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From Being to Thing: Personhood, Animalhood, and Deanimalization in the Human-Animal Relationship

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FROM BEING TO THING:
PERSONHOOD, ANIMALHOOD, AND DEANIMALIZATION IN
THE HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP

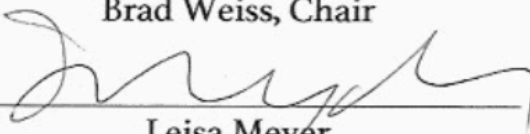
A thesis submitted as a component of a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from
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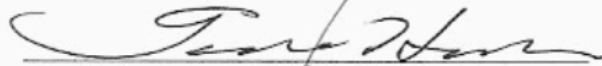
Accepted for Highest Honors



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It's October 2017, and I'm at the Montpellier fiber festival: where farmers, craftspeople, and artists join in a celebration of felt, yarn, shopping, food trucks, and fuzzy creatures great and small. I've struck up a conversation with a man who's exhibiting his ewe, educating the festival attendants about farming sheep for fiber. The model ewe is standing patiently in a small pen, chewing hay and taking interest in the goings-on around her. Other penned animals nearby frequently shy away when curious humans try to pet them, but she is friendly, socialized, and curious, acting perhaps like a very calm dog.

"If they have names they're gonna be like that," the farmer tells me when I comment on her temperament. Furthermore, he confides, the sheep with names "aren't going anywhere." Unlike the others, they won't be sold for mutton when they're older. A name has transformed them from Descartes's automata, whose lives intersect with humans' only in brief moments of use and consumption, to individuals with recognized personalities. With a word, they are now beings who are valued not only for what they can provide, but for who they are. The nature of this transformation, from being to thing and back again, is central to this thesis. I am interested in how domesticated animals are conceptualized, as well as in the effect of variable conceptions on animal welfare and treatment.

Human-animal relationships have long been a subject of anthropological investigation, partially as a means of better understanding humans. (Mullin 1999:207) "The investigation of human and animal interaction," is, writes Shanklin, "one of the most fruitful endeavors of anthropology." (1985:380) Lévi-Strauss studied animals as "Conceptual support for social differentiation" (1963:101), Geertz analyzed Balinese people and culture through the lens of cockfighting, and Mead used symbol use/nonuse to argue against animal minds. (Irvine 2004:loc1508). Though the study of the human-animal relationship has a long history, anthropology's approach has been anthropocentric. Animals are "portrayed as passive objects

that are dealt with and thought and felt about.” (Noske 1993) Rather than studying our relationship with animals as valuable in its own right, anthropologists have focused on what relationships with animals can tell us about *humans*, and their relationships with *each other*. "Animal-related discourse has often functioned as an extended, if unacknowledged metonymy, offering participants a concealed forum for the expression of opinions and worries imported from the human cultural arena." (Ritvo 1991:70) Even the study of animals itself has centered on animals as objects acted upon by humans. For example, the sociozoologic scale classifies animals based on their degree and nature of interaction with human beings.

However, we are in the midst of an animal turn, affecting anthropology as well as other fields. Increasingly, animals are being studied for their own existence and value, and the animal-human relationship is being viewed more as a mutually constituted dynamic than the static binary of actor and acted upon. A relatively young science, animal behaviorism has been gaining legitimacy and popularity, thanks to the groundbreaking work of mid-twentieth century behaviorists, including Konrad Lorenze, Niko Tinbergen, and Karl von Frisch. (Safina 2016:25) Anthrozoology and other fields of study dedicated to both animals and the animal-human relationship are also emerging and gaining traction.

Anthropologists themselves, however, are often in a difficult position. Some, like Noske (1993, 1997), argue against the “anthropocentrism” of anthropological study thus far, criticizing the blind eye the discipline has turned to animal plights and arguing for increased consideration and awareness of the animal perspective in human-animal relationships. (Mullin 1999:217) Others, including Lundin (1999) and Arluke & Sanders (1996) deal with the boundaries between human and animal, and encourage increased plasticity of these conceptions, as well as increased awareness of the application of these boundaries as means to politicized ends. (Mullin 1999:214)

Other anthropologists find themselves in opposition to animal advocates, “whose campaigns have imposed hardships on communities dependent on hunting and fishing or on agriculture that conflicts with efforts to protect endangered species.” (Mullin 1999:218) This is an approach that stems, in part, from the assumption, “that rural people, especially those belonging to indigenous communities, have a more 'authentic' relationship to animals than urban middle classes.” (Mullin 1999:218) This framework often serves to discount existing anthropological study of the human-animal relationship, as it is assumed that white, middle-class, urban people can't understand animals as well as other populations, and that studies of diverse societies can't be used to understand this demographic. “Sociologists Arluke & Sanders (1996) claim that because research on human-animal relationships by anthropologists primarily has addressed 'traditional societies,' it is of limited value to those seeking to better understand humans' relationships with animals in industrialized regions.” (Mullin 1999:3) The prevalence of this perspective gave rise, in part, to this thesis. I chose to turn the anthropological gaze inwards, upon American society (and American animal welfare's predominantly white middle class constituency), in order to challenge the perception that this type of animal-human relationship is somehow less “real” than relationships in more commonly studied societies, and to develop groundwork for future comparative scholarship.

Regardless of one's position on advocacy and scholarship, the increased study of the human-animal relationship, including animal turn-era investigation of the animal mind and perspective, is vital for anthropology. Though human and animal life has always been intimately intertwined, we have reached a point where critical consideration of the nature of our bonds with our fellow creatures has become of vital importance. The study of man as an isolated creature has lost legitimacy as post-colonial studies force recognition of cultures as continuously shaped by external interaction and intervention. The extension of this

philosophy of interconnectedness into the realm of the animal is necessary for the full understanding of modern phenomena and the trends that shape our cultural landscape. In an increasingly global world, culture and species links must be considered together. "With the rise of ecotourism, a global traffic in exotic animals, the spread of factory farming, and transnational conflicts over conservation and the treatment of animals, it is especially important that humans' relationships with animals in one part of the world be considered in relation to those in others." (Mullin 1999:219)

Furthermore, anthropology's previous anthropocentric view of the human-animal relationship is rooted in colonial thought, including the belief that Western conceptions of human and animal are universal. Western assumptions about the nature of man's relationship with animal have affected not only the study of other cultures, but also the cultures themselves, as colonial influences shape dynamics within colonized societies. "Nick Thomas argues that modern cultural anthropology has nonetheless retained ties to colonial natural history, with its 'language of typification' and its emphasis on documenting varieties of creatures, each with their 'specific and distinct natures.'" (1994:89, cited in Mullin 1999:206-207) Fortunately, this perspective, at least within the context of the study of animals, seems to be shifting, if slowly. The nature of relationships between humans and animals is being increasingly recognized as culturally and historically specific. Stepping away from assuming universal mindsets, anthropologists are revealing interactions with animals as strongly linked to other belief systems and inter-human relationships, in culturally specific contexts. This thesis evaluates the American context alone, in full recognition that our ways of relating to and with animals in this country are neither universal nor necessarily desirable.

In American society, our relationship with nature and therefore animals has long been defined by struggles over resources, survival, and labor power. At the beginning of European

presence on this continent, we felt at the mercy of the beings and forces we assign to “nature”, and we built an ethos around conquering that wildness before it conquered us. Though times have changed and power dynamics reversed, this mindset has not left us. The interactions with others (both human and non-human) detailed in this thesis frequently display the actions of those who believe themselves to be *more than*. “With animality posited as something inferior to humankind, and as something to be conquered and exploited, early modern Europeans made concerted efforts to maintain distinct boundaries between themselves and animals,” (Mullin 1999:204) a mindset that they carried to the Americas with them.

This mindset may be understood as the construction and weaponization of the human/animal divide: the conceptual notion of a gulf between Man and Other, or Human and Animal. Codified by the religious concept of the Great Chain of Being, and strengthened by practice during colonialism, there is a strong belief in the United States in a fundamental difference between human and non-human animals. Furthermore, it is believed that this difference makes animals indisputably lesser. While ostensibly applying only to those who are biologically non-human, the human/animal divide was created and continues to be used against groups of human beings, by way of the dominant group relating the Other to the animal. This is a belief system that underlies not only cruelty against animals, but also the legacy of racism and classism perpetuated by several of my informants.

The essays of black vegan feminists Aph and Syl Ko, collected in *Aphro-ism*, dissect and analyze the category of “the animal” as “a colonial invention that has been imposed on humans and animals.” (Ko 2017:loc199) In this context, “colonial” does not refer simply to the colonial era, but instead to the mindsets and systems of colonial powers that developed before colonialism itself and have been maintained since, which excuse and perpetuate the domination of other peoples, places, and creatures. The sisters emphasize that the conceptual

“Difference” between humans and animals is very different than biological “differences” between them. There are no traits that all humans have and zero animals do, and the two groups share a multitude of similarities, but the idea of an intangible and impenetrable Difference between them is pervasive. The Kos detail the history of the human/animal divide as one of domination and conquest, wherein white Europeans “designated themselves and their point of reference as constitutive of ‘being human’,” thus constructing the “human” and the “animal” as concepts to be weaponized not only against non-human animals, but against marginalized homo sapiens populations. This conceptual divide represents a legacy of domination, and, in opposition, a struggle for life and value. “The human-animal divide is the ideological bedrock of white supremacy,” (Ko 2017:loc979) as well as a “racialized weapon” of that ideological framework (Ko 2017:loc421), in that “the closer your category is to the white male human, the more you ‘matter’.” (Ko 2017:loc1315) Mechanisms of “dehumanization” and “animalization”, familiar as tools of oppression, base their functionality in the human/animal divide and are inexorably linked to it. The human/animal divide (as a conceptual construction, not a biological one) is a Western colonial and religious invention, without which mechanisms of colonial rule and continued oppression could not persist.

I have found the conceptual framework of the human/animal divide to be closely complemented by dominion. A fundamental element of our cultural system, dominion is the idea that our fellow creatures belong to us, and are ours to do as we please with. It transforms the animal (as separated by the human/animal divide) into something to be used, eaten, owned, and otherwise dominated. “Typically this involves three points of attack: A glorification of economic imperatives; a summary dismissal of the matter as sentimental, morally trivial, and probably subversive; and a little Scripture thrown in for our moral uplift.” (Scully 2003:90) I draw the terminology of “dominion” from the Judeo-Christian Bible, as well

as from Matthew Scully's 2003 work *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*, as I found it to be both powerful and descriptive. However, in the United States today, Dominion as a paradigm extends far past its original biblical reference. Instead, it has become intertwined with political ideology, capitalist profit drive, and the discourse of "rights", to the point where it now represents a broad dynamic of domination and entitlement, to which I will return at the conclusion of this essay. Both rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as in Western secular thought, dominion and the human/animal divide are dual methods of conflating social power structures and inequalities with expressions of natural order.

Anthropologists have not been innocent bystanders in the history of these belief systems. Instead, imposition of the human/animal divide upon societies has served to obfuscate and erase ways of relating that differ from our own, perpetuating colonialism and oppression in the process. The harm done by anthropology's reinforcement of the human/animal divide is being addressed in some schools of thought today. "Whereas structuralists tend to write as if oppositions between nature and culture or humans and animals are fixed in place and relatively outside the bounds of individual negotiation, poststructuralists have been more inclined to ask questions such as that asked by Haraway (1997:75): 'What gets to count as nature, for whom, and at what cost?'" (Mullin 1999:213) However, there is much work still to be done in denaturalizing the human-animal divide and excoriating its bias from our work.

Methodology

I designed this project as a sort of tabula rasa for my own conceptions. I wanted to return to the basics of animal welfare in the United States, and to build a foundational framework in which the human/animal divide was denaturalized and problematic elements

of folk knowledge were challenged. I wondered; how do people in the United States truly view animals? What determines how we value them, and, in turn, how does our valuation of animals affect how we treat them? Of course, I had my own hypotheses and biases from the beginning – I was, at the start of this research, a meat-loving dog rescuer who strongly believed that how we care *for* animals is a direct result of how much we care *about* them. Additionally, like most Americans, I'd never much questioned the human/animal divide. However, I endeavored to allow space for each of these notions to be challenged by the evidence, and that is precisely what occurred.

In pursuit of answers, I read extensively and broadly, dipping into the fields of animal behavior and welfare; ethnographies of differently constructed bonds; theory of animal psychology, pet keeping, and the human-animal relationship in general; in-depth descriptions of animal industries; and more. Additionally, I attended the annual Best Friends Animal Society conference, a trendsetter for the animal advocacy field. However, the focal point of my work was the extensive field research I conducted. I spent several weeks observing activity in a north-central Virginia animal hospital, to begin to operationalize measures for my concepts of interest. Then, in pursuit of answers that could be generalizable across demographics, I traveled around the country to interview animal rescuers, shelter workers, and others with extensive experience with human-animal relationships. I conducted such research in 8 US states and territories: Utah; Los Angeles, California; Western Washington; Southern New York; New Jersey; Northeastern Kentucky; The US Virgin Islands; and North-central Virginia. I tried to limit my investigation to domestic animals, but allowed my work to brush against the boundaries of domestication, coming into contact with uncertain territory such as exotic pets and commercially produced wildlife.

Over the course of this thesis, I will first outline the conceptual framework from which I drew to position my fieldwork and readings in context. I will then apply those concepts to three main, species-invariant animal groupings: pets, farmed animals, and working animals. In the United States, large Differences are believed to separate these groups of animals, especially farmed animals from pets. These animal types are thought to be fundamentally dissimilar, and alternate beliefs and actions are applied to each, based on their grouping alone.

99% of all animals that Americans directly interact with (in part if not in whole) in their daily lives are farmed animals. (Foer 2009:73) I use the term “farmed animal” instead of the more common “farm animal” to emphasize that this category is socially imposed. “Farmed animal” refers to animals who are bred (frequently with extreme genetic alteration) and raised for the purpose of harvesting some part of their bodies. An animal need not be harvested for food in order to be part of this category. The defining characteristic of the category is that farmed animals retain some degree of value, or even realize their full value, following their deaths. Production animals are included in this category, as they are eventually used as meat. “A significant portion of U.S. ground beef is made from dairy cows.” (Joy 2011:61)

In contrast, a “pet” is an animal who is kept for purposes of companionship, an emotional bond, and/or as part of an interpersonal relationship. There are 470 million such animals living in the United States today (Pierce 2016:3), and every year, US consumers will acquire roughly 15 million birds, 94 million cats, 78 million dogs, 172 million freshwater fish, 14 million reptiles, and 16 million small animals.” (Pierce 2014:7) In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway asserts a distinction between “companion animals” as actors and “pets” as acted upon, but I make no such division. The human’s perception of the animal has no impact on the animal’s ability to shape human life systems, nor can it erase the non-voluntary

components of the animal's involvement in the relationship. I am more inclined to agree with Herzog's statement that "the terms companion animal and pet guardian are linguistic illusions that enable us to pretend we do not own the animals we live with." (2011:74)

Notably, the line between farmed animal and pet can be blurry. Not only can farmed animals be conceived as almost pet-like (in 4-H shows or as family dairy cows, for example), pets may also be farmed. Puppy mills and the vast majority of backyard breeders exemplify this dynamic, even when the kinship terms typically applied to pets are still used. (An example of this was a breeder I observed who, while haggling over a tail-docking bill, said to the vet, "I don't have kids. These are my kids, so you gotta cut costs.") While these mass-produced animals experience commodification and abuse that is more similar to that of farmed animals than that of other pets, I include them in the pet category because, unlike farmed animals, their value is lost in death, rather than gained. Puppy mills have high death rates that have been factored into the business model as "normal", but death is not the desired outcome. Additionally, mill dogs are capable of becoming typical members of the pet category with an ease and continuity of cultural form unavailable to farmed animals.

Finally, some animals are socially conceived somewhere between things and persons. This category, loosely conceptualized as "working animals" encompasses animals whose living selves have use value. Animals who are useful for their labor, such as oxen or performance horses, fall into this category, as do animals with other non-emotional uses that can only be served by the animal being alive for some or all of their time in use, such as lab animals or live bait. These animals are subject to intersections and varying degrees of personhood, animalhood, deanimalization, and commodification, as well as unique questions of labor value and use-dependent positioning on the being/thing spectrum. A working animal may or may not have his needs met, because his treatment is largely dependent on what he

needs to fulfill his use-purpose, not on what he needs to sustain his quality of life. All categories laid out in this thesis are species invariant, but working animals are most notably diverse. The flexibility and breadth of this category makes it unique.

Within the constructs of these three categories, I will establish that domestic animals are conceived along a spectrum ranging from “being” to “thing”, and that this placement is precarious and species-invariant. Furthermore, an animal’s position on the spectrum creates a range of **possible** treatment, but it does not **determine** treatment. Unlike folk knowledge suggests, the amount an animal is cared about does not directly determine its level of welfare. Rather, an animal’s wellbeing is made possible by a framework of beinghood (as opposed to commodification), but is ultimately dependent on facilitating conditions of human access to resources, and education on animal needs. Education is addressed in this thesis as knowledge of the mental, emotional, and physical needs of a particular animal or animal type, as well as the best means by which to fulfill these needs. This type of education, known as animal-centric education, is linked to systemic valuations of animals, and not to class or other demographic factors. An animal will have intentionally high quality of life if its owner seeks to provide such welfare, understands how to do so, and has the resources to make that possible.

As indicated above, the relationship between humans and animals is complicated and longstanding, as well as highly variable. It is and always has been a vital part of human life, frequently considered to be deeply spiritual. It’s also mutual: the product of co-evolution. However, it is far from universally constructed, and even subgroups within singular cultures may have vastly different frameworks and experiences. This thesis will not address the full range of relationships between people and domestic animals in the United States, but instead attempts to provide an overview of the mainstream. My ethnographies encompass a variety of ethnicities, age ranges, and gender identities, but are not fully inclusive, nor do they attend to

nuanced differences between groups. Marginalized groups (including indigenous peoples) who do not frequently utilize the resources I drew upon for my ethnography were not studied, nor do I address religious variations. Finally, I speak of adult humans, who often lack the closeness with animals children may express.

Personhood, Animalhood, and Pets

Being with animals in the United States today is frequently conceptualized in terms of personhood. Legal personhood as a basis for rights is a pillar of the animal rights movement, animal welfare advocates rest their case on animals as “just like us” and/or “members of the family”, and those who oppose both groups emphasize the human/animal divide and argue that animals are not persons and thus must not be treated as such. I chose to build this thesis around the notion of personhood because of its prevalence in the discussion from all sides, and its conceptual accessibility to nonacademics. Furthermore, personhood is intimately linked to the human-animal divide, as a culture’s construction of “person” implicitly creates the opposing idea of “animal”. This thesis will define personhood as “social personhood”, which reflects the idea that personhood is constructed and maintained in a social environment. In this framework, you are a person if and only if your surrounding culture believes you to be.

I use the framework of personhood to assess my questions of how animals are viewed and valued. To determine if animals are granted personhood in our society, and, if so, why and how, it is important to operationalize what social personhood entails. A being can be said to have social personhood if:

1. They are integrated into at least some social structures and practices typically reserved for persons. Examples include kinship systems, human-centric social interactions, care of remains, and personal pronoun use.

2. Their interests and existence are seen as having **value for their own sake**, detached from any use they may be of to others.
3. They are included in the moral community. What is done to and towards members of the moral community is deserving of consideration and open to criticism, and is also subject to any believed-in supernatural judgment.

Due to the pervasiveness of the human/animal divide as an ideology, I limit my meaning of personhood for animals to the above criteria. Thus this personhood is not meant to be taken as a radical overturning of the human/animal divide, but rather an expression of the kin-like affection and valuation that a good deal of Americans feel and express towards their pets.

In the literature, markers of personhood included money spent on the animal, animal presence in the human bed, verbal professions of love, animal attendance of activities and trips, fond discussion of the animal, inclusion of the animal in ceremonies, consistent veterinary care, sacrifice on behalf of the pet, and/or active focus on the animal's needs.

However, my fieldwork primarily deals with overt declarations of kinship, maintaining that an animal is a "member of the family" if he is said to be: regardless of treatment.

Dafna Shir-Vertesh (2012) challenges the prevailing notion of the pet as a "liminal" creature (between animals and persons). Instead, she suggests animalness and personhood are two ends of a spectrum, along which particular pets may be slid depending on the needs, wants, and circumstances of their human keepers. I have adopted a similar paradigm in this thesis, but have expanded the theory to incorporate non-pets. More importantly, I reconceptualize the end points of the spectrum as "beinghood" and "commodification," partially as a means of rejecting and distancing from the human/animal divide, instead creating clearly externally imposed categorizations.

For Shir-Vertesh, animals can be incorporated into the kinship structure of human families, but “their nonhumanness sanctions the possibility of exclusion at any juncture.” (Shir-Vertesh 2012:9) She calls this “flexible personhood”. The assignment of personhood requires valuing an animal and his perceived interests, and while this may make pet ownership feel less exploitative and more fulfilling, it is a responsibility that may chafe. The concept of flexible personhood is a cultural coping mechanism for this dissonance. Pets may be persons, it suggests, but they are always honorary persons, and if their interests come into conflict with those of a real person, there is no shame in shifting your priorities. In other words, there is a “perceived ability to reject the animal in some way when it no longer fulfills its purpose, or when it is in competition with a more alluring love object.” (Shir-Vertesh 2012:9) While other humans can be variably included and excluded from the kinship structure as well, the animal case is set apart by the fact that personhood frequently attends familial connection. Thus, Shir-Vertesh theorizes, an animal rejected from the kinship structure is not only no longer a family member, but is no longer a person. The value of an animal is constructed through its relationships with human persons, and if the emotional purpose of the animal ceases to be served, value is lost.

While Shir-Vertesh’s work felt true based on my previously experiences, her research was conducted in Israel, and she concluded her essay with the suggestion that US research should follow. Thus, I designed my fieldwork to investigate whether the same concepts could be said to apply in the United States. While much of it did apply, other components of the relationship between people and pets revealed themselves to be very different in the US than Shir-Vertesh had observed. Institutional exclusion from personhood does create a context for human-animal relationships in which rejection of the animal is sanctioned, and many owner surrenders (pets surrendered to a shelter or rescue directly by their owners) are due to

denunciation of the animal's kinship status. However, I did not find Shir-Vertesh's framework of surrender as necessarily the revocation of personhood by individuals to be accurate.

Surrender in the US is generally the forced result of institutionalized rejection of personhood and/or a personal lack of resources, or a choice stemming from either a lack of recognition of personhood from the beginning (not a loss of previously recognized personhood), or the misinterpretation of animalhood. **Animalhood, discussed later, is a conceptualization of an individual animal's internal level of health and happiness, best estimated by scientific studies of animal minds and behaviors.** Thus when I discuss a "misinterpretation of animalhood", what I refer to is human action intended to increase the individual animal's wellbeing, that, based on a researched understanding of animal psychology, health, and behaviorism, is unlikely to have done so, and more likely to have decreased welfare. This is a phenomenon rooted in a systemic devaluation of animal-centric knowledge and its pursuit, and is thus linked less to race or class than to the extent and nature of previous experiences with animals and education about them. Such misinterpretation encompasses a variety of situations to be discussed in the following pages, from animal surrender, to industrialized farming, to cockfighting. Finally, an animal's personhood is frequently removed with their kinship relation, as Shir-Vertesh found in Israel, but it is the system in which homeless animals are considered disposable that does so – not the prior owners.

My focus is on the way that individuals conceptualize the animals they live with, and not on systemic constraints or expectations. Institutionally, personhood for animals is still considered too anthropomorphic for professional or otherwise "serious" contexts. The institutional denial of animal personhood is reflected in part by language, such as editing guidelines that constrict the use of personal pronouns for animals. (Haraway 2007:206) Furthermore, housing and insurance restrictions apply to animals in a variety of ways,

including restrictions on pet presence or breed. Assistance options are also plagued by the systemic denial of animal personhood, as food kitchens, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and disaster relief efforts often exclude pets entirely, forcing people to choose between their pets and the bodily needs of themselves and their families. These and other avenues for survival often usurp individually assigned animal personhood, causing people to surrender animals, even while the animal remains conceived as kin.

To begin to evaluate the US applicability of Shir-Vertesh's theories, I used a veterinary office in north-central VA as a "baseline" for everyday relationships. This data supported my hypothesis that animals in the US do experience something akin to personhood in their homes. 124 of 164 clients I observed used names, nicknames and/or personal pronouns to refer to their animals, or spoke to the animal directly. Almost all directed affectionate attention, including comforting talk, towards their animals and/or other animals in the waiting room. 27 directly referenced and/or utilized the concept of pets as kin. Personhood took on a more visible and robust character for some clients than others, but most seemed to bestow personhood at some level or another. Furthermore, Shir-Vertesh's conceptualization of animals as possible "child substitutes" was frequently demonstrated. Multiple clients described their pets to me as being like their children before they had human kids, and/or as returning to that role after the human family members had grown up and moved out. Though some people related to animals as children while there were also human children in the home, Shir-Vertesh's model of the animal as a possible pre-child or replacement child was definitively present.

Though Shir-Vertesh's model of pet personhood seemed to hold for the US, surrender as a withdrawal of this personhood began to fall apart as soon as I moved past the veterinary office in my research. It's worth noting first, however, that in some cases, US surrender did

mirror Israeli surrender. According to one LA informant, there are many juvenile dogs in the Los Angeles shelter system because people don't train them as puppies, and then they become "the dog in the back yard" before ending up homeless. Another informant - a 48-year-old white woman who worked as the PR specialist for a major adoption center in LA - emphasized to me that, "we're not all born advocates." People usually surrender animals for "lifestyle reasons", such as divorce, job loss, losing their home, landlord changing their mind about the pet being allowed, or the pet not fitting in with the family/lifestyle/other pets: reasons she deemed "reasonable," and which fit with Shir-Vertesh's observations. Further support came from an open admission animal shelter in Western WA, to which cats are mostly surrendered for "behavioral problems people think are unsolvable" or that people don't want to deal with. Adolescent animals are also surrendered by people without the time/energy to manage them. My informant admitted it was frustrating when people surrender for behavioral reasons, but said that people who aren't animal people aren't going to prioritize animals over themselves.

This WA informant stressed the need for advocates to remember that not everyone can be an animal care professional, and that laypeople not doing all the things for their animals that professionals might doesn't make them bad people. Compassion and understanding can be difficult given the stress of the job, but should be practiced nonetheless. This perspective illustrates a dynamic that both Shir-Vertesh's flexible personhood model and common US perspectives on poor welfare or surrender fail to address. In the United States, most pets are surrendered not because people don't care, or because personhood is removed. Instead, people often lack the resources and animal-centric information and education necessary to address obstacles to pet keeping. While Shir-Vertesh's model of lost personhood explains some situations, the majority of animals discussed in my fieldwork are victims of circumstance, or animals who were never seen as persons in the first place.

The complicated reality of the surrender dynamic was illustrated best in my Los Angeles, CA fieldwork. At the adoption center, my informant told me that the city is very renter-heavy, and that landlords often forbid dogs, especially large dogs or pitbulls. Even people who own their own homes can run into issues with HOA or insurance. Bad things can happen to anyone, and as advocates, she believes it's our responsibility to help people learn more about animals and the resources available to them as pet owners, so they can care for their pets more effectively in the future. At an open admission city shelter (also in LA), pets are often surrendered because the owners don't have time for them, are moving, or have too many animals. The day of my visit was particularly busy because people with many animals or backyard animals often get rid of them for the holidays. Residents of this area range from the very rich to the very poor, and there are ranches as well as urban areas. My informant here told me the level of care people give their animals is determined by what they want to give, not by income. Some people will give the best care they can, while others set a cap they won't go above. "People will spend \$2,000 on a puppy and surrender it if it gets sick. They have money, they just don't want to spend it." She emphasized that being "part of the family" doesn't mean that an animal lives exactly as the human members do, or even that it lives well. Instead a pet, conceived as kin, is "a living creature you take care of like you care for yourself."

Most in opposition to the flexible personhood hypothesis was my experience with a shelter intervention center at another open-admission LA facility. The program has kept 9,000 animals in their homes since 2013, by providing resources and solutions to issues that threaten the owner's ability to keep their pet. My informant here was a woman of color, younger than most of my other contacts. She spoke out strongly against the common perception that people who surrender their animals are bad owners who don't care about their pets. In her experience, 90% of people will accept help if it's offered, and 5% of people

truly have no choice (such as in domestic abuse situations). The other 5% she still tries not to judge, but they are people whose pets are better off at the shelter. She was very critical of the judgmental attitudes of many rescuers, and implored them to “ask how to help before you bash.” These pets are truly part of peoples’ families, and most people desperately want to keep them – they just can’t afford it or they don’t know how.

Many people aren’t aware that animals need to be house-trained (or how to do it), don’t realize that certain conditions are unkind and/or illegal (such as tethering), or become afraid because they can’t differentiate between exuberance and aggression. Animals are often surrendered for mange, based on the misunderstanding that mange is either lethal or can be spread to human children. Even the oft-touted horror story of senior dogs being surrendered to the shelter can frequently be explained through lack of animal-centric education.

Oftentimes people in poverty will bring their senior “members of the family” to the shelter because they’ve heard animals are humanely euthanized there, and either can’t afford to have the animal put to sleep at the vet themselves, or come from an area or background where humane euthanasia is not an option at all. These people don’t realize until they are at the shelter that animals are euthanized based on different procedures, and they can’t actually sit with their pets when they’re put to sleep. Upon realizing this, they’re heartbroken but stuck. The intervention program offers payment and transport for pets and people, so that the euthanasia can take place in a veterinary office, with the animal surrounded by loved ones. For other people, they provide education, as well as training and socialization courses that correct behavior issues and teach people about the animalhood of their pets. This is a powerful example of the prominence of lack of animal-centric education as a factor behind poor animal welfare. As Americans, we are simply not educated on what animals need to be happy and healthy. Animal-centric education is rarely taught in schools, many animal care

professionals do not educate their clients, and animal advocates frequently focus more on “bashing” people (or ignoring people and dealing only with the animals) than providing people with information on animal care, problem-solving resources, and alternatives to surrender to shelters. Some people may pursue this knowledge on their own, but those who lack the time, ability, or motivation to do so suffer (along with their pets) from problems that need not exist.

Beyond the information gap, many people can't afford to deal with issues that arise (such as citations for breaking laws they didn't know existed), or perhaps can't afford care. Instead of seeing those animals lose the family that loves them and possibly be euthanized at the shelter, this organization provides resources such as fence-building labor and materials, transportation, veterinary care, and food. “What seems easy to fix for us because we have funding isn't easy for a family living in LA on \$2400 a month.” My informant spoke directly against the classist sentiment that is reflected in many of my other interviews, as well as the animal advocacy community as a whole. “Lots of people have the misperception that people in low income areas don't care about their animals. I can honestly say that's BS. Most people who come in looking for help take it... [There's a] whole misperception that ‘if you can't afford your animal then why do you have it?’ But anything can happen. Tomorrow's not promised. You're not untouchable.”

Finally, people in poverty (and their pets) suffer from the institutional deprivation of personhood for animals. Securing rental housing, or the inability to do so, is a leading reason for owner surrender in the United States (Per the Best Friends Animal Society annual conference). Even if you are a long-term resident and have had your pet at your home previously, a new landlord could take possession of the property, or the old one could change his mind on your pet. My informant herself had an experience where, after 10 years of

residence, her landlord suddenly took issue with her pitbull. Multiple times in other interviews, rescuers expressed the sentiment that moving or living in a place where your animal is not welcome is not a valid reason for surrender. This interview demonstrated the cruelty of those blanket statements. For people in poverty and without resources - especially those with children, disabilities, undocumented status, or other compounding difficulties - moving or engaging in a legal battle over an animal is simply not feasible. It has nothing to do with people's individual beliefs in their animals as persons, and everything to do with the systemic devaluation of animals (and of impoverished people).

The US Virgin Islands fieldwork I conducted was also very useful in illustrating alternative reasons for less than ideal pet welfare. An informant of mine there (a young white man, originally from PA) explained the island as a "very poor culture. People aren't used to being cared about themselves, so they definitely don't care about animals." He described it as "very third worldish". There is lots of both not knowing and not caring, but he didn't feel like this made the island particularly different from the mainland. Rather, the geography and pervasiveness of the poverty just makes it more visible. "Up there [states], if you don't live in the poorest areas, you don't have to see it. Here, because it's so small, there's no escaping it." When compared to the rest of the US, he didn't think it was different or worse than the worst of anywhere/everywhere else. It's just more visible and more saturated because there's nowhere else for the animals to go. He also referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs, explaining that people who aren't cared for or about by anyone have to worry about their own lives first. This fit with the statements of the LA shelter intervention volunteer, as well as others who worked with areas of high poverty.

Though impoverished environments often correlate with generally poor animal welfare (for a variety of reasons), on an individual level, income and assets do not determine a

person's degree of care for their animals. Homeless pet owners were referenced extremely positively by several of my informants, and existing ethnographic research into these populations reveals people who care deeply about their animals, often providing them with more actualized animalhood than do the domiciled. As Irvine observed in *My Dog Always Eats First*, many homeless people recognize the toll that boredom and loneliness take on domiciled pets. "Many tellers extolled the fact that they seldom, if ever, leave their dogs alone. Some made this into a moral critique in which holding a job, and thus keeping a dog at home and often alone all day, constitutes improper care bordering on abuse." (Irvine 2013:54) Animal care experts and behaviorists are increasingly finding loneliness and boredom, caused largely by being left home alone, to be a leading source of stress for domiciled animals. (Grandin 2010:42) Thus this observation emphasizes that animal-centric knowledge and education may take the form of experience-based folk knowledge, and that affluent people are deeply entrenched in misinterpretation of animalhood, as well as animal mistreatment. Homeless people also emphasize the kinship of pets in a way those with more structured human kinship networks often do not, frequently refusing offers to purchase their pets. Finally, homeless populations create a model in which working animals need not be separate from pet animals, such as the dual role of "dog as protector" and "dog as family". (Irvine 2013:118-19) Through caring and being cared for in a very dynamic and intimate manner, many homeless people challenge dominion and problematize the human/animal divide in their own way. However, without resources, what even the most caring person is able to do is limited.

Though LA's size and diversity and the Virgin Island's concentration and visibility did the most to emphasize the role of institutions and external factors in surrender (instead of Shir-Vertesh's flexible personhood model), this new hypothesis was supported in other field work, as well. In Western WA, I spoke to a 40-year-old white woman in an open admission,

No Kill shelter. She confirmed that, while the area is relatively affluent and pet-friendly, it can be difficult for those with lower incomes to obtain pet-friendly housing. Every socio-economic class has its ups and downs, and she doesn't see a class difference in how much people care – just a difference in resources.

On the East Coast, I found similar support. In NJ, I spoke to a white woman who ran a rescue and adoption center. She described herself as in her 50s with no 2-legged children. “I don't even think ‘pet’ is a word. My furchild? Yes. My kid, my heartbeat, the reason that I breathe.” Her organization mostly rescues from shelters, but they accept owner surrenders as well. There's no such thing as a typical owner surrender story, though some are more common than others. “The biggest excuse is ‘we're moving’, which I don't understand because which state in the US doesn't allow animals?” This statement reflects the trend of animal rescuers failing to consider economic and housing conditions in their assessments. The most bizarre reason for surrender she's heard is that someone's dog's hair showed too strongly on new furniture, and the most touching was a dying man who checked out of the hospital in order to stay with his dog until a rescue was found. “You have both ends of the spectrum – people who care so much and people who don't care enough.” One woman she helped lost her home, and then the arrangements she'd made for the dog fell through last minute. She was sobbing as she surrendered her, saying, “My kids hate me. I've told them dogs are like family and they can't believe I'm doing this. You don't give up on family.” Such desperate cases challenge the hypothesis that surrender constitutes a loss of kinship and of personhood. Instead, they illustrate that surrender and personhood are not mutually exclusive. As stated in my evaluation of Shir-Vertesh's essay, my fieldwork suggests that surrender in the United States is often due to insurmountable circumstances and/or broad societal rejection of personhood, rather than the loss of personhood within the family.

In New York City, I spoke to an informant who worked at a combined rescue, adoption center, and animal hospital. The hospital is low cost for everyone on a sliding scale, based on the conviction that nobody should be unable to afford a pet. “Sometimes pets are the only family these people have.” In NYC, it’s possible to be employed full-time and still barely getting by. People generally surrender because of the difficulty of finding and affording pet-friendly housing, or because of human illness or death. The rescue sees lots of neglected animals whose owners have treated them “like vehicles they can trade in”, but my informant says she likes to think there are more people with good intentions than bad. “Sometimes circumstances just take over.” Furthermore, she told me that it’s hard to live in NYC, even alone. All the people and animals of the city need to get along in a small space, and you’re with your pet all the time. It can strain the best of relationships. This radically challenges Shir-Vertesh’s model by suggesting a framework in which surrender is the result of an interpersonal relationship (between human and animal persons) that simply doesn’t work out. When the relationship does work, however, pets make people happy, signal trust, decrease isolation, and provide companionship. “Sometimes it’s their [people’s] greatest treasure.” Though some people may be flippant, for most it’s a very hard decision to surrender a pet, as pets are members of the family to many New Yorkers.

Though I focus on animals, it is important to note that the phenomenon of flexible personhood is not limited to them. The human/animal divide is weaponized, not only to devalue the lives and suffering of non-human animals, but also of human beings who are othered. These humans are often dehumanized and equated with animals (by oppressors) as a method of legitimizing violence and discrimination against them, as has been explored extensively in other fields (such as African diaspora literature, feminist writings, and more). Alternatively, animals may be humanized at the expense of human groups. This issue is more

pertinent here, as the demonization of human groups through the medium of animals has plagued animal rights and welfare movements since their beginnings. (Thurston 1996:134) For example, Nazi Germany instituted innovative animal protection policies in the years before WWII. (Herzog 2011:58) By criminalizing animal abuse and forming a new cultural norm of animal personhood while simultaneously implementing extermination techniques against human people, the Nazis forged a tangible cultural framework in which Jews, Roma, the disabled, and other marginalized humans were not viewed as *like* animals, but in fact *below* animals. “[Hermann] Göring once threatened, ‘I will commit to concentration camps those who think they can continue to treat animals as property.’” (Herzog 2011:58) This is a highly effective strategy for stripping people of their social personhood (thereby facilitating genocide), and one long used in Western dominations.

Historically and today, animal advocacy often serves, intentionally or not, as “a vehicle for sustaining power relations between the dominant and subordinate groups.” (Irvine 2004:loc705) While no modern American example is as drastic as Nazi Germany, or even US history, human/animal divide crossing and substitution remain pivotal facets of the racism that underlies so much of the white animal advocacy subculture. I discuss such flexible (social) personhood and imposed animalization with regards to human beings, not only to avoid the illusion that this expansive social justice struggle applies only to non-human animals, but to address trends within my fieldwork. In several of my interviews, as well as some of my observational material, informants exhibited a tendency to conceptually “move” animals to the “human” side of the human/animal divide, at the expense of certain humans, who they then subjugated below the dividing line.

A common example of this phenomenon is what I call the racist pitbull advocate (RPBA) archetype. The RPBA is extremely sympathetic to the abuse that many pitbulls suffer

at the hands of dogfighters and breed segregation laws, but instead of approaching the issue from a broad systemic perspective, she transfers her anger onto the stereotyped image of the black male urban dog owner. She posts prolifically on social media and speaks openly in her non-virtual life about her belief that “the [insert expletives and/or racist epithets] owner should be put to sleep, not the dog”. Thus the RPBA and others like her do not challenge the human/animal divide, nor the subjugation and victimization of those in the “animal” category. Rather, they simply want to move the pitbull dog into the “human” category, while relegating the black man to the “animal” category where he can be abused and acted violently against. Similar examples are represented in Donna Haraway’s encounter with an activist who advocated the rape of female Monsanto scientists as retribution for their “rape” of the earth (Haraway 2007:11), and Herzog’s students’ suggestion that lab mice should be saved by using death-row inmates for experiments instead. (Herzog 2011:213)

I encountered such racism in my fieldwork, in addition to classism, which functions similarly. In LA, I interviewed a 50-year-old white female cat rescuer. She lived in an affluent area (“C”), with a more impoverished region nearby (“A”). She was generally very flattering of Area C, but when I asked about adopters, she made a disgusted noise and said that 60% of adopters want the animals for free and get very vocal when they don’t get their way. She then clarified that she does a lot of advertisement through social media, and therefore gets inquiries from a broad geographical range. People from Area C, “the best adopters”, are used to rescue fees and much less likely to want a free cat than those from poorer areas.

In her opinion, only 10% of owner surrenders are justified, and she has no sympathy for reasons such as moving or behavioral issues. In Area C, pets are important to people, and are generally considered part of the family. There are a handful of people who “don’t really see them as family”, but they are anomalous. In Area A, however, she says there are far more

“disposable animals”. Owners from either location often give similar reasons for surrender, but people from Area A say “moving” more, and there’s a large number of people who give reasons like “got old and don’t want anymore”. People from the two areas also differ in how they give animals away. People from Area A tend to turn them loose or dump them in rural areas, while people from Area C often place online rehoming ads. “In [Area A] they don’t care what happens to them. They’ll put them up on the pet sites for free... Even though they’re dumping them for the same stupid reasons, at least I know they care more here than there.” She was also critical of vet care in Area A. “In [Area A] it’s always ‘no money’. ‘My animal got hit by a car, what do I do?’ You take it to a vet! If you don’t have the money to take care of it, don’t get a pet! These people bash us rescuers left and right until they need our help.” She guessed that higher income areas in the rest of the US were probably similar to Area C, but said, “in, like, Detroit, I can see nobody caring about community cats and more disposable pets. But in wealthier areas they probably take better care of them and value them more.”

In addition to delineating between people in Areas C and A, based primarily on socio-economic class, she brought up ethnicity as a factor. She grew up in a Hispanic neighborhood, where she believed animals were seen as disposable. People there “don’t care”, she told me, and frequently drop animals at her mother’s house (who still lives there). Owners often get new animals after surrendering old ones. “It’s nothing bad about them as people,” she insists, “it’s the culture. It’s what they grow up with. Animals serve a purpose: dogs are for protection, cats are for rodent control, and others are food.” Yet she remarks that “Some of the best rescuers I know are Mexicans,” and wonders why “they” are the best and the worst. She collaborated herself by saying that a friend of hers is from Mexico City and says that they’re not taught to value animals when they’re kids.

The conception that poor people and/or people of color care less about their animals, and thus frequently treat them poorly, is common within US animal advocacy subculture. Advocates support these perceptions with personal experience, and do not see them as classist and racist, though they absolutely are. These attitudes are not geographically isolated. When I was researching in NJ, I spoke to a white dog rescuer who talked about engrained cultural norms of animal abuse in explicit terms of race and class. “A lot of the city folk... the blacks and the dogfighting... different nationalities that still believe in cockfighting... and if you’re brought up in that environment...” She rambled. She also said that, when conducting local adoptions, she will use Google Maps to “see if they live in the ghetto,” or “see if they live in [location name], when you don’t live in [location] if you want to live.” If they do, she will reconsider the adoption. She admitted that “it sounds terrible,” but believed she was doing what was necessary to protect the animals she cares for.

In the US Virgin Islands, I visited an animal shelter that primarily received owner surrenders, commonly due to moving, or because the people here “don’t believe in spay/neuter” and often have too many pets. My informant there was a 60-year-old white woman who was originally from Connecticut and still networks with rescues there. She was extremely frustrated with the island, from its low rates of spay and neuter to the common treatment of dogs and cats. She didn’t understand why people acted the way they did, nor did she seem interested in learning. “Some are really caring and others see as just an animal they can trade in for another if it didn’t work out... It’s very easy for them to detach; I don’t know why that is.” Sometimes people “think it’s ok to keep it kenneled. How’s it supposed to protect you if it’s in a kennel? [Referencing guard dogs] Sometimes you can’t reason with people. I don’t see it and they don’t see my side either.” She sees the issue as a lack of education, mostly, though she seemed to be denigrating this particular population

with the comment, and not recognizing the widespread inaccessibility of animal-centric information in the US in general (as most of my other informants had). Other people on the island, she believes, just don't care. "They just think 'this is the way it's been all my life and here is this crazy white woman...'" Her statements, especially when considered with the others above, tie into issues of race and colonially-constructed power structures, and how race-based assumptions of value systems and white savior complexes are prevalent in animal advocacy. While these issues are far too broad to unpack here, it is necessary to keep in mind that animal advocacy remains a predominantly white, middle-class, outsider position, both on the island and the mainland. The mainstream movement fails to challenge the human-animal divide, and instead demonizes and subjugates human groups in the name of animal assistance. This is a version of animal advocacy that *Aphro-ism* suggests alternatives to, and which I hope to problematize in this thesis.

In our interview, my island informant drew frequent comparisons to the mainland. "In the states we have some issues, too... There's animal abuse and there's hoarders.... But you can't even compare. It's like we're back 50 years. [They used to chain dogs up] back home, too, but now there's laws." Additionally, the island has a "unique" problem with "people not understanding how important spay/neuter is. Back home it's automatic. You probably wouldn't even adopt a dog if it wasn't spayed/neutered. That and people wanting so many animals." What was particularly telling about this portion of the interview was how skewed her perspectives on the mainland were. The vast majority of her stateside experiences were with affluent communities in Northern states, yet she believed these experiences to be universal. In Southern states, however, the behaviors that seemed so unthinkable to her are common. Everything she thought was unique to the island was not.

I highlight these instances of racism and classism to demonstrate the importance of caution when analyzing informant testimony for information on area trends, and the dangers of taking evaluations of the local populace at face value, as well as to bring attention to an extremely problematic feature of animal advocacy as it exists in the mainstream today. While racist and classist biases are sometimes overt, these perspectives are also frequently presented under the label of “cultural difference”. This is most common in instances of people from the Northeast talking about the Southeast, but was present across other divides, as well. In Western WA, I talked to a young Persian/Cuban American woman and her middle-aged white boss at a cat rescue and adoption center. They contrasted the area with Eastern WA, where my primary informant and many of the cats were from. The young woman’s childhood neighbor owned multitudes of loose, unaltered animals that he would shoot in his back yard if they got sick. She repeatedly referred to such practices as “cultural”, “common thing(s) over there”, and being done by “most people”. “You know if you’re taking cats from [location] you’re generally not getting any vet care,” the women asserted. From what they told me, Eastern WA sounded very similar to what I had previously experienced in the South.

In southern New York, I met with an independent dog rescuer in her late 50s. Though she lives in NY, she rescues mostly from Alabama and Georgia. “[It’s] a cultural thing in the South. They don’t get that animals are pets. Not even pets – they’re family members, which is how us Yankees feel. Here they live in the house, sleep in the bedroom, get taken care of... There they get chained up, no vet care... I have no tolerance for people like that.” She recognizes that NY has its problems, too, but chooses to rescue from the South because of the prevalence of gas euthanasia – a particularly cruel method that is often ineffective on the first attempt. She said that in her area, pets are very important to people, and that they go to great lengths for their animals. Unfortunately, a place to rent with animals is very difficult to find,

let alone afford. She does not acknowledge this difficulty when evaluating reasons for surrender, saying, “A lot of times it [reasoning behind surrender] is nonsense. A lot of times they’re ‘moving and can’t take him’. Then don’t move there! That’s what I say!”

Both of my NJ informants also worked extensively with the South. One said that whether animals are more commonly seen as family or commodities depends on the demographic. In the Northeast, people are generally “more enlightened”. To her this means that people “understand that animals live inside and are part of the family”, whereas in the South there is more apathy, ignorance, and horror stories. “To the right people, they’re part of your family. To the wrong people, they’re just commodities. They’re something to breed, chain up, guard your house...” The other agreed that, “The mentality in the South is worse than the North.” This mentality has a direct effect, in her eyes, on care. “The people down south don’t really do the normal vet care, such as heartworm and flea prevention.” Additionally, she tells me that lots of people tie dogs to trees and don’t take care of them, including “trailer people” who will tie the mother near enough to the road that the puppies often get hit by cars. “What kind of people are those? I don’t know.”

These instances of racism and classism within the advocacy community, including those that are discussed through the language of cultural difference, are important to consider in a work of this nature. **This thesis aims to problematize the human/animal divide, as well as the exclusion of those in the “animal” category (however it is constructed) from the moral community.** This can be done, as in *Aphro-ism*, in a way that is intersectional and cognizant of the ways that this binary has been used to inflict extreme harm against human beings. I condemn the animal advocacy community for their frequent and blatantly racist attempts to simply shift animal-like victimization onto humans, as well as their classist lessening of poor and/or addicted people in the same way.

When I began this research, I expected assignment of personhood to be an accurate predictor of good treatment of animals. Basing my view on Shir-Vertesh's work, I hypothesized that animals were caught between personhood and commodity status, and that the more personhood they were granted, the better their lives would be. However, I came to realize that I was wrong. While personhood is a valuable conceptual marker, and represents a foundation of beinghood upon which good treatment can be based, it does not predict welfare. Personhood as an abstract hypothetical does not create behavioral change. 47% of American adults believe that "animals are just like people in all important ways", but "their belief that humans and animals are equal had little effect on their attitudes about the use of animals." (Herzog 2011:239) On an individual level, the assignment of personhood can cause harm by depriving the animal of its animalhood.

"Animalhood" indicates an animal-specific and socially constructed variant of beinghood; a concept for which there is no popular imagining in our culture. It holds as vital characteristics the same indicators of personhood discussed previously, with the exception of inclusion in person-specific structures and activities. Additionally, in animalhood, value assessments are made because of the being's animality, not in spite of it. Respect for and valuation of the animal as an animal of its specific type is key. Thus animalhood is the valuation of the animal as a being with its own species-specific needs and desires, who is no less valuable for being nonhuman. This is a conception of the animal not as the opposite of the person, but as merely a different sort of valuable being. Because domesticated animals have been mutually constituted with humans, interactions with us are often part of their animalhood, not rejected by it. Thus instead of necessitating "naturalness" in the form of human absence, animalhood requires that the human interactions be respectful of the animal involved. The deprivation of animalhood is "deanimalization."

Animalhood is not mutually exclusive with personhood, but the two are frequently in tension. As the idea of the person has historically been held in binary opposition to the animal, and this antagonism remains very powerful, it can be very conceptually difficult for people to conceive of their animals both in terms of animalhood and of personhood. Furthermore, the idea of personhood itself remains problematic. Even when assigned to specific animals, personhood as a concept often continues to degrade the idea of animals in general, and thus perpetuates harms against the animalized Other.

A creature may be deprived of its animalhood and assigned personhood instead, serving to exempt the individual animal from the negative association of “animal” without disturbing the paradigm of the human/animal divide. This action comes at a multitude of costs. As discussed, the animal in question may be replaced in the animal level by a human being, serving only to redistribute injustice and cruelty. Even in the absence of direct substitution, the problematic nature of the human/animal divide persists. Additionally, when animalhood is replaced by personhood, any proof of animalhood can cause the animal’s personhood to be removed, possibly plummeting the animal into commodity status, or even causing the animal’s disposal. Such is the case when dogs are euthanized after bites that could have been prevented by respectful treatment of the animal and recognition of warning signs.

Both animalhood and the Northern perspective of the Southeastern US were addressed by my field work in Northeastern Kentucky. My first KY field location was an open admission animal shelter that only fails to make the technical definition of No Kill due to its close partnership with an independent adoption center. The shelter has a major focus on public, animal-centric education, and I started my day by attending their children’s day camp. Here, kids from a variety of backgrounds learned how to approach and treat animals, and about the role of animal control. The education was very focused on the skills required to

address animals on their terms and within their comfort zones, exemplifying the type of information that is often lacking, and which can reduce or prevent future surrender and human-animal conflicts. My informant was a 30-year-old, mixed race (black/white), male officer. He addressed my questions, and also gave me a comprehensive tour of the facilities, walking me through the daily operations.

Everything about this shelter was state of the art, and the staff members I met were friendly, open, and kind to the animals. My informant told me that they struggle with public perception, and have been working on getting the media to show the work that they do. “We’re not the devil,” he lamented. Rescuers contribute to this bad PR, as any incident is widely publicized and often misconstrued and/or blown out of proportion. For the most part, he said, this is a very good area for animal care. Most people “get it” and take great care of their animals, though some people either don’t know the laws or “need to know the laws.” He believes that pets being seen as part of the family is key. “I consider my dogs to be my children.” Most people in this area and in bigger cities conceive of pets similarly, but people in rural areas often view them as “what they are in the law’s eyes – property.” At this facility, they deal with a lot of cruelty cases, including neglect of both dogs and horses. Often surrendered animals have been treated poorly, and/or have indifferent owners, but many people care deeply and just aren’t able to keep their pet. Additionally, the community as a whole is animal-friendly. Cruelty cases aren’t concentrated to any one area, and false cruelty calls are also common, suggesting that, with the exception of a few bad apples, people are alert and invested in animal welfare.

My second KY informant was originally from the North, and he seemed a bit discouraged by the state of animal welfare here. “The South is pretty bad,” he said, “but KY is the worst, as far as the laws go.” Spay and neuter is less common, and in rural areas people

receive less education about “proper animal ownership”. Despite his personal disappointment, he said something to me that completely changed the way I approached my research. I had been thinking of poor animal treatment through the same framework as the Northerners I had interviewed previously, a mentality carried over from my own time working animal rescue in North Carolina. I believed that people who treated their animals poorly, especially those in the South where such treatment was prolific, did so because they simply did not care. However, this informant pointed out to me that the biggest problem was a lack of knowledge about what taking good care of animals means. People who treat animals poorly are frequently just emulating what they grew up with, without knowing that these methods of treatment are vastly different from conditions under which research has shown animals to thrive. For example, those whose dogs spend their lives chained with no socialization or enrichment aren’t usually being intentionally cruel – that’s just what they think pets are. These pets are still seen as family. Their owners care deeply about them and want to talk about them at every opportunity, like anybody else. “For the most part they love their pet, they just don’t know the best way to show their love.” He said. Others are exceptions. “Of course there are people who don’t care and will throw them out like garbage, but you can bet they do that to a lot of people in their lives, too.” Epidemic poor welfare isn’t about certain people loving their pets less, but rather about a widespread lack of education about animal care and welfare. This is a return to the concept of misinterpreted animalhood. People are doing what they believe to be right, but when their actions are evaluated with reference to research on animal needs and behaviors, they are not actually providing the animal with what it needs for high quality of life. In other words, they are not fulfilling the animal’s requirements of animalhood – a concept that was clarified for me by this interview.

While, in the rural South, deanimalization often resembles chained dogs unable to engage in the social and mobile behaviors that dogs need to be happy, animals of wealthy owners are not exempt from such suffering. These animals are often stripped of animalhood in exchange for personhood. This can result in abuse or neglect that, while it doesn't fit the ASPCA commercial or Facebook-shaming imagery, is nonetheless torturous for the animal. "Poor Little Rich Dog" details such suffering in Ernie, a golden retriever whose life with a wealthy family devolved from treasured puppy status into a downward spiral of neglect and anxiety; a cycle his owners refused to recognize and instead continued to perpetuate. Ernie was far from unique. "One study suggests that although affluence can mean more veterinary care and a premium diet, it often also correlates with less attention to social and behavioral needs and less exercise." (Pierce 2016:109) This is no less a misinterpretation of animalhood than the chained dog example above, and a person's class or level of conventional education does not prevent their lack of animal-centric education from being incredibly harmful.

I have found animalhood to be the best single-factor predictor of good treatment of animals: above my predicted indicator of personhood (though the two may be paired). When animalhood is recognized and valued, the evaluating human is more able to care for the animal in a way that is conducive to maximum quality of life for that individual. However, animalhood can be harmful as well; especially if the attending human's idea of what the animal needs to be happy is not synonymous with what the animal actually needs (best estimated by expert experience and research). One common example, especially in the South, is the belief that breeding is a critical part of animalhood and an animal's sense of self. This belief, which runs counter to veterinary literature on spay/neuter practices, leads to the deaths of countless animals, both through unwanted litters and by owners who are tired of dealing with pregnancy. Another case, this one rampant in suburbs throughout the country, is the

belief that purchased purebreds, including “designer dogs” (who are merely intentional mutts) are qualitatively different in being and needs from their rescued counterparts, and thus more desirable. This leads to the grotesquely abusive breeding of animals with aesthetics and not health in mind, as well as continued euthanasia of animals in shelters. People who hold such misconceptions of animalhood, which run counter to expert knowledge based in animal-centric experience and/or scientific inquiry, are extremely common, and their beliefs lead them to create and perpetuate situations that lead to the injury, suffering, and deaths of millions of animals.

Thus the translation of animalhood into quality welfare is highly dependent on animal-centric education and the correct interpretation of the animal’s wants and needs. If the human doesn’t know how to properly care for the animal, or misinterprets the animal’s quality of life, the animal can still suffer, perhaps severely. Many animals, including beloved pets, endure pain. Sometimes this is due to abuse or negligence on the part of humans, but mostly it is a lack of understanding of an animal’s signals. These animals hurt despite being valued and cared for. (Pierce 2014:104) “Denial, culpable ignorance, intimidation to enforce silence, and outright lies work to damage the dogs people claim to love.” (Haraway 2007:109) Put more simply, valuing an animal in animal terms and wanting to do what’s best for it are good predictors of those things happening, but do not make them happen. In order to result in good animal welfare, the desire to treat the animal as is best for him as an animal must be followed up by addressing his needs in an educated and effective way.

Together, these complicated dynamics illustrate one of the most important and unexpected conclusions of my investigation: the disconnect between valuation and treatment. When I began this research, I believed I would find a clear correlation between how highly an animal’s living existence is valued and how he is treated. However, many beloved animals do

not have their needs met. In fact, most may not. “Pet keeping has dark undercurrents: the breeding facilities, the wholesale marketplaces where animals are sold like guns or toys, the high mortality, the shelters overflowing with bodies, the shockingly high numbers of animals being sexually exploited or physically abused by their owners, the punitive training methods that leave animals emotionally traumatized, the failure of more than a quarter of all pet owners to provide their animal access to basic care.” (Pierce 2016:4) "At least a quarter of all dogs and cats never see a veterinarian, and millions live with untreated chronic pain or slow-moving illnesses that owners either fail to notice or are too tightfisted to address." (Pierce 2016:49) Additionally, family pets are frequently abused by the household's children. Even when we do engage with animals in ways they enjoy, such as play, we establish ourselves as the primary instigators, for fear that initiation by our pets would be irritating to us if encouraged. (Pierce 2016:26) "Some scholars have suggested that as our relationships with animals become less functional, and the more that the animals are integrated into human families, the greater their risk for poor welfare... The way we live with animals now makes it more difficult for them to engage in normal behaviors. In addition, cats and dogs are exposed to an increasing number of stressors like boredom and loneliness." (Pierce 2016:109)

The subjugation and abuse of beloved pets is especially severe among small animals. One of my informants, a white, nonbinary college student who advocates and educates on behalf of such animals, spoke passionately with me about this little-known issue. Originally interested in fish because they thought fish were easy to care for, they had come to realize that the low-maintenance reputation of these pets was actually normalization of abuse and neglect. “I really became passionate about caring for these pets that other people treat as throwaway pets.” They emphasized that pet stores don't educate the public on how to care for exotics. “They're not sold to be long-term pets. They're sold to get them out of there and you

make a buck or two... You buy them to die.” As reiterated in by Jessica Pierce, “Goldfish are billed as small, low-maintenance, and short-lived, but that’s only because their growth is stunted and untimely death is inevitable.” *Run, Spot, Run* details the plight of these animals, problematizing even the practices that are marketed as correct. Such normalized cases of abuse demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of misinterpretation, and reiterate the importance of accompanying animalhood with active and animal-centric education.

The suggestion that pets, even beloved ones, are subjugated not only as an exception, but perhaps as a norm may strike readers as being untrue, or even not genuine. This is because, as a culture, we persistently and pervasively use pets as the gold standard for animal treatment. “Would you eat me?” ask vegan advertisements, holding up a cat as the lucky one whose condition should be emulated. Time and time again, consciously or unconsciously, we compare animals from other categories to pets as a case for better treatment for the other; so absorbed in how bad things are for other creatures that we do not stop to ask if the common treatment of pets is perhaps itself unacceptable. This fetishization of the life of pets reduces our ability to critically assess the practice, as we fail to analyze the pet’s quality of life and conditions of existence. When viewing pet keeping with a critical eye, it becomes clear that pets experience commodification as well, though it is often more nuanced and subtle in form.

Commodification, Deanimalization, and Farmed Animals

The opposite of beinghood – be it animalhood, personhood, or both - is commodification. Commodification is a concept with a long history, and its meaning varies across time and authors. I do not wish to insert this thesis into the literature of the commodity form, and will neither define commodity in terms of economic value nor focus on animals in the technical terms of capitalism or the ideologies that oppose it. Instead, I address “commodification” from the position of the animal experience. For the purposes of this essay,

commodification is meant as the process by which a creature's life and welfare are reduced to the status of "things", to be measured in value against other things. This process distances (or even removes) the commodified animal from the plane of the moral, shifting it and its concerns into the realms of economics, personal preferences, and conflicting goals. For example, after commodification, the "thing" that is a cow's natural inclination to live on pasture may be subverted by the thing that is "well-marbled beef" (achieved by feed-lot), should the latter be deemed more desirable. This is opposite the experience of beinghood, as beinghood assumes and grants inherent value of life and welfare, considering the living creature to be qualitatively different in moral weight from non-living things such as leather or profit. Thus commodification and beinghood are the two ends of the same spectrum; a spectrum that animals are slid along easily and frequently.

Commodification is a social construct that inherently affects both the animal's way of being, and the treatment and valuation of that animal. It is the experience of becoming a thing to be used and consumed. One variation on commodification is "soft" commodification, which applies to many pets. Soft commodification includes the animal as an emotional commodity, such as a status symbol, a substitute, an identity shaper, or a fashion statement.

Commodification can also be "brute", which I will discuss below. While creatures imbued with beinghood may still be treated poorly, they are part of the moral community and thus this poor treatment is unintentional and/or condemned when it occurs. Conversely, a commodity is free to be treated badly with minimal concern or consequence. "Animals lose because their status as property is always a good reason not to respect their interests in not suffering. The interests of property will almost never be judged as similar to the interests of property owners." (Francione 2000, cited in Irvine 2004:86) Thus commodification as a

mechanism works to allow extreme exploitation of living beings to exist without threatening existing social conceptions of fairness and decency.

Notably, in instances when use of a being is immediate, the being is often not commodified. Naveh and Bird-David address the role of use-type in determining what (or who) is commodified versus who is granted personhood in the context of the Nayaka of South India. Among the Nayaka, non-human animals and even certain plants have historically been considered persons. However, the adoption of animal husbandry has led to the cessation of the co-person view for many creatures, despite the persistence of this perception for some wild beings. (Naveh & Bird-David 2014:75) This is a distant example, but a useful one because of the contemporary nature of the transition. In cases where animals are not immediately used, and are instead processed for use by others, there is detachment and lack of interpersonal feelings of responsibility. “The vivid presence of animals and plants is concealed, and they no longer appear as persons, but as things.” (Naveh & Bird-David 2014:74) *Every Twelve Seconds* reflects on similar dynamics in the United States, describing how politics of concealment and distancing within industrial slaughter industries separate us not only from uncomfortable truths, but from feelings of moral culpability. There are exceptions to these trends, but the unifying factor of all types and manifestations of commodification is the presumption of justified dominance on the part of the human.

Farmed animals especially are seen as property, and dynamics of commodification apply to them most strongly. I label the commodification of these animals as brute, to delineate it from instances where animal *lives* are the goods. For farmed animals, the animal life is not a commodity at all – a resulting product is. The animals themselves serve as merely sources, or perhaps containers. (Irvine 2004:loc1681) It is as if fur coats and chuck roasts are bizarre crops, proceeding through an unfortunate ambulatory stage before ripening for

harvest. Ten billion land-dwelling animals are slaughtered for food in the US each year, and it is estimated that ten billion sea creatures join them. “That’s 19,011 animals per minute, or 317 animals per second.” (Joy 2011:37) Improved welfare for these animals is seen as a barrier to optimal profit, and while some farmers choose to take that hit on ethical grounds, such action is considered a matter of personal preference, and not of necessity or decency. We “feel entitled to treat those animals with any manner of cruelty so long as it lowers the price per pound.” (Joy 2011:7)

This form of commodification is accompanied by severe deanimalization – the distancing of the actual creature from the sympathy-inducing *idea* of the animal. Joy explains this prolific deanimalization through the concepts of carnism – “the belief system in which eating certain animals is considered ethical and appropriate” – and psychic numbing. (Joy 2011:29) “Internalized carnism distorts our perception of reality: though animals are living beings, we perceive them as living things; though they are individuals, we perceive them as abstractions - as a 'bunch' of things; and in the absence of any objective, supporting data, we perceive them as though their appropriateness for human consumption is naturally contingent upon their species.” (Joy 2011:116) At a deeper level, the deanimalization of animals for the purposes of better being able to use them is an outgrowth of dominion. Together, these schemas excuse and enable horrific treatment.

Deanimalization relies heavily upon politics of sight, including the strategic concealment of farmed creatures’ animalhood, even from those who deconstruct their bodies directly. The invisibility of animalhood in the slaughter industry, through strategic use of space (externally discrete, internally subdivided facilities), language (referring to live cattle as “beef”), and visibility (minimized interaction with live cattle, concealment of the moment of death from all but the knocker himself) is analyzed in depth in *Every Twelve Seconds* (Pachirat

2013). Systematic deanimalization allows workers to do their jobs and consumers to enjoy animal products.

The system of commodification is also reinforced by pseudo-biological claims of inferiority and lack of sensitivity (emotional, mental, and physical) on the part of the animal. For example, many people continue to believe that fish do not feel pain, despite growing scientific certainty that they do. (King 2017:loc1176) Cows, who we view as largely indifferent, recognize us (humans) as individuals, and are affected by emotional upset in much the same way as by physical pain. (King 2017:loc1988, loc2042) Chickens recognize faces, fool each other, and are often beloved for their personalities, yet are still considered dumb. (Foer 2011:66) The smart and sensitive nature of pigs is concealed by the fact that almost all our information on pigs is related to the factory farming industry, and that “the dominant agenda remains to understand pigs better so that we can manage them better and thus eat them better.” (King 2017:loc2303) While lay-people are generally eager to believe that other animals think and feel, “this isn’t true of cows, much in the same way that it isn’t true of fish or goats or chickens.” (King 2017:loc1983) Despite reluctance to believe it, the evidence continues to add up. “Even as we bring them to our family tables in our restaurants in their anonymous billions, other animals sense, and sometimes suffer; learn, and sometimes love; think, and sometimes reflect. Their lives matter to them,” King argues, “and they should matter to us too.” (King 2017:loc136) These misconceptions are not a reflection of stupidity or hypocrisy, but instead the result of a carefully crafted illusion on the part of science and animal agriculture, that plays into peoples’ natural psychological tools for remedying cognitive dissonance. They are appealing fictions, in which I also believed until completing this research, but they are fictions nonetheless.

The inaccuracy of disparaging perceptions is highlighted by sanctuaries where, given the opportunity, previously farmed animals reveal their individual characters. While in LA, I

had the pleasure of meeting several factory farm survivors. Despite my extensive animal background, this was my first time meeting any meat-intended animals - a sad fact that illustrates the extent to which farmed animals are out of sight and out of mind for the majority of Americans. My informant showed me around the sanctuary, where they focus on educating people on the animals behind their food. The cattle (referred to by my informant as “magical puppy dogs”) were incredibly sweet and indeed quite dog-like, licking me thoroughly as I talked with my guide. The pigs were lively and each unique, and even the chickens and turkeys (most eaten and most overlooked) showed individual personalities that ranged from the jealous to the gregarious. They stood as living proof that, “To some significant degree, most all the animals profiled in this book [*Personalities on the Plate*] would come alive for us as smart, sentient personalities if we lived alongside them in acute mutuality in the ways we [Euro-Americans] have done and continue to do with dogs.” (King 2017:2866)

The scientific community has actively and intentionally maintained misconceptions of animals and misinterpretation of animalhood, by way of punishing academics who dared suggest animal minds or feelings. “Suggesting that other animals can feel anything wasn’t just a conversation stopper; it was a career killer. In 1992, readers of the exclusive journal *Science* were warned by one academic writer that studying animal perceptions ‘isn’t a project I’d recommend to anyone without tenure.’... To this day, ‘anthropo’phobia remains widespread among behavioral scientists and science writers.” (Safina 2016:27-28) Ostensibly, the scientific failure to recognize even the most obvious indications of animal beinghood is derived from a desire for objectivity. However, these pseudobiological claims perpetuate their own biases. Repeated studies claim to demonstrate that animals lack a “theory of mind” through convoluted interpretations of data, while ignoring the everyday activities of animals (such as hunting, play, and comforting behaviors) that demonstrate the opposite. (Safina 2016:250-276)

Denial of animal thought and feeling allows cruelty to persist relatively unopposed. People not only perceive intelligent animals as less edible, but believe eaten animals to be less intelligent, creating a self-sustaining cycle that ensures that dietary complacency can persist. (King 2017:loc2875) Thus denial of the animal mind is simply deanimalization under the protective label of science. Furthermore, the consistent undercutting and undervaluing of animal-centric study in the scientific community forms the foundation of the lack of animal-centric education in the community at large. By maintaining that the study of animal needs and desires is not only impossible, but frivolous and even dangerous to attempt, the scientific community upholds a nationwide cult of ignorance. Told that we cannot know what animals need or want, and that it would not matter if we did, people are discouraged both from pursuing knowledge on the subject, and from taking seriously information that they do encounter.

Commodification, deanimalization, and the calculated misinterpretation of animals and animalhood reach their height in the practice of factory farming. Note that industrial agriculture, referenced in terms of “CAFOs” or “factory farms”, refers to scale and methodology, not to ownership. A “factory farm”, as used here, is a large-scale farm that utilizes industrialized management techniques, which includes many family-owned farms (though these farms are often ultimately regulated by umbrella corporations, such as Smithfield or Tyson). “Livestock farmers around the world are becoming ‘growers’, their barns ‘mass containment facilities, and slaughterhouses vast ‘processing plants’ dispatching animals – ‘production units’ – at a furious pace of hundreds per minute.” (Scully 2003:loc159) This is brute commodification in its purest form, as well as maximum deanimalization: the end point on the scale from beinghood to commodification. “Factory farming isn't just killing; it is negation, a complete denial of the animal as a living being with his or her own needs and

nature. It is not the worst evil we can do, but it is the worst evil we can do to them." (Scully 2003:289)

There is a general aversion in the United States to “unnecessary” cruelty, but this is offset by the trend that “as long as a particular animal use is considered legitimate, then anything that facilitates that usage will be deemed under the law as ‘necessary’”. (Francione 1996:2) For example, chickens in battery cages (the majority of egg-laying American chickens, per the HSUS) live their lives in approximately 67 square inches, where the wire cuts their feet and they are crushed and defecated on by the animals above and around them. (Foer 2009:47) Meat chickens are so genetically deformed, their legs often fail to support them. 80% of pregnant American sows are kept in gestation crates that prevent basic mobility, where they stand on bare concrete. (Foer 2009:170,183-185) "New life on the way, as the expectant mother noses at straw that isn't there to make a nest she'll never have for another litter she'll never raise." (Scully 2003:268) Though a small handful of straw given twice a day is enough to entertain pigs so much that they do not engage in tail biting, they are denied the comfort because it clogs liquid waste disposal systems. (Grandin 2010:175) Beef cattle live much of their lives outdoors, but dairy cattle are confined to barns, so stifled and over-bred that lameness on dairy farms ranges from 5%-50% of the entire farmed population. (Grandin 2010:164) Dairy cattle also experience the repeated trauma of separation from calves. These conditions have extremely adverse effects on the health of the animals – both mentally and physically. "Georgia Mason and Jeffrey Rushen at the University of Guelph and Agri-Food Canada estimate that over 85 million farm, laboratory, and zoo animals and pets worldwide have stereotypies, including 91.5 percent of all pigs, 82.6 percent of poultry, 50 percent of lab mice, [and] 80 percent of American minks living on fur farms." (Grandin 2010:15) At the Smithfield farm Scully toured, a model farm run by literal textbook standards, nearly every pig had

physical maladies. “Sores, tumors, ulcers, pus pockets, lesions, cysts, bruises, torn ears, swollen legs everywhere.” (Scully 2003:267)

Wretched lives are followed by a similar manner of death. All slaughtered animals are bled out while alive. While mammals are required by law to be stunned before throat slitting (Joy 2011:54), stunning is often done incorrectly or not at all (due to the fast-paced job and exhausted workers), causing unknown multitudes of animals to be conscious as they are bled out upside down. For the lucky ones, blood loss is the cause of death, but others remain alive (conscious or not) through some of the later stages of processing. For cattle, this means piecemeal disassembly, while for poultry and pigs, death comes at latest in a vat of scalding water designed to remove hair or feathers. (Foer 2009:230-233) The USDA estimates 700,000 chickens per year are boiled alive in this manner. (King 2017:loc1471) Beyond planned slaughter, “Mass culling remains the officially recommended response to every appearance of the disease [bird flu] in domestic flocks, and sporadic threats to kill migrating birds are not empty.” (Haraway 2007:268) Prophylactic slaughter is utilized even when the disease (such as foot-and-mouth) is lethal neither to animals nor people, due to decreased market value. A Smithfield veterinarian told Scully, “Most of the culls go to market, but the ones with disease don't go to Smithfield at all. These are, like, trash.” (Scully 2003:269) Animal life and suffering are blatantly disregarded to focus on what animal bodies can provide to human beings.

Deanimalization and commodification are hardly limited to land mammals. Researchers at the Fisheries Centre of the University of British Columbia argue, “our interactions with fisheries resources [also known as *fish*] have come to resemble... wars of extermination.” (Foer 2010:33). Farmed fish suffer by way of poor water quality (causing difficulty breathing), crowding (resulting in cannibalization), rough handling (causing lasting stress), disturbance, nutritional deficiencies (weakening the immune system), and social

instability (resulting in additional cannibalism). They are plagued by sea lice, which often eat through to the bones of the fish's face, and are starved for 7-10 days before slaughter (which frequently occurs while conscious). (Foer 2010:189-191) Wild-caught fish face slow deaths from suffocation, decompression, predation, or slaughter. 4.5 million additional sea creatures die each year as discarded bycatch. (Foer 2010:190-193) Such creatures are so deanimalized that many Americans do not even consider their flesh to be meat. We treat them "as if they were anomalous plants, plucking them from the ocean as easily as we pluck an apple from a tree." (Joy 2011:63)

Notably, those who work in and orchestrate CAFOs are frequently the most convinced by arguments that there is nothing wrong, demonstrating misinterpretation of animalhood across class barriers. In fact, misunderstanding of these creatures is perhaps most severe at the highest levels of wealth and general education. Exploited by the same people and factories, lower-class workers may not have the ability to allow themselves to feel for the animals (for the sake of their own sanity), but they know what is being done to them. Pachirat emphasizes this dynamic at length in *Every Twelve Seconds. Dominion*, on the other hand, features several examples of rich and/or highly educated CAFO staff misinterpreting animalhood to extreme degrees. An interviewed Smithfield executive who claimed pigs "love" CAFOs assured Scully that, "The conditions that we keep these animals in are much more humane than when they were out in the field." (Scully 2003:258) Also at Smithfield, Scully was stunned when the staff vet called a sow "baby." "Baby," he observed, "is lying there covered in feces and dried blood, yanking maniacally on chains that have torn her mouth raw... 'She's hurting herself with the chains,' I remark. 'Oh, that's normal.' [the vet responds]" (Scully 2003:266) Temple Grandin herself references a study by her graduate student, Wendy Fulwider, in which 78% of dairy producers believed that cows have better welfare today than 20 years ago. "Their attitude was

that life was better because being locked up in a dairy stall was like living in a fancy hotel with room service. Only 8 percent thought that living conditions for cows were worse, and that cows should have pasture.” (Grandin 2010:164) One of my informants, with a farming history and degree in animal science, echoed the sentiment expressed by Smithfield and others in the literature. “The bottom line is that happy, healthy animals are the most productive, and therefore the most profitable.” She told me most animal abuse happens on small-scale farms that lack resources and streamlined processes, and that the methods used in industrialized agriculture improve quality of life for the animals. Any abuses that do occur are “very very occasional,” and generally in the form of “minor neglect, like something that just doesn’t get caught.” “On what people think of as factory farms, those animals are getting everything they could possibly need or want.” She actively seeks out eggs from caged hens, as “that’s a happier, healthier way for them to live in that [farmed] circumstance.” Owners, managers, students, and employees of CAFOs are frequently examples of “true believers” in the paradigms of dominion, deanimalization, and lack of animal awareness we are all groomed to ascribe to.

Many people seek traditional or small-scale farmed food as a more ethical alternative. Indeed, imagery of small farms is what factory farms call to mind to inspire comfort and complacency in their consumers. These are also the images that people are quick to defend, fearing that attacks on factory farms are hurting those smiling, weather-worn families you see on milk cartons and truck commercials. While the perceived prevalence of these small farms is a mythology, in many cases it is true that treatment of animals is better in these facilities. It’s not just that factory farming sets an animal welfare standard that’s not difficult to surpass: a great deal of these farmers care deeply about their animals, and do their best to give them

happy and comfortable lives. As I've heard many times, the goal for these animals is "a great life and one bad day".

I encountered one such farmer in the VA veterinary waiting room where I conducted my first fieldwork. She raises some fowl, but focuses on goats. She called the breed she rears "the hippie flower children of the goat world", and regaled me with tales of these eccentric critters, each one with a name and personal pronouns. Two of her goats love to ride shotgun, one "enjoys retail therapy", and she called one doe (whose favorite music is apparently heavy metal) her "daughter." Intrigued, I asked this farmer if her goats were her pets. Without missing a beat, she responded that, "I consider anything a pet unless it tries to murder people." She clarified further, "there's no reason to keep an overly aggressive animal alive." She had had a ram whom she bottle-fed, and who even slept with her in her bed when he was a baby (an activity often used in the literature as a marker of personhood). She loved him dearly, but after he was rehomed, he became severely aggressive, hospitalizing his new owner twice. She told me matter-of-factly that she took him to a butcher. "It broke my heart; he was my baby," she said. "For something that slept in my bed, he's disturbingly delicious."

When we finally got around to speaking about her meat fowl, she reiterated that she "treats animals as pets", even when they're being raised for food. When the time comes to slaughter them, she does so herself, "in the way that's gentlest for them, even though it's harder for me." She breaks their necks while they sleep in her arms. In this, she exemplifies the model of a good life and one bad day (or even moment). On her farm, the animals hold degrees of personhood as well as animalhood. Her language also mirrored the language used for pets, or even human persons. She is an uncommon sort of farmer, and is far more outnumbered by CAFO farmers than the majority of Americans realize. Yet she is not alone. I met a farmer of Navajo-Churro sheep who followed a similar philosophy when I was at the

fiber festival, and read about turkey and pig farmers doing the same. The existence of such farmers serves as a cautionary reminder that cultural conceptions of animals are far too nebulous to contain absolutes or infallible consistencies. People can care deeply about animals and indulge animalhood while still consuming them, and in fact, most do. Yet the scarcity of these farmers illustrate as much about our society as their existence, if not more. Their rarity reflects our ethos of domination – of dominion – in that it demonstrates that, for the vast majority of both farmers and consumers, profit takes precedence over animal life and welfare. The strength of this claim to animal bodies is emphasized when one considers that, despite fad veganism, increased animal welfare concerns, purposeful distancing from the realities of meat (via fully deconstructed packaging), and discomfort with eating animals, Americans eat more meat per person annually than ever before – and we kill more animals per pound of meat than ever before to do so. (Herzog 2011:191-192) Dominance paired with love is still dominance, and while such a model of farming vastly improves the wellbeing of the animal while it is alive, welfare remains subjugated to business, and the animal still dies prematurely.

As a final note regarding farmed animals, I wish to draw attention to burial versus consumption of corpses. In “Eating Meat and Eating People”, Cora Diamond makes the point that, even the ethical question of killing aside, a fundamental element of personhood is the taboo of consumption. In the US, we do not eat our dead, nor the discarded body parts of the living. (Diamond 1978) Instead, burial of the dead (often with attached ceremony) is a strong norm. Thus the treatment of corpses is intimately related to the nature of valuation and assignment of personhood. While the corpses of farmed animals (and occasionally working animals) are consumed as a matter of course, the remains of pets (and again, some working

animals) are under the same taboo as human persons. Instead of eating pets, we frequently bury or cremate them.

Best Friends Animal Sanctuary features an elaborate group of cemeteries, including an egg-shaped site for birds. Each sanctuary resident who passes is honored with an individual funeral and their own plot, and monthly group memorial services ensure that any employees who so desire are able to honor the lost pet. Old Friends Farm (a KY racehorse sanctuary) has a similar cemetery for their horses. Because animal burial sites are not covered under legal protections from disturbance (Pierce 2014:212), Old Friends also houses the remains of animals who have been expensively and painstakingly removed from other, endangered sites. These practices echo the treatment of human remains; a similarity that strongly supports both my hypothesis that some animals can possess personhood, and that farmed animals clearly do not. “The desire to bury a pet with the same honors accorded human beings marks dogdom’s transcendence of the greatest class barrier of all – the one that philosophically has separated humans from the animal world.” (Thurston 1996:266)

The Liminal Case of the Working Animal

It is important to clarify that merely serving a purpose does not guarantee commodification, but that some level of usefulness must exist before commodification can occur. However, this does not mean that an individual cannot be commodified despite it itself not being useful. Working animals are a perfect example of this. A broad category of animals who are useful for their labor, there are many types of working animals. Regardless of their use, working animals experience a primacy of physical functionality in value assignment that animals in the other categories do not. The value of a pet is in its companionship; a role that often does not require a high level of physical performance. Conversely, farmed animals retain value in death, making their physical condition of secondary concern, at best. Working

animals, however, are valued in accordance with their ability to perform their intended function. This ability-dependent value causes working animals to be most individually vulnerable to rapidly changing perceptions and circumstances, providing much more mobility (for better or worse) into and out of this category than others. If an animal becomes unable to adequately serve its intended purpose, or its purpose falls out of favor, it can be abruptly shifted into the category of pet or farmed animal. This may happen more than once over the course of an individual animal's life. The frequency with which an animal transfers categories and which categories those are depends entirely on human and external conditions. For example, a racehorse that goes lame is more likely to be sold for slaughter and consumption (shift to farmed) than a beloved childhood mount, who may fall into a pet role.

On a professional trail ride in UT, I got a snapshot of the world of high-value working animals, such as horses, mules, oxen, and herding dogs. These animals are ultimately dependent on their use-value, and subordinated to the requirements of their work. However, they are also animals with whom partnerships have been built and (frequently) affection has developed, and who are not easily replaced. Thus these animals tend to be treated rather well, both because it improves their quality of work, and often because they are genuinely cared about as individuals.

Often ignored in the literature due to their uniquely liminal and difficult positioning, horses have held a special position in many human societies since domestication. Many cultures retain “some element of what we might call horse worship, with horseshoes and horse brasses reminding us of their place in folklore.” (Chamberlin 2006:67) While horses are significantly less venerated today, and their use value has declined from its previous splendor of near-absolute dependence, their long history of personhood and partnership with humans has left them in a particularly nebulous limbo space, in which our deep-seated attachment

overrides their limited suitability as either modern pets or physical laborers. Remnants of our historical bond are seen in the persistent (and perhaps increasing) “petlikeness” of horses today, despite the horse (with its largeness, strangeness, and relative simple-mindedness) being a seemingly unlikely candidate for such regard. Horses (even pet horses) do not necessarily take on the closeness or degree of personhood of animals who can more completely share in our daily lives. However, our interactions with horses include affection and companionship-valuation. Though most horses in the United States are working animals, their proximity to petlikeness increases their likelihood of becoming “pets” if no longer of use. Horses at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, for example, are mostly unrideable, and have been shifted from working animals to pets.

Beyond the farmed/pet binary, working animals who cease their employment have the relatively unique option of return, or semi-return, to actualized animalhood. While animals in other categories are very firmly conceptualized within the context of human lives, working animals may be seen as the animal form of contract labor. I have encountered this attitude most commonly regarding hobby oxen and the horses of amateur equestrians. An animal thus conceived spends a portion of his life “at work”, and what he does while not at work is his own prerogative. When no longer able to serve his purpose, he is akin to a retired laborer and returns to being his own animal. For example, some racehorses who retire spend the rest of their lives living off a portion of their racing earnings. These are called “pension horses” and their existence supports the contract laborer framework for working animals.

Old Friends Farm, a racehorse sanctuary in KY, further reinforced this conceptualization of working horses. Such horses have a brief window where they are highly valued, their every need painstakingly attended to, and then they are often discarded. Old Friends was founded as “a way to give back to these horses,” by providing them with a

permanent retirement home. “I think these horses have proven that they’re very valuable,” says the founder in the welcome video, referring to the horses’ roles as living history and tributes to the breed and the sport. Some residents are injured and unable to work elsewhere, and others were sent by their owners. “They’re all here because somebody cared.” At Old Friends, the animalhood of the retirees is central. Tour groups are instructed on how to safely and respectfully interact with the horses they will meet, and each tour carries a bucket of carrots. As we met each horse, the guide told us their names and filled us in on the quirks of their personalities. Upon arrival after a long career, many don’t know how to “be horses”, and one of the goals of Old Friends is to just let them relax and find that animalhood again. All residents are strictly retired – there is absolutely no riding or breeding. Instead, the staff tries to create a “natural environment”: to the extent that such a thing exists for domesticated creatures. This is reflected in care practices, but also the allowance of behaviors that are considered “bad” in a human-centric context. War Emblem (2002 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner), is “one of the smartest horses we have,” according to the guide, “but he has a contrary side.” When he first came to the sanctuary, he was very unsafe to the human workers. However, as time passed, “he realized we didn’t want anything from him and he’s relaxed a bit.” He will, however, still occasionally terrorize staff. Most horses there get attached to certain caregivers, but not War Emblem. “He’s nobody’s horse.”

Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat includes a fascinating account of a different type of working animal: fighting roosters. In his research, Herzog realized that cockfighters express a love for and admiration of their birds that he found extremely contradictory. However, the fighters (“cockers”) don’t see it as inconsistent. In fact, many cockers assert that their pastime is actually incredibly humane, with the fight itself only a marginal part of a sport focused on training and maintaining cocks as athletes. Furthermore, the cockfight, in modern

America as in 1970s Bali, is a medium through which man “forms and discovers his temperament and his society’s temper at the same time.” (Geertz 1972:28) Cockers base their conception of the cockfight as humane in the understanding that a rooster’s primary desire is to fight to the death. According to Captain L. Fitz-Barnard, “Where the agents are willing, there can be no cruelty. For the gamecock, the joy of battle is his greatest joy.” (Herzog 2011:162) Cockers like Herzog’s interviewee Johnny see themselves as simply allowing nature to take its course in a fairer way: “That rooster’s going to fight if we are there or not. We make things as even as possible for them to perform an act of nature. We don’t make these roosters fight. That’s what they were put here for. It is their purpose.” (Herzog 2011:162)

The viewpoints that underlie cockfighting are legitimate as cultural belief systems, and as subjects of anthropological investigation. Furthermore, the understanding of animalhood that holds cockfighting as joyful for the roosters is no different than widely held beliefs in CAFOs as concordant with animal welfare, meat as possibly humane, long-term confinement for house pets as acceptable, or tiny cages for singular small animals as sufficient. Cultural relativism is typically the position taken by anthropology, within reason, and were this an ethnography of cockfighters, farmers or even specific pet owners, I would follow this same directive. However, this thesis is intended as an evaluation of the factors behind poor animal welfare, and to be effective at this goal, I must accept that, while there is no one right way to treat any animal, there are indeed harmful ways. The victim is no relativist. Thus, to evaluate cockfighting, I compare the naturalistic statements of the cocker to the actual natural behavior of the Red Jungle Fowl (the closest wild relative to the chicken). As research reveals, the Red Jungle Fowl does engage in elaborate and potentially dangerous “ritual showdowns” over mates. However, the deadly gladiatorial format of a cockfight is overwhelmingly the result of constrained conditions, bladed spurs, and intentional selection for aggression. (MacKay 2005)

Such naturalist arguments are used not only in defense of cockfighting, but of dog fighting and hunting, horse and dog racing, fox hunting (on behalf of the horses, dogs, and even the foxes), and many other animal-use activities, both on industrial and personal scales. One anonymous dog fighter described dogfighting as “just good, clean fun, not much different from horse racing. It is just as natural for a pit bull to fight and die as it is for a thoroughbred to race.” (Benning 1976:140) Taken alone, these ideologies simply represent the tendency to naturalize what it serves us to do. These sports are an extension of the same ideologies of dominion that convince us that some animals are meant to be eaten and others are meant to be pets. It is no stretch to further assume that some animals are meant to compete in physical challenges. However, the way these ideologies are reflected upon by society at large is much more telling. In the case of certain blood sports, such as cockfighting and dogfighting, condemnation is harsh and swift. Conversely, horse racing, and even blood sports such as hunting with dogs or bullfighting, persist, due to the proximity of these sports to middle or upper-class whiteness. (Herzog 2011:171-172)

To return to the concept of the human/animal divide, societal acceptance of some animal uses and not others has little to do with the animalhood of the non-human creatures involved. Instead, the public reception of the sport in question is related to the perceived *humanness* of the humans involved. As Chris Rock joked to Letterman, “She’s [Sarah Palin] holding a dead, bloody moose. And Michael Vick’s like, ‘Why am I in jail?’ They let a white lady shoot a moose, but a black man wants to kill a dog? Now that’s a crime.” (Herzog 2011:172) In fact, even if a white man “wants to kill a dog”, the backlash is minimal. Black, urban dogfighting is criminalized and pursued to an exponentially higher degree than white, rural dogfights. Floyd Boudreaux, a white man known as the “Godfather” of the blood sport, underwent trial for 48 counts of dogfighting at the same time as Michael Vick, with similar

evidence against him. (Robinson 2011:14-15) Over the course of the trial, different white people (these under the banner of the SPCA) euthanized all 57 of Boudreaux's dogs. Upon the conclusion of the case, in which he was acquitted, Boudreaux sued the SPCA for damages over their euthanasia of his dogs – a claim that was settled out of court with undisclosed terms. (Robinson 2011:16)

Interestingly, people who accept naturalistic reasoning for some animal uses often decry it with others: such as Herzog's cockfighting informants who denounce dogfighting or my fox-hunting and horse-racing enthusiast friends that would cringe at either. However, regarding their own activities, these users of working animals are as firmly convinced by their own arguments as the factory farmers discussed previously. "Rooster fighters have told me with a straight face they would like to bring animal rights activists to a derby so they could see what a great sport cockfighting really is." (Herzog 2011:166) This comment demonstrates both the extent to which cockfighters believe in the morality of their sport, and the understandable nature of such a belief in context of a country where similar (and worse) cruelties go unnoticed, unspoken, and even supported. In an example of the constantly folding and interrelated dynamics of perceptions of animals, the existence of factory farming supports the cockfighter's moral argument. Cocker Eddy Buckner said, "We give our roosters the best food, the best housing, the best hens... And then they call us cruel." (Herzog 2011:165) There is certainly a point to be made about how animals in general are treated in the United States. "It is likely that 10,000 or 20,000 chickens have their necks slashed in a mechanized processing plant for each gamecock that dies in a derby. And there is the inconvenient fact that the life of a fighting cock is fifteen times longer and infinitely more pleasurable than the life of a broiler chicken." (Herzog 2011:170) However, the industrial-scale destruction of billions of animals does not serve to justify the personal deaths of thousands (from gamecocks to racehorses).

Instead, these numbers emphasize the massive scale upon which abuse of animals exists in the United States. Animalhood is consistently misinterpreted, through aligning welfare-detriment with animal interest in justification of human activity, by nearly every person in this country (including myself). Thus claims of misinterpretation and condemnation of the affiliated practices are not attacks on any one group of people. Instead, they represent recognition of a systemic and nation-wide problem with the ways in which Americans relate to animals.

That widespread moral indignation meets cockfighting and similar abuses but not the exponentially more brutal practice of factory farming reinforces several points of this thesis. Firstly, animal issues do not exist in a vacuum. What the mainstream views as cruel and the practices we choose to condemn are deeply steeped in power dynamics of race and class, in which majority poor and/or non-white cruelties (such as cockfighting, dogfighting, “pet” animal consumption, and the act of slaughter itself) are condemned while rich white abuses (including horse racing, factory farm ownership and management, boar baiting, and trophy hunting) are ignored, supported, and even openly condoned. Secondly, as Francione (1996) argues, cruelty against those seen as lesser will be seen as necessary so long as it pursues a goal deemed worthy. While which goals are worthy is a reflection of race and class politics, the ability to excuse any such cruelties is a function of dominion and the human/animal divide. Finally, this differential outrage supports my theories about deanimalization and commodification of farmed animals, discussed above. "We kill 200 food animals for every animal used in a scientific experiment, 2,000 for each unwanted dog euthanized in an animal shelter, and 40,000 for every baby harp seal bludgeoned to death on a Canadian ice floe." (Herzog 2011:176) The high visibility and outcry over the killing of non-farmed animals, despite these animals typically living and dying under much more humane conditions than their

farmed counterparts, supports the deanimalized commodity model for farmed animals, because it demonstrates a differential weight of concern for life. Here I do not seek to address the deaths of the other animals listed, because each is killed under very different constraints and vastly dissimilar motivations. I simply use these numbers to demonstrate that the plight of food-intended animals is larger in scale than any other animal rights or welfare problem. And yet, these animals' deaths are considered a moral gray area, and discussion of ceasing to kill them is controversial even among animal care professionals. This is deanimalization and commoditization on an institutional scale.

However, some working animals, particularly lab animals, are also extremely deanimalized and commodified, perhaps as much or even more so than farmed animals. By a count in 2001, 690,800 guinea pigs, rabbits, and hamsters; 161,700 "farm-type" animals; 70,000 dogs; 49,400 primates; 22,800 cats; and 80 million mice and rats lived and died that year in experimental research labs. (Bekoff 2008:138) These animals are denied names and are not only excluded from the conceptual framework of the animal (via deanimalization), but also from the legal category. Under the Animal Welfare Act (1966), ostensibly designed to protect such creatures, only 1-10% (reports conflict) of the animals used in research are categorized as "animals" and thus subject to protection. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 excludes birds, rats (of genus *Rattus*), and mice (of genus *Mus*), bred for use in research from the legal definition of "animal." (Bekoff 2008:139, Herzog 2011:224) Bred with custom ailments in a form of commodification straight out of techno-horror fantasy, these creatures are exploited by a plastic dynamic of being both considered more and less relevantly like people than other animals. Their use in invasive medical, psychological, and cosmetic research rests on the assumption that their brains and bodies work enough like ours to make studying them useful. Yet the scientific community is consistently reluctant to acknowledge that such

animals experience pain in any morally relevant way; or even at all. For example, in 2004, John Capitanio (the associate director at a significant primate research center) denied animal emotion by claiming, “animals are ‘a neutral palette on which we paint our needs, feelings, and view of the world.’” (Bekoff 2008:25) This paradoxical way of conceptualizing these animals and their experiences is extreme, but it only varies by degree from the broad cultural practice of subjugating animal needs to human needs, then creating literature to justify it.

Viewing these lab animals with horses fresh on the mind demonstrates the diversity of treatment within the working animal category. A lab mouse may have genetically deformed innards, be sold in a group of thousands, spend a brief life being tortured, and be intentionally killed and discarded; all without so much as the legal designation of being an “animal”. Meanwhile, a racehorse’s pedigree is pored over for generations before he is even born, he’s suckled by a nurse mare, has multiple grooms and every amenity known to man, lives in a barn nicer than most homes, and is sold for millions before retiring to breed. Each performing a non-emotional living purpose, these animals are bound less by similarities between each other, and more by their differences from the positions of farmed or pet animals. They live to do a job – not to exist as companions or to be grown as crops. Should they cease to be able to do that job, any member of this vastly diverse category can find itself adrift and endangered. Furthermore, working animals’ jobs may simply become obsolete. “Working cats” underline this point. Neither domestic nor feral, working cats (once valued as mousers) have fallen from favor in the domestic and streamlined world of American urban and suburban life. The shift to mouse traps and rat poison has left working cats as one of the most difficult to rehome populations. Their plight illustrates how a working animal can lose value while still being functional, simply because the job has fallen out of favor. This is the same predicament that plagues bulls (now nearly all eaten instead of being used as oxen), pigeons (homing now only

a niche hobby), and more. Though being a working animal comes with its own struggles and dangers, it is often more dangerous for the animal to lose its job than to keep it. This precariousness is not unique to non-human laborers, and such intersections with human phenomena would make the working animal a fascinating candidate for further, more targeted research.

Dominion and Conclusions

I introduced the content of this thesis with a discussion of the human-animal divide, and I wish to conclude with a more in-depth evaluation of the divide's companion paradigm – dominion. These two belief systems underlie the patterns demonstrated by my fieldwork, and create a framework through which to understand the range of information presented in this essay. Animals are slid along the spectrum from being to thing and back again, and this phenomenon is made possible by the segregation and subordination of the category of the animal from and under that of man. The human/animal divide provides structure for exclusion, and dominion justifies domination.

The commodification of animals, and even the human-centric way we often approach personhood, is a reflection of dominion. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, dominion is considered man's first calling (Scully 2003:18), and has historically been used to establish humanity's rule over "creation and the animal serfdom it contained". (Thurston 1996:95) Dominion is also entrenched in Western secular thought, where it further supports human exceptionalism. Protagoras pronounced "Man is the measure of all things," and Descartes' idea of animals as automata was used to justify such cruelties as pre-anesthesia vivisections. (Safina 2016:80) Finally, dominion in the United States is rooted in colonial practices of domination. This is discussed at length in *Aphro-ism*, as it pertains to race, gender, and the human/animal divide, and is also evident in *Dominion's* depictions of hunting and hunter-lead

“conservation.” From the latter: “That’s the way conservation, Safari Club-style, works at its best: Three white guys from across the world show up, pick out the local chieftains, and throw some money around while hinting of bigger favors to come in exchange for the privilege of looting the local forests. Before this became ‘conservation,’ we used to call it colonialism.” (Scully 2003:70) As indicated by its roots in three primary elements of American culture and history, dominion is long lasting and deep-seated.

The discourse of “rights” is necessary to understanding Dominion in an American context, where such concepts hold an almost mystical sway. Political and ideological platforms in the US today frequently use “rights” as a buzzword, injecting feelings of vulnerability, oppression, and threats to freedom into previously more neutral or personal topics. This dialog is not only inflammatory, but creates a context in which people translate their belief in what they “ought” to do/have under the “natural order of things” (ideas generally originated in religion) into the legal language and expectations of codified rights. Such coded shifting of religious beliefs into political and legal frameworks is extremely common in the United States at this time, and can be seen in other areas such as “religious freedom acts” as a guise for discriminatory sentiment, certain arguments within abortion conversations, and more. Dominion, originally a religious concept itself, is similarly being increasingly conceived through the language of rights. In the current social climate, this position is more tenable than one based on deference to a Judeo-Christian God, and use of rights discourse to defend dominion has thus far been extraordinarily effective. The website of the non-profit Protect The Harvest (which has an associated PAC) epitomizes this appropriation of rights discourse on its FAQ page, where it states, “the rights of individuals to hunt and fish, and even to own animals for entertainment or food, are being assaulted. The result is an America that is increasingly hungrier, less free, and less secure.”

Put shortly, dominion in rights-based language is the right to prioritize your interests more highly than any interests the animal may have. This means that human desires, no matter how small, take precedence over the most basic and complete animal desire – the desire to continue living – and all other subordinate animal interests. The desire to have a mouse-free home, for example, is seen to justifiably trump the mouse's desire to exist. Full access to animals, including possession of their selves, is seen as mankind's birthright. This applies to all animals, and is justified through any rhetoric necessary. Hunting is framed as a "basic right" (Scully 2003:53), as well as a "sacred right and solemn duty." (Scully 2003:56) The consumption of animals is considered a matter of personal choice and preference, as is the keeping and (within limits) treatment of pets. "It is a vision that looks upon our fellow creatures to find only an infinite array of pests, threats, resources, obstacles, targets, livestock, roadkill, racks, and 'wall-hangers.'" (Scully 2003:106)

While my informants did not believe in the right to abuse pets, dominion as a rights-based concept was evident in their reluctance to condemn either different (but not blatantly abusive) approaches to pet keeping or the use of farmed or working animals. These are people who believe in placing limitations on rights over animals, in order to prevent wanton cruelty, but who still subscribe to the general ideology of animals in a human-centric framework. Animals were discussed in terms of their relationships to people, and in cases where those relationships were either non-constructive (aggressive animals) or incompatible with animal life (meat), the animal life was ultimately subverted and discarded.

In tandem with the human/animal divide, Dominion underlies the ease, self-assuredness, and security of animal commodification, and explains the non-radical character of personhood for animals as it is generally practiced. Within a framework of dominion, animals are for humans to do with as we please, and, within reason, those actions are our

choice and our right. This fits easily with personhood as we know it, as elements of dominion permeate inter-human relationships as well: especially between parents and children or the powerful and the marginalized (due in part to the proximity of dominion and the human/animal divide, in concept and tradition). Given this sense of entitlement, if a person chooses to pay (indirectly) to have a cow disassembled while mostly alive in pursuit of a taste preference (also known as the consumption of industrially processed beef), they are not to be judged. Neither is a person who calls their dog their “furbaby” and holds a birthday party for her every year. One must not even be judged for doing both. "One man's horror is another man's hobby. What matters is that we each follow our own 'inner nature.' And each person's choice is equally valid." (Scully 2003:193) Indeed, “60% of Americans believe simultaneously that animals have the right to live, and that humans have a right to eat them. (Herzog 2011:14) This is not an example of simple hypocrisy, but instead a demonstration of the depth and strength of our sense of entitlement. The human/animal divide establishes who is “animal”, dominion tells us “Man” owns animals, and other Western belief systems regarding private property and individual freedom assure us that we are free to do as we wish with the objects that we own.

Even in the vast majority of cases of pet animal suffering, in which poor welfare is not intentional or even necessarily conscious, dominion holds significant weight as an explanatory factor. Though individuals may not subscribe to dominion’s insistence that animals are here to serve and satisfy humans, institutions continue to prioritize human people over animals as a rule. As discussed in reference to LA shelter intervention especially, this leads to surrender and other forms of neglect and abandonment, even when owners don’t wish to harm or lose their animals. Similarly, the dearth of accessible, animal-centric education and the resultant pandemic of unrecognized, untreated, and unnecessary animal

suffering and human-animal conflict is derived from the prioritization of beings considered “worthy” of consideration. People are infrequently taught how to deal with animals in an animal-centric way because the animal’s terms are considered inferior to human-preferred methods of interaction.

As dominion is reflected in our cruelty, so it also permeates our mercy. When we take an animal into our care, we accept responsibility, in theory, not only for his life but for his death. It is expected that, when the quality of our animal’s life declines beyond a certain point, we will “put them to sleep”. In many cases, providing such a death may be a kindness. However, “euthanasia” is commonly a euphemism. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, euthanasia alone is categorized among Pain Category C experiments: “procedures that cause no pain or distress, or only momentary or mild/slight pain or distress, and do not require the use of pain-relieving drugs.” (Pierce 2014:91) The idea that death itself is not a harm is related to dominion in that, while human life is frequently thought to have some meaning, animal life is perceived as meaningless outside the human context. This belief in “cruelty-free death” underlies practices of population management and animal control, the concepts of “humane” slaughter/animal products/pest control and “good” deaths for healthy animals, convenience euthanasia, lab culls, and more.

Dominion is also behind the idea of “good” and “bad” animals. “As explained by one cleric, ‘good’ animals could be easily defined as ‘those whose services are most required, as if conscious that they were ordained to be subject to man’s dominion, yield to it without reluctance.’ (Thruston 1996:98) My fieldwork demonstrates the widespread subscription to the good/bad dichotomy, even among advocates. One of my NY informants said that an aggressive dog who can’t be reformed should be put to sleep, because, with so many good dogs being killed, such an animal is “not worth saving.” Some rescuers specialize in difficult

animals, such as Best Friends Animal Sanctuary or my second NJ informant (who likes “to work with small evil dogs”). However, they recognize when animals are “bad” and center their work around making the animals “good”, so they will be desired in human homes. When an animal is called “good” or “bad”, it is meant in the context of the animal’s relationships with people, and not as a moral judgment. By defining animals in this way, we both demonstrate and reinforce the dominion-based belief that animals exist meaningfully for and in relation to us only. This belief is acted out through convenience euthanasias. “Among the euthanasias performed by veterinarians on companion animals, a large number are requested because of unresolved behavioral problems such as aggression or house soiling.” (Pierce 2014:181) These euthanasias are becoming less common in a formal capacity, but, in many cases, surrendering an animal with behavioral issues amounts to simply killing that animal by way of the shelter system (whether the owner understands this or not).

Dominion is so ubiquitous within American society that it permeates even the perspectives of those professionally invested in animal care, study and/or advocacy. Repeatedly in my field research, I encountered individuals who were highly critical of the ways in which pets are often mistreated. They tried to withhold judgment in instances where lack of information or resources caused the abuse, but anyone intentionally mistreating their pets was despised. These advocates also tended to be disapproving of animals they thought of as pet species being used for work. However, when I asked them about the animals that fit more comfortably into their idea of what working or farmed animals should be (such as cows, horses, or chickens), they believed that the animal should be treated with the greatest respect and kindness possible, *within the limitations of its purpose*. Though in some instances they expressed personal discomfort with these purposes (some refused to eat meat, for example, while others did so with regret), they did not condemn the use of the animal in general.

Additionally, they frequently had to adjust their definitions of what a “pet” was when I reminded them of the existence of farmed animals, suggesting that these animals are conceptually distant from the mental schema of the domestic animal. For example, having previously told me that the killing of a sweet, healthy pet was “a crime”, a NY rescuer defined a “pet” as “a member of the family” that can be any kind of domesticated animal. And a pet is a pet, regardless of how it’s treated (the underlying logic of condemning people who chain their dogs or otherwise engage in behavior not typically seen as suitable treatment of pets). Following her logic of a pet being a domesticated animal whose petlikeness is unrelated to its treatment, I said “then all cows are pets.” At this point she became unsure, before deciding that a pet was actually a domesticated animal that had the *capacity* to be a family member. Thus a family dairy cow may be a pet, but a beef cow that cannot be touched is not. Beef cattle should be treated well: until they are slaughtered. “I hate to say it, but that’s their purpose.” Following this amendment of the category, she added that working animals should be treated with as much kindness as possible, again within the limits of their purpose. A similar perspective has been illustrated on a larger scale regarding the Korean dog meat trade. “Lee Won-Bok, president of the Korea Association for Animal Protection, says, ‘it’s horrible to imagine dog meat on display next to beef and ham at supermarkets.’ And horrified bloggers on the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)’s website echo his sentiment.” (Joy 2011:69) The belief in the right to use, kill, and consume some animals, even by people who don’t believe such a right exists regarding others, illustrates the pervasiveness of dominion and the depth to which it resists opposition, even if it has been successfully challenged in one respect.

Dominion is so powerful that it even challenges the boundaries between “wild” and “not wild”. Though outside the scope of this thesis, further investigation into the themes

discussed here should take such boundary relationships into account. Examples include zoo animals, nondomestic pets (from birds to tigers), exotic livestock, trophy hunting (especially canned hunting), and nuisance animals.

I wish to reiterate that the way an animal is viewed, the framework through which value is assigned, the level of that value, and the way an animal is treated are all heavily dependent on the human conditions the animal is surrounded by. The hegemonic forces of the human/animal divide and dominion shape us all, and efforts to deconstruct these systems must be ongoing. Furthermore, animal issues do not exist in a vacuum, but are instead intertwined with various intersections of human variability and struggle. To ethically approach animal suffering, the impact of these ideologies on human relationships must also be deconstructed – an endeavor at which animal advocacy has thus far failed spectacularly. To simply advocate for animal rights without recognizing the human Others against which these concepts have been constructed is to perpetuate white supremacy and class war under the guise of animal assistance.

Social assignment of and respect for animalhood, and, to an extent, personhood, are necessary prerequisites for the humane treatment of animals. It is impossible to treat beings well on a systemic scale if they are reduced to things. However, if animal wellbeing is desired, advocacy cannot stop at recognition of beinghood. Animal-centric education of the population as a whole would include improved increased support for and accessibility of research into animal behavior, psychology, and needs. Such research and subsequent education is necessary to translate wanting to maximize welfare for the animals we live with into actually doing so. As reiterated repeatedly by my informants across the country, as well as by the literature, animals frequently suffer despite valuation and beinghood, because people do not recognize their suffering, nor know how to alleviate it. Additionally, even those who

have assigned personhood to their animals may be forced by external, institutionalized circumstances to treat their animals as disposable commodities. **In summary, the way animals are conceived and valued *relates to and sets limits for but does not consistently and directly determine* the animal's treatment.**

Finally, each conception of animals (with the exception of animalhood) and the mechanisms by which it is enacted serve to enable and facilitate human goals, often to the detriment of animalkind. Our valuations have very little to do with the innate characteristics of other creatures, and much to do with human cultural systems. Dynamics of deanimalization, commodification, and personhood reinforce dominion (and thus, indirectly, the religious and capitalist ideologies it bolsters), as well as the human/animal divide itself. They exist as ways to maintain the ideology of human exceptionalism and protect its expressions. These are intricate networks of belief and action, in a constant state of construction and reinforcement from the dominant paradigms of our place and time. Understanding, let alone deconstructing, these belief systems is neither easy nor simple. However, a greater understanding of those with whom we share our planet, paired with respect for them and the desire to take them more into consideration moving forward, unlocks the potential for a great deal more wonderment than is encouraged under paradigms in which the rest of life is merely here in service of superior Man.

I would like to close on a positive note, by quoting Carl Safina, whose statement in *Beyond Words* epitomizes my feelings at the end of this project: "When my experiences with dogs and other animals – and people – were fewer, I used to think it silly for people to speak of dogs as 'family' or other animals as 'friends.' Now I feel it's silly not to. I'd overestimated the loyalty and staying power of humans and underestimated the intelligence and sensitivity of

other animals. I think I understand both better. Their gifts overlap, though they are different gifts.” (Safina 2016:410)

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