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The Silence of the Lamb: Animals in Biopolitics and
the Discourse of Ethical Evasion

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The Silence of the Lamb: Animals in Biopolitics and the Discourse of Ethical Evasion

Sana Ali

ABSTRACT

This paper is a contribution in the growing work of scholars in the multidisciplinary field of animal studies. It delves into the question of how news about animal suffering evokes ethical positions while evading engagement in the ultimate question of what humanity's ethical responsibility towards non-human animals is. This research comes at a time where our concern for the 'welfare' of non-human animals is at an all-time high, while our exploitation of non-human animals has also reached unprecedented levels, with grave consequences for the environment, human health, and our ethical identities. Foucault's concepts of biopolitics, discourse and ethical subjectification of the self are used to understand the way power works to normalize our 'morally schizophrenic' institutions and social practices vis a vis animals. In choosing these concepts to examine ethical evasion this paper aims to fill the lacuna in the discipline of animal studies which tends to take as its starting point the conceptual framework of 'Othering' animals. This research avoids this circularity inherent in overlooking an unsolved problem (the nature of the human-animal difference) by conducting an investigation of how people are led to form themselves as ethical subjects in relation to non-human animals in the first place. A Critical discourse analysis of three case studies where human treatment of non-human animals is being condemned finds that other discourses co-opt the animal-human discourse in all of the cases. These distracting discourses are critical in evading the ethical question of human-animal relationships, permitting the readers to view themselves as un-implicated in the societal processes which exploit animals, while inviting moral outrage by assigning blame elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

Humanity's true moral test, its fundamental test, consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect human kind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it (Kundera, 1984).

The question of who we are has always been inextricably tied up with determining what we are not (Levinas, Smith & Harshav, 1998). Our membership in the commune of humanity delimits our understanding of universality. And it is this universality that forms the basis of all the moral achievements we pride ourselves on, and all the idealistic undertakings of modernity that we imagine we exert ourselves for. Human rights, humanity, human dignity, the humane and the inhumane, human progress; these are all concepts that flow from the notion that the most basic building block of human identity is our belonging to the human species (Parekh, 2008). The banality of this view is the source of its power. There is another more 'universal' identity, that gets lost in the dark corners of our social consciousness and it is that of sentience, life, of 'bios' (Esposito, 2008). The implications of this are evident in the ever-growing incoherence between our large scale institutionalization of non-human animal exploitation and our obsession with seeing ourselves as an 'animal loving' or 'humane' society (Baker, 1993). How do we understand the reality that 'at the very historical moment when the scale and efficiency of factory farming has never been more nightmarish, in which the oceans are being overfished by advanced techniques to the point of collapse, some animals are receiving unprecedented levels of care, so much so that the pet care industry in the US grew in total expenditures from \$17 billion in 1994 to \$45.5 billion in 2009' (Wolfe, 2013: 53)?

Legal scholar Gary Francione (2008) has described this state of western society as one of 'moral schizophrenia' (135), and this dissertation is an investigation into how discourse reconciles the existence of competing ethical imperatives to legitimize and promote the continuation of this condition. Theoretically, this project is inspired by and draws upon Cary Wolfe's work in elaborating biopolitical thought to describe the power acting on animals within human society¹ and aligns itself with the goals of critical animal studies. While plenty of work in field has been done on the discourses of animal use and abuse at the site of welfare campaigns (Cole, 2011), TV programme and films, (Plumwood 2000) advertisements (Tovey, 2003) and even school textbooks (Wadiwel, 2009) there is a scarcity of material which ana-

¹ See Cary Wolfe's 'Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame,' 2013.

lyzes news discourses that relate directly to animal ethics, a dearth this paper aims to fill. The purpose of news, presumably, is to report on anomalous incidents, indeed that is what makes something 'newsworthy' (Fowler, 1996), but in light of the systematized abuse of millions of animals² in Western developed countries, these news pieces have to serve a critical role in representing these incidents as unusual and immoral, making them a valuable untapped resource. Aside from this empirical gap, there is also a theoretical void which this new discipline thus far has suffered from, in its reliance on the concept of 'Othering,' which I will elaborate on in the Theoretical Review section.

The importance of understanding how ethical positions are discursively formulated while legitimizing and naturalizing the systemic oppression of animals for human advancement, is vast, not just for the cause of animals, but other oppressed groups. A growing body of academic literature in the past decade has come to recognize the commonality of different kinds of oppression and seeks to advance a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to understanding interlocking systems of global domination (Adams & Donovan, 1995). Critical animal studies, is one such school, which seeks to deconstruct and denaturalize these systems, while embracing the inherently political nature of knowledge construction. In this sense, the school shares common themes with the methodological goals of Critical discourse analysis which is also based on a Foucauldian understanding of power and language. The multidisciplinary and proudly political nature of both made them ideal conceptual partners for this project, which seeks to problematize our view of ourselves as an 'ethically conscious' society, comfortably blind to the 'lived realities' (Boyde, 2014) of the animals caught in webs of biopolitical domination.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Animal studies

A close examination of the government of animals by humans is vital for an anthropology of biopolitics: for an understanding, that is, of the many ways in which humans themselves have been governed as animals in modern times. (Pandian, 2008)

² See *The Invisibility of Evil: Moral Progress and the 'Animal Holocaust'* (Costelloe, 2003), *Cruel Intimacies and Risky Relationships: Accounting for Suffering in Industrial Livestock Production* (Purcell, 2011) and *Meat past and present: research, production, consumption* (Pedersen, 1995)

‘Animal studies’ is an interdisciplinary field that draws on postmodern notions of identity and representation to put preconceived understandings of the relationship between humans and animals under a critical lens. It is an expansion of cultural studies, which set as its goal ‘to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them’ (Horkheimer, 1982, 244), and as such seeks to understand the way acts of cultural production and identity formation lead to the oppression of non-human animals (Sorenson, 2014).

The rise of animal studies also coincides with developments in scientific research that have blurred the once sharp distinction between humans and other animals. Language, tool use, even morality are no longer considered confined solely within human capacity (Weil, 2012), raising questions about Cartesian and Kantian humanist ethical systems, which are based around a distinct binary between human and non-human subjectivities, in fact classifying animals as things (Nocella, 2014). These developments have brought with them a new wave of the animal rights movement, triggered by Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation* (1975), which following Jeremy Bentham, argued for a ‘biocentrist’ (1948) ethic: animals being deserving of ethical consideration as part of a cohesive moral and philosophical perspective (Sperling 1988, 82).

Animal studies, inspired by all of these streams, is an exercise in ‘post-humanism’- de-centering the human to include the ‘ultimate Other’- animals (Weil, 2012). As NYU’s Animal studies initiative Professor Chaudhuri puts it:

Once you start thinking of them as the ultimately othered Other, you realize how much has been riding on or produced by the mechanisms of Othering, and how it folds back on the other identity discourses. [Animal studies is] another way to go back and understand how sexism and racism have been in many ways underwritten by speciesism. (2015)

Recent scholarship in animal studies can be divided into two streams. One takes inspiration from the traditions of Derrida and Foucault, as does Cary Wolfe, in opting for a biopolitical frame to explain the nature of power relations that act on animal and human bodies (Cole, 2011). The other, more dominant, particularly in empirical research into discourse, adopts the concept of ‘Othering’ to explain the way power works through language to legitimize the oppression of animals (Weil, 2012). As mentioned earlier, my research project follows in the former rather than the latter tradition, the reasons for which I shall explain after briefly outlining the two concepts themselves.

Biopolitics and the Animal Body - A View of Power

Foucault used the term biopower to describe the way power works to subdue and harness the reproductive and developmental potential of living bodies (Dreyfus, Rabinow & Foucault, 1983). In the service of power, these living bodies are reconstituted as productive subjects, or 'docile bodies' (Novek, 2005, 224). Biopolitics, in turn, are the strategic arrangements that coordinate power relations, 'a new technology of power', which acts as an apparatus of control on a scale unthinkable during classical times (Foucault, 1997, 242). While Foucault used these terms to explain the functioning of power relations between humans, his theory has been elaborated by contemporary academics working in the interdisciplinary field of critical animal studies to describe the way animal bodies are the subjects of human discipline to optimize their productive capabilities (Cole, 2011).

Other biopolitical theorists, while failing to explicitly apply the concept to animal-human relations, have long been toying with the implications of that binary. Humans, in seeking purity, an 'immunization' from their animality, according to Esposito, tend towards a kind of nihilism, towards what he termed a 'biopolitics of death' (2008). Agamben, in his own elaboration of biopolitics, is driven by the blurring distinction between the human and inhuman in Nazi death camps to take a further step in questioning the deeply entrenched human/non-human binary that characterizes most socially dominant ethical systems. He recognized the need for a new ethics, 'an ethics of a form of life that begins where [human] dignity ends' (Agamben, 1999, 69).

The notion of Foucault's idea of biopower (1978) is an omnipresent arbiter of all relations coursing through the various nodes and capillaries of society, displaced from any central node or sovereign, unlike a traditional Marxist approach to understanding power relations as top-down and class based, or as merely tied to modes of production (Heinz & Lee, 1998). Biopower functions via a series of 'techniques' or forms of 'discipline' (139) that create 'a docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved' (Foucault, 1979, 136). A second element that sets biopolitics apart from class-based approaches is the notion of power as not inherently negative or oppressive. Rather, biopower is ambivalent in its capacity 'to make live and let die' (Foucault, 2003, 241).

Within the workings of biopolitics lie the key to elaborating an understanding of how modernity is characterized by a totalizing exercise of biopower over animal bodies, which not only subjugate them physically, but constitute them discursively. While certain species near extinction, largely due to anthropogenic activity, conservation programmes are put in place to

manage the breeding and life-cycles of those animals in reserves that mimic their ‘natural habitat’. At the same time the second most populous land based vertebrate on earth is the domestic chicken, numbering at about 18.6 billion in 2009 (NPR.org, 2011). Modern farming practice is an act of bringing to life millions of animals that would not otherwise be alive and then using the ‘technologies’ of power to govern their lives and deaths to maximize their output. Twine (2010) explains how ‘docility has been selected for across all agricultural species in that “disruptive” or aggressive animals will tend to be selected out’ (87).

Beach, Rao and Stammler (2006) describe how the ‘rationalization process whereby animals are both assumed to be and also are treated as dumb beings, devoid of cultural capability, mere robots of instinct, forms a self-fulfilling prophecy. The assertion of an ecology devoted to human purposiveness appears all the more justifiable to humans as they strip their former symbiotic partners of their cultural capabilities’. What this results in is complete dominance of biopower, which Springer et al. (2015) say is apparent in ‘the purposeful and permanent modification of living species by humans through domestication, genetic engineering, and synthetic biology. Because of our obsession with unusual dog breeds, we have created a habitat so specialized that some of these breeds can now only exist with our help. The various regimes of selective breeding, mail-order semen, and artificial insemination used in specialized breeds of dogs, pigs, and cattle have assigned humans a job so essential that if we were to quit, the result would be their inevitable extinction’ (97).

Shiva points out that ‘when organisms are treated as if they are machines, an ethical shift takes place, life is seen as having instrumental rather than intrinsic value’ (Gross et al., 2012, 32). While this may indeed seem to have ethical implications, biopolitical theory does not conceptualize this subordination of life to the technologies of biopower as inherently bad. In fact, Foucault’s conceptualization of ‘ethics’ itself is detached from positivist notions of good and evil, which is what we will turn to in the following section.

Ethical Subjectification of the Self and Discourse

Foucault (1990) describes ethics as an intertwining of ‘code’ and ‘subjectivation’. Code can be understood as the ethical principle or imperative to be acted upon, and subjectivation the element of human intentionality. In other words, Foucault’s notion of an ethical act requires a one to ‘form’ oneself into an ethical subject. In adopting this definition, we are rejecting the notion of a universal ethical framework such as those formulated by Kant (1964) and Weber (1930) that characterized the western Enlightenment era. Instead we understand the ethical in the postmodern sense as being mediated from an individual’s experiences, an agent con-

stantly determining what is right or wrong (Bauman, 1993). This understanding of ethics implies that the an ethical life is ‘constructed’ and inevitably involves a negotiation of practical choices about personal conduct based on a set of specific learned ethical competencies (Clive et al.,2005, 31). Ethics are thus ‘a matter of reflective heteronomy of the recognition of one’s implication in and dependence upon a web of social relations’ (Bennett, 1996, 656). As ethics is tied up with the construction of subject positions that identify ‘a location for persons within a structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire,’ (Harré & Lagenhove, 1999, 35), this implicates discourse itself in the construction of ethical practice.

Fiske (1987) defines ‘discourse as a language or system of representation that is developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area” (14). Evidently, then ‘ethics itself is caught up in language’ (Derrida 2008, 23). Hence, the construction of different kinds of knowledge systems - anthropological knowledge, legal knowledge, biological knowledge and even ethical knowledge, acts as a technology of biopower in allowing and limiting certain social practices, and producing a specific version of reality that enables our behaviour. In producing specific realities, discourses then also constitute ethical subjects (Bennet, 1996).

The importance of this to this research cannot be overstated. In seeking to understand the way discourse evokes certain kinds of ethical responsibility, the site of study is the discourse itself and the kinds of ethical subjectivations it proposes in society. This paper makes no claims about understanding the way the text is actually decoded or how it creates ethical positions at the site of the individual. These are matters that have been attended to in previous studies that try to explain the cognitive dissonance of meat eating and audience studies of animal welfare campaigns (Heinz & Lee, 1998).

Instead, we are seeking patterns or ‘regularities’ that serve to order, correlate, position or ‘transform’ subjects and meanings- what Foucault calls ‘discursive formations’ (Wetherell, Yates & Taylor, 2001). The ‘habit of treating animals both as quasi-human companions and as food’ brings humans into a ‘painful conflict in [their] relationship with the animate world’ (Tuan, 1971, 31). This can be understood as a kind of ‘ethical bypass’ which manages to re-legitimize previously established social practices, here specifically human–animal relations, by sidestepping the ethical deliberation demanded by new and proposed techno-scientific developments (Twine, 2010). It is the goal of this project to get at the discursive formations that are implicated in constituting ethical subjects who can legitimize these social practices.

The ‘Other’ - Power as Oppressive

The concept of the ‘Other’ as formulated by Edward Said (1979) has been a highly popular starting point for much of the literature that falls into the category of animal studies (Adams & Donovan, 1995; Wadiwel, 2009; Nocella, 2014; Smith, 2002; Baker 1993; Serpell 1986; Shepard 1996). Said describes the process of Othering as building a ‘conceptual framework around a notion of us-versus-them to pretend that the principal consideration is epistemological and natural – our civilization is known and accepted, theirs is different and strange – whereas in fact the framework separating us from them is belligerent, constructed, and situational’ (Said, 2000, 577). The key thing to note about this conceptualization is that it is adamant that subjugation based on perceived difference is necessarily bad. This poses problems for application in the animal-human context, because it rests on the implicit acceptance of the fact that all humans are indeed the same - something that cannot be unproblematically presumed about humans and animals.

The problem with using the notion of the Other for my project and others is that we are unable to actually situate the animal being into a human-based discourse of ‘Othering’, without getting trapped in a circular argument as described by Widdicombe (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995, 108). We see animals as ‘others’, but it seems unclear why that would be a problem in the first place. While work on ‘othering’ in racist discourse and sexist discourse takes its starting point from a socially pre-existing affirmation of the general ethical principle that racism and sexism is wrong, work on speciesism³ does not. It is unclear to us where our ethical responsibility towards animals comes from and what the extents of it are.

Philosophical rationalization for why speciesism is unethical cannot be the baseline for a project that seeks to understand the mechanics of societal dependence on speciesism in the first place. So the utility of demonstrating that animals are discursively ‘othered’ in cultural products is minimal. The equivalent of doing so would be to undertake a project in discursive othering of black people during the time when slavery was a socially accepted practice. It evokes the question: ‘so what?’.

Research that demonstrates that animals are ‘other-ed’ have skipped the step of shedding light on the reality that we aren’t quite sure why but it seems a cognitive leap to equate animals and humans, theoretically. My project demonstrates through Foucault’s biopolitics,

³ ‘Speciesism’ is the idea that being human is a good enough reason for human animals to have greater moral rights than non-human animals. See (Singer, 1971).

which do not theorize power as negative or purely coercive manifestations, how the productive relations of domination which characterize the situation of animals in modern society are in inherent contradiction with the way we construct ourselves as ethical beings vis a vis animals. In essence then, my choice of biopolitics allows the reconstruction of how power is working without pre-embedding theoretically the ethical position that the power we exert over animals is wrong. Doing so would have locked me into a circularity which would render this research ineffectual (ibid.).

The point of my paper then is not to explain how we legitimize what I may perceive to be gross injustices to animals. It is to show how we evade the question of ethical treatment of animals at the very site of ethical self-formation. And until that dissonance in ethical subjectification is uncovered, we cannot effectively claim that there is anything inherently wrong or right about how we treat animals. We cannot ask how we 'other' animals before we ask whether we should do so. And this project is about demonstrating how we have thus far managed to avoid answering that very question on a societal level. In shedding light on this avoidance, on our ignorance, or hypocrisy, whatever one may call it, I aim at least to push for that question to finally be addressed - who are we in relation to other animals and what do we owe them ethically?

Dominant Discourses and the News

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the scope of this research has been limited due to practicality to a study of the animal/human ethical discourse in news reports about animal suffering. This is because it is largely agreed that mainstream newspapers offer versions of the world that are 'structured in dominance'- reflecting the interests of the state, of patriarchy, and of other powerful social groups (Hyland & Paltridge, 2011, 224). It is for this reason I choose to tap into this resource of 'words of the socially and institutionally powerful in their discursive formations' (Rose, 2001, 159). Furthermore, newspapers in their claim of being objective, are implicated in what Hartley (1996) has called the 'sense-making practice of modernity' (29). Tuchman calls objectivity 'a strategic ritual' (1978) and an important professional tool-of-the-trade for the working journalist, while 'objectivity' can be understood to be a mere effect created through language (a rhetorical effect) rather than a depiction that is 'true to nature' (Hyland and Paltridge, 2011, 223). Media discourse circulates in and across institutions and it is deeply embedded in social life, providing what Spitulnik calls 'inhabitable discourses that form the substance of culture and experience' (Talbot, 2007, 4).

While it can be reductive to assume a simple uncritical absorption of media messages by its audiences (Philo, 2008), it is generally accepted that in having the power over ‘setting of agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects, which operates to limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate,’ news producers provide readers with ‘an active component of the construction of their own social environments and social interactions (Scollon, 1998, ix)’.

So while this paper does study newspapers in an attempt to understand how dominant discourses proceed, it is not to say that all newspapers and news media fail to provide alternate discourses about animal rights. Nor does this work allow us to claim any understanding of why or whether news producers adopt any particular ethical narrative, and secondly, to understand how any specific ethical narrative, or rather the evasion of ethical engagement normalizes itself in society, particularly in the audiences of these news sources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project is deeply involved with the ‘work that is being done to reconcile conflicting ideas, to cope with contradiction or uncertainty, or to counter alternatives’ (Seale, 1998) about the ethical frameworks that legitimize condemnation of specific kinds of animal suffering, and in doing so implicitly or explicitly make natural other instances of animal suffering. The research takes as its starting point biopolitical thought to understand how animal bodies are brought under the control of humans, discursively and physiologically, often in ways which stand directly in contradiction to what would be perceived as ethical. Drawing from a Foucauldian understanding of ‘ethical subjectification of the self’ and the site of news as a source of dominant discourse, this paper proceeds by way of a critical discourse analysis in order to understand what is perceived as ‘ethical’ at the site of news stories about animal suffering.

To do so it addresses the following 2 research questions:

1. How do news media reporting animal suffering articulate the various kinds of ‘natural’ relationship between humans and animal and their corresponding ethical implications?
2. How do news media reporting animal suffering reconcile contradictory human ethical imperatives towards animals?

METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis has developed as a tool to problematize both ‘activities of social practice’ and the ‘reflexive construction of social practice’ (Fairclough, 2008, 206). In that regard it is a natural choice for my research project which aims to question the construction of the animal human relationship as well as the practices that stem from this construction.

Doing a discourse analysis assumes you are concerned with the discursive production of some kind of authoritative account - and perhaps too about how that account was or is contested - and with the social practices both in which that production is embedded and which it itself produces (Rose, 2001, 142).

Specifically it functions as a critique of dominant discourses and genres that perpetuate inequalities, injustices and oppression in contemporary society (Van Leeuwen, 2008). In addition to being well-suited to the goals of this project, critical discourse analysis also draws on a theoretical background closely aligned with the conceptual framework of this project. As explained earlier, the practice of ethical self-formation is inextricably linked with language, and language with power. These are also the central theoretical assumptions behind CDA, as explained by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). Reflexivity is seen as being essentially inseparable from social practice, because ‘people’s reflexive representations of what they do are in a sense already theories of their practices’ (26). As a result of this reflexivity, practices inevitably have a discursive character. Giddens (1993) called this the ‘double hermeneutic’ where ‘sociology deals with a pre-interpreted world in which the meanings developed by active subjects actually enter into the actual constitution or interpretation of that world’ (170).

This research aims to draw out the ethical ‘codes’ that are put forth by these speciesist narratives in an attempt to understand the way the discourse evokes and evades certain kinds of ethical responsibility. The site of study is the text itself and the kinds of ethical subjectifications it proposes in society. In CDA, as in many approaches to discourse analysis, texts are examined as ‘the concrete realization of abstract forms of knowledge- discourse’ (Lemke, 1995, in Meyer & Wodak, 2001, 6). Indeed, ‘texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourse and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance’ (Weiss & Wodak 2003, 15). Since discourse is implicated in multiple dimensions, Fairclough’s model of analysis, which functions on the three levels of text, discourse, and society/culture has been applied (Fairclough, 1995).

Methodological Shortcomings and Reflexivity

The central assumptions behind CDA are that meanings are unfixed, and as such, the analyst 'seeks to open up statements to challenge, interrogate take for granted meanings, and disturb easy claims to objectivity in the texts they are reading. It would therefore be inconsistent to contend that the analysts own discourse was itself wholly objective, factual or generally true' (Rose 2001, 222). In performing a CDA, the analyst has to be ready to admit the inherent impossibility of discovering an 'objective truth' in her research, while taking as many steps as possible to increase the transparency of the analytical framework, to minimize the role of subjectivity in the analysis itself. Having said that, CDAs:

should feel no need to apologize for the critical stance of their work. On the contrary, by writing about issues that are of crucial importance of society, they continue the tradition of reasoned debate that has been fundamental to democratic societies since Antiquity (Roukema, 2009, 279).

To that end, I openly disclose my position of disgust at the treatment of animals institutionalized and legitimized throughout society. I have struggled to reconcile my lifelong held ideas of an ethical life necessarily including animals and other living beings as holders of moral worth, with a new found realization of my own embedded-ness in social practices that perpetuate the kind of treatment of animals that I could never justify on the individual level. This is the kind of 'moral schizophrenia' that I lived with for most of my life, completely unaware of the affliction, one that I believe society too has thus long managed to not grasp the severity of.

While disclosure of my beliefs may open me to accusations of engaging in mere 'political argumentation' (Lassen, Strunck & Vestergaard, 2006), especially as CDA of newspapers is often accused of being 'shaped by the ideologic concerns of the analysts...and for selecting its data to prove its point' (Widdowson, 2004, 6), I have attempted wherever possible, to systemize my analysis framework, without limiting myself from engaging with the method creatively. I have also justify the choice of each methodological decision, ranging from the choice of my conceptual framework, to sample selection and through to the operationalization of my analysis. This has been an essential part of my aim to gain distance from my own preconceived ideas in approaching this research and doing away with morally pre-loaded conceptual frameworks, a detailed explanation of which I gave earlier in this paper. Next, I shall seek to

explain with satisfactory thoroughness the justification for my sample selection and the way I went about my analysis.

Sampling

The selection of case studies was based on a process of skimming through online archives of major mainstream newspapers to find stories that fit the following criteria:

1. The story should have garnered attention across multiple mainstream newspapers, so we can reasonably expect to be dealing with ‘dominant discourses’
2. It should be about an animal subject who suffers in some way, and raises an ethical question relating to human treatment of animals.
3. It should be a story with an ultimate ethical action orientation, ideally one that could be proven to have effectively led to some kind of social action/or engagement

Once the case studies were narrowed down, two articles about each were selected with the aim to include the immediate reporting of the incident as well as a follow up story that claimed to assess the ethical questions arising from the incident a few days later. The sample of case studies for this project has been limited to three so as not to compromise the quality of analysis. The three case studies are different in their coverage of different animal/human relationships and nature of incidents, but they all serve to generate discourses that legitimize and navigate the ethical bases of human-animal interaction.

Case 1 - Killer Whale Tilikum

The first case study looks at the reporting of a 2010 whale attack, in which a Sea World trainer is killed by the orca Tilikum in front of an audience during a performance. This incident fulfilled the above requirements very well, because the Tilikum story was picked up by international news channels (Outside Online, 2010) and also led to the making of a documentary about the incident⁴. It also created an explicit ethical position condemning SeaWorld’s confinement of orcas. The public outcry as a result of this story resulted in giving PETA’s free the whale campaign new life. The success of the campaign is evidenced by a drastic decline in Sea World revenues in the last few years (Outside Online, 2010). Finally, the relationship be-

⁴see (Blackfish, 2015)

tween human and animal in this case was one where the animal's role appears to be one of 'entertainer'.

The two articles selected reflect the fact that the incident took place in the USA, where SeaWorld owns most of its parks. The resulting PETA campaigns and decline in SeaWorld revenue, thus also for the most part, was a result of actions taken by American consumers (ibid.). As a result, I have chosen American news media with the highest online circulation- The New York Times and CNN (Stateofthedia.org, 2015).

Case 2 - Blessed Sheep

The second case is a UK incident where CCTV footage was released from inside a halal abattoir depicting workers beating and mocking sheep as they were about to be killed. This case became a political hot topic, addressed by national entities (British National Party, 2015), which again, demonstrates the incident's success in demanding ethical constructions and self-positioning, and also involves an animal whose relation to humans is as food. The ethical concern elicited for an animal destined for death in a factory farm makes this a compelling case study - while the discursive work that goes into legitimizing the label of cruelty for the other two specific incidents seems complex, this incident is particularly intriguing, since it serves to buff over the ethical contradiction of moral concern expressed for this animal stuck in an entire institution built on cruelty (Nibert, 2002). The breaking of this story resulted in the starting of a petition to ban religious slaughter (slaughter without stunning) in the UK, and became an election issue (Change.org, 2015). The two articles selected are from the two highest read online newspapers in the UK, the Daily Mail, and the BBC (Pressgazette.co.uk, 2011).

Case 3 - Cecil the Lion

The last case, the shooting of Cecil the Lion, happened quite late in the progress of this dissertation but it was too relevant to the research question to pass up the opportunity when it presented itself - here was an incident where the animal was explicitly positioned as 'victim'. The virality (Insidephilanthropy.com, 2015), of the incident via online platforms in particular, made it of great interest. The international scope of this story is unique out of the case studies because while it takes place in Zimbabwe, the reaction and outcry that ensued on social media platforms largely come from the West (Miceli, 2015).

As a result of the international and recent nature of this incident, the narrowing down of articles was a little more difficult. The first is a simple reporting by the BBC which is one of the most visited online news platforms internationally. The second article published a few days

later by National Geographic appeared to engage in an evenhanded debate about the practice of trophy hunting, and also ended with a request to donate money to support conservation efforts, making it a good fit for the criteria. After reading through many other similar articles on other leading news websites, it was apparent that there was nothing that indicated the article was 'alternative' or misrepresenting the dominant discourses raised in the other articles on the subject.

The Development of Analysis Framework

Reading through the stories with the research questions kept in mind had revealed a few themes. The research questions were:

- How do news media reporting animal suffering articulate the various kinds of 'natural' relationship between humans and animal and their corresponding ethical implications?
- How do news media reporting animal suffering reconcile contradictory human ethical imperatives towards animals?

First, it became clear that the second research question had been based on the assumption that the news stories would actually engage in reconciling contradictory ethical codes. As it turned out, most of them did not. As a result, my interest shifted to understanding how the news media evaded that reconciliation. The themes that had arisen from the initial reading were narrowed down to the ones that helped answer this updated second question, which is aligned with the ultimate goal of the project to understand how these news stories encourage ethical positions in relation to a specific instance of animal suffering which directly stand opposed to systemic social practices. The final four themes that structured the analysis of the 6 shortlisted articles were:

1. Individuation + Anthropomorphism
2. Blame
3. Innocence/Ethical Subjectification
4. Ethical Evasion

Each theme was analyzed on the level of the text, the level of discourse, and on the socio-cultural level, to create a multi-layered framework that incorporates Fairclough's 3 dimensional method of CDA. Often the distinctions between these layers merge (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), so the analysis is presented in a holistic manner that weaves together the interactions between the three dimensions.

ANALYSIS

Summary of Results

The results of the CDA undertaken on the six articles are best explained through a diagrammatic representation of how the four themes interact with one another in creating the discursive evasion that is the central preoccupation of this research. Their similarities begin on a textual level, in how the narrative progresses through the way it treats specific actors. The following diagram explains how the texts follow an ordered process, which implicates specific actors at each stage, to ultimately create a complex core of discursive ethical evasion.

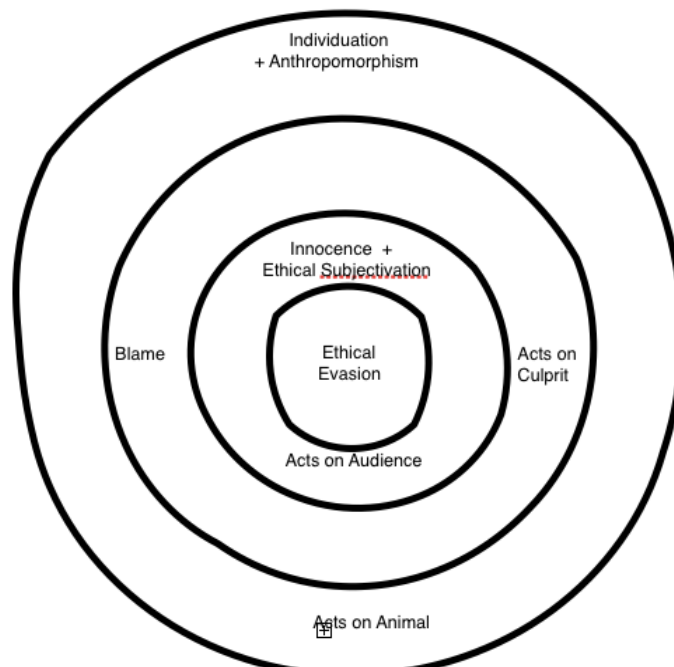


Diagram 1: Mapping Ethical Evasion

Discussion

While each of the cases proceeded to set up an ethical discourse via different methods, at the most surface level of the text, the news stories depend on a combined process of Individualization/Anthropomorphism in order to constitute the animal as a subject that can feel pain or suffering. To this end, the representation of the animal proceeded through a combination of giving the animal a temporary humanized identity - i.e. describing it in ways that likened it to humans, thus closing the gap between human and animal. However, this tended to be matched with an excision of the animal from its animal identity - this was accomplished through individualizing the animal, stressing its unique characteristics that separated it from the rest of its species.

In doing this, the text reverses the biopolitical as practiced on humans- ‘a science of populations whose task is to manage the aleatory element by a power that is not individualizing but massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but man-as-species’ (Wolfe, 2013, 23). In manipulating these categories, of animal-as-individual vs. animal-as-species the text works to bring the animal to personhood, albeit only temporarily. On a socio-cultural level, then, this creation of a temporarily relatable subject, one who is given the stage to suffer in a way that is decodable to humans, ensures the news value of the story (Fowler, 1996). Since ultimately, the role of the news is to be both anomalous enough to validate being reported, and relevantly urgent, in that it has to implicitly justify its place on the agenda (Fiske, 1987) it works to create a precisely aimed emotional connection about the incident it reports on via this the subjectification of an ‘animal person’.

At this level of the text, then the ethical discourse begins forming itself via a simplistic and seemingly ‘natural’ understanding, based on the emotive response to this animal-as-individual, that the animal-as-species is a member of the moral community, deserving ethical consideration and requiring justice when wronged. The way this happens in each of the case studies is summarized below.

Individuation/ Anthropomorphism

‘Tilly’ the Whale

The two texts analyzed both tended to rely on overtly anthropomorphic language to constitute Tilikum the whale as a subject of ethical worth. Calling him ‘a laid-back guy who is kind of lazy’ and a ‘misunderstood big kid’ then pointing out that the whale has physical needs as well as psychological and social needs, the texts proceed to evoke a visceral outrage at the

mental image of being ‘confined’ to a space that to whales is ‘like the size of a bathtub’. The description of being trapped in a bathtub attempts to put us within the whale-as-individual’s subjective experience, but in doing so, bringing the whale out of its animal experience, to something humanly recognizable and therefore evocative.

Furthermore, this discursive anthropomorphic subjectivation becomes double-layered when the whale is described as engaging in ‘what a whale would call horseplay’. What Esposito called the ‘animalization of human species’ under the machinations of biopower (Faubion, 2014), here manifests in its reversal as a humanization of animal-species. Even in its linkage of the behaviours of two different animal-species, whale and horse, it appears the language must pass through a lens of human subjectivity for an understanding of both behaviours. The whale thus is positioned as not a whale acting like a whale, but a whale acting like a human acting like a horse. Doubly denaturalizing the behaviour from the whale, discursively, simplifies and shortens the range of behaviours we are positioned to perceive as natural whale-as-species behaviours. Instead, the idea that this particular whale is an anomaly is discursively developed, to set up a selective inclusion of this whale within the human moral community, while leaving the rest of the species out. ‘The media often decontextualize events by focusing on the individuals in a conflict rather than on situational or structural causes of conflicts’ (Salmon & Moh, 1994), a phenomenon that manifests repeatedly in this analysis.

The Blessed Sheep

This case is pointedly different from the last in that the animals depicted as experiencing suffering were destined for the abattoir, in an inevitably unpleasant process for the sheep involved, regardless of method of killing. Furthermore, they were part of a cruel process of industrialized meat production that Smith (2002) says constitutes a life characterized by suffering, followed by an end at the abattoir, ‘a space that exemplifies modern humanity’s attempt to distance itself from its own animality and from its ethical responsibilities to animal Others’ (50). As a result, the kind of emotional response the sheep were allowed to evoke necessarily has to be carefully negotiated, so as not to overcome this cultivated distance.

While one of the texts depends on graphic depictions of violence towards individual sheep ‘vicious attacks on defenceless, frightened animals’, the other avoids anthropomorphic descriptions entirely, instead employing a ‘commodity discourse’ to neutralize the violence being performed in both religious and non-religious slaughterhouses. The aim of the first article appears to be to report on the incident, in other words, to ‘make news’ out of it, so it uses anthropomorphic language to represent the horrible treatment of sheep in religious slaughterhouses while using ‘sanitizing’ (ibid.) language (‘painless’, ‘humane’, ‘processing’, ‘practices’)

in describing the processes of non-religious abattoirs. The second article seeks to take a more analytical and conciliatory tone and thus avoids this engagement in what it terms 'dog-whistle politics'.

The lack of anthropomorphic and individualizing language in these articles is as telling as its presence in the former. Because it remains silent in creating a subjectivity for the sheep, the first report depends on depictions of shocking and gratuitous violence ('sheep bleeding to death with spectacles drawn around her eyes in green paint' that become what Baker (1993) writes of as 'a form of sensationalist display' (193)), starting early on to destabilize the idea of ethical inclusion for food commodity sheep in the moral community.

Cecil the Lion

The two texts analyzed in this case engage in both anthropomorphic and individuation of Cecil to create a discourse of value around him as animal-as-individual ('iconic, 'never bothered anybody' and was 'one of Africa's most famous lions'), in an attempt to build up the loss that was experienced upon his killing ('tragic'). At the same time, as Cecil is built up as an iconic individual to evoke a sense of loss about his death, the lion species overall is excluded from individual moral concern, as a shift takes place between the tragedy of his death, and the sensibility of 'culling herds'. This progresses by building a case for 'responsible hunting' as the 'taking' of 'select individuals'. Similarly, this distinction between portraying Cecil as an ethically wronged lion and simultaneously justifying the 'culling' of others stems from an implicit appreciation for Cecil's 'docility' and productivity in a biopolitical framework in 'not bothering anybody' and having aesthetic appeal ('distinctive mane'). Thus, the value he holds is uncharacteristic of other members of his species, because it stems not from his personhood, or being but from the value he creates for the human spectator ('was one of the most beautiful animals to look at').

Blame/Innocence and Ethical Subjectification

We live under what Agamben called the anthropological machine' which perpetually decides upon and recomposes the conflict between man and animal (Faubion, 2014). This conflict stems not just from a physiological, but cognitive and ontological basis. The way the second theme of Blame manifests in the selected texts, works to reconstitute this conflict in a myriad of ways. Firstly, it does so explicitly on the textual level, by always positing human as the aggressor or wrongdoer of 'animal', and then engaging in a process of vilification that discursively separates the wrong-doer from the rest of society. In order to do so, the blame is as-

signed to a specific human or group of humans, in a careful construction that draws from other discourses which are prevalent in the social context of these respective incidences.

These serve to seal the blame within the intent of those actors alone. This is performed as a dual process which combines the third theme, Innocence and Ethical Subjectification. This theme was a common one through the texts, presumably due to the nature of the texts themselves. In engaging with the public's 'endless fascination with animals and their behaviour and treatment (Armstrong, 2003, xiii) the news text 'reflects the culture of its creation, both within and outside of a news organization' (Berkowitz, 2011, xv). As news pieces, the texts were always careful to shelter their audiences and the general public that made up their audience as divorced from the wrong they were reporting on. They did this by repeatedly signalling the ignorance, followed by shock of the public upon discovery of the reported event. This effectively provokes the audience to be simultaneously comforted and exonerated through their experience of shock and/or horror at the news piece they are consuming (Chouliaraki, 2006). At the same time as they are represented as discursively innocent, they are also cast into a position where they form themselves as ethical subjects, judging the action of the 'Blamed.'

Tilly - Revisited

The attribution of blame in this case, develops through a process of 'proving' the innocence of all others involved. While the text itself is set up like a news piece about a criminal investigation, the use of epithets that absolve the literal culprit (Tilly) are numerous ('Was the 12,000-pound Orca, Tilikum (Tilly for short) acting violently, possibly because of stress from captivity? Or was he just playing?' 'the whale involved is named Tilikum'). The image conjured up is somewhat farcical in nature, since the subject of this investigation is a whale ('Homicide investigators', 'His record is hardly clean'). '*Can we try a whale by human law?*' seems to be the implicit question, with the question requiring no answer.

Even in proving the whale's innocence, we deal with contradictory subjectifications of the whale. There is the idea that the whale 'lashed out' for being unhappy, having been 'pushed too hard' but this behaviour is made natural and agency removed in contemplation of the notion of a whale being able to bear 'any responsibility for his actions'. In that regard, he is likened to a human child ('laid back guy', 'misunderstood big kid'). Molloy (2011) has said that animals are often cast 'as characters in the reworking of familiar cultural narratives' and are made to 'conform to whatever anthropomorphic devices are used to frame the narrative' (7). In the resulting evocation of pity we are made willing to erase the violence from his action, and grant him innocence.

At the same time, the violence of the orca's action is called upon not to vilify the whale, but to serve a role in establishing the innocence of the public. The numerous audience testimonies, in their shock and distress ('traumatic', 'All of a sudden', 'kind of flipped out,'), play a role in whitewashing the consumer role in perpetuating the violence of confinement against the whale. What comes out of this is the notion that the audiences had been being tricked and are un-implicated in the practice of captivity, or domination over the whale, despite being obviously complicit parties to SeaWorld's business model.

Instead, the problem of keeping the 'social animals' in 'isolation' and the inevitable likelihood of this to 'cause problems,' transfers the guilt to the commodity owner, SeaWorld, for engaging in what appear to be acts of corporate negligence, greed and betrayal of both the animals and the audiences ('overworked', 'stressed out' 'SeaWorld is a for-profit organization'). As a result, the ethical subjectification of the audience orients itself around the call to free the whales since they themselves are constituted as innocent, as are the whales.

Blessed Sheep - Revisited

The case of the sheep requires little creativity in analysis, since the process of apportioning blame and innocence is performed explicitly at the level of the text itself. In fact, the lack of subtlety employed by the writers of both the texts is somewhat jarring, especially due to the racial implications of this reading. Both of the texts go about equivocating 'excessive' cruelty with religious slaughter, completely marginalizing the voice of the animal welfare organization that had leaked the footage ('slaughter without pre-stunning unnecessarily compromise animal welfare' 'affects millions of animals every year'). In doing so, they manage to trivialize the fact that the organization had filmed cruel practices at nine out of the ten abattoirs they targeted, only one of which practiced halal slaughter ('This is the 10th slaughterhouse in which we have filmed undercover, and it is the ninth to be caught breaking animal welfare laws.') Yet, the conflict is posed as one involving the cruelty of non-stunning as practiced by religious slaughterhouses, regardless of whether illegal violations of welfare laws were occurring or not.

Gamson (1992) has demonstrated that news suffers from a 'tendency to reduce controversy to two competing positions' (75), but the choice of which two positions evidently provide insight into the values, beliefs and experiences of a society' (Brennen, 2013, 103). Those values seem to be coloured by Islamophobia ('Slaughtermen wearing the traditional Muslim kufi skullcap and muttering the words Allahu Akbar (God is great)', 'instead of praying', 'Muslim workers chatted', 'recognised the risks of stirring up anti-Muslim' sentiment, 'our key mission to ex-

pose and combat animal cruelty', 'full force of the law') as evidenced by the huge concentration of expressions of shock regarding the footage ('shocking' 'horrific'; innocence established by 'urgent investigation', 'action being taken', 'strict rules'), which seeks to justify why a natural place of violence is being targeted for being 'extra violent'. In an effort to forward this justification, the articles fall into the contradiction of several times condemning the practice of killing the animals itself ('The vicious attacks on defenceless, frightened animals at Bowood are inexcusable', more than '4,000 sheep were filmed being killed', 'prevent unnecessary suffering').

Once more the public is allowed to remain un-implicated in the practices taking place in the slaughterhouses...as long as it's not a religious slaughterhouse from which they purchase their meat. The degree of violence perpetrated on sheep bodies in non-religious slaughterhouses, is presumed just enough to position them as innocent, while those who eat unstunned meat for religious reasons become positioned as villains ('The public has a right to expect that all farmed animals have as painless and humane an end to their lives as possible,' 'It affects millions of animals every year and action is long overdue,'). The action demanded, as stated by the posting of the online petition, is the banning of religious slaughter, rather than either ensuring the cruel practices that were a result of the law being broken do not occur again, or that animal's welfare become a genuine priority or matter of concern.

Cecil - Revisited

Blame is, in this case, placed directly on the dentist who shot Cecil, with several details added to make his hunting of Cecil look cruel and violent ('did not die immediately', 'six cubs of Cecil will now be killed'). The initial reporting of the incident takes a negative view of hunting in general, even legally ('bow and arrow is a new trend', 'a tactic which hunters used to portray their action as legal'), however, the second article which seeks to shed light on the debate of whether hunting can help conservation, went about portraying hunters as a 'necessary evil', in that they raised money for conservation efforts. The end of the article calls for a donation towards conservation efforts, without a hint of irony, pointing out that Cecil would never have been chosen as the target for a legal hunt.

What this article seems to be doing is trying to calm an already angered public, and reinstating the innocence of conservation practices, while creating a sufficient distance from the ethically messy practice of hunting, without calling for an end to it. In doing so, it tempers the anger towards hunting in general, especially as it points out the truly unethical practice of 'canned hunts' ('conserving the species in the wild' 'scientists can prove that the taking of the select individuals will not endanger the species,' 'Fewer than 30,000 African lions remain').

Furthermore, the role of the legal hunt is cemented in a development discourse ('The next step for Zimbabwe should be to step up enforcement of their hunting laws, to prevent more illegal takes,' says Bisbee. 'Responsible hunting is going to pay for that,' he adds, pointing out that 'Zimbabwe is among the world's poorest countries.'). chilling the arguments against legal hunting that it had forwarded ('the first rule of protecting a rare species is to limit the human [related] killing', 'critics say is prone to corruption', 'fuels demand for black market wildlife products, and can be too hard to enforce on the ground').

Ethical Evasion via Co-opting Human Discourses

As we have seen in the previous section, through its work of individualizing and or anthropomorphizing the animal, and then encouraging audiences to accept the action orientation evoked by the victim and blame assignments, the text ultimately coaxes its readers into adopting a position of moral outrage in the kind of ethical codes it evokes.

Ethical Evasion

A verbal model will clarify the way the general arguments appears to work textually.

Ethical Position 1:

This animal(individual) is just like a human.

Therefore, we have an ethical responsibility towards it(individual).

This animal(individual) has been wronged by this actor.

We can blame that actor, but we are innocent so we can demand justice, because we have accepted we have a responsibility towards this animal (individual).

The Space of Contradiction:

Many individual animals of this species institutionally, systematically undergo the same treatment as has been judged as wrong above and a vast portion of humanity is implicated in this process.

The Solution- via an Alternate Discourse:

Let's focus on this animal, because this one is special. If we do right by this animal, we have done right by all its kind. (the animal becomes a stand-in for something other than itself)

We can blame the culprit and demand justice.

The simultaneous inter-discursive ethical narratives being superimposed on the situation as a whole require a separate attending to. Just as we anthropomorphize the animals to estab-

lish their inclusion in our moral community, we then ignore the moral debt logically owed to the individuals of the species by extension, by situating that animal into another familiar and human-based victim-culprit discourse, like one of corporate greed vs. working class, or national identity vs domestic ‘other’ discourse, or developed-vs- developing discourses. Each of these is elaborated on in the specific sections relating to each case.

Overall, however, the animals are transformed into ‘characters with which the audience can identify’ (Ryan, 1991, 34). The calling upon of inter-discursive frames, seems to be implicated in blurring over the inherent, ethically contradictory positions vis- a-vis animals contained within in each of the texts. This final theme, I have called Ethical Evasion. Repeatedly, the texts worked to magnify the specific incident while cropping out the ‘big picture’ and the fundamental ethical questions raised about animal treatment by humans.

Each of the texts invariably switched between evoking moral outrage by emphasizing the individual-ness of an animal, only to later, in order to maintain the ethical subjectification they had created, ‘zoom out’ and subtly disengage the animal’s ‘person-hood’. The same ethical code that was evoked by creating sympathy with the animal is later kept intact in the face of systemic hypocrisy, by expanding the ethical responsibility owed to the animal as an individual to that owed to its species as a whole, while simultaneously making a switchover from the discourse of human/animal ethics to human/human discursive frameworks that depended on the ‘elevated’ status of an individual animal to pseudo-human. Suddenly, then, through this discreet discursive sleight of hand, entire contradictions in our collective treatment of animals are overcome and we are able to maintain the sense of pride we seem to have in being ‘ethical’. An identity that news representations seem to be complicit in maintaining.

‘Any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’ (Kristeva 1986, 66). The final section of this chapter will touch upon the discursive frames that the overall analysis of each of the case studies are evocative of, since they have ended up playing a critical role in ‘ethical evasion’.

Tilly- The Disenfranchised and Rebellious Youth

The scent of an anti-corporate discourse is hard to miss in the news coverage of SeaWorld following the attack on the trainer. It is not surprising then that the event is situated in the middle of the greatest economic crisis to hit the global economy since the Great Depression (Elliott, 2011). The willingness of the news media to position SeaWorld as the villain followed by the public reaction to SeaWorld in general, raises questions about the potential mood of the country as the time of the incident. Economic as well as cultural contexts are crucial to

understanding the multiple layers that discourses occupy (Kellner & Durham, 2006, 197). To this end Tilly is humanized to an almost farcical extent ('no foul play on the part of anyone but the whale,' 'this was premeditated'), and cast into the role of an 'over-worked', 'stressed-out' 'money-making animal.'

Blessed Sheep- The Patriotic Self-Sacrifice

The manner in which this news broke, and the follow up story excavating the question 'Should the UK ban religious slaughter?' grew out of an obvious socio-political context, and had little to do with a scale of difference in the actual cruelty of practices in halal/kosher abattoirs vs non-religious ones, as is very easy to see, without very deep analysis. This quickly became clear in the sensationalist tone of the first article and was further evidenced by the fact that the trigger for the story, Animal Aid's filming of 10 slaughterhouses and finding 9/10 of those engaging in practices they deemed to be 'unnecessarily' cruel, was twisted into a story about the cruelty of religious slaughter itself. The complete overlooking of the other slaughterhouses that had broken with 'legally ensured standards' combined with an unshamed equivocation of 'unusually gratuitous violence and cruelty' depicted in the leaked footage of a halal slaughterhouse, with the process of halal slaughter itself (without the use of stunning), indicates not just biased journalism, but a shallow instrumentalization of animal welfare discourse to cover up an attack on domestic UK Muslim populations, in the face of rising anti-Muslim sentiment and questions of immigrant's ability to integrate into European society (Richardson, 2004). Commodified sheep, usually left behind the walls of industrial sized factory farms and slaughterhouses, make an appearance as loyal British subjects, with a 'right to a humane death'. They fit into a discourse of our sheep vs. their sheep, and questions of what 'our sheep' 'deserve', a classic discourse of Othering which seeks to, as mentioned earlier on in this paper, portray the other as uncivilized. As such, the role of British sheep is sanitized into that of a proud sacrifice for the Motherland, one that deserves 'respect' and 'rights' to a good death ('We believe that meat produced from animals stunned or not stunned before slaughter should be clearly labelled to allow consumer choice', 'The public has a right to expect that all farmed animals have as painless and humane an end to their lives as possible,').

Cecil- The African Orphan

The shooting of Cecil and the corresponding debate on whether trophy hunting supports conservation, draws upon a developmental discourse, casting Cecil in the role of the trope of the 'unfortunate', such as the hyper-mediatized starving African child that fronts NGO advertisements - a trope we see all too often on our screens, positioned there to make us feel angry at some kind of injustice, while not recognizing our own role in the institutions that perpetu-

ate those very injustices. As such the way development discourse proceeds by way of humanizing one child to gain donations, it at the same time rests on the implicit recognition that for every child saved, there will have been countless other who could not be ('Supporters say regulated hunts raise much-needed money for conservation and help manage populations, since game officials typically try to make sure hunters target animals that are no longer able to breed or that might inhibit the reproduction of others around them'). The question of Cecil's subjectivity is enmeshed within the false subjectivity entrusted to that African orphan whose picture is everywhere, but whose voice is absent. In that way, Cecil fits naturally, out of habit, into a discourse that evokes acts of extreme monetary generosity mingled with systematic disengagement.

CONCLUSION

Biopolitics, in its involvement with constituting both physical as well as discursive subjects, proves to be an interesting framework on which to found a critical discourse analysis, with the potential to problematize the discursive limits we place between the bodies governed by its apparatuses, whether human or animal. This is particularly true when trying to understand the way ethical subjects are formed within the discourses produced by and constituted by these apparatuses. Derrida thus pointed this out when he said the idea of calling animals 'animals' to mean one homogenous, monolithic entity, is absolutely absurd (Derrida & Mallet, 2008). I have to concur that it is not only absurd, it's dangerous. Perhaps it is by this discursive tactic that we seem to fail animals and ourselves; there appears to be no word in the English language that is commonly used to describe the personhood of an animal. Animals ultimately do lack the possibility of having an identity in our language about them. Personhood, person, the words, are imbued with ideas of individual-ness, consciousness, presence, being. Animalhood, animality, these terms are not. The extent of their meaning is the same as the meaning of animal. What is it to be an animal? Is it to not be human, to be pre-human, sub-human, and as a result, to lack all the things that humans have. That is the discursive leap we make, and it seems to be followed by and then re-instated by a cognitive one. Our language does not offer us the ability to speak of it, let alone describe or understand it. The power and implications of this come out in texts which are struggling to convey where we stand vis a vis our non-human animal counterparts.

While it seems we have pinpointed the exact locus of contradiction at the site of these texts, it is important to remember that a study of the text alone cannot give us the answer about how these contradictions are reconciled (or evaded) at the site of the subject. Nonetheless, this

research makes a critical point in demonstrating the existence of a significant 'silence' or void at the site of news media in its systematic evasion of a critically important ethical question: who are we in relation to other animals and what do we owe them ethically?

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APPENDIX

Texts Analyzed

A.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31411219>

Should religious slaughter be banned in the UK?

It's a passionate conflict - animal welfare campaigners opposing the slaughter practices of religious minorities.

Could it be a topic that persuades undecided voters on polling day?

Always an emotive issue, religious slaughter has become an unexpected political battleground as the general election approaches.

Animal rights campaigners have long called for a ban on halal or shechita slaughter, which amongst other requirements specify slitting an animal's throat quickly with a sharp knife while it is still conscious.

The British Veterinary Association, the RSPCA, Compassion in World Farming and the National Secular Society all want to see an end to the religious slaughter of animals or to slaughter without pre-stunning.

However, in the run-up to the general election, opposition to those methods of slaughter would also seem to have become dog whistle politics: shorthand for targeting a specific religious minority - Muslims - without saying as much.

UKIP last week said it would ban all slaughter methods that didn't involve pre-stunning - causing controversy amongst British Muslims and Jews, some of whom warned that any such ban would in effect drive those who observe religious dietary laws out of the UK.

For many of the UK's almost three million Muslims, halal slaughter is a strict religious requirement, as is eating kosher for many of the UK's 300,000 Jews.

Rules over stunning

According to the Halal Authority Board, there is a strong strand of religious opinion that live-stock should not be stunned before slaughter, but others feel that light stunning is permissible.

Its standards permit both types of slaughter, and dictate a number of requirements regarding animal welfare for both.

"If followed properly, both unstunned and stunned are extremely humane forms of slaughter and the evidence to suggest otherwise is completely wrong," according to its head of certification, Shaykh Tauqir Ishaq.

"Being cruel to animals is a sin in Islam, and we do not permit any form of cruelty in abattoirs certified by us.

"The discomfort and pain experienced by any animal should be absolutely minimised if not eliminated, and our standards reflect such requirements.

"We have found that all abattoirs we have visited, audited and certified pay great attention to animal welfare from transportation, temporary storage and stunning and slaughtering.

Whilst the taking of an animal's life is not a pleasant one, it is permitted in Islam as long as it is for eating and not sport."

The most recent debate over religious slaughter was sparked off by images released by Animal Aid, showing "horrificing yet routine abuse" captured using hidden cameras at a halal abattoir. One worker was sacked and three others suspended after being filmed breaking the strict rules on slaughtering sheep by hacking and sawing at the animals' throats.

The men at the Bowood Lamb abattoir in Thirsk, North Yorkshire, could be prosecuted.

However, Animal Aid is keen to point out that prior to Bowood, it had filmed undercover in nine other slaughterhouses, all of them practising mainstream "humane" killing with pre-stunning.

In all but one of the nine, the group recorded "appalling and often gratuitous cruelty".

Animal Aid's position is that all slaughter involves suffering, so it promotes an animal-free vegan diet.

British and EU law requires all animals to be stunned prior to being killed, unless the meat is intended for Muslim or Jewish consumers.

Laws not applied

However, Animal Aid said it had discovered a "remarkable weakness in the application of the law", with the regulatory body, the Food Standards Agency, acknowledging to Animal Aid that any slaughterhouse "can practise non-stun slaughter without demonstrating that the meat is destined for religious communities."

The Halal Authority Board said that it was "shocked at the cruel practices that have been filmed and these persons and abattoirs should be held to account".

But it went on to say: "We also feel that halal slaughter has been especially targeted by certain groups to attempt to discredit humane halal slaughter methods."

UKIP is the only British political party so far to promise to ban the killing of animals for meat in the UK without stunning them first.

line

Halal and Kosher meat:

Halal is Arabic for permissible. Halal food is that which adheres to Islamic law, as defined in the Koran.

The Islamic form of slaughtering animals or poultry, dhabiha, involves killing through a cut to the jugular vein, carotid artery and windpipe.

Animals must be alive and healthy at the time of slaughter and all blood is drained from the carcass. During the process, a Muslim will recite a dedication, known as tasmiya or shahada. There is debate about elements of halal, such as whether stunning is allowed.

Stunning cannot be used to kill an animal, according to the Halal Food Authority (HFA), a non-profit organisation that monitors adherence to halal principles. But it can be used if the animal survives and is then killed by halal methods.

Kosher food complies with Jewish dietary law (kashrut), again governing what can and cannot be eaten by those practising the faith.

There are similarities in the method of slaughter in that both require use of a surgically sharp knife and specially-trained slaughtermen.

Jewish law strictly forbids the use of stunning and meats are not blessed in the same way.

Unlike for halal, kashrut does not require God's name to be said before every slaughter after an initial blessing.

Kashrut forbids the consumption of certain parts of the carcass, including the sciatic nerve and particular fats.

Halal also forbids consumption of some carcass parts including the testicles and bladder.

line

Prime Minister David Cameron, who has said he is happy to eat halal meat, has promised to keep exemptions for religious purposes such as halal and Jewish shechita for kosher meat.

However, UKIP said that it was "about time someone stood up for the rights of the silent majority in the ethical treatment of animals instead of bowing down to those who shout the loudest".

In a statement, the party noted: "We respect religious groups to carry out slaughter in the UK according to how they define and read their scriptures.

"What we do not allow, however, is for the rights and demands of groups within those religions to override the UK's compassionate traditions of animal welfare.

"We see no reason why religious groups should not take into account the concerns of animal welfare when carrying out slaughter."

The party's agricultural spokesman, Stuart Agnew, was quoted in the Jewish Chronicle as saying that he had been against the policy change, but had been overruled.

He told the newspaper that the policy was not meant to "target" Jews, but was "aimed elsewhere - it's aimed at others. You've been caught in the crossfire; collateral damage. You know what I mean."

'Opportunistic shift'

Shimon Cohen, the campaign director of Shechita UK, hit back at the party.

He said: "This latest move is opportunistic and a disappointing shift from UKIP's previous

position, when both Nigel Farage and Stuart Agnew publicly advocated their support for shechita. "UKIP's new assertion that '[mechanical] pre stunning before religious ritual slaughter is fully compatible with all world religions,' is plain nonsense.

"The Jewish community does not permit any of the industrialised mechanical stunning methods used in factory slaughter.

"By joining the campaign to prioritise 'animal welfare' over the rights and beliefs of the UK's faith communities UKIP has returned to the fringes of mainstream politics."

A Westminster Hall debate in November last year on religious methods of animal slaughter cited figures from the all-party group on beef and lamb that suggested about 90% of lambs and 88% of chickens slaughtered under halal were stunned before slaughter.

However, an estimated 3% of cattle, 10% of sheep and goats, and 4% of poultry slaughtered in Britain were not pre-stunned.

Some 114 million animals are killed annually in the UK using the halal method, while a further 2.1 million are killed under the shechita method, with the value of the halal market estimated at between £1bn and £2bn.

Ban 'counter-productive'

Neil Parish MP, the all-party group's chairman, said that there "is a danger that an outright ban on religious slaughter would not improve the welfare of animals at the point of slaughter.

"At the moment about 80% of the halal meat produced in this country has been stunned.

"Driving our halal and shechita meat industry abroad to countries without our robust animal welfare standards and our supply chain traceability might result in more animals being slaughtered without stunning."

Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, emphasised the importance of Jewish methods of slaughter and kashrut (Jewish religious dietary laws) to the whole Jewish community.

"It recognises its rights as part of British society as well as enabling individual Jewish people who observe the laws of kashrut to eat meat and poultry. Any interference with their ability to do so would be a gross infringement of civil rights."

She said that the Jewish laws of kashrut were part of a wider concern for animal welfare.

"Shechita is carried out by trained, licensed experts. Animals are killed by a single cut to the throat in a prescribed way from a special surgically sharp knife that is regularly inspected.

"Blood flow to the brain is immediately cut off with consequential inability to feel pain and subsequent rapid death.

"There are too many other rules of kashrut to enumerate here, but it is important to point out that they are all related to enhancing animal welfare."

Mechanical stunning can also have a high failure rate, Mrs Ellman pointed out.

"Many more animals suffer because of inadequate stunning than are killed altogether by shechita.

"The report of the EU Food Safety Authority stated that failure rates for penetrative captive bolt stunning may be as high as 6.6% - 2 million cows.

"It also reported that failure for non-penetrative captive bolt stunning and electric stunning could be as high as 31% - 10 million cows.

"In comparison, the total number of cattle killed by shechita [in the UK] in any one year is 20,000."

The one area where some MPs and lobby groups tend to agree that more should be done is in labelling meat to make clearer to all UK consumers what methods were used in its slaughter, and in ensuring that all abattoirs have CCTV to ensure that the law is complied with.

Clearer labelling would also help Britain's Sikhs, who cannot eat halal or kosher meat.

B.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2937206/Halal-abattoir-staff-hacked-taunted-sheep-One-worker-sacked-three-suspended-caught-camera-carrying-horrifying-routine-abuse.html>

Inside halal house of horrors: Sickening footage shows 'evil' abattoir staff 'taunting sheep before hacking them to pieces'

Slaughtermen caught on camera 'hacking and sawing' at animals' throats
Sheep filmed being kicked, with one worker standing on an animal's neck
Staff laughed as a sheep bled to death with spectacles painted on its face
'Horrific abuse' captured by animal rights campaigners at halal abattoir
One worker has been sacked and another three have been suspended
The Food Standards Agency has launched an urgent investigation
RSPCA and British Veterinary Association condemn 'shocking' footage
100,000-strong BVA petition means slaughter will be debated in Commons
Muslim Council of Britain: Findings are 'abhorrent in Islamic practice'
WARNING: GRAPHIC CONTENT

A worker at a halal abattoir has been sacked and three others suspended after being filmed breaking strict rules on slaughtering sheep.

The men could face prosecution for the 'horrifying yet routine abuse' captured by animal rights campaigners using hidden cameras.

Slaughtermen at the Bowood Lamb abattoir in Thirsk, North Yorkshire, are seen 'hacking and sawing' at animals' throats in apparent contravention of Islamic practice.

The RSPCA slammed the 'absolutely shocking' footage amid renewed calls to ban halal slaughter, which is opposed by the British Veterinary Association and 100,000 people in an online petition.

Sheep at Bowood Lamb were filmed being kicked, lifted and hurled, with one worker recorded standing on a conscious sheep's neck.

Staff are also alleged to have erupted in laughter over a sheep bleeding to death with spectacles drawn around her eyes in green paint.

Slaughtermen were allegedly filmed 'taunting and frightening' animals by waving knives, smacking them on the head and shouting at them.

And instead of praying as the sheep were killed, the Muslim workers chatted as a radio 'blared out Christmas songs' and colleagues sang along.

The footage has been released by Animal Aid campaigners and handed to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to investigate.

Secretly-placed hidden cameras were used to record practices during slaughter over a period of three days in December.

Kate Fowler, head of campaigns at Animal Aid, said: 'The vicious attacks on defenceless, frightened animals at Bowood are inexcusable.'

'All four conveyor operators we filmed over three days abused animals to varying degrees, while the slaughterers looked on unmoved.'

She added: 'This is the 10th slaughterhouse in which we have filmed undercover, and it is the ninth to be caught breaking animal welfare laws.'

'None of the abuses we uncovered would have come to light without our cameras being in place, even though there is a Government-appointed vet at each slaughterhouse.'

The law requires abattoirs to stun animals before slaughter to prevent unnecessary suffering, but there are exemptions for Jewish and Muslim producers

Under the halal code, animals are supposed to be killed quickly, with a single sweep of a surgically-sharp knife. They should not see the knife before they are slaughtered, or witness the death of other animals.

The video footage appears to show that these rules were routinely flouted at Bowood, where more than 4,000 sheep were filmed being killed.

The full dossier by the campaigners said:

Sheep were kicked in the face, smashed into solid objects head-first and picked up and hurled by their legs, fleeces, throats and ears

A worker stood on the neck of a conscious sheep, then bounced up and down

Slaughterhouse workers erupted into laughter at a sheep bleeding to death with spectacles drawn around her eyes in green paint

A worker held a sheep by her throat and pulled back a fist as if to punch her
Slaughtermen taunted sheep by waving knives, smacking them on the head and shouting at them

Slaughtermen hacked away at the throats of still-conscious sheep.

Under UK law, slaughtered animals that have not been stunned must remain in position for at least 20 seconds after their throats are cut, to ensure loss of consciousness.

But 86 per cent of the sheep at Bowood were moved before that amount of time had elapsed, some in as little as one second, claimed Animal Aid.

It said many of the practices 'defied expectations of what Muslims believe halal slaughter should be.'

Slaughtermen wearing the traditional Muslim kufi skullcap and muttering the words 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great) were allegedly seen breaking rules in the way sheep were put down.

Campaigners said they recognised the risks of stirring up anti-Muslim feeling but 'withholding release of the footage would be a betrayal of our key mission to expose and combat animal cruelty'.

A petition calling for non-stun slaughter to be banned has reached more than 105,000 signatures.

Set up by organizations including the British Veterinary Association and RSPCA to improve animal welfare, it will now have to be debated by the Commons Backbench Business Committee after crossing the 100,000 threshold.

Last year Prime Minister David Cameron has explicitly ruled out banning non-stun slaughter in a speech to the Israeli parliament.

Kosher food also requires animals to be conscious when they are killed, although Animal Aid said no kosher meat was prepared in the Bowood Lamb slaughterhouse.

Mr Cameron said last year: 'When people challenged Kosher Shechita I have defended it. I fought as a backbench Member of Parliament against the last attempt to do something to change this, and there is no way I'm allowing that to change now I'm Prime Minister – on my watch Shechita is safe in the United Kingdom.'

The Muslim Council of Britain said the video was 'abhorrent' and against everything in Islam. 'Animal cruelty is wrong and criminal wherever it may occur,' a spokesman said. That it is being carried out in halal slaughter makes it even more incredulous.

'The findings certainly are abhorrent in Islamic practice, and the abattoir must be subject to the full force of the law.

'There are urgent questions this case raises: since each abattoir is under veterinarian supervision, how were these practices overlooked? We call on the Food Standards Agency to look into this abuse and the flagrant disregard of the very principles of humane slaughter as a matter of urgency.'

An RSPCA spokesman said the footage from Bowood Lamb appeared to be 'absolutely shocking'.

'The public has a right to expect that all farmed animals have as painless and humane an end to their lives as possible,' she added.

'The RSPCA firmly believes CCTV in slaughterhouses can be a valuable tool to help improve animal welfare.

'Our concern [about non-stun slaughter] has nothing to do with the expression of religious belief but with the practice of killing by throat cutting without pre-stunning.

'We believe that meat produced from animals stunned or not stunned before slaughter should be clearly labelled to allow consumer choice.'

The British Veterinary Association said the film was 'truly shocking' and blamed the government for not introducing EU regulations already used in Wales and Scotland.

'The government has delayed the introduction of the EU regulation Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (WATOK) which would require slaughterhouses to appoint an animal welfare officer,' a spokesman said.

'These abuses could have been prevented if a welfare officer had been present protecting the welfare of livestock.

'The BVA has long believed that slaughter without pre-stunning unnecessarily compromise

animal welfare at the time of death. It affects millions of animals every year and action is long overdue.'

The FSA, which regulates abattoirs, confirmed four slaughtermen have had their licences suspended and an investigation launched.

A spokesman said: 'The Food Standards Agency takes animal welfare at abattoirs very seriously which is why we immediately suspended the licences of the slaughtermen involved.

'There is no excuse for treating animals in the way shown on the video and we are therefore investigating the footage with a view to prosecution. We are also continuing to investigate all the circumstances around the incident to ensure proper safeguards are introduced to stop this happening in the future.'

The halal market could be worth as much as £2billion a year, with more than 100 million animals killed using the method annually.

A statement issued by Bowood Lamb's solicitors said: 'Bowood Lamb makes animal welfare its highest priority. We set very high standards for the way in which animals that pass through our premises are treated.

'It is highly regrettable that one of our slaughtermen fell below those standards. As soon as we were aware of this failing we dismissed this staff member for gross misconduct.

'Currently three other members of staff have had their licences suspended because Animal Aid claims that they have committed technical infringements of the regulations relating to religious slaughter.

'We will await the outcome of any investigation relating to their suspension.'

The statement said the real problem was Defra rules relating to animal conveyer belts and attacked Animal Aid for 'breaking into our plant' - a claim the campaigners firmly deny.

'Bowood Lamb is surprised that Animal Aid targeted our premises, given the stated aim of their campaign is to encourage CCTV in abattoirs,' the statement said.

'Bowood Lamb has had CCTV in our premises for over four years.

'We cannot condone Animal Aid breaking into our plant and undermining the strict hygiene controls we have in place.'

Read more:

End non-stun slaughter to promote animal welfare - e-petitions

C.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-33674087>

Zimbabwe's 'iconic' lion Cecil killed by hunter

A hunter paid a \$55,000 (£35,000) bribe to wildlife guides to kill an "iconic" lion in Zimbabwe, a conservationist has told the BBC.

Allegations that a Spaniard was behind the killing were being investigated, Johnny Rodrigues said.

The lion, named Cecil, was shot with a crossbow and rifle, before being beheaded and skinned, he added.

The 13-year-old lion was a major tourist attraction at Zimbabwe's famous Hwange National Park.

Zimbabwe, like many African countries, is battling to curb illegal hunting and poaching which threatens to make some of its wildlife extinct.

Mr Rodrigues, the head of Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, said the use of a bow and arrow heralded a new trend aimed at avoiding arrest.

"It's more silent. If you want to do anything illegal, that's the way to do it," he told BBC's Newsday programme.

'Lion baited'

However, the lion, which had a distinctive black mane, did not die immediately and was followed for more than 40 hours before it was shot with rifle, Mr Rodrigues said.

The animal had a GPS collar for a research project by UK-based Oxford University, allowing

authorities to track its movements.

Mr Rodrigues said Cecil's killing was tragic.

"He never bothered anybody. He was one of the most beautiful animals to look at."

The lion had been "baited" out of the park, a tactic which hunters used to portray their action as legal, Mr Rodrigues said.

Two guides had been arrested and if it was confirmed that the hunter was a Spaniard, "we will expose him for what he is", he added.

The six cubs of Cecil will now be killed, as a new male lion in the pride will not allow them to live in order to encourage the lionesses to mate with him.

"That's how it works... it's in the wild; it's nature taking its course," Mr Rodrigues said.

D.

Source: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/07/150729-lion-trophy-hunting-conservation-animals-cecil/>

Can Lion Trophy Hunting Support Conservation?

Cecil the Lion's death has stirred a heated debate over legal hunting, which some conservationists support.

The recent illegal killing of Cecil, one of Africa's most famous lions, has increased calls to outlaw trophy hunting. It's also caused some in the hunting community to reevaluate their positions on the contentious issue, even as other hunters dig in and say killing individual animals can help the wider population.

A number of mainstream scientists, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and some conservation groups—including the World Wildlife Fund (which has not returned a request for comment on the Cecil issue)—support regulated trophy hunting. Supporters say regulated hunts raise much-needed money for conservation and help manage populations, since game officials typically try to make sure hunters target animals that are no longer able to breed or that might inhibit the reproduction of others around them.

Earlier this year, the Dallas Safari Club auctioned off a permit to shoot a black rhino and used the proceeds for conservation. The club did not have anyone available for comment Wednesday but said in a statement: "Lawful, ethical, vigilant hunters play an important role in public acceptance of sustainable hunting as a vital tool for modern wildlife conservation and management." Club president Ben Carter previously told National Geographic that regulated trophy hunting is a tool that wildlife managers use to keep animal populations healthy and strong. "By removing counterproductive individuals from a herd, [populations] can actually grow," Carter said.

Melissa Simpson, director of science-based conservation for the Safari Club International Foundation, previously wrote on National Geographic's website: "As with the regulated hunters in the United States, the regulated hunters in Africa make a vital contribution to conservation efforts, primarily through the revenues their hunting expeditions generate for local communities and wildlife resource agencies." (The foundation has not yet responded to a request for comment.)

But representing another view, Wayne Pacelle, the president of the Humane Society of the United States, says, "The first rule of protecting a rare species is to limit the human [related] killing."

Permits aside, Cecil the Lion was not intended to be targeted. American dentist and hunter Walter Palmer says he believed he had purchased a legal permit to shoot a lion in Zimbabwe (for around \$55,000). Such permits are allowed by international treaties as long as a significant part of the proceeds are earmarked to conserving the species in the wild and scientists can prove that the taking of the select individuals will not endanger the species. Fewer than 30,000 African lions remain.

Time for Change?

Other hunters are taking a closer look at a practice that critics say is prone to corruption,

fuels demand for black market wildlife products, and can be too hard to enforce on the ground, leaving lions like Cecil to end up as collateral damage.

What happened to Cecil is the result of “a few bad apples and is not typical of the vast majority of trophy hunting,” says Wayne Bisbee, a trophy hunter who founded Bisbee’s Fish and Wildlife Conservation Fund in Texas to support wildlife protection. In addition to raising funds for conservation and culling herds, responsible hunters deter illegal poachers by serving as eyes and ears on the ground, Bisbee adds.

The next step for Zimbabwe should be to step up enforcement of their hunting laws, to prevent more illegal takes, says Bisbee. “Responsible hunting is going to pay for that,” he adds, pointing out that Zimbabwe is among the world’s poorest countries.

Another practice increasingly coming under scrutiny is the raising of lions on game reserves specifically for the purpose of hunting.

Late last week, Hermann Meyerdricks, president of the Professional Hunters’ Association of South Africa (PHASA), asked his membership to reconsider its position on the practice, which opponents call “canned hunting.”

“It has become clear to me that those against the hunting of lions bred in captivity are no longer just a small if vociferous group of animal-rights activists,” said Meyerdricks. “Even within our own ranks, as well as in the hunting fraternity as a whole, respected voices are speaking out publicly against it.” Citing the fact that some airlines and shipping companies now refuse to transport lion trophies, Meyerdricks said “the lion issue is putting at risk not only the reputation of professional hunting in South Africa but its very survival.”

Share your support of big cats by donating \$5 and uploading a photo of yourself giving a virtual high five to any social media platform, with the hashtag #5forBigCats. Learn more.

E.

Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/02/24/killer.whale.trainer.death/>

SeaWorld trainer killed by killer whale

(CNN) -- A killer whale killed a trainer Wednesday afternoon at SeaWorld's Shamu Stadium in Orlando, Florida, a public information officer for the Orange County Sheriff's Office said. The 40-year-old woman, identified by sheriff's spokesman Jim Solomons as Dawn Brancheau, was in the whale holding area about 2 p.m. when "she apparently slipped or fell into the tank and was fatally injured by one of the whales," he said.

But a witness told CNN affiliate WKMG-TV that the whale approached the glass side of the 35-foot-deep tank at Shamu Stadium, jumped up and grabbed the trainer by the waist, shaking her so violently that her shoe came off.

A SeaWorld employee who asked not to be identified confirmed the description of the attack and added that the whale involved is named Tillikum.

SeaWorld uses "Shamu" as a stage name for any of the male or female orcas in its shows.

"One of our most experienced animal trainers drowned" in the accident, said Dan Brown, vice president and general manager of SeaWorld Orlando. He said an investigation will be carried out.

"We'll make our findings known in due course," he said. "We've never in the history of our parks experienced an incident like this. All standard operating procedures will be reviewed." He would not elaborate.

Please bear with us; we've just lost a member of our family," he said.

The incident occurred after a show called "Dine with Shamu," said Paula Gillespie, who attended with her daughter.

"During the show everything was perfectly fine," she said.

Afterward, "we went down to look at his full body underneath the isolation tank," she said.

"Everything seemed calm and OK. The trainer was laying down on him and kissing his nose and rubbing him."

But the scene changed quickly, she said.

"Within five minutes, she was down in the tank and we saw all the thrashing and the bubbles

and him pushing her with his nose," she said. "It was just so, so traumatic."

Within moments, sirens went off and SeaWorld employees asked her to leave the building, she said.

A woman who had watched the whales perform before the incident said the trainers were having difficulties getting the whales to perform.

"They weren't following the instructions," Lori Miller said on "Larry King Live." "And the senior trainer actually came out onto the stage to let the crowd know ... that the whales decided they were having more fun splashing each than splashing the crowd."

A patron who did not witness the event said the park refunded her entry fee, although a spokeswoman said the park remained open.

Guest David Dalton told CNN affiliate WFTV, "All of a sudden, out of nowhere, two of the bigger whales just kind of flipped out, going as fast as they could in the water."

Jeffrey Ventre, a former SeaWorld trainer, described Brancheau as "a great trainer" and Tillikum as "a great animal" who has sired 13 offspring. "He's huge, he's impressive; people just see him and they go 'Wow!' He's a money stream as well."

Fred Felleman, a marine consultant in Seattle, Washington, said keeping the social animals in what amounts to isolation is bound to cause problems.

"The fact is we don't have the facilities to adequately accommodate not only the physical needs, the psychological and social needs of these animals," he told CNN affiliate KIRO-TV. "We respect lions and wolves and wild dogs as fantastic things, but we don't go run into the Serengeti and try to jump on their back."

Jack Hanna, director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in Ohio, said he knew Brancheau and that she would want her work to continue.

"What happened is something that happens; it happens in our line of work," he said. "They are dangerous animals; they're wild animals."

He added that he hopes SeaWorld continues with the work it does with killer whales.

But a spokesman for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals called the death "a tragedy that didn't have to happen."

Jaime Zalac said the organization had called on SeaWorld "to stop confining oceangoing mammals to an area that to them is like the size of a bathtub, and we have also been asking the park to stop forcing the animals to perform silly tricks over and over again. It's not surprising when these huge, smart animals lash out."

In 2006, a trainer at the adventure park was hospitalized after a killer whale grabbed him and twice held him underwater during a show at Shamu Stadium.

In 1999, Tillikum was blamed for the death of a 27-year-old man whose body was found floating on his back in a tank at SeaWorld, the apparent victim of a whale's "horseplay," authorities said then.

The Orange County Sheriff's Office said the man apparently hid in the park until after it closed and then climbed into the tank.

The 11,000-pound, 22-foot-long whale was "not accustomed to people being in his tank" and "wouldn't have realized he was dealing with a very fragile human being," Solomons said at the time.

"He may have been a victim of what a whale would call horseplay, just playing around," Solomons said.

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Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/26/us/26whale.html?_r=0

Intentions of Whale in Killing Are Debated

MIAMI — Homicide investigators in Orlando said Thursday that the death of a trainer at SeaWorld on Wednesday occurred when the theme park's largest male Orca whale grabbed the trainer by her hair while she stood in shallow water, and dragged her into a deep pool.

Within minutes, the trainer, Dawn Brancheau, 40, was dead from drowning and what the police described as “multiple traumatic injuries.” There were no signs of foul play on the part of anyone other than the whale, but questions about the mammal’s intent continued to linger. Was the 12,000-pound Orca, Tilikum (Tilly for short) acting violently, possibly because of stress from captivity? Or was he just playing?

When chimpanzees, alligators, pythons and pit bulls have been involved in attacks against humans, they have generally been euthanized quickly, without much debate. But whales and other large mammals in captivity are different, experts say, because they are truly wild, and they live under the watchful care of professional trainers, who can explain their behaviour in context.

Tilly, more than most, has been hard to defend. His record is hardly clean. In 1991, he and two female killer whales drowned a trainer, Keltie Byrne, at an aquarium in Canada before a crowd of spectators. Eight years later, SeaWorld officials found the naked, lifeless body of a homeless man who had sneaked into Tilly’s pool after hours lying across the whale’s back. At least one animal activist, Russ Rector, a Fort Lauderdale dolphin trainer, said he wrote a letter to SeaWorld three years ago warning that the park’s trainers were inviting attacks by pushing show mammals too hard to please a crowd. Video of Tilly taken before the drowning on Wednesday shows that he was excited, or agitated, depending on one’s point of view. Richard Ellis, a marine conservationist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, said that generally whales like Tilly — which are actually members of the dolphin family — are too smart to have been acting purely out of impulse. Pulling Ms. Brancheau into the water, he said, was not an accident.

“This was not an insane, uncontrollable act,” Mr. Ellis told The Associated Press. “This was premeditated.”

But was it intentionally violent? Graham Worthy, a whale expert at the University of Central Florida, said he doubted it. “These are animals that can tear apart a blue whale,” Mr. Worthy said. “If this was an animal that was trying to be aggressive, what would have happened would be much more gruesome.”

He said that in a handful of his own interactions with Tilly, “He struck me as a laid-back guy who is kind of lazy, frankly. He’s a misunderstood big kid.”

Sea World’s head of animal training, Chuck Tompkins, said in an interview that Tilly and all of SeaWorld’s whales were closely monitored and were not put on display if they showed signs of abnormal behaviour. He denied that trainers had pushed the animals too hard, or that Tilly bore any responsibility for his actions.

“They are not overworked,” he said. “They are not stressed out.”

He said that SeaWorld would not even consider euthanizing Tilly. “He is a member of a family group here, a pod of animals,” Mr. Tompkins said, adding, “These animals are a valuable resource for us to learn from.”

But Tilly’s ultimate value may lie in his being more than just an educator. He is SeaWorld’s largest, oldest male and he has sired 14 calves — making him the park’s top stud. So in biological and economic terms Tilly is essentially one of the animal kingdom’s most valuable defendants. “SeaWorld is a for-profit organization,” said Nancy Black, a marine biologist with Monterey Bay Whale Watch in Monterey, Calif. “That’s a big money-making animal.”

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