of rapidly changing technology” (Vertical Integration). The compartmentalization and simultaneous fragmenting of the process (Hatcheries, Grower Farms, Feed Mills, Distribution...) purportedly in the interest of welfare and food safety is really aimed at “[reducing] uncertainties in production” to secure “economical chicken products” (Vertical Integration). The line of argument that equates the quality of meat with high-welfare production builds on the animal as being stable and thus legible in these notoriously opaque industrial structures. Moreover, the violent interference and experimentation with the chickens' biology is considered a step towards the well-being of the animal in the artificial enclosures that cause the detrimental conditions in the first place.

Vertical integration is an “economically” oriented approach to raising, slaughtering, and processing animals for the meat industry and finds increasing application in West African

countries such as Ghana,¹² Nigeria,¹³ and southern African countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Respective research, mainly in the field of animal science, similarly highlights the potential for economic growth and the “reduction of protein deficiency” (1), with little to no regard for the welfare of birds in the industry. Even though scholars such as T.T. Nukwanana and McLoed et al. remark that “intensive poultry farming scores poorly on welfare grounds” concerns or calls for improvement exclusively aim at “[improving] food quality” (876). Nukwanana registers a similar reliance on legibility in an opaque system and suggests that “the quality assurance on the housing environment, handling, feed and water availability, location and biosecurity standards are welfare considerations” (877). Biosecurity as a welfare consideration is thus signaled as progress, better for the health of the raw product and the consumer, yet it is a necessity of industrialized productions trying to produce the most ‘economical’ chickens, its greedy overproduction, which makes this security imperative to the production in the first place. Welfare and sustainability efforts, rather than in the interest of the animal, secure a consistent, marketable, ostensibly safe product for consumption.

Vertical integration, as a superimposed structure of control aiming to streamline dynamic biological processes and their very real organisms, forcefully shapes and deforms the animal body in the interest of global markets. According to the NCC, the broiler chicken “has changed dramatically from the barnyard variety of years past, too, and has been specifically bred for meat production” (Vertical Integration). Nkukwana is more specific and explains “the large decline in days to market and disproportional increases in breast yield have contributed to greater incidences of skeletal anomalies, resulting in abnormal long bone development in broilers owing

¹² See “Modelling of vertical integration in commercial poultry production of Ghana: A count data model analysis” by Faizal Adams et al., 2022.

¹³ See Olasunkanmi M. Bamiro’s “Vertical Integration and Profitability in Poultry Industry in Ogun and Oyo States, Nigeria,” 2009.

to significantly slower relative tibia development (length and width) in broilers” (877). The broiler chicken demonstrates the limitless shaping of the animal body, a plasticity that Zakiyyah Iman Jackson would describe as an ontologizing “mode of transfiguration” (3). In *On Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World*, Jackson takes up the ontologizing effects of the human-animal distinction that has led to the persistent animalization of blackness within colonial and imperial pursuits. Jackson’s work focuses on the “inclusion and recognition” (3) as opposed to exclusion of “black(ened) humanity” in definitions of the human to signal the limitless forming and deforming of blackness in the interest of enlightenment humanism and other western visions of worldmaking. In this plasticization of blackness, the animal is “one but not the only form blackness is thought to encompass” (3). While Jackson focuses on the ontologizing plasticity and the properties of form of blackness, I suggest her analysis also marks the radical inclusion of the animal into these same worldmaking processes. The broiler chicken that exists today is an example of this radical inclusion. Its body is literally an expression of global market pressures and discourses of sustainability, and is given its existence so that it can satisfy them. What is represented to the global market as ‘legible’ is a consumable, plastic body that can be shaped in the interests of human survival and secured futures.

The forming and deforming of the animal, however, is not merely normalized, but the biological manipulation of the animal is seemingly commendable. In fact, in the muddy waters of sustainability and welfare for birds in the industry, vertical integration and its processes are signaled as a contribution to eco-friendly consumerism. The NCC website claims that the benefits of vertical integration are “a reduced growing period to produce a market broiler chicken, meaning reduced space, labor, equipment and a much smaller environmental impact” (Vertical Integration). The tightening of enclosures for the animal in global bioeconomies are

translated into a smaller environmental footprint. The shortened lifespans and the possibly premature killing of animals are neutralized through market-oriented environmental frameworks supposedly for more sustainable food production. The fixing of the animal experience within increasing enclosures, both in terms of physical space for the animal in the food industry but also in light of climate change and its disproportionate impact on the Global South, represents processes of mastery over nature. Within these processes, high-welfare commitments in industrial food production, such as aquaculture, considered further in chapter 3, are as much an oxymoron as clean cobalt. Despite the heavy conceptual implication of ‘clean’ environmentalism that simply ignores how the Global South has been the dumping ground for the toxic waste of Global North manufacturing, the conceptualization of the reconciliation of animal necropolitics with global politics in the favor of the animal and its well-being is misleading at best. This representational cherry-picking is overrepresented as eco-conscious progress on a global scale. Yet it only fosters economic growth implicating the animal, environments, and materials in narratives of sustainable growth rather than a rethinking of global consumptive attitudes. The aforementioned welfare considerations in the reconciliation with vertical integration impose increasingly streamlined structures and procedures to secure a uniform product/production as if the animal and nature are static organisms in static worldmaking systems. The image of the chicken bred and produced for global consumption, its biology and needs streamlined and affirmed through the language of sustainability mirrors the necropolitics of faceless animals discussed in this project. The globalization of animal necropolitics securing animals as a sustainable resource for increasing demands of global markets promises “nonviolent” relationality with the animal, while simultaneously veiling the violent processes of “humane” ideologies of inclusion. Such seemingly paradox articulations of the animal within various

discourses may be a result of the intersectional assemblage of what can broadly be referred to as animal studies.

Postcolonial Animal Welfare and Sustainable Futures

My aim of thinking about animal welfarism through both animal studies and postcolonial animals studies is to demonstrate the limitation of welfare narratives of care and inclusion that leverage the animal for decolonial pathways. Care for the animal in both animal and postcolonial animal studies does not escape an explicit advocacy agenda that requires the animal's legibility within particular frameworks. Moreover, as we have seen above, animal welfare movements and its intersecting narratives securing futures of consumption, are increasingly complicit in the necropolitics of the animal. While recent postcolonial scholarship by Evan Mwangi, Julietta Singh, and Suvadip Sinha and Amit R. Baishya critically engage with questions of welfarism, humanitarianism, and other forms of advocacy in animal writing from the postcolony, the animal is used to articulate the ethical promise and potential of sustainable and otherwise reasonable relationality.

Animal studies, more so than postcolonial animal studies which already has a critical theoretical lens in its geopolitical focus, is split between discourses that believe the animal to be a subject of science and others that see the animal as a subject of theory. As much as the multiplicity of the field is critically productive, it causes tension between sometimes drastically opposing views and frameworks. The field of animal studies as it intersects with natural science, for example, is predominantly interested in laboratory animal research and is often criticized by critical animal studies (hereafter CAS). CAS, a field invested in the dismantling of eurocentric positioning of the animal, suggests that animal science perpetuates the human-animal dualism in

its focus on animals as objects of science. While CAS seemingly moves away from human priority and centers the animal, CAS's focus on animals as objects of theorization suggests pathways to universal ethics and global awareness as main goals of critical animal studies. In its all too humanistic legacies, CAS as is often criticized for such implicit advocacy agendas.¹⁴ Even in its alternative terminology, such as the term human-animal studies, CAS does not escape the universalizing trap of the violent inclusion into human organizations of the world. Michael Lundblad, for example, believes that the terminology of human-animal studies, one that Sarah McHugh and Garry Marvin claim signals a "linking" (3) or togetherness, a relationality of co-existence, risks reinstating humanist epistemologies and affirms the "better treatment of nonhuman animals" (Lundblad 4). Despite advocacy and activist discourses' good intentions, such goals are universalizing and all too often politically divisive strategies of integrating the animal. These discourses thus rarely escape the hierarchies of dominance and priorities they aim to address. Critical animal studies, I thus suggest, relies on modes of inclusion and care that require the animal to be a legible category.

Animal welfare and its explicit advocacy agenda faces similar limitations. Animal welfarism's representation of care is contingent on the imagined inability of animals to care for themselves (including reproduction and survival) and a simultaneous state of crisis ostensibly the result of human lack of welfarist care. In the context of need and urgency, biotechnological advances, animal welfare promises, are used in the interest of animals. While animal welfare organizations, such as the Animal Anti-Cruelty League (AACL) more closely considered in chapter 2, articulate euthanasia as a last resort, too many animal welfare organizations and animal shelters consider mass sterilization programs a defense against the cruel and unforgiving

¹⁴ See among others Lundblad's *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human*.

social structures animals are so forcefully integrated into.¹⁵ In fact, in the context of these unforgiving structures and the global impacts of climate change, animal welfare movements and responding institutional structures represent bioscience and technology as in the interest of the animal and all other life. While biotechnological solutions, such as biomimicry discussed in chapter 4, respond to unsustainable industrial consumption or civil practices, institutionalized governmental and non-governmental animal welfare overrepresents such scientific interventions as positive steps towards animal justice. On the contrary, I suggest that biotechnological practices signal deepened modes of colonization, practices that have become somewhat synonymous with neoimperial, neoliberal worldmaking in and beyond the postcolony unabashedly moving forward through discourses of promise. In *Animals as Biotechnology*, Richard Twine considers such “promissory discourses” (115) to which he counts discourses of sustainability and suggests that “the language of sustainability has become an organizing frame for animal science” (115). This includes animal welfare science that often gives relevance to the promise of biotechnology. Bioscience, in particular biosecurity as discussed through vertical integration, thus frames practices of enclosure, manipulation, and intervention as eco-defenses. The re-packaging of sustainability through biotechnologically engineered animals, healthier for humans and more “ecologically benign” (115), thus marks a disregard for the animal’s material realities in animal welfare as promissory discourse.

¹⁵ Examples are countless from large organizations, municipal shelters to small rescues around the world. This project’s consideration of organizations such as Sidewalk Specials (Chapter 5), and The Dodo, are representative stand-ins for the many organizations that build on welfare’s humane ideologies. Even though there have been successful initiatives to end kill shelters often referred to as the “No Kill Movement” (see *Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America*), unfortunately many shelters and rescuers (who I have personally interacted with in this regard) believe that it is simply not feasible for most shelters to not kill animals on a weekly, sometimes daily basis.

Thinking about animal welfare through a postcolonial lens, a mode of reading that attempts to dismantle legacies of European domination, seems a promising lens for reading animals in Global North and South entanglements. However, scholars that have considered animals in the postcolony have generally, as Evan Mwangi suggests in *The Postcolonial Animal*, employed western environmental perspectives and all too often consulted white writers and theorists (3f). In fact, Mwangi argues that western environmentalists leverage animal welfare and conversion discourses to justify continued western intervention in Africa's care for its wildlife. Mwangi emphasizes the necessity of a theorization from "within [African countries]" (vii) and "rather than asking how texts represent the animal, [he asks] how the animal shapes texts" (vii). Beyond representationalism and how animals shape texts, I am interested in how narratives shape animals. As I hope to have shown so far, narratives of welfare and sustainability, as well as the uncritical categorization of animals along animacy hierarchies, have shaped the animal in violent material and ideological ways. Thinking about how the postcolonial animal shapes and is shaped by narratives of inclusion highlights the disruptive, illegible nature of animals in human-making, world-making systems. This is an attention to form rather than format.

However, the unruly existence of animals does not mean that the animal, animal agency, and animal representationalism should or can carry the burden of rethinking the violence of neoimperial workmaking or anti-neoimperial futures, yet many scholars and critics first and foremost think about the relevance of thinking with animals for social justice (chapter 4). The animal remains part of the master narrative of sustainable growth and humane integration into global markets promising better futures at the continued expense of the animal. Julietta Singh also sees animals as part of the deployment of power in the postcolony and on an increasing global scale. Postcolonial studies, she says, have yet to take seriously the "the position of

mastery at its foundations” (6). Yet, Singh reads the animal to represent a relevant vehicle for the rupture of masterful conceptions of the human failing to register the continuous exploitive logics by which she dismantles such mastery. The animal’s material realities remain reduced to its ethical integration into decolonial, “dehumanist” (4) futures. Sinha and Baishya similarly suggest that many postcolonial animal scholars and literary animal studies predominantly focus on the ‘signifying’ animal, rather than the “real” animal. The real animal, they argue, cannot be found in language and is “the fundamental reason why the real animal remains elusive” (30). I attribute such elusiveness also to the language of care that requires the animal to be legible in frameworks of animal welfare and sustainability in which the real animal is unrecognizable. Between the organization of global systems and political units, I argue, the animal requires subjectivity, personhood,¹⁶ the capacity to suffer, sentience¹⁷ for the inclusion in and formation of ethical frameworks and their instituting mechanisms. The frameworks of inclusion and ethical consideration nonetheless require that the animal can only be encountered, understood, or cared for within a framework that renders them legible. Underneath such properties of inclusion the animal is neither clear or fixed, but rather unreasonable.^c Thus, I consider the global tendencies of radical integration of the animal into such systems with particular skepticism and pay attention to the unreasonable entanglements of materials and its forms.

In such examinations, the legacy of racialized, animalized conceptions of human-animal interfaces are foundational for colonial and postcolonial modes of organization. This study thus hopes to contribute to a body of literature at the emerging intersection of race and (post)

¹⁶ Maneesha Deckha argues that the consideration of animal personhood is central for interspecies justice in decolonizing efforts (as for example in Canada). In Indigenous legal order, the animal is considered kin, rather than inferior to humans and signifies the potential of non-anthropocentric perspectives for legal animal subjectivity. See “Unsettling Anthropocentric Legal Systems: Reconciliation, Indigenous Laws, and Animal Personhood.”

¹⁷ Such as Peter Singer’s *The Expanding Circle*.

coloniality that signals the centrality of thinking the animal and other identity categories, such as gender, at the register of ontology¹⁸ and those directly centering the postcolony.¹⁹ I hope to add a particular focus on institutionalized discourses of care and sustainability, such as global attitudes of animal welfarism, to keep with the interwoven dynamics of local and planetary dimension of ecological thought. The shaping and assimilation of both the symbolic and the ‘real’ animal are violent and often remain unaccounted for in the legacies of colonial domination. With a focus on welfare rhetorics and ideologies as they recursively affect the implementation of institutionalized discourses of care, I hope to show the unclear and divisive application of sustainability and humane ideologies that require the legibility of the animal, plastic representations, and simultaneous disposability of the animal for sustainable consumerism and better futures. Animal welfarism, as the dominant global attitude reconciling market interests and animal rights discourses for global industrial systems, is an accepted incremental approach to multispecies justice. In this approach, the animal has ‘freedoms’²⁰ but not liberty until organizing structures establish a universal moral unity. Until then, the animal is in a perpetual state of crisis that justifies immediate intervention re-packaged as eco-defenses. Mass euthanasia, sterilization, manipulation, assimilation, and cyborgization are all ostensibly preventative measures for a future without suffering. The animal’s future, I suggest, is a consideration, not for the animal’s

¹⁸ See Mel Chen’s *Animacies*, 2012; Neel Ahuja’s *Bioinsecurities*, 2016; Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s *Becoming Human* 2020 and Maneesha Deckha’s “Unsettling Anthropocentric Legal Systems,” 2020.

¹⁹ See Huggan and Tiffin’s *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* 2010/2015; Singh’s *Unthinking Mastery*, 2017; Mwangi 2019; Sinha and Baishya’s *Postcolonial Animalities*, 2020.

²⁰ Animal rights discourses assert that animals have the right to 5 freedoms: “These encompass freedom from hunger and thirst, from discomfort, from pain, injury and, disease, to express normal behaviour, and from fear and distress” (Nkukwana 876f). These freedoms are insistently invoked in the public media texts (policies, journalistic and scientific writing, advocacy) consulted in this project and find closer attention in chapter 4.

material limits, but its material possibilities (symbolic and real) for “the new emancipatory landscapes” (Lavendar and Yaszek 3) promising justice for all.

Although implicit in my readings of race, the animal, and instituting governance in the postcolony, my goal here is not to critique the production of genres of the human²¹ at which foundations the animal and animality have and continue to function as vestibule for a revitalized anti-colonial grammar. My goal is to center a postcolonial animal archive, to archive the faceless and explore the unreasonable. This project takes seriously the animating force of matter and meaning (Jackson) and “narrative and meaning” (Singh 18), entanglements that not just disrupt “monohumanist conceptions of the ‘human’” (Sinha and Baishya 13), but monoanimalist definitions of animals as static or encompassing. The explicit focus is on the ‘real’ animal; it is never left out of sight, though never expected to look the same. Through such considerations, this project hopes to get a more comprehensive picture of global politics of care as they shape the material realities of animal life at the edge of legibility.

Reading Postcolonial Animal Archives

The breadth of texts examined in this work are organized first and foremost around its representation of institutionalized animal welfare and conservation in Africa and their often bleached ideological frameworks that challenge the uncritical integration of the animal into a postcolonial thinking and governing. Some of these texts may be considered staples of postcolonial animal and environmental studies, such as J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Zakes Mda’s *The Whale Caller*. Other literary texts such as Deji Bryce Olukotun’s *Nigerians in Space*

²¹ Based on Frantz Fanon’s sociogenic principle that recognizes the conceptions of the human and “what it is *like to be*, human” (31) as a product of biology and storytelling, Sylvia Wynter argues that humans are hybrid beings uniquely shaped by both bios and mythoi. She thus asserts that “we need to speak instead of our genres of being human” (31).

and *After the Flare* have mostly been considered in regards to their anti-neocolonial significance and have not been read through their intersection with animal studies. Beyond their representation of animal welfare and conservation discourses, the accumulation of these texts allow me to trace the animal and the care for the animal as a dynamic and continuous agent in processes of decolonization. *Disgrace*, for example, signals animal suffering and the crumbling institutionalized structures of animal welfare in early postapartheid South Africa as a result of the nation's preoccupation with restructuring and reconciliation. However, more than 30 years later, institutionalized animal welfarism in the form of "humane" killing and other forms of supposedly humane integration continue to fail to protect animals from global extractive systems (chapters 2-5).

Following the introduction, the second chapter "Whiteness and the Animal Question: Revisiting Coetzee's Postapartheid South Africa" re-reads Coetzee's *Disgrace* and its representation of institutionalized animal welfare in the context of postapartheid reconciliations. David Lurie's concern for the reduction of animal suffering and the preservation of their dignity in and after death, a concern for how the animals die but not why, I argue secures white standards of living and Lurie's belonging to the changing nation. *Disgrace*'s picture of animal welfare through the lens of Lurie marks the racialized perceptions of animal care in which sacrificial animal slaughter is morally condemnable and institutionalized euthanasia is reasonable and necessary. Focusing on the rhetoric of animal welfare organizations, their humane ideologies, and contemporary reporting on the state of the animal, I outline a historical centering of white, western environmental perspectives in institutional discourses of the animal welfarism in South Africa. These institutional discourses of care, I argue, create increasing enclosures for the animal and other live off-center. Redemptive or reparative readings of David Lurie's

character, readings that suggest he regains ‘grace’ and perspective in his care for the animal, ignore the instrumentalization of the animal and their disposability in the revitalization of white lives.

The second and last chapter of this thesis are closely connected. Their focus lies on the dog, rescue organizations, and the racial histories of animal welfare in South Africa that continue to discipline alternative, non-capitalistic, or unreasonable relationality with the animal. The animal, but dogs in particular, remain politically fraught in a postapartheid context. Studies into South African dog history²², apartheid military defenses²³, and intimate animal relationality pitted against Black authenticity²⁴, have shown dogs and wolves entanglement with narratives of white nation-building and interests. Thus, their role as a guard dog (of particular property or national defense), but also their ideological integration as companions and family into normalizing visions of white, middle class family structures, signals the dog’s significance for processes of reconciliation.

The increasing enclosures between efforts of conservation and the management of natural resources for national growth can also be traced along the development of the abalone trade in South Africa. Both Mda’s *The Whale Caller* and Olukotun’s *Nigerians in Space*, more than 10 years apart, address the uneven impact of the illicit abalone trade and the consequent war on abalone for impoverished communities, its animals, and environments. The irony is that

²² See Lance Van Sittert and Sandra Swart’s “Canis Familiaris: A Dog History of South Africa.”

²³ In her article “Apartheid’s Wolves: Political Animals and Animal Politics,” Louise Green focuses on a group of wolves, as an alien species imported to South Africa under apartheid as a biological weapon intended to secure apartheid government and soldiers.

²⁴ In “Animal Likenesses: Dogs and the Boundary of the Human in South Africa,” Gabeba Baderoon cites former South African President Zuma claiming that “[s]pending money on buying a dog, taking it to the vet and for walks belonged to white culture and was not the African way, which was to focus on the family” (349). Baderoon considers this a postapartheid nationalist disciplining of “Black authenticity” (350).

discourses of sustainable, green economies justify the disciplining of the former in favor of industries as an investment into the alleviation of poverty and the maintenance of ecosystems perpetually deferred to the future. In such deferrals, visions of the future of the animal as it intersects with visions of decolonial futures become a significant way of imagining alternative presents and futures. *Nigerians in Space* and its sequel *After the Flare* represent increasing investments into bioeconomies and biotechnological futures that are hardly more optimistic about the efficacy of institutionalized relations with the animal. *After the Flare*'s new world order, an order in which Nigeria is the scientific and knowledge capital of the world demonstrates deepened colonial architectures that represent the violent shaping and mimicking of animals and the industrial resource extraction of the moon as "[righting] the wrongs of the past" (Olukotun 44). Beside the literary representations of the postcolonial animal, however, this project considers current public media and policies, film and social media developments that generate intersecting representations of the animal in postcolonial discourses.

In the third chapter "Ocean Chronicles: Mollusks and Postcolonial Ecologies," the focus shifts from representations of the animal in welfare to conservation discourses. This chapter also moves from land to sea, diving into the wet archives of aquatic animals. Conservation discourses in the reconciliation with nation building, I argue, rely on misleading conceptions of sustainability and leverage animacy hierarchies to navigate animal necropolitics. Aquatic animals and the ocean itself, as well as its literary and visual representation, are central sides of knowledge production overwhelmingly disregarded within the enclosures of welfarism and sustainability and cast as ahistorical. My readings of Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* and Craig Foster's *My Octopus Teacher* pay attention to the varying ways in which aquatic animals are integrated into global markets, narratives of sustainable growth and green consumerism. While

The Whale Caller narrates a range of aquatic animals (whale, fish, abalone), the kind of consideration the whale receives in contrast to the abalone, the difference of giving face to the animal in light of global attitudes and the faceless integration of the animal in the name of global food security, is reflective of the varying interest for the well-being of aquatic life. Comparing the literary and visual representation of two species of mollusks, the abalone (or perlemoen) and the octopus, I explore the limits of conservation narratives. Even though the octopus is as much a delicacy in rising demand as abalone, a demand that requires the raising of these animals in artificial conditions - aquacultures - *My Octopus Teacher* has signaled the octopus as too sentient to be raised in such enclosures. While the film is considered a “new breed of animal documentary”(Rapold 4), not reliant on an authoritative conservationist voice, raising awareness and care through the signaling of ‘face’-value fails to escape the extractive logics of neoimperial worldmaking. The octopuses’ integration into visual culture, the stunning frames of an ‘alien’ world (the kelp forest) and the capturing of an intimate relationship with the octopus against all odds, affirms rather than dismantles the radical integration along animacy hierarchies. The double bind of porous and arbitrary visibility highlights an overemphasis on western scientific knowledge as universally applicable and authoritative that pushes animal well-being and non-capitalistic care to the “edge of legibility” (Jackson 4).

The fourth chapter “Hacking Animals: Decolonial Bioeconomies in Olukotun’s Africanfuturism” turns its focus to the future, continuing, to take seriously the animal and its representation as a site of knowledge production. Much of the emancipatory potential of welfarist, animal rights and ethics discourses, is a layering of a current state of crisis and the prospect of a better future for all life, perpetually deferring non-capitalistic, non-violent relationality. It seems thus significant that narratives of alternative futurism, such as Deji Bryce

Olukotin's *Nigerians in Space* and *After the Flare*, imagine the animal as a integral vehicle towards, but not a beneficiary of "new emancipatory landscapes" (Lavender and Yaszek 3) marked as the potential of alternative futurisms. Olutkotun's representation of the deepening commodifications of the animal in the postcolonial bioeconomic imaginary (from live to hybrid to synthetic animal) draws significant connections between global perspectives on the animal in our industrial society, the neutralization of western technological development, and alternative futurisms that require further scrutiny.

With the increasing global reach of social media and its influence on visual cultural production transnationally, the final chapter "Transforming Township Dogs: Digital Welfarism And Global 'Care'" turns its focus on online animal welfare and its avenues of ePhilanthropy. The term rescue-transformation narrative (RTN) refers to short stories or videos capturing an abused, neglected, or feral animal's transformation through animal welfare programs that almost exclusively ends in the adoption of the animal into a 'forever home.' The most popular subject of these transformation videos are dogs in which the dog transforms from homeless animal to beloved family member and functions as a marker of animal welfare organizations' validity. However, these narratives assume ferality as a state of crisis regardless of the animals' health which in turn highlights domestication and a home for every dog as the only reasonable care for these animals. In extension, the mass sterilization and euthanization of canine and feline in particular is represented as an eco-defense and prevention of future suffering. RTNs, as an ideal depiction of humanity's growing inclusion of the animal into industrial, modern life, I suggest, becomes a way of policing human-animal relationality on the one hand, and a way of radically integrating the animal into neocolonial imaginaries, on the other. In this chapter, I focus on the RTNs produced by South African welfare organization Sidewalk Specials serving a township in

the Western Cape, which are regularly shared by the popular media brand The Dodo. The global circulation of these videos/ transformations represent a productive local-cum-global, but also global-cum-local perspective of the role of animal welfare in the pursuit of environmental, animal, and social justice.

“Caring for Postcolonial Animals” insists that animals shape narratives and narratives shape animals, a recursive poesis that draws attention to the representations of the animal, the material animal, and its modes of inclusion into neoimperial worldmaking. The postcolonial texts in this study, individually and collectively, represent the animal as an assemblage of surplus and scarcity, from uncountable carcasses of dogs, pieces of flesh, and bioweapons, to the representation of abalone, the octopus ‘teacher’ and other threatened ‘genres’ of the animal. The animal, in particular animal death, is a constitutive mechanism of purportedly sustainable futures that continue to engage in processes of violent inclusion. Whatever the animal is, it is not readable within the confines of global attitudes and networks of sustainable consumption. Whatever the animal is lies beyond reason and the edge of legibility.

CHAPTER II
WHITENESS AND THE ANIMAL QUESTION: REVISITING COETZEE'S
POSTAPARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

Animal rights discourses, as well as western animal studies, often consider the animal through welfarism. Even as both discourses have been criticized as complicit in reproducing the very mechanisms they set out to dismantle, mechanisms that center and privilege human experience, the dominant ideologies of western welfarism enable the continued killing and exploitation of the animal under the cover of humane treatment. Such ideologies reveal a telling parallel between animal studies and postcolonialism; in a quite similar fashion, postcolonial studies have been accused of “continued academic Eurocentricity” (Harrison 4). It seems par for the course that postcolonial animal studies are all too often considered through white environmentalist perspectives and writers, a criticism that, Evan Mwangi argues, is exemplified through the centrality of writers such as J.M. Coetzee, Barbara Gowdy, and Lauren Beukes. Mwangi’s criticism makes legible the prevalence of white environmental discourses that have informed prominent readings of *Disgrace*.

The dominance of white environmental perspectives in readings of *Disgrace* and the animal in South Africa mark not only the jarring absence of African perspectives on the animal but also the attempted neutralization of white imperialist ideologies that drive welfarism. Paying attention to the necropolitics of the animal, however, exposes the bleached ideologies of welfarism that attempt to distinguish ethical and unethical ways of killing the animal along racial

lines. This uncritical discourse of animal welfare in the postcolony exposes its explicit ties to apartheid governing and its rhetorical legacy. Through a comparative reading of Coetzee's *Disgrace*, the rhetoric of euthanasia by animal welfare organizations, and contemporary reporting on the state of the animal, I attempt to outline a historical centering of white environmentalism, in particular welfarism, in institutional South African discourses of the animal. This, I argue, continues to secure white South African belonging to the nation and its development. The novel shows how the purportedly humane ideologies of animal welfare that support euthanasia signal an investment in white nation-building in which the animal is ultimately disposable. In opposition to assertions that the animal becomes a vehicle of redemption for the main character, David Lurie, and other redemptive readings of white environmental figures of the novel such as Lucy Lurie, I suggest that the novel reveals the white nationalist ideologies that undergird state and institutional environmental discourses in South Africa and signals that the purported humane ideologies of animal population control and welfare remain synonymous with white interests.

Disgrace and the Animal

Disgrace is the story of a white South African professor of English, David Lurie, who loses his university position after seducing and raping his student, Melanie Isaacs. The story follows David's decision to spend some time with his daughter Lucy who lives in the rural Eastern Cape. Following Lucy's advice, he begins volunteering at the animal welfare clinic and develops a relationship with the animal that has produced much critical scholarship, so much in fact, that there is "too much for a single chapter, to be said about the animals in *Disgrace*" (Attridge 184). However, many scholars argue that the novel makes a pragmatic statement about human-animal relationality in postapartheid South Africa. Such criticisms are often redemptive and reparative

readings of the ideologies and actions of the novel's white characters analog to the natural course of decolonization in South Africa. In this framework, Lurie's transformation into the "dog-man" with empathy for vulnerable life and violence against it, as well as Lucy's refusal to report the rape, signify a positive trajectory in "a trial and error model of education and becoming, for blacks and whites alike, as they struggle to find a common ground" (Wrights 97).

Even as the animal remains surprisingly decentered in such conclusions, scholars such as Tim Herron, Mike Marais, and Lauren Wright frame Lurie's 'empathy' for the animal and the novel's representation of welfarist ideologies as part of the necessary, somewhat uncomfortable work of decolonization. To that effect, Herron argues that there is a 'transformative' force to the "shared suffering" (473) of Lurie and the animal, while Marais reads David's participation in the practice of euthanasia as an act of redemption, a selfless act "in the dog's interest" (Marais 78). Although Wright argues that *Disgrace* highlights the interdependence of animal and human rights, she concludes that "if there is to be a 'new age' in South Africa, it is, perhaps, more likely to be ushered in by David Lurie" (102). In this 'new age' of environmental justice ushered in by a white male intellectual, Lurie's relationship with the dogs stirs up as much hope for human and animal relationality as his purportedly changed attitude towards livestock. Similarly, Lurie's state of disturbance in the face of slaughter for Pertus's celebration and his deliberation of whether or not to eat the sheep's meat is read as Lurie's incremental understanding of veganism and the "willingness to engage in a celebration of black empowerment" (Wright 100). Lurie's criticism of slaughter is thus read as the logical development of learning to care for the animal rather than, as I will argue, an ideological abjection of Blackness in the securing white nationalist imaginaries.

Other critics reading the animal in *Disgrace* explicitly acknowledge connections between animal welfare and the maintenance of apartheid but nonetheless continue to reproduce redemptive narratives of whiteness. While scholars such as Lucy Graham and Great Olsen recognize the historical function of guard dogs to protect white South Africans and their property to indicate that “dogs have generally acted in the interests of white power” (Graham 8, Olsen 124), their readings secure white responsibility for the care of animals. Olsen argues that the novel shows that concepts of animality have functioned to displace the responsibility of violence, yet identifies David Lurie as a guide through “a journey away from the complacency of gender and imperial supremacy” and who “models an every wo/mans awkward lurching towards grace” (143). Lucy Graham’s reading of *Disgrace* productively accounts for the often-unacknowledged parallels between the two rape narratives of the novel, in which the violence of one rape narrative is contextualized through white desire and another through black animality. Even as Graham registers how *Disgrace* scrutinizes a rhetoric that refuses to rigorously examine white violence during and after apartheid and criticizes sympathetic readings of David’s perspective, she ultimately suggests that he “stumbles upon a stunted form of care for the ‘plain ordinary’ Bev Shaw and for the dog to whom he gives the gift of death” (12).

Just as Graham criticizes a lack of acknowledgment that David’s “affair” with Melanie was not seduction, but rape, I believe there is a need to acknowledge that David’s ‘gift of death’ is not humane, but necropolitical. Readings that emphasize the ethical potential of David’s relationship with the animal disregard the enabling legacy of white national identity. I hope to have shown that, although scholars have productively explored the role of the animal and the operations of whiteness in the novel discreetly, it is crucial to explore these in conjunction to

fully account for the white national ideologies that continue to permeate the governing of non-human animals and natures.

The Postapartheid Animal and the Legacies of Apartheid Ideologies

During the apartheid era, segregation rhetoric often revolved around population issues. The purported rapid population growth of Africans as opposed to white European settlers in South Africa shaped nationalist arguments of African overpopulation as a pressing public health concern. Eugenics, a discourse that is “predicated on the idea that social and political objectives could be efficiently achieved through the deliberate manipulation of genetic pools” (Dubow 154), provided the framework and language for reproductive policies. These policies responded to fears of “the vulnerability of white civilization in the face of the numerical preponderance of Africans” (156) and the purported “fear of racial ‘degeneration’” (155). As determined by scholars such as Tom Moultrie and Saul Dubow, the vulnerability of white civilization was anchored in the rhetoric of “swamping”, “flooding” (Moultrie 220), and the threat of “the rising tide of color” (Dubow 156) and saturated the paranoia with urgency. The legacy overpopulation rhetoric and its mechanisms of control remain a central ideology for the framing of animal welfarism in postapartheid South Africa. The killing of the animal through the practice of euthanasia as well as spay/neuter programs for canines and felines are just some of the purported ‘humane’ modes of navigating the animal in crisis. *Disgrace*’s representation of the practice of euthanasia adopts the rhetoric of overpopulation that draws attention to the necropolitics of the animal in South Africa.

There are three acts of violence against the animal in the novel that signal the white national imaginaries that shape the necropolitical territory of the animal: the euthanization of companion and livestock animals at the Animal Welfare League, the shooting of Lucy’s dogs at

the farm, and the slaughter of two sheep. Even as the practice of euthanasia is the only continued form of violence against animals in the novel, the narrative frames Bev and David's standing appointment to euthanize superfluous pets as humane. David, the focalizer of the narrative, represents violence against animals, not including euthanasia, as a result of institutional and moral decline postapartheid. This framing shows the neutralization of white colonial violence against animals. The narrative draws attention to modes of displacement that imply it is Black South Africans who perpetuate violence against animals.

The novel explicitly places animals in a position of crisis in a changing nation in which "a time must come" (Coetzee 219) when (white) animal lovers carry the burden of the embodied remainders of the crisis. Throughout the novel, we witness the killing of the animal, over and over again, as the novel sets up a distinction between practices of killing the animal. The social, political, and actual death of the animal is negotiated through its necropolitics. Achille Mbembe defines necropolitics as "the ultimate expression of sovereignty [that] largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty's limits, its fundamental attributes" (12). Thus, for Mbembe necropolitics are closely related to the nation and its biopolitics. He explains that "the exercise of sovereignty, in turn, consists in society's capacity for self-creation through recourse to institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary significations" (13). In other words, the way a dominant power exercises its necropolitics is by signifying shared ideologies executed through recourse institutions. In this dynamic, I read the postapartheid animal and its explicit link to white nation-building and the protection of white interest as signaling how animal welfarism in South Africa (and Coetzee's early postapartheid South Africa, specifically) is an institution "inspired by the social and imaginary significations" (13) of white vulnerability in the restructuring of the nation.

An animal necropolitical lens thus pays attention to the instrumentalization of animals (politically, literally, etc..) in the project of modernity and highlights the political and social mechanisms of its institution. In the context of South Africa's colonial history and white nationalism, a reading of animal necropolitics makes visible the destruction of precarious bodies, animals, humans, and otherwise.

The representation of animal welfarism as nowhere "on the list of the nation's priorities" in a postapartheid state, sets up a picture of institutional and ideological decline. Animal welfare organizations, their shelters, and clinics are significant executing institutions of humane ideologies and welfarism. In *Disgrace*, the Animal Welfare League and its ideologies are represented through Bev Shaw, Lucy, and soon-to-be converted David. The narrative carefully sets up the contrast of the once flourishing Animal Welfare Clinic, and the worsening condition of the building that "smells pungently of urine" (Coetzee 80). Through these conditions, David reads animal welfare as a crumbling institution, a dying "subculture" fighting "a losing battle" (73), and thus echoes the fear of the decline of a white national imaginary. The once active charity, a symbol of the success of white "civilization" and its environmental ideologies under apartheid, is now neglected like the animals it sets out to protect. In many cases, the shelter is a hospice rather than a hospital and suggests the animal welfare clinic run by Bev Saw as "a place not of healing [...] but of last resort" (84). The animal shelter thus carries the tragic responsibility to solve the overpopulation crisis addressed with sterilization as much as with euthanasia. Bev expands:

'The trouble is, there are just too many of them,' says Bev Shaw. 'They don't understand it, of course, and we have no way of telling them. Too many by our standards, not by theirs. They would just multiply and multiply if they had their way, until they filled the earth. They don't think it's a bad thing to have lots of offspring. The more the jollier. Cats the same' (85).

If we believe Bev, the problem of the animal is thus numerical, a problem that tragically escapes the animal, however. Human intervention in the lives of animals is thus marked not only as necessary in the interest of the animal population, but its control is signaled as the only humane solution. It is Lucy who makes the connection for the reader between the decay of the animal clinic and the purported animal overpopulation. Bev is fighting this battle alone, Lucy explains, because “there is no funding any longer. On the list of the nation’s priorities, animals come nowhere” (73). In the postapartheid state, it seems, animal control is the burden of environmentalists aligned with apartheid’s animal welfare institution. In light of colonial and imperial histories, a positioning of white, western interventions as the necessary work of developmentalism and civilizing trajectories perpetuates the centering of white governance of nonwhite and nonhuman populations.

The centering of white governance as necessary for the nation’s well-being is signified most strongly through the echoing of particular key concepts of population control under apartheid. In line with such framing, David explains that “the dogs that are brought in suffering from distemper, from broken limbs, from infected bites, from mange, from neglect, benign or malign, from old age, from malnutrition, from internal parasites, but most of all from their own fertility” (142). “Fertility” is a keyword that immediately brings to mind the discourse that formed and deformed population control under apartheid in which Africans’ fertility was presented as the looming downfall of white civilization. The Commission for Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu within the Union of South Africa, a commission founded to address the political, social, and economic effects of African vis-a-vis white population growth, shamelessly promoted racialized ideas of fertility to cultivate segregation ideologies:

...it cannot be assumed that [Africans’] attitude towards reproduction will change quickly enough in a spontaneous manner to realize the fruits of economic development in the

form of higher material standard of living... What is indicated, therefore, appears to be a campaign for the promotion of planned parenthood (South Africa 30).

It is “Africans”’s purported high fertility in combination with a lack of perspective for the regulation of their reproduction in the interest of development that become the enforcing framework of population control during apartheid. David’s representation of animal suffering and neglect as a product of their fertility and their respective lack of perspective mirrors the logic of segregation ideologies. This places the animal in the care of animal welfare organizations and their ‘humane’ practices of population control.

The idea that nature is the animal’s true demise while ignoring the Anthropocene and white nation-building is the driving logic of euthanasia in animal welfarism. Animal welfare organizations, such as the Animal Anti-Cruelty League (AACL), have rhetorically well-crafted policies regarding euthanasia that ensure the executioners’ love and care for the animal. The AACL is one of the largest independent animal welfare organizations in South Africa with several branches in eight locations including Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth. AACL’s philosophical clarification of the circumstances under which euthanasia is practiced by their instituting organizations are delineated by this statement from their website:

it must, however, be understood that while every effort is made towards achieving this ‘happy outcomes goal’ [adoption], there are times when due to the dynamics of kennel life and factors beyond our control, this is not always possible. There are, and will continue to be times when, due to these very factors, a decision has to be taken between the kennel, veterinary and behavioural staff where it would be in the best interests of the animal concerned, to be humanely euthanized by our compassionate and caring hospital staff, who ensure that the dignity of the animal always remains their priority.

The overall tone of the statement aims to defer the accountability of the animals' fate to “factors beyond [their] control” (n.pag) including “the dynamics of the kennel life” (n.pag). What exactly such “factors beyond [their] control” are, remains explicitly vague. Yet, this rhetorical

evasiveness allows the institution to justify euthanasia on healthy, non-suffering animals as long as the killing is done humanely. Such is the philosophy of the Animal Welfare League and its ‘decaying’ institution Bev’s struggles to keep operating. There, at the end of each week, Bev and David solve “the week's superfluous canines” (Coetzee 142). David emphasizes that, while a dog’s time on the euthanasia list varies, “a time *must* come, it can not be evaded, when he will have to bring [them] to Bev Shaw in her operating room” (my emphasis 219). This professed inevitability of animal death is coded as benevolence for the animal in crisis.

Similarly, the inevitability of the animals’ fate in the AACL statement is considered to counterbalance the love, care, and compassion of the euthanizing staff before, during, and after the death. It is these notions of care and love with which Bev Shaw and, in the end, David’s participation in euthanasia are characterized. When David decides to euthanize the dog he has developed an emotional bond with, he imagines himself performing practices of killing humanely: “Perhaps he will carry him in his arms [...] and caress him and brush back his fur so that the needle can find his vein, and whisper to him and support him in the moment when, bewilderingly, his legs buckle” (219). While David is not oblivious to the animal’s experience of the process, he counterbalances his role with acts of redemption, “giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love” (219). To David, he carries the burden of the animal in crisis in a nation with other priorities. The governing of the animal is thus presented as assistance. euthanasia is care “in the best interest of the animal concerned” (AACL n.pag) and it is the love and compassion of the executioners that makes it an act of humane killing.

David’s proclaimed love and care before, during, and after death preserves the animals’ dignity in death. In the same way that the AACL stresses the importance of “[ensuring] that the dignity of the animal always remains [the] priority” (n.pag.), David is concerned with the

“disgrace of dying” and the possible dishonoring of the animals’ bodies (143f). Lurie’s Monday ritual of burning the superfluous canine bodies at the incinerator is thus an act of reclaiming the animals, as well as his own grace and honor. Yet, it is this notion of dignity and honor, of a faith in the humane treatment of the animals that Lurie instrumentalizes to secure belonging in South Africa. Linguist Paul-Mikhail Podosky argues that using morally implicit language, such as humane killing, invites a discernment that focuses on how the animal is killed “while ignoring judgments about whether or not such killing ought to happen” (76). More specifically, he argues for a difference between “*killing humanely* and a *humane killing*”(76). While the former points towards the “process or method of killing, the latter refers to the justness or fairness of ending life” (76f), and blurs the line between procedure and practice, between mechanisms and ideology. Letting live thus becomes impossible in the animal welfare’s deployment of euthanasia as care. In other words, the practice of euthanasia is firmly positioned in the necropolitics of the animal that navigates the securing of white national imaginaries.

David’s reflection on public opinion, the function of euthanasia, and its instituting organizations show that compassion for and killing of animals are intimately intertwined. He reflects: “When people bring a dog in they do not say straight out, ‘I have brought you this dog to kill,’ but that is what is expected” (Coetzee 142). In the enlightenment fashion, the animal in crisis is a problem to be solved. David similarly identifies that “what is being asked for is, in fact, *Lösung* (German always to hand with an appropriate blank abstraction): sublimation, as alcohol is sublimed in water, leaving no residue, no aftertaste” (Coetzee, original emphasis 142). Yet, the animal does not go without a trace, but instead, begins to haunt David, to take its toll. As he begins to “help Bev Shaw *lösen* the week’s superfluous canines”(142), he questions whether or not he has “the gift of hardness” (143) like those professions in which “cruelty is

demanding in the line of duty” (143). This marks the practice of euthanasia, and consequently his involvement, as the duty and burden of animal welfare and allows him to displace the violence of the procedure. The representation of euthanasia that requires “the gift of hardness” however, radically differs from his representation of slaughter, which according to David, requires “indifference, hardheartedness” (125). Petrus’s practice of killing the animal is portrayed as an ethical shortcoming. The only difference between David’s sacrifice of the dog and Petrus’ sacrifice of the sheep is the bleached ideology of animal welfarism in which livestock slaughter is barbaric and euthanasia is humane. Lurie’s perspective thus reveals the ways in which animal necropolitics map a moral code for the killing of the animal in *Disgrace* and is reflective of postapartheid securing of white South African national imaginaries.

This is the Country. This is Africa”: Livestock Slaughter

In South Africa’s colonial history, the dog represents a significant instrument of white nationalism in South Africa, while the slaughter of livestock, often a celebratory symbol of marriage, birth, and funerals (Qekwana et. al), and in the case of *Disgrace*, land ownership, seems to threaten white national imaginaries. The dog, “sanitized through domestication” (Ballard 1074) is a symbol of the success of civilization as a trajectory for humanity, a trajectory that encourages “sympathetic, non-utilitarian and non-violent encounters with animals” (1075). Livestock slaughter troubles the bleached, urban ideologies of animal welfare in which violent encounters with the animal, such as meat production, is often rurally outsourced.

The assessment of animal welfare issues in regards to livestock slaughter, such as Qekwana’s study, often focuses on the strict analysis of quantitative data carefully navigating around the political tension as though it can be separate from ongoing colonial, civilizing history. The main criticism of the study, for example, lies with the unsecured transport, no water or food

provision during transport or before slaughter, and the lack of stunning the animal before slaughter. This implicitly frames the care for the animal within the limits of the ideology of humane killing that produces a particular kind of knowledge, a knowledge that can only affirm and expand the discourse around such ideology.

David's criticism of Petrus's execution of slaughter moves alongside similar welfare concerns; the fact that the sheep do not have access to grass and water is the reported source of his tribulation. His concern for the quality of life of the sheep and the preservation of their dignity in death reflects ethical concerns: "I'm not sure I like the way he does things -- bringing the slaughter-beasts home to acquaint them with people who are going to eat them" (Coetzee 124). The slaughter conflicts with the kind of sympathetic encounters animal welfare discourses imagine. Lurie criticizes what he identifies as an act of deceit, a false investment in a relationality that will end too soon (and ends in one animal eating another). It is not the death of the animal that bothers David, it is the inhumane, undignified way of dying for the animal. Lucy criticizes this ethical loophole: "What would you prefer? That the slaughtering be done in an abattoir, so that you needn't think about it?" (124). The difference between the slaughterhouse, the Animal Welfare Clinic, and Petrus' property is the illusion of institutional authority. Similar to the Animal Welfare Clinic, the slaughterhouse is a signifying institution of industrialized killing neutralized through a recourse to the implicit ideologies of welfarism. Lucy's wake-up call reminding David that "this is the country. This is Africa" then, in fact, suggests that animal necropolitics are indicative of certain geopolitical borders of the humane that run along racial lines. While David interprets Lucy's commentary as a lesson on the "country ways" (125), she too affirms the idea that Black South Africans perpetuate violence against animals in South Africa. The narrative highlights the limits of animal welfare ideologies and an absence of

African perspectives for navigating animal necropolitics in South Africa. The varying moral signification of the practices of killing executed by white and black characters in the novel frames animal welfare as a racialized violence vis-a-vis white nation building.

A Coup de Grâce

I have explored the ideological legacies of apartheid that signal animal welfarism as a signifying institution of white national imaginaries, however, livestock animals are positioned in dissimilar ways to companion animals. The dog's ideological and social function under apartheid has been the backdrop of critical readings of dogs in *Disgrace*, and for scholars such as Baderoon, this function "explains why the *kind* of affiliation Black people have with dogs remains fraught with political meaning today" (349). This is a meaning that Lucy off-handedly invokes when David inquires if she is not "nervous by [herself]" (Coetzee 60) alone on the farm. She asserts: "There are the dogs. Dogs still mean something." (60). Lucy asserts a notion of safety built, first and foremost, on the political weight of dogs in the protection of white property. Yet, what remains implicit in Baderoon's statement and Lucy's reassurance is that "the kind of associations [White] people have with dogs [also] remain fraught with political meaning today" (349). The responsibility of white violence against animals is recontextualized through the fraught relationality between Blackness and the animal suggesting that the political weight of the animal is a Black South African problem.

It is this neutralization of white violence that frames David's account of the execution of Lucy's dogs. The attack on the farm centers around three encounters of violence. The violence of Lurie's mutilation, the violence of Lucy's rape (which remains implicit), and the seemingly unnecessary violence against the dogs. Lurie understands the last as an affirmation that it is

Black South Africans who perpetuate violence against animals in South Africa. David's report repeatedly invokes morality and the notion of disgrace:

Now the tall man appears from around the front, carrying the rifle. With practised ease he brings a cartridge up into the breach, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs' cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a *coup de grace*.

A hush falls. The remaining three dogs, with nowhere to hide, retreat to the back of the pen, milling about, whining softly. Taking his time between shots, the man picks them off (Coetzee 95f).

Lurie's depiction is an interplay of carefully assigned intent and anthropomorphic emotional reading of the dogs' suffering. It is the graphic depiction of the seemingly unfaced cruelty, the described savoring of each execution that reads as especially heinous. The repeated contrast of violent actions carried out with ease and the "heavy" impact of those acts on the confined animals solidifies the atrociousness of this power imbalance. This allows David to strategically dehumanize the Black man, "this being" (95), and affirms the man's bestiality, a practice well established in the justification of merciless colonial expansion. Jackson, however, re-reads the history of dehumanization that often reflects humanist readings of white oppression but is somehow "treated as sufficient shorthand for humanist thought (especially Enlightenment thought) concerning blackness" (23). A parallel that was overlooked, and according to Jackson, requires a reformulation:

I replace the notion of "denied humanity" and "exclusion" with bestialized humanization, because the African's humanity is not denied but appropriated, inverted, and ultimately plasticized in the methodology of abjecting animality. (23).

David's act of dehumanization of the attacker not as an animal, but as "this being" (Coetzee 95), deprived of formerly bestializing significations, the attacker's blackness is now plasticized

through a lack of humanity. The humanity that is denied to the attacker is thus not ontological, but ideological. His dehumanization is defined by a lack of benevolence, of grace. In the governing structure of animal welfare regulated by humane ideologies, blackness takes the form of disgrace and functions to determine the limits of care for the animal.

In brutal contrast to the attacker, this is a position that enables David to see himself as the preserver of the animals' dignity while the attacker is lacking such respect. Some of the dogs shot do not die instantly, yet the attacker does not "bother to administer a *coup de grace*" (95). The representation of mercy killing as the minimum decency given to those less powerful is firmly situated in the concept of necropolitics. This draws a connection between power and duty of care that undergirds the consideration of the animal in welfarism. Most interestingly, for David, this duty extends to the body of the animal after death. On Mondays, after the animal clinic's killing sessions, "he drives the loaded kombi to the grounds of Settlers Hospital, to the incinerator, and there consigns the bodies in their black bags to the flames" (144). The dog-man he has become (146), he "offers himself to the service of dead dogs" (146). As a result of David's need to preserve the dog's dignity, he disposes of the bodies himself. Leaving the bags overnight would mean that the corpses mix with the weekend's pile of disposable items; "waste from the hospital wards, carrion scooped up at the roadside, malodorous refuse from the tannery - a mixture both causal and terrible." (144). This signals a state of dishonor, David is "not prepared to inflict [...] upon them" (144). The scene at the incinerator signals a desensitization of violence, normalized through the merciless processes of colonialism. While David is concerned with the dignity of the dogs he killed, he is less concerned with the women and children picking through the same waste. His service is an act of advocacy for "his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for

processing,” but not a world in which women and children do not rummage through the medical waste for survival. Violence is both neutralized and invoked as it serves to secure his new identity as a dog-man. David is asserting his humanity not in abjection to the animal but in conjunction with it. All the while, he fails to put into perspective the violence of white nationalism that he so ruthlessly invokes in the process of securing his belonging.

Whiteness, Gendered Violence, and the Postapartheid Animal

The invocation of violence and neutralization of white national ideologies continues to navigate the animal necropolitics in contemporary South Africa. In December of 2021, *The Mail & Guardian*, known for its political and investigative reporting, published an article that brings awareness to legislative and structural departmental shortcomings in the enforcement of Animal Protection Act 71 from 1993 and the lack of interdepartmental consultation in the drafting of the new Animal Welfare Bill (March 2021). The same article quotes Karen Trendler, former National Council of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) wildlife manager, who concludes: “Part of the problem with animal welfare is not necessarily the Acts, or who is enforcing it. But if you have a country that is so desensitised to violence ... then animal welfare is at the bottom of the list” ([ellipsis in original text] n.pag). A good twenty years after *Disgrace* received much critical attention for its representation of South Africa’s postapartheid race relations and animal welfare, the analysis is bleak despite the hopeful critical readings. The animal appears to remain at the bottom of the nation’s list of priorities.

Interestingly, Trendler’s statement also alludes to a correlation between violence and animal welfare within the continued project of national development. South Africa’s continued struggle with violence, often sexual and racial violence, makes South Africa’s rape rate one of the highest in the world. Trendler’s statement thus sets into close proximity gendered violence

and violence against animals that evokes particular apartheid histories. Under apartheid, “fears of the rape of white women by black man — was used to justify the earliest segregation laws in South Africa, which have disastrous implications for the country’s black population in the twentieth century” ([sic] Graham 5). Thus, in the white South African public imagination gender violence was a racial issue and thus justified segregation and control of the affairs of nonwhite people. This brings forth a re-reading of animal welfare organizations such as the Animal Anti-Cruelty League (AACL), whose philosophy on euthanasia was analyzed earlier, and their signifying ideologies. Olga Allen, who founded AACL in 1956, traces the history of the organization: “At this time [1956], the Anti-Cruelty League’s (as they were formerly known) mission, included the harbouring and care of abused women and children, but it soon became apparent that this would be a difficult mix to maintain and that concentration should be given to the area of animal welfare” (“The Animal Anti-Cruelty League History”). In the context of population control and reproductive policies that particularly affected Black women’s reproductive health, it seems surprising that violence against women and children was not prioritized under apartheid unless this concentration is framed by the safety of white women and children. The acceptance of violence against Black women and children during apartheid represents a form of genocide that remains opaque in care for the animal.

It strikes me as relevant that gendered violence and violence against children remain in the vicinity of care for the animal, and yet, even as it suggests an intimacy with colonial violence, remains unnoted. Jackson also registers an intersection of race, gender, and the animal in the inception of blackness throughout colonial and imperial histories. She draws attention to “the roles of gender and sexuality in the production of blackness as ‘animal man’” (5) that have often been ignored as the less “profound category of difference” (5) used in the construction of

whiteness and western concepts of the human. The narrative draws attention to the relative indifference of gender violence against black bodies in the discourse of animal welfare. The locations that become the institutional locus of humane killing and the preservation of the animal's dignity, the Animal Welfare League and the incinerator at Settler Hospital, are populated with violence against women and children. At the clinic, "there are children all around him, begging for money" (Coetzee 80), while at the incinerator women and children pick through the trash. While David does not racially identify the women and children as black South Africans, he used racial signifiers such as the "*muti* shop" (145) to place people who "hang about" (145) in the vestibule of locations of white care. Animal welfare in South Africa reflects a historical investment in white well-being that coincides with the nation's well-being. The explicit link between violence and welfare, in which black women and animals seem to slip through institutional cracks of the nation, reflects an ongoing securing of white national ideologies at the expense of nonwhite, nonhuman animals and natures. In Coetzee's work, sexual violence and violence against animals are cross-racially intertwined and represent central processes of securing white South African belonging during political and racial integration postapartheid.

Conclusion

While scholars such as Mwangi begin the reading from and reading through African perspectives and literatures, engagement with the postcolonial animal has often been considered the animal within white environmental discourses. Within these discourses, non-western approaches to animal experiences are often represented as uncivilized and, respectively, inhumane. The novel brings to bear the diverging contextualization of practices such as the slaughter and sacrifice of animals as signifiers of the moral decline of shared (white) ideologies, on the one hand, and the practice of euthanasia and animal population control as signifiers of the humane treatment

leading the path for interspecies justice, on the other. This a paradox that, even though some critics of the novel register the colonial histories and its white nationalism, remains unaccounted. Instead, David Lurie becomes the unwilling hero of the nation's ethical growth. Such readings perpetuate white national imaginary and the neutralization of white violence in the name of national development.

Disgrace, and other works of Coetzee, are often placed within postcolonial studies, a discourse that, according to Wright, seeks "to bring into focus the voices of marginalized peoples through sustained analysis of the mechanisms of colonial silencing" (2). Animal welfarism in South Africa continues to be framed through the bleached ideologies of the humane treatment of animals. Animal welfare is the continuation of colonial modes of control that make unthinkable alternative perspectives of the animal outside of welfarism. The novel emphasizes the silencing and the resulting absence of African views of the animal and its care. The continued representation of animals at the bottom of the list in particular through white environmental discourses perpetuates stereotypes of Africans' inability and disinterest in the animal. Animal welfare organizations in South Africa such as the AAAL and their governing ideologies need to account for the nation's continued investment in white nation-building. If the postcolonial animal has the potential for decolonizing futures and the decentering of western philosophies of knowing that scholars such as Mwangi and Jackson (and myself) have read in the intersection of anti-blackness and colonial expansion, the discourse has to become radically undisciplined.

CHAPTER III

OCEAN CHRONICLES: MOLLUSKS AND POSTCOLONIAL ECOLOGIES

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen how animal necropolitics, as it is practiced through animal welfare institutions and its normative (bleached) frameworks, affirms white nationalist imaginaries in South Africa. The reading of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* unfolds the ways in which care and animal welfare forge a white South African belonging to the nation and its non-human natures. The novel makes visible the absence of black African ecological perspectives on care for the animal vis-à-vis racialized ideologies of care. This chapter moves from scrutinizing animal necropolitics in relation to animal welfare to thinking about how animal necropolitics are enacted through conservation and development policy in South Africa. By adapting a globalized environmental outlook that has been assumed universal²⁵, these policies, which attempt the reconciliation of conservation and development, often fail to account for not only the political and racial legacies of apartheid and its impact on human-animal relationality but also how these legacies render the animal itself opaque and disposable. This dynamic is especially apparent when one considers how animals that score low on the animacy hierarchy are particularly exploited by the forceful integration of postcolonial nations into global markets.

To think about animal necropolitics in South African conservation policy, I focus on creative works that center mollusks, more specifically, the South African abalone otherwise

²⁵ See Ramachandra Guha's "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique." Guha criticizes claims about deep ecologies' purported universality and its application in postcolonial nations.

referred to as perlemoen, and the octopus. Both species of mollusks share the ecosystem of the kelp forests, yet they are connected to South African oceanic industries and their conservation frameworks through distinctive modes of consumption. Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005) addresses the effects of the illicit abalone trade in South African coastal communities. The novel, which is narratively driven by the relationship between a man and a whale and often read to reject understandings of the animal as a commodity, also intimate how the category of faceless animals, such as the mollusk, stands in juxtaposition to those animals presented as worth caring for. While the narrative unsettles oversimplified representations of poaching as greedy environmental crimes against the nation, consideration for the abalone itself remains surprisingly absent from the novel, its scholarship, and current South African conservation policy. In light of the varying ways in which aquatic animals are integrated into oceanic industries in South Africa in the reconciliation of "international obligations" (Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment) and South Africa's global image, I offer a rereading of *The Whale Caller's* watershed scene. I read Sharisha's death as a spectacle of grotesque visual consumption in which the raining of flesh celebrates welfarist necropolitics. As an eco-fictional text, *The Whale Caller* unveils a stance of care and conservation forged through global western perspectives that have no space for human-animal non-capitalistic relationality. Considering animal necropolitics in South Africa contributes to postcolonial ecological thought by disrupting the seamless fit of neoliberal conservationist and developmentalist perspectives as universally applicable.

The documentary film *My Octopus Teacher* (2020), centered around Craig Foster, a white South African filmmaker, who captures the development of a year-long relationship between himself and an octopus, seems to refute the mollusk as a faceless commodity. However, Foster's advocacy framework is built on a voice-over narration that neutralizes the filmmaking

process and its institutionalized advocacy. I suggest that *My Octopus Teacher* disregards Foster's exploitation of the animal for personal revitalization after a burnout and identity crisis. In his role as a filmmaker and activist, Foster asserts his belonging to South Africa's natural world and leverages the image of the octopus teacher as part of a global knowledge economy in which caring for the octopus is profitable. 'Giving a face' to the octopus (and the mollusk) through expanding the circle of oceanic animals, suggesting they are too intelligent or sentient to be commodified, risks perpetuating western, colonial philosophies of knowing and caring for the animal. My reading of *The Whale Caller* and *My Octopus Teacher* strives to offset the seamless reinstatement of colonial power through nature in institutionalized discourses of conservation. I aim to probe the connection between ecological studies and social justice in the postcolony tilted away from the epistemologies of the global North.

Oceanic Industries: Animal Necropolitics and National Development

Mda's *The Whale Caller* is centered around the unnamed protagonist otherwise referred to as the Whale Caller and his love for whale calling. At the moment we enter the narrative, the Whale Caller is living in the small fisher town of Hermanus, a South African coastal town and popular tourist destination for whale watching. The Whale Caller is particularly infatuated with a southern right whale named Sharisha to whom he devotes all his time until Saluni, the "village drunk" (Mda 23), enters his life. The increasing enclosures of oceanic industries and conservation regulations for the novel's characters become the ever-present backdrop of the narrative. While for many local fishers and small-scale fisheries fishing has become unprofitable as a result of strict quotas for private permits, the whale-watching ecotourists are pricing local citizens out of Hermanus. Because the whale is central to the ecotourism of coastal regions such

as Hermanus, Cape Town, or Port Elizabeth, it is hardly surprising that the giant, flashy mammals whose gentle intelligence has elevated the whale to near human status, have been rendered worth preserving. Yet, the novel also sheds light on the faceless animals of oceanic industries, such as the abalone, whose preservation is not tied to the particular visuality and bodily integrity attributed to the whale. The abalone's necropolitics are navigated by its worth to nation-building. The Whale Caller and Saluni's encounter with a poacher of abalone traces the limits of conservation policies that inform the kind of care and consideration animals and humans receive within the network of oceanic industries in the postcolony. The novel's climax, the day Sharisha beaches, dramatically brings together the tensions of institutionalized discourses of care and oceanic industries leaving the Whale Caller to do the work of penance.

Ecocritical readings of Mda's works at the turn of the century, in particular those of *The Whale Caller* and *The Heart of Redness*, have traced a disillusionment with environmental policies and their efficacy for the alleviation of poverty and the conservation of biodiversity. A testament to Mda's rich, intricate, and disruptive writings, *The Whale Caller* has evoked a proliferation of productive readings over the last two decades. A large number of scholars have considered the precarious and marginalized positions of Mda's characters who face the dichotomy between nature and civilization in the nation's transitions (most notably Goodman, Wenzel, Steinwald, Finchman, Bartosch, among others). Goodman, for example, identifies the thematization of "post-struggle issues" (107) and recognizes its "relation to the political genealogy of white nationalism" (107), yet the focus lies on the Whale Caller's perspective and the whale as a "whimsical" element ignoring the range of Mda's animals relevant to understanding postapartheid articulations of South Africa. The political legacy of white nationalism does not only impact the institutionalized and ideological care for the animal

postapartheid but has long been the tool of white worldmaking (see Chapter 1,3,4). Goodman productively engages with the conflict of reunification, suggesting “the dis-ease and visibility of the seam created by the suture, [makes] us aware of the incommensurability of the seams which have sewn up our culture into a falsely comfortable whole” (108). Paying attention to the necropolitics of the animal negotiated in Mda’s oceanic industries, I suggest, shows the *seamless* integration of the animal into neocolonial worldmaking, which often forecloses a more comprehensive visibility of the suture. The novel treats the abalone, unlike Sharisha, as a non-desiring commodity, its value determined through market interest highlighting the irreducible limitations of universal welfarist approaches. Unable to think care outside of animacy hierarchies, discourses of animal welfarism both produce and legitimize conceptions of sustainability that calculate growth and development alongside nearly invisible structures of animal consumption.

More recent scholarship has been more concerned with human/ non-human boundaries and, in particular, with Black African ecological perspectives that are at odds with western hierarchies grounded in the strict distinction between human and nonhuman natures (Woodward, Sewall, Feldbruegge, Price, and Iannaccaro). Harry Sewall, for example, suggests that *The Whale Caller* “attests to an investment in indigenous knowledge systems” (37) and traces “interfaces of the human/animal symbiosis” (37). Jason Price reads the novel as a narrative of capitalist resistance through a centering of nonhuman desire in the figure of Sharisha. While positioning non-human desire as a mode of resistance to neocolonial violence makes possible the space for queer belonging, I argue, the novel makes us aware that “interfaces of the human/animal symbiosis” (37) are not exclusively centered around human-animal relationships with desirable

animals, those re-packaged for eco-tourists.²⁶ The abalone, fish, and other animals in Mda's postapartheid South Africa are neither desired nor desiring and are often part of capitalist actualizations on varying scales. Thus, while the Whale Caller's relationship with Sharisha bears the sign of an "investment in indigenous knowledge systems" (37), the range of aquatic animals in the novel signals investment in western, purportedly universal approaches to conservation and welfare that require more careful disentangling.

In addition to the interfaces of symbiosis between humans and animals, I argue, the novel stages a consideration of aquatic life that includes other animated materials. The ocean, as an animating force worth recognizing and engaging with regarding South Africa's interwoven conservation and development, has been mostly overlooked. Even as Goodman considers the opening lines of the novel framed by the animated sea, he reads it as a foreboding sign of the unfolding of unaddressed dysfunctionality in an unevenly developing South Africa. The sea is considered part of human meaning-making rather than shared meaning-making. However, Meg Samulason and Charne Lavery recently proposed the category of the oceanic South, both as a "model of textuality" (46) and modes of analysis that pays attention to the intersections of global extractive frameworks and colonial legacies. This "perspective of the sea" (46) unsettles the representation of oceanic industries that I locate in *The Whale Caller*. The knowledge of natures and (animated) materials (the sea, Sharisha, the kelp horn, abalone, frogs, goats, vibrations, smells) produce a fabric of reality in which the animal and its shared history of domination is animated and animating. Ultimately, even as Mda's critical scholarship recognizes the limits of thinking about human-animal relationality between national development and market-oriented

²⁶ See Phillip Armstrong's "The Postcolonial Animal."

environmental policies for decolonial trajectories, many scholars are too quick to read the animal as an avenue for alternative environmental perspectives.

As outlined above, scholars of the novel have drawn our attention to the relationship between man and whale as the nexus of ecocritical departure in Mda's postapartheid South Africa but have given little to no consideration to the other aquatic animals in the novel not quite as marketable as the whale. The abalone remains faceless, whereas the whale's established intelligence and complex forms of communication have, as Dan Wylie argues, "brought them swiftly into that realm of near-humanity occupied by the great apes and elephants" (43). In their focus on Sharisha, critics align themselves to some degree with the novel's whale watcher. The whale-watching industry values a particular embodiedness required for the visual consumption of whales. Mda's novel emphasizes, however, that the abalone trade, in contrast, values abalone as quantities of meat. The abalone becomes part of the global market as an animal to be eaten, rather than seen. I argue that Mda's representation of oceanic industries thus makes visible a discrepancy between modes of consumption that shape global ecological stances and their institutional governing. Already vulnerable members of local communities interwoven with oceanic industries, both human and non-human, are rendered powerless in the processes of national development and neoimperial worldmaking.

Mollusk Tales

In a framework between national development and imaginings of decolonization through neocolonial trajectories, non-capitalist modes of relationality with the animal become unarticulatable. The reconciliation of "sustainable" development and neoliberal pursuits adumbrate the possibility of animal agency. This is a tension that becomes visible when the

Whale Caller and Saluni encounter a poacher walking ‘the road’ and passing through Gansbaai. The representation of the abalone trade reveals prevailing misrepresentations of abalone, the *haliotis midae*, as endangered through poaching, the poacher as a heartless criminal, and poaching as a crime against the nation. The Whale Caller’s consideration of the abalone and the poacher remains within the moral and political nexus of sustainability and welfare. This framework secures the animal’s commodification and marks the “puny” (190) poacher as undeserving of care. When the Whale Caller finds a large bag of perlemoen he determines the owner, a “puny man in faded jeans” (190), is a poacher. As the man claims that the perlemoen are “for the pot” (190), the Whale Caller explains: “It can’t be for the pot. [...]. The law allows you only four perlemoen a day for the pot. You are a poacher.” (190). The Whale Caller invokes a sustainability framework that forecloses more complex interpretations of the situation. Even as the man indicates that government quotas for legal harvesting are insufficient and even though he is repeatedly described as “puny” (191-195) the Whale Caller insists “it’s all wrong” (191). Thus, while everything about the poacher’s appearance communicates a need and desperation that suggests illegal harvesting as a mode of survival, environmental discourses often present environmental crimes as greedy crimes against the nation, conflating moral and market frameworks of sustainability.

The conceptualization of the poacher, poaching, and the role of institutionalization under the jurisdiction of environmental agencies such as the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries (DFFE), have provided the framework of public duty to call out environmental crimes as universally reprehensible. Even though research has shown that increasing restrictions on harvesting abalone have affected “the small-scale fishers living in or near coastal communities that required the resources for sustenance” (Van AS and Cordell 10) and has turned poaching

into a mode of survival, and, for a few, into a means of neoliberal self-actualization, poaching is often constructed as a crime against the nation and its natures. A pamphlet by the DFFE, for example, displaces the responsibility of environmental crimes exclusively on the offender. The informational pamphlet “Undertaking Environmental Compliance and Enforcement” not only strategically displaces responsibility but also uses deceiving economic rhetoric that naturalizes the animal’s right to live through their market value. Breaking down their ‘undertaking’ into digestible subcategories, the pamphlet asks “Who Commits Environmental Crimes?” only to oversimplify the response:

Environmental crimes are usually the result of calculated business decisions either to make money or save money. A very small proportion of environmental crimes are committed out of desperation or need. The greed of environmental criminals is encouraged by the short sighted perception that abusing or harming the environment does not matter. [...] However, many of these crimes are undertaken by organised syndicates; and may consequently not only be life-threatening, but also cost our country billions of rand each year (4).

The pamphlet asserts criminal, premeditated, conscious intent that is supposed to logically contradict any assumption that environmental crimes may be committed out of “desperation or need” (4). With greed and intent established, the pamphlet identifies the environmental criminal’s indifference and obliviousness as a moral disposition. Conceptualization of Africans’ lack of interest and care for the animal, often constructed in response to western discourses of conservation and welfare (Mwangi 3), justifies the disciplining of poachers and poaching, and with it, the coastal communities unevenly dependent on abalone for immediate survival.

In Mda’s work, the Whale Caller assumes the role of disciplining the poacher, reiterating notions of obliviousness. He argues that “It is all wrong” and asks: “Do you know how long it takes for those perlemoen to mature? Eight years. Eight years, I tell you” (Mda 191). The slow maturation of abalone is supposed to signal the severity of disrupting wild stocks through

poaching. The knowledge of the animal is used to discipline the moral integrity of the poacher, leveraging the abalone's vulnerability. While it seems like the Whale Caller is advocating for the abalone's agency, he merely invokes a sustainability framework. The ethical judgment of right or wrong is navigated by the limits of sustainability aimed at development and perpetuates the idea that environmental crime is the result of a lack of awareness or interest in the animal. In attempts of reconciling these, often competing, trajectories of conservation and development, sustainability becomes the key concept for responsible conservation, which often means in accordance with a global, neoliberal stance in regard to institutionalized species welfare. For example, within the most recent²⁷ standard operational procedure for abalone trade, the DFFE positions its sustainable management as follows:

D: SAM aims to achieve the above mentioned strategic objectives through the development and implementation of relevant enabling legislation, policies and programmes as well as be responsive and compliant to international obligations and agreed standards.

Sustainability in an environmental discourse would suggest, one would hope, the language for preserving not only biodiversity but also for renegotiating the relationship between humans and everything else.²⁸ Here, however, sustainability seems to secure an eco-conscious ideology for perpetual economic extraction. This reinforces the idea of nature as a resource that is to be exploited. Ultimately, raising environmental awareness through sustainability frameworks, such as the Whale Caller's advocacy for the abalone, upholds the animal's disposability within the institutionally enforced limits deceptively packaged as conservation-oriented.

The moral responsibility that the Whale Caller wants to identify in the poacher's actions is set into tension with the poacher's realities: "We have got to eat, sir, [...] We have got to feed

²⁷ From 2018.

²⁸ Environments, organisms, objects, etc.

our children. Big companies are making money out of these perlemoens. The government gives them quotas. [...] How are we expected to survive?” (191). The poacher suggests that fishing in a legal, livable way is the privilege of large companies and that the government’s tight quotas do not feed their children. Environmental crimes, much in contrast to what the pamphlet asserts, are often acts of survival and self-actualization in a new regime with the same prevailing injustices. In fact, Kimon De Greef draws a direct correlation between apartheid history and the illegal abalone trade:

In many fishing communities, still socially and economically marginalized more than 25 years after apartheid, poaching has become a major source of income. In Hangberg, an impoverished and overcrowded settlement within sight of luxury housing estates, hundreds of families have come to depend on the abalone black market. While some poachers have grown wealthy, many remain in poverty, earning a fraction of what their harvest is worth (n.pag).

De Greef signals the prevailing legacies of apartheid that produce the conditions for illegal poaching. Grounded in this uneven structure, the perseverance of illegal poaching of perlemoen is not a result of poachers’ unmanageable criminality or even rising demand, but of economic dependency on the trade. The puny man equally asserts that poaching “keeps the economy of the village going” and that “the whole village suffers” (192f) from the fishery restrictions and the persecution of poachers. The poacher explains that only the “well-known poachers have become rich, building double-storey houses in dusty townships” (191). It’s a telling picture of the landscape of uneven development, a blueprint of neocolonial, neoliberal worldmaking traced over prevailing colonial structures. While the scene gives a face to the act of poaching that cannot be reconciled with the criminalization of poachers and the framing of environmental crimes as crimes against the nation, the continued securing of abalone as an animal to be eaten or commodified through institutionalized discourses of care marks the precarious status of faceless animals and the people who “poach” them.

The environmental discourses around whales in the novel celebrate and leverage their near human status allowing Sharisha to be the subject of human desire (the Whale Caller) and to be a sexual rival (to Saluni), while the perlemoen ultimately remain a delicacy, an aphrodisiac, valued for their function over their being (as an object *for* desire). The abalone's status as an aphrodisiac, Van As and Cordell argue, creates an "increased demand for a scarce resource" (11). In fact, the demand-regulated trade increased the value of a kilogram of abalone from R27 in the 1990 to R400 in 2016 causing a "gold rush" (*White Gold*) for abalone. In a report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime at the beginning of February 2022, Kimon De Greef and Simone Hayson suggest that the war on abalone poaching is lost and that institutionalized farming and ranching will manage the sustainability of the species for continued global consumption. In this rush, the abalone remains faceless and poaching is "a crime without a face"(Lambrechts and Goga 231). Facelessness signifies those animals, shellfish in particular, that, in a hierarchy of sentience, are not sentient enough to be considered more than an abstract category of disposable individuals. This juxtaposition of care for the animal is determined by the oceanic industry's mode of consumption. Where the whale is primarily consumed as an experience, a visual and embodied experience of wildlife authenticity, the abalone is consumed as a delicacy. Facelessness thus also signifies a state of visibility in the reconciliation of market access and conservation policies. The exploitation and consumption of abalone require their killability and marketability within the ideological framework of their conservation. The depletion of South African abalone through legal and illegal harvesting remains a pressing threat, however, as Cerica Lambrechts and Khalil Goga suggest, because the illicit trade is "arguably a crime 'without a face' [in contrast to rhino poaching for example], it receives far less attention from media campaigns, funders and researchers" (231). While there have been critical

considerations for the causes and effects of poaching regarding global food security, prevailing social injustices and their apartheid legacies, concerns for the abalone itself remain absent from these discourses.

In the Whale Caller, such absence is literally and figuratively consuming as the scene reroutes from the poacher to the poached. As the poacher continues to tell “poaching stories” (193), they share a meal. Saluni, who has been dismissive of the Whale Caller and the poacher’s disagreement throughout the scene claims: ““You must eat more of this perlemoen. God knows you need it. You have not touched me since we left Hermanus”” (Mda 193). Ensuring the Whale Caller has not missed the undertone of her innuendo, its status as an aphrodisiac, the Whale Caller affirms that “everyone knows that” (193). The abalone’s function presents a kind of global knowledge that undermines the institutional conservation of abalone. While the poacher’s reality marks his instrumentalization in the complex entanglement of the trade, Saluni’s comment signals the abalone’s reality within the same entanglements. Both realities, both knowledges, however, fade into the background. The knowledge of the abalone’s slow maturing referenced by the Whale Caller, the kind of scientific knowledge environmental discourses tend to highlight to appeal to reason and to claim authority, holds little weight in the reality of the trade. Even though the trade of wild abalone is strictly regulated, and commercial trade was illegal between 2008 and 2010, *haliotis midae* was removed from CITIES list of endangered species shortly thereafter. In consequence, while the export of wild abalone is regulated in South Africa, abalone is often laundered through neighboring countries such as Namibia or Mozambique where the export is not regulated. The muddy international regulations of the trade allow for the continued overrepresentation of abalone as a commodity. The narrative traces the shortcomings of a global environmental perspective on biodiversity for the insatiable appetite of oceanic industries in the

context of globalization. The application of purportedly universal frameworks of conservation and sustainability to the abalone trade in South Africa, the novel suggests, ignores apartheid histories and its prevailing legacies of uneven development in which certain humans and nonhumans are disposable.

Ocean Chronicles

A focus on the necropolitics of the mollusks in South Africa's oceanic industries makes transparent the purported neutrality of colonial modes of governing regarding nature conservation and its seamless reinstatement of colonial thought. The prevailing ideologies of welfare approaches to conservation that follow global environmental perspectives and that maintain the commodification of the mollusks, visually or as a food resource, show that considering oceanic industries and turning one's gaze to the ocean, can disrupt such neutralization. Thus paying attention to Mda's wider narrative ecology, a focus that goes beyond the relationship between the Whale Caller and Sharisha, I suggest, contributes to postcolonial ecocritical discourses through its disruption of animal necropolitics otherwise seamlessly integrated into South Africa's nature industries.

I have already examined the ecology of abalone; I now turn to the wider ecology of the ocean itself. Samuelson and Lavery consider the southern ocean the "most neglected of oceans" (37) and thus a vantage point to articulate the "oceanic South" (37), a category that takes seriously the geopolitical framing and colonial histories of the oceanic south while rigorously interrogating modes of globalization and capitalism. The ocean is all too often "cast as inhuman and ahistorical" (38) risking the neutralization of colonial violence and its historical production. Rereading *The Whale Caller's* dramatic climax with a focus on the oceanic industries within the

animating category of the oceanic South, I suggest, marks the effects of a global environmental perspective that continues to marginalize non-white, non-human beings and natures in its centering of western philosophies of knowing. In the network of the narrative, the day Sharisha dies is nested within the larger geopolitical space through which oceanic industries are regulated and articulated. This is a network that needs to be considered in the reading of Sharisha's beaching.

On scene during the beaching, outside of Sharisha and the Whale Caller, there are bystanders, presumably tourists and other locals, scientists, and environmentalists who are quickly established as "officials" (Mda 217) and, lastly, local politicians. Soon after Sharisha beaches, "the place is beaming with police officers and bureaucrats from various government departments that deal with fisheries and nature conversation" (217). The bystanders, including the Whale Caller, are soon separated from the emergency rescue team who assert authority over the rescue. This is a point of irritation and frustration for the Whale Caller who protests that "people who know nothing about Sharisha have taken over and her life is in their hands" (217). The Whale Caller's relationship with Sharisha is built on forms of intimacy and knowing that become unarticulatable within this "official", dominant network. It is an intimacy and knowledge that has no weight in the care for Sharisha, while the scientist and environmentalist's knowledge is regarded as neutral and self-evident.

Once more, scientific knowledge and its teachings are closely connected as the environmental scientists take on educating the public and politicians alike: "The scientist patiently explains to him, obviously for the benefit of everyone else, that the whale is too big to be killed by lethal injection or shooting. Explosives will save the whale from further agony and will ensure a quick death" (223). Even as the death of Sharisha seems imminent, the forefront of

global animal welfare perspectives is invested in the reduction or avoidance of suffering and its translation into science-backed ideologies and policies. The concept of humane killing presented as the only reasonable act of human benevolence in the face of perceived suffering produces increasingly invisible structures of animal necropolitics. Much like in chapter 2, administering a coup de grace, preserving the animal's grace in death affirms humane ideologies as concerns for the welfare of animals. While the scientists focus on the most humane way of killing Sharisha, "the politicians from the national legislature are more concerned about South Africa's image in the international community" who are assumed to accuse them of "savagery and barbarism" (223). A concern that is not unfounded given the systematic animalization of colonized peoples to justify a governing that through the bestialization of particular bodies, knowledge, and cultures disciplines colonized peoples into subhuman categories. Mwangi, in a similar notion, argues that

it is right to point out that the West, even today, stereotypes non-Western cultures as insensitive to animals while continuing its own violence against nonhuman others. Therefore, what needs attention today is [...] how African postcolonial cultures, for example, have used animals to address their hopes and anxieties and, furthermore, to address the rights of animals in the real world. (3)

It is this expression of hopes and anxieties, however, that seems to be denied to the Whale Caller in the novel, and to the novel itself in some of the critical readings. In his powerlessness, he has no choice but to "leave everything to the experts from Cape Town" (Mda 219). It seems, that the city, here Cape Town, a symbol of modernity and development, decorates the experts with the most reliable knowledge while the Whale Caller is silenced in his care:

The Whale Caller prays for the powers of Ramindjeri Strong Man and tries to sing Sharisha away from the danger. His voice cannot be heard for the plea for her life is uttered only inside him. He focuses his mind on Sharisha, looking her in the eye, hoping to send his messages of salvation to her mind. He beams them out in vain" (219).

Sharisha's death and the Whale Caller's inability to save her, however, does not deny the possibility for communal action as is Gail Finchman's conclusion of the scene, but signals that underlying humane conversation ideologies, western science, and neoliberal developmentalism are overrepresented in the communal care for the animal. This overvaluation of science has a history in humanitarian inventions. Didier Fassin marks this relationship as divisive and explains that "public bodies and private groups produce representations of the world, and the social sciences give them the authority of their theoretical reflection and the substance of their empirical research" (6). Such granting of authority enables the 'humane' commercialization of nature and naturalizes understandings of sustainability that grotesquely affirm the necessity for human involvement, while effectively silencing animal agency. Within the eco-conscious trajectory, regulated by neoliberal development and secured through western inferences to best science in which particular bodies and materials are disposable, alternative experiences and effects of nature economies become difficult to articulate.

On a global scale today, this continues to justify western interference packaged as conservationist ambitions that often patronize formerly colonized nations' ability to govern themselves. Achille Mbembe, who argues that the bestialization of colonized peoples shaped and shapes the discourses about Africa,²⁹ signals the mechanisms of narrativization:

In the very principle of its constitution, in its language, and in its finalities, narrative about Africa is always a pretext for a comment about something else, some other place, some other people. More precisely, Africa is the mediation that enables the West to accede to its own subconscious and give a public account of its subjectivity (3).

What escapes Mda's politicians concerned about the global image of South Africa is that they, too, perpetuate the instrumentalization of the animal. Narratives about the animal become a

²⁹ See *On the Postcolony*, but also *The Critique of Black Reason*.

pretext to articulate South Africa's relationship with the world, while animal agency becomes unthinkable. Thus, it becomes clear that between the scientists, environmentalists, and politicians, whose knowledge and authority are based on the neutrality of science, Sharisha's rescue was always going to be a spectacle to secure global conservation ideologies that helps position South Africa in the trajectory of neoliberal developmentalism. The narrative suggests:

Like a high priest in a ritual sacrifice, a man stands over a contraption that is connected to the whale with a long red cable. [...] It is like Guy Fawkes fireworks. The glorious death brightens the sky like the pyrotechnics that are used by rock bands in the cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg. [...] The onlookers cheer and applaud like the carnival crowd they have become. (224)

Practices of ritual sacrifice are often positioned against modern human-animal relationality that centers on the most humane way of killing the animal, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, a means of positioning the killing of animals along racial lines. Similar to the forms of entertainment referenced, fireworks and concerts, the celebratory vocabulary suggests a kind of performance, the staging of an environmental stance. Sharisha's death thus becomes a spectacle of grotesque visual consumption in which the raining of flesh celebrates welfarist necropolitics in the promise of a postcolonial nation. The audience becomes a faithful participant in the instrumentalization of the animal. This is an instrumentalization that silences and leaves the Whale Caller powerless in his sorrow.

If we are shifting the narrative nexus of the novel, however, from the Whale Caller to the sea, Mda's mode of storytelling allows us to read such entanglements of colonial disciplining. Mda opens the novel and frames the narrative through unreasonable depiction of animacy: "The sea is bleeding from the wounds of Sharisha. But that is later. Now the tide returns in slight gentle movements" (3). The grammatical ambiguity of Sharisha's fate ruptures anthropocentric notions of subjectivity and natures and is reflective of the decolonial intimacies that run counter

to neoliberal developmentalist investments within the story more broadly. The passage of the narrative remains liminal, rupturing the grammar of imperial disciplining. The mode of storytelling then becomes a way to signal the weight and continuity of Sharisha's sacrifice. The opening lines of the novel ground the story within non-western cosmologies, an oceanic archive that allows for the articulation of otherwise silenced narratives. This animating force of the sea is sprinkled consistently throughout the narrative and signals a different kind of knowledge. Later on, in one of the Whale Caller's mortification sessions with Mr. Yodd, he notes fumes of decay and death. He stands corrected as he recalls:

Yes, you told me many times, Mr Yodd. These are not today's smells. They have lingered for more than two hundred years. A two-hundred-year-old stench from the slaughter of the southern rights by the French, American and British whalers at St. Helena Bay in 1785. Five hundred southern whales in one season! (16).

In this, the ocean becomes a mode of production, a mode of storytelling itself that traces a sort of animist materialism. Alexander Fyfe equally considers the productive potential of animist materialism and suggests that animism in literary texts can be read as a mode of production namely as "attempts to articulate non-capitalist forms of wealth" (324). In *The Whale Caller*, I argue, the animating force of the ocean articulates non-capitalist forms of intimacy that within conservation and developmentalist approaches have no real weight. It produces a knowledge that spills over the edges of the disciplined narratives of development and nature as natural resources. Ultimately, Mda's representation of oceanic industries does not accept the exploitation of the animal as a 'natural,' but signals the overrepresentation and overbearingness of a purportedly universal conservationist stance that does not account for non-capitalist relationality with the animal. Such critical ecological readings of the novel do not exceed the limits of political shortcomings of multispecies justice in the face of neocolonial capitalism they are interrogating, or too easily disregard the boundaries of human and nonhuman boundaries. In fact, scholarship

and contemporary representations of South Africa's environmental stance, such as *My Octopus Teacher*, signal how animal necropolitics remain navigated by abstract, universal categories of the animal and render the faceless postcolonial animal opaque.

Octopus Archives

The Whale Caller's representation of abalone as a faceless resource preserved as a species with disposable individuals signals the mode of consumption as that which determines the care for the animal within oceanic industries. While illegal harvesting has remained a critical social and environmental issue in South Africa, conservationist discourses have relied on ranching and farming to manage the 'sustainability' of wild abalone and simultaneously meet market demands. According to the aforementioned report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, "illegal harvesting is currently (as of February 2022) at its highest-ever levels" (Executive Summary 1). De Greef and Hayson foreground South Africa's social cost of poaching, "the human harms of the trade" (2) and suggest that "instead of treating abalone poaching as an environmental issue or as a law enforcement problem" (2), the report argues that it must be treated as one in which "various harms need to be balanced against each other" (2). The harms outlined are exclusively human harms, however, the balance of social justice and market demands signals that the abalone itself continues to have no real stake in the institutional care for the species. In fact, De Greef and Hayson argue to abandon the control of illegal poaching and "allowing the species to decline beyond levels that are viable for criminal enterprise" (2). Because in their opinion, the "battle to save the abalone from a population collapse has already been lost" (48) and abalone does not represent a keystone species (47f) for the survival of the kelp forest as an ecosystem, its depletion is considered a viable option. The

wild abalone in its natural ecosystem is disposable while human-made enclosures take over the sustaining and fostering of abalone securing continuous consumption and market stability. While de Greef and Hayson understand their avenue is controversial, they assure the reader that “they would certainly still survive in legal ranching facilities” (45). The reversing, slowing down or regenerating of the process of extinction as environmental preservation represents to Tania Nyong’o an extension of biopower. He suggests that what may look like “environmentally motivated” (250) removal of human influence risks “a covert reinstatement of sovereignty” (250). Thus, the letting die of the wild abalone and the fostering of abalone through aquaculture reinstates a welfarist stance on sustainability in the interest of global markets. Abalone ranching, then, as a countermeasure to the depletion of the species, represents *reanimated* modes of colonial, imperial disciplining.

While ranching and farming are considered ethical and high-welfare solutions to the endangerment of wild abalone in South Africa, planned octopus farming raises concerns among animal rights advocates. In *The Guardian* article from March 2022, Lauren Paddison sketches the debate regarding commercial octopus farming. Paddison’s angle of concern is the exceptional intelligence of the octopus. The subtitle signals that “with the film *My Octopus Teacher* showing their complexity, questions are being raised about plans for the world’s first farm” (Paddison n.pag.). In the process of refuting the facelessness of the mollusks, *My Octopus Teacher*, it seems, has rendered the octopus too sentient to be consumed. However, I argue that what looks like a growing respect and concern for the mollusks is a covert participation in the process of extraction that reproduces colonial thought. Foster’s philosophy of non-interference and the seemingly “environmentally motivated ‘giving up’ of human sovereignty” (250), in fact, reinstates fantasies of non-human wilderness. The philosophy of non-interference masks the

commercialization of the octopus by way of film and books, and the acceptance of the exploitation of nature capital.

While *The Whale Caller* makes visible the ways in which the abalone is rendered a faceless resource in the process of ‘sustainable’ extraction, *My Octopus Teacher* sets out to disrupt representations of mollusks as faceless resources. Much of the documentary’s critical reception ponders on the film’s instructive message to “disconnect” and “live in the moment” (Gay 6) and other translatable and meaning-making takeaways for humanity. Despite the somewhat conventional ecocinematic features of Foster’s on-camera interviews that function as a voice-over narrative to the visual storytelling, critics such as Nicolas Rapold for *The New York Times*, praise the film as a “new breed of animal documentary” that “reflects a different approach to animals than that of the traditionally authoritative conservationist or guide” (4). However, Foster’s approach of non-interference, often interpreted as that which makes the documentary “humble” (Reid 168) or “tender” (Gay 6), pays lip service to a universalist stance of preservation that perpetuates understandings of the natural world as a harmonious, neutral, and balanced non-human world to which humans are merely adjacent. Moreover, it neutralizes his presence in the ecosystem of the kelp forest and filmmaking’s complicity in the exploitation of postcolonial non-human natures.

Although the documentary gives a face to the mollusk and signals the mattering of an individual octopus, it reinvests in institutional frameworks of conservation that center on welfarist approaches. This is an approach, as discussed in the previous chapter, that accepts the disposability of the animal as long as they are treated humanely. Like the whale in Mda’s work, the octopus in *My Octopus Teacher* achieves near-human status and becomes reintegrated into oceanic industries as a visual commodity. The visual experience of the real-life octopus as well

as the on-screen substitute is presented as a kind of non-anthropocentric care for the animal. Foster's on-screen interviews synthesize his narrative with the images of the octopus and the kelp forest. The narrative framework that emerges carefully navigates the kind of authentic experience of a non-human world that makes the octopus attractive and marketable.

Foster presents the kelp forest as an otherworldly, beyond-human place that invokes an image of nature as inhuman, or as Nyong'o would describe it, "a wilderness beyond human sovereignty" (250) that feeds into fantasies of precolonial, pre-industrial natures. The opening scene of *My Octopus Teacher* begins to establish the kelp forest as "another planet" (00:08:42-00:08:45), an alien place. As the camera moves through the curtains of kelp, they become near silhouettes illuminated only from the water surface as the music transitions from chanting to light orchestral music. Within this other world, Foster's experiences are more-than-human, "extraordinary" (00:01:12) and made possible by ostensibly dissolving the barriers between Foster and the octopus. The framing of the kind of experiences the kelp forest and an engagement with oceanic animals provides suggest a romanticization of human-animal relational potential and, according to Green, not only signals a particular modern prerogative but also masks modes of colonial resource extraction. Green argues that

in Africa in particular, the natural world acquired value as the domain in which, freed from constraints of everyday domestic life in the metropole, the white colonial hero and occasional heroine could test their mettle through various profitable exploits—exploring, hunting, and mining. These exploits conferred a certain glamour on the ruthless exploitation of Africa's abundant natural resources (5).

Green thus marks even the purportedly neutral and unimpactful exploring of African landscapes as a form of modern consumption that articulates a white national identity uncritical of the mechanism of colonialism. Foster's explorative presence, trying to map and learn from the forest and its inhabitants allow Foster to see himself "as part of this place, not a visitor" (01:22:42-

01:22:46). Foster positions himself as a neutral observer ready to learn from the octopus, who becomes his teacher in navigating the natural world. On the one hand, while positioning the octopus as a teacher, *his* teacher, Foster seemingly refutes conceptions of human exceptionalism and superiority, he marks the octopus as the nature authority through which he legitimizes his presence in the forest. On the other hand, the idea of the octopus teacher signals the octopus as a non-human oceanic informant and the commodification of nature capital for human consumption.

The commodification of nature capital is neutralized as a philosophy of knowing and shows the kind of uncritical flattening that captures the octopus as part of the oceanic industry. This educational practice, Foster cultivated through his earlier filmmaking and, in fact, enabled the mapping of the kelp forest. He reminisces on his documentary film *The Great Dance* which took him to the Kalahari at the turn of the century. He explains how he met

these men who were probably some of the best trackers in the world. To watch these men go into the incredible, subtle signs of nature, things that my eye couldn't even see, and then follow them, sometimes for hours, and find hidden animals in the landscape was just extraordinary to witness. I mean, they just were inside of the natural world. And I could feel I was outside (00:04:06-00:04:40).

It is the trackers' ability to read the "subtle signs of nature" that sets Foster apart from "these men" (00:04:06-00:04:40). Similar to the double standard of reverse breeding, while there is a sense of decentering colonial authority by highlighting African perspectives on nature, there is also a sense of glorifying and perpetuating the idea of "natives'" closeness to nature. Mwangi traces such romanticization as a tendency in ecological writings about the Global South that either "celebrate the flora and fauna of the Global South while demonizing its human residents or to uncritically idealize 'natives' as perfect environmentalists" (3). The irony of celebrating indigenous environmental perspectives without properly accounting for the ways in which such

perspectives were scrutinized, persecuted, and claimed inferior to white standards of living and enlightenment moral marks the continued colonization of indigenous knowledge capital.

The representation of the kelp forest as neutral, non-violent circle of life anchored in the concept of the octopus as the teacher articulates an environmental consciousness that promises a horizontal, non-anthropocentric relationship between humans and nature. However, what Nyong'o registers as the "biophilic pursuit of the Great Outdoors" (250), the uncritical idealization of 'primitive' otherness to the 'natural world' and its non-human inhabitants is symptomatic of "a color-blind planetary solidarity" that erases modes of colonial violence. In particular because, as Cilano and DeLoughrey argue, "the rise of the natural sciences is concurrent with European colonialism and the adoption and appropriation of indigenous knowledge of environment" (74). Thus, even as Foster uniquely positions himself as both a neutral presence and unbiased observer blending into the environment of the kelp forest determined to not interfere with the octopus, such neutrality of presence not only neutralizes his role and the equipment he carries, it depoliticizes modes of western natural sciences and its historical discourse production that is intimately intertwined with European colonialism.

The neutralization of covert processes of extraction frames the production, reception, and initiatives responding to the environmental consciousness fostered in this "new breed of animal documentary" (Rapold 4). Considering the filmmaking process itself a mode of visual consumption, *My Octopus Teacher* captures, records, and speaks for the octopus. Rapold's review in which he positions the idea of the "traditionally authoritative conservationist or guide" (4) in opposition to Foster's approach to the animal, thus rings hollow. In fact, the broader philosophy of non-interference with the natural order of the kelp forest perpetuates hierarchies of knowledge production. Modes of exploring and mapping symptomatic of colonial expansion are

masked as neutral, harmless forms of visual consumption valorized as non-anthropocentric care. While Foster's relationship with the octopus has great potential for generating local knowledges that “transgress the sovereign’s preserve” (Nyong’o 266), the documentary reintegrates the octopus within visually oriented oceanic industries.

Conclusion

My reading of *The Whale Caller* and *My Octopus Teacher*’s representation of the mollusk highlights the often detrimental intersection of narratives of sustainability in our current ecological moment and the foundational categorical error of human superiority in the order of human-animal relationships often taken for granted in animal welfare science. Such narratives of sustainability and subsequent well-being of the animal are predominantly interested in the stability of growth that more efficiently abides by international obligations, such as the concerns of the loss of biodiversity on a species level, rather than the protection of individual animals and environments. This is particularly true for the category of faceless animals, animals not sentient enough to require high-welfare protections determined by a spectrum of animals’ capacity to suffer. While some animals achieve the status of an “individuated animal” (Deleuze and Guatarri), this status, at least for the range of aquatic animals represented in both texts, is tied to a particular embodied visuality, a distinction that either fosters wholeness (bodily integrity) or neutralizes fragmentation (animal part used for the various forms of consumption of modern society). The individuated status (legal or extralegal through concepts of sentience, personhood, or subjectivity) does not offer a reprieve from the blurry extractive logics of the animal’s integration into current worldmaking systems.

The need for ‘authentic’ representationalism and its often synonymous need for visual evidence encapsulates, commodifies, consumes, and ultimately deforms even animals ‘with a face.’ When the visibility of Sharisha’s beached body becomes unmarketable, the consequent fragmentation of her body, the raining of flesh, signals her facelessness and disposability in global politics of care. In similar ways, the visual fragmentation of the octopus on film and all the subsequent extractions (marketing, books) is neutralized through its sustainability advocacy. The aquatic industries as represented in both works in correlation with respective government policies and media coverage unveil thin eco-conscious ideologies. The protection of the animal and environments, endangered or otherwise, is relevant only as far as they represent a stable natural resource for national development. The double bind of porous and arbitrary visibility highlights an overemphasis on western scientific knowledge as universally applicable and authoritative. The texts thus signal that animal welfare is not an issue that is solved through the fine-tuning of humane methodologies aiming to integrate the animal into the global capitalist machine. Expanding the circle of sentience, personhood, subjectivity, the ethical, legal, and political re-drawings of the animal, the works show, shape how we care and can think about caring for the animal. The sea of the opening lines of *The Whale Caller* functions as an archive, a connective space for the nexus of relationalities that constitute coastal communities in South Africa. It keeps record, and with the returning tide, becomes a reminder of colonial and apartheid histories and their ongoing effects that remain deluded through neoliberal developmentalist trajectories.

CHAPTER IV
HACKING ANIMALS: DECOLONIAL BIOECONOMIES IN OLUKOTUN'S
AFRICANFUTURISM

Introduction

Africanfuturistic fiction and its proliferating body of scholarship mark the significance of future-oriented imaginings from, about, and for Africa to “create new emancipatory mindscapes that further challenge monochrome futures where whiteness remains the standard off civilization” (Lavender and Yaszek 3). In such polychrome futures, the animal and *its* futures have received surprisingly little critical consideration. Even as there is critical scholarship engaging with Africanfuturistic fiction that centrally positions the animal in its speculative universe, such as Nnedi Okorafor’s *Lagoon* (2014) or Lauren Beukes *Zoo City* (2010), scholars of these novels uncritically read the animal to bear the burden and violence of change in renewed anti-colonial, post-capitalist imaginings. Unlike *Lagoon* and *Zoo City*, in Deji Bryce Olukotun’s works, animals are neither environmentally conscious swordfish fighting petro-industries nor animal familiars of near human status, but biomimetic and cyborg beings serving and securing capitalist sovereignty in a new world order. The novel’s representation of biotechnology highlights the deepened processes of animal necropolitics in visions of africanfuturisms otherwise considered by scholars and writers to foster more emancipatory futures. Olukotun’s work, I suggest, is suspicious of purportedly eco-friendly, sustainable animal technology and bioengineering. Biotechnological animals are a facet of marketable representations of postcolonial bioeconomies often equally (if not more) detrimental to and destructive of animals and natures

In the previous two chapters, a necropolitical lens on institutionalized discourses of care for the animal and their literary representations have enabled us to trace a history and presence of racialized, market-oriented ideologies determining what animals are to be cared for and how. The last chapter in particular considered the limits of a global ecological stance superimposed on postcolonial ecologies and their responding nature industries. Animal welfare and conservation discourses discipline non-capitalistic relationalities in the nature industries considered. The emerging animal necropolitics are navigated by modes of neoimperial disciplining. The increasing global, industrial systems and their bioeconomy rely on bioscience to secure sustainable exploitation of animals and nature. The animal is thus precariously positioned in alternative imaginings of decolonial futures. In this chapter, I am interested in how the animal is integrated into the ‘new emancipatory mindscapes’ of African future-oriented imaginings, in particular, if those are “neither forward-looking or utopian” (Eshun 290) such as Olukotun’s novels. While scholars read both *Nigerians in Space* and *After the Flare* through futuristic lenses, the former is set in an alternative South Africa spanning from the 1990s to the present day, and the latter articulates a dystopian vision of a future Nigeria.

Nigerians In Space, despite its title, takes place mostly in South Africa and never actually makes it to space. As part of operation ‘Brain Gain,’ Nurudeen Bello’s project to bring back intellectual capital to Nigeria, lunar rock geologist Wale Olufunmi is traveling back to Nigeria. With Bello’s sudden disappearance, Wale and his son Dayo ultimately end up in Hermanus, South Africa, home to Thursday whose timeline we have been following parallelly. Thursday Malaysius is a former clam shucker who became an abalone poacher and breeder for an illicit trade business with little to no choice. Violent bioeconomies around the animal (or oceanic industries) and lunar materials are central discourses of exploitation that equally come to play in

After the Flare. From the international space station, the astronaut Masha Kornakova witnesses the massive solar flare that will position Nigeria as the technologically leading nation for astronomical research with the only working space station in the otherwise impaired global electricity grid. Former NASA engineer Kwesi Bracket and his team are tasked with the rescue of the astronaut stuck on the space station. The project's seemingly humanitarian motivations turn out to masquerade the intention of space travel resulting in the colonization and exploitation of the moon and its resources. Across both novels, loosely applied concepts of sustainability and welfare, simultaneously non-violent, innovative, and progressive, supply the ideological loopholes for nature to be mastered through a deepened colonial architecture. Olukotun's treatment of bio-and animal technology in an Africanfuturistic context, I argue, makes visible the violent structures of uncritical bioeconomic discourses and institutionalized discourses of biomimicry. The representation of biochemical defenses in *Nigerians in Space* and the techno-euphoric speculations of sustainable bioeconomies in *After the Flare* bring into focus the modes of integrating and mastering nature that distort and obstruct decolonial frameworks in the present and for possible futures.

The ways in which the animal is cared for, protected, organized, and legislated in the reconciliation of welfare and conservation with national development risks promoting mastery of African natures symptomatic of colonialism and western philosophies of knowing. While the chapter's main focus lies on Olukotun's biomimetic and cyborg technology in *After the Flare*, the representation of the never-ending cat-and-mouse game between the South African government and abalone poachers in *Nigerians in Space*, as well as the institutionalized discourses around it, marks a measurable starting point to read the animal through Olukotun's works, as the animal is progressively modified into a kind of trans-animal image. Specifically,

the representation of the illicit abalone trade and its governmental ecodefenses illustrates the covert construction and deconstruction of the animal in neocolonial interests that are over-projected in *After the Flare*. Olukotun's (arguably) dystopian world-building is saturated by speculative biotechnology that either mimics or imagines biomechatronic animal hybrids. While the narrative represents animal cyborg technology as cruelty, the novel depicts biomimicry as an environmental and animal rights progressive trajectory moving the post-flare society away from animal cyborg technology. I suggest that *After the Flare*'s representation of biomimicry and cyborg technology highlights the often overlooked hierarchies of animacy and sentience and challenges the western philosophies of being and knowing they rely on. Ultimately, Olukotun's treatment of biotechnology as it facilitates oceanic industries in South Africa, as well as his treatment of biomimicry in africafuturistic imaginings, question representations of biotechnology that promise more just futures for all life. Abalone, animal cyborgs, and biotechnological animals signify the present and speculative instrumentalization of animals for politics of care and sustainability in which the animal is ultimately disposable and otherwise manipulable.

Africanfuturism, Bioeconomies, and the Animal

African future-oriented fiction centered in Nigeria, such as the works of Olukotun, but also those of Nnedi Okorafor and Tade Thompson, mark new frontiers to both the genre of speculative fiction and contemporary African fiction. Africanfuturism has been read as a discourse distinct from Afrofuturism only in recent years. It is Okorafor who terms science and speculative fiction that is concerned with and "rooted in African culture, history, mythology, and point-of-view" (n.pag.), Africanfuturism. Okorafor's redrawing of the genre has led to much debate about the most productive ways of recognizing and articulating such frontiers while noting a standing

history of (futuristic) speculative works from Africa that precedes the terming of even Afrofuturism³⁰. However, scholars and writers generally agree about the limits of Afrofuturism as a mode of analysis for SF from and centered in Africa (Lavendar and Yaszek, and Okorafor below). Afrofuturism overlooks the political, social, and economic differences between Black diaspora writing, often with its center in the West, and African writing, itself the product of a vastly diverse continent. Africanfuturism, in contrast, as a mode of reading and production, according to Okorafor, pays attention to

visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa. It's less concerned with "what could have been" and more concerned with 'what is and can/will be'. It acknowledges, grapples with and carries 'what has been' (n.pag).

African conceptual futures thus confront histories of western domination rather than imagining a historical absence. Such confrontation is a central point of departure for both novels, articulating a productive doubt in optimistic neocolonial worldmaking. While *Nigerians in Space* grapples with the double bind of Africans imagining space (what is) and western ideological knowledge economies that have historically denied or drained intellectual capital from the African continent (what has been), *After the Flare* speculates about the uncritical appropriation of such drainage for a quid pro quo postcolonial future. While this does not exactly "skew optimism" (Okorafor), the dystopian speculations challenge techno-optimistic integrations of the animal into Nigeria's future.

To date, the study of animals in Africanfuturistic imaginings remains limited and limiting. Despite the principally agreed-upon potential of African speculative fiction for

³⁰ Afrofuturism was first termed by Mark Dery in "Black to the Future" in 1994.

imagining decolonial futures,³¹ the animal seems uncritically incorporated into the techno-euphoric futures. Africanfuturistic novels anchored in Nigeria and featuring animals as central to the narrative's world-building, such as Okorafor's *Lagoon* and Beukes' *Zoo City*, have evoked much anti-colonial, anti-neoimperial consideration. Okorafor's 'second contact'³² narrative, often read as climate or petro-fiction, productively acknowledges the ambiguous double coding of the first contact narrative and the figure of the alien in its revival of colonial narratives. However, Hugh Charles O'Connell reads the *Lagoon's* animals, or "ocean dwellers" (305), to signal the "role of violence within radical change" (306), mobilizing the animal for decolonial causes. Similarly, Suzanne Ericson reads Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City* to sketch co-constitutive relationality in which the animal is used to reiterate human-nonhuman boundaries:

It is with such proximity in mind that I read Beukes's human-nonhuman animal encounters. For by anthropomorphising nonhuman animals in order to bring them closer to her novel's human characters, Beukes stages both the shared vulnerability of all bodies and what David Herman (2016, 6) refers to as the 'co-constitutive relationality' of humans and nonhumans" (25).

The staging of shared vulnerability, the bringing closer of human and non-human animals through the concept of co-constitutive relationality, forges an intimacy that risks erasing the violences that produce such shared vulnerability. The animal bears, literally and figuratively, the burden of 'radical' anti- neoimperialism and the violence inherent to the processes of decolonization. A critical reading of decolonial visions thus begins to account for the violent instrumentalization of animals in visions of progress that do not simply conflate human and non-human interests and desires.

³¹ See Hugh Charles O'Connell's "We are the Change": The Novum as Event in Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*."

³² Rachel Haywood Ferreira argues that postcolonial narratives featuring alien encounters "might better be described as stories of second contact due to the degree to which the historical circumstances and the colonial legacy inform content and perspective" (70).

Even as the narrative and its characters never quite make it to Nigeria, let alone space, Olukotun's *Nigerians in Space* is often read and categorized as a contribution to African science fiction. Scholars such as Magalí Armillas-Tiseyra have read the failure of "Operation Brain Gain" to put Nigerians in space as a challenge to the limits of speculative possibility in which Africa is perpetually catching up with modern (western) technology. *After the Flare* has enticed even less critical scholarly attention despite its more overt speculative representation of western and non-western technology and ways of knowing that inform the post-apocalyptic world of the novel. A notable exception is Damien Droney who reads *After the Flare* in light of the potential of African futurist fiction to present "counterrealities to the pathological projection of Africa" (29) as residing in the past. Droney reads the representation of technology in the novel as a challenge to western authority on technology, science, and its futures to "gently redefine science and technology to better encompass a range of expert knowledges" (30). I argue that animals are excluded from such gentle redefinitions. Not only does the narrative itself establish that "that evolution is still way ahead of us" (148), the novel represents the animal through the discourses of welfare and sustainability that, as I have shown in the previous chapters, shape the animal necropolitics in the postcolony. Even as biomimicry inadvertently acknowledges a form of expert knowledge derived from natures and animal biology, it does so only in its adaptation of and integration into modes of production of futures industry. The animal necropolitics of a post-flare Nigeria navigates what animals are allowed to *survive* in post-apocalyptic futures and in what form. Ultimately, Olukotun's representation of the deepening commodifications of the animal in the postcolonial bioeconomic imaginary (from live to hybrid to synthetic animal) draws significant connections between global perspectives on the animal in our industrial

society, the neutralization of western technological development, and alternative futurisms that require further scrutiny.

Hacking Animals for Decolonial Futures: Biomimicry, Abalone, and Cyborgs

With the rapid and devastating effects of climate change, with its record temperatures and water shortages that particularly impact impoverished and marginalized communities around the globe,³³ it seems more pertinent than ever to critically examine bioeconomic research and innovation that promise the alleviation of such systemic vulnerabilities and paints a sustainable future for industrial society. Commercial discourses regarding biomimicry overrepresent biomimetic processes as environmentally friendly modes of technological development and as sustainable investments into a better future. In the interest of ‘sustainable’ solutions, bioscience repackages nature as an untapped resource for securing an industrial future in the face of climate change. The aligning interests of bioeconomies and national development that, at first glance, signal a growing recognition of continued violence against animals and nature, represent a foundational dynamic to Olukotun’s *Nigerians in Space* and its depiction of the abalone trade in South Africa. Scholars such as Jesse Goldstein and Elizabeth Johnson define biomimicry as a “technoscience that renders biological research a resource for innovation in industrial engineering” (62). While Goldstein and Johnson recognize the extractive logic of nature as an industrial resource, biologist Janine Benyus stresses the discourse of sustainability at the forefront of this technology: “Biomimicry is learning from and then emulating natural forms, processes, and ecosystems to create more sustainable designs” (Gallo 8). Recalling the last chapter’s critique of the limitations of sustainability discourses as a local-cum-global philosophy

³³ See Diffenbaugh et.al, “Global Warming Has Increased Global Economic Inequality,” 2019.

of conservation, the abalone, and other oceanic animals, I argue, remain enclosed in imperial logics. Narratives of sustainability as environmentally conscious resource management foreclose the recognition of animal necropolitics that normalize human mastery over natures.

Animal welfare and sustainability discourses' investment in minimizing animal suffering is often represented as the only reasonable countermeasure and ecodefense against human behavior. One of the earliest uses of the term was in David Foreman's *Ecodefenses: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* in 1985. He explains that "Monkeywrenching, ecological sabotage, ecotage, ecodefense, or "night work" (118) – these are all terms for the destruction of machines or property that are used to destroy the natural world." While the concept of ecodefense is explicitly non-violent aiming for "inanimate objects" (118), the impact on animals in ecodefensive actions is often disregarded by advocacy organizations.³⁴ The idea of ecodefense in this work thus refers to acts of defense in the name of the animal that disrupt the animal rather than human actions or machinery otherwise often seen as the target of disruption. These are acts of ecodefense that alter, shape, enclose or otherwise implicate the animal in harmful ways. In *Nigerians in Space*, such means of ecodefense come to threaten the exposure of Thursday and other characters' participation in the illicit abalone trade. Thursday's boss, Ip, outlines the risks of trading with farmed abalone. He explains that the government "developed an enzyme that the farmers can insert into their tanks. When someone puts in a few drops of indicator solution, the abalone change color and the enzyme ruins their flavor" (Olukotun 179). To prevent farmed abalone from entering the illicit trade, the manipulation of the abalone is justified. Even as the

³⁴ In "Monkeywrenched Images: Ecocinema and Sabotage," Graig Uhlin uses the example of Greenpeace spraying seals for anti-hunting campaigns. He argues that "These stains were a form of ecodefense, a minimal intervention designed to ruin the commercial value of the fur – though this action might also have made the animals more vulnerable to natural predation" (307). Many other examples come to mind, but some of the most invasive ecodefenses are rhino dehorning as anti-poaching method, or the mass sterilization of canine and felines in urban or otherwise heavily populated areas (see chapters 2 and 5).

economic undertones of such defense mechanisms are glaring, the governmental control of the abalone trade is overrepresented as means to relieve wild stocks and prevent the extinction of the species in South Africa. Any impact on the abalone is disregarded and ultimately presented as harmless and sustainable science. The overrepresentation of scientific knowledge and research as neutral and authorizing governance, according to Goldstein and Johnson, has led to

the global circulation of biological materials and bio-based services in pharmaceutical, agricultural and other sectors of the biotech industry [that] have integrated cell lines, protein sequences, reproductive materials, genetically modified crop seeds and experimental animal breeds, and other elements of biology within an increasingly knowledge-based economy (63).

Purportedly ‘neutral’ and ‘innovative’ research into sustainable solutions and practices of reproductive control echo the mechanisms of oppressive regimes and their histories of eugenics that have justified anti-black governing and forms of knowledge. The use of biotechnology as ecodefense purportedly in the interest of animals and natures, ultimately results in experimenting, modifying, and manipulating the biology of the former. The violence of obtaining, organizing, and enforcing the knowledge produced by animals and natures for ‘sustainable’ futures highlights their integration into marketable futures at the expense of their integrity. The animal’s position in the crossfire of bio- and knowledge economies limits the kind of knowledge the animal is allowed to produce. Any knowledge Benyus reads into nature is limited to its functionality for human flourishing in the aftermath of the Anthropocene, meaning-making, and the securing of power. In fact, the overrepresentation of ecodefenses as sustainability and welfare actions brutally distorts the discourses of care while disciplining the vastly diverse forms of human-animal relationality. In the *Nigerians In Space*, we see this in Thursday’s ambiguous care. On the one hand, Thursday cares about the abalone, “[nurses] them back to health” (Olukotun 123), and feels “loyalty” (123) towards them. However, he also

participates in the raising, manipulation, and integration of the abalone into global markets. Using his knowledge and ability to care for the abalone, Thursday explains “three years before they’ve got good flavor [for harvesting]. I could probably get that down to two with the right diet” (175). The forceful incorporation of postcolonial nations into global markets in which care turns into the currency of survival and self-actualization neutralizes the disposability of the animal in the process of neocolonial, neoimperial salvage. Even more so, the discourses of care depicted in *Nigerians in Space* limit the ways in which Thursday *can* care for and about the animal. The uncritical ecodefensive nature of sustainability and welfare navigates the representation of bioeconomies in *Nigerians in Space*. Animal welfare and sustainability in contact with technological advances informs deepened modes of colonial disciplining in *After the Flare* captured in its treatment of biomimicry.

The representation of biomimicry and animal cyborg technology in post-flare Nigeria is shaped by the ideological and scientific discourses communicated through digital security expert Ini. Her profession as well as her somewhat quirky passion for illegal cyborgs frame Ini as an expert on cyber technology. Amidst the catalog of future technology, biomimicry is introduced to readers as the leading technology of post-flare Nigeria. In her function as the technoscience expert, Ini takes on the educator role contextualizing biomimicry and cyborg technology for Bracket, a relative newcomer to the space station, and the reader. Bracket requires assistance when his biomimetic device, the Geckofone, falls victim to a suspicious cyber-attack. The concept of the Geckofone, in some ways the futuristic interpretation of the smartphone, maps out the speculative territory of the animal within the dystopian vision of the novel.

The Geckofone, or G-fone, is represented as an entirely electronic device that merely mimics its biological original. The Geckofone is introduced and normalized as a non-sentient

object, technology that is shaped and functions like an animal but is not considered sentient, programmed to serve in the interest of (certain) humans without a will of their own. Yet, some of the Geckofone's behaviors are depicted as emotional responses or autonomous decision-making. The Geckofone's *liveliness*, thus, troubles conceptions of sentience and naturalness prevalent in western philosophies of science that have categorically defined the human and the nonhuman along animacy hierarchies. In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Mel Y. Chen challenges the limitations of biopolitics and necropolitics that predominantly consider governmental structures or individual human subjects. This selected focus, Chen argues, risks ignoring "how inanimate objects and nonhuman animals participate in the regimes of life (making life) and coerced death (killing)" (6). On the one hand, Olukotun's speculative future animals participate or produce regimes of life, such as the Geckofone's "Loom" system using and manipulating biometric data for the protection of particular forms of life. On the other hand, the same technology and its predecessor, the animal cyborg, are simultaneously *produced* and forged within the same regimes of life-making. These modes of producing, shaping, and capitalizing on the animal represent a particular kind of violence undergird by hierarchies of animacy and liveliness.

The representation of animals and technology along animacy hierarchies frames the kind of consideration the animal receives within the biotech-economy of post-flare Nigeria. Because the animal cyborg technology uses the animal body as a host to performance-enhancing mechanical elements, this technology is presented as cruel by virtue of liveliness and vulnerability. All animal cyborgs, according to Ini, experience pain from the technology implanted. Biomimicry, in contrast, Ini paints as a positive development toward global technological futures good for all life and proof of the decentering of the human and its

neoimperial logic. The eco-conscious rhetoric allows for a recontextualization of nature as our salvation rather than humanity's demise. It is also this very rhetoric that allows for the bioeconomy to promote intimacy with nature while masquerading the modes of mastery inherent to biomimetic processes. The Biomimicry Institute, the leading non-profit organization in the field co-founded by Benyus, for example, puts forth the same focus on nature as a resource for sustainability:

It's time to ask nature. The human-constructed world is ripe for a deep redesign, and this time, it needs to be good for all life. Fortunately, we are surrounded by experts in life-enhancing design—the organisms and living systems that have been developing in an epic give and take for billions of years (n.pag).

The rhetoric of urgency and crisis, routinely used in environmental activism, signals the necessity of sustainable technological innovations. The living organisms and systems, their “epic give and take for billions of years,” is represented as an overdue untapped resource. Nature and the natural are represented as more successful forms of organization and being in the world. Nature's ‘expert’ knowledge is repurposed as a mode of production claiming to be “good for all life” (n.pag) this time. The representation of a “human-constructed world,” separate and superimposed on nature is symptomatic of anthropocentric discourses on climate change and its ‘solutions’. In the revised modes of mastery over nature, the former separation is productively repurposed through the radical inclusion and integration of nature and its ‘life-enhancing’ designs as sustainable modes of being in the human-*re*constructed world.

The violence of interference and control, however, remains unaccounted for in Ini's representations of biomimicry as conciliatory. Enchanted by such promises, Ini marvels at a cicada that she introduces as “the height of biomimicry. It evolved in nature to imitate a leaf, and then was hacked with optrodes. Its motions are very basic but I love the audacity of it - a computer imitating a bug imitating a leaf. Genius” (148). “It,” presumably the insect itself, was

“hacked with optrodes” (148), that is hacked with neural probes that include optical sensors to deliver vision in live tissue (figure 1).³⁵ The potential of knowledge justifies animal experiments in which “good for all life” is more an appealing promise than a true philosophy. The violence of such interference is bypassed and justified in the assertion of progress and innovation signaling that the concept of sustainability is interested in enabling continuous, now green growth rather than renegotiating the stipulations of growth threatening sustainability. Suparno Banerjee registers a similar discrepancy in the perception of biotechnology in posthuman discourses (such as Donna Haraway or N. Katherine Hayles’ works) and discourses of Indian science fiction (of, for example, Anil Menon and Manjula Padmanabhan). Banerjee suggests that what in a western posthuman context is considered liberating from or subversive to capitalist social orders, can, in a postcolonial context, “indicate the crushing power of mechanically aided global capitalism that tries to patent indigenous knowledge and colonize organic resources and bodies” (59). As a product of human and nature capital, the cicada, as much as the Geckofone, proves a symbolically significant image in the narrative network of Operation Brain Gain signaling that simple subversion or shifting may risk deepened modes of colonization. The promise of the alleviation of suffering and harm for animals and the environment in sustainable bioeconomies defers the keeping of such promises to a future that is always still to come.

The G-fone, more so than the cicada, is characterized by securing nature capital as the rightful, untapped, environmentally friendly resource for better futures. Early descriptions of the G-fone categorize it as an object, highlighting its functionality. We learn:

It blinked green on the ceiling next to an overhanging lamp, where it was drawing solar power. He snapped his fingers twice, and the Geckofone obediently slithered along the ceiling and down the wall, allowing him to pluck it off with his hands. The G-fone flattened its body and retracted its legs once in his palm, so that it

³⁵ See “Optrodes for combined optogenetics and electrophysiology in live animals.”

looked more like an ordinary phone. He could swipe through the screens, use gestures, or give it commands through the microphone. Its legs, head, and tail - formed from interlocking graphene scales - could extend and scale up sheer walls like an actual lizard. Indeed, the effect was so convincing that real geckos would slither over to inspect the device and occasionally attack it. Most of the time Bracket kept it in his pocket, where it would draw energy from his body heat (Olukotun 29).

With the loyalty of companion animals and the beyond-human abilities of machine learning united in the protection of human interest, the G-fone represents an anthropocentric vision of technological futures. It is a gadget with state-of-the-art artificial intelligence mimicking an animal's biological design for the most effective safety features. While the description references the animalness of the G-fone, it is bound up in the functionality and practicality of it as a consumer product. The G-fone's depiction carries simultaneously notions of intimacy and violence. The description highlights its appearance and behaviors as being-animal or passing as animal, while also signaling its fragmentation. This marks a plasticization of the conceptualization and representation of the animal that Zakiyyah Iman Jackson has described as a "mode of ontologizing, not at all deterred by the self-regulation of matter or its limits" (VUB Crosstalks 00:29:26-00:29:35). The violence of such plasticity remains unacknowledged in the ingenuity of its function. The all too easy positioning of biomimicry as the science of green futures and responsible reimagining of industrial society is thus signaling the altered shapes the animal takes on in the uncritical integration of nature into global futures. Such integration, the novel suggests, requires the conceptualization of the animal as part of nature capital to be shaped and manipulated in the interest of sustainable futures inevitably invoking histories of whiteness and colonialism.

The neutral positioning of biomimicry is further complicated by emotional responses and decision-making that solidify a picture of the G-fone as an affective neuronetwork. When

Bracket's Geckofone is attacked by an animal cyborg, descriptions of the Geckofone's behavior trouble western conceptions of sentience often not extended to artificial intelligence. Not only does the Geckofone experience arousal that entices Bracket to "[calm] it with his fingerprint signature" (Olukotun 133), but also seems to problem-solve. Ini concludes: 'Your G-fone ejected it. It must have overloaded the circuit intentionally. Smart.'" (133) and later on reflects: "The remarkable thing is that it came up with the solution on its own of dropping its battery to escape" (149). The notion of surprise in Ini's reflection suggests that this behavior is not part of the original algorithm, yet remains remarkably unaddressed. Biomimetic devices do not receive similar consideration despite the G-fone signs of distress and machine learning. This seems to reinforce the status of technology within well-established western concepts of sentience and liveliness. Scholars such as Steven Shaviro argue that speculative possibilities of fiction and fabulations can challenge such "scientific methods of understanding the world" (11). He suggests that "science fiction narratives can help us step beyond the overly limited cognitivist assumptions of recent research both in the philosophy of mind and in the science of neurobiology" (15). Sentience, for Shaviro, is related to degrees of information processing rather than cognition and attributes information processing abilities to a thermostat (222), an inanimate object "with something like *unintentional sentience*" (18, original emphasis). The G-fone displays more than unintentional sentience. It displays, in fact, sophisticated degrees of machine learning, of information processing. This is not to assert a replacement of animacy hierarchies by extending sentience to all organisms or materials but to signal a forestallment of a more comprehensive recognition of being and knowing outside humanizing trajectories. The representation of biomimicry in the novel thus allows us to trace the limited ability of western philosophies of science to appropriately account for nonhuman forms of intelligence. The animal

is uncritically reintegrated as nature capital as if man's authority over nature and technology has been proven already.

The critical representation of biomimicry, however, does not only bypass critical ethical conceptions of artificial intelligence. The abuse of sensitive biometric data is the most critical feature of the Geckofone's operating system. The identification feature, a virtual identity created for every worker of the space station, uses biometric data to create an avatar. This avatar enables and restricts the clearance for certain areas in the spaceport:

The Geckofone allowed you to alternate rapidly between multiple ethnic identities – Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, or even Ijaw and Ogoni [...]. The identities were more than avatars since they changed the inflections of your voice and exaggerate your physical gestures too. It allowed for security and anonymity and in theory served as a defense against violence caused by tribalism. (35)

The avatar displayed obscures the individual identity in favor of iconographic images adhering to imagined biological and ethnocultural borders. It is an exaggerated, distorted image of the individual's identity. Yet this cherry-picking of ethnic identities is limited to certain ethnic groups of Nigeria. When Bracket attempts to switch to Wodaabe it does not appear in the registrar options (150). Ini explains that “[it's] not on the top-level Loom” (150). In the novel, the Wodaabe are described as “an old clan from the north,” “nomads,” and “Herders who only come to the city to make money during the dry season” (55). What seems implicit here is the assumption that nomadic forms of living are somehow inherently unqualified to be considered for the ‘top-level Loom’ security. As Ini brushes over this exclusionary feature of the Geckofone she performs allyship and appreciation of Wodaabe practices, she explains to Bracket that “their men carry mirrors and are constantly touching up their makeup” and ends up inviting him to “catch a Geerewol ceremony” where “they compete to be the most beautiful member of the clan” (150). Ini's rehearsal of entertaining ‘knowledge’ about Wodaabe at odds with dominant western

representations of masculinity, and the shameless consumption of their cultural practices masquerades the technology's racializing and exclusionary assemblage of augmented humanity.

The representation of biomimicry as neutral technology with apolitical programming and algorithms signals the potential of recolonizing the material world overwritten by the separation of digital and real spaces, between artificial and natural. Such covert reinstatement of race is, according to Achille Mbembe, the result of globalization and its "capitalist mode" (21) of designing life and manipulating life forms including "cyborgization" (21). Mbembe predicts that "there is good reason to believe that in a more or less distant future genetic techniques will be used to manage characteristics of populations to eliminate races judged "undesirable" through the selection of trisomic embryos, or through theriomorphism (hybridization with animal elements) or 'cyborgization'(hybridization with artificial elements)" (21). If we shift the central subject of population management from the human to the animal, Mbembe captured the future of the animal and related transformations of Olukotun's Africanfuturism. However, in doing so, we cut across the aforementioned separation of digital and real spaces revealing the renewed deployment of population control and its "racial syntax" (21) through non-biological modes of reproduction. In light of these 'augmented' extra-material spheres of biomimetic and - hybrid technology, presented as the protection "from violence caused by tribalism" (Olukotun 35), marks renewed mindscapes of racial discrimination. The violence of such interference, manipulation, and control is hidden in a culture of the global knowledge economy that measures care and consideration through the deployment of animacy hierarchies. The novel signals that flourishing and thriving are inextricably interwoven with global power and ideologies of economic growth. The treatment of biomimicry highlights the complex sociopolitical investment

in concepts of naturalness all too often used as a neutral measure for delineating universal definitions of being, knowing, and making life.

While the narrative acknowledges that biomimetic animals display forms of knowing, modes of being remain denied. In contrast, the narrative acknowledges animal cyborg's being through the experience of pain, it identifies cyborg technology as animal cruelty. The animal cyborg is offered a reprieve through an expanded circle of animals with almost human status qualifying for welfare discourses. According to Ini, animal cyborg technology runs counter to the contemporary ethics of animal rights in which leftover specimens are but a remnant of the political history of a nation that has banned their existence:

They are quite rare. We don't get to see too many cyborgs, not since the hacking of live creatures was banned under the Tallinn Agreement. That's why devices shifted to biomimicry - your G-fone, for example - and not using real animals.

The animal cyborg, an illegal foreign bioweapon, becomes disposable under the Tallinn Agreement and represents a liminal existence. They appear to be a leftover of a technological history that, in the face of Nigeria's new frontiers, interfered with the changing ethics of animal rights and welfare. As such, their existence under the Tallinn Agreement projects the responsibility of the abuse and suffering of the animal, present *and past*, upon enemy warfare and national defense. Ini explains: "Hacking animals was shoved underground to the black market and the military. The fact is that evolution is still way ahead of us" (148). Whereas the animal finds protection under Nigerian law, animal cyborgs are, in their illegality, below or beyond the law.

Between what sounds like an animal cyborg sanctuary and a laboratory at the same time, Ini positions herself as both an ally and scientist. She explains that "people find these [animal cyborgs] for me. I pay what I can, usually not a lot. Though I admit I paid a lot for the green

racer. I love the efficiency of its movements. I can't always save them, though. Many of them die" (148). In an almost paradoxical interweaving of financial investments and the owning of certain specimens as a guilty pleasure, Ini's care for the animal cyborgs is overshadowed by the focus on the ingenuity and rarity of their existence. As with the biomimetic cicada, Ini's display of 'expert' knowledge neutralizes the deeper animal rights concerns said to have led to the banning of "the hacking of live creatures" (148). While Ini acknowledges the violence of cyborg technology for the bodily integrity of the hacked animal, as "their immune systems reject the technology" (148), their continued existence seems to justify their collection and study. Bracket's description of the animal cyborgs thus sits uncomfortably with the naturalized violence of the illicit technology. He reports that he "could see two dark gray graphene wafers poking out of the insect's underbelly. Its green skin had healed around the wafers, but the wounds still had an oozing, disturbed quality" (148). As a symbolic remainder of the neutralized violence, the wounds are the markers of the disruption that cannot be reconciled in the shift to biomimicry. The Africanfuturistic vision of Olukotun is thus an image of a future that does not account for or grapple with the "what has been" (Okorafor) and sketches the potentially detrimental outcomes for the planet and beyond. The novel thus stages a critique of blind developmentalism that, under the cover of care and sustainability, passes over pressing social and economic inequalities of neoimperial world-making projected onto 'truly' global futures. The representation of bioeconomies and their speculative historical production traced through the animal in *Nigerians in Space* and *After the Flare* challenges the emancipatory potential animal welfare discourses write into decolonial futures.

Conclusion

The speculative world of *Nigerians in Space* and *After the Flare* sketches a critical picture of bioeconomies and their promises for a better future. The depiction of bioeconomies in *Nigerians in Space* begins to implicate bio-technological development seemingly in the interest of harm reduction as closely imbricated in the future (as a speculative industry) of securing growth rather than preservation. The shaping and manipulation of animals, their bodies, and the knowledge they produce is overrepresented as forms of ecodefense. Olukotun's future (post-flare) Nigeria is not any less bleak. Beneath the technological thriving and the success of African engineering, the narrative writes into Nigeria's future the colonization and resource exploitation of the moon. While the use of biomimicry is represented as an animal-conscious development, I argue that it marks new forms of mastery over nature and modes of deepened colonization. Olukotun's critical treatment of the Geckofone and its speculative landscape, but also the animal cyborg, unsettle narratives of biotechnological futures for multispecies justice. Ultimately, both the 'cruel' animal cyborg technology and the 'cruelty-free' biomimicry highlight the need for new conceptual territory and non-capitalist modes of relationality. The modes of being and knowing displayed by both technologies cut across animacy hierarchies that otherwise determine concepts of liveliness and naturalness.

Insofar as Olukotun's Africanfuturistic vision of technology and animals maintains conceptions of liveliness disciplined by animacy hierarchies, how do we speculate about concepts of sustainability and care if those are vastly integrated into representations of global futurity? In *Becoming Human : Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*, Jackson argues that the radical inclusion of blackness into the sphere of the human, rather than modes of dehumanization, shapes the representationalism of black bodies. Consequently, Jackson suggests that asking whether or not the Black is human may not be the right question and that "a better

question may be: If being recognized as human offers no reprieve from ontologizing dominance and violence, then what might we gain from the rupture?" (20). With a similar lack of assurance through welfare and sustainability discourses, it comes to mind that: If conceptualizations of animals through western philosophies of knowing and their respective institutionalizing discourses of care and sustainability offer no reprieve from the violence of its domination, "what might we gain from the rupture?" (20).

CHAPTER V

TRANSFORMING TOWNSHIP DOGS: DIGITAL WELFARISM AND GLOBAL 'CARE'

Introduction

In South Africa, I have shown in chapters one, two, and three, the attempts at reconciling animal welfare with national development have created deeper and more entangled modes of commodifying the animal. Selected animals, animals that revitalize whiteness in discourses of sustainability and equity, are integrated into discourses of welfare allowing for local-cum global environmental virtue signaling. In such conceptualizations of animal welfare, euthanizing superfluous canines is considered welfare (chapter 1) and swimming with octopuses represents conservation (chapter 2). Euthanasia and mass sterilization, in particular, are figured as a reality of loving these animals. Within these discourses of care, often reliant on volunteers and donations, loving the animal means the purportedly sensible, logical or otherwise *reasonable* recognition that domesticated animals must either be integrated into global industrial society or destroyed (chapter 1). Other animals, including the category of faceless animals, are comestibles, not sentient enough for environmental virtue signaling (chapter 2). However, these faceless animals are similarly carefully integrated or destroyed. South African abalone, for example, when 'legally' harvested or farmed, are seamlessly integrated into global markets, while illicitly harvested abalone, if confiscated, are respectively destroyed. However, the process of institutionalizing animal welfarism and its underlying ideologies, as well as the manipulation and shaping of the animal that goes hand in hand with welfarism are all too often reconstructed as forms of eco-defense. In chapter three, biomimicry and other biotechnological 'advances,' are

explicitly packaged as environmentally progressive and in the interest of multispecies justice. Such eco-defenses, I suggest, produce narratives of inclusion and assimilation that normalize modes of neoimperialism. The narratives of seamlessly integrated animals, best protected in the enclosures of sustainability drills, become increasingly relevant for a comprehensive picture of the effects of global ethics of care and national development in the postcolony.

Rescue and adoption programs instituted by animal welfarism often similarly frame the shaping and manipulation of the animal, such as domestication, as modes of inclusion and care. These modes of transformation are thus considered eco-defenses ostensibly in the interest of the animal, yet ironically they sustain global-capitalist attitudes that require animal sacrifice as normative for securing more just futures. As I argue in my first chapter, animal welfare in South Africa, in particular in regards to beloved domesticated animals such as the dog, is intimately connected to the violence of white environmental virtue signaling and national identity. Welfarist practices, such as the euthanization of fit animals and the mass sterilization of cats and dogs, are framed as the necessary evil in the face of a nation with other priorities. More than 30 years after J.M. Coetzee's bleak picture of the state of the animal in institutionalized structures of national care, global welfarist pictures deploy the effects of uneven development and the 'urgency' of global sustainable growth to promote global authority as universal and necessary. I therefore return to questions of welfarism in our digital, global moment because thinking about animal necropolitics and its representation on digital social platforms reveals a paradigm of recursive global/local extractive logics revitalized as sustainable, inclusive growth. The transformative power of visual storytelling on social media platforms and its global reach marks visual storytelling as an effective tool to communicate ostensibly universal ethics. Looking at the global circulation of welfarist moralities also allows to trace the ways in which these continue to

discipline the vulnerable, subaltern communities other humanitarian discourses set out to care for.

One particular genre of visual storytelling employed by animal welfare and rescue organizations around the world is what I will refer to as the Rescue-Transformation Narrative (RTN). In those short videos (about three minutes), rescue and welfare organizations recapture the work they are doing for animals in their care by narrating the animal's journeys from capture/surrender to adoption. There are countless examples from large welfare organization such as The Humane Society in the US, Animal Aid India, to smaller non-profit/ public benefit organization promoted through Instagram such as Big Love Animal Rescue (Los Angeles), Sidewalks Specials (Cape Town) as well as independent distributions on social media platforms or by media brands such as The Dodo. Many animal rescues and sanctuaries employ social media for global reach and thus rely on content engagement, patronage, and donations to sustain their work. In these videos, the picture of neglect/ ferality is as significant as the picture of blissful domestication covertly disciplining what caring for animals looks like. While caring for the sick and the hurt is a positive general sentiment, the idea of what constitutes the 'good life' for a dog becomes a way of policing human-animal relationality on the one hand, and a way of radically integrating the animal into neocolonial imaginaries, on the other. For its South Africa section, the popular media brand The Dodo, for example, often connects with Sidewalk Specials, a Public Benefit Organization (PBO) in the Western Cape rescuing predominantly dogs from a township in De Doorns. The RTNs produced by South African welfare organization Sidewalk Specials and globally echoed by The Dodo represent a productive local-cum-global, but also global-cum-local perspective of the role of animal welfare in the pursuit of environmental, animal, and social

justice. In this chapter, the trading of content between Sidewalk Specials and The Dodo functions as a local case study as well as a stand-in for emerging global networks and attitudes.

The local and global dynamics at play in rescue-transformation narratives implicate the postcolony in particular ways. Dogs, more than any other animal, are the subject of these transformation videos, and given the racializing histories of dogs in South Africa discussed in this project, are the main focus and anchor of the following analysis. In this chapter, I will consider the RTN as an ideological and conceptual framework for reading the role of animal welfare organizations in the digital welfare industry. I suggest that the transformation narrative represents a genre of welfare literature framed by western conceptualizations of civilized living and animal welfare approaches. The narratives perpetuate conceptualizations of ferality, sanitation, and degeneration that have historically justified the violent expansion of white civilizing trajectories under apartheid and, as I hope to show, continue to do so. The animal welfare narratives produced by Sidewalk Specials of the happy transformations of dogs from feral to family, from a poor, predominantly black townships to predominantly white suburban neighborhoods, are produced against the backdrop of continued racialized social and economic inequalities in South Africa. The role of animal welfare ideologies, often bleached ideologies of care along racial lines and animacy hierarchies overrepresented by western epistemologies (see chapter 1-3), is solidified in the visual story-telling of the rescue-transformation narrative. It is thus crucial to think about animal welfarism echoed on digital platforms because it draws, at least in part, on welfarist videos of the Global South to articulate welfarism as a universal and reasonable approach to animal care within the global, capitalist apparatus.

Digital Animal Welfarism and the Postcolonial Animal

Postcolonial animal studies, even as it is concerned with the care for the animal and its dominant western humanist perspectives, focuses on the *unsuccessful* integration or representation of the animal within the various interfaces of the field. However, the almost exclusive focus on questions of integration and representation overrepresents those modes of engagement as emancipatory pathways. Postcolonial animal studies thus not only has to account for its indebtedness to western ecological perspectives (such as welfarism), a criticism we have explored in earlier chapters through Evan Mwangi's Africanist approach to the animal and its role in African writing. It also has to account for the material realities of the animal often overlooked in processes of inclusions, particularly if these processes are otherwise presented to be in the interest of global justice. Mwangi's work begins to sketch some of the ways in which race has influenced the construction of the animal as well as African people through a colonial lens. Such constructions often deny Africans the same 'progressive' animal ethics purportedly informing western welfarist discourses. Even though Mwangi's work takes a critical stance in regard to animal welfare approaches and their effects on environmental scholarship of African writing, he focuses on the ways in which this has undermined the significance of African writing and its advocacy for the humane treatment of non-human others. However, the continued overrepresentation of welfarism in the institutionalized care for the animal becomes increasingly normative for articulations of national development in South Africa, and the global digital platforms of animal rescue are central for the shaping of such articulations locally and, ultimately, globally.

Other overrepresentations of western welfarism in the postcolony, such as humanitarian discourses and interventions, have been extensively criticized.³⁶ However, even scholars critical of humanitarian discourses at the intersection of the dehumanizing and animalizing social histories in the postcolony, such as Julietta Singh, fail to recognize the same paradox interface between compassion and its inherent unequal power structures³⁷ for the animal they assign to humanitarian discourses. Singh takes up the humanitarian figure and explains that “they emerge as figures that stand in opposition to the colonial mastery of others but also unwittingly work alongside its modern-day iterations” (98). However, certain modes of inclusions (e.g. domestication, sustainability and animal rights discourses) have yet to be fully recognized as practices of colonial mastery in transnational industrial and governing structures, rather than as a tool for anti-colonial and anti-neoimperial thought. It is such fantasies of relief that scholars including Ilan Kapoor criticize in the discourse of celebrity humanitarianism. Kapoor reads the celebrity performances as self-serving rescue fantasies that represent Africa only through a developmentalist lens of humanitarian relief. Thus, even as postcolonial scholars recognize the damaging representation of Africa “desperately in need (of philanthropy)” that undergird global charity and celebrity humanitarianism, the representation of the postapartheid animal in desperate need (of welfarism) that undergird animal rescue ideologies in South Africa have been mostly overlooked.

At the intersection of digital visual culture and humanitarian relief narratives, scholars have noted the repurposing of African nature for local and global economies. The critique of

³⁶ See additionally Jemima Repo and Riina Yrjölä’s “The Gender Politics of Celebrity Humanitarianism in Africa.”

³⁷ In *Humanitarian Reason*, Didier Fassin outlines the inherent imbalance of compassion: “A critique of compassion is necessary not because of the attitude of superiority it implies but because it always presupposes a relation of inequality” (4).

revitalizing ostensibly uncultivated modes of engagement with African landscapes and their animals, however, stops short of recognizing the effects on animal materiality. Reiner J.M. Vriend identifies particular conceptualizations of nature that frame visual narratives of voluntourism (volunteer tourism) and unveils the binary dynamic of nature as an abject category and its reframing as a global treasure. This paradox begins to sketch the double bind of altruistic discourses and their continued global commitment to articulate South Africa in marketable ways. In a similar double bind, the transformation narrative uses concepts of ferality as an abject category and its reworking as a treasure to be defended. It is thus not exactly surprising that the conceptualizations of the state of ferality, rescue, and domestication of the animal carry ideological structures of colonialism that have historically characterized the civilizing/ sanitizing trajectories of white nationalism in South Africa.

It's also not exactly surprising that scholarship at the intersection of ePhilanthropy and animal welfare has highlighted the potential benefits of using online platforms for animal rescue institutions with very limited critical engagement. The representation of animal welfare and the role of animal rescue institutions in their online presence, in contrast to Vriend, is considered an opportunity to articulate awareness of animal rights and welfare. Madelene Blaer, for example, argues that “niche forms of tourist-animal interactions can support animal rights ethics” (13) in our digital era. Other studies focus on the ‘advertising’ strategies for animal adoption processes for rescues and shelters noting aspects such as that dogs pictured in sad circumstances are more likely to be adopted (Nakamura et. al 152). While such studies uncritically embrace the commodification of dogs, it also reveals the overemphasis put on the state of ferality as a state of crisis. In other words, the raising of awareness and funds requires viewers to bear witness to the suffering of animals leveraging the animal in crisis to, as Joseph Slaughter would put it, stage a

“humanitarian intervention” through the act of viewing. Such new digitalized ways of ‘caring’ for animals risk perpetuating ideas of inclusion that have neutralized colonial and imperial interventions.

In chapter one, I have shown the ways in which the legacies of apartheid population control/ reproductive control are revitalized in animal welfare discourses to justify mass euthanization and sterilization, as well as affirm humane ideologies as in the interest of the animal as a social being. In this chapter, I am interested in how representations of overpopulation, ferality, and degeneration justify the intervention, displacement, and control of the animal that disciplines alternative relationality between humans and animals on a global scale. Animal welfarism, an ideology of intervention and integration of the animal into civil society, requires a continued need and crises to be normative. Such naive authority, blissfully manipulative, disciplines human-animal relationality along the dichotomy of radical integration and destruction. While postcolonial scholarship productively criticizes the power imbalances between the Global North and South and their damaging global articulation of Africa in need of humanitarian aid, there is a lack of criticism thinking about animal aid in the postcolony similarly dominated by narratives of Africa in need. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the unaccounted violences of animal welfare narratives and its underlying ideologies readily used to revitalize whiteness and neoimperial trajectories in times of increased environmental destruction.

From ‘Township Special’ to Sidewalk Specials: The Rescue-Transformation Narrative

The local/global dynamic of RTNs is productively signaled through the relationship between The Dodo and Sidewalk Specials which are employing mostly distributed media strategies. This

means that most of the engagement with their videos happens off-website on various social media platforms. The popular media brand and digital publisher The Dodo has become a staple of VoxMedia and received several Shorty Awards³⁸ for the most popular animal brand across media platforms. In the 2019 entry for the award, The Dodo, describes their reach of 2.5 billion video views monthly, 110MM + people, and 65MM subscribers. The entry also positions the brand as “#1 most-viewed animal brand on digital in the world” - that is on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. While animal advocacy is an objective of The Dodo content, their explicit goal is “to entertain, make people feel connected to animals, and make viewers feel good about the world.” Animals are included as entertainers performing the kind of animality that revitalizes their consumption for positive globalization. These stories are widely shared on social media where they independently become ‘feel-good’ videos related to animal welfare causes only insofar as they reiterate global ecological stances assumed universally applicable.

The majority of the videos distributed on The Dodo’s various platforms, however, are audience submissions and are thus produced and submitted by individual viewers or organizations such as Sidewalk Special trying to make use of global exposure. In contrast to The Dodo, Sidewalk Specials, a self-identified “mass sterilisation unit and dog rescue based in the township of De Doorns” (sic, “Mission”), has a clear advocacy philosophy to the creation of their videos. Their mission states “Sidewalks Specials works through a culture of respect, education, and upliftment, helping township families care for their pets, rather than simply removing them” (“Mission”). Despite their claim to prioritize helping township families to care

³⁸ The Shorty Awards recognize “honoring the work of brands, agencies, influencers, creators and other social media professionals” (“About”) and termed “the Oscars of social media” by CBS News in 2012 (Ngak).

for their animals, the transformation videos are predominantly rehoming cases.³⁹ Here Sidewalk Special clarifies: “We safely rehome dogs from cases of abuse and/or severe neglect where education and upliftment are not possible” and link a story titled “Watch Buster and Tilana go from rags to riches in their new forever homes!” (“Mission”). From ‘rags to riches,’ as an idiom routinely used to signal equal possibilities in the land of opportunity, is ironically repurposed to suggest similar opportunities for the animal through welfarism. Even though rehoming is ostensibly a last resort, the oversaturation of rescue-rehome videos suggests that the majority of township dogs are homeless and feral. In efforts to meet the global audiences’ appetite for feel-good videos that ‘connects’ them with animals through visual consumption, the animal is included into imperial worldmaking ideologies with little to no agency for the animal and the township’s predominantly black residents. Because of The Dodo’s global reach and following, Sidewalk Specials’ representation of animal rescue in South Africa articulates the township as a focal point for animal welfare on an international platform. This not only affirms the rescue’s validity but presents new digitalized facets of global environmental ethics considered universally normative, neutral, and progressive.

In considering the rescue-transformation narrative as a genre of welfare literature, I hope to show the entanglements of global narratives of care and visual culture industries that overrepresent the animal in crisis and the emancipatory potential of welfare and animal rights discourses. Sidewalk Specials’ reporting on the state of the animal in townships, for example, shows the leveraging of animal suffering for global awareness and advocacy. Regardless of whether or not the RTN follows a personal rescue story or cooperates with local rescue

³⁹ In fact, of the over 300 videos on Sidewalks Specials Youtube in the transformation category in the past 5 years, it is only a handful of videos that focus on transformations in which the animal is returned to the care of township families.

organizations, the cathartic journey of a dog's self-actualization within domestic structures represents a characteristic of the transformation narratives. The seamless, domestic integration into modern family life is continuously reiterated as the ideal outcome of animal rescue. The transformation videos follow a simple narrative structure of exposition, turning point, and resolution, that is the rescue, the transformation, and the domestic bliss. The beginning of the narrative establishes the state of ferality, may that be through neglect, abandonment, enclosure, or sickness. The animal's rescue is the turning point for the animal. Sidewalk Specials' global audience is rewarded with images of healing and redemption as the feral animal slowly learns to trust in humanity. Scholars such as Singh and Slaughter criticize this distant engagement with trauma as a form of humanitarian witnessing that reduces care for its subject to sustainable consumption. Singh recalls Slaughters's critique of the West's interest in non-west suffering and suggests that

this stark rendering of international journalism as a sensational enterprise that seeks to satiate rather than to transform its audiences positions journalism well outside of the realm of aid; what the journalist does is merely to bring home a story, a narrative to be consumed passively rather than one to mobilize radical change (142).

While Singh and Slaughter are focusing on humanitarianism's human subject, the radical inclusion of the animal in humane discourses for better futures as well as the dismantling of violent conceptions of the human through the animal draws significant parallels between global aid initiatives. The reporting of animal welfare narratives that embrace the passive consumption of the videos in the name of global awareness must also be considered "outside of the realm of aid" (142). Moreover, in the discrepancy between passive consumption and mobilizing change, it seems significant that it is only the animal that transforms and subsequently seems to satisfy the urgency for radical change. The burden of progress deforms the animal in the interest of global

care and signals the limited potential of RTNs as a welfarist genre to *uplift* animals or black residents.

The rescue-transformation narrative entices engagement through clickbaity titles promising the happy domestic ending desired, carrying the torch through the opposing images of feral animals that do not have a home to call their own. The narrative sets out to restore faith in animal welfarism's approach as a working intervention for the animal in crises and affirms welfarist ideologies in instituting care and preventing cruelty against animals. Ultimately, it suggests domestication as fundamental and universal human-animal ethics. Animal welfare narratives make use of the conceptual blurriness concerning ferality and domestication in which the former is a sign of the degeneration of not only civilizational structures and institutions but also social and moral welfarism informed by our global moment. Domestication, in contrast, is overrepresented as a signal of development and the kind of positive engagement with the animal that characterizes the state of modernity. Postcolonial ecocritics Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin provide an analog for the entanglement of colonial/imperial pursuits and agricultural developmentalism. In reference to Virginia Anderson who thinks about the correlation of domestication and the early US empire, Huggan and Tiffin recapture:

The English colonists had 'invariably judged the Indians' obvious "failure" to domesticate New World beasts as evidence of their backwardness' [...] Once such an assumption had been made, it became part of a persisting stereotype, encouraging the view that Indians 'who wasted time with hunting and also failed to domesticate animals obviously needed to learn how to exploit properly the abundant fauna the Lord had placed in the New World for the benefit of humans' (10f).

Domestication was thus employed not only to integrate resources (human and non-human) into industrializing structures of global development but also to discipline non-capitalistic relationships with the animal. Animal welfare organizations that represent the state of ferality as

a state of non-relationship and homelessness thus only affirm narratives of domestication as the desirable mode of association. The violence of domestication and animal husbandry is repackaged as sustainable market growth to extend the unquestioned benefits of civilized living to seemingly “underdeveloped” nations and peoples.

While it is impossible to define ferality but in abjection to states of domestication and cultivation, the images of ferality used in the rescue-transformation narratives signal a lapse from domestication rather than a pre-domestic state. This distinction is relevant for the conceptualizations of domestication in contemporary animal welfare narratives. Because the lapse from domestication requires domestication to be the *priori* state, ‘natural’ and without needing evidence, animal welfare interventions only restore a natural order, civil structures and intercept the animal suffering interwoven with ferality as a degenerative state. In “*Canis Familiaris: A Dog History of South Africa*,” Lance Van Sittert and Sandra Swart trace the social and cultural production of the animal in South Africa’s precolonial, colonial, and apartheid history. They argue that “anthropomorphism and commodification helped consolidate the dog’s place as an integral member of the white middle-class household” (159). The integration of the dog as a family member suggests the state of domestication in the white, middle-class family as a state of kinship overwriting the violence of the process of this radical inclusion. The domesticated dog becomes a symbol of the ‘progressive’ discourse of inclusion, multispecies justice, and other hot-button vocabulary regenerating white middle-class families. On the flip side, the homeless, unowned, abandoned dogs are often treated as markers of institutional and moral degeneration, a threat to the sanitized human-animal relationality, and the failure of the nation’s postcolonial restructuring to enforce animal rights. The particular racialized paradigm that occurs in the context of ferality, the animal, in particular dogs, and anti-black governing in

South Africa saturate animal welfare narratives and naturalizes its modes of safeguarding bleached ideologies of national development. It shapes the public perception of the role of animal welfare in national development and mimics the kind of overrepresentation of crisis and need that has informed western humanitarian interventions in Africa at large and has been established to perpetuate the very power dynamics it aims to dismantle (Kapoor 12ff, Singh 26). Ultimately, RTNs uphold modes of population control as well as enabling narratives of degeneration and public health that informed apartheid politics.

The conceptions of ferality and domestication help construe animal welfarist interventions as *the* defense against animal cruelty and articulate an innocence to the visions of global (white) welfarist authority. The description of The Dodo's story about a "Tiny, Mangey Puppy Found on the Side of the Road" (sic, n.pag.) that "can't wait to pick her human siblings up from school now [heart emoji]", carries the kind of opposing conceptualization of ferality and domestication I suggest undergird welfarist story-telling. Carefully chosen signal words paint the picture of a defenseless, neglected animal, carelessly left behind and passed over by the flow of everyday life. This is accompanied by a pitiful picture visualizing both the size and condition of the feral animal. The puppy is dirty, distressed, and captured between the trash it was found in. It is this initial picture of ferality that highlights the state of domestication under welfarism as the defensive response to the animal in crisis. The dog's new life, fully integrated into the family nexus as a sibling and caregiver in its own regards, the transformation into a clean, obedient almost-human member of the family stands in stark contrast to its former state of neglect. What is significant is that Sidewalk Specials uses, constructs, and ultimately requires the state of ferality located in conditions of poverty and other social, structural inequalities. It helps articulate the state of domestication and regenerates western standards of living through rescue

fantasies that secure donations for their cause. In other words, Sidewalk Special's authority is covertly established through the disallowance of ferality, while on the surface, their rescue work is constructed as honorable and apolitical. This is a kind of diversion Kapoor also identifies in the discourse of celebrity humanitarianism. He explains that

when the spectacle of humanitarian relief focuses on the 'show', as it most often does, it ends up valuing the crisis's outwardly visible and photogenic aspects, diverting public attention away from the latter's long-term and structural causes. All such instances are depoliticizing because they tend to eliminate public deliberation, disagreement, and conflict, thereby upholding both a top-down politics and the status quo (3).

At minimum, RTNs exploit the conditions of animal suffering in order to overemphasize rescue and domestication as the alternative to such suffering. What remains unaddressed in this picture is a history of colonial manipulation of the animal and ferality in the interest of white governing and its consequent production of the township or informal settlements as the nexus of crises.

The picture of the dirty, diseased, unwanted dog thus comes to signify a state of ferality only possible in the township and becomes in significant ways an extension of the sanitation syndrome that fueled segregationist ideologies in South Africa. Under apartheid, the argument of public health and resulting measures of sanitation for the preservation of white territory has historically located a thread of civilizational decline in black South African settlements Tom A. Moultry traces the ideological structures of segregationist policies and explains that

initially, the justification for the displacement of the indigenous population (and, hence, the maintenance of urban areas for Whites, while still retaining a population of African workers) found its expression in the discourses of public health. One such example was the forced removal of Africans to Ndabeni township on the outskirts of Cape Town in March 1901 [...]. While these concerns (what Swanson terms the "sanitation syndrome") offered a convenient pretext for enforced urban segregation, Maylam (1995) and other historians have argued that this discourse also (and more importantly) provided a vehicle by which White capitalist interests in the cities could be safeguarded and preserved (219).

The dynamic of using Black labor to meet the ever-growing demands of white urban livelihood while using sanitary arguments for forced displacement shows significant overlaps with the use of animals in welfarist and developmentalist neocolonial imaginary. The feral animal is predominantly adopted out of the township and into affluent neighborhoods in light of sanitary concerns for the animal and the township itself, while the sanitation of the township dog and its removal mobilizes and revitalizes welfarist authority. Animal welfare narratives thus not only misidentify the actual state of crisis for the animal in neoimperial worldmaking, but it also ascribes white standards of civilization as the universal, ethical platform and point of departure for human-animal relationality.

The immediate and future suffering associated with ferality and overcrowding justify rescue interventions constructed as defenses against the realities of township ferality. In the public imagination, informal settlements are often identified as the scapegoat of animal cruelty mobilizing arguments for increased governing and policing of townships. We read this most clearly in the responses to RTNs often advocating for more disciplining:

Has she found a home by now. Hope so....she shouldn't be out in the cold and wet on the street. There are too many strays and unwanted animals on the streets...especially in the squatter camps....there should be stricter laws regarding animals. It is so cruel. They do not understand why they have to go through all this cruelty. Stop breeding and have your animals spayed (sic Jurgen van Zabuesnig).

The commentator identifies the problem of the overpopulation of feral animals as a particularly pertinent concern for “[squatter] camps” and calls for stricter laws against animal cruelty. It becomes clear thus that townships are a stand-in for the uncaring, preoccupied other, ostensibly ‘causally’ constructed across the racial spheres of national development. Ironically, the commentator also calls for solutions deeply imbricated in the racial fabric of the nation’s history. In chapter one, the politically fraught relationship between dogs and white nationalism in South

Africa, one marked by the animalization of Black South Africans and the use of dogs to protect white lives, begins to unravel the colonial entanglements of animal welfare and domestication that, with the end of apartheid, were repackaged as a praxis of inclusive care. In consequence, the generally rightful call for the end of dog breeding for profit all too easily overwrites the history of controlled or targeted breeding. As outlined by Gabeba Baderoon, racialized imaginaries under apartheid led to the division of indigenous dogs such as the Africanis, to become “‘Black’ breeds” (347), whereas ridgebacks, bred by White European settlers with European hunting dogs, become ‘White’ breeds. While the ‘Black’ breeds were hunted and killed, ‘White’ breeds were cultivated. Additionally, the Africanis was considered feral and thus “the ‘mongrel’ *Africanis* dog became associated with a discourse of degeneracy and wildness” (347). The discourse of colonial breeding control, racialized perception of animal ferality under Black ownership, and overimposed narratives of degeneration consequently justified the call for breeding and overpopulation control. Significantly, the extensive control of breeding led to

far-reaching official programmes [that] saw thousands of African dogs, wolves and jackals killed, while ‘pure-bred’ imported dogs grew in numbers, status and popularity. These policies continued into the twentieth century when organizations such as the SPCA undertook extensive extermination operations against what they termed an ‘underclass mongrel horde’ (Van Sittert and Swart 2007, 24).

The controlled breeding under colonialism resulted thus not only in the destruction and persecution of Africanis dogs, but also its owners who were violently animalized in the wake of civil degeneration and calls for control. Animal conceptualizations in the postcolony are informed by racialized assemblages of humanity historically produced in the reiteration of human/non-human boundaries. The image of animal ferality in South Africa’s poor urban areas thus operates as part of the racializing assemblage of animal welfarism in processes of neoimperial worldmaking.

The overrepresentation of ferality as a lapse from domestication becomes but one mechanism through which animal welfare narratives articulate the role of welfarism and its ideological and institutional frameworks. With the animal established as a victim without agency that thrives only in frameworks of domestication, and with welfarists established as the reluctantly chosen, but natural caregivers of the animal, animal suffering becomes reinforced as a normative condition of townships. The RTN and its perception, traced through comments left in response to the transformations produce recursive and self-validating discourses of animal welfare. The comments identify a particular need of welfare in townships and informal settlement often affirmed through the establishment of a lack of care and ‘cultural’ ignorance. While former owners and abusers remain anonymous in the videos, the narrative is explicit in its rhetoric about the state of the animal in the township at the moment of rescue. Almost exclusively, Sidewalk Special opens their videos with the explanation that the rescued animals were “completely neglected. The owner *just* didn’t want [them] anymore” (my emphasis, 01:25-02:51) or “They found puppies in a drain pipe. Somebody had *just* dumped them there” (my emphasis, “Tiniest Puppy” 0:01-0:09). The vocabulary of neglect and dumping, the picture of dogs abandoned *just* like that implies a state of obliviousness. Such rhetoric suggests a lack of care or ignorance both implicated in the loaded language of both Sidewalk Special themselves and its followers. While some followers claim that one “can’t claim ignorance here,” and identify a lack of empathy, the Sidewalk Special emphasizes education over judgment. However, presenting animal abuse as a result of a ‘lack of awareness’ or ignorance risks both rendering people unfit to own dogs and diverting the effects of social, structural postapartheid violence to a ‘cultural’ backwardness. Even as Sidewalk Specials first and foremost identify the social and economic conditions of townships to be the cause of the state of crisis for animal, the focus on

blame that either universally signifies township people as innocent or liable disciplines and homogenizes Black South Africans' relationship with the animal. This relationship ultimately takes any form necessary for securing of bleached welfarist ideologies.

The shaping and representation of both township people and animals is often part of the discourse of guidance and education. In June of 2022, Sidewalk Specials posted a four episode video series “aimed at empowering children to be good pet owners within their township” (“Education”). The educational series aims to be a preventative measure against animal abuse that speculatively locates a future of crisis in the township. One of the videos, titled “Cruelty Isn’t Cool,” explains to the children that “animals have rights, just like us” and that “Animals can’t speak for themselves so you have to use your voice to protect them” (“Cruelty” 00:12-00:14; 02:04-02:09). In referencing an “us,” a picture of a human who has rights, the request radically includes poor communities in an “us,” a belonging that has delivered no reprieve from the structural violence in South Africa. This is once more a moment of depoliticization, in which the child is supposed to use their voice to affirm animal and human rights discourses and validate a neocolonial governing that requires Black poverty to be normative. Thus, the burden of moral responsibility and policing against animal rights abuses is projected on the black female child as if her own suffering is already articulated through the declaration of human rights. In *Fictions of Dignity*, Elizabeth Anker reads such fantasies about the inclusiveness of universal human rights to assume sovereignty and integrity. She argues that

as liberalism scripts the human, the dignified individual in possession of rights is imagined to inhabit an always already fully integrated and inviolable body: a body that is whole, autonomous, and self-enclosed. This premise turns corporeal integrity into something of a baseline condition that precedes the ascription of dignity and rights to an individual (Anker 4).

Assuming township children's human rights as a baseline to argue for animal rights shows humanitarianism and welfarism's disregard for the material realities of embodied integrity in discourses of inclusions and well-being. Ultimately, the presentation of Sidewalk Specials and their cause as apolitical guidance for the betterment of the animal in crisis first and foremost secures their authority.

As the people in the township "fail" to be responsible owners, caretakers, and handlers providing the kind of 'forever' home that meets the standards of neocolonialism, Sidewalk Special has to take over the integration of the animal into an uneven postapartheid society. As a result, Sidewalk Special's work, articulated through the regular RTN update is often read as an honorable fight against the inhumanity the audience comes to associate with De Doorns' township. The people who respond on social media to videos, such as on the organization's Facebook page, often identify their work to restore faith in the seemingly otherwise crumbling, degenerating state of humanity. Responses read as follows: "I am weeping whilst reading this - weeping with sorrow at the inhuman cruelty of humans towards animals and weeping with joy at the humanity and love of the people of Sidewalk Specials. Thank you" (Stiller). Some are even more explicit: "I just love this....it's stories like this that restore my faith in humanity. Thank you sidewalk specials for always being at the right place *when needed the most*.....you are just the best" (my emphasis, Berger). Underlying the expression of restored faith, these comments identify a continuous exigency and obligation to rescue the animal from the state of ferality that implicates both the township (as a civilizational structure) and its citizens as incapable of the kind of human-animal relationality that signals responsible ownership and 'humanity.'

Domestication as the remedy for ferality and the civil degeneration associated with it, fuels the narrative discourse of animal welfarism in South Africa. The humanity that cannot be

located in the township allows these narratives to position a white and middle-upper-class population at the center of animal rescue fantasies. Sidewalk Special founder and rescuer, Rachael Sylvester, reflects on the state and conditions under which the mangy puppy, now named Halo, was found. She explains that Halo “was by the side of the road and she sort of just was there with traffic passing her by, sat in the dirt. Even though it was an awful situation, she was still looking at us, still wagging her tail, still waiting to be rescued” (00:00:00- 00:00:12). What is supposed to highlight the resilience of the dog and signal the dog’s faith in a system that determines Halo incapable of any degree of self-determination, demonstrates that the state of ferality secures animal welfare in institutionalized care and requires a continuous state of crisis to articulate welfarism’s necessity and authority. The idea that Halo was waiting to be rescued establishes her as a passive victim of ferality and renders the dog utterly powerless. The construction of a passive victim who needs representation and aid has been central to the conceptualization of Africa in the West, particularly in humanitarian discourses. Kapoor explains that celebrity humanitarianism, for example, constructs Africa as “voiceless” and “because Africans are shown to be passive, without knowledge or agency, the stars can ventriloquize and paternalize them” (42). In a similar gesture, Sylvester speaks for the animal and secures its place in rescue as the logical defense against the dog’s ferality. Domestication is thus in the animal’s best interest and implemented as if it is universally true.

In the framing structure of ferality and domestication the rescue becomes a kind of intermediary instrumentalizing the conditions of animal suffering in the township to promote welfarist rescue fantasies and revitalize covert architectures of white living. In a video outlining Sidewalk Special’s outreach work and necessity, Sylvester paints a picture of township rescue in De Doorns “one of the poorest communities in the Western Cape” where life “is tough, not only

for people but also for their beloved dogs” (“Outreach” 00:00:04-00:00:14). The video’s mobilizing battle music is only interrupted by the reflective narrative-voice over of Sylvester explaining: “In township rescue you never know what to expect; some days are amazing, some days are heartbreaking, everyday is worthwhile” (00:00:56-00:01:15). The ‘amazing’ days are signaled through Sylvester amidst laughing black children, while the heartbreaking one’s show cuts of severely abused dogs carried away by Sylvester in dismay. The conclusion that “everyday is worthwhile” forecloses a more comprehensive picture of animal suffering and animal care in ‘township rescue.’ Sylvester takes on the role of navigating the audience through the hard images and functions similarly to celebrities in global charity. Kapoor identifies the role of celebrities as “the audience’s guide” through which “the ‘dark continent’ becomes a museum or tourist attraction, and, to recall Bono’s earlier-quoted remark, ‘less of a burden and more of an adventure’ (39). The sense of excitement and rejuvenation that marks welfarist labor is mobilized to revitalize the validity of their own mechanisms and shapes the ideological community of Sidewalk Specials and its international audience. The people and animals in the township remain the backdrop to the spectacle. These rescue fantasies, both burden and bliss, are foundational for the construction of the rescue-transformation narrative. The moment of rescue is the kind of positive change, that bit of humanity necessary to revitalize the dog, the rescuer, and the future owners.

The transformation of the township dog follows ritualistic steps of domestication. In the RTN, every township dog becomes the ‘amazing’ dog that makes rescue worthwhile. Part of the dog’s transformation is the almost symbolic bath in which the dirty puppy is washed clean from its township past. Free from diseases and signs of neglect the dog becomes integrated into its

new ‘forever’ home. This kind of rebranding is reminiscent of the postapartheid rehabilitation of the Africanis dog. Van Sittert and Swart explain that

‘Homing’ and DNA testing were duly employed to reinvent this ‘mangy township mongrel’ as *Cunis Africanis* - the dog of Africa’ - a new national breed appropriate to the post-1994 rainbow/pan-African nationalism [appendix reference left out] (169).

The ‘homing’ of township dogs implies a previous homelessness to the dog and suggests that the forced removal and genealogical reinvention and manipulation is central to the civil integration of the dog. Van Sittert and Swart also highlight the “synchronicity of the cycles of rejection and rehabilitation with the rise and fall of competing nationalism” (169). It reveals the instrumentalization and the ceaseless shaping of the animal, the dog in particular, in the interest of white progressive agendas in South Africa. In the RTN, the domestic space becomes the central space of transformation, a private structure shaping public ideologies, that disciplines the conceptualization of what it means to be family. One adopter recaps the journey of her two rescue dogs from De Doorns:

She [Emma] didn’t have a mom, so there were a lot of things she didn’t know how to do. She didn’t know how to bark, she didn’t know how to sit. And Chester has shown her everything. All the tricks that she can do, catching her food or giving a paw, he’s taught her all of that. [...] These two are special” (00:01:25-00:02:51).

The denial of family ties, a reiteration of an “absent and irresponsibly ‘Third World’ parent” (Kapoor 28), signals the ideological reorientation of the adopted dog seamlessly taking its place in the white middle-class family. The indication of exceptionalism of the dog is a common humanist mode of expanding the circle. Significantly, the chosen examples of the kind of knowledge that Emma learns from Chester only affirm domestic disciplining rather than promoting a species-appropriate development. Properly trained and integrated, the domesticated dog completes the picture of the caring white middle-class family that now includes the dog.

The sense of revitalization is crucial to measuring how ‘worthwhile’ township rescue is. Affectionately Halo’s adopter reflects on her relationship with Halo: “She is just the most intelligent, lovable, amazing dog, and having her in our family not only changed her life, but has changed our lives as well, so much, for the better” (“Tiniest” 01:25- 02:51). This better-for-all conclusion in which the dog has shed its feral layers “sanitized through domestication,” now clearly identifiable by attributes deserving of love and affection, shows the overly romanticized narrative of the seamless integration of the animal into modern life. Animal welfare narratives, such as RTNs, and by extension the benefactors involved, identify the problem (the state of ferality that marks the animal in crisis) and its solution (domestication and sterilization as compassionate mode of intervention). Fassin traces the risks of such repackaging in which “inequality is replaced by exclusion, domination is transformed into misfortune, injustice is articulated as suffering, violence is expressed in terms of trauma” (6). The shaping of welfare reasons⁴⁰ into global-intellectual and political agendas masks the violent outcomes of colonial and imperial legacies often responsible for prevailing structural and social injustices. Moreover, the problematization of welfare reasons as a moral issue revitalizes those reasons as innocent authority and principal responsibility of the privileged benefactor.

This sense of revitalization is highlighted by the scenes of Halo’s everyday life. The dog’s new life unfolds quite literally in the backyard of neoliberal urban regeneration pinpointed by large properties, turfed yards, boats, and car rides. The dog’s ‘good life,’ full of material goods and disciplining attention, is the public representation of care and ‘good’ pet ownership bound to western, often white standards of living. In *Necropolitics*, Achille Mbembe draws a

⁴⁰ Fassin terms “humanitarian reasons” (2) to signal the social and political re-articulation of geostrategic intervention as humanitarian mission, such as “the Western heads of state who called for the bombing of Kosovo as part of a military campaign they asserted was ‘purely humanitarian’” (2).

similar connection between the politics of the good life and employing reason as moral disciplining. He argues that

on the basis of a distinction between reason and unreason (passion, fantasy), late modern criticism has been able to articulate a certain idea of the political, the community, the subject—or, more fundamentally, of the good life, how to achieve it, and how to become, in the process, a fully moral agent. Within this paradigm, reason is the truth of the subject, and politics is the exercise of reason in the public sphere (67).

In the process of articulating the good life, it is not the dog however, who becomes a “fully moral agent” (67), but the adopter reasonable enough to exercise the instituting politics of ‘humane’ treatment. In this articulation, the state of ferality, principally presented by Sidewalk Special’s RTNs as the state of township dogs, is unreasonable. The dog’s family status in his adopted family is thus relevant to the articulation of postapartheid kinship relationality as a measure of revitalization and the last signifier of the township dog’s transformation. The insistent claim to family, however, signals a radical inclusion of the animal that overwrites possibilities of self-determination and seamlessly integrates animal welfare ideologies as mode of neocolonial disciplining. Ultimately, the RTN, as a tool of welfarism, is a self-fulfilling, self-promoting blueprint with interchangeable and disposable subjects that perpetuates colonial rescue fantasies in the postcolonial imaginary.

Conclusion

Just for the month of September in 2022, the Animal Welfare Society of South Africa planned to sterilize up to a 1000 cats and dogs during what they have termed “Spaytember” (see figure 1). Spay and neuter programs, along with the ideology of ‘adopt don’t shop’, are the flagships of rescue and welfare initiatives. Sidewalk Specials, for example, defines their philosophy as “Rescue, educate, sterilize, rehome...all in one day's labor” (Instagram Profile Page). This kind

of shaping and manipulating of the animal, I hope to have shown, represents a covert structure of violence all too often reconstructed as the necessary defense against animal cruelty. Locating the unceasing threat of animal ferality and consequent suffering in townships while those administering institutionalized care mass kill, sterilize, breed, and otherwise accept the utter manipulation and destruction of the animal calculated against a speculative future of suffering, allows positioning welfare and rescue organizations and its particular picture of the state of domestication as the only acceptable process, trajectory, and outcome of animal welfarism. RTNs thus revitalize animal welfare causes and influence both the representation and perception of rescues, their teams, and animal lovers willing to donate or adopt. Through the RTN, township dogs become ‘sanitized’ from feral animalhood and revitalize whiteness in ethical virtue signaling. In the iteration of the rescue fantasies central to the construction of the RTN, animal suffering is instrumentalized to secure global ethical perspectives.

Overall, there is too little attention given to the kind of abuses of domestication that allowed for the unhindered flourishing of RTNs and its articulation of dogs as family. While scholars such as David A. Nibert show the violence of domestication for industrial purposes and domestication as a civilizing tool of colonial and imperial endeavors,⁴¹ the violence of domestication in the domestic space outside of bodily harm or those that neutralize such harm are rarely considered. Not only are dogs often overfed and under-exercised,⁴² but they are also shamelessly forced to participate in all human activities most photogenic for social media including bike rides, roller skating, or skiing that perpetually undermine the dog’s health and self-determination. The integration of animal welfare in digital visual culture aiming to advocate

⁴¹ See *Animal Oppression and Human Violence : Domeseccration, Capitalism, and Global Conflict*

⁴² According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), 56% of dogs in the US are overweight or obese (The Farmer’s Dog).

for their subjects mostly revitalizes animal lovers' compassion mobilizing donations rather than action. The cruelty of designer dog puppy mills or dog fighting rings, let alone shady animal rescues that keep animals in bad conditions to elicit the largest profit margins, or the mass euthanization and sterilization of animals through purportedly humane welfare mechanisms, are the often overlooked violences of animals' radical integration into our civil structures. The relationship between predominantly white activists providing aid and the predominantly black residents of townships in South Africa often rendered incapable of 'responsible' pet ownership demonstrates the need for singular, localized analytics of care that simultaneously keeps an eye on global expressions. The overrepresentation of welfarist discourses in regard to animal rights and the *prevention* of cruelty against animals in South Africa has yet to recognize its commitment to global ecological perspectives that are contingent on a future of suffering and maintain white nationalist standards of civil society.

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Chapter I

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VITA

Rebecca Brings

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: CARING FOR POSTCOLONIAL ANIMALS

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in English at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Comparative Literature at University College London, London, United Kingdom in 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English Studies at Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität, Bonn, Germany in 2014.