Voices for the Voiceless:
Animal Rights Activism in Canada

by

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Abstract

Veganism and animal rights activism are minority ethical beliefs and practices amply covered by the academy and the media, often in stark contrasts. This outsider coverage influences public perception, often leaving insider perspectives misunderstood and overgeneralized. The work of this dissertation is primarily concerned with the application of a folkloristic lens to vegan and animal rights communities in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and Toronto, Ontario in an effort to counterbalance outsider opinions of these groups with the nuances of insider voices and lived experiences.

This dissertation also makes the case for a folkloristics of ethical belief via the exploration of veganism in the lives of St. John's and Toronto vegans and examines various elements of performativity in Toronto animal rights activism. Central to this work is an argument rooted in the philosophical writing of Antonio Gramsci and the folklore scholarship of David Hufford that veganism is a tradition of counter-hegemonic belief and that its counterpart, carnism, is not simply *senso comune* but a tradition of hegemonic belief. The philosophical positions of Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Josephine Donovan, and Gary Francione on the rights of animals are situated alongside folkloristic scholarship of belief to produce a framework for the analysis of ethical belief in vegan life narratives belonging to research participants in both cities. These narratives provide insights into the nuanced perspectives of participants about animals and food when they were children and young adults, detail their transitions from carnism to veganism, outline their current

ethical beliefs systems, and offer commentary about the challenges they face and supports they receive from others for their beliefs.

Following these life narratives, four ethnographic accounts of participant observation at animal rights demonstrations illustrate some of the ways veganism is enacted and performed. The Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 march provides an opportunity to analyze communicative competence in speakouts. The Toronto Cow Save vigil explores the place of pilgrimage, memorial, and persuasion at slaughterhouse demonstrations along with their impacts upon various target audiences. The Toronto Cow Save vigil problematizes hegemonic violence against vegan animal rights activists via the death of Regan Russell. Finally, the GRASS Bar Isabel protest examines the spatial and verbal tensions created by protesters and police at a dynamic, hyperlocal restaurant demonstration against the presence of foie gras on the menu.

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I did not and could not have undertaken this doctoral degree or this research project alone, and there are many who have my gratitude. First and foremost, I am grateful to my research participants in St. John's and Toronto, who shared their ethical beliefs and their activism with me. To my St. John's research participants; thank you for making it possible for me to complete this dissertation at all. None of us knew when I was so keen to interview you for a PhD class that your gracious sharing of life narratives would make up for the research I lost to the pandemic, but it most certainly did. To my Toronto research participants; thank you for permitting me to participate in your activism, and thank you for sharing your nuanced perspectives with me. You were to be the first among many interviewees, but the pandemic truncated my time in the field. I am so glad to have interviewed you before that happened. This dissertation has benefitted greatly from your generosity.

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Introduction

The People, the Protests, the Pandemic, and the Project

Figure 1: Demonstrators Marching in the Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 Protest (MacCath-Moran 2020c)

The organizers gather us into a circle inside the ring of low shrubs at the Trinity Square Labyrinth and explain the parameters of the march. There are march marshals in yellow construction vests who will ensure an orderly procession, speak to members of the public when they approach us, and pass out leaflets containing a list of reasons for the demonstration along with a website where more information can be found. We will be silent throughout, and red tape will be provided so we can cover our mouths. However, at

various points along the demonstration route; Dundas Square, Toronto City Hall, and the intersection of Queen Street West and Spadina Avenue, we will stop while organizers speak to the public via megaphone. Jo-Anne MacArthur, an award-winning animal rights activist and photojournalist, has printed and donated the only signs permitted on the route. Some of these read "Stop Bill 156: Animals Need Protection Now," "Right to Rescue," and "Exposing Violence Is Not a Crime," while others are photographs of farmed animals taken during slaughterhouse vigils in Ontario.[1] We learn there will be a gathering after the demonstration at a local plant-based restaurant, and then we all link arms for a moment of silence for the Wet'suwet'en people and a brief meditation. Organizers ask us to remember farmed animals we have encountered at vigils because we are marching for them. Then John starts a sober drumbeat, a woman behind him echoes the beat on her drum, and the march begins.

A month before the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto animal rights activists marched to protest Ontario Bill 156, *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act*. If it received Royal Assent, it would significantly deter animal rights activism in Ontario via several punitive measures. I begin with this demonstration because it was the reason I departed for Toronto and my field research in the winter of 2019-2020 and not the summer to follow. If Bill 156 became law, not only would it become more difficult for animal rights activists to demonstrate, it would also become more difficult for me to act as a participant observer in those

1 The term "slaughterhouse vigil" is widely used in the animal rights community. See Chapter Three for a broader discussion of this.

demonstrations. As it happened, COVID-19 preceded the Royal Assent of Bill 156 in that regard, and my field research came to an end on March 11, 2020 as I sat in my truck after an interview with a research participant, listening to the World Health Organization declare the pandemic.

However, I am fortunate to have had six weeks in a helpful Toronto community of animal rights activists who were willing to talk about their lived experience and permit me to demonstrate with them. I was also fortunate as a graduate student to interview several vegans in St. John's during the winter of 2017 for a research paper, and I have added that collection of interviews to my Toronto research. These ethnographic materials, coupled with my extensive research of the vegan animal rights community over the course of fifteen years, underpin my dissertation's argument for the usefulness of ethical belief studies in folkloristics and its exploration of the ways vegan ethical belief is performed in animal rights activism.

My argument for ethical belief studies will require an exploration of scholarship in more than one discipline. Folkloristic studies of belief will anchor the argument, contributions from animal rights philosophers will provide necessary context, and scholars of vernacular theory will help me locate ethical belief in the aforementioned interviews. It is important to note that as part of this work, I will be establishing veganism as a primary ethical underpinning of animal rights activism using contributions from philosophy and from my research participants themselves.

I will also undertake an ethnographic exploration of animal rights activism rooted in performance theory to better understand some of the ways animal rights activists perform their ethics. These are many. Activists perform their ethics privately in food, clothing, medicine, and entertainment choices. They perform group identity with other activists based on the group's concerns and goals. They perform both ethics and identity in public theatres of activism. They perform their ethics differently with insiders than they do with outsiders, and they make use of material culture to identify themselves as insiders and to persuade outsiders. By exploring these ethical performances in my ethnographic materials, I will bring a more nuanced understanding of animal rights activism to the reader.

It is important to make clear the scope of my enquiry before continuing, so I will add that my work is an ethnographic snapshot of Canadian veganism and animal rights activism in 2017 and 2020 as I found them in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and Toronto, Ontario. This means that the individual voices of vegans and animal rights activists in this dissertation are geographically representative samples of larger communities engaged with regional issues of concern to them at the time the interviews were conducted. Moreover, because I was not able to interact with the St. John's or Toronto communities over time, my ethnographic materials will be subjected to a synchronic and not a diachronic analysis. It should also be noted that neither in my St. John's research nor in my Toronto research did I analyze the concerns and discourses of animal rights detractors except as it regards the ways my communities of interest respond

to their opposition, since outsiders to these communities were not the focus of my investigation. However, I will bring some of these into my discussion throughout this dissertation, notably in my analysis of Ontario Bill 156 in Chapter One and my analysis of violence against activists in Chapter Three.

Vegan animal rights activism is an intellectual movement comprised of individuals with nuanced perspectives about the uses of animals in food, clothing, medicine, and entertainment. All of the research participants you will meet in this dissertation have arrived at their ethical belief systems after careful research, and while they are compassionate people besides, it is important to note that for them, intellectual rigour and compassion are not mutually exclusive. It is also important to note that none of these people are celebrities. Rather, they are everyday vegans engaging in everyday activism as part of a broader philosophical movement that seeks an end to animal suffering.

Some Important Definitions

Vegan/Veganism

Donald Watson coined the word "vegan" in 1944 at the inception of The Vegan Society in Great Britain after founding members discussed the need for a term that described their non-dairy vegetarian diets and lifestyles ("History" n.d.). In the following decades, The Vegan Society developed a definition for the word "veganism," which is widely cited and paraphrased as the operational definition of the word by vegans, including all but one of my research participants:

> Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals ("Definition of Veganism" n.d.).

The outlier among my research participants is Dr. Arjun Rayapudi,[2] whom I interviewed as part of my Newfoundland research. Dr. Rayapudi discusses the environmental impacts of plant-based foods and the animal rights issue but believes that "labels divide us" and offers several reasons for not using the word "vegan." As a healthcare provider whose primary interest is in spreading a message of good nutrition, he is concerned about the negative connotations of the word, he doubts that many of his patients on the Burin Peninsula know what it means, and he asserts that vegans are not necessarily healthier than the general population. However, he also says that "if you want more peace in your life, you should have more peace on your plate" making a direct connection between suffering and the eating of animal flesh and secretions (Rayapudi 2017). I mention Dr. Rayapudi here because his perspective prompted me to take more care with the words "vegan" and "veganism" in my *Voices for the Voiceless* interviews,

2 Throughout this dissertation, I am honouring the preferences of research participants as it regards the use of their names in my work. In some cases, I have permission to use a participant's full name. In other cases, I have permission to use a participant's first name only. In one case, a participant has asked me to create and use a pseudonym. I will address some of the underlying reasons for these preferences in the Research and Literature Review section of this Introduction.

where I endeavoured to refrain from using the words until my research participants did and then asked them to provide a definition for me. Here are some of their responses.

> Vegan, obviously being on a plant based diet, obviously no meat, no fish, no eggs, no dairy, no honey. A vegan lifestyle is other things. When you think about clothes like no leather, you don't go to the zoo, try and avoid... I know some people just try and trip you up and say, oh, there's animal fat in rubber, there's rubber on your boots and rubber on, you know, your sneakers. I say, yeah, but you have to... It's not a case of being pure. You can't be pure. It's a case of trying to avoid exploitation as much as you can (Griffin 2020).[3]

Anne Griffin highlights the dietary component of veganism but also refers to a "vegan lifestyle" that eschews leather and entertainment involving animals. However, she is careful to point out that "It's not a case of being pure," which is a nod to the "possible and practicable" component of Watson's definition. Rather, Anne tries to avoid exploitation wherever she can.

> Vegan for me means excluding so far as practical and possible forms of animal exploitation from my diet, and from my purchasing, and from my actions. So abstaining from consuming animal products. Although for me, I do consume honey that my mom gets. She's got a couple of beehives that she keeps mostly to help pollinate and I will consume her honey. I wouldn't consume industrially produced honey because I have cruelty concerns about that, and then not wearing any animal products. And so far as possible, not purchasing, well, cosmetics, that's an easy one, I find medications are a little bit more of a difficult one. Sometimes pharmaceuticals are tested on animals, but are required for health reasons (Labchuk 2020).

Camille Labchuk is obviously familiar with Watson's definition and goes on to confirm that her veganism is ethical moments later in the interview. However, it is interesting to note that she does eat the honey her mother collects. Further, while she does not support

3 I have gently edited interview excerpts in this dissertation for clarity and flow while endeavouring to retain the nuanced perspectives expressed in them.

the testing of pharmaceuticals on animals, she acknowledges that "if a person needs a medication, and that medicine has been tested on animals, it is not a straightforward ethical question re whether they should take that medicine or not" (Labchuk 2024).[4]

> I don't use plant-based because plant-based to me just says you're doing it for health, which is fine ultimately if people don't kill animals, and hopefully they stay plant-based. I relate more to activist than I do vegan. So that's what I would say if I met someone on the street; I would say I'm an animal rights activist (Marni 2020).

One of the more interesting nuances in these definitions of "vegan" and "veganism" comes from Marni. She alludes to it here when she says that the term "plant-based" refers to a diet, but she prefers to describe herself as an "animal rights activist" rather than a "vegan." Here is the rest of that conversation.

> **Ceallaigh:** Do you think of it as a sort of a step along the journey to go from being vegan to being an activist?
>
> **Marni:** For me, it was almost immediate. It...it's a step. But I became vegan and became an activist almost... I mean, I was suffering as a vegan and doing nothing, because as soon as I found out about dairy, I was angry. It was so painful to just be a vegan. Yeah. So it didn't take long (Marni 2020).

For Marni, veganism is a personal performance of ethics, while animal rights activism is a public and interventional performance that arises out of her own emotional experience of suffering, anger, and pain at knowing about the plight of farmed animals.[5]

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4 The latter of these assertions places her in line with Peter Singer's utilitarian position on animal liberation, which I will address and explore in Chapter One.

5 This element of her perspective echoes Josephine Donovan's feminist caring ethic, which I will also address and explore in Chapter One.

> I think veganism is about non-human animals, and nobody is perfect. But you know, veganism is... you're really trying to not disrespect, dis-appreciate, impose, and oppress non-human animals. You're trying to let them do their thing and live kind of with them in a way, you know? That's why a lot of vegans are also environmentalists, because they don't see it as like we should be imposing our will on these animals and where they live. We should be trying to live with them. We're just another kind of animal (Reeves 2020).

Dane Reeves also emphasizes that "nobody is perfect" in his definition of veganism, and he echoes the environmental element of Watson's definition. The language of oppression in his definition echoes Peter Singer's discussion of liberation, but he is primarily interested in letting animals "do their thing" and in not "imposing our will" on animals and where they live.[6]

Vegans who specify that veganism is an ethical position still use the word "vegan" in reference to food (e.g. vegan restaurants, vegan dishes, etc.). These people also use the word in other areas of life; medicine, clothing, cosmetics, etc. In all of these cases, the word is taken to mean "acceptable for use by ethical vegans." However, the word "vegan" is sometimes contested between ethical vegans and those who adopt a plant-based diet, and in common parlance the word is most often used in reference to food. So for the sake of clarity, when I refer to the foodway alone without the ethical underpinning, I will use the term "plant-based."

Beyond this distinction between "vegan" and "plant-based," there are differences in the ways I use the terms "vegan/veganism" and "animal rights activist/activism" here, the

6 This is the language of animal rights as expressed by Tom Regan and Gary Francione, which again, I will address and explore in Chapter One.

ways my research participants use these terms, and the ways they are used in common parlance. This work includes an argument from folkloristics that veganism is a performance of animal rights activism. However, my research participants draw nuanced distinctions between these two terms. Finally, as previously mentioned, "veganism" is associated with a foodway in common parlance, while "animal rights activism" is associated with demonstrations and direct intervention on behalf of animals. I cannot use all of these meanings interchangeably and expect the reader to follow my argumentation, but neither can I use them separably because they are interconnected. Therefore, because I argue in Chapters One and Two that veganism is an example of ethical belief, I will use the terms "veganism/vegan" in reference to that belief and the people who hold it. Because I argue in Chapter Three that veganism is a performance of animal rights activism, I will use the terms "animal rights activism/activist" in reference to those performances and the people who engage in them. This should not be taken to mean that all animal rights activists are vegan; they are not. However, all of my research participants self-identify as vegan except for Dr. Arjun Rayapudi, as mentioned above.

Carnist/Carnism

In "Traditions of Disbelief," David Hufford makes the case that disbelief in the supernatural is not an indisputable position but a belief system itself, writing that "Traditions of disbelief should be recognized as such and no more accepted uncritically than are the traditions of belief" (Hufford 1982, 54). It is with this egalitarian perspective

of disbelief and belief in mind that I introduce to this dissertation a term coined by social psychologist Melanie Joy, who writes that:

> We don't see meat eating as we do vegetarianism - as a choice, based on a set of assumptions about animals, the world, and ourselves. Rather, we see it as a given, the "natural" thing to do, the way things have always been and the way things will always be. We eat animals without thinking about what we are doing and why because the belief system that underlies this behaviour is invisible. This invisible belief system is what I call *carnism* (Joy, chap. 2).[7]

Inasmuch as vegans hold an ethical belief system called "veganism" that seeks to exclude the use of animals for food, clothing, and other purposes, carnists hold an ethical belief system called "carnism," which takes the position that these uses of animals are normal and natural. While carnism is largely invisible, and I will address some of the reasons for this in due course, it is much like disbelief in the supernatural because they are both perceived as indisputable positions and neither should be accepted uncritically. Therefore, when I refer to non-vegans throughout this work, I will use the term "carnists," and I will refer to their belief system as "carnism."

Speciesism

In 1970, hospital scientist Richard D. Ryder wrote a pamphlet that decries the use of animals in laboratory experiments and calls the justifications for animal experimentation "speciesism." In his 2010 commentary on the original pamphlet, he writes that "The

7 Many of the sources cited in this dissertation were found in ebooks. Citation of these sources follows the guidelines set forth in *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers, Ninth Edition*. Guideline specifics can be found in Section 19.1.10.

1960s revolutions against racism, sexism and classism nearly missed out the animals. This worried me. Ethics and politics at the time simply overlooked the nonhumans entirely…As a hospital scientist I believed that hundreds of other species of animals suffer fear, pain and distress much as I did" (Ryder 2010, 1-2). In 1975, philosopher Peter Singer better defined the word in a major philosophical argument against it, writing that "Speciesism - the word is not an attractive one, but I can think of no better term - is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (Singer 2015, chap. 1).

If carnism is the belief system that views the use of animals as normal and natural, speciesism is the embedded bias in that belief system. The vegans and animal rights activists among my research participants refer to the term often in this context and count it among the other prejudicial -isms mentioned by Ryder as worthy of eradication. This is the primary reason why readers will encounter the term in this work, though it should be noted that where I follow Hufford's lead in treating carnism as a belief system worthy of critical analysis, the embedded bias of speciesism will also be analyzed.

Cows versus Beef, Pigs versus Pork, Chickens versus Poultry

Precision of language is important to every academic endeavour, but it is especially important when elements of the topic under consideration are hidden or invisible. So it is with carnism and speciesism, which encourage a use of language that obfuscates the animal on the plate. Carol J. Adams writes in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* that:

> Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. The "absent referent" is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our "meat" separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep the "moo" or "cluck" or "baa" away from the meat, to keep something from being seen as having been someone. Once the existence of meat is disconnected from the existence of an animal who was killed to become that "meat," meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image… (Adams 2015, xxiv-xxv).

Any analysis of carnism and speciesism requires a language of un-hiding, of visibility, so that the absent referent on the plate and in the mind is made present again. This is why the language of animal rights activism frequently refers to animals as "she or he" rather than "it" as Adams does above. For the same reason, activists commonly do not use the words "meat" and "dairy," preferring the words "flesh" and "secretions," and they refer to cows, pigs, and chickens rather than beef, pork, and poultry, thereby bringing the animal into the conversation. I will use the same language in this dissertation wherever possible, to honour the phraseology used by animal rights activists and to prevent the problem of the absent referent in discussions of carnism and speciesism.

My Position in the Research

I am aware that this topic is a political one, so I am introducing my position in the research now so that readers are well-informed about it at the outset. I subscribe to the definition of veganism as coined by Donald Watson and The Vegan Society. I have been vegetarian most of my adult life, and I have been vegan since October 1, 2008. Veganism is at the core of my ethical framework, I perform my own ethics in many of the same

ways my research participants do, and I am a co-founder of the Your Vegan Fallacy Is project at www.yourveganfallacyis.com, which engages in the sort of counter-hegemonic discourse I write about in this work. I was and remain an insider among vegans and animal rights activists.

However, I was not an insider to the St. John's or Toronto vegan and animal rights communities. While prospective research participants often asked if I was vegan during our initial conversations, and my answer bypassed what might have been an effort on their part to persuade me to "go vegan," I was an outsider to the local relationship dynamics and group concerns of each place. For example, I was unaware that the word "vegan" was vigorously contested in St. John's Internet spaces until my husband found himself at the centre of an argument about it in the local "NL Vegans" Facebook group. The vegans, my husband included, defended the original definition of the word, while plant-based dieters used the word to mean a temporary or permanent decision to refrain from eating the flesh and secretions of animals. In Toronto, prospective research participants warned me that there were difficult personalities and issues of contention in the local community but did not provide many details, so I was left to discover them on my own. The negotiation of my status in these communities was further complexified by my ethical responsibilities to them as a researcher and my intellectual responsibilities to the scholarship I was producing. For example, three of my prospective research participants were put off by my security protocols. One prominent activist stopped returning my calls when I mentioned them in a telephone message, while another

endeavoured to circumvent them by filling out my paperwork incorrectly on purpose and thereafter expecting to be interviewed anyway. A third activist was interested in my work but would not agree to an interview because I could not promise complete anonymity.

Other folklorists have encountered and commented upon similar issues of intersubjectivity in field work. Folklorist Sabina Magliocco writes of her research among fellow Pagans that, "My answer to readers who want to know whether I am 'really' an insider or an outsider to the Pagan community is that I am neither and both" (Magliocco 2004, Introduction), and Kari Sawden writes in her recent dissertation on divination practices in 21st century Canada that:

> The boundaries between the etic and emic spaces have been increasingly dissolved in scholarly discourse. The days of fieldworkers going out into "exotic" spaces to study "the other" have given way to complicated understandings and questionings of what these spaces mean and how they are constructed. However, with this new exploration of boundaries comes a renegotiation of how academics situate themselves within them (Sawden 2018, 31).

This renegotiation of boundaries was an ongoing process for me, especially in Toronto. I was welcomed there as a fellow vegan animal rights activist and sympathetic scholar of the movement, but I also had to educate prospective research participants about my ethical constraints and intellectual responsibilities in risky field work settings like marches, vigils, and protests. To protect us both and preserve the safety of my data, it became necessary for me to keep a certain distance from the people whose community I had come to study; a counterintuitive strategy for an ethnographer but one this particular project required.

I chose to conduct an ethnographic study that foregrounds the diverse voices and nuanced perspectives of vegans and animal rights activists because they are often overgeneralized and misunderstood. There is also a strong carnist bias against these people that sometimes gives rise to anger and violence, making a sympathetic study of vegans and animal rights activists not only reasonable, but necessary. Indeed, as I was preparing to undertake this research, I found that bias in the scholarship of other disciplines along with a regrettable lack of consideration for insider perspectives. While much of that work relies upon Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and its theoretical model of religion as a societal phenomenon (Durkheim 1995), it also imposes an outside vocabulary that privileges the perspectives of scholars over those of their research subjects. Perhaps the most problematic of these can be found in the use of Christian religion as a model for veganism and the animal rights movement. Harold A. Herzog writes that the people he interviewed experienced a shift in fundamental beliefs, accompanied this with a change in lifestyle, became evangelical, and experienced a sense of sin for previous behaviours that caused harm to animals (Herzog 1993, 117). James Parker, an information officer with the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center, challenges theological thinkers who support animal rights with his own interpretations of the Christian Bible on the topic (Parker 1993). Wesley V. Jamison and his colleagues - among them James Parker - declare that animal rights activism is a functional religion that relies upon "quasi-religious fanaticism" to maintain the political pressure necessary for success (Jamison, Wenk, and Parker 2000, 307). Finally, Kerstin Jacobsson refers to animal rights activists as radical saviours of suffering souls and utilizes other Biblically-

charged language to make an argument that the movement is a secular religion (Jacobsson 2014). As a non-Christian vegan and animal rights activist, I found this work particularly jarring. As a folklore scholar, I was motivated by ethnographer Dwight Conquergood's critique of "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" to utilize the tools of folkloristics in a study that would not treat the culture of the vegan animal rights movement as "an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" (Geertz 1972, 29; Conquergood 2013b, 38-39). Instead, I wanted to step into a space I already occupied as a member of the movement and encounter it again as a folklorist who views veganism and animal rights activism as an "unfolding performative invention instead of reified system, structure, or variable" (Conquergood 2013d, 96).

I also undertook this project to help establish a folkloristics of ethical belief and its expression in performance. I am inspired by folkloristic and performance studies scholars of activism who advocate engagement with difficult topics, produce scholarship of activism, and are themselves activist scholars. I agree with Donald Brenneis, who writes that "If we are to bring the virtues of our shared perspectives to bear on central ethical issues, we cannot limit our research to attractive subjects nor our disciplinary narratives to heroic ones" (Brenneis 1993, 300). I recognize, as Debra Kodish does, that "Folklore offers the possibility of joining the closely grained detail of a particular moment with larger peoples' movements, sensitive to forces, coercive and reparatory: the field has theory and practice that we can and must contribute to current struggles and freedom

movements" (Kodish 2011, 47). I am called to action by the writing of Phillips Stevens Jr., who argues that "folklorists should take their expertise out of academe but further than the museums, historical societies, craft fairs, and ethnic dance exhibitions - directly into the heart of social problems" (Stevens Jr. 1996, "Satanism: Where are the Folklorists?"). Finally, I follow the lead of Dwight Conquergood, who protested the executions of Timothy McVeigh and Juan Raul Garza and then problematized the theatre of execution in the United States with unflinching language and critical analysis (Conquergood 2013a, 264-302).

My research has had a profound impact upon me as a vegan, an animal rights activist, and a folklorist. However, I am fortunate that Elaine Lawless came before me, herself a survivor of domestic abuse who conducted ethnographic research of domestic abuse survivors. Lawless set a strong example for future ethnographers like me - who undertake research in communities they care about - and writes in her ethnography of women in the clergy that:

> I hope my work never becomes subject to accusations of excessive reflexivity, where the ethnography becomes the ethnographer's biography, but to deny where I stand within this ethnography would be foolhardy. My voice is certainly in this work. It begins with the title and is foregrounded on every page. On the other hand, my voice will not, I hope, ever presuppose its authority over the voices of the women in the study, however, when they begin to speak (Lawless 1993, 5-6).

I am also fortunate that Sabina Magliocco came before me, whose participant observation of the Neo-Pagan community led her to have profound spiritual experiences and to adopt Neo-Pagan beliefs and practices. Magliocco writes that "The ethnographic perspective is

not about being an objective observer of a culture, but rather about containing within one body multiple, simultaneous frames of reference with which to interpret experience, and being able to shift easily from one to the other" (Magliocco 2004, Introduction).

Like Lawless, I recognize that my voice is on every page of this dissertation, and I also recognize the authority that voice carries in scholarship and public discourse. With this in mind, I will foreground the voices of my research participants, their performances of animal rights activism, and the narratives I have selected for analysis. Like Magliocco, I contain multiple frames of reference where the issues covered in this dissertation are concerned, notably those of Ceallaigh the folklorist and Ceallaigh the vegan animal rights activist. Ceallaigh the folklorist will lead the discussion. However, there are places she cannot get to as a spectator (Behar 1996, 14), and this is where you will hear the autoethnographic voice of Ceallaigh the vegan animal rights activist. Where that voice is present, it will be set off in ***Helvetica bold italics***, a useful approach I have borrowed from Magliocco. Finally, I have been guided from the beginning of this project by the words of an academic advisor who told me that good scholarship is good activism. If I am able to give you the former, then perhaps the latter will care for itself.

The Question of the Animal

The locus of this inquiry is the voice of the animal rights activist raised in answer to the "question of the animal." Performance theorist Una Chaudhuri writes that this question is:

> raised *in* and *by* philosophy *for us* (with increasing contentiousness since Descartes' pronouncement that animals were nothing more than machines), but it is also a question *put to us* - individuals and disciplines - *by* animals, with increasing urgency as their disappearance from modern life and extinction from the planet accelerates beyond denial (Chaudhuri 2007, 9).

Among those putting the question to us are the 1600 land animals slaughtered for food in Canada every minute, a number that does not include sea animals, who are measured in tons. In the next twenty-four hours, that number will rise to roughly 2,260,000 individuals (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2020a; Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2016; Labchuk 2022). In the next year, an unprecedented number of animal species will join them in death, so many that even conservative biological science points to a mass extinction event caused by habitat destruction and climate change (Ceballos et al. 2015). These animals inhabit our physical, intellectual, and emotional universes as food, statistics, and regrettable consequences of the Anthropocene, but Chaudhuri writes of a place they might also inhabit in our moral universe (Chaudhuri 2007, 15).

The voice of the animal rights activist and the question of the animal are two separate foci, and my primary interest here is in the first of these. However, animal rights activists do advocate for the place of animals in our moral universe, and the presence of animals in the frame of my inquiry will help to illuminate the sense of urgency expressed by the animal rights movement. While a comprehensive discussion of animal rights issues is well beyond the scope of any dissertation, my research participants did discuss particular issues with me, and I encountered other issues in the field. What follows is a sample of

these along with a brief analysis of each, offered to foreground the concerns of my research participants and their communities.

> There's a local backyard farm in Torbay [Newfoundland and Labrador] who has chickens, hogs, cows. I think that's it. There are maybe a couple more that I might be forgetting. But we went there in hopes of rescuing a couple of animals, and we thought with our residential space and infrastructure that we had, that we could take on two chickens. And so we took them from that backyard farm, which was not a very ideal area to do it...or not a very good situation that they were in, I guess. At the time there was multiple, I guess juvenile chickens and one was literally laying there on its deathbed. And he just grabbed it out of, you know, the pile of other chickens and threw him behind a rock. And that's where he was leaving him to die. Basically a very horrible situation. There was also a calf at the same backyard farm, and this calf may have only been a couple of weeks old, so he still had that natural instinct to lick because he wants to suckle on his mother's udders. So the farmer that was there was standing right next to the calf, and the calf was licking his arm, and he didn't like that. So he just started punching the calf in the face. And basically I had to keep my cool because, you know, I was getting animals from these people, and they actually knew where we lived at that point, so I didn't really want to cause any kind of conflict there because of the situation that we were in. But people have this idea that because it's a backyard farm, the animals are getting treated properly, and I can tell you that they're not (Gosse 2017).

Regrettably, this is the only account in my ethnographic materials of farmed animal sanctuary activism, an area of animal rights activism that interests me and deserves closer attention. Farmed animal sanctuaries may be any size, from larger operations with charitable status such as the Happily Ever Esther sanctuary in Ontario ("Happily Ever Esther Farm Sanctuary" n.d.) to micro-sanctuaries that rescue and provide for farmed animals out-of-pocket. These sanctuaries do not buy or breed animals, and they are not petting zoos. Rather, they rescue farmed animals after they have been abandoned, surrendered, abused, or neglected, have fallen out of transport trucks, have been thrown

into the garbage by farmers because of illness or injury, or have been seized by authorities. In all cases, animals brought to these sanctuaries are provided care appropriate to their individual needs and permitted to live out their natural lives (Farm Sanctuary n.d.). Farm Sanctuary, one of the most respected farmed animal sanctuaries and founder of the Farmed Animal Adoption Network, has rescued a piglet from a petting zoo where he was neglected (Farm Sanctuary 2020a), rescued chickens from barn fires (Farm Sanctuary 2020b), re-homed cows after a farmer left the business of animal farming for ethical reasons (Farm Sanctuary 2022), and receives thousands of calls every year about farmed animals in similar situations.

When Renee Gosse says that she and her partner visited the Torbay backyard farm in hopes of rescuing two chickens, she is speaking as a farmed animal micro-sanctuary activist who provides for rescued animals out-of-pocket. Of note, she precedes this narrative with a powerful statement about the reasons why she engages in animal rights activism, saying:

> I know that there's so much injustice out there when it relates to animals and what's going on. I think it's a huge issue. I just think about every breath that I take and 'Oh well, that's so many thousand animals killed right there.' It's a huge atrocity, and the least I can do is use my voice to go and speak for animals that are, you know, in the dark (Gosse 2017).

While Renee's actions and perspectives are not religious in nature, Leonard Primiano's concept of "vernacular religion" can be expanded to understand them in the context of ethical belief, and I will further engage with Primiano's scholarship in a similar way throughout this work. He writes that "Vernacular religion is, by definition, religion as

it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it. Since religion inherently involves interpretation, it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular" (Primiano 1995, 44). So it is with ethical belief, which is the nuanced product of an individual's reflection upon the principles of right and wrong and their applications in everyday life. Renee has reflected upon these principles as they relate to the everyday treatment of farmed animals, and her ethical beliefs are lived in her encounter with the Torbay backyard farm, her understanding that animals are suffering there, and her practice of intervention on their behalf. I would add that Renee is willing to brave the displeasure of the backyard farmer - within reason - in the service of her ethical beliefs, which points to the important role they play in her life. Like religious belief, ethical belief is often a foundational part of the way we interpret and interact with the world.

Renee's first-hand account of legal, local, farmed animal rescue is compelling because it is a personal experience narrative that comes from an animal rights activist willing to provide for rescued chickens herself, but it is also interesting from a narrative perspective, since there are elements of both tradition and innovation in it (Stahl 1977). She begins with a negative assertion about the placement and condition of the backyard farm, and she notes that one of the chickens "was literally laying there on its deathbed," that the farmer "threw him behind a rock," and that he later punched a calf in the face for licking him. Farmed animal rescue narratives foreground the pre-rescue conditions of animals and their surroundings in negative terms; the above rescue of the piglet from the petting zoo

and the chickens from the barn fire do as well, and so do the narratives that follow this one. Highlighting the poor conditions of these animals provides the rationale for their rescue and helps to persuade outsiders that rescue is necessary. Intervention is another common narrative element, and we see that in Renee's story as well. She goes to the backyard farm to rescue chickens. In the above-cited narratives, this intervention is in the middle, and it is a medical intervention in both cases. In these narratives, the veterinary treatments provided to the rescued piglet and chickens are detailed; the rescued piglet was treated for pneumonia and Balantidium coli, while the hens were treated for burns and given oxygen when needed (Farm Sanctuary 2020a; 2020b). These detailed treatment narratives are offered to contrast the level of care farmed animals receive in pre-rescue environments with the level of care they receive from farmed animal sanctuaries, and narrators hope this will help target audiences to view these animals as individuals worthy of this care. Renee's narrative lacks the final element traditional to farmed animal rescues; the disposition of the animal after intervention, which may be death in the case of animals who did not survive or happy resettlement in the farmed animal sanctuary, which is usually accompanied by photographs or video of the rescued animals enjoying their new environments. In both cases, the animals are usually given names, which further serves to individualize them. (The piglet's name is George, and one of the rescued hens is Rosalinda.) Less traditional is the lack of persuasive language and tone in Renee's narrative. She's telling her story to an animal rights activist and knows it, so there is no need to encourage me to "go vegan," though she does conclude the account by saying that

"people have this idea that because it's a backyard farm, the animals are getting treated properly, and I can tell you that they're not" (Gosse 2017).

Figure 2: Pamphlet Produced for the Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 Protest (StopBill156.com, n.d.)

We move from Renee's narrative to a pamphlet produced by members of the Toronto animal rights movement for distribution during the Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 protest. Here the tone is far more persuasive, and the reader is urged to view the issues raised by the pamphlet with the same lens of ethical belief its writers have adopted. The third-person, plural "we" includes the reader in a "moral obligation to prevent cruelty to animals." Near the bottom of the pamphlet, a second-person "you" follows the inclusive "we" to make that moral obligation a duty: "These are sentient individuals, we are a

civilized society, and you have a duty to respect the majority of Canadians who want a ban on cruel farm practices."

The language of animal suffering is stronger here as well. Readers learn of "legal sadism," "unconscionable acts of sadistic cruelty," and "illegal acts" that cause "horrific anguish and grief." Compelling gerunds are used to describe these acts; "burning," "chopping," "cutting," "ripping," "confining," "grabbing," "smashing," and other, similar words draw the reader into an emotional discussion of animals who "are the same as human mothers in all ways that matter," "newborns," and babies. Images of animal cruelty add validity to these assertions; pigs are wounded and confined, ducks are injured, cows are dehorned, and turkeys are beaten. In contrast to the insider language Renee uses to describe the backyard farm to me, this pamphlet uses the language vegan animal rights activists reserve for outsiders they hope to persuade.

I also see a performance of grief and anger in the writing of this pamphlet. Many of us can no longer bear to watch footage of farmed animals because it's so violent, and there's so much of it. I remember every cruelty described here from pictures I've seen and footage I've viewed as an animal rights activist, and working with this material now brings these memories to the forefront of my mind. So what outsiders see as the unreasonable, judgemental rage of animal rights activists I see as chronic, self-induced trauma, inflicted because we watch violence we don't condone or participate in to save those who suffer from it from people who do.

Figure 3: Marni Rescues a Duckling at King Cole Ducks (shaytheactivist 2020)

Open rescue is where you're taking animals from a farm, which means you're revealing the real conditions. In this case, it was a duck farm, and they claim we love our animals. We're an ethically run establishment. We meet all their needs. But of course, we go in there, and we find out otherwise, and we will take a few animals out, which non-vegans would call theft. Although a lot of non-vegans like my clients were horrified and supported me, some people call it theft, and I call it rescuing an animal in the same way. Speciesism is a big thing for me. So if these were dogs at a dog breeding facility or some puppy mill, people would understand what that means. Somebody could say it's theft, but people have bleeding hearts when it comes to dogs. And they would understand, like, look at the condition of that dog, in this case, ducks. We walked in to so much crying and chaos. Ducks, they have grates for the feces to drop into, and little baby ducks had their wings stuck. They were on their back with their legs kicking. They couldn't move. And apparently the staff go in twice a week. So they're like this for days. They can't move. They're just crying. They're just crying. So, you know, you have babies all over the place crying. Somebody could call it theft. I call it rescue. Yeah (Marni 2020).

In the week before I interviewed Marni, she joined other animal rights activists belonging to the organization Direct Action Everywhere in the open rescue of several ducks from King Cole Ducks in Stouffville.[8] Photographs and video taken inside the buildings at this facility show that some ducks were found injured, sick, dying, or dead, while others were found with legs, wings, or beaks stuck in the wire flooring where they stood. Marni and others undertook this rescue for two reasons; to uncover the conditions of animals on the farm and to protest Bill 156 (Robertson 2020). Marni's account of this experience draws sharp ethical distinctions between her beliefs and those of outsiders. She argues that non-vegans, even some among her clients, called her removal of the ducks theft but would have been more inclined to support her if the ducks had been puppies in a puppy mill. She identifies this bias as speciesism and contrasts it with her own vegan ethical beliefs. From Marni's perspective, her removal of the ducks is rescue, and she supports this argument with a first-hand account of the conditions they were in when she arrived at the farm. Marni's account also draws sharp narrative distinctions between the claim King Cole itself makes that it "has long been heralded for its leadership and stewardship in the area of animal care" ("The History of Our Farm" n.d.), and the actual conditions of the ducks. Her use of language draws attention to the age of the ducks and their distress in emotional terms; there were "babies all over the place crying," but like Renee, her intention is not to

8 Activists who participate in open rescue insist upon showing their faces and offering their real names because they believe transparency plays a critical role in animal rights activism. These activists are willing to be arrested, tried, and imprisoned for what they do and use the legal process itself to shed light on the concerns of the animal rights movement.

persuade. Rather, these women understand, interpret, and practice their ethical beliefs from a place of compassion, and this compassion moves them to grief and then to action.

However, each woman performed her ethical beliefs in somewhat different ways. While both rescued farmed animals, Renee's performance was semi-private; only she and the backyard farmer were witnesses to it. Marni's performance was public; activists shut down the road leading to the farm, took photographs and video of the ducks inside, and then posted them to social media (Direct Action Everywhere 2020; Robertson 2020). These performances illuminate the wide spectrum of activities that may be called animal rights activism. On one end of the spectrum is veganism, which must be performed because we all need to feed and clothe ourselves but may be limited to individual choices. Open rescue activism stands at the other end of the spectrum as a dramatic performance of ethical belief that makes a theatre out of a place not intended to be viewed by the public. As characters, the activists are often reviled for creating that theatre in the first place, even as the animals among the dramatis personae are almost always pitied.

So it is with other social issues. In *Troubling Violence: A Performance Project*, Heather Carver and Elaine Lawless challenge the "cultural frames that endorse male entitlement" (Carver and Lawless 2009, Backdrop), which may be seen as a cultural belief system that reinforces gender disparity between men and women, leading to unequal treatment of women and to domestic violence. However, this challenge is not without opposition, even in the academy, where the theatrical treatment they offer the topic was questioned at the American Folklore Society Annual General Meeting in 2003:

"we ruffled some feathers-or, more accurately, Elaine ruffled feathers. It seemed like the audience interrogated Elaine. Again, I felt like I was in the middle of a foreign country, but this time there were bullets whizzing by. From our aesthetics to our ethics, all of our choices were dissected" (Carver and Lawless 2009, Performing Violence). Activism of any kind asks that we interrogate our position in the issue under question, and this can be an uncomfortable process. Animal rights activism asks that we bring that interrogation to every meal we have eaten, every pair of wool socks we have worn, every circus we have attended, every place in our lives where we have used the bodies of animals for our benefit. It not only makes people uncomfortable, it can make them angry, because it turns the lives and deaths of those animals from a backstage event they would rather not see into a spectacle of suffering.

Carver later reflects on the reception she and Lawless received through the lens of Norman Denzin's work on performance ethnography. He writes that "The current historical moment requires morally informed performance and arts-based disciplines that will help people recover meaning in the face of senseless, brutal violence, violence that produces voiceless screams of terror and insanity" (Denzin 2003, 7). Carver responds to his scholarship, writing: "After I read Denzin's statement, I threw my arms up in triumph and committed to taking up the banner by using performance in conjunction with sociological research to perform the silenced voices" (Carver and Lawless 2009, Performing Violence).

Vegan animal rights activism is ethically informed performance of belief that pulls back the curtain on the "voiceless screams of terror" uttered by animals on the backstage of modern life, as Renee puts it, "in the dark." Both Renee and Marni have been backstage, and the accounts of what they saw there are credible. They are performing silenced voices for us when they speak about it, and while the pamphlet is a tool of activism designed for outsiders, it also comes from the passage of animal rights activists backstage. Together, they ask that we watch as they pull the curtain aside and bring farmed animals into the frame.

Research and Literature Review

Research Plans and Methodologies

This dissertation is an amalgam of two research projects; my Oral History 6710 final paper and my field work in Toronto. Paul Smith taught Oral History 6710 the semester I took the course, and his final assignment was a case study with broad parameters. I chose to write on vegan life story narratives from people with significant connections to Newfoundland.[9] My research participants were all recruited from the NL Vegans Facebook group on February 1, 2017, where I wrote of my interest in the Newfoundland vegan community and asked if anyone would consent to be interviewed for a case study. Within twenty-four hours, I had eleven prospective participants. Of these, I interviewed nine; two couples and five individuals. Most of these interviews took place in my home,

9 Throughout this dissertation, when I refer to Newfoundland on its own, I am referring to the island of Newfoundland and not the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

but one couple was interviewed in their St. John's home, two individuals were interviewed by email, and one individual was interviewed by telephone.

This was my first attempt to locate folkloristic scholarship of veganism, and finding little, my first exploration of relevant interdisciplinary scholarship on the topic. I was informed by ethnographic scholarship on the relationship between ethics and food in a local vegetarian restaurant (Simmonds 2006), sociological scholarship on the relationships between ethics, food, place, and tradition (Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepcevic, and Chapman 2010; Twine 2014), and scholarship in both disciplines on the challenges of becoming and being vegan (Andreatta 2015; McDonald 2000). It was also my first attempt to explore veganism as an ethical belief system, and I hoped to draw research participants into nuanced conversations about the intersections of their identities as Newfoundlanders and their ethics of food consumption. I was interested to learn how they positioned themselves in Newfoundland's noteworthy culture of hunting, fishing, and sealing, and I wanted to find out if they had anything to say about the relationship of food security in the province to the dietary component of veganism.

As a result, these interviews were comprehensive, in-depth discussions that often lasted more than two hours. I began with biographical questions about birthplace, childhood, and upbringing. I followed with the question "Why are you vegan?" to establish whether they used the word "vegan" in ethical or dietary contexts. If an ethical context for usage was established, I continued with questions about childhood and adulthood dietary choices, beliefs about the use of animals for food, relationships with animals, and pre-transition opinions about veganism. Following this, I asked about the

social and dietary impacts of their transitions to veganism and took note of any "transition stories" they told, which are common narratives in the vegan animal rights community that highlight a significant moment in the individual's ethical shift from carnism to veganism. Then I revisited earlier questions about dietary choices, the use of animals for food, and relationships with animals, inviting them to answer with their current ethical beliefs in mind. I concluded with questions about the role of animal rights activism in their lives and the levels of social and dietary support they received as vegan Newfoundlanders.

Having been a vegan animal rights activist for nearly a decade, I was well-prepared to bring the intellectual rigour of my PhD coursework to an insider study of life history narratives among my fellow vegans. I knew we all had engaged in a process of vernacular theorization about our ethical beliefs, and I knew we were all performing and practicing these beliefs in similar ways. I also had no carnist bias to overcome in my scholarship, so my research participants were able to dispense with any pre-emptive defence of their ethical belief system to an outsider with an opposing belief system. As a result, Vegans in Newfoundland was a useful precursor to Voices for the Voiceless. I was glad to have conducted the research under Paul Smith's supervision and glad to have the proper student research consent forms on hand for each participant when COVID-19 interrupted my Toronto field work. These interviews comprise half of my ethnographic data, they are directly related to the topic of my doctoral research, and they have made my dissertation possible.

The purpose of my field work in Toronto was to investigate ethical beliefs and theoretical perspectives underpinning the animal rights movement and to document a variety of animal rights events as examples of political performance. I went into the field with the following research questions in mind: *1) What is the relationship between individual ethical belief and collective vernacular theory among animal rights activists, and how are they both communicated in animal rights activism? 2) What performative strategies does the movement employ to create a theatre of activism, and what are their target audiences? 3) In what other ways do activists challenge hegemonic cultures of animal use, and what counter-hegemonic cultural alternatives do they present? 4) How is this activism received by its audiences, what discursive tensions result, and how are they negotiated by activists?*

My research questions are grounded in scholarship of belief, vernacular theory, and performance. In belief studies, I follow the lead of scholars who problematize the ways vernacular beliefs of various kinds are narrativized by outsiders, since veganism and animal rights activism arise from ethical beliefs that may be viewed as both vernacular and counter-hegemonic. Bonnie Blair O'Connor writes that various academic disciplines have used pejorative language to discuss vernacular healthcare systems and advocates neutral observation of these along with an emphasis on "the patient's point of view with respect to health, illness, and care" (O'Connor 1995, xxiii), setting a good example for neutral observation of vegan animal rights activists with an emphasis on their perspectives about issues of concern to them.

Leonard Primiano's scholarship on the residualization effect of "separating the 'folk' or 'popular' religion of the faithful from 'official' or institutional religion administered by hierarchical elites" and his problematization of the term "folk religion" also have much to offer a discussion of the power disparity between veganism and carnism (Primiano 1995, 39-42). Counter-hegemonic veganism is often residualized because hegemonic carnism is both powerful and invisible. So while I cannot write about veganism versus carnism in precisely the same terms Primiano uses because the the two systems of thought do not share the same institutional structures and ideological foundations as their "folk religion" versus "official religion" counterparts, I am following his lead by paying careful attention to the language employed in this study.

In light of the foregoing, and because the terms "hegemonic carnism" and "counter-hegemonic veganism" will be used alongside the structures and languages of hiding and unhiding respectively, it should be noted that contemporary carnism is a product of capitalism in which many people are not informed about the industrial processes that produce their entertainment, clothing, food, and medicine. In a similar way, contemporary veganism and animal rights activism is a product of capitalism because it responds to this lack of information with education, undercover investigations, whistleblowing, and other efforts to disclose the treatment of animals in these industries. Therefore, while the philosophies of carnism and veganism have long historical precedent, this dissertation is exclusively concerned with their contemporary expressions.

I am also concerned about issues of reflexivity, since I am an insider to the vegan animal rights movement. Because of this, I have been and continue to be guided by Harris

Berger's phenomenological methods and Elaine Lawless' reciprocal methods of ethnography in fostering dialogic relationships with my research participants and foregrounding their voices throughout the research and writing process (Berger 1997, 1999; Lawless 2000, 2001, 2003). Individual expressions of belief can be diverse, as Gillian Bennett and Diane Goldstein discuss in their ethnographic research of religious and supernatural narratives (Bennett 1999; Goldstein 1983, 1995), so I have endeavoured to listen carefully for contextual language, ambiguity of meaning, and other nuances in the narratives I collected. It is important to me that I represent the beliefs of research participants in a way that communicates both language and meaning without substituting my own preconceived understanding of them, a position David J. Hufford advises (Hufford 1982, 1983, 1985, 1995). Of course, this approach has required a careful negotiation of my status among research participants and an awareness of my power as a scholar to shape the language of discourse (Magliocco 2004; Wilson 1995).

Moreover, while Thomas McLaughlin's writing on vernacular theory is not folkloristic, it is foundational to this study because it intersects with the writing of O'Connor, Primiano, and other folklore scholars who situate belief in the nuances of individual interpretation and in the interplay of these interpretations in small groups (Alver 1995; Bowman 2000; 2003; Bowman and Valk 2014; Davie 1995; Lawless 1992; 1993; Lesiv 2013). Thomas cites Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectuals" to make the argument that vernacular theorists from outside academic disciplines of philosophical analysis do not have access to the language and strategy of academic theory but do ask important questions about culture by developing language and strategy appropriate to

their issues of concern (Gramsci 1989; McLaughlin 1996). Vegan animal rights activists may be viewed as vernacular theorists because they are well-informed about their own issues of concern, having cultivated theoretical positions about them as individuals and in small groups. This understanding informs much of my work on a folkloristics of ethical belief in Chapters One and Two.

In performance studies, I follow the lead of scholars whose contributions to research are rooted in process and context. Erving Goffman informs my discussion about the various presentations of self animal rights activists embody both as individuals and as part of their participation in the animal rights movement (Goffman 1959), while Gregory Bateson's scholarship on meta-communication helps me analyze speak-outs and silences at animal rights demonstrations (Bateson 1955). Where possible, I situate other individuals and groups in the contexts of these performances to better understand the place of audiences and outsiders in the theatre of animal rights activism (Bauman 1986; Paredes and Bauman 1972; Schechner 1985a, 1985b). I also examine the relationship between education and persuasion in the animal rights movement and the ways vegan animal rights activists deploy arguments from vernacular theory in their efforts to change the public's perception and use of animals. Of particular interest is what Richard Bauman identifies as displays of "communicative competence," which elevate this argumentation into aestheticized performance, what D. Soyini Madison identifies as heightened moments when public speech erupts into performance, surfacing from the "...passion and communion of public deliberation or dissent," and the ways subversive, counter-hegemonic performativity of activism disrupts and disavows what hegemonic

performativity enacts (Abrahams 1977; Austin 1962; Bauman 1977; Donkor 2016; Hymes 1962, 1975; Madison 2010). I also document the uses of street theatre in animal rights activism and investigate the ways animal rights activists create "time and space for ethical speaking and listening" (Garlough 2008, 2011). With the help of this and other scholarship, I hope to contribute to folkloristics a discussion of the ways ethical belief and vernacular theory are articulated and performed in the theatre of activism.

The research and writing of this dissertation has also been influenced by interdisciplinary literature in critical animal studies. Of primary interest are theoretical approaches to the study of animal rights. Philosopher Peter Singer applies the ethical framework of utilitarianism to the issue, seeking to minimize the suffering of animals while maximizing the interests of both humans and animals (Singer 2015). Philosopher Tom Regan offers a rebuttal to Singer's position, arguing that humans and animals are sentient beings of equal value who should not be exploited under any circumstances (Regan 1983; Regan and Masson 2005). Legal scholar Gary L. Francione outlines the differences between animal welfarism, which seeks to mitigate the suffering of animals, and animal rightism, which seeks to abolish it (Francione 2010). Literary scholar Josephine Donovan offers a perspective on the treatment of animals situated in a feminist caring ethic (Donovan 1990; Donovan and Adams 2000). The work of these scholars is important to my understanding of the animal rights movement and enables me to better articulate the ethical perspectives of my research participants. It is my hope that I will contribute back to this body of literature a discussion of the ways ethical belief is vernacularized among vegans and performed in animal rights activism.

I expected that my familiarity with the animal rights movement would provide me with insider access to communities of interest in the Greater Toronto Area. My primary fieldwork there would involve collection of data (video and audio recordings, photographs, and field notes) during participant observation of public events and semi-structured interviews. I scheduled this work to begin in the spring of 2020, when I would relocate to Toronto and begin attending animal rights events. Throughout the spring and summer, I would recruit research participants and undertake a contextual study of ethical belief as embodied performance, performative language, framing, and material culture. Throughout the autumn and winter, I would begin a two-stage interview process of recruited participants. In the first stage, I would utilize photographs and video recordings taken at animal rights events to enrich semi-structured interviews by offering participants an opportunity to comment upon their involvement in these events (Harper 2002; Schwartz 1989). In the second stage, I would interact more closely with participants in follow-up interviews about the cultivation of their ethical beliefs and theoretical perspectives on animal rights activism. In the spring of 2021, I would undertake any necessary archival research before writing my dissertation, which I planned to finish by the spring of 2022.

Unfortunately, this research plan was handicapped by the pandemic, leaving me with five sets of ethnographic data from participant observation at demonstrations and seven ethnographic interviews. However, the ethnographic data is rich with possibilities for analysis, and the ethnographic interviews are detailed, lengthy discussions with animal rights activists whose nuanced perspectives contribute much to this study. My interview

preparation was modelled on that of my previous research, but I had come to see the benefit of inviting conversation with participants by asking broad questions, and I brought this perspective to my interview design (Sepp 2012; Zeitlin, Kotkin, and Cutting Baker 1982, 260-270). I had also come to see ethical veganism as both a performance of self and a performance of animal rights activism, one of many such performances. These shifts in thinking gave rise to a question set rooted in animal rights activism that elicited accounts of the places animals occupied in my research participants' lives before and after they became activists, their transition stories (if any), the changes they made to personal consumption of food, medicines, clothing, cosmetics, and entertainments upon becoming activists, the words they used to describe themselves now (e.g. pescatarian, flexitarian, vegetarian, plant-based dieter, or ethical vegan), and the role of the Toronto animal rights community in their lives. I also inquired about the kinds of animal rights activism they performed, what they hoped to accomplish as activists, the kinds of activism they found most and least effective, and any challenges or obstacles they faced as activists. Interviews concluded with the aforementioned discussion of photographs and video of their participation in animal rights events.

Finally, I complemented these two sets of ethnographic data with extensive analysis of government, agricultural, and industry material, media reports, and social media posts relevant to my research so that I might provide a contextual understanding of vegan animal rights activism. As a result, this dissertation includes information from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Consolidated Federal Laws of Canada, the Government of Ontario Official Ministry of Transportation Truck Handbook, Agriculture

and Agri-Food Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, news reports about vegan animal rights activism from several sources, and vegan social media posts, memes, and comics.

Research Ethics and Security Provisions

Ethically sensitive ethnographic research projects like mine require institutional support and careful preparation. In the case of this project, I consulted several authorities in academia, activism, government, and law to craft a research methodology that met the standards set forth by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), protected my research participants, and protected me as a researcher in a robust animal rights community that included whistleblowers. Because my preparation was not straightforward and included strong security provisions, I am detailing it here. It is my hope that this writing will be especially helpful to Canadian ethnographers who are concerned about institutional and legal protections afforded their sensitive research and data. In addition, many of the practical measures I employed were informed by preliminary inquiries I made outside the academic community, so I am making the results of that work available so that fellow ethnographers can find it aggregated in the context of their own professional literature.

The research conducted for my Oral History 6710 final paper was governed by the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) Student Research Consent Form and the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore and Language Archive Informant Contract. However, the ethics and security provisions for my dissertation field work were far more

complex. Because it was possible that I would be interviewing people who had committed crimes about those crimes, my preparations were careful and comprehensive. During my final semester of PhD coursework, I completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics. After the Folklore Department approved my research proposal, I submitted an application to conduct research involving human participants with the ICEHR. In this application, I stipulated that I planned to recruit research participants in person only, which meant I would not recruit by email, on social media, in print media, or using signage of any kind. By introducing myself to potential research participants in person and minimizing the public footprint of my research otherwise, I hoped to instil trust in the people who would participate in my research and better protect their identities, privacy, and confidentiality. In due course, however, I did reach out by email to various animal rights organizations for information about their activism and for permission to attend their demonstrations as a participant observer, and a few of these initial inquiries lead to interviews.

I also stipulated to the ICEHR that while half of my research would take place at public animal rights events in which there could be no expectation of privacy or anonymity, and while I would photograph and videotape these events much as anyone else might, I would never identify by name the individuals who appeared in these records. This would not anonymize these people because the data would be comprised of visual and audio materials in which animal rights activists appeared and spoke, but it would help to obfuscate their identities in my research. The other half of my research would be comprised of interviews of activists who were recruited at these events. I would ask that

these people adopt pseudonyms for the sake of their privacy and for the protection of fellow activists. I would also obfuscate their personal details and those of the people they discussed during the image elicitation portion of their interviews. Again, this would not guarantee anonymity, because I would have recruited research participants from a small population of people who are known to one another, but it would help to obfuscate their identities. If a research participant requested complete anonymity, I would utilize their interviews to draw general research conclusions without discussing them individually in my dissertation or in other scholarship derived from the primary research. In cases where a prospective research participant expressed reservations about the level of anonymity I could provide or might be harmed if their identity was discovered, I would decline their offer of participation.

During the process of ethical clearance, the ICEHR helpfully pointed out that my video and photographic data could be seized by police and that I could be compellable as a witness in court proceedings during a criminal prosecution of my research participants, and this led me to conduct further research. I consulted with an attorney who specializes in criminal law, and I spoke with a journalist representative of Canadian Journalists for Free Expression. From the attorney, I learned there is no legal protection in Canada for data gathered by scholars during the course of their researches. He further indicated that I was free to destroy my research before law enforcement officials demanded it of me, but I would be committing a crime if I destroyed my research afterwards. This attorney also offered the opinion that my work would constitute an attractive target for law enforcement officers investigating crimes committed by animal rights activists. From the

journalist, I learned there are few legal protections afforded to members of his profession. He did tell me that he had heard of edge-case situations in which these protections were extended to scholars, their data, and their research participants, but he did not offer any examples of this. He also indicated that an attorney might apply for an injunction to stop law enforcement officials from seizing my data, but I would "need to have that attorney on speed dial," since law enforcement officials do not alert journalists or scholars before coming to a home or place of business with a warrant. This journalist gave me the names of two attorneys in Ontario who work with Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, and I contacted them when I arrived in the province. In due course, I met with a helpful Toronto attorney who practices media law and paid his retainer fee out-of-pocket so I would have immediate legal recourse if the police attempted to seize my research. We both hoped I would never need his services, but we were pleased to note from the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) that: "In situations where there is an attempt by legal means (e.g., warrant, subpoena) to compel disclosure of confidential participant information, institutions are required to provide researchers with financial and other support to obtain independent legal advice or to ensure that such support is provided" (Government of Canada Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics 2019).

In a subsequent conversation with a Folklore Department faculty member, I was advised that the best protection for my research participants was their fully-informed consent. She suggested that I conduct preliminary research in the field to find out where and under what circumstances animal rights activists themselves took video and

photographs. Once I had a better understanding of this, I could factor it into my research, ask to record events when I went to them, and receive the verbal consent of activists before doing so. This would be especially important at events where illegal activity might occur. Thereafter, if my data was seized and I was compelled to testify, I could do so knowing that I only took video and photographs in situations where my research participants also took them and that I received their verbal consent to do so. I adopted these suggestions into my research methodology.

I signed up for a ProtonMail secure email account for the purpose of communication about my research project, and I asked prospective research participants to do the same. This would permit both parties to encrypt email communication and set time limits for automatic deletion of correspondence. I also purchased a state-of-the-industry secure laptop that could not be booted without two sets of passwords and an external key,[10] which I concealed separately. This laptop had a hardwire switch that disabled the wifi card, and I never connected to the Internet while using it except to update the software on a site approved by the manufacturer and to check my ProtonMail account. My research and dissertation would be stored on this laptop to protect it against hacking and so that if the hardware was ever seized by the police, I might have time to consult with my attorney before they figured out it needed a boot key and asked me for it.

Throughout the course of my preparation and research, I adopted a need-to-know policy about my work and only spoke about it with those people who were directly involved. This was perhaps the most important step I took to protect my research and

10 This laptop is manufactured by Purism and can be found at https://puri.sm.

participants. I also interviewed them in private locations or sound-treated library rooms, and as previously mentioned, I asked that they adopt pseudonyms for the sake of the research. However, within a week of my arrival in Toronto, I learned that some animal rights activists not only wanted to use their legal names in my research, they conducted both legal and illegal animal rights activities openly. This openness was integral to their activism and reflected an ethical commitment to their issues of concern. It also demanded an amendment to the ethical clearance documents I had filed with the ICEHR.

I have previously mentioned that one of my prospective research participants in Toronto endeavoured to circumvent my ethics and security provisions by filling out my paperwork incorrectly on purpose and thereafter expecting to be interviewed anyway. It was this person who educated me about open rescue, a form of animal rights activism I did not know about and did not expect to encounter in the field. Open rescue is a complex phenomenon. First and foremost, it denotes the non-violent rescue of farmed animals who are suffering but trapped in conditions where they have been abused, neglected, or left to die. As part of this rescue, activists document the conditions of these animals and expose them to the public. Second, activists engaging in open rescue identify themselves even when trespassing because they are committed to the ethics of their actions, prepared to accept the consequences of them, and believe that trial and imprisonment may be used to shed light upon their issues of concern. Third, undercover investigation of farmed animal conditions is increasingly criminalized across the world with the same sort of ag-gag

legislation[11] that prompted me to begin my research in Toronto several months early, and the activists who conduct these investigations often have to participate in animal cruelty themselves in order to document the cruelty of others (Hsiung 2015; Animal Liberation Victoria n.d.). With this in mind, open rescue advocates conclude that if trial and imprisonment are possibilities when conducting undercover investigations, it is better to conduct open rescue and face the same consequences without having to participate in something they abhor.

This was precisely the sort of ethical belief and performance I had come to study, so when my prospective research participant's assertion was substantiated by conversations with other animal rights activists and by an open rescue of ducklings at King Cole Ducks, I approached the ICEHR with an amendment to my ethical clearance. This was a challenging amendment to write, and the specifics of it made my field work more challenging as well. My revised In-Person Recruitment Letter for Research Participants stipulated that I would prefer they use a pseudonym, but I no longer made a pseudonym or a ProtonMail account mandatory for participation. However, I added that if the use of legal names and personal details might result in the identification of research participants who wished to remain anonymous, I would replace those legal names and obfuscate those personal details in my dissertation. I also included a Duty to Report section in my Informed Consent Form that outlined the circumstances under which I was able to keep

11 Ag-gag legislation refers to a body of laws passed in several countries, provinces, and states with the specific intention of silencing whistleblowers who conduct undercover investigations and engage in activism designed to expose poor treatment of animals in the animal agriculture industry.

research participants' criminal activity confidential and the circumstances under which I was obligated to report that activity. This section discussed the possibility that my research might become attractive to law enforcement authorities as part of an investigation of criminal activity in the Toronto animal rights community, the circumstances under which I would resist complying with a warrant or subpoena, and the circumstances under which I would comply with the same. Finally, I stated plainly that I would not engage in illegal activity myself during the course of my research. It was my hope that these measures would allow prospective research participants to engage with my project in a way respected their ethics, but I was also mindful that I needed to set boundaries that would 1) protect everyone who might be affected by my research, not just my prospective participants, 2) allow me to conduct myself and my research in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and 3) honour the trust the Folklore Department had placed in me by approving such a sensitive research project. Again, it is my hope that fellow ethnographers might benefit from my discussion of these considerations in the design of their own ethically sensitive field work projects.

COVID-19 Impact Statement

This is not the dissertation I wanted or planned to write. This is the dissertation I was able to write given the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person ethnographic research I had already completed when it began, and the online research I was able to complete thereafter. However, the research field is never what we want or plan for it to be. Rather,

it is comprised of what we find when we arrive, what we miss when our training and our biases fail us, and the limitations time, place, and circumstance impose upon our research. In the case of this study, COVID-19 placed extraordinary limitations on my ability to conduct field work.

Ethical veganism and animal rights activism are performed both online and offline, and both places are valid sites of research. However, a study that centres online performances of ethical veganism and animal rights activism will by necessity be designed differently from its offline counterpart. For example, an online study limited to public websites and forums does not require the informed consent of owners, moderators, or visitors because there is no expectation of privacy in these places. Interview questions of prospective research participants must also be designed differently when there is a risk that interviews may be made public by circumstances outside the control of the researcher and participant. This is a serious consideration for scholars utilizing third-party communication platforms to conduct ethnographic interviews. The kind of research that would emerge from such an online study would certainly be useful, but it was not the study I designed. I knew there was a worldwide effort to enact restrictive ag-gag legislation that would silence the voices of animal rights activists engaged in whistleblowing about cruelty to farmed animals. Indeed, while I was designing my study in 2019, I was invited to submit an academic response to an Australian Parliamentary Inquiry about the "Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture," and this inquiry was itself a prelude to the enactment of ag-gag legislation in that country. I wanted for all of my research participants to feel safe talking to me about their ethical

beliefs and performances of activism, but I was especially interested in the voices of whistleblowers in the animal rights movement. This meant my field work needed to be conducted in person and in private. With this in mind, and having detailed the ethics and security provisions for my research project in the previous section, I now turn to a brief discussion of the ways COVID-19 affected that field work.

On March 11, 2020, after thirty-nine days in Toronto, my field work ended when the pandemic was declared. I could no longer safely attend animal rights events, which meant that I could no longer recruit research participants. Neither could I use a videoconferencing platform to interview the research participants I had recently recruited. As the CEO of my family's technology company and the wife of a senior software engineer, I knew that videoconferencing platforms like Zoom, Google, and Facebook could not be counted upon to protect the privacy of my research participants in the face of a court order, and I suspected that at least Facebook kept records of video conversations. This meant that the five animal rights events I had already attended and the seven research participants I had already interviewed comprised the entirety of my Toronto research. I briefly considered amending my ICEHR documents again to allow for the recruitment and remote interview of farmed animal sanctuary owners in the Greater Toronto Area, whose animal rights activism is concerned with the rescue and care of sick and injured farmed animals. These interviews would have contributed interesting nuances to my research project, and I would have enjoyed pursuing this line of inquiry. However, farmed animal sanctuary owners are animal rights activists themselves with close ties to the animal rights community and to open rescue in particular, since they are often the

recipients of animals removed from farms, which itself often requires breaking the law. In the end, I concluded that there was no difference in risk to these people and their associates than there was to anyone else I had hoped to interview, so I chose not to proceed.

From a financial perspective, I was more fortunate than some of my peers because I am a mature, married student whose husband supports my research and degree. After careful but rapid consideration of the situation on the day after the pandemic was declared, we concluded that we would be safer at home in Cape Breton than we would remaining in Toronto, so we rented a moving van and departed the following weekend. However, I would add that my research was not funded, so I paid out-of-pocket to move my family to Toronto, and then I paid out-of-pocket again to move us home. I had saved several thousand dollars over the course of my PhD studies so that I could conduct this field research, but that savings was now depleted.

These are the reasons why the research that comprises my dissertation is an amalgam of two projects. However, the ethnographic interviews I conducted as part of my Oral History 6710 project and the ethnographic data that comprises my dissertation project provide diverse opportunities for analysis of vegan animal rights activism in Canada, and the scholarship that follows is richer for the inclusion of them both. I hope that my folkloristic exploration of ethical belief and political performance contribute something of value to my discipline and that my discussion of ethics and security provisions is helpful

to future scholars conducting sensitive research. Finally, but most importantly, I hope that my work facilitates greater understanding of vegan animal rights activists.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One: "The Case for Ethical Belief" begins by introducing the positions of various philosophers and other scholars on the issue of animal rights. These include utilitarianism and the rebuttal to it, abolitionism, and the feminist caring ethic. From this groundwork, I begin to build the case for ethical belief in folkloristics with a discussion of existing scholarship on the place of ethics in the discipline, arguing that this work paves the way for a more formal study of ethical belief in folklore. I go on to demonstrate some of the ways theoretical belief scholarship might be applied to ethical belief and expand this demonstration to include the applicability of medical and religious belief scholarship. Finally, I combine a discussion of philosophy and folkloristics in the context of veganism, beginning with an exploration of relevant concepts from Antonio Gramsci's political writing and Thomas McLaughlin's scholarship on vernacular theory. As part of this work, I make an argument that carnism is a hegemonic, "common sense" tradition of ethical belief countered by veganism, which is a counter-hegemonic tradition of ethical belief, and I further argue that vegans are vernacular theorists who engage with this power structure not as a philosophical abstract but as a process and performance of their personal and collective ethical beliefs.

Chapter Two: "Vegan Voices" is concerned with the ways ethical belief is articulated in the interviews of my research participants. I offer it as a separate chapter because

Chapter One makes a broad argument for ethical belief in folkloristics and is almost wholly theoretical, while Chapter Two contains many interview excerpts of vegans and is almost wholly ethnographic. In it, I introduce the elements of my Newfoundland project and my Ontario project that engage with veganism as an ethical belief system and discuss related nuances of each project in turn. Following this, I utilize the work of the previous chapter to analyze the ethical beliefs of my research participants beginning with the beliefs parental figures imparted in childhood and continuing with the beliefs they held as adults before transitioning to veganism. I explore that transition period along with any "transition stories" they told me and move from there into a discussion of their current beliefs and practices, local concerns in relation to these, challenges to these, and supports for these. The chapter concludes with a discussion of traditionality in carnist discourses about veganism and traditional ways vegans respond to them.

Chapter Three: "Performing Animal Rights" offers an ethnographic exploration of four animal rights demonstrations in Toronto and utilizes performance theory as a foundation for analysis. Each one begins with a thick description of the demonstration to situate the reader in the discussion that follows. "Roaring Silence Against Bill 156" highlights the communicative processes of activists with special focus on the persuasive elements of three speakouts and the place of material culture in animal rights performance. "Toronto Cow Save Vigil" argues that slaughterhouse demonstrations are places of pilgrimage and memorial, distinguishes between various intended audiences of these events, and explores the tensions that arise between protesters and audiences. "Toronto Pig Save Vigil" problematizes the anger and violence directed at vegan animal

rights activists with special focus on the circumstances surrounding the death of Regan Russell outside Sofina Foods, arguing that a logic of contagion contributes to situational in-group cohesion among carnists who lash out at vegans. Finally, "GRASS Bar Isabel Protest" explores spatial and verbal tensions, performative crowding, and the role of police at a dynamic, hyperlocal foie gras demonstration outside a Toronto restaurant.

I conclude by revisiting the title of this dissertation in light of provocative new scholarship on interspecies folklore. Thereafter, I revisit the importance of viewing carnism as a system of ethical belief, arguing that when we make hegemonic belief systems visible, we are better able to address misconceptions hegemonic believers hold about their counter-hegemonic counterparts. There is also a call for scholarship of epiphanies and threshold experiences, which are narrativized in vegan animal rights communities as the aforementioned transition stories and may feature in shifts of ethical belief outside the scope of this inquiry. There is also a call for scholarship of tensions between competing ethical belief systems and the strategies that uphold them. Finally, I discuss the need for internationalization of this research to understand the ways vegan animal rights expressive culture is situated in other regional contexts, and I join my fellow folklore scholars in making a case for scholarship as activism.

Chapter One: The Case for Ethical Belief

Philosophy of Ethics in Animal Rights Discourse

The first part of this chapter is concerned with the work of four animal rights scholars; Australian philosopher Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*, American philosopher Tom Regan, author of *The Case for Animal Rights*, American scholar of comparative literature Josephine Donovan, author of "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory" and co-editor of *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals*, and American philosopher and legal scholar Gary Francione, author of *Rain Without Thunder: the Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*. These scholars do not represent the totality of philosophical and academic thinking on the topic of animal rights, but they do conceptualize the topic in ways that have been and remain important to veganism and the animal rights movement. More importantly, their work is echoed in vernacular expressions of ethical belief provided by research participants in my interviews with them. All of these scholars argue that animals are sentient beings, but each of them approaches the ethics of animal rights differently. Singer offers a philosophy of utilitarianism, arguing that our actions in relation to animals are ethical if they give equal consideration to all sentient beings. Regan offers a rebuttal to this, arguing that all sentient beings have basic moral rights because they are "subjects-of-a-life." Donovan's feminist caring ethic calls for "a fundamental respect for nonhuman life forms" (Donovan 1990, 374). Francione offers a philosophy of abolitionism in an animal rights context, arguing that no sentient being should be treated as property. What

follows is a brief discussion of each position along with relevant rebuttals to help familiarize the reader with this literature before it is applied to interviews with my research participants.

Peter Singer: Utilitarianism

Singer's 1975 book addresses the question of the animal in the language of liberation, which was also used during the time of publication to discuss other movements; Women's Liberation, Black Liberation, and Gay Liberation among them. In the preface to his first edition, he asks readers to recognize that their "attitudes to members of other species are a form of prejudice no less objectionable than prejudice about a person's race or sex" (Singer 2015, Preface to the 1975 Edition), and he names this prejudice "speciesism" in the chapter that follows (Singer 2015, chap. 1). Singer's argument for utilitarianism rests on this fundamental premise; namely, that animals are an oppressed class of sentient beings who cannot protest their oppression in an organized fashion and whose oppressors are guilty of speciesism.

From this premise, Singer begins to build a utilitarian argument for animal rights rooted in the work of eighteenth century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, writing that:

> Jeremy Bentham, the founder of the reforming utilitarian school of moral philosophy, incorporated the essential basis of moral equality into his system of ethics by means of the formula: "Each to count for one and none for more than one." In other words, the interests of every being affected by an action are to be taken into account and given the same weight as the like interests of any other being (Singer 2015, chap. 1).

Singer qualifies this basic utilitarian argument by pointing out that:

> It is an implication of this principle of equality that our concern for others and our readiness to consider their interests ought not to depend on what they are like or on what abilities they may possess. Precisely what our concern or consideration requires us to do may vary according to the characteristics of those affected by what we do: concern for the well-being of children growing up in America would require that we teach them to read; concern for the well-being of pigs may require no more than that we leave them with other pigs in a place where there is adequate food and room to run freely (Singer 2015, chap. 1).

Singer's concern for equal consideration according to need is again honed by Bentham, who writes that the most important reason for an ethic of equality where animals are concerned is not "Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer" (Bentham 1781, chap. 17)? Singer himself adds that the capacity for suffering is "the vital characteristic that gives a being the right to equal consideration" (Singer 2015, chap. 1).

In Singer's view, our efforts to end speciesism and forward the cause of animal liberation require us to focus on the equality of all beings, the various needs of all beings, and their capacity for suffering. He argues that humans are not privileged above animals in this respect. However, a self-aware human being with family relationships and plans for the future has a more valuable life than does the average mouse. So in cases where the lives of the human and the mouse are weighted against each other, the human's life is of greater worth. Conversely, the life of a healthy chimpanzee, dog, or pig may be weighted more heavily than that of a mentally handicapped infant or senile person when using these same criteria of self-awareness, family relationships, and plans for the future. In short, whatever criteria we apply to value the lives of humans, we must also apply to value the lives of animals. He cushions this sharp philosophical razor by writing that "the conclusions that are argued for in this book flow from the principle of minimizing

suffering alone," but he does not waver from his essential premise that the most ethical choice in a given situation is the one that offers the best outcome for the most individuals involved, and he includes animals in the scope of this premise (Singer 2015, chap. 1).

Tom Regan: Subjects-of-a-Life

Regan's 1983 book addresses the question of the animal in the language of moral rights. He argues that all humans and "normal mammalian animals aged one or more" (Regan 2004, 81) are "subjects-of-a-life," which he defines as follows:

> ...individuals are subjects-of-a-life if they have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychosocial identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone else's interests (Regan 2004, 243).

Individuals, human or animal, who are subjects-of-a-life have inherent value, even though some humans ("infants, young children, and the mentally deranged or enfeebled") and all animals are moral patients, who are incapable of knowing the difference between right and wrong but are still subject to right and wrong treatment by moral agents, who do know the difference (Regan 2004, 151-156). Animals who are moral patients and also subjects-of-a-life have moral rights; specifically, the right to respectful treatment and the right to be free from harm (Regan 2004, 279-280). These moral rights are inherent, universal, equal, and can neither be created nor destroyed by the activities of a ruler or legislative body, making them different from legal rights (Regan 2004, 267-268). They also exist even in the presence of another individual's need or suffering, since harming

one individual to help another is morally wrong in the face of the first individual's moral rights to respectful treatment and to freedom from harm. This places Regan's argument for the moral rights of animals who are subjects-of-a-life at odds with Singer's argument that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.

Regan's rebuttal to Singer is also a rebuttal to utilitarianism, and he writes that:

> On its face, utilitarianism seems to be the fairest, least prejudicial view around. Everyone's interests count, and no one's interests count for any more than the like interests of anyone else. The trouble is, as we have seen, there is no necessary connection, no pre-established harmony between everybody's abiding by the equality principle and everybody's having their interests forwarded equally. On the contrary, reliance on the principle of utility could sanction acting in ways where some individuals have their interests affected in significantly adverse ways-for example they are killed because this brings about optimal aggregated results (Regan 2004, 226-227).

His most compelling example of this problem comes a few pages earlier, when he argues that the animal industry is a big business that employs a great many people who raise, slaughter, transport, and process animals, their body parts, and their secretions for food. These people have families who depend upon them for the necessities of life and whose well-being is dependent upon the use of animals, but this is in direct conflict with Singer's call for vegetarianism. A utilitarian consideration of animals could argue that their needs are less important in the aggregate than are the needs of the humans who depend upon their deaths to make a living (Regan 2004, 221-222). Of course, this example itself is flawed when we consider the numbers of land animals killed for food per year globally, which was 21,451,910,642 in 1984, the year after Regan's book was written. Even if we remove from this number the animals who are slaughtered before they reach the age at which Regan argues they become subjects-of-a-life (chickens, sheep, and pigs) that

number was still 246,319,936 cows (Orzechowski 2022). If each of these individuals is due the equal consideration Singer's utilitarianism advises, their numbers alone make the distinction between the many and the few fairly muddy. However, like Singer, Regan ultimately sides with humanity in situations where equal consideration or moral value are concerned, writing that in the hypothetical case of a lifeboat that only holds four individuals, where there are four humans and a dog, the dog should be denied a place because the death of a human would cause more harm than the death of a dog (Regan 2004, xxix).

I would point out here that Regan is basing his argument for the moral rights of most animals on the subject-of-a-life criteria they share with humans. However, not all humans are subjects-of-a-life according to this criteria, and they are not thereby excluded from our moral responsibility to them. So it is with animals. Newborn humans and newborn whales are both moral patients whether or not they have a developed sense of self, and as moral agents, we have a duty of care toward them. But then, my own ethical beliefs on this issue align most closely with Josephine Donovan's.

Regan's rebuttal to Josephine Donovan and other ethic-of-care scholars is a problematic and personal critique of the feminist caring ethic. I will address the work of these scholars in more detail below, but in brief, they advocate situating animals in our moral community by way of compassion and sympathy for their circumstances. Regan summarizes the position of these scholars by writing that:

> Owing to a variety of cultural forces, ethic-of-care feminists maintain, men tend to think in certain ways, women in others. To begin with, men (but not women) tend to think in dualistic, hierarchical terms. For example, men tend

> to view reason as standing over against emotion (a dualism), and also tend to think that reason is the superior of the two (a hierarchy). The same pattern emerges in the case of objectivity and subjectivity, impartiality and partiality, justice and care, culture and nature, and individualism and communitarianism. In each of these and other cases, the world tends to be carved up by men into dualistic terms, and, in each such case, one of the two terms is ranked higher, as being of greater importance and value than its opposite (Regan 2004, xli).

However, Regan's summary of Donovan's position lacks depth because it articulates her concerns about animal rightism without articulating the basis for these concerns and leads the reader to think that she is guilty of the very dualistic and hierarchical thinking she critiques. Having offered his incomplete summary, he goes on to write that "With the preceding serving as a logical backdrop, the denunciation of individual rights voiced by ethic-of-care feminists is intelligible" (Regan 2004, xli-xlii), intimating that without his incomplete summary, it would not be. Later he writes that "The objections these feminists raise against the rights view all follow the same logical pattern. Patriarchal modes of thought are first characterized in terms of certain traits a, b, c; the rights view is said to have traits a, b, c, therefore, the rights view is denounced as patriarchal" (Regan 2004, xlii), thereby utilizing his incomplete summary to make a sweeping generalization about "these feminists" who "all follow the same logical pattern." Finally, he invites the reader to "consider how fair these ethic-of-care feminists are in their efforts to understand and characterize the views they attribute to me" and goes on to supply examples of his previous writing that express emotion in order to refute the incomplete summary he has provided (Ibid).

Josephine Donovan: Feminist Caring Ethic

In providing an introduction to the ways a feminist caring ethic addresses the question of the animal, I have had to choose among a plurality of voices to represent, as this section of my work is merely an overview of animal rights philosophy and not a thorough examination of it. With this in mind, I will begin with a piece of scholarship Donovan calls the "classic statement of the care ethic," written by Carol Gilligan in 1982:

> The moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. The conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules (Gilligan 1982, 19).

Gilligan's statement resituates the discussion of animal rights from an ethic based in the rational and individual to an ethic based in the sympathetic and relational, and this resituation is at the core of the feminist caring ethic. Citing scholars of sympathy theory, Donovan argues that our compassion for animals makes them part of our moral community, engenders moral respect, and replaces abstract animal rights ethics rooted in rationalism with emotional animal rights ethics that acknowledge the "particular other" (Donovan 2000, 156-158; Fischer 1992, 228, 245; Mercer 1972; 124, 132-133). This acknowledgement has political and cultural dimensions that force us to examine the "symbolic cultural significances of meat-eating," among them the use of meat as a symbol of masculinity and the National Rifle Association's promotion of hunting as a performance of rural resilience. Embedded in these political and cultural dimensions are power disparities that "obscure the reality of animal suffering" and call us to "lift the veil

on animal agony" (Donovan 2000, 159). An ethic of sympathy also forces us to consider the needs of animals, which itself requires a careful assessment of those needs and a response to them from a place of "attentive love," which Donovan defines as an "exercise of the moral imagination," citing Simone Weil, who writes that:

> The love of our neighbour in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him [or her] "What are you going through?" It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled "unfortunate," but as [an individual], exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction. For this reason it is enough, but it is indispensable, to know how to look at him [or her] in a certain way. This way of looking is first of all attentive (Weil 1977, 51).

Donovan's critiques of Singer and Regan are critiques of Cartesian objectivism, which she finds at the root of Singer's utilitarianism and Regan's natural rights theory, even though Regan himself critiques the Cartesian perspective that animals are machines (Regan 2004, 1-33). In Donovan's view, Descartes' rational, mechanistic universe is a masculine departure from the "organic female universe of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (Donovan 1990, 44). Cartesian objectivism finds its way into animal rights philosophy by way of a reliance upon rational abstractions; Singer's argument that the needs of humans and animals deserve equal consideration and Regan's argument that animals have inherent moral value. However, these positions are derived "from the mechanistic premises of Enlightenment epistemology (natural rights in the case of Regan and utilitarian calculation in the case of Singer) and in their suppression/denial of emotional knowledge, continue to employ Cartesian, or objectivist modes even while they condemn the scientific practices enabled by them" (Donovan 1990, 45). Donovan also has the same concern about Regan's criteria for "subjects-of-a-life" that I do, writing that if

complex awareness is the baseline for inherent worth, the status of "severely retarded humans, humans in irreversible comas, fetuses, even human infants" is called into question (Donovan 1990, 37).

Gary Francione: Abolitionism

Francione does not introduce a specific philosophy for addressing the question of the animal. Rather, he utilizes Regan's philosophy of animal rights as a baseline for addressing the issue of animal welfarism versus animal rightism and introduces an approach to animal rights he calls "abolitionism." He writes that:

> The need to distinguish animal rights from animal welfare is clear not only because of the theoretical inconsistencies between the two positions but also because the most ardent defenders of institutionalized animal exploitation themselves endorse animal welfare. Almost everyone-including those who use animals in painful experiments or who slaughter them for food-accepts as abstract propositions that animals ought to be treated "humanely" and ought not to be subjected to "unnecessary" suffering. Animal rights theory rejects this approach, holding that animals, like humans, have inherent value that must be respected (Francione 2010, Introduction).

In Francione's view, much of the contemporary animal rights community regards any reduction in animal suffering as a victory for animal rights. However, measures such as heated transport vehicles, larger cages, and low-stress slaughter methods are not consistent with a philosophy that regards animals as beings with inherent moral value. Worse, animal welfare reforms primarily serve to entrench animal suffering by assuring its perpetrators that small improvements are a sufficient salve to the conscience of those who wish to be viewed as "humane" in their treatment of animals. Arguing that "Animal welfarism, especially when applied in an economic system that has strong property

notions, is structurally defective and conceptualizes the conflict in ways that ensure animal interests never prevail" (Ibid), Francione instead proposes "the incremental eradication of the property status of animals" (Ibid).

Francione's rebuttal of Singer rests on a finer point of utilitarian philosophy as he writes that "Singer's approach is clearly more favorable toward animals than is classical animal welfare, which accorded little weight to animal interests. Singer's theory, however, is not a theory of animal rights. For Singer, the rightness or wrongness of conduct is determined by consequences, not by any appeal to right" (Francione 2010, chap. 1). In a practical application of Singer's ethics, an animal may be harmed if the greater good is served. However, this harm is ethically wrong to Regan and Francione because for them, animals have inherent moral value.

Unfortunately, Francione dismisses Donovan and other feminist caring ethic proponents out of hand, writing that "I recognize that some will claim that my focus on the distinction between rights and welfare is itself too confined in light of other moral theories such as ecofeminism, sentientism, or whatever" (Francione 2010, Conclusion). His subsequent argument, that moral rights must underlie any other consideration of the ecofeminist, is only a few sentences long and dismisses Donovan's critique of Cartesian objectivism without ever naming it or her.

Now we have the first of the components necessary to construct a folkloristic analysis of ethical beliefs among vegans; namely, an understanding of several ways philosophers and other scholars have addressed the question of the animal. When I bring the work of these scholars into my analysis of interview excerpts, I will be situating it alongside

vernacular theories among vegans that echo this work in whole or as part of nuanced ethical belief systems. Many of my research participants use the terms "speciesism" as Singer has and/or "abolitionism" as Francione has, so it will be easy to make connections between their vernacular theories and the philosophies underpinning them. But equally important are those vernacular theories that arise out of lived experience and personal reflection, which obliquely reference or do not reference at all the scholarship I have discussed here, and I will analyze these as well.

However, while speciesism and abolitionism are central to the ethical belief systems and vernacular theories of many vegans, and while many vegans express ethical beliefs and vernacular theories in line with those I have discussed here, I have not introduced the work of these scholars to establish a canon of ethical belief to which vernacular ethical belief may be compared. This would set up a dualism I do not think exists in veganism and do not think would be helpful to the case for ethical belief in folkloristics. Rather, I have introduced the work of these scholars to ground my dissertation in some of the most widely read and cited literature on ethics in animal rights so that it may be contextualized alongside folkloristic scholarship of belief in my analysis of ethnographic interviews.

In practice, if an interview addresses animal liberation, speciesism, or equal consideration of needs, I will associate the interviewee's ethical beliefs and vernacular theories with Singer's work. If an interview addresses animal rights and inherent moral value given the cognitive and emotional capacities of animals, I will associate it with Regan's work. If an interview addresses sympathy for animals, political power dynamics between animals and human institutions, the needs of animals, and "attentive love," I will

associate it with Donovan's work. If an interview addresses abolitionism in an animal rights context, I will associate it with Francione's work. Finally, if an interview addresses ethical beliefs and vernacular theories not in line with the work of these scholars, I will analyze it using the same folkloristic theories utilized in conjunction with animal rights philosophy in the other cases mentioned above. Again, these scholars do not represent the totality of philosophical thought on the topic of animal rights, but they are important thinkers and writers often cited by vegans and animal rights activists themselves, which is the reason I have restricted this discussion and the subsequent application of philosophical theory to their work.

Folkloristic Scholarship of Belief

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines ethics as "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity" (Oxford University Press 2021), and it is with this definition in mind that I approach the work of the present section, in which I argue for a folkloristics of ethical belief in three ways. First, I explore the work of scholars who discuss the place of ethics in folklore and argue that this and other scholarship like it pave the way for a study of ethical belief. I will reflect more deeply on the scholarship of Donald Brenneis and Phillips Stevens Jr. here, bringing to light some of the underlying reasons for their engagement with ethics. As part of this work, I will also discuss Simon Bronner's 2005 article "Contesting Tradition: The Deep Play and Protest of Pigeon Shoots," which is itself a folkloristic examination of animal rights demonstrations that cites the work of Josephine Donovan, Tom Regan, and Peter Singer. Next, I explore

foundational folkloristic scholarship of belief with a discussion of Marilyn Motz's "The Practice of Belief" and a return to the writing of several folklore scholars mentioned in the Introduction to argue that this scholarship can be applied to the study of ethical belief. Finally, I revisit Bonnie Blair O'Connor's *Healing Traditions: Alternative Medicine and the Health Professions* and Sabina Magliocco's *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* to argue that their work in these texts can be repurposed for the study of ethical belief. While I am aware that these authors engage with different belief contexts, underlining principles, and ideological matrixes, their work is useful to the present study because it illustrates the place of ethics and the possibility for ethical belief studies in folkloristics. Overall, it is my goal to establish that existing folklore scholarship supports the analysis of ethical beliefs expressed in the interviews of my research participants and also supports a study of ethical belief in general.

Donald Brenneis is concerned with the ways artistic communication "is not solely an artifact or reflection of the political but also plays a critical role in constituting it" (Brenneis 1993, 293). His locus of inquiry is the performative shift in folkloristics outlined in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, but much of his discussion is concerned with the ways "recent work in folklore has shaped and resonates with broader intellectual concerns and changes, whether in cultural studies, critical theory, or more mainstream social analysis" (Brenneis 1993, 297). He concludes, among other things, that "Aesthetics and the broader folkloristic enterprise to which it is central can enhance rather than detract from an understanding of ethics" (Brenneis 1993, 300), and his argument calls folklorists to apply the intellectual strengths of the discipline to an understanding of the

contemporary ethical complexities that give rise to and are received from "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1972, 13).

Phillips Stevens Jr. also calls folklorists to engage with contemporary ethical concerns. In his impassioned article addressing the narrative roots of the Satanic Panic, he writes that:

> It is all folklore, of a particularly insidious and dangerous form; moreover, it fits classic and easily recognized patterns. Folklorists ought to be outraged at the irresponsibility of media and the "experts," and at their blatant misrepresentation of the traditional cultural systems of our ethnic minorities, and they ought to be actively trying to calm things down. But, where *are* the folklorists (Stevens Jr. 1996, 342)?

Stevens Jr. is concerned about the "incredible carelessness" of news representatives in checking their sources about the Satanic Panic, the ways this carelessness contributes to a "dangerous" folklore that demonizes Wicca and Santeria, and the marginalization of beliefs and individuals that results from this. He argues that "Wherever they are, folklorists should get involved, NOW. This stuff is right up their alley" and later writes that "Folklorists have the knowledge about what is going on; most importantly, they have both a professional and a moral responsibility to share that knowledge" (Stevens Jr. 1996). His appeal is a powerful one that calls his colleagues to consider their ethical duty to both the folklore discipline and to a society caught up in a moral panic.

In recent scholarship, folklorists have answered his call in the Fall 2018 issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* devoted to a discussion of fake news, in which Tom Mould writes that the topic of fake news is "dominating public discourse in the United States" and adds that "Folklorists should be a part of those discussions and debates" (Mould

2018, 371). Later he concludes that "While the role of 'debunker' remains a stigmatized one among folklorists - we are wary of criticisms about devaluing the importance of why people tell the stories they do and of dismissing the importance of very real anxieties, fears, and hopes - the era of 'fake news' has forced many of us to reconsider our competing ethical obligations" (Mould 2018, 376). It would be an improper generalization of the scholarship in this issue to assert that it all emerges from the same desire to "calm things down" that Stevens Jr. expresses. However, the folklorists *are here*, engaging ethically with a problematic element of public discourse while at the same time engaging with their "competing ethical obligations."

Simon Bronner's 2005 article "Contesting Tradition: The Deep Play and Protest of Pigeon Shoots" is especially relevant to my argument for ethical belief studies. Bronner's discussion of the conflict between animal rights activists and participants in a pigeon shoot is largely concerned with cultural ideas in competition, as he writes that "For the protestors, the point is that its result and overwhelming message is one of promoting "violence" and "brutality"; for supporters, it is that it fosters a needed sense of cultural identity and community by building on the legacy of the past" (Bronner 2005, 415). However, what he calls a semiotic discussion is also a discussion of opposing ethical beliefs and the intersections of conflict between them. Indeed, he begins the article by writing that it "offers a folkloristic perspective on the contested tradition by analyzing how the protest rhetorically served to present tradition as a 'problem' in the ethical modernization of society" (Bronner 2005, 409).

Figure 4: Animal Rights Activist Hangs a Sign Outside Sofina Foods (MacCath-Moran 2020m)

These tensions between ethical belief systems call to mind a conversation I overheard between two slaughterhouse workers as I passed them in a crosswalk outside Sofina Foods in Burlington, Ontario during a scheduled animal rights demonstration in March 2020. While I walked toward animal rights activists hanging signs that read "Bacon Causes Cancer," "Friends Not Food," and "Shut It Down," I overheard one slaughterhouse worker say to the other that these activists were the stupidest people he had ever seen. In that moment, the opposing ethical beliefs of the groups were plain to me; those of the activists who pointed out the health dangers of consuming pig flesh along with the

speciesism underlying that consumption and those of the slaughterhouse workers whose ethical beliefs conflicted enough that they thought the activists were stupid.

Regrettably, Bronner's characterization of the animal rights position reflects a possible academic bias against the community sometimes found in other scholarship as well. He writes that "For protestors, the shooters represented predatory, phallocentric rapists" but does not quantify the "rapists" element of his characterization (Bronner 2005, 409), and "The animal rights movement literature consistently includes the connotation that animals are childlike or feminized victims" where the term "feminized" is yet another mischaracterization of Donovan's argument (Bronner 2005, 412). His treatment of the ways animal rights philosophers problematize tradition is also too general, as he writes that "From this vantage point, tradition is a static instrument of human dominion that people in culture mindlessly follow without regard to harmful consequences to animals" (Bronner 2005, 413), an oversimplification of Mary Midgley's position that he then uses to make further arguments. Overall, the article is a useful folkloristic exploration of conflicting ethical beliefs through a semiotic lens. However, it also encourages a view of formal and vernacular animal rights ethics not unlike Regan's view of the feminist caring ethic, in which the subject of the scholarship is rendered as hyper-emotional and reactionary.

I have seen this academic bias against veganism and animal rights activism elsewhere in scholarship. Sometimes the scholar's carnism is obvious, and sometimes it is hidden, but in every case the writing relaxes around the topic in ways it should not. It is as if the scholar is working on

the unexamined assumption that since we all know vegans and animal rights activists are wrong-thinking radicals, it is not necessary to represent their perspectives with the care we reserve for their right-thinking opponents.

With the foregoing in mind, the above review of Bronner's work reveals complex bias potentials and trajectories, and there are important methodological implications related to positionality as well. I am both a vegan animal rights activist and a scholar of vegan animal rights activism, so I am expected to critically address and contextualize my positionality because of potential insider biases. At the same time, carnism is a hegemonic and largely invisible ethical belief system that requires careful self-interrogation to understand and extract from scholarship it might otherwise influence. So it is equally important for outsider scholars to critically address and contextualize their positionality when they discuss vegan and animal rights communities and perspectives.

There are many pieces of folklore scholarship that might be considered foundational to belief studies, and it is not my intention to discuss them all here. It *is* my intention to pull from these a few pieces that offer good tools a folklorist might utilize in the study of ethical belief. The first of these is Marilyn Motz's "The Practice of Belief," which endeavours to "reclaim, recuperate, and recontextualize the concept of belief as a keyword of the discipline" (Motz 1998, 340). Her article is focused primarily on "cultural traditions and modes of thought that have been persistently excluded from rational discourse since the enlightenment" (Motz 1998, 343), and ethics is not among these. However, in discussing these cultural traditions and modes of thought, she offers several

important ideas about belief in general. The first is a working definition of belief as "a process of knowing that is not subject to verification or measurement by experimental means within the framework of a modern Western scientific paradigm" (Motz 1998, 340). She also tells us that "Belief requires a believer: it cannot exist at the level of pure discourse. It is always located in individuals, in real life. It is always local and specific" (Motz 1998, 349). Finally, her scholarship reminds us of the shift in folklore's focus from "collection and classification of texts to the examination of process and performance" (Motz 1998, 348) and also reminds us that our subject matter "slips through cracks, blurs genres, exceeds its practical usefulness, eludes maps and diagrams, refuses to be counted and measured, and declines to specify its meaning" (Ibid).

There is plenty here to support an argument for the study of ethical belief in folkloristics. Ethical beliefs are not measurable via scientific experiments. They are constructed by the processes of human thought and consideration, and they are performed in a range of ways from private to public. In addition, while my exploration of animal rights philosophy presented us with ethical abstractions, ethical *beliefs* are a different matter altogether. They require believers, and as I will demonstrate in the interviews to come, these believers vernacularize and contextualize the philosophical abstractions that underpin their ethical beliefs even when they call them by name and claim adherence to them. However, there is one important element of folkloristic belief studies in need of modification before we include it in a tool kit for the study of ethical belief; namely, our critique of language that subjugates belief to science. While folklorists have problematized power imbalances created by the use of "superstition," "backward," and

"outmoded" as descriptors for religious and supernatural belief (Bowman and Valk 2014, 6; Mullen 2000, 126), I would problematize the power imbalances created by "radical," "extreme," and "terror" as they are used pejoratively in descriptions of minority ethical beliefs like veganism and the performance of those beliefs in non-violent animal rights activism.[12]

I have already introduced one of the more important pieces of folklore literature that might be applied to the study of ethical belief and used it in a brief discussion of the differences between the ethical beliefs of vegans and carnists; David Hufford's "Traditions of Disbelief." In my Introduction, I write that veganism and carnism are both belief systems in the same way that belief in the supernatural and disbelief in the supernatural are. Hufford also discusses the ways supernatural belief and disbelief run parallel to each other and that traditions of disbelief are "surprisingly homogenous" across the range of disbelievers (Hufford 1982, 48). Also mentioned in the Introduction are Heather Carver and Elaine Lawless and their discussion of "the cultural frames that endorse male entitlement" (Carver and Lawless 2009, Backdrop). These cultural frames are belief systems both in opposition and parallel to those Carver and Lawless hope to encourage, in which women are not subjected to male entitlement and the violence that emerges from it. The same observations may be made of ethical beliefs; that they are

12 The use of "terrorism" to describe the activities of animal rights activists gained traction in the aftermath of 9/11, when the FBI and US lawmakers co-opted the term from the war on terror to equate the use of passenger airplanes as bombs with the non-violent release of dogs and cats from research facilities and subsequently argued that "The FBI's investigation of animal rights extremists and eco-terrorism matters is our highest domestic terrorism priority" (Potter 2011, War at Home).

systems, that systems in opposition often run parallel to each other, and that while the ethical beliefs of individuals are certainly nuanced, there are elements of homogeneity among believers. Bronner draws attention to this when he identifies elements of oppositional but parallel ethical beliefs among the animal rights protesters and pigeon shooters in the above article, writing that:

> From the viewpoint of animal rights, Hegins centrally represented a tradition of cruelty or "barbarism" pervasive in America and holding back progress toward creating a civil society; from the perspective of sportsmen, by contrast, the animal rights movement was central to all the depravity associated with modernizing, cosmopolitan America that had taken over the country's soul (Bronner 2005, 444).

Leonard Primiano's work on vernacular religious belief is especially useful to an argument for ethical belief. In Primiano's conclusion to *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*, he writes that "What makes 'vernacular religion' conceptually valuable, and why it has been applied by scholars in a variety of fields from folklore to theology to ethnology to art history, is that it highlights the power of the individual and communities of individuals to create and re-create their own religion" (Primiano 2014, 383). His arguments here are rooted in both belief studies and performance theory, which understands "the nuances of religious belief and related practices, as well as verbal and material expressions of religion, as artistic communication" (Primiano 2014, 386). This creation and re-creation of religion on the part of individuals and communities is also a communication of belief from individual to community and back again. Elements of group religious belief inform the individual, while individual religious beliefs are withheld or shared according to group dynamics and tolerances. Ethical beliefs share this

dynamism. In the case of individual vegans and vegan communities, ethical beliefs are created and re-created as individuals absorb information about the treatment of animals from various sources and contextualize that information alongside their personal upbringing and values to create vernacular theories about the issue. These theories are contested, refined, and supported in vegan communities, which are subject to similar processes of ethical belief creation and vernacular theorization.

One of the most interesting examples of this in my research comes from Jackson MacLean, who was a co-moderator of the NL Vegans Facebook group and a co-founder of the St. John's VegFest in 2017:

> The seal hunt is such a big thing here, and it's so contentious even within the vegan community. So we're kind of walking on eggshells, because if we step into that with VegFest and even mention the seal hunt at all, we would end up with protesters outside saying that the seal hunt is okay, and the VegFest would probably not be as positive an experience (McLean 2017).

Note that in this interview excerpt, MacLean says that the seal hunt is "contentious even within the vegan community." My own research of the NL Vegans Facebook group supports this. Some of the most heavily-charged debates I encountered in that group were rooted in local traditions and foodways around the seal hunt. While most Newfoundland vegans engaged in these debates opposed the seal hunt, others supported it as an expression of Indigenous tradition and a necessary food source in the far north. Outside Newfoundland, vegan beliefs about the seal hunt are more homogenous, though not uniform, and this points to the localized interplay of ethical beliefs and vernacular theories between vegan individuals and communities.

My final exploration of folkloristic scholarship is concerned with the ways medical and religious beliefs have been understood and analyzed by scholars. My goal here is to demonstrate that this work can be repurposed for a formal study of ethical belief in general and for this study of veganism and animal rights activism in particular. Bonnie Blair O'Connor's work in *Healing Traditions: Alternative Medicine and the Health Professions* does quite a bit of heavy lifting where health care beliefs are concerned, and much of her work is useful to mine. Of primary interest are her discussions of vernacular health care strategies. She writes that "ordinary people's health care strategies frequently involve the use of both conventional medical and nonconventional approaches, in varying combinations. Use of nonconventional modalities may be undertaken on an occasional or event-specific basis, or as a part of routine preventive and therapeutic health behavior" (O'Connor 1995, xv). While her work necessarily compares conventional and nonconventional approaches to medicine, she avoids creating a dichotomy between them by analyzing the ways people blend these approaches. O'Connor later writes that her book is "a study of vernacular health belief systems and of some of the ways in which people's experiences, beliefs, and values influence their health care choices" (O'Connor 1995, xv-xvi), and she is careful to foreground the lived experiences of patients throughout. By way of comparison, Jackson MacLean's discussion of the seal hunt demonstrates that some Newfoundland vegans combine conventional and nonconventional ideas about the hunt with their own lived experiences to arrive at nuanced ethical beliefs about the practice (McLean 2017). While often contested in vegan communities, these nuanced ethical beliefs are neither wholly pro-vegan or pro-hunt. This process of ethical belief

cultivation also exists elsewhere in society, which means the same folkloristic tools can be utilized to understand and analyze it.

Also of interest is O'Connor's discussion of the assumptions conventional health professions have made that "folk and popular systems of health beliefs and practices would inevitably decline in modern and industrialized societies, falling away before the forces of modernization and progress to be replaced by modern, Western medicine" (O'Connor 1995, 1) and that "those people who have recourse to nonconventional healing practices are most likely to do so instead of resorting to the biomedical system" (Ibid). She writes that these assumptions have been misleading, and there are similar misleading assumptions made about vegans. Animal rights attorney Camille Labchuk addresses one of these when she says that "It's the perception of animal activists sometimes that we all just go gaga when we see an animal on the street. And I, you know, I like seeing dogs. Sure. But I think a lot of our team is just motivated by these more abstract conceptions of justice and fairness than they are about the personal attachment to individuals" (Labchuk 2020). Labchuk's co-workers and co-activists are motivated by their ethical beliefs about justice and fairness to animals, which problematizes the popular but misleading assumption that all vegans are motivated by an anthropomorphic attachment to animals that expresses itself in unreasonable emotional pleas for their lives. In broader strokes, a formal study of ethical belief would certainly benefit from O'Connor's analysis of misleading assumptions, especially since those cited above benefit from a power imbalance between conventional and unconventional medicine that may also be found between conventional and unconventional ethics.

Sabina Magliocco gives us some useful tools for understanding community and identity among American Neo-Pagans, and these are also useful for understanding the same among vegans because both are minority groups. However, the similarities between Neo-Pagans and vegans must be drawn with care because the differences are subtle but significant. Magliocco writes that:

> American Neo-Paganism exists both as a community in which religious culture is created and shaped, and as an identity performed for both insiders and outsiders. As new religions form and develop, disagreements arise over a number of issues, and these cause factions to diverge in various directions. Neo-Paganism, as a movement which is antiauthoritarian, critical of the dominant culture, and invested in the idea of individual spiritual authority, has spawned an almost endless number of denominations; in fact, one of its appealing features for individualistic, freedom-seeking Americans is that it leaves a great deal of space for difference (Magliocco 2004, chap. 1).

Contrary to the popular belief that vegans constitute a monolithic group of ethical perfectionists, vegan communities are places where ethical culture is rigorously interrogated according to the interplay of abstract philosophical principles, community concerns, and individual perspectives, much as religious culture in Neo-Pagan communities is created and shaped by "shifting, complex networks" and "multiple, overlapping traditions" (Ibid). The above discussion of seal hunting in Newfoundland is but one example among many of this. However, while Neo-Pagans are individualistic because the locus of their identity is in what Magliocco identifies as orthognosis, or the recognition of the same core spiritual experience in one another (Ibid), vegans are communitarian because the locus of their identity is in a shared ethical belief system that seeks to reduce the suffering of animals, however contested the particulars of that system may be. The former community makes space for divergent identities, beliefs, and

practices to suit the spiritual needs of the individual, while the latter is less tolerant of this divergence because it is a united response to the oppression of animals. Still, both communities are antiauthoritarian and critical of the dominant culture; Neo-Pagans for religious reasons and vegans for ethical reasons.

Because of this, individuals in both groups sometimes find themselves at odds with their broader communities and with their own families; Neo-Pagans because they perceive family members to be "dysfunctional or dogmatic in their religious and moral views" (Magliocco 2004, chap. 4), and vegans because of ethical tensions between themselves and their non-vegan family members. In this excerpt of my interview with Dane Reeves, he discusses these tensions in response to my question "What do your family members and friends think about your veganism, or your activism, or both?":

> So my family is understanding of it. They respect it. They think it's good for me. They haven't, or they're not willing to say that it's a good thing. My grandma is, I think. But everybody else in the family just thinks that it's not a good thing for everyone. When I first came home and started cooking, my mom thought it was a phase, and she just kind of brushed it off, you know, and a decade later, nope. So it's come out now more, and it's causing more friction with me being an activist because it's more in the face. It's not just me passively being okay with Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner. I actually missed Christmas dinner on purpose this year. I mean, my grandma was, you know, just send us a list of what you want for Christmas kind of thing, and I was like, oh, my God. I just, it's hard because for Christmas, all I wanted was, I didn't want any presents. I didn't want any money. I didn't want anything, any material stuff. I just wanted to feel connected to my family, you know, and I think being a vegan, being an activist with family specifically, that can be really, really hard. It's really strong relationships, and what you eat is such an intimate decision. If I can't connect with my family on what we eat, that's going to drive a wedge. And I asked that, if you can, I was just like, I know that you guys eat meat or whatever, if we could have a vegan dinner, that would make me really happy. And then, I know they talked about it for like a day and a half and they were just like no, and it's that ingrained (Reeves 2020).

Here Reeves articulates the difficulty in reconciling his own ethical beliefs and practices with those of family members, who have strong, ingrained ideas about the consumption of animals. He even requests a plant-based Christmas dinner in lieu of gifts but misses the holiday meal on purpose when his family declines the request. It is worth noting that elsewhere in the interview, Reeves mentions that his grandmother has cancer and that he has been cooking plant-based meals for her because he "heard that the vegan diet can help keep cancer in remission" (Ibid), so the loss of this opportunity to spend time with her is both poignant and a testament to the family tensions that sometimes arise between vegans and their carnist relatives. Also worth noting is his mother's view that his veganism is a phase, which points to the carnist belief that animal consumption is normal, while the choice not to consume animals is deviant.

The folklore scholarship introduced above provides a valuable foundation for the study of ethical belief, but these pieces do specific, important work for my argument. Brenneis advocates the study of ethics in aesthetics, calling us to engage with the ways folklore constitutes and is informed by political and social realities. Stevens Jr., Mould, and others engage with political and social realities from their vantage points in folkloristics even when the tensions between their professional and moral obligations force them to inhabit uncomfortable intellectual spaces. Bronner addresses the ethical tensions between competing cultural ideas. None of these scholars nor any of the others I might have cited engage in a formal study of ethical belief, but they do highlight the place of ethics in expressive culture and in our profession. In her argument for belief as a keyword of folkloristics, Motz reminds us that belief is a process of knowing that requires

individual believers and a slippery practice that defies our efforts at categorization. Hufford situates belief and disbelief together as parallel opposites, while Carver and Lawless illustrate these parallel opposites in their discussion of male entitlement and female resistance. Primiano discusses the place of vernacularization among individuals and groups. While much of this foundational scholarship is directed at religious and social belief, it is also applicable to ethical belief. Finally, O'Connor argues that patients make use of conventional and unconventional healthcare strategies and discusses misleading assumptions about patient choices, while Magliocco analyzes the antiauthoritarianism of Neo-Pagan communities. Again, while these authors engage with different belief contexts, underlining principles, and ideological matrixes, their work is directly applicable to ethical belief in various ways; it helps us understand conventional and unconventional beliefs, it discourages us from making assumptions in our ethnographic studies of individual vegans and vegan communities, and it enables us to make sense of these people and groups in the context of belonging to a minority culture in opposition to a dominant culture. With all of the foregoing in mind, I would argue that folkloristics is well-prepared to engage in a formal study of ethical belief.

Carnist Hegemony and Vegan Counter-Hegemony

In the third section of this chapter, I will explore the idea of vernacular theory more closely in the context of Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Kate Crehan's *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives,* Joseph V. Femia's *Gramsci's Political Thought,* and Thomas McLaughlin's *Street Smarts and Critical*

Theory: Listening to the Vernacular. Utilizing these texts in combination with a folkloristic analysis of belief, I will argue that carnism is a "common sense" ideology, that it is hegemonic, and that because of these characteristics it is indeed an invisible tradition of ethical belief Then I will apply this argument to an examination of vegan and carnist discourses about Ontario Bill 156.

There are two key concepts in Antonio Gramsci's notebooks that have utility in this discussion. The first of these is *senso comune*, or "common sense." Kate Crehan writes that:

> *Senso comune*, in the notebooks, is that accumulation of taken-for-granted "knowledge" to be found in every human community. In any given time and place, this accumulation provides a heterogeneous bundle of assumed certainties that structure the basic landscapes within which individuals are socialized and chart their individual life courses (Crehan 2016, Common Sense).

This common sense is not vernacular wisdom but rather a loose collection of "multiple narratives, some closely connected and overlapping, some conflicting and contradictory, but all of which are, to some rational beings, self-evident truths" (Ibid). While this common sense may contain what Gramsci calls "good sense," it is rooted in societal inequalities and favours those in power, so it cannot be relied upon to properly inform or direct human behaviour (Ibid). Common sense narratives are not always hegemonic, but they are often shaped by the powerful and/or used to establish and maintain power. Because these narratives are accepted as de facto truths about the world, they are embedded in society and difficult to counter, especially when they are utilized in the maintenance of hegemony. However, they *must* be countered if any substantive social

change is to occur, and this begins with the individual's decision to think critically about common sense and take an active role in the shaping of society. Crehan elaborates on this critical thinking process:

> Gramsci's argument is that while we may have no choice but to begin from the common sense into which we are born, we should not accept its comforting familiarities unthinkingly, but continually question them, dragging into the light of day all the implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions buried within that which presents itself as simple reality. We must subject everything we are told is just 'the way things are' to careful and rigorous questioning. As an individual, one has an obligation 'to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labours of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one's personality' (Ibid).

The second concept is that of hegemony. Antonio Gramsci defines the functions of social hegemony and political government as "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group," and "The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (Gramsci 1989, The Formation of the Intellectuals). However, as we have already seen, the "dominant fundamental group" manipulates common sense to encourage consent, and in the above passage Gramsci argues that the state punishes those who do not consent. So the idea of consent in these contexts is problematic. Further, Joseph Femia writes that "the exigencies of survival and day-to-day practicalities restrict mental (or ideological) development, and subordinate even the unwilling and rebellious to the logic and norms of the system" (Femia 1981, 33). So while individuals should be interrogating the common sense handed to them by the circumstances of their upbringing and socioeconomic status,

they often never see a problem with the way things are at all, since their mental and ideological development is stymied by the pressures of everyday life. If they do begin the process of interrogation and become a threat to power, they are silenced by those who wield it, either directly with punitive measures or indirectly by the appropriation of counter-hegemonic narratives into hegemonic discourses.

Thomas McLaughlin also discusses hegemony in the context of his work on vernacular theory. He begins by citing Raymond Williams' definition of the word, which characterizes hegemony as a "whole body of practices and expectations" and a "lived system of meanings and values" that constitute the entirety of a person's reality in society (Williams 1977, 110). McLaughlin argues that it is difficult for us to think our way out of a system like this when the ideas that comprise it are constantly reinforced. This is why the work of critical theory and the critical theorist are so important. He writes that:

> Only a set of critical strategies informed by a skeptical philosophical tradition could take on the power of self-affirming, systematized experience. The critical theorist goes to school on Marx and Freud and Nietzsche and all the modern and postmodern methods of critical analysis in order to take the position within the society of the one who is aware, the one who is not unself-consciously immersed in invisible cultural assumptions. In this mindset, theory can be practiced only by an educated few who have both taken advantage of and turned their education against itself (McLaughlin 1996, 4-5).

However, this intellectual tradition is difficult to master, requires specialized training, and is replete with complex language, which leaves most people on the outside either accepting Williams' "lived system of meanings and values" without question or choosing to interrogate it with the intellectual tools they have to hand. This brings us to the central argument of McLaughlin's work, that:

> individuals who do not come out of a tradition of philosophical critique are capable of raising questions about the dominant cultural assumptions. They do so in ordinary language, and they often suffer from the blindness that unself-conscious language creates. But the fact that vernacular theories therefore do not completely transcend ideologies does not make them different in kind from academic theories (McLaughlin 1996, 5).

McLaughlin argues that "vernacular theory does not differ in kind from academic theory" and that while one is formal and the other informal, both are versions of the same "widely practiced intellectual strategy" (McLaughlin 1996, 6). The substantive difference between them is that vernacular theorists do not use the specialized training and complex language of the academy. Rather, they develop strategies rooted in their concerns and use language appropriate to those strategies. He later draws upon Foucault's discussion of "subjugated knowledges" and Gramsci's discussion of "organic intellectuals" to side with the intellectual work of everyday people on their issues of concern and later makes a compelling argument that "Groups defined by demeaning and dehumanizing mainstream values either do theory or die in spirit. That is, either they internalize those definitions and accept self-hatred, or they recognize that the official version is not the only way of looking at the world" (McLaughlin 1996, 21).

As part of his argument for vernacular theory, McLaughlin identifies four varieties of vernacular theorists; expert practitioners, elite fans, activists, and visionaries. Of these, I am only concerned with activists, but my understanding of these theorists in a vegan animal rights context is somewhat different from his. He writes that activists are motivated by a moral conviction to correct a cultural or political wrong, and this motivation prompts "a systematic questioning of the institutions that make it possible."

He further writes that these wrongs are often local, making the activist's dispute of them local as well, and he concludes that "Activists often scorn theory, as though it were necessarily detached from real experience, 'academic' in the worst sense" (McLaughlin 1996, 24-25). In a vegan animal rights context, activists are indeed motivated by an ethical or moral conviction to speak and act against the use of animals for human benefit, but their interest is in the cessation of this practice - where possible and practicable - worldwide.[13]

Now we have the theoretical tools necessary to ascertain whether or not carnism is an invisible, common sense, hegemonic tradition of ethical belief. If this argument has merit, we should be able to find evidence for it in carnist narratives about animals, institutional enforcement of carnist narratives, and cultural support for carnist narratives. Further, if veganism is a counter-hegemonic tradition of ethical belief, we should be able to find evidence of this in vegan narratives, vegan vernacular theories about the place of animals in society, and vegan responses to carnism. While I hope to offer a more comprehensive proof for these arguments in a future work, I cannot make space for that here. However, I *can* offer ethnographic support for them in the discourses of lawmakers, farmers, truck drivers, vegans, and animal rights activists about the passage of Ontario Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. This has the added utility of introducing the reader to nuances of an important piece of legislation that drew me into

13 Many vegans are also accomplished interpreters of academic theory, as I have previously written, and I will discuss this further in Chapter Two.

the field several months earlier than I intended and curtailed vegan animal rights activism in the province after it received Royal Assent.

Ontario Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act received Royal Assent on June 18, 2020 and contains several provisions designed to deter animal rights activism in Ontario. The bill creates "animal protection zones" around farmed animals wherever they may be kept; on farms, in transport trucks, in slaughterhouses, or at any premises identified as an animal protection zone by signage whether on public or private property. Trespass in these zones carries a $15,000 fine for a first offence and a $25,000 fine for subsequent offences. Owners and occupiers of these zones have the right to arrest trespassers themselves and deliver them to police. Finally, neither these owners and occupiers nor the truck drivers transporting farmed animals can be held liable for injuring trespassers unless it can be proved they "created a danger with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person" or that "the injury, loss or damages were caused by actions taken...with wilful or reckless disregard for the presence of the person" (Hardeman 2019). Much of the legislation is aimed at demonstrations like the one below; a weekly vigil organized by Toronto Pig Save in which activists stop each transport truck arriving at Sofina Foods in Burlington. During the timed, two-minute period that follows, they offer the pigs water and document their condition. In 2020, the Toronto Pig Save website indicated that these vigils were supervised and assisted by local police (Toronto Pig Save n.d.), and there were police present when I attended a vigil on March 4, 2020, as seen in the following photograph I took on that day.

Figure 5: Animal Rights Activist Feeds Water to a Pig While Police Stand on the Sidewalk Outside Sofina Foods
(MacCath-Moran 2020l)

On June 12, 2020, Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Keith Currie published an article on the organization's website in support of the bill, where he writes that "Once peaceful protests have now escalated to trespassing, invasions, barn break-ins, theft and harassment. Activists have stolen private property and threatened the health and welfare of farms, families, employees, livestock and crops, effectively putting the entire food system at risk" (Currie 2020). In an October 23, 2020 article on *The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario* website, Suzanne Armstrong refers to "the ongoing plight of farmers and truck drivers facing ongoing confrontation from animal activists" and further

writes that "Because the Act is designed to protect farm animals from interference and harm, it is important that all relevant farm animals be included in the definition. Animals may be raised on farms as meat or for things they produce, such as milk, eggs, or fiber. But they are also used on farms for labour, such as for transportation or as herding and companion animals" (Armstrong 2020). *About Bill 156*, a website supporting the legislation, argues that "Ongoing harassment, unfounded accusations and attacks made in person, through social media or in public venues put undue stress on farmers and individuals in the food sector who are following the law, caring for animals and putting food on the table for Canadians" and assures the public that "All livestock commodities in Canada are subject to national animal care guidelines under the National Farm Animal Care Council" ("About Bill 156" n.d.).

The first step in ascertaining the merit of my arguments in the context of Bill 156 is an examination of the above narratives for evidence of the invisible, ethical belief system I have identified as carnism, which takes the position that it is normal and natural to use animals for food, clothing, and other purposes. There is evidence of this belief system in a few places. Note that Currie accuses activists of stealing private property from farms. However, he does not mention that animals are the only kinds of private property stolen, and this activity is often limited to the sick and injured. The *About Bill 156* website also references the property status of animals by referring to them as "livestock commodities," an absent referent that separates the website's audience from the individual animals behind those commodities. In both statements, the belief that it is appropriate to own animals is so entrenched that it provides invisible structural support for other statements

that refer to animals as part of the food system. When Gary Francione critiques the concept of animal welfarism and instead proposes "the incremental eradication of the property status of animals," he is pointing to this invisible structural support as the underpinning for "institutionalized animal exploitation" that ensures human interests always prevail (Francione 2010, Introduction). Armstrong writes that Bill 156 is designed to protect farmed animals from "interference and harm," but it is important to note that she does not include the use of these animals for milk, eggs, wool, or labour in her definition of interference, nor does she include the killing of these animals for food in her definition of harm. Her assertion is unselfconscious about the logical flaws embedded within it in view of the fact that impregnating cows and taking away their calves for the sake of milk production, keeping hens in battery cages, shearing sheep, breaking horses for riding, and slaughtering animals for human consumption both interferes with and harms them. When Tom Regan advocates for the moral status of animals and Josephine Donovan calls for an ethic of sympathy that uses our moral imaginations to consider the needs of animals, they are pointing to these logical flaws and others like them that support a belief system in which it is appropriate to own, use, and kill animals for human benefit. That belief system is carnism, and this is how it expressed in discourses about Bill 156; as an invisible, common sense tradition of ethical belief which is unremarked by those who hold it but which underpins and informs their support of the legislation.

Carnism is also a hegemonic belief system, which means that it seeks to exercise control over veganism, the counter-hegemonic belief system that opposes it. Ontario Bill 156 provides institutional enforcement of hegemonic carnism in several ways. It imposes

hefty fines for engaging in activities that include removing injured ducklings from barns as shown in Figure 3 of the Introduction and feeding water to pigs as shown in Figure 4 above. It gives private citizens with a vested interest in supporting animal agriculture the right to arrest animal rights activists who enter animal protection zones, and it reduces the liability these people face for harming activists in the process. These elements of the legislation are aimed at the performative counter-hegemony of animal rights activism because it makes the invisible visible, thereby troubling the common sense of carnists who encounter it.

Currie, Armstrong, and others employ a different strategy in their cultural support for carnism by characterizing vegan animal rights activists as violent extremists. Currie mentions harassment that threatens the health and welfare of families. Armstrong mentions the plight of farmers and truck drivers facing ongoing confrontation. *About Bill 156* mentions unfounded accusations and attacks. Ontario Pork makes a similar claim in its statement of support for Bill 156, writing that "Farmers need equal protection under the law when their homes, property and workplaces are threatened" ("The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act (Bill 156)" 2021).

I encountered the claim that Ontario animal rights activists were breaking into the homes of farmers while I was in the field, so I asked Animal Justice attorney Camille Labchuk about it during my interview with her. Here is a transcript of that conversation:

> *Ceallaigh*: How many animal rights activists have actually broken into a farmer's home in Ontario in the last decade?
>
> *Camille*: None that I'm aware of. I've never heard of that happening.

> *Ceallaigh*: And you're an attorney, and you work for Animal Justice.
>
> *Camille*: There have been trespasses onto commercial properties, that's...
>
> *Ceallaigh*: Into barns.
>
> *Camille*: Into barns which are commercial properties and quite distinct from what the law would call a dwelling house, which is somebody's home. The law treats homes quite differently from commercial property...The safety narrative is a very common one, of safety and then private property, which are related to some extent. But I think the safety one is compelling to the public. It's obviously not really borne out by any evidence or any facts. But anytime somebody says they feel unsafe, that's a red flag, something in society we should be concerned about. The problem is when it's not actually the case, although to be fair, I don't know that that's not the case. It's possible that they do feel unsafe. I kind of doubt that industrial chicken farmers who've got two or three thousand, twenty thousand, however many chickens and a large barn feel unsafe when someone goes into that barn. But maybe they do. But it's it's not unique to recent discourse. You know, a good example of this is the lab industry. So the animal research industry. It's even more secretive than the farming industry in Canada, and theoretically we should be able to get freedom of information and access to information requests on inspections done by the authorities in Ontario on what's happening at universities, because these are public bodies. But every time someone tries to do that, they rely on an exemption for public safety to refuse that information (Labchuk 2020).

In a separate rebuttal to this allegation aimed at MPP Ernie Hardeman's December 10, 2019 argument that Bill 156 is necessary because "No one in Ontario should ever feel unsafe in their homes and at work" ("Hansard Transcript" 2019), the *Stop Bill 156* website asserts that "At no time have animal advocates, activists, whistleblowers or any other investigators threatened farmers or their families in their homes, nor have any animal advocates or organizations ever perpetrated an act of violence against an Ontario farmer(s), or have been similarly charged" ("Stop Bill 156" n.d.).

I had intended to conduct research of criminal activity reports involving animal rights activists in Ontario to determine with more certainty what basis in fact these claims of home invasion might have, but my field work was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I am on better footing with the following assertions made by Tyler Jutzi, vice president of Brussels Transport, when he writes that:

> Escalating aggression by animal extremists are beyond my control, and put my employees and their cargo at risk. Rushing the trailer, banging on the truck, putting hands inside the trailer, stepping in front of the moving vehicle, opening the cab doors and grabbing at the driver puts additional stress on the animals and the driver, and places the individuals taking those risks directly in harm's way (Jutzi 2020).

Jutzi is referring to the aforementioned Toronto Pig Save vigils in front of Sofina Foods in Burlington, Ontario. Of note, *The Hamilton Spectator* published his Opinion on September 9, 2020, nearly three months after a Brussels Transport driver struck and killed Regan Russell while she was engaged in a regularly-scheduled animal rights demonstration outside the facility on June 19, 2020, the day after Bill 156 received Royal Assent. Jutzi is referring to this tragedy when he writes that:

> In recent months, protests at Sofina have become much more aggressive. When Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020 received royal assent, I could have never imagined the danger that activist groups would put our drivers or themselves in. Police have been repeatedly warned about the rising risk, but we have seen limited support (Jutzi 2020).

As mentioned above, I was conducting field work at just such a demonstration on March 4, 2020, and the only parts of Jutzi's assertions I recognize are his statements that activists stepped in front of the trucks while they were moving and rushed the trucks.

Activists *did* step in front of slow-moving transport trucks mid-turn to signal a request for two minutes with the pigs. After the drivers stopped, activists *did* rush toward the right sides of the trucks to offer the pigs water. However, I did not witness anything that would support Jutzi's claims of escalating aggression or opening the cab doors and grabbing at the drivers. Rather, activists endeavoured to be respectful of drivers, thanked them for their time when possible, and did not interact with them otherwise. Conversely, I did witness aggression on the part of transport truck drivers against animal rights activists including the weaponization of transport trucks.[14]

As a folklorist, I am reluctant to ascribe a truth status to any of these carnist narratives, even though I have just written of a variance between Jutzi's assertions and my observations in the field. Whatever their truth status might be, it is the narrator's effort to foreground the alleged violence of animal rights activists that interests me. Because carnism is a hegemonic belief system, claiming that those who oppose it are violent reinforces the common sense discourses associated with that belief system and undermines the less powerful, counter-hegemonic belief system and discourses of the opposition. With this in mind, I would argue that the above narratives are aimed at fellow carnists and structured to garner support for the Royal Assent and later the enforcement of Bill 156. By asserting that activists are harassing, threatening, and breaking into the homes of farmers, or escalating aggression, opening cab doors, and grabbing transport truck drivers, these narrators are drawing upon a system of ethical beliefs they share with

14 I will provide a more thorough analysis of Sofina Foods demonstrations and a discussion of Regan Russell's death on the slaughterhouse grounds in Chapter Three.

readers to characterize activists as thugs who need to be stopped. When presented with a choice between accepting this characterization of animal rights activists and dismissing their arguments because of it or taking the time to work out their own conceptions of the world as it relates to these arguments, the average carnists preoccupied with the exigencies of their own lives might choose the former with what little attention they to offer the matter. Later, they might only have a vague recollection that activists are violent, which might be enough to encourage dismissal of vegan discourses altogether, making this strategy an effective component of carnist hegemony.

Vegan narratives about animals in the context of Bill 156 and elsewhere seek to disrupt conceptualizations of animals as absent referents (e.g. livestock, commodities, meat) that encourage disassociation with their physical lives, cognitive abilities, and emotional capacities. These narratives also offer alternatives to carnism by discussing animals as individuals, highlighting perceived similarities between humans and animals and pointing to animal suffering whenever it is encountered on farms, at auctions, in transport trucks, and elsewhere. The *Stop Bill 156* website employs all of these strategies in a counter-hegemonic effort to strengthen public opposition to the bill, and in this effort we find evidence of vegan ethical belief, vegan vernacular theory, and vegan responses to carnism. This website was central to the opposition effort while I was conducting field work in Toronto, so the following analysis is focused exclusively on the narratives and discourses found there.

A video at the top of the website, titled *Canadians are speaking out against the Ford Government's Bill 156,* intersperses a diverse group of speakers with footage of farmed animals and animal rights activists. This is a transcript of the first quarter of that video:

(Piano music plays in a minor key.)

Tiffany Ford, CEO & Politician: "My friends are playful."

Maxwell, Activist: "They love frolicking in the grass."

Georges Laraque, NHL Player: "And a lively game of tag or soccer."

Kevin Lahey, Undercover Investigator: "My friends are kind and gentle."

Maxwell: "And they can be a little sneaky and cheeky too!"

Tiffany Ford: "Some are even amateur escape artists."

Dan Moskaluk, Retired RCMP Officer: "Indeed, my friends are very clever."

Kevin Lahey: "Adventurous,"

Tiffany Ford: "And curious."

Georges Laraque: "Resilient too."

Maxwell: "My friends are protective and loyal."

Kevin Lahey: "They enjoy being with their friends and family."

Tiffany Ford: "My friends feel love,"

Dan Moskaluk: Happiness,

Kevin Lahey: And joy.

(Footage of a donkey and cow together in an outdoor pen. The cow is licking the donkey. Footage of two goats playing in the snow. Footage of a turkey following a pig while a cow looks on from behind a farm gate.) ("Stop Bill 156" 2020)

There are two non-verbal strategies worth noting before we approach the narrative itself. First, these vegan animal rights activists are indeed diverse; Tiffany and Georges are people of colour in business and sport, Maxwell is a little girl, Dan is a retired law enforcement officer, and Kevin is an undercover animal rights activist. Utilizing a cross-section of Canadians in the video demonstrates to the audience that the vegan ethical beliefs expressed therein are held by a wide variety of people, which counters the common misconception that all vegan animal rights activists are young adults, middle-class women, or some other discrete group. The other non-verbal strategy is the withholding of animal imagery until a narrative of friendship has been established, a deliberate misdirection to encourage the belief that the video is about human friends of the speakers. It is clear that the filmmakers were conversant in carnist narratives because they took care to strategically refute anti-vegan sentiments and entice non-vegan audiences before exposing them to the subject of the video.

This leads us directly into an examination of the narrative. The term "friends" is utilized repeatedly in reference to animals, which positions them as individuals capable of relationships with humans. These individuals are described as playful, kind, gentle, sneaky, adventurous, resilient, loyal, protective, loving members of their families and communities. But while these are expressions of sincerely-held belief designed to encourage compassion in the audience, and while the cognitive and emotional capacities of many animals may be characterized in the aforementioned ways, it is worth noting that the voices of these speakers are not the voices of the animals themselves. Performance theorist Una Chaudhuri writes that "Unlike others 'on the margins,' animals cannot 'speak

back' - to humanist hegemonies or to anything else. To make them speak is not to write their faces; it is usually to write ours, to indulge that anthropomorphic reflex that is all too often rooted in an anthropocentric outlook" (Chaudhuri 2007, 15). Chaudhuri's work in this article is insightful throughout, and her argument that we ought to attend to "The urgent dialectic of the animal face and the animal body" (Chaudhuri 2007, 16) is compelling. However, I would argue that what the above animal rights activists are doing is not *quite* the writing of their own faces or the centring of the human in discourses about non-humans. Rather, they are expressing their ethical beliefs as vernacular theories by seeking connection points between the self and the animal and by articulating what they find in the language to which they have access.

Figure 6: Injured Pig in a Transport Truck
(New Wave Activism, n.d.)

Moreover, animals do speak back to humanist hegemonies with embodied communication, but this is hidden from the public behind the physical and political structures and processes of animal agriculture. Vegan animal rights activists draw attention to this communication via undercover operations, slaughterhouse vigils, and other direct action activism when they take photographs and video footage of farmed animal conditions in these places and highlight the suffering they find. The above photograph, published on the *StopBill156.com* website, was taken at a slaughterhouse vigil, and it is the least graphic of the photographs and videos found there. Also found: pregnant sows with untreated prolapses, sick, diseased, and suffering pigs on transport trucks, chickens with dismembered legs on transport trucks, cows with open head wounds and large tumours on transport trucks, and a lamb born on a transport truck who was trampled to death. Activists argue that the real impetus behind Ontario Bill 156 is to stop this evidence gathering, since:

> Investigators and whistleblowers, together with the mainstream media, have recorded and documented shocking animal cruelty and revealed the footage to the Ontario public. This included cruelty to chickens at the *Maple Lodge Farms* slaughterhouse; horrific conditions for pigs at *Crimson Lane Farms*; and abuse of turkeys at *Hybrid Turkeys*, which led to 11 charges and cruelty convictions under the *Criminal Code of Canada*, for the commercial farm and its individual employees ("Stop Bill 156" 2020).

In "Visual Ethnography: Using Photography in Qualitative Research," Dona Schwartz argues that where photographs are concerned "The viewing process is a dynamic interaction between the photographer, the spectator, and the image; meaning is actively constructed, not passively received" (Schwartz 1989, 120). This is certainly true in the case of the aforementioned photographs and video footage. The *StopBill156.com* website

asks the question: "What are they hiding?" The answer presented by vegan animal rights activists behind the project is found in the embodied communication of farmed animals photographed and filmed during the specific kinds of demonstrations the bill sought to outlaw. The result is a counter-hegemonic response to the view of farmers encouraged by hegemonic discourses about the legislation. This vegan response to carnism invites website visitors to interpret the visual and audial evidence they encounter as proof that Ontario farmers are habitually neglectful and cruel to the animals they farm and are covering it up with the help of the Ontario government.

Antonio Gramsci and Thomas McLaughlin give us excellent tools for understanding the ethical beliefs and the power dynamics in play between hegemonic carnist discourses and counter-hegemonic vegan discourses about Ontario Bill 156. Carnist supporters of the bill believe animals are the property of farmers, livestock commodities, and part of the food system. They characterize interventional animal rights activism as interference that has the potential to harm animals, but they either do not see or do not express the opinion that the uses of animals in contemporary society both interfere with and harm them. These perspectives are not simply "the way things are." Rather, they are components of a hegemonic ethical belief system that views the ownership and use of animals for human benefit as normal and natural. In the case of Bill 156, carnism had the institutional support of the Ontario government, which crafted and enacted a piece of legislation designed to deter animal rights activism. Farmers and other carnists provided strategic cultural support for the bill by publicly characterizing activists as violent extremists who needed to be stopped. Conversely, vegan opponents of Bill 156 drew potential allies into

their narratives with non-verbal strategies designed to refute anti-vegan sentiments and verbal strategies designed to encourage compassion for farmed animals in non-vegan audiences. Vegan narratives on the *StopBill156.com* website reflected the ethical belief that farmed animals have physical, cognitive, and emotional capacities similar to our own, making them worthy of our care and consideration, a vernacular theory expressed in formal language by Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and other scholars of animal rights long before the legislation was proposed. Counter-hegemonic responses to carnism were also put forward through photographs and video footage of sick and injured animals in the Ontario animal agriculture system, and website visitors were invited to revisit their view of farmers and animal farming in light of these.

A Final Argument for Ethical Belief Studies in Folkloristics

Ethical beliefs *are* beliefs, just as religious, supernatural, medical, and other beliefs are, and they deserve discrete attention in folkloristics because they may be expressed by themselves or as parts of complex belief systems. For example, a practitioner of vernacular healing methods might conduct herself according to a personal ethical code she employs when treating patients. In this case, both her medical beliefs and her ethical beliefs would be worthy of study, and the interplay of these would also be worthy of study. Jodie Shapiro Davie provides a good model for this sort of scholarship in her discussion of supernatural beliefs in the context of Protestant religious beliefs. Davie makes the distinction between these two belief systems clear by bringing religious scholar Stephen T. Katz' writing on supernatural experience into conversation with folklorist

David Hufford's writing on the same. Katz does not allow for the possibility that supernatural experience has a foundation in reality, while Hufford does, but together these scholars enrich Davie's discussion of religious belief by offering alternate ways of understanding supernatural belief (Davie 1995, 119). A robust folkloristics of ethical belief, in which scholars comment and disagree on various points of interest, would allow for similar nuance, helping us understand the interplay between medical and ethical belief - as in the example above - and also helping us discuss and debate the particulars of ethical beliefs on their own.

Another important argument for a folkloristics of ethical belief lies in a strength of our discipline; namely, that we listen to the voices of our research participants and strive to represent them in reflexive ways. With this in mind, and while it is not my intention to disparage the methodologies of other disciplines, I would again problematize the utility of Durkheim's model of religion as a societal phenomenon in studies of ethical vegans and animal rights activists. I have previously mentioned that the use of this model in the social sciences has led to the description of vegans and animal rights activists as "evangelical" and reliant upon "quasi-religious fanaticism." I would add to that Kerstin Jacobsson's description of animal rights activists as radical saviours of suffering souls who go out into the world and give testimony about their secular religion, which itself gives rise to a moral certitude that "leaves little room for compromise and pragmatism" (Jacobsson 2014, 317). This is the language that Durkheim's model encourages in researchers who use it and who are also predisposed to thinking in Christian terms. It can be and often is

insulting to vegans and animal rights activists because it residualizes their ethical beliefs and the actions they take to uphold them.[15]

I find this language particularly problematic as a Pagan, vegan animal rights activist because I do sometimes use the language of religious belief to discuss my ethical beliefs, but that language is rooted in animism, not monotheism. I think of animals as brothers and sisters for whom I bear a complex moral responsibility, and I think of my activism as a commitment to upholding this responsibility, even when it requires me to make difficult choices. The language of evangelism, sin, fanaticism, testimony, and moral certitude are altogether alien to my ethical beliefs, and worse, they remind me of a childhood spent in a Christian cult from which I was glad to escape. The literatures and methodologies of folklore are well-suited to the flexible investigation and discussion of these nuances in my religious and ethical belief systems, while Durkheim's model as filtered through the lenses of the aforementioned social scientists has resulted in scholarship that makes sweeping claims about vegan animal rights activists that exclude me.

Fortunately, we know from Leonard Primiano's work on vernacular religion the dangers of residualizing the religious beliefs of research participants by using the terms "folk religion," "unofficial religion," and "popular religion," to describe them. Primiano has strong words for his concerns about this issue, writing that:

> Scholars share with the biblical Adam that same power to name, to signify, to classify people, ideas, and behaviors around them. Through such naming in their writings and teaching, scholars have the ability to influence, even

15 Note that in this paragraph and the one that follows, I am engaging with Christian language utilized by social scientists to describe vegans and animal rights activists, not Christian beliefs or belief systems.

> control, the perceptions of their fellow scholars as well as the non-academic public regarding particular subjects of interest. That kind of power is a privilege that some scholars have used with insufficient methodological self-criticism. Religious folklife as a scholarly discipline, as opposed to a subject matter, has been quite guilty of such a misuse of power. Scholars within the discipline have consistently named religious people's beliefs in residualistic, derogatory ways as "folk," "unofficial," or "popular" religion, and have then juxtaposed these terms on a two-tiered model with "official" religion (Primiano 1995, 38).

It is a short step from Primiano's warning against the misuse of academic power in the residualization of vernacular religious belief to a warning against the misuse of academic power in the residualization of vernacular ethical belief. Moreover, his mention of a "two-tiered model" of "folk religion" and "official religion" encourages folklorists to explore the possibility for nuance in religious belief rather than falling back upon an intellectually convenient dichotomy, and this also has utility in a folkloristics of ethical belief. While ethical beliefs may be held by groups in the way that a "pro-life" ethic is held by the Catholic Church, these same beliefs are mediated by individual Catholics who may be altogether "pro-choice" or may believe that abortion is justifiable in certain circumstances. A folkloristics of ethical belief would study the ethical beliefs of Catholic individuals discretely, study the interplay between their ethical and religious beliefs, resist the impulse to dichotomize these beliefs as either wholly pro-life or wholly pro-choice, and contextualize them using reflexive, respectful language.

Finally, a folkloristic methodology of engagement with ethical belief requires that we first understand the theoretical underpinnings of the specific ethical beliefs we plan to study. In the case of a Catholic pro-life ethic, we might begin with an investigation of church teachings on the value of life as expressed in the Catholic Bible, Papal Encyclicals

and other such documents. However, a study of ethical beliefs in support of gun ownership might be more regional and begin with archival research of hunting traditions. In the case of veganism, I began with an examination of animal rights philosophy because it has contributed so much to and received so much from vegan vernacular theory. Once we have completed this theoretical groundwork, we can begin to research the ways vernacular theorists who hold these ethical beliefs express them in everyday life. This is where folkloristic scholarship of belief is helpful, because vernacular ethical beliefs are mediated by individuals, groups of believers, local discourses and traditions, political concerns, and other factors.

I will close with an argument that the same methodology I have introduced here for the folkloristic study of vegan ethical beliefs can be used in folkloristic studies of other ethical beliefs; research of philosophical and other foundations for the belief, the interweaving of these with relevant folkloristic scholarship, and application of them both to an ethnographic study. What emerges - and what I hope will emerge in the next chapter - is respectful, nuanced, contextual scholarship about the ways people wrestle with difficult social issues and conduct themselves in light of their conclusions.

Chapter Two: Vegan Voices

Introduction to the Interviews

I draw from two sets of ethnographic data in this chapter; the Newfoundland data foregrounding veganism and the Ontario data foregrounding animal rights activism. Because of this, I include the abbreviation (NL) alongside the names of research participants from the former and (ON) alongside the names of research participants from the latter the first time they appear in a given section to identify the study from which each interview excerpt is taken. I would also remind the reader that the Newfoundland interview questions were structured to produce life narratives, and the Ontario interview questions were derived from these, so this chapter is organized to reflect that structure.

There are regional nuances in the ways community members in each place contextualize their vegan ethical beliefs, and while the *Voices for the Voiceless* study was not specifically designed to compare them, they do emerge in the interviews. I endeavour to highlight these regional nuances wherever possible in this chapter and the next. Transition narratives were also of special interest to my Newfoundland study, and this interest found its way into my Ontario study as well, so I take care to identify traditionality and innovation in the narratives that comprise the "Ethical Beliefs in Transition" section of this chapter.

These ethnographic accounts help to contextualize arguments put forth in the Introduction; primarily that hegemonic carnism and counter-hegemonic veganism are

parallel but opposite belief systems and that speciesism is an embedded bias in carnism.[16] They also help to contextualize the arguments put forth in Chapter One because they express animal rights philosophy as vernacular ethical belief in the narratives of individual believers who belong to a minority group and whose nuanced convictions may be conventional or unconventional from the group's perspective. These ethical beliefs may include elements of Peter Singer's argument for equal consideration of human and animal needs, Tom Regan's argument that animals have inherent moral value and should have inherent rights because of this, Josephine Donovan's argument that animals deserve compassion because they are part of our moral community, and Gary Francione's argument that we abolish the property status of animals. In some cases, research participants use the language of these philosophers in their ethnographic accounts, and in other cases they merely allude to these philosophies in the vernacular, but in all cases there is evidence of substantial intellectual and theoretical work underpinning the ethics of the vegans I interviewed.

Childhood Ethical Beliefs

Because the Newfoundland case study was centred on veganism, the questions I asked research participants about their childhoods were more detailed than those I asked the Ontario research participants. One of my primary goals in the case study was to encourage reflection upon the ways vegans thought about animals in childhood and early adulthood before they became vegan, the ways their thinking changed as they transitioned

16 This is also the primary argument of Melanie Joy and John Robbin's seminal text; *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (Joy and Robbins 2011).

to veganism, and the ways they thought about animals in the post-transition stage of their veganism. With this goal in mind, I asked about childhood diets and holiday meals, and I asked how research participants responded when they first learned some of their food came from animals. I also asked about childhood relationships with companion animals and perspectives on circuses and zoos. In the *Voices for the Voiceless* study, this detailed series of questions was reduced to "What place or places did animals occupy in your childhood?" and "What do you remember about the ways you were taught to view animals?" The interview excerpts that follow come from answers to these questions. They include narratives about the ethical beliefs parents taught their children and narratives about independent ethical beliefs held in childhood.

Ethical Beliefs Imparted By Parents

Economic concerns are common features of these childhood narratives, and where they are discussed, many research participants do not mention a concomitant ethical concern for the animals on their plates. But even in these situations, carnism is a subtle hegemonic driver of diet because animal agriculture subsidies around the world outstrip subsidies offered to fruit and vegetable agriculture (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2020; Carrington 2019; Sewell 2020). This lowers the cost of foods derived from animal flesh and secretions, making them more affordable to low-income households. Whether or not parents want to consider the ethics of their food choices or simply serve a more varied diet to their children, "the exigencies of survival" often prohibit this (Femia 1981, 33). Dane Reeves (ON) indicates as much in his interview:

> I was raised by a single mom and a grandma. My dad died before I was born. We didn't have a lot of money. Mom worked a lot of jobs. And I was raised eating meat, ate meat every day. There was meatloafs, and I'd get excited for steaks at grandma's, and yeah, like all my friends ate meat. I maybe knew one or two vegetarians growing up, but...the whole vegetarian/vegan thing wasn't something that I really thought about at all. It was just food on my plate when I got meat or anything; chicken, eggs, fish. And, you know, it tasted good. But I never thought about where it came from or anything like that, probably because my mom and grandma never thought about it because they were too busy with life (Reeves 2020).

I have a great deal of empathy for Dane's story and others like his. I grew up in a low-income home as well, and I remember a time when my family lived in rural Kentucky that all we had to eat were plain pinto beans and the mulberries I collected. In fact, I often ate better at my Flemingsburg elementary school than I did at home because the women who worked in the kitchen cooked farm-style meals for students, and I qualified for the free breakfast and lunch program. So I know what it means to be grateful for the food on my plate, wherever it might have originated.

One of the more interesting discussions of ethical beliefs imparted by parents comes from Susan (ON), who is Chinese Canadian and whose mother and maternal grandparents are Chinese. In the interview excerpt that follows, Susan discusses her childhood grief at the death of a beloved gerbil and her mother's difficulty understanding why it affected her so deeply:

> I think she felt, and I know my Chinese grandmother felt the same way, that we're not supposed to connect with animals because they're an animal. That's an animal. We later would get my first dog, and I would kiss my dog, and my grandpa would say, "Oh, your face is so dirty. You're going to get something on your face. Don't kiss the dog." So it's like, don't show emotion, don't interact, don't cry over your first dead pet. You know, don't kiss your dog sort of thing. So, yeah, I was just there. I think they may have viewed animals as

> being less or being incapable of this two way relationship. I'm not sure what their thoughts were on that (Susan 2020).

There may be layers of cultural knowledge here that I am not equipped to interpret, and there are certainly elements of tradition around the place of animals in Chinese homes that I only understand to the extent that Susan explained them to me. Indeed, Susan herself is uncertain whether or not her mother and grandparents thought animals were incapable of participating in two-way relationships. However, she also indicates that she was taught not to connect with animals because they are less important than human beings. Therefore, and with the above caveats, her account contains an example of carnism as an ethical belief taught in a Chinese Canadian cultural context.

Not all of my research participants grew up in households where animal flesh was consumed, but even in the two vegetarian households described by my research participants, there are nuanced differences in upbringing and ethical belief. Skye Tostowaryk (NL) describes a childhood spent in a low-income household where she ate "Kraft dinner and a lot of chicken nuggets" until her mother made different dietary choices for herself, which prompted Skye to follow suit:

> And then when I was nine, my mother went vegetarian. And I thought she was the coolest person in the world, so I went vegetarian, but I didn't know why. So then we started eating a lot of vegetarian food but still a lot of dairy, and I stayed vegetarian for most of my pre-teen and teen years. There was a couple of years when we were living in Labrador that I ate meat because we were living with my grandparents, and it was Labrador. And then when I was eighteen...eighteen? I went vegan. Nineteen. So, when I was a kid, we ate a lot of junk. But then my mother went into this transition where we did a lot of curries and juicing, and like, it just did a full 360 (Tostowaryk 2017).

There is an interesting contrast to be made here between Dane's upbringing and Skye's. Both grew up in low-income households led by single mothers, but at some point, Skye's mother made a decision to stop eating animal flesh. Unfortunately, I have no information about the reasons why she adopted vegetarianism, though Skye does indicate that her mother believed in treating companion animals respectfully and found circuses heartbreaking (Tostowaryk 2017). However, it is clear that while Dane credits his mother with teaching him values that indirectly contributed to his adoption of vegan ethical beliefs in adulthood; integrity, honesty, and "caring for others, even though they're different" (Reeves 2020), Skye's mother had a direct influence on her decision to adopt the same ethical beliefs at nineteen. Also note the important regional nuance in Skye's account. She recalls that "There was a couple of years when we were living in Labrador that I ate meat because we were living with my grandparents, and it was Labrador," which points to cultural, economic, and geographical influences upon Canadian diets in the far north.

Camille Labchuk (ON) was also raised by a single mother who had a direct impact upon her ethical belief development:

> Oh, yeah. So I think it was actually a huge part of why I'm an activist today is because my mother was an environmental activist in Prince Edward Island growing up in the 1990s and 2000s. That was what she did. So she was primarily an anti-pesticide activist, although she was involved in a lot of other initiatives, too. So some of my earliest activism memories are sitting under the table while she's meeting with ministers, with my little brother, and they would give us colouring books to fill out while she's trying to convince them (Labchuk 2020).

Camille's mother had strong ethical beliefs about animals as well, and this was reflected in her parenting:

> Yeah, so we always had cats when I was growing up, a series of cats starting from when I was about six years old and had hamsters as well. For a while we had some ducks who were really sweet and lived in the garden and ate all the slugs that were killing my mom's vegetables, and we had some rabbits as well. And so for us, the animals are part of the community. They're part of the world that we shared together. She's always been very concerned about wild animals and the protections afforded to them. When I was twelve, my mom and I went vegetarian together after seeing a documentary on *The Nature of Things* or some sort of CBC program about how animals are being mistreated. And I don't even think it was in relation to the food system. But we both found it compelling, and she'd been vegetarian when she was younger, too. So I think she always had an appreciation for the role of animals in our shared world. And once our eyes were sort of mutually opened, it was easy to do the next step (Labchuk 2020).

There is no doubt that Camille's ethical belief development was influenced by her mother's activism. Her account of sitting under a table and colouring with her brother while their mother campaigned above them is powerful. Also powerful are her memories of the cats, ducks, and rabbits who were part of her world and the wild animals her mother protected. Given this strong foundation of ethical belief, it is no wonder that mother and daughter adopted a vegetarian diet after learning about the ways animals are mistreated.

However, ethical veganism holds that all animals have inherent moral value, are deserving of equal consideration, should receive compassionate care, and should not be kept as property. Neither Skye's nor Camille's mother holds these ethical beliefs in their entirety during their childhoods, but there are elements of vegan philosophy in the ethical beliefs and vernacular theories they impart to their daughters. Skye's mother believes in

respectful treatment of companion animals and feels sympathy for circus animals, echoing Josephine Donovan's call for compassionate care (Donovan 2000, 156-158). Camille's mother teaches her that "animals are part of the community," echoing Tom Regan's argument for the inherent moral value of animals (Regan 2004, 279-280). It is also interesting to note that while all four of these women are now vegan, these ethical beliefs and vernacular theories preceded their respective transitions to veganism.

Dane and Susan offer accounts of childhoods in which carnism was received as an ethical belief system, and these accounts point to economic and cultural expressions of carnist belief they revisited as adults considering veganism. Other research participants discuss the care they were taught to provide animals who were companions versus the many ways they were taught to perceive animals who were eaten or otherwise used for food. Some were taught not to think of these animals at all, while others were taught to think of them as food or producers of food, and this difference in perception is another expression of carnism. The same differences in perception are found in the accounts provided by Skye and Camille, since vegetarianism permits the use of animals for milk and eggs whether it is rooted in ethical or dietary considerations. However, their mothers had ethical concerns about the treatment of companion animals, circus animals, and wild animals that gave rise to ethical beliefs about the ways these animals ought to be treated, and those ethical beliefs eventually grew to encompass farmed animals. Along the way, their daughters adopted the same ethical beliefs and chose to become vegan.

Independent Ethical Beliefs of Children

In general, my research participants discussed their childhood ethical beliefs in three contexts; the ethical beliefs imparted to them by parents, their own beliefs and feelings about animals as children, and their reflections as adult vegans upon both categories of belief.[17] In order to separate the ethical beliefs they were taught from those they held independently, I listened for narratives of childhood disagreement with the ways adults treated animals. It should be noted that in each case, the narrator is an adult vegan reflecting upon childhood events through the lens of their current ethical belief system for an interview that encourages this. But while these narratives are reconstructions of the past and do not reflect the robust ethical beliefs my research participants now hold as adults, they do offer insights into childhood ethical and emotional connections with animals, especially since it is the presence of animals themselves that prompts reflection in the interview excerpts that follow and others not cited here.

Kayla Coombs' (NL) account of cod jigging with her father calls to mind Peter Singer's liberationist position that "If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering - insofar as rough comparisons can be made - of any other being" (Singer 2015, chap. 1). Her account also calls to mind Josephine Donovan's feminist ethic of

17 These reflections relate to the current ethical beliefs and practices of my research participants, their local issues of concern, and other topics, so I will explore them in context later in this chapter.

compassion for animals, which requires contextual, narrative thinking and a "morality of responsibility" for the preservation of life (Donovan 1990, 374):

> I used to go out with my dad cod jigging a lot. We just had our own recreation boat. But I vividly remember, always on the way back in from cod jigging, he'd be driving here, say, and then there was a seat behind him facing the opposite way, and I would always sit there. And then the bucket of cod or whatever would just be sitting in front of me. And as we were getting closer in to shore or whatever, you could see their...they would stop trying to breathe and stuff like that, and their eyes were getting buggy. I always felt absolutely terrible, and I always wanted to throw them back in the water. But it was just like, no, you can't do that because that's your food. That's what we're going to eat. So I remember feeling bad but not really doing anything about it (K. Coombs 2017).

Kayla contextualizes and narrativizes the slow death of beings far different from herself as suffering, and her compassion for these beings prompts a morality of responsibility to liberate them. However, she also acknowledges that these animals are part of her family's food supply, and there is an element of Singer's equal consideration of needs in her perspective. Having grown up on the Burin Peninsula of Newfoundland, where hunting and fishing are common, Kayla's account is one of rural living according to Newfoundland cultural foodways. She does not mention whether or not fishing and hunting were necessary for her family's survival, but there is an implication of subsistence in her discussion of family life and food. Still, the tensions between her connection with the suffering fish and her acknowledgement of family foodways do demonstrate a difference between her nascent ethical beliefs and those of her father.

This tension also exists between Stephanie Lushman (NL), her sister, and their father in the account that follows. Stephanie was born in St. John's, Newfoundland and refers to herself as a "west-ender, born and bred" who remembers growing up in government

housing and feasting at Christmas on groceries her parents bought at Sobey's with saved air miles. Lobsters were an inexpensive, local food for her family, but preceding the account that follows, Stephanie remarks that she could not be in the house when they were cooking and goes on to discuss the reasons for this here:

> My strongest memory, so I'm going to say it's one of my first...It would be lobsters, for sure. I think I mentioned that before. And my brother found it interesting and funny. Didn't realize they were *dying* dying. He just knew they were like, 'Oh, they're dying!' Does that make sense? Like, they're just getting cooked. It's not connected to a suffering being. My sister and I, we were older, but we were also more sensitive. We knew they were suffering because we explored it when my dad brought home...What did they come in? I can't even remember what they came in. Bags? In water? I have no idea what they came in. But my memory is my dad holding one up and teasing me with it, and he's moving. And I remember, 'This is alive. Is it a pet? Is it...What are we going to do with a lobster? Put it in the bathtub?' Like, and I started playing with the funny idea in my head of the lobster. And he had two lobsters. And then he put them in the pot of boiling water. And I remember my sister, because I was the more people-pleaser. I kind of respected what they were doing more. Okay. What? But my sister was freaking out. 'That's boiling water! Why are you putting them in there? That's going to hurt them!' And dad said 'No, that's natural. That's how they die.' And she said something along the lines of 'It'll hurt them. It'll hurt them.' And then she's crying, and then I'm crying just thinking about it (Lushman 2017).

Perhaps the most striking element of this account is Stephanie's father's assertion that it is natural to put lobsters in boiling water because this is how they die, a narrative surely constructed to soothe a compassionate child but one that also conveys a hegemonic perspective about the ways animals ought to be treated. Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey cite earlier scholarship in their argument that "narratives bridge the gap between daily social interaction and large-scale social structures" (Ewick and Silbey 1995, 198), and this narrative does much of work they describe. In an everyday social interaction between a parent and his children, Stephanie's father bridges the gap between boiling two lobsters

alive in his kitchen and the broader carnist belief system that normalizes this activity. He even uses the word "natural" to describe the process. Also interesting is Stephanie's assertion that she cannot fathom what her father plans to do with the lobsters at first and believes they might be pets. This is a profound moment in both her life and her sister's, when their own compassionate natures are subjugated by a competing ethical belief system taught to them by a person of authority in their lives.

Once adopted, there are emotional consequences for upholding this carnist belief system, as Julius Sandor (ON) remembers from his urban Ontario childhood. In a narrative that calls to mind Peter Singer's discussion of urban and suburban children, who are encouraged to draw emotional distinctions between companion animals, farmed animals, and wild animals, (Singer 2015, chap. 6), Julius describes an encounter with a caged fox that still haunts him:

> I think it was in Grade Two, there was a day where we went on a field trip as a school. And this is another one of those experiences that's haunted me my whole life. And we went to a farm which was out in Whitby, which is now all subdivisions, but back then was all farm country. And this farmer had gone around and gathered or caught all these animals and put them in cages that were just like roaming around his farm, wild animals, and had them on display. And our class got on a school bus, and we went out there to look at these animals. And I just remember not feeling comfortable. And I broke away from the group, and I found this fox, in this cage, and he just looked at me, and he's going 'Open the cage. Open the cage.' I got into so much trouble when I was a little kid that I knew that if I opened this cage, really bad things would happen. And I didn't open that cage, and it's haunted me all my life (Sandor 2020).

Julius remembers feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the caged wild animals he encountered on the Whitby farm he visited as a child and especially in the presence of a caged fox he encountered after breaking away from his group. In this moment alone with

the fox, away from the carnist pressure to see these wild animals as curiosities subject to a human gaze, he sees a living being who wants to be liberated. But there is tension between his beliefs and feelings about the fox and those of his group, so he does nothing, and this inaction haunts him for decades. Much as Kayla and Stephanie felt compassion for fishes and lobsters who did not want to die, Julius felt compassion for a fox who did not want to be caged, and there are echoes of counter-hegemonic animal rights philosophies in all of their childhood perspectives.

Many vegans express the sentiment that we are born vegan but become carnist, meaning that our compassion for animals is stronger before we are taught to distance ourselves from the impacts of our animal use upon the animals who are used. Peter Singer agrees, writing that:

> Interestingly enough, many children at first refuse to eat animal flesh, and only become accustomed to it after strenuous efforts by their parents, who mistakenly believe it is necessary for good health. Whatever the child's initial reaction though, the point to notice is that we eat animal flesh long before we are capable of understanding that what we are eating is the dead body of an animal. Thus we never make a conscious, informed decision, free from the bias that accompanies any long-established habit, reinforced by all the pressures of social conformity, to eat animal flesh (Singer 2015, chap. 6).

This early acclimation to hegemonic carnism is certainly evident in the above interview excerpts to varying degrees and in various contexts. However, note that I returned to Josephine Donovan's scholarship often in my analysis of these narratives, and this is because "caring theory is rooted in a relational ontology that does not privilege the rational individual nor require rationality as a 'means test' for ethical treatment...Caring theory also, of course, values the emotions and considers sympathy, empathy, love -

feelings that often characterize humans' responses to animals - as central to any ethical theory" (Donovan and Adams 2000, 15). This places the beliefs and feelings of children about the treatment of animals within the purview of folkloristic analysis. Abstract, fully-developed ethical positions are not required for the compassion of children to count as expressions of ethical belief, and as we have just seen, this compassion is often expressed in the personal experience narratives of children and adults reflecting upon their childhoods.

Teen and Adult Ethical Beliefs

In the Newfoundland project, I asked my research participants how childhood relationships with food and animals influenced them in adulthood and what their earliest memories were of vegans and veganism. My goals were to learn more about the ways parental influences in childhood shaped their adult lives and to explore their first exposure to counter-hegemonic vegan ethical beliefs. In the Ontario project, these questions were again reduced, this time to "What do you feel comfortable telling me about your adult life, family, education, and career?" and "At what point did your childhood perceptions of animals begin to change? What precipitated this change?" Both sets of questions elicited responses that included information about the lived experiences of my research participants as teens, so these are included here when relevant. The selected interview excerpts that follow provide opportunities for analysis of traditional narrative elements, the ways received carnist narratives influence teens, the negotiation of

conflicting ethical beliefs in a blended carnist and vegan relationship, and the "meat paradox" in carnist ethical beliefs.

Vegans Are Hippies and Punks

Narratives about hegemonic carnist beliefs often contain significant elements of traditionality because they are used to reinforce and perpetuate societal norms. They may be altogether traditional in content, or they may contain traditional structures, terms, attitudes, and other components (Clements 1980; Stahl 1977). These elements of traditionality find their way into the interview excerpts that follow as carnist attitudes about vegetarians and vegans and in the words "hippie" and "punk" as counter-cultural terms used to describe them.

Jackson McLean (NL) and Skye Tostowaryk (NL) were interviewed together, and in the interview excerpt that follows they are responding to my question about their early memories of vegans and veganism:

> *Jackson*: I don't think I knew any vegetarians, but there would be vegetarians in the news or TV shows, and it would just be kind of a thing you would make fun of, like all those hippie vegetarians (McLean 2017).
>
> *Skye*: I was made fun of a lot in junior high for being vegetarian, not even vegan, but vegetarian. There was a boy named Donovan; I'll never forget his face or anything about him. And he would sit behind me on purpose every day while the teacher was teaching and go "Skye, you want chicken? Don't you want some chicken?" Every day, when I was trying to learn math. This is why I suck at math (Tostowaryk 2017).

Jackson and Skye bring different lived experiences to their teens as it regards their relationships with animals. Jackson was raised in a home where animals were eaten, while Skye became a vegetarian with her mother in childhood. However, we can see the

effects of hegemonic carnism on narrative in both accounts. Jackson remembers that vegetarians were a target of mockery in the news and television, and I would draw specific attention to the term "hippie" here, which indicates that vegetarians were also viewed as counter-cultural. Skye was the target of mockery in middle school from a fellow student who regularly disrupted her education to ask if she wanted to eat chickens.

Because hegemonic carnism is a normative ethical belief system, deviance from that norm is often seen as worthy of mockery in the media, which encourages normative behaviours of many kinds by reflecting society's values via narratives produced for large audiences. But while "Popular culture venues are contested sites where multitudes come together and negotiate the conflicts with which individuals, and groups of individuals, must reckon in the course of social participation" (Mazur and McCarthy 2011, Introduction), I have previously written of mass market fairy tale adaptations that:

> society and the entertainment industry enter into a conversation about alterity, and both influence resulting productions in various ways. Societal shifts are disruptive and often counter-hegemonic, but narrative risk-taking in mass market fairy tale adaptations is limited and skewed by consumer tolerance. The social message that results from this conversation may be conflicted; a nod to progressive culture that still upholds conservative values (MacCath-Moran 2020, 138).

With the foregoing in mind, the presence of vegetarians in the news and television Jackson watched as a young man suggests a counter-hegemonic societal shift, while the mockery of these people and the use of the term "hippie" to describe them upholds a narrative of carnist hegemony. Skye is the unhappy target of this process in middle school, where Donovan knows what vegetarians are and knows how to mock them.

Stephanie Lushman (NL) also uses the term "hippie" in a counter-cultural context to describe her early opinions of vegans:

> I pictured hippies, to be honest. Make love, not war. Make your life a little more difficult, kind of thing. I did. I pictured hippies just being like...And veganism was so far...Not having eggs and cheese didn't even make sense to me. Eggs are extremely good for you, and though I'm not eating dairy, most people need to eat dairy, and I'm going to pop my pills and eat some cheese, you know?...To me the idea was, aside from religious, people do this as a choice. To me it was because they were really far out there, but in an admirable way, because they were making their lives more difficult to better themselves and be more peaceful (Lushman 2017).

The connotation of the term "hippie" undergoes a subtle shift between the above accounts. Whereas Jackson equates vegetarianism with hippies and is encouraged by the media to find them funny, Stephanie equates veganism with hippies but finds their behaviour admirable even though she also thinks they're "really far out there." There are notes of vernacular carnist belief in her account that inform her opinion; that eggs are healthy, that milk is necessary for human health, and notably that the plant-based diet underpinning vegan ethical belief is difficult.

Many vegans encounter the carnist belief that veganism is difficult, and I'm no exception, but I would counter that it should be more difficult to harm a sentient being than it should be to avoid that harm. So my ethical beliefs are counter-hegemonic and viewed as counter-cultural, which means that society isn't set up to meet my needs with the same ease it meets the needs of a carnist. While my everyday diet is more satisfying than it was when I ate animals, there are minor difficulties I have learned to take in stride. Shopping for clothes and shoes is a bit more time-consuming now because I don't wear leather, fur, wool, or silk. I read the

labels of foods, cosmetics, cleaning supplies, and other goods to eliminate those that contain animal ingredients wherever possible and practicable. Dining out can be challenging in the wrong restaurant. Vegan insider and comic artist Dan Piraro understands this, and in a self-deprecating comic that hits the mark and makes me laugh, he makes light of the ways we sometimes order food:

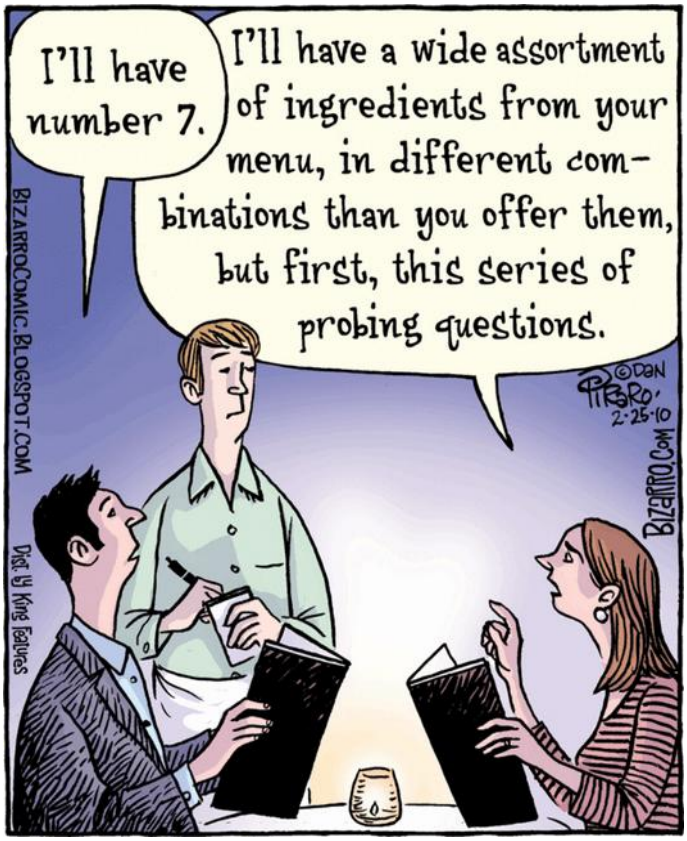

Figure 7: Ordering Out
(Piraro 2010)

As I mentioned in the autoethnographic text above, veganism is viewed as counter-cultural, so it is unsurprising that my research participants would encounter in the media or themselves make an association between vegetarians or vegans and hippies. While

hippie presentations of self and performances of culture were viewed as non-traditional in the 1960s, the hippie as a counter-cultural figure has become a traditional narrative trope since then and is sometimes conflated with ethical beliefs like veganism and religious beliefs like Buddhism or Neo-Paganism. With this in mind, it is interesting that Nigel Osborne (ON) remembers a vegetarian who might have self-identified as a hippie:

> In my young adult life, I knew a couple of women that were vegetarian. And I think that was my first exposure to somebody who was consciously and deliberately choosing not to eat certain things for ethical reasons. I didn't really delve into it and explore with them why. It was just something they had chosen to do, and I just respected it. I didn't think, you know, I didn't make fun of them for it. One woman who was a friend of mine at the time - and I'm in my early 20s, very early 20s - she was kind of a hippie. She drove around an old Chevy Chevette, and she painted flowers all over it. It could have literally have been a centrepiece at Woodstock. And she always liked that 60s music. And she was kind of hippie-ish. But she was a friend of mine, you know, and she'd been vegetarian for a long time, and had an allergy to fish. And it was just what it was (Osborne 2020).

While Nigel does identify his friend as "hippie-ish," his opinion of her vegetarianism is neutral, and he respects her ethical beliefs even though he does not share them at this time in his life. There is also mention of a fish allergy, suggesting that at least part of the reason for her vegetarianism was related to diet. However, his account suggests a willingness on her part to identify with and perform hippie counter-culture as well along with the possibility that her ethical beliefs were related to this identity and performance.

The association of vegetarian or vegan ethics with a counter-cultural movement can also be found in the straight edge punk scene, which began in the 1980s and whose members commit to positive living by avoiding the consumption of animals and their secretions, illegal drugs, liquor, and tobacco (Haenfler 2006, chap. 2). Note that in

Jackson and Stephanie's accounts, the relationship between hippie counter-culture and vegetarian or vegan ethics is both abstract and ascribed. The connection in Nigel's account is more concrete but may still be ascribed because while he observes that his friend is a hippie and a vegetarian, the relationship between these counter-cultural identities and performances is not clear. However, there is an established relationship between straight edge punks and veganism, one Ryan Patey (NL) may have encountered while working in Halifax:

> One of my earliest memories of vegans and veganism would probably be from around the time I was managing a restaurant and all-ages music venue in Halifax. Although I had met a few vegetarians, and my first partner had even gone veg. while we were in university, I don't think I met a vegan until I started doing shows with a group of youth volunteers. At the time, at least two of them were vegan, and I respected their passion for many things, which included a commitment to eliminate animal products from their life. Since I was getting involved with the local music scene, specifically the punk and alternative youth scene, I saw veganism as a part of the activism of the people I knew, and I liked it. Growing up in a small town meant I wasn't exposed to a lot of counter-culture ideas, so my time running the venue was a chance to take a lot of that stuff in, and I did (Patey 2017).

Ryan does not offer the term "straight edge" to describe the punk vegans he knew in Halifax, but he does say that veganism is part of punk and alternative youth activism, and it is unsurprising that he encountered vegan ethical beliefs in the scene. His attitude about them is positive; influenced by his interest in learning about counter-cultural ideas and by vegetarians in his life.

In general, the research participants cited above make connections between hippies, punks, vegetarians, and vegans, but while these connections may exist in Nigel's and Ryan's accounts, they are ascribed in Jackson's and Stephanie's. Moreover, each of these

four counter-cultural performances is distinct from the others. There may be some overlap among them in the lived experiences of people who identify as both hippies and vegetarians or punks and vegans, but this is not always the case, so it should not be presumed that all vegans belong to a specific counter-cultural group.

Glimmers of Ethical Change

In Skye's account above, we learn she was mocked in middle school for being vegetarian, and her account illuminates the reach and power of carnist narratives. In terms of reach, these narratives are received by Donovan from a society where carnism is is viewed as normal, and he transmits them in a middle school environment where young people are learning social norms. In terms of power, while his mockery fails to change Skye's mind about her ethical and dietary choices, she still remembers everything about the person who used these narratives to hurt her feelings and disrupt her education. This reinforcement of traditional attitudes and narratives about animal consumption also found its way into Renee Gosse's (NL) life via the responses of fellow high school students to her project about the health benefits of a vegetarian diet:

> I was actually going to Stephenville High, so I think I would have been around sixteen turning seventeen, and that's when I sparked an interest in health. So I wanted to be healthy for myself, and then I did some research online, and I found that going the vegetarian route might be the best option. And I remember doing a high school project on vegetarianism and how healthy it was. And I remember kind of touching briefly on the animal parts and talking about factory farming, what was involved in factory farming as well. And remember someone saying to me as I was walking down the hallway, they said 'Oh, like *you* care about the animals.' And I was like, 'No, I'm healthy. I'm vegetarian for health reasons.' And I guess I was kind of repressing those feelings that I was doing something for the animals because

> of my peers looking down on that. So I think maybe a year or two later I actually went back to eating meat (Gosse 2017).

Renee is enthusiastic about vegetarianism as a means of maintaining good health, and her research leads to discoveries about factory farming that prompt reflection about the ways her diet helps farmed animals. But this process of reflection is cut short by peer pressure from fellow students, whose commentary about her compassion for farmed animals never rises to the level of mockery because she repudiates it. In Renee's case, hegemonic carnism undermines and exerts social control over her ethical belief development by way of peer pressure, and after a time she begins eating animals again.

Still, Renee engaged in a process of vernacular theorization about the ways farmed animals ought to be treated and situated herself in that process as a person who can make an ethical choice not to consume them and thereby refrain from contributing to their treatment on factory farms. In doing so, she ceased to be a passive audience for traditional carnist narratives much as fans of contemporary popular culture cease to be passive audiences when formulating personal theories about the plots of films, television shows, and books they love. Thomas McLaughlin writes in the context of zine production that "the contemporary popular culture fan should no longer be thought of in terms of 'audience,' a concept that implies the passive position of the addressee, but rather as an 'active, producing cultural worker who fashions narratives, stories, objects and practices from myriad bits and pieces of prior cultural production'" (McLaughlin 1996, 56; Radway 1988, 362). In researching vegetarianism, discovering information about the treatment of animals on factory farms, and reflecting upon her food choices in light of this

information, Renee became an active, producing countercultural worker even though it took her a while to overcome the societal pressures of hegemonic carnism and adopt a vegan ethical belief system.

Nigel Osborne (ON) was a carnist while he was engaged to be married, but his fiancée was either vegan or an ethical vegetarian,[18] so the relationship between them was ethically blended during that time. His account of this period in their lives includes references to an ideological dissonance and discursive negotiation that often occurs between carnist and vegan co-workers, friends, and family members. Folklorist Gary R. Butler explores these concepts in the context of confrontational discourse among members of the Toronto African Caribbean community, writing that:

> In interactions involving individuals holding divergent world views concerning a single traditional domain, ideological dissonance underlying this difference will almost certainly manifest...Given the cooperative nature of communication, for an oral exchange to continue between persons holding asymmetrical frameworks, a discursive negotiation of meaning is necessary (Butler 2002, 155).

In the interview excerpt below, Nigel discusses some of the ways he and his fiancée managed their ethically blended relationship:

> At no point has my wife ever said, 'you have to go veg.' Not once. And even the food that we had planned for the wedding; there was vegan food, and then there was other food, non-vegan food to accommodate the guests. And so I was free to think, feel, do, read, watch, learn what I wanted. And she was there. She was an open book, and we would have conversations. I would challenge her sometimes, you know? I'd come back from a Whole Foods, and I would bring a pamphlet that was audited by veterinarians and humane food and humane slaughter and all of these things. Right. And I think, 'Well, what about this? What if I just get this kind of food?' And she would say, 'Well, that

18 This nuance is unclear in the interview. Nigel mentions "vegan food" when he discusses wedding plans, but he later indicates that he and his wife stopped eating cheese and eggs together.

> certainly is better.' You know, it would still bring up some issues. And I guess around 2008, 2009, my wife had previously been a financial supporter of PETA, PETA being obviously the most well known, longest standing animal rights organization in the world, and so we would get newsletters. We would get literature in from them on a regular basis, and I would start reading it. And by this time I was probably starting to think about transitioning because my objections started to fall away. I had fewer and fewer objections that I couldn't intellectually get around (Osborne 2020).

Nigel and his fiancée do not share the same ethical beliefs about animal consumption, which points to an ideological dissonance between them, but he is careful to point out that it is discursively well-negotiated. She never demands that he "go veg," and together they provide for vegan and non-vegan wedding guests, an accommodation he cites as proof of her amiability where vegan ethics are concerned. Even when he challenges her with literature about humane food and humane slaughter, she responds with a circumspect "Well, that's certainly better." In time, his objections to vegan ethical beliefs fall away in the face of his fiancée's good-natured conversations about the matter and his exposure to animal rights literature. Later in the interview, he says "So yeah, it took me several years, and I started eliminating certain animals with no rational explanation, no rhyme or reason as to what I was limiting, and I was doing it at work too. So when I'd go for lunch, I'd slowly start to eliminate, and then I kind of came to a level where my wife and I were sort of at the same place" (Osborne 2020).

In both Renee's and Nigel's accounts, there is evidence of an intellectual shift from unfamiliarity to familiarity with the question of the animal and the ways vegans answer that question. Renee makes this shift when she researches vegetarianism and learns about the treatment of animals on factory farms. Nigel makes this shift when he marries a vegan

or ethical vegetarian and reads PETA literature. In both cases, and in many others like them, this act of learning is a threshold experience. Before, Renee and Nigel accepted the carnist belief system they received from society. After, they had a heightened awareness about the ways animals were treated for their sakes. The invisible had become visible, and they felt the need to interrogate what they had seen, situate their ethics in relation to it, and make decisions about their lives that reflected this process. Neither of them adopted vegan ethics right away, and indeed many never do at all. But this heightened awareness often remains, whether or not it results in an ethical shift.

The consumption of animals in the face of knowledge about their cognitive abilities, the poor quality of their lives on factory farms, and related issues of concern can lead to what philosopher Elisa Aaltola identifies as "omnivore's akrasia." She writes that:

> We have been offered rational moral arguments and evidence, which support the notion that the way in which nonhuman animals are treated ought to be radically reconsidered. Yet, the contemporary era is witnessing an intriguing phenomenon: Individuals, who have been convinced by the moral and factual reasons, are nonetheless often persuaded to maintain the status quo, and to carry on those consumptive habits, which exist in a stark conflict with their values. Indeed, it has been empirically manifested that many omnivores struggle with what in literature is termed “the meat paradox”, within which one both loves and eats animals [1,2]. One can also apply the philosophical paradox, akrasia, to the phenomenon. Within a state of akrasia, one knows x to be true and good, yet acts against x. We can speak of “omnivore’s akrasia” as a state, wherein one believes that nonhuman animals ought not, prima facie, to be harmed or killed for secondary reasons, wherein one considers this to imply that the consumption of many, most, or all animal products is morally indefensible, and wherein one yet continues to consume those very products (even when one has access to alternatives). (Aaltola 2019, 2).

Omnivore's akrasia results from a tension between carnist and vegan ethical belief systems, which itself arises out of an individual's exposure to information that challenges

Gramscian common sense about the place of animals in society. In response to this tension, some choose to buy animal flesh and secretions labeled "free range" or "humane" in the hope their purchases contribute to a reduction in farmed animal suffering. Others buy from small, family-owned farms because they believe these businesses provide a better quality of life for farmed animals. Still others choose to engage in what Aaltola calls "strategic ignorance," in which the individual "undergoes a state of ambiguity or denial by willfully ignoring beliefs that one deems as threatening to one's choices" (Aaltola 2019, 3). This tension can be an important pivot point in which an omnivore's akrasia is resolved by the adoption of a vegan ethical belief system. Hegemonic carnism appropriates the language and goals of counter-hegemonic veganism by promoting animal welfare in the context of animal use, but it cannot resolve the meat paradox. Counter-hegemonic veganism can resolve it by eliminating animal use except in situations that cannot be avoided.

Ethical Beliefs in Transition

Moving from a non-vegan lifestyle to a vegan one is a complex process that requires both internal and external changes. People who adopt plant-based diets for health-related reasons often need to relinquish attachments to familiar foods and embrace unfamiliar foods. This process can be challenging until new foodways are habitual. People who adopt vegan ethical beliefs and practices must take this process a step further and interrogate cosmetic, clothing, entertainment, and other choices involving products derived from animals. This additional step can also be challenging and is often

undertaken over a period of time as vegans educate themselves. In addition to these changes, vegans have to negotiate the impacts their new ethics and practices have on carnists among their family, friends, and colleagues. These complexities give rise to the need for a term to describe this process. They also give rise to particular kinds of narratives. The term of choice in most cases is 'transition,' and the narratives are called 'transition stories.'

I used the word "transition" in the Newfoundland interviews to reference the process described above. Because the project was focused on veganism, I asked why my research participants first thought about becoming vegan, when they first began to transition, how long the transition took, how their communities responded, and what challenges or supports they encountered along the way. In the Ontario project, I asked "Do you have a transition story you would like to share about your change in thinking about animals and the way it affected your life?" Having heard many transition stories over the years, I suspected my research participants would know what I was asking for in that question and know how to respond. They all knew what the term meant, and many had already shared such a narrative by the time I came to the question.

There is a strong element of traditionality in transition stories, enough that many have an identifiable structure. I will explore that structure here by way of three interview excerpts and show that while each of these transition stories is unique, they all contain threshold experiences, epiphanies, or a-ha moments that detail shifts in ethical belief from carnism to veganism. Narrators may describe one major shift that results in an abrupt change or several micro-shifts that result in a gradual change of lifestyle. Transition

narratives also detail the periods of reflection that precede and/or follow these epiphanies, which may be brief in cases of an abrupt shift or extended in cases of a gradual shift. Finally, there is sometimes a concluding statement that affirms the narrator's new ethical beliefs and practices. It is notable that transition stories emphasize epiphanies over other narrative elements, likely because narrators undergo such important ethical transformations during this period that these epiphanies become dividing moments in their lives. There is even a common phrase in the vegan community to describe this experience; "making the connection," which connotes an epiphany and refers to the moment when vegans make intellectual and emotional connections between their lifestyles and the impacts of those lifestyles upon animal lives.

Health Sciences scholar Maria Marta Andreatta addresses the value of epiphanies to vegan transition experiences in her performative autoethnography "Being a Vegan." In the following excerpt, she is already vegetarian and preparing to order a suitable meal at a restaurant when the waiter volunteers that he has been vegetarian since he "visited a slaughterhouse and saw how two workers beat a calf to death just for fun" (Andreatta 2015, 481). His account precipitates a period of reflection for her, as she writes that:

> The waiter's story set something in motion. I couldn't stop thinking about the abuse that non-human animals suffer every day, not only in slaughterhouses, but also in the dairy industry, fur farming, labs, and breeding centers. Not only the death. Maybe there are some things worse than death, like daily, institutionalized and legalized degradation, abuse, and torture of non-human animals, which after a short, horrifying life are slaughtered for human consumption (Ibid).

Andreatta further argues that knowledge about animal suffering is often not enough to precipitate lasting change. What is needed is a shift in perception itself, and that can only be caused by an epiphany. Later, she writes:

> It's possible that the shift in my perception was finally triggered by the waiter's story about the cruel killing of the calf, and this may have been a major epiphany, the point after which my notion of non-human animals changed for good. I made the decision and adopted a vegan worldview, "represented by a belief in the equality of human and non- human animals" (Andreatta 2015, 481-482; McDonald 200, 7).

There is an element of animal rights activism in these narratives as well. When they are told to vegans, as the narratives below were told to me, they reinforce the ethical beliefs of the audience. When they are told to carnists, they highlight differences between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic beliefs about animals. In both cases, the act of listening allows vegans and carnists alike to "transform narrative, and therefore other people's experience, into a resource for living their own lives" (Braid 1996, 26). In more precise terms, telling transition stories and listening to transition stories together comprise "a mutually constitutive dialogue, only part of which is verbalized in any given instance," which facilitates meaning-making on both sides of the story (Borland 2017, 440). In this way, a vegan listener might be encouraged to believe they made the right choice in adopting vegan ethical beliefs, while a carnist listener might begin to question a belief system they had not previously recognized as such.

However, transition narratives are not altogether traditional. While the presence of epiphanies in the narratives below is traditional to the narrative type, the epiphanies themselves cannot be, since these are comprised of personal reflections, vernacular

theories, and conclusions. Further, the Newfoundland nuances of Renee Gosse's narrative and the echoes of Josephine Donovan's caring ethic in Julius Sandor's and Marni's narratives are regional and philosophical components of their stories, demonstrating yet again that vegans are not a monolithic group possessed of undifferentiated, radicalized viewpoints. They are individuals who have arrived at similar conclusions by different roads.

Renee Gosse

Renee Gosse (NL) first thought about becoming vegan during a Facebook debate about the Newfoundland seal hunt. She thought the hunt was fast becoming a thing of the past. Her partner agreed. But during the course of this online debate, they had a realization:

> We ended up getting into a one-and-a-half day dispute with people online. You know, going back and forth like, 'We need the seal hunt. It's part of our culture and our heritage.' And we were like, 'No, we don't.' [laughs] You know? And someone was like, 'Well, you know what? You can't support one animal and eat others.' Basically, they were like, 'If you're not vegan, you're a hypocrite.' And myself and Heather were like...It was kind of like an a-ha moment, you know? [laughs] And we were like, 'Wow, they're so right. What is the difference between a dog, a seal, and a pig?' So that was our starting point to considering veganism. But Heather came from a small town. Her diet consisted of meat, and eggs, and hash brown casserole, and anything you could think of that was animal-based. So I think for her it was more of a struggle. But for me, I was like, okay, let's do this. We were working out at the time, so she kind of made a joke and said 'Instead of having cheat days, we'll have meat days.' So I guess that was the start of our transition point. I remember cutting out meat and animal products almost instantly, and Heather would still eat meat and eggs. I wasn't a huge fan of eggs anyway, so it wasn't really hard for me at all. And then I noticed there was humane meat out there, and I said 'Oh, that's interesting. I'm glad that there's companies out there that are considering treating animals humanely.' So we kind of looked at that avenue as well, maybe not even cutting out animal products altogether but

> maybe going the humane route. And during that time, I had a petition regarding the seal hunt, actually. And I met someone online who was willing to sign that petition. And this person is completely, 100% vegan. And so I said, 'There's still humane meat out there. I think that's a really good route to go.' And he basically said that there was no humane way to kill an animal. I reflected on that and did some research, and then I totally agreed, you know? Like, if I wouldn't kill my dog, why would I kill another animal (Gosse 2017)?

There are two epiphanies in Renee's transition story. The first occurs during an online dispute with Newfoundlanders about the role of the seal hunt in local culture and heritage. Both Renee and Heather were born and raised in Newfoundland, but they do not believe the seal hunt is necessary, and neither of them has eaten seal flesh. In response, another participant in the dispute argues that they cannot support one animal and eat others. This precipitates what Renee describes as an "a-ha moment" in which they realize there is no difference between a dog, a seal, and a pig. A period of reflection follows as they negotiate their present foodways alongside their changing ethics. Having come to the decision that they will only eat "humane meat," Renee encounters a vegan who tells her that there is "no humane way to kill an animal." This precipitates a second period of reflection and a second epiphany in which Renee comes to agree with this line of reasoning. Later, Renee affirms the decision she and Heather made to adopt vegan ethical beliefs and a vegan lifestyle when she says that "I think it was maybe a four or five month transition period to get myself and Heather to being 100% vegan. But we literally thought of every avenue. Like, maybe we'll go Meatless Mondays. Maybe we'll do the humane meat. Maybe we'll just be vegetarians. Like, no. We're meant to be vegan" (Ibid). The traditional narrative elements of epiphany, reflection, and affirmation are all present here,

and the first epiphany is emphasized as important to the story. There are regional elements as well, most notably in Renee's and Heather's initial objection to the seal hunt, which presents an alternative viewpoint to widespread support of the practice in Newfoundland.

Julius Sandor

Julius Sandor's (ON) transition story begins with his interest in the menu at a restaurant named Cultures, which offered interesting, plant-based fare comprised primarily of salads with exotic ingredients. He enjoyed the food, and it made him reflect upon his current diet, but this reflection was only the beginning of a long transition process. Julius introduces the word "transition" as part of this discussion and makes the same point I made above, that ethical shifts from carnism to veganism may be abrupt or gradual, saying that "This is funny because the transition from, in the community, when we have this discussion, and we have it a lot, you know, there's two teams of people. It's the people who slowly transitioned into veganism and people who overnight went vegan. Yesterday, I had a steak. Today I'm vegan" (Sandor 2020). After he confirms that his own transition involved a slow period of questioning, primarily about food, I ask him for a transition story. However, the way I ask not only demonstrates that we share a frame of reference as vegan animal rights activists, it also reveals my own intrinsic understanding of the importance epiphany plays in these narratives even though I had not yet subjected them to folkloristic analysis:

> *Ceallaigh*: When I interview people, because I'm also a vegan animal rights activist, I use terms like 'transition story' and 'transition stories'. You know what that means. I don't even really have to explain it to you. So I was going

> to ask you if you had a transition story that you wanted to share. Was there a moment in your life that you just went "Oh!" and that was the end?
>
> *Julius*: I think it was from 2008, 2009. After my wife passed away, I somehow...Facebook was evolving. There was lots of groups created and stuff like that, and there was all this talk about wolves. I was always fascinated by wolves, and I enjoyed reading about them, and I was doing that online. And I came across a lady in in Wisconsin. And I was following her, and she was writing all this stuff, and one day she wrote something...She lives in the woods, in a remote type area. And she was lying in bed late at night listening to babies crying. And they weren't babies, they were cub bears, because a mother bear will put its cub bear up in a tree and go look for food, and the mother bear was shot. And so these cub bears are crying for their mother. I just...that story, it just shook me to the core. And she was a very good writer. And that really sort of started the wheels turning in my head for activism from that story she wrote. And then I remember my mother telling me, you know, you've got to get a good winter jacket. 'Okay, Mom, I'll get a winter jacket.' So I went out and bought a Canada Goose jacket, and then I realized, oh my God, this thing's got a fur collar on it. And then I realized where this thing came from, and that really started to bother me. And I ended up giving it to a charity that gives them to homeless people. So I figured that was the best use for that jacket. And then I bought a cruelty-free jacket, but it just sort of started evolving like that. And once I made the connection and the awareness that the fur trim comes from this animal who died screaming and yeah, making those connections with clothing, with food, really started me on my path (Sandor 2020).

Julius' reaction to the orphaned bear cubs was not an epiphany, but it was clearly a threshold experience in which he was shaken "to the core." He also does not detail the period of reflection that follows but does tell me that the Wisconsin writer's story "started the wheels turning" in his head as it regards animal rights activism. His realization that the Canada Goose jacket had a fur collar may be characterized as a minor epiphany and his discomfort with it another short period of reflection. Then Julius affirms his vegan ethical beliefs by saying he "made the connection" that the fur collar came from a suffering animal, and together his reflections about food and clothing helped him start a

new path. There is also a strong undercurrent of compassion in Julius' transition story. Indeed, his threshold experience is the result of profound sympathy for the orphaned bear cubs, and he describes the fur collar as having come from an animal who "died screaming." Because these responses to animal suffering trigger a process of vernacular theorization about the treatment of animals, his transition story echoes Josephine Donovan's feminist caring ethic.

Marni

Marni's (ON) transition story begins with a prologue about a class trip to the zoo and a moment when she realized the orangutang or gorilla in the cage and the baby on his back did not belong there. She remembers crying for the animals while everyone else was entertained by them, and then she tells this story:

> Twenty-five or so years ago, I became a vegetarian, but it wasn't for the animals initially. I just thought, oh, it's good for me not to eat meat. So that was the starting point. I didn't eat red meat. And one day I was eating a piece of chicken, and I looked down on my plate, and I pictured the chicken running around alive. But the chicken was on my plate. So that was it for chicken. Then it went red meat, chicken, and then I still ate fish for several years. And then one day, it goes back to empathy. I thought, what would it feel like if somebody shoved me under water, and I was just kind of flailing about saying, 'Help, I can't breathe!' because that's what it's like when you take a fish out of water. And I thought, wow, I can't do this anymore. But I also thought, I can't go fishing. I already knew that I could never take a fish out of water. So again, it was empathy. So it just kept going back to empathy for the chicken, for the fish. That went (on for) many years, but I was a big consumer of yogurt thinking that it was innocent. In retrospect, I would never use an animal, obviously, but I was a big consumer of yogurt. I was late on social media. I never used it. And then eventually I started using Facebook. And of course, everything I joined was just animal-related. And so it was through, and I believe it was actually Mercy for Animals, I saw something about the dairy industry. And it was like somebody punched me. I couldn't breathe. And I thought, this can't be, this can't be. And I started frantically researching what

> dairy is, that a baby is taken away from his mother and he's a byproduct, veal. And it was all confirmed. And then that was it. I just never again purchased yogurt. Yeah, that was it (Marni 2020).

Marni has several epiphanies throughout her transition process, and the first of these happens in childhood with a belief that the animals she sees in the zoo do not belong there. The second happens when she visualizes the chicken on her plate "running around alive" and realizes it can never again do that because it has been killed for food. The third happens when she empathizes with the suffering of fish who suffocate when they are caught. Finally, she learns "what dairy is, that a baby is taken away from his mother and he's a byproduct, veal" and has a visceral reaction to the information that culminates in her decision to adopt a vegan ethical belief system and lifestyle. Interestingly, Marni's period of reflection is quite brief in all of these cases but the last one and is driven by empathy each time. In the case of her strongest epiphany about the use of cows to produce milk, she reflects upon and researches the matter, ultimately confirming what she has learned from Mercy for Animals. Her concluding statement "And then that was it. I just never again purchased yogurt. Yeah, that was it" affirms her full transition to veganism. Further, while Marni's prologue is not included in my discussion about childhood ethical beliefs, the arguments I made there are applicable to her. She does not have an abstract, fully-developed ethical position about the primates she encounters at the zoo, but she believes they do not belong in a cage, and it upsets her to see them there. In this case, she is engaging in a process of vernacular theorization rooted in empathy and appropriate to her age. The remainder of her epiphanies are also rooted in empathy, and like Julius', they evoke Josephine Donovan's feminist caring ethic.

Following Tom Mould's lead in the categorization of Mormon personal revelation narratives, we can situate transition stories in the academic category of personal experience narratives (Mould 2011, 23-24), but they are also persuasive, and this places them in a wider non-academic category of vegan and animal rights narratives and motifs. This wider category deserves far more attention than I am able to offer it here, but I will conclude by gathering together the few examples I have already offered to better define it. Renee's and Marni's animal rescue stories are first among these, and both are analyzed at some length in the Introduction. The transition story and the animal rescue story are robust narrative types comprised of various motifs traditional to each one. Above, I introduced "make the connection," a motif Julius used in his transition story to describe his epiphany. This motif is also used in animal rights campaigns as a call to action. "There is no humane way to kill an animal," is another motif, introduced by Renee, which counters the carnist belief that it is possible to raise and slaughter animals without making them suffer. Finally, when Renee asks "What is the difference between a dog, a seal, and a pig?" she is alluding to the popular motif "Why love one and eat the other?" which often appears as a caption alongside a companion animal and a food animal shown together to prompt reflection about the reasons why some animals are cherished and protected, while others are ignored and eaten.

As with the blurring of distinctions between the memorate and fabulate discussed by Linda Degh (Dégh 2001, 72), the distinctions between personal experience narrative and persuasive narrative blur in transition stories and animal rescue narratives, which have personal meaning to those who tell them but also serve as performances of animal rights

activism. When they are told as they were to me, these narratives may contain traditional motifs intended to persuade, but they are framed as declarative accounts. When they are told to carnists, these narratives may be structured the same way and contain identical information, but the frame shifts and becomes more directly persuasive. In both cases, the role of the audience in framing is significant, and because of this, the narratives operate on contrasting levels of abstraction (Bateson 1955, 177-178). As previously mentioned, vegan audiences often hear a reinforcement of their ethical beliefs in these narratives, while carnist audiences often hear a challenge to theirs and come to the conclusion that these narratives are more than a telling of personal experience, that the "performance sets up, or represents, an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal" (Bauman 1977, 9). So whether a vegan narrator intends to set up the literal frame of the personal experience narrative or the interpretive frame of the persuasive narrative, carnist audience members often feel berated for their ethical choices and badgered to change them. Of course, vegan narrators often do tell these narratives to persuade. In particular, animal rescue narratives containing whistleblowing components are told with an appeal to compassion and a call to "go vegan" in mind.

Current Ethical Beliefs and Practices

Post-transition questions in the Newfoundland project and the Ontario project diverged from each other somewhat. In the first project, I was interested in my research participants' vegan relationships to food and animals, the opinions of family, friends, and

co-workers about their veganism, and their current thoughts on vegan ethical and dietary choices. If I knew a particular research participant was active in the Newfoundland animal rights community, I asked questions about activism as well, and some of the *Voices for the Voiceless* questions were modelled after these. In the second project, I was interested in the place of animals in the lives of my research participants, their beliefs about the rights of animals, their reasons for wanting others to adopt similar beliefs, the inception of their self-identification as animal rights activists, the kinds of activism they had undertaken, and the goals of this activism. Both sets of questions offered research participants an opportunity to discuss the place of their new ethical belief systems in their everyday lives and the way it informs and supports what for many of them has become a regular performance of animal rights activism.[19]

The Newfoundlanders

Many of my Newfoundland research participants reflected upon their childhood carnism through the lens of their adult vegan ethical beliefs. Ryan Patey (NL) indicates in his written response to my interview questions that "I loved my companion animals, but I believe I saw them in some regard as property, so they were also considered a bit of a burden since their presence led to me having chores. Now, after house sitting for so long and connecting with people who truly love animals, I realize just how much more I could have done for both animals" (Patey 2017). There is an echo of Gary Francione's call for an end to the property status of animals in Ryan's ethical shift from carnism to veganism,

19 I will discuss private and public performances of animal rights activism more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

but he is also conscious of the hegemonic power behind systems of oppression in general. He further writes that:

> In general, I try not to judge people for their food choices directly. Although I may not agree with their disconnect between what's on their plate and what is involved in getting it there, I understand that there are numerous systems in place that make it easy to ignore the connection, and also difficult to transition away from it. Along with this, my veganism is not the main drive for my activism, despite the fact that I publish a vegan magazine. Personally, I spend more time promoting intersectionality and the need for people to consider such things as sexism, racism, fat shaming, and other issues of oppression, and my being vegan and simply living that way is how I generally choose to expose people to that form of activism (Ibid).

When I interviewed Ryan in 2017, he was the publisher of *T.O.F.U. Magazine*, which strove to support intersectionality, to encourage discussions in the vegan and animal rights communities about issues of importance to themselves and society, and to "spark conversations that will change the world for more than just the animals" (Patey n.d.). Because *T.O.F.U. Magazine's* target audience was comprised of people who had already adopted vegan ethical beliefs, it was not a platform for animal rights activism but rather a platform for the discussion of intersectional oppression from a vegan point of view. However, Ryan does write that "being vegan and simply living that way" is an important expression of his animal rights activism, one sociologist and performance theorist Erving Goffman would call a presentation of self. But rather than incorporating and exemplifying the officially accredited values of carnist society (Goffman 1959, 35), Ryan's public performance of the vegan self is counter-hegemonic.

As a fellow vegan animal rights activist, I have often referred to this as "the vegan in the room effect." Refusing to wear leather, wool, and silk as part of a uniform, requesting

that workplace luncheons provide plant-based options, or declining family invitations to visit zoos and circuses challenge a carnist "master narrative" in which the invisible exploitation of animal bodies for clothing, food, and entertainments would otherwise never find its way into everyday discourse (Lawless 2003). Even when the topic of animal suffering is not verbally addressed in situations like these, animals are made visible by the presence of vegans who ask their social groups to accommodate the belief that it is wrong to exploit them. Because of this, the vegan in the room engages in animal rights activism by "being vegan and simply living that way."

This brings me to a great joke. How can you tell if someone is vegan? Don't worry, everyone around them will tell you.[20] The risk of being the vegan in the room is that the mere mention of my ethical beliefs often engenders conversations with carnists desperate to find fault with my lifestyle. There are "confessional" carnists who tell me they only eat certain animals and expect my approval, "double-standard" carnists who remind me that the polyester in my clothes is made of petroleum, "twenty questions" carnists who bring up every bad argument against veganism they've ever read on the Internet, and "culinary" carnists who just say "Mmm, bacon." While I'm delighted to educate people about veganism, I don't want to be the centre of negative attention at a work outing simply because I asked that we go to a restaurant where I might order something other than a salad and french fries. The folks at Vegan Street understand:

20 This is a vegan inversion of the common carnist joke "How do you know someone is vegan? Don't worry, they'll tell you."

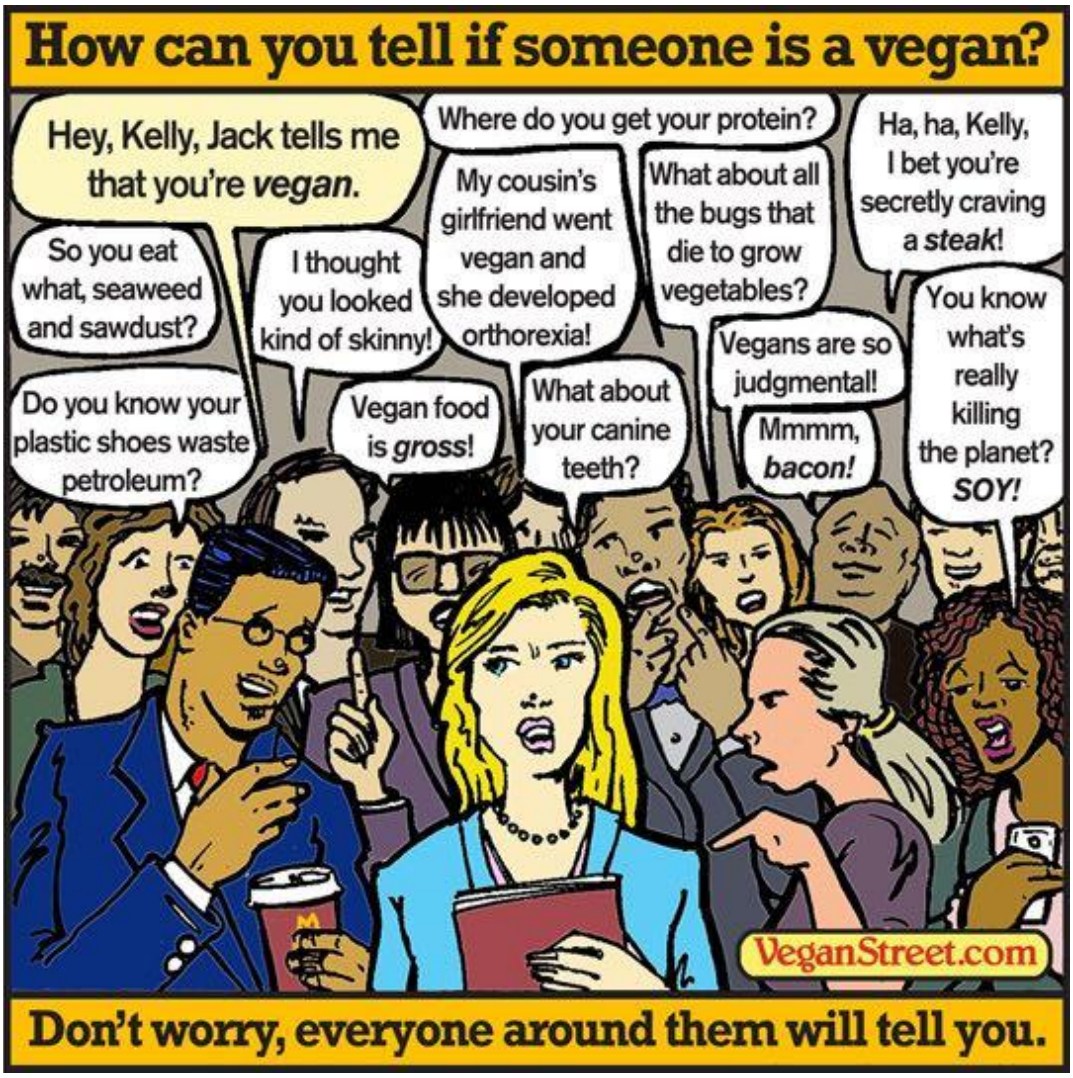

Figure 8: How can you tell if someone is vegan?
(Vegan Street 2014)

Jane Bonsall (NL) also brings an adult vegan perspective to her childhood carnism when she writes in her response to my interview questions that "I loved the types of animals I ate but dissociated with the idea that they were, in fact, animals, once they were on my plate" (Bonsall 2017). Dissociation of this kind is the intended effect of hiding the lives and deaths of farmed animals from the public, which is not simply a matter of

preventing whistleblower access to farms and slaughterhouses. It is also a matter of controlling the discourse, as Melanie Joy points out in the same text where the word "carnism" is coined:

> Industry insiders have long been aware of the discomfort consumers feel when words paint too accurate a picture of how animals are turned into meat. As far back as 1922, the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association proposed replacing "goat meat" with "chevron," arguing that: 'People don't eat ground cow, pig chops, or leg of sheep...beef, pork, and mutton sound much more appetizing.' And the former National Cattleman's Beef Association advised its members to substitute "process" or "harvest" for "slaughter," since 'people react negatively to the word "slaughtering"' (Joy 2011, chap. 3).

In *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, folklorists Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs address "the construction, articulation, and ideologization of a conception of tradition founded on language" (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 11). Their work is useful to understanding the discourse manipulation that encourages the dissociation of animals from food and contributes to the problem of absent referents I mentioned in the Introduction. In their discussion of the ways John Locke contributed to the creation of language as a discrete province of knowledge and the ways his hybridization of language and society disenfranchised women, the poor, and labourers, they write that even now, the same hybridization is used "by advertisers who tie words and phrases to commodities, political propagandists who make words like “crime,” “drugs,” or “welfare mothers” stand for race, and educational professionals who make non-standard dialects into markers of irrationality, ignorance, school failure, and suitability for dead-end service jobs" (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 7).

A similar hybridization of language and society exists, for example, in the deliberate introduction and use of "harvest" to mean "slaughter" as it concerns the killing of animals. The word "harvest," along with its bucolic connotations of wheat-reaping and apple-picking, are overlaid upon the bloody, often prolonged slaughter of a being whose capacity for comprehending her plight rivals a cat's or dog's.[21] In time, and with enough consistent usage, both the word "harvest" and its societal connotations come to stand in for the word "slaughter" and its societal connotations. This deliberate whitewashing, or more accurately, language-washing on the part of the animal agriculture industry dovetails neatly into the existing use of words like beef, pork, and mutton, which are already embedded in carnist hegemony as substitutes for cow, pig, and sheep. While these words pre-date the advent of industrial animal agriculture, the industry reinforces them and adds neologisms into the carnist lexicon to further the dissociation Jane describes.

Jane's account is also significant because her vegan ethical beliefs are shaped by a nuanced, insider perspective on issues of Newfoundland food security, and her opinion about the place of veganism in the lives of others reflects her own struggle with an eating disorder. She indicates in a written response to my interview questions that her mother is an animal lover, "but growing up poor in outport NL did not allow her to cut meat from her diet when she was younger - it was eat what was caught (in the Winter months), or actually starve to death. People in her community would often 'drop with hunger' in the

21 Melanie Joy discusses in some detail the process of industrial animal slaughter in *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism*, and I would refer the reader to her book for further information on this topic.

past" (Bonsall 2017). Jane also writes that while food security is better in outport communities than it once was, she knows people who would like to be vegan but cannot make the transition because a plant-based diet is not accessible to them in the far north. Finally, while her own veganism has benefitted her relationships with food and animals alike, she also writes that:

> While I would prefer if people could be vegan, I understand that everyone faces their own battles, and for some people it's food. Do I encourage being vegan? Of course. Would I shame someone for not being so? NEVER. I know that I would never want to be shamed for something that MAY be a serious and pressing topic, therefore, I tend to avoid it (Ibid).

Indeed, all of my Newfoundland research participants reported a change for the better in their relationships with food and animals after they adopted vegan ethical beliefs and a vegan lifestyle. For example, Dr. Arjun Rayapudi (NL) emerged from personal and familial health crises to become a passionate advocate for plant-based nutrition. He and his wife Dr. Shobha Rayapudi started an organization called Gift of Health and have spoken at various events across Newfoundland. His transition has taught him that "if you want more peace in your life, you know, you want to have more peace on your plate" (Rayapudi 2017). Remember that Dr. Rayapudi does not use the word "vegan" in his life or medical practice, but his ethical beliefs belong in this discussion even without the label because they combine a plant-based diet with a commitment to peace on his plate.

Renee Gosse (NL) also came to feel that education of non-vegans was important, both for their sakes and for the sakes of the animals. To that end, she has circulated online petitions against the seal hunt, engaged in video-making, held vigils, written letters to the editor, and organized protests. Renee told me that she consumed animal products most of

her life, and in retrospect, she would have wanted to know it was so harmful. There is an urgency in her voice when she discusses animal rights and a sense that she understands the scope of their suffering: "There is so much injustice out there when it relates to animals and what's going on...It's a huge issue. I just think about...every breath that I take...well, that's so many thousands of animals killed, right there" (Gosse 2017).

Skye Tostowaryk (NL) remembered being happy to have ten people in the NL Vegans group she founded with Jackson McLean (Tostowaryk 2017). However, the group was home to over a thousand lively and sometimes argumentative members in 2017, which is significant, since the couple only admitted people with ties to Newfoundland. Clearly, the regional habitus as it relates to carnism is fast becoming a contested territory. Jackson (NL), a long-time environmental activist and social justice advocate, is conscious of this and discouraged by those vegans who present themselves as infallible arbiters of right and wrong:

> I'm always checking myself, I'm always thinking, 'Is this the right thing? I think it's the right thing right now, but there could be something we didn't think about'...There's always new things to learn about ethical issues with food and broader social justice issues that are related or even not related to veganism that we should care about...The example I like to think of is the avocado and the egg. Like, you have an avocado in one hand and an egg in another hand. What's more ethical? And those people say 'Obviously the avocado is more ethical.' But what if the avocado was picked by a child slave, and the money went into some cartel? And the egg was made by a chicken in a farm sanctuary? Like, there's so many things that you might not know about those two foods that can make a big difference in how ethical they are (McLean 2017).

Jackson's thoughtful approach to veganism echoes Peter Singer's utilitarian argument for animal rights ethics in his efforts to determine where the least harm to the least

number of individuals may lie. It is also well-suited to life in Newfoundland. Hunger is an ongoing problem there, and food security remains a serious concern. Historically, it was scarcity that prompted Newfoundlanders to adopt foodways that favour the use of animals, and they are still viewed by many as the traditional, sustainable way to address these problems. Even the word "vegan" is not a common one, especially in outport communities, and those people who do encounter it often do not understand what it means. Still, it is possible now to find enough information on the Internet to make informed decisions about veganism, and there is hope among my research participants that there are compassionate, healthy ways to solve Newfoundland's food security problems.

The Torontonians

Toronto is home to a wide variety of animal rights activists, and while all of those I interviewed were vegan, their ethical beliefs did not always precede their performances of animal rights activism. Susan (ON) came to volunteer at Happily Ever Esther farm sanctuary after a series of unsuccessful fertility treatments left her with a desire to take care of others. A neuroscientist by training, she was not only moved by the emotional lives of the animals at Happily Ever Esther, she was mindful of their long-term memory capacity, auditory memory recall, and ability to learn as well. It was the animals themselves, and specifically a pig named Lenny, who helped Susan realize how little she knew about the ways animal bodies are used for food, medicine, clothing, and other supports for human life, and the realization was overwhelming for her: "I was angry. I

was upset. I was, you know, angry at the world, angry at the system...and I wanted to learn more, but I didn't know how to learn more because a lot of information is hidden from us" (Susan 2020). The daughter of a grocer, Susan remembers going to the Ontario food terminal with her father, an experience from childhood that helped to contextualize her frustration in adulthood:

> Huge for me is where food came from, because comparatively, I could go down to the Ontario food terminal and meet the farmers, sample things, and get right in there and understand their family story...So it was all exposed. You know, we didn't really have so much of the Internet back then. So we couldn't see their farm per se online. But yeah, they were so forthcoming and honest and just wonderful, wonderful people, and you could see what they were growing. Then what was hidden from me, which I was most upset about, was factory farming and animals and where the meat came from and dairy. I had no idea that all that existed (Ibid).

There are two elements of the transition narrative type in Susan's account; specifically the threshold experience in which her close association with Lenny prompts a realization about farmed animal treatment and the period of reflection that follows. I am sharing her story here because Susan's experience of volunteering at Happily Ever Esther shaped her vegan ethical beliefs and performances of animal rights advocacy thereafter. She says of her beliefs that consuming animal products "doesn't morally sit well" with her because of the suffering they cause, and while she understands there are products that contain animal ingredients for which there are no alternatives at present, those products that go in her body and in her house are vegan-friendly.

Susan has a great deal more to say about animal advocacy, and the reader should note the change in term here and above, from from "activist" to "advocate." It is a deliberate one, since Susan does not consider herself an activist even though she has volunteered for

Happily Ever Esther, worked as a director at the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals (CCFA), built a website for children through the CCFA titled Humane Food for Kids,[22] and started a local chapter of the 100 Who Care Alliance to provide financial help for animals where it was most needed.[23] Rather, she thinks of herself as an advocate because she prefers not to attend vigils and demonstrations but does believe in educating the public with gentleness and kindness:

> I would like to sort of teach and inspire others through teaching them about the sentient point of view and about the kindness that's in all animals. We can support that sort of thing. So I'm not about going online and berating people and doing all those things that just start arguments, and then, you know, the lines of communication are cut off...I think a lot of people, if they were in the situation that I was in, having not known any of this, it was just all so hidden! Their physical bodies were hidden, but so much of their abilities and capabilities and their potentials, it was just all hidden from me. So I feel that if other people were to be educated about this from a kind perspective, I think that could really help (Ibid).

When Susan says that she was "angry at the system" for hiding information about industrial animal agriculture from her and expresses frustration that the abilities, capabilities, and potentials of farmed animals were also hidden from her, she is pointing at the hegemonic influence of carnism upon society. Susan's transition to veganism at Happily Ever Esther demonstrates the power of farmed animal sanctuaries as sites of animal rights activism and advocacy. They exemplify the feminist caring ethic of "attentive love" towards animals that have been abandoned or abused by the industry that bred them for consumption, and they provide the public with an opportunity to see what was hidden from Susan. Her gentle approach to education stems from another belief, that

22 https://humanefoodforkids.ca.

23 https://www.100whocarealliance.org.

we would "do better" if we knew more about animals and the ways they are made to suffer for us.

Anne Griffin (ON) is a fellow director at the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals who believes that animals have the right not to be exploited and defines exploitation this way:

> Being bred into the world just to die at six months old, which is the pigs that are being kept in a cramped space, obviously with a cow having the baby stolen from them, all these farm animals, they don't live their lives to the full. People say, 'Oh, you're bringing a life into the world, giving it a life.' But no, especially not in factory farming, not really. You'd be giving it a life of hell (Griffin 2020).

Critical to Anne's veganism is a belief in the minimization of animal suffering on farms and in transport trucks, even though this sometimes places her at odds with other vegans. While this might sound counterintuitive to an outsider, recall that Gary Francione's philosophy of abolitionism specifically abjures this position - called welfarism - because it does not advocate for the inherent moral value of animals and potentially entrenches animal suffering at the hands of carnists. However, Anne takes a different view of the matter. She has abolitionist friends and respects the work they do, but even though she engages in vegan outreach, she recognizes that not everyone will become vegan in her lifetime. With this in mind, Anne believes in taking practical steps to make the lives of farmed animals "a bit more comfortable, pleasant, if possible" (Ibid). When I asked why it was important to her that farmed animals suffer less even though they will later be eaten and otherwise used, she said:

> Why cause less suffering? I'll be blunt here. Some people don't give a shit. They're just going to carry on eating meat. I've seen so much on the Internet,

> seen someone put something on *Blog TO*, 'I'm going to go out and have a steak tonight, blah, blah, blah.' You know, some people don't care. Somebody I know, where I tried telling her, and she lives out in the country: 'Oh, I'm sure I'll buy all my food out there. I'm sure they treat them well.' No, they might not. You have to go to the farm to take a look. It might still be a small family farm. They might still have their chickens in battery cages. They might still have sows in a sow stall. And she was in denial. Have you heard of Jo-Anne MacArthur? I had had her book on the coffee table, *We Animals*. And (this woman) came, and her husband came in, and she picked it up and opened it. As soon as I told her what it's about, she slammed it shut. 'I'm not ready to go vegan.' Don't think she ever will. And there's people like that. That's why I think this is important (Ibid).

There is a degree of stigmatization among vegans of the welfarist position Anne espouses, and because of this, her vegan ethical beliefs and performances of animal rights activism are somewhat non-conventional in the community. They are also well-informed. Anne was part of the Humane Trucks campaign through the CCFA, which sought to reduce the travel time of animals transported to slaughterhouses and provide them with better transport conditions in climate-controlled trailers. She showed me a CCFA advertisement in which a family looking for a new automobile with individual climate control options is contrasted with footage and information about cows and pigs, who could be transported without food or water for up to 52 hours and could be transported in poor weather for up to 36 and 28 hours, respectively.[24] Afterward, Anne remarked "I know it's not perfect, but I think it would be a help" (Ibid), a statement that epitomizes the vernacularization of her ethical beliefs and pragmatic activism.

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24 This information was provided in the advertisement and was accurate at the time of the interview in 2020. However, in a more recent search of the CCFA website, I read that the transport times of animals in Ontario have been reduced as a result of CCFA campaigns (“Recent Wins” n.d.).

Both Susan and Anne believe animals have the right to be free from suffering, but neither of them holds these beliefs in a performative vacuum. They worked together at the CCFA in 2020, when these interviews were conducted. They engaged in vegan outreach to children and adults, and they campaigned to improve the well-being of animals trapped in a carnist food system. Susan also engaged in volunteer efforts to support farmed animals, and she made many of her own household products to ensure they were vegan-friendly. They both expressed frustration at hegemonic carnism but had differing opinions about the benefit of education to address it, though Anne was committed to making the effort in spite of her doubts. Indeed, all of my Toronto research participants were committed to making a counter-hegemonic effort at educating the public, and while it is true I went to the city in search of animal rights activists, none of the ones I found were acting in the absence of vegan ethical belief. I asked all of these people why others should believe as they do, and I will close this section with the answer Julius offered, which is the product of his effort "to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world" (Crehan 2016, Common Sense):

> We grew up as children, and every teacher we ever had in public school drilled into our minds to be fair, to share, to be kind. And then all of a sudden you grew up with those values and then you see what's being done to animals. And you're going, wait a minute, why? Where's the fairness here? Where's the golden rule here? And it's sort of forgotten. It's sort of pushed aside. And I'm going, wait a minute, this is wrong. You know, like who decided this? Who decided that that animal dies, but this one sleeps on the end of my bed? And then, I think as a society, we have to start questioning this, and we have to stop saying, 'Okay.' Just because they're doing this for profit doesn't mean I have to do it too (Sandor 2020).

Vegan Challenges and Supports

In both the Oral History 6710 and the Ontario interviews, I asked research participants to discuss the challenges they faced as vegans and/or animal rights activists and the supports offered them from both inside and outside the vegan animal rights community. I will present and explore three of these narratives here, one from Stephanie Lushman's (NL) personal life, one from Mark Coombs' (NL) professional life, and one from Camille Labchuk's (ON) work as an attorney advocate for animals. Stephanie's narrative is a mixed account of support and challenge related to her vegan ethics and a leukaemia diagnosis, Mark discusses challenges he faces as a vegan working on an oil rig, and Camille explores challenges facing the animal rights movement in Ontario. In various respects, each of them illustrates what Martha Norkunas identifies as a "narrative of resistance," in which the narrators choose to speak about their ethical beliefs in difficult situations rather than trafficking in "discourses abhorrent to the spirit" with their silence (Norkunas 2004, 115).

Stephanie Lushman was diagnosed with leukaemia in 2016 while teaching English as a second language in South Korea. I interviewed her shortly after the leukaemia went into remission in 2017, while she was still in recovery. Stephanie told me that her American boss in South Korea grilled the oncologist there about possible relationships between her plant-based diet and the disease. "Does this have anything to do with her being vegan?" he asked. "Is she eating too much soy? Is there too much estrogen?" Her father asked the same questions when she came home for treatment, and Stephanie indicated to me that other people in her life expressed similar sentiments. So in addition to grappling with the

disease, she was forced to address the presumption that her dietary choices were faulty and somehow to blame for it. Fortunately, her doctor refuted this presumption and integrated her plant-based diet into his treatment plan: "We know doctors are not nutritionists. They know the same amount we know about the Canadian food guide. So I was really impressed with that. I was a little worried. But he said, 'If you feel great, and your blood work comes out fine, there's nothing to worry about'" (Lushman 2017). She goes on to report that nutritionists and nurses also supported her dietary choices during a five-month hospitalization period.

Stephanie's account points to an important reason why vegans advocate for the ethical definition and understanding of the word that describes their beliefs. A vegan dietary preference may be cast aside in the face of a life-threatening illness upon the advice of well-meaning colleagues, family members, and friends. However, a vegan ethical belief system may motivate the adherent to insist upon the integration of her ethics into a treatment plan unless it is no longer possible or practicable to do so, and this is precisely what Stephanie did. An ethical belief system may also motivate vegans to request plant-based meals in prisons, and this request carries far more weight if veganism is understood as creed and not a dietary preference.

In her 2020 interview, Camille Labchuk distinguished between the positions of "health vegans" and "planetary vegans" whose beliefs do not meet the Ontario Human Rights Commission's five-point definition of a creed and ethical vegans, whose beliefs potentially do and pointed me to the Ontario *Human Rights Code,* which specifies that a creed is:

- sincerely, freely and deeply held
- integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfilment
- a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices
- addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence
- has some connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2015)

However, in a 2016 response to claims that ethical veganism is now a creed, the Ontario Human Rights Commission writes that:

> the Policy does not say one way or the other whether ethical veganism is a creed. Indeed, it is **not** the OHRC's role to determine whether or not a certain belief is a creed. Specific facts and context are needed for those kinds of determinations to be made. Ultimately, courts or a Tribunal will make those kinds of decisions. However, our policy provides guidance to those tasked with making that determination, whether it be courts and Tribunals, or employers, service providers, landlords, or others with obligations under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2016).

Because courts and tribunals often make the final determination in cases where an individual argues that a particular belief system is a creed, it is important to vegans that the definitions of "vegan" and "veganism" remain undiluted from their original coinage, which specifically denotes a philosophy and way of living. This particular point is a core concern of my dissertation and a primary reason why I am careful to distinguish veganism, which is an ethical belief system, from plant-based diets, which may be adopted for any number of reasons.

As a journeyman electrician in the conservative, primarily masculine environment of an oil rig, Mark Coombs has weathered a number of negative comments from co-workers directed at his veganism. When I interviewed Mark and his wife Kayla in 2017, he said "It's a bit of a rough industry when you've got an open mind. A lot of closed-mindedness in the industry" and went on to discuss the challenges he faces as a vegan working in this environment:

> When I first started on this job I had a crew, and you're on a crew with a bunch of fellas, and it's the same small crew mostly all day long. So they got to know me. And then they were asking what was a vegan and asked me their questions, and we got it out of the way. It was good. It all calmed down, and then they all made their scattered little jokes. Some people gets really...They gotta keep on it because it's something different. And then I switched crews. So I said to Kayla, 'I gotta do it all over again. I gotta go through all the same stuff.'...You know those memes you see on Facebook? 'Where do you get your protein?' is the first question. I just laughs at that one now. I've gotten every question you can dream of vegans are asked, like everything really. Even the fact of, they'll even ask, 'You're vegan, but you're working here?' 'I'm working in oil and gas.' 'I figured you'd be a hippie driving a smart car.' 'No. That's got nothing to do with being vegan. Now, you let me know when we can do without oil.' Meanwhile, I'm trying to get out of the industry and get into clean energy. But it's different....Sometimes it can be very frustrating, like, sometimes you'll overhear a lot of comments and conversations. And it's just like, Mark, shut up. Don't get into it now. You don't want to go through this for the next half hour, of 'What would you do if you were on a deserted island' (M. Coombs 2017)?

The traditional vegan-as-hippie stereotype makes an appearance in Mark's account of workplace reactions to his veganism even in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, and his response to this presumption about vegans is part of what he later identifies as a set of "typical answers to the typical questions" about his ethical beliefs. This is a telling statement, because it points to a level of traditionality in outsider discourses about veganism and traditionality in insider narrative resistance to these discourses rooted in

vernacular theory. While Mark makes it clear that he often wants to work and eat in peace, it is also clear that he endeavours to answer the questions of coworkers when they arise, even when he finds them offensive or strange, and even though his answers are sometimes acerbic. This is certainly true of his response to workplace accusations that veganism emasculates him:

> I don't know what the fuck is manly about going and grabbing a piece of packaged meat and paying for it and cooking it. I don't know what's tough about that. It don't make you strong or tough, and you just went and grabbed it. Well, haul down a moose with your bare hands, and then we can talk about you being tough. But until then, I'm only going to grab a grapefruit off the shelf, and you're going to grab a steak off the shelf. There's no difference (M. Coombs 2017).

This association of meat with masculinity has also included workplace conversations about his relationship with Kayla. He was once asked in all seriousness if oral sex with his partner could be considered vegan, and co-workers have also expressed the opinion that he was only vegan because his wife was. His standard reply to this is "Yes, because a grown man cannot make the decision when information is put in front of him to stop eating animals" (M. Coombs 2017). At the time of the interview, Mark was uncertain how his ethical beliefs would intersect with his working environment when he returned to Alberta, where employee meals are catered. But he was committed to being vegan there as well, even if he is, as he puts it, "a unicorn in the industry."

Animal Justice was founded in 2008 by Nick Wright, a recent law school graduate who was motivated by animal injustice to create an organization called Lawyers for Animal Welfare. Camille Labchuk knew Nick because of their mutual interest in protests against the commercial seal hunt in Canada, and after she graduated from law school in

2011, she joined him. Together they did what Camille calls "significant work that resulted in some policy changes," including a memo advising Air Canada that it had the right to ban shipments of monkeys into the country for research purposes, which the airline has now done (Labchuk 2020). Camille is presently the executive director of Animal Justice, which supports a staff of eleven people, educates animal rights activists through the Animal Justice Academy, and is concerned with issues of puppy mills, "ag-gag" legislation, animal experimentation, and fur farming, among others (Animal Justice n.d.). But while the organization has grown in the last fifteen years and undertaken important work on behalf of animals, it still faces significant challenges:

> Our ultimate goal is to harness the power of the legal system to advance animal protection in some significant way. We recognize that animals as are probably the most disempowered segment of society. They don't have the ability to go into parliament or to go into courtrooms themselves and speak for what they want and what they need. They are typically kept behind closed doors on factory farms. The vast majority of animals that we use are in that situation. They just simply don't have the political capacity to speak up on their own. So we try to be a voice for them in the legal system and make sure that their interests are represented in the corridors of power. They are, as I mentioned, very disempowered. And the interests that use them and profit from their use and exploit and cause them to suffer are very well entrenched, incredibly powerful. Look at the commodity groups for just one industry of animal use, the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Their annual marketing budget is eighty million dollars a year, and that's more than all of the animal rights groups in this country combined times ten. So there's a challenge...And we don't really have any idea about the beef industry, the chicken industry, and all of these other massive industries that benefit from animal exploitation. We just happened to notice that because the Dairy Farmers once mentioned it in the House of Commons committee meeting. So you know, the conservative estimate is somewhere in the area of five hundred million they probably spend on marketing per year. So we see this as a power struggle and a struggle between very powerful interests and very not powerful interests. And we try to level the playing field and we try to focus on areas with the most potential for change. And sometimes that means the low hanging fruit where society is ready for it, but also those areas where the potential for change is maybe not

> as immediate but the suffering is so great that it needs to be worked on. And specifically, that means farming. (Labchuk 2020).

In this interview excerpt, Camille discusses counter-hegemonic narratives of resistance directed at the Canadian legal system on behalf of animals. The power disparities she describes are quite clear. There are vast physical disparities between animals - who are disempowered and cannot speak for themselves - and industries that profit from their exploitation, and there are vast financial disparities between animal rights organizations - which advocate for these animals - and those same industries. Because of these power differences, Animal Justice focuses on initiatives that have the greatest potential to affect societal change and those where the suffering of animals is greatest.

There is also an important point to be made here about Thomas McLaughlin's analysis of vernacular theory in small groups engaged with issues of interest, which I have utilized as part of the foundation for theoretical work in this chapter, versus "critical strategies informed by a skeptical philosophical tradition" (McLaughlin 1996, 4), which form part of the foundation for Animal Justice's work. Whereas the first half of Camille's interview details the development of her own vernacular theories about the ways animals ought to be treated, the second half details her work for Humane Society International, the Green Party, the National Capitol Vegetarian Association in Ottawa, and Animal Justice on collective issues of concern involving animals. In these places, the vernacular theories of the group are complemented by critical strategies informed by various branches of the aforementioned skeptical philosophical tradition. Camille participates in this work as a

member of the Ontario Bar Association, bringing her legal expertise to bear on ethical beliefs she has held most of her life.

I selected the interview excerpts above because they highlight tensions between hegemonic carnism and counter-hegemonic veganism in the personal lives, professional environments, and public activism of my research participants and to illustrate the power disparity that exists between carnists and vegans. As we have seen, Stephanie had the support of her doctors in navigating the carnist questions of well-meaning family members and colleagues, but she was still forced to engage with those questions at a time when she was vulnerable. Mark responds to the carnist commentary of his co-workers with acerbic pragmatism, but he also grows so weary of that commentary that he sometimes says nothing at all. Finally, Camille's organization of legal experts and staff bring vernacular theory and critical strategy to the mitigation of animal suffering, but their resources are minuscule in comparison to those of the animal agriculture industry. In their interactions with family members, colleagues, and industries, these research participants resist the external pressures of carnism upon their vegan ethical beliefs even when it is difficult for them to do and speak back to that carnism whenever they are able.

Vegan Voices

In 2017 and 2020, I went into the field and asked questions of vegans and animal rights activists that I hoped would encourage conversation about their ethical beliefs and the ways they were enacted. In both cases, I prepared a list of "friendly insider questions" knowing that I would need to engage with the answers of research participants in a

probative manner. However, I was also aware of many "unfriendly outsider questions" rooted in hegemonic carnist discourses. In this context, a friendly insider question is one that eschews the broad scope of outsider perspectives about vegans and animal rights activists in favour of an inquiry that seeks to understand these groups on their own terms. Conversely, an unfriendly outsider question draws from outsider perspectives in the formulation of an inquiry that seeks to satisfy the curiosity of people who do not belong to these groups, often at the expense of the patience, the intellectual labour, and the emotional well-being of insiders. While any ethnographic project may demand that a researcher be willing to challenge her participants within reason, it is not my role as an ethnographer to bring potentially harmful discourses into my community of interest under the guise of scholarship, so I was sensitive to the distinction between these kinds of questions and their prospective use in my interviews.

My understanding of these discourses was informed by several examples of vegan expressive culture, including the *Your Vegan Fallacy Is* (YVFI) website.[25] YVFI responds to unfriendly outsider questions in a non-confrontational way, and because of this, it has become a popular resource among vegans engaging in animal rights activism. The website contains thirty-two carnist "fallacies" presented in the form of statements; e.g. "Canine Teeth Make Me A Meat Eater," "I Only Eat Humane Meat," and "Plants Are Alive." Clicking on each statement opens a webpage containing both the carnist fallacy and a vegan response to it. For example, this is the YVFI response to "Vegans Kill

25 See Pg. 13 "My Position in the Research" for additional discussion of this website, which can be found at www.yourveganfallacyis.com.

Animals Too," an unfriendly outsider challenge I will discuss in more detail below. In the interest of transparent positionality, please note that I am a co-author of this response:

> Crop fields do indeed disrupt the habitats of wild animals, and wild animals are also killed when harvesting plants. However, this point makes the case for a plant-based diet and not against it, since many more plants are required to produce a measure of animal flesh for food (often as high as 12:1) than are required to produce an equal measure of plants for food (which is obviously 1:1). Because of this, a plant-based diet causes less suffering and death than one that includes animals.
>
> It is pertinent to note that the idea of perfect veganism is a non-vegan one. Such demands for perfection are imposed by critics of veganism, often as a precursor to lambasting vegans for not measuring up to an externally-imposed standard. That said, the actual and applied ethics of veganism are focused on causing the least possible harm to the fewest number of others. It is also noteworthy that the accidental deaths caused by growing and harvesting plants for food are ethically distinct from the intentional deaths caused by breeding and slaughtering animals for food. This is not to say that vegans are not responsible for the deaths they cause, but rather to point out that these deaths do not violate the vegan ethics stated above (MacCath-Moran and MacCath-Moran 2015)

Another example of vegan expressive culture includes Benny Malone's book *How to Argue With Vegans*, which discusses thought-terminating cliches in carnist arguments (e.g. "agree to disagree," "circle of life," and "humane slaughter"), debate tactics utilized by carnists, and many other unfriendly outsider approaches to veganism (Malone 2021). Arising from exchanges between carnists and vegans in everyday life, these resources and many others like them are evidence of traditionality in carnist argumentation and the subsequent traditionality that arises out of vegan responses. So while I was concerned about bringing unfriendly outsider discourses into my interviews, I also wanted to explore

these elements of traditionality because they illustrate important ways both groups communicate their ethical positions.

To this end, I included a question in the Toronto interview set derived from the "Vegans Kill Animals Too" argument with the disclaimer that I knew it was based on an unfriendly outsider challenge. I had recently encountered a variation of this argument rooted in the assertion that vegans contribute to animal suffering and because of this, they need to address the ways they draw boundaries around their ability to mitigate animal cruelty. This argument goes on to take issue with vegan consumption of almond milk and problematizes the uses of almond milk and palm oil at some length, concluding that vegan ethical practices have proximal limits. While the author of the argument is careful to indicate that their comments are not intended to find fault with veganism as an ethical practice, they conclude that vegans avoid the direct consumption of animals and their secretions but for practical reasons consent to the use of animals in industries that cause harm.

The above concern about almond milk includes an assertion that bees are used to pollinate almond trees and suffer as a result. Indeed, the California almond industry relies on bees as pollinators, and commercial beekeepers in the region have reported widespread loss of hives to pesticides, diseases from parasites, habitat loss, and stresses imposed upon them as the industry grows (McGivney 2020). However, almond milk is also responsible for one third of the emissions cow's milk produces, requires one ninth of the land to grow, and uses one half of the water (Oakes 2020), so there are clear ecological benefits to this choice of beverage over that of cow's milk. Further, vegans are not the only people who

eat almonds or drink almond milk, and industrial beekeeping is responsible for the pollination of many fruit and vegetable crops. With these concerns in mind, vegans counter that the abuse of bees in industrial agriculture is a complex issue involving all people who eat the plants they pollinate, so it is problematic to use that issue in an argument about the reasons why their ethics are proximal. The same can be said for palm oil, which is a common ingredient in processed foods.

While this variation of the "Vegans Kill Animals Too" argument is concerned with almonds and palm oil, it is a good example of traditionality in carnist discourses about vegans because it takes so many forms. Sometimes the offending item is almonds because of the aforementioned problems involving bees. Other times the offending item is wheat because of the mice killed during harvest. Still other times the offending item is truck tires because they contain animal byproducts. In all cases, the underlying argument is that veganism is an ethic of perfection that vegans themselves cannot attain, which prompts variations of the traditional vegan counter-argument that "the idea of perfect veganism is a non-vegan one."

There is also a unique discursive pattern in the "Vegans Kill Animals Too" argument, which is found in so many unfriendly outsider challenges that it is worth exploring in detail. Here is the pattern:

1. *Presumption*: The philosophy of veganism is flawed because there is no way to be perfectly vegan.
2. *Common Sense*: Vegans ignore the harm they do to animals while they claim to uphold this philosophy.

3. *Challenge*: Vegans kill animals too and need to be told as much.

To better understand it, I will analyze another unfriendly outsider question, which will also provide an opportunity for additional exposure to the kinds of expressive culture that arise out of vegan responses to carnists.

Where do you get your protein?

Veganism and animal rights activism are minority ethical beliefs and practices not well-understood by carnists, and their adherents are often stigmatized by majority non-adherents. Together, this lack of understanding and concomitant stigma sometimes give rise to the discursive pattern illustrated above. In it, the carnist holds a presumption about veganism and/or animal rights activism that arises out of Gramscian common sense perpetuated by hegemonic carnist culture. This combination of presumption and common sense engenders a challenge the carnist presents to the vegan and/or animal rights activist as if the answer were obvious and detrimental to the vegan's position. For example:

1. *Presumption*: Vegans don't get enough protein.
2. *Common Sense*: Only meat has protein.
3. *Challenge*: Where do you get your protein?

In answer to this question, vegans refer their opponents to a wide variety of reputable sources about the abundance of protein in foods not derived from animals. However, the surety of carnists about their presumptions and the answers provided by common sense often preclude preliminary research and encourage the challenge. As a result, vegans and animal rights activists, who are savvy vernacular theorists operating from a position of

counter-hegemony, often find themselves answering the same challenges over and over again. In doing so, they dismantle these presumptions and correct the common sense embedded in them. They also develop shared discourses around the challenges, and from these, elements of expressive culture emerge. In a popular example of this expressive culture on the Internet, a vegan music duo addresses several of these challenges in song. Here is the first verse:

> *Jonathan*: Hey, Ivory!
>
> *Ivory*: Yeah, Jonathan.
>
> *Jonathan*: You're vegan, right?
>
> *Ivory*: Yes, that's right. I am.
>
> *Jonathan*: Can I ask you some questions, then?
>
> *Ivory*: Sure, man. Of course you can.
>
> *Jonathan*: Are you ready for the questions, then?
>
> *Ivory*: What are you waiting for?
>
> *Jonathan*: Where do you get your protein, protein, protein? Only meat has protein. So where do you get your protein?
>
> *Ivory*: Actually, lots of things have protein. Beans have protein. Greens have protein. Fruits and nuts have protein. Grains and seeds have protein, and here's the thing that's so obscene: We don't need so much protein. Most people eat more than they need (Mann 2011).

This discursive pattern is so common in outsider carnist challenges that it has also found a place in insider expressive culture via counter-hegemonic counter memes "inherently structured in opposition to a dominant message" (Mould 2022, 448). Many of

these counter-memes are humorous, taking the form of insider jokes at the expense of outsiders. Consider the following comic created by Vegan Sidekick, a popular artist who specializes in acerbic counter-memes:

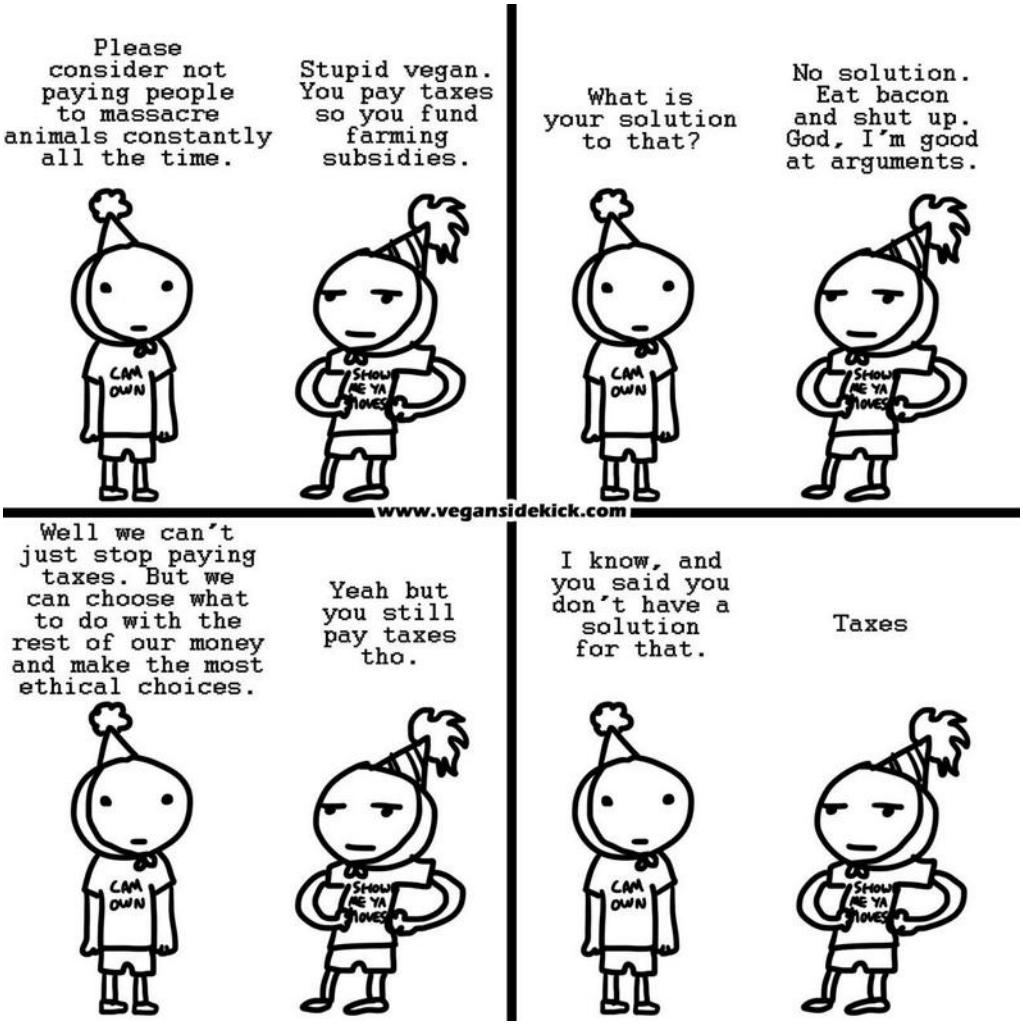

Figure 9: Taxes
(Vegan Sidekick 2016)

Overall, the comic is a response to "Vegans Kill Animals Too." However, there is also an example of unfriendly outsider discourse in a variation of the "Mmm, Bacon" argument

that because pigs taste good it is appropriate to eat them, which is often used as a trolling technique on the Internet. Finally, note the insider language of animal suffering in the phrase "massacre animals constantly all the time," used here because the comic is meant for a vegan audience and intends to make fun of carnists. This sort of insider humour expresses vegan ethical positions in sympathetic terms and is unsympathetic to perceived flaws in carnist ethical positions, thus providing a release valve for frustrations about unfriendly outsider questions.

The Question My Research Participants Answered

Many of my research participants expressed a nuanced understanding of the practical limitations inherent to their ethics, and I have cited some of these people on the matter in this chapter. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue that any person who practices ethical veganism is unaware that the flesh, secretions, and work of animals are ubiquitous in everyday life because vegans research all of the products and services they use and not just those that might form the foundation of an unfriendly carnist challenge. Further, because vegans have an intimate understanding of the carnism that underpins their everyday lives, there can be negative emotional impacts associated with common activities like taking medicines tested on animals or purchasing tires for a family automobile, and these impacts are not well understood by carnists for the same reasons that traditional carnist arguments *are* well understood by vegans.

With the foregoing in mind, I asked my Toronto research participants "What would you say to the assertion that the consumption choices animal rights activists make also cause harm to animals?" Here are a few of their answers:

> Growing hundreds of acres of crops to feed animals is going to displace wildlife because they have to go to feeding humans, but 10, 20, 30, 50 times the amount of displacement is going to occur because we're having to grow food to feed 70 billion animals - 10 times more than there are human beings on this earth. And they are going to have to eat every single day for weeks, months, maybe even a year or a year and a half until they reach slaughter weight when only a very small percentage of that food, energy and protein in mass is going to actually get converted to food. Not only is it exceedingly, bizarrely wasteful on a scale that's unimaginable and incomprehensible, but you're still doing a far better job as a vegan than you are as a non-vegan. And if somebody can show me a way to get to to perfect, I'm there. I'm happy to do that. But that's going to mean that everyone else is going to have to participate. You can't stand on the outside and critique somebody across the fence and say, hey, you can't do that. (Osborne 2020)

Nigel's answer to the question centres the use of resources for food animals versus the use of resources for fruit and vegetable crops. He points out that of the two, the use of animals is far more wasteful and displaces many more wild animals. He also invites those who critique the imperfection of vegan ethics to offer him a better solution with the caveat that anyone who would offer such a solution should be willing to implement it themselves.

> Well, it's been proven, and I don't have everything in front of me right now the way I could respond on social media, that it's still the path of least harm. I mean, if somebody said there are more insects on this stalk than that stalk, I would choose the one with with less insects. But I don't knowingly cause harm. I still think it's a path of less harm. I think less animals are being killed. (Marni 2020)

Marni's answer to the question centres the issue of harm reduction. She asserts that veganism is the path of least harm and expresses familiarity with research underpinning her assertion, which illustrates a nuanced understanding of practical limits where her vegan ethics are concerned. Marni also expresses a willingness to do all she can to reduce the harm she causes to animals.

> It takes so many grains to produce a pound of beef. So to get to plow the field, you obviously kill some mice and insects or something. So there's more, and people say, 'Oh, you know, they're growing all these soya beans.' Hello! That's to feed cows...Yeah, that to me, that's just bullshit. (Griffin 2020)

Anne's answer to the question also centres the use of resources, and she includes another traditional offender in the catalogue of items used to bring this challenge; namely, the relationship between soy crops and plant-based diets. In the "vegans eat soy, and soy crops are bad for the planet, so vegans are bad for the planet" version of the challenge, the carnist presumes that people who eat plant-based diets are primarily responsible for the proliferation of soy crops. However, research shows and vegans are aware that the vast majority of soybeans produced in the world - over seventy-five percent, in fact - are fed to animals used for food, which means that the consumption of animals is the primary driver of negative environmental impacts associated with soy production (Ritchie and Roser 2021).

Hegemonic systems encourage blindness to alternatives on the part of their adherents, and carnism is no different in that respect. However, a few of my research participants expressed the opinion that because they had once been carnists, they were sympathetic to unfriendly outsider questions and looked forward to educating people who asked them. I

have endeavoured to approach this part of my ethnographic work with their good will in mind. Yes, there are marked tensions between outsider carnist challenges to veganism and insider vegan responses, and there are marked elements of traditionality in both of these. In addition, it can be difficult to identify the traditionality in these narratives for various reasons; the carnist challenges often arise out of an invisible system of ethical belief, while the vegan responses are often only seen as a shared element of expressive culture from within the community. However, my purpose here is not to alienate readers. Rather, I have aimed to identify and discuss a unique pattern of traditionality in outsider carnist discourses about veganism, to provide the responses of research participants to an interview question I derived from the argument above, and to alleviate the potential concerns of those who might wonder why I did not discuss certain topics in my interviews.

I went into the field to find vegan voices that were not my own and faithfully represent them in folkloristic analysis. Again, while it was my intention to be probative, I was listening for insider discourses and structured my interviews accordingly except for the unfriendly outsider question I was prompted to ask by familiarity with outsider discourses. To facilitate this listening, I asked friendly insider questions about topics of interest to vegans themselves, and this is why the chapter you have just read centres their concerns alone.

Chapter Three: Performing Animal Rights Activism

Introduction to the Demonstrations

Chapter One makes the case for ethical belief in the context of vegan animal rights activism, and Chapter Two utilizes that argument in the analysis of ethnographic interviews. Chapter Three will contextualize these discussions further in an exploration of the ways vegan ethical belief is enacted and performed as animal rights activism that informs, persuades, and agitates the public. My primary goal in undertaking participant observation of these demonstrations was to learn more about performative strategies in the movement; how they create a theatre of activism, how they are received, the discursive tensions that result, and the ways they are negotiated. However, these demonstrations also illustrate various performances of the self. There are performances in which the ethical beliefs of individuals are enacted in public but intended for fellow group members, especially in the solidarity of activists at Roaring Silence Against Bill 156. There are differences in performances of the self-as-activist for outsiders and insiders to the animal rights community, which are apparent among Toronto Cow Save vigil attendees whose grief for lambs facing slaughter is raw and unscripted off-camera. There are deeply personal performances in which the decisions people make on the basis of ethical belief have multivalent interpretations, notably in Lori's decision to remain in front of a transport truck as it was weaponized against her. Finally, there are several props employed in these performances; literature, signage, red tape, and water bottles have specific roles to play in the performance of activism for the public, while hats, jacket

patches, and other adornments bearing insider discourses identify community members to one another. Material culture plays a significant role in the performance of animal rights activism, so I will highlight a few of these props in the discussion to come.

Anthropologist Elise M. Brenner writes that "Social protest folklore is a vehicle for focusing justified political anger toward the sources of oppression. It is virtuous anger directed at the right source, focusing the attention of performers and audiences on the struggle for social justice" (Brenner 2021, 506). There is little anger in the following social protest folklore that is unscripted for the benefit of a carnist audience. However, there is virtuous compassion for animals and virtuous determination not to be powerless or voiceless on their behalf. Committed animal rights activists view their work as the most important social justice struggle of our time and find common ground with climate, reproductive, and racial justice in the goals of the animal rights movement. Sociologist Thomas Reed writes that "To engage in protest is to offer public witness," adding that protest movements "are always proposing, putting forth positive alternatives" (Reed 2019, xiv). Public witness is central to each of the demonstrations I attended; indeed, animal rights activists utilize the term "bearing witness" to describe their activities at slaughterhouse vigils. The positive alternative they offer is the adoption of a vegan ethical belief system, and this alternative is often interwoven with a call to the same compassion for animals that motivates them.

The ethnographic data in this chapter is comprised of several sources; discussions with animal rights activists, participant observation of animal rights demonstrations, my own photographs and video of these demonstrations, and audiovisual materials supplied

by research participants. Amateur and professional photojournalism play an important role in bearing witness throughout the animal rights movement. Photographs and video footage taken at vigils offer a window into the troubled and troubling lives of animals at the moment of their imminent deaths, and these materials find their way onto the Internet, onto protest literature, and onto the placards carried during demonstrations like Roaring Silence Against Bill 156. Similar to protest photography in Kashmir, protest photography in the animal rights movement "does not simply bear witness; rather, the photographer's act of witnessing makes themselves subject to the frames they seek to capture. Their individual subjectivities are deeply interconnected with the image...Photography is their protest" (Kanjwal 2018, 88). In this way, individual ethical beliefs and semi-private performances of interaction with slaughter-bound animals become material culture in the animal rights movement, which is later carried into demonstrations as part of public protest theatre.

At each of the following animal rights demonstrations, I discussed my research project with fellow demonstrators, asked about their reasons for attending, recruited research participants, and engaged in the activism at hand. I endeavoured to bring an open mind to this element of my field work and to interrogate these performances of animal rights activism even as I participated in them. To this end, my field journal contained a list of thematic, discursive, performative and other folkloristic prompts, which helped me engage thoughtfully with this process and create an intellectual space for deeper analysis as I wrote field notes afterward. Still, there were moments in the field when I was only an animal rights activist interacting for the first time in an environment where farmed

animals were suffering and their advocates were being harassed or threatened. I navigated these moments by acknowledging their emotional impact, remembering my commitment to ethical conduct, and reminding myself that good scholarship is good activism.

Notably, these demonstrations often placed activists in close contact with unsympathetic, sometimes violent outsiders and police officers whose mandate and intentions were not always clear. In these situations, it was not possible to distinguish myself as a scholar and participant observer without conscious effort, and this was not always advisable given the ethically sensitive nature of my research. As a result, these outsiders and officers often viewed me in the same way they viewed the people whose activism I had come to study. This was not altogether inaccurate; I am a vegan animal rights activist, and my own performances of activism at these demonstrations were sincere. However, the heightened tensions between protestors and respondents inhibited my ability to bridge the divide between us and speak to these people about their perspectives of the animal rights movement, which were undoubtedly nuanced and worthy of scholarship in their own right. As a result, my research is focused exclusively on vegans and animal rights activists in the present chapter, but the roles of outsiders and police officers are prominent in the ethnographic data that underpins it. Readers should remember that this data and the analyses derived from it are purely observational and shaped by my positionality at each demonstration.

While my field work was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic, the data I gathered was rich and diverse, especially as it regards participant observation of the animal rights demonstrations discussed herein. Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 was a polished,

theatrical march through downtown Toronto made all the more dramatic by the significant number of activists who attended. The Toronto Cow Save and Pig Save vigils brought the ethical beliefs of two polarized groups into intimate, often troubled contact with each other. The GRASS Bar Isabel protest was a chaotic, determined effort to influence a restaurant owner that drew the ire of patrons and the attention of police. Ethnographic accounts and analysis of these will comprise the entirety of this chapter as I invite the reader to step into the field, experience these demonstrations through me, and come to understand them as both a folklorist and an animal rights activist.

Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 March

Toronto police officers and cruisers line the march route from its inception at Trinity Square Labyrinth, through Yonge-Dundas Square, on to Toronto City Hall, and back around to the labyrinth by way of Chinatown. We cannot speak to them because our mouths are taped shut, but many among us nod our thanks as we step out onto Dundas Street single file, signs raised, silent except for the drumbeat in a city expecting noise. Neither can we respond to the woman who shouts "Take all those animals to Africa, and let the lions, tigers, and bears eat them!" Not that any of us would. There are marshals for that; to engage with passersby, field questions, and pass out literature. But we are ignored for the most part, except for the few Torontonians who watch with bemused expressions or take pictures with mobile phones.

Figure 10: Tall Man With Raised Fist Shouting to Disrupt the Demonstration (MacCath-Moran, 2020f)

After a five-minute walk, we arrive at Yonge-Dundas Square. A stage by any definition of the word, it is already populated with people performing belief; a man with a sign advertising "Free Info on Islam," a street preacher with a portable PA system shouting "hallelujah" and "thank you, Jesus," a pair of Jehovah's Witnesses with an easel full of literature. There are enough of us to circle the square shoulder-to-shoulder and face outward in the direction of digital billboards and the department stores beneath them. The first speakout begins when a demonstration organizer with black and green hair deploys a megaphone to tell the crowd about human supremacy and the abuse of animals in slaughterhouses. A tall man steps into the circle and shouts nonsense over the megaphone to disrupt the speakout; one hand cupped over his mouth to amplify the sound, another waving in the air. One of the protest marshals approaches him but is rebuffed. The police do not intervene. The result is cacophony, but we have something the street preacher and

the tall man do not; numbers. A familiar call goes out over the megaphone: "What do we want?" Together we pull aside the red tape and answer "Animal liberation!" The second half of the call goes out. "When do we want it?" We answer. "Now!" Another call-and-response follows, and then we re-tape our mouths and follow the drumbeat out of the square.

Figure 11: Activists and Ice-Skaters at Toronto City Hall (MacCath-Moran, 2020b)

Later we arrive at Toronto City Hall after listening to a man honk his car horn for several minutes to protest our demonstration and another shout to his friend about the "fucking drum" and the "fucking tape" over our mouths. Here we gather in a semi-circle

around an ice-skating crowd, and a young organizer begins a second speakout. Over the megaphone, she says:

> Your government is proposing Bill 156. That means they want to imprison people for exposing the truth of marginalized bodies. This means they are taking away your right to knowledge....They don't want you to know the truth. They are trying to silence all truth. You have a right to know the truth, and we have a right to teach you. If something was happening to you or the people you love, and you needed someone to stand up for you, and all you could do was cry because you did nothing, that's not illegal. That's bullshit. So much love and compassion is exposing corruption and violence. That's not illegal. It's a moral duty. It's our moral duty, and if any one of you needed me to stand with you, and you needed any one of us to stand with you, we would stand right there looking after you and speaking out, and that should not be illegal. The truth, the truth is what will bring power to the people. Don't let that be taken away from you. Please, go to the web site, Stopbill156.com. Prove that you have power. You have power over what happens in the world...Each and every individual person has the power to make sure that truth is out there for all. We won't be silent.

It is surprising how few people listen to her, or indeed, pay attention to any of us at all.

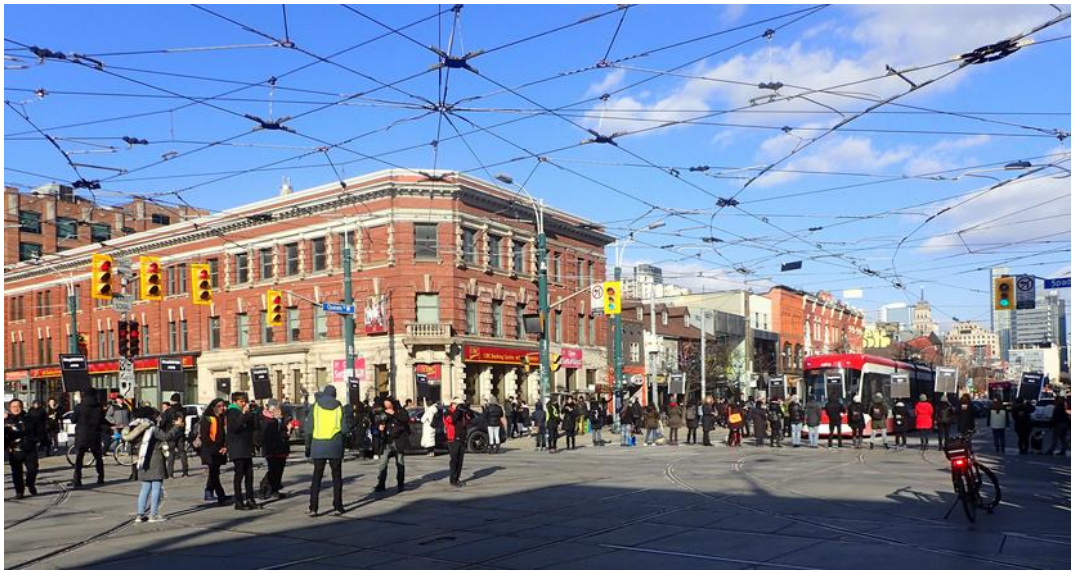

Figure 12: Queen and Spadina Rolling Blockade
(MacCath-Moran, 2020d)

At Queen and Spadina, Torontonians break our ranks to cross the street and board the trolley while we engage in a rolling blockade of traffic in all directions for two light cycles. A third organizer takes the megaphone:

> Good afternoon everyone! We are here today to speak to you about Bill 156, a draconian piece of legislation that the Ford government has put at the Ontario legislature. This bill will make it illegal to expose cruelty to animals at slaughterhouses, at farms, and in transport. We are a group of concerned citizens who have gathered together to stop Bill 156. I urge you to go to the website StopBill156.com. There is a little section of myths and facts there that you can read and make your own decisions as to whether you think that this bill should go ahead. If you agree with us that it should not, please sign the petition, contact your MPPs who are starting back to legislature on Tuesday, and tell them why this bill is neither needed nor appropriate anywhere in Canada, let alone in Ontario. We thank you for your time, and also there is an excellent video on the same website, StopBill156.com. Please watch that. Thank you.

On the way through Chinatown, a woman screams at us. "You're losers! You're all fucking losers! You're telling fucking lies! You can go fuck yourself!" Thereafter, a man in dreadlocks repeats "If I can catch it, Imma eat it!" again and again as we pass. Another tells his friend "These people act like druggies with tape over their mouths." It is cold, we are tired, and it is easy to be disheartened, but on the way back to Trinity Square I watch a woman weeping from a construction awning while she watches us pass, and in the debriefing we learn the marshals received many positive comments from onlookers. An organizer announces a Wet'suwet'en solidarity march for the animals in coordination with local Indigenous people, and the march ends. There are fewer of us now, but those that remain gather for a group photo.

Figure 13: Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 Group Photo (MacCath-Moran 2020e)

Analysis

In her discussion of Earth First!'s "Crack the Dam" protest, humanities professor and theatre director Sarah Ann Standing writes that:

> Calling ecoactivism art opens it to important analysis. To begin with, understanding ecoactivism as art allows us to place it in historical context: ecoactivist performance finds roots in situationist art, agit-prop, farce, and performance art, as well as Dada and Futurism. All of these artistic movements made powerful and paradigm-shifting interventions in social and political culture. If we understand ecoactivism as artistic practice as well as political action, we can similarly frame such activism as attempts to shift our paradigms and ways of seeing (as well as stunts aimed at shaping political opinion) (Standing 2012).

Standing's commentary about "Crack the Dam" helps to contextualize "Roaring Silence Against Bill 156" as both an artistic practice and a political action. Inside the march, there is an urgent performance of vegan ethical beliefs all of the silent actors comprehend. Outside the march is Hogtown,[26] and many of the unwitting audience members there find the performance unsettling at least, incomprehensible at worst because they espouse carnist ethical beliefs whether or not they have ever examined them. Between this counter-hegemonic inside and hegemonic outside is liminal space where animal rights activists hope to spark "flashes" of counter-hegemonic consciousness in people who are presently steeped in hegemonic narratives, thereby strengthening the vegan position in a game of inches (Crehan 2016, chap. 7; Schechner 1985, 302-303). Because of this, the art of the march is situationist; disrupting systems of animal consumption, environmental; demanding that Torontonians "make the connection" between themselves and the animals on the placards, and paradigm-shifting. Given the physical condition of the animals on the placards; freezing cows, injured chickens and pigs, etc., their bodies themselves become "a performance that demands a narrative (or, in the event of silence, expresses the existence of said narrative) account" of the violence underpinning their lives and deaths (Bodner 2019, 254).

There is also a parallel to be drawn between this promenade and the one described by folklorist Giovanna P. Del Negro in *The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town*. In the village of Sasso, women stroll the piazza in the evening wearing their best

26 Hogtown is a nickname given to the City of Toronto because the raising and slaughtering of pigs are an important part of its history.

clothes, holding up a mirror to village society and the "daily struggles of politics and gender" as they perform their own conceptualizations of modernity (Del Negro 2004; 4, 16). The actors in "Roaring Silence Against Bill 156" also hold up a mirror, but this one faces resolutely outward at the Toronto commons, and our silence opens a space for the internal dialogue of audience members about the red tape across our mouths and the suffering animals on our placards. That internal dialogue externalizes in shouted carnist presumptions about the food chain (*"Take all those animals to Africa, and let the lions, tigers, and bears eat them!"*), insults (*"These people act like druggies with tape over their mouths."*), accusations (*You're losers! You're all fucking losers! You're telling fucking lies! You can go fuck yourself!"*), baiting (*"If I can catch it, Imma eat it!"*), and a clamorous effort to shout us down. Many animal rights activists regard these kinds of behaviours as evidence of a struggle between carnism and the conscience of the carnist manifesting in an attack on those who espouse veganism as an antidote to animal suffering. In the face of our red-taped silence, this is a plausible explanation for the dramatic responses we receive to our own passeggiata.

There are several other communicative processes co-occuring among demonstrators and audience members in this account, and understanding them can offer additional insights about performative strategies at the march, receptions to them, discursive tensions that result, and the ways they are negotiated. I will begin with the demonstrators - who enact the performative strategy of the march and negotiate discursive tensions along the route - by drawing attention to the critical role of material culture in the demonstration. Jo-Anne MacArthur's donated signage is dramatic, communicative, and

unifying. The "Stop Bill 156" placards are orange and black - the only ones coloured this way - which draws the eye toward the purpose of the march. All of the animal photographs were taken in Ontario, which communicates to any Toronto audience members who ask that the concerns of demonstrators are local. Another nod to local concerns is found among the printed slogans; "Stop Bill 156" and "The Truth Should Never Be Illegal" refer to the legislation and its consequences for animal rights activists, while "Rose's Law" and "Animal Bill of Rights" refer to a broader initiative in the global animal rights movement supported by local activists who hope it will be implemented in Ontario.[27] The red tape is a striking prop that signals our performative silence during the march but also problematizes Bill 156 as a piece of ag-gag legislation that will inhibit whistleblowing about the abuses of farmed animals in the province. Together the signage, its contents, and the red tape endeavour to convey a unified message: "These suffering animals are local, and we want to continue exposing their suffering, but Bill 156 wants to prevent us from doing that."

When we speak, we also perform unity in our insider knowledge of verbal lore in the animal rights community. All of the demonstrators know that "Animal liberation!" is the correct response to "What do we want?", and we know that when an organizer shouts "Their bodies!" "Their lives!" or "Their babies!" over the megaphone, the correct

27 Rose's Law: Animal Bill of Rights holds that animals have the right to be free or to have a guardian acting in their best interests, the right to have their interests represented in court, the right to a protected home, habitat, or ecosystem, and the right to be rescued from situations of distress or exploitation ("Rose's Law" n.d.).

response is "Not ours!" Del Negro cites Milton Singer's usage of the term "cultural performance" to describe "religious texts, lectures, festivals, plays, social gatherings, and a wide range of public rituals and other display events," and Del Negro herself applies this term to the passeggiata (Singer 1972, 148; Del Negro 2004, 14). The use of the term may also be extended to the artistic practice and political action of "Roaring Silence Against Bill 156" because the ethical beliefs, verbal lore, and extemporaneous speakouts enacted during the march are insider cultural performances of the vegan animal rights community.

However, despite the outreach efforts of marshals, many of these insider cultural performances remain inscrutable to outsiders because they come from the far side of a wide chasm between carnist hegemony and vegan counter-hegemony. As examples of this, let us take a closer look at the speakouts. At Yonge-Dundas Square, the first organizer is plain-spoken about the abuses of animals on farms and in slaughterhouses, but I would problematize his use of "human supremacy" by pointing out that this is a specialist term synonymous with speciesism among animal rights activists. To be fair, he is distracted by the tall man shouting nonsense beside him, and he is endeavouring to be heard over a cacophony. However, his solution to these interruptions is to call for a traditional vegan animal rights chant. Carnist outsiders in the square might be shocked or surprised to hear about the abuses of animals but bewildered by the terms "animal liberation" and "human supremacy," which might not be part of their lexicon and might not be used in their cultural groups. Because of this, the first organizer risks muddying his message with specialist language too far across that chasm for his audience to grasp.

At Toronto City Hall, the second organizer's speakout also contains many insider references. Jo-Anne MacArthur's signage supports the organizer's assertion that "Your government is proposing Bill 156," and the same signage makes a connection between the legislation and farmed animals. However, her assertion that the Ontario government wants to "imprison people for exposing the truth of marginalized bodies" is an amalgam of Bill 156 provisions and a specialist term from the racial justice movement sometimes utilized to express the idea that the bodies of animals are subject to human interests. As a vegan animal rights activist, I understand that she is concerned about the fate of animal rights whistleblowers under the proposed legislation and making an indirect reference to the abuses of animals on farms and in slaughterhouses. However, she does not communicate these concerns and abuses in a lexicon her audience can easily comprehend, nor does she provide specific examples of legislative over-reach or the marginalization of farmed animals. Because of this, her subsequent assertions about taking away the right to knowledge, silencing truth, the right of activists to teach the public, and moral duty are also troubled because they rely upon an insider understanding of the demonstration and its goals. Her closing call to action relies upon the same, and while she does exhort the audience to visit the Stop Bill 156 website, the reasons for this exhortation remain unclear from an outsider perspective.

Having situated all of these speakouts as part of an artistic practice in the vegan animal rights community, we can draw upon Richard Bauman's discussion of communicative competence in *Verbal Art as Performance* to help us contextualize the final speakout. He writes that:

> Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content (Bauman 1977, 11).

In the case of Roaring Silence Against Bill 156, this display of communicative competence requires the final organizer to be aware of and endeavour to bridge the aforementioned chasm between carnists and vegans. Further, because the final speakout stops traffic for two light cycles, he must be able to convey a message quickly, and he is accountable to motorists for the appropriation of their time. The organizer accomplishes all of this by introducing the purpose of the blockade, situating Bill 156 in the Ford government and the Ontario legislature, explaining why it is a "draconian piece of legislation," and identifying us by the sympathetic phrase "concerned citizens." When he makes a call to action, it is also brief but specific and references the information he has already provided. So while the first and second speakouts are *insider* cultural performances of ethical belief communicated largely by way of *insider* language, the final speakout is an *insider* cultural performance of ethical belief communicated largely by way of *outsider* language. Because the goal of the demonstration is outreach, the final speakout is the most relatable of them.

Figure 14: A Cross-Section of March Responses in a Snapshot (MacCath-Moran 2020a)

Having explored the communicative processes of demonstrators in some detail, let us now briefly return to those of the audience. I have already discussed antagonistic verbal responses to the march, but marshals also report positive responses from onlookers. I have no information about these responses in my data, but they do point to a mixed reception and not a wholly negative one. Indeed, the photograph above depicts a more accurate representation of the responses along the route; the disinterest of the man on the left crossing the street (and several others behind him), the curiosity of the man in the red coat filming or photographing the march, and the negative expression of the young woman carrying packages. Of these, disinterest was by far the most common response, so

I asked a fellow demonstrator about it after the march. This person informed me that tourists were more likely be interested in marches than Torontonians were, who are accustomed to being "annoyed by everything."

It is clear that the organizers of Roaring Silence Against Bill 156 and the demonstrators who participated in the march were well-informed about the particulars of the legislation and its proposed impacts upon their whistleblowing efforts. It is also clear that the legislation was of grave concern to animal rights activists in a position to support the march, as is evidenced by Jo-Anne MacArthur's donated signage. However, the efforts of demonstrators to communicate their concerns were mixed, in part because there *is* a wide chasm between carnism and veganism, and in part because the organizers were probably not professional speakers. Rather, they were people performing shared ethical beliefs about the rights of animals during a time of crisis in the Ontario animal rights community.

Toronto Cow Save Vigil

I park several blocks away from the slaughterhouse and approach on foot. The building is tucked away in an industrial park on Glen Scarlett Road, an apt name given the overwhelming odour of blood that emanates from the building. I begin to gag a block away, and it takes a moment to get the reflex under control. The facility is partitioned; the offices are behind glass siding that stretches from door-front to rooftop, while the killing floor and processing facility are behind off-white siding dotted with smaller windows on the upper floors. Beyond them, an open trailer of animal skins and other body parts is

parked under a chute in the loading dock. Nearby, a crowd of animal rights activists is occupying the sidewalk and holding signs from Roaring Silence Against Bill 156.

Figure 15: Activists Film and Speak to Cows Arriving for Slaughter (MacCath-Moran 2020g)

A transport truck driver backs his cargo of cows into the loading bay, leans out of the driver's side window, and laughs. It is the loud, manufactured laughter of a cartoon villain, and it quickly becomes apparent that I have arrived at a moment of crisis when he walks over to us and asks where "the woman with the white car is," whom he accuses of rear-ending his trailer. However, his demeanour suggests he is not acting in good faith but rather to intimidate the activists, and the young woman in question asserts that she did not hit his truck but only parked behind it while he was waiting to pull into the dock. There is

no evidence of damage to either vehicle, but the man did lean under the woman's car directly after the alleged incident for no reason he would explain. Rattled, the young woman calls the police. They arrive in short order, interview both parties, and take no action on the matter. Later the truck driver engages the woman in conversation again. She says, "I'm here for the love. This is a protest of love. Have a good day." He replies, "I'm having a good day. I'm having the best day of my life!" Behind her, activists discuss the conversation and conclude that a response rooted in kindness is always correct.

There is plenty of time for conversation now, and these activists are known to one another. They are also curious about me and eager to offer an insider's understanding of animal rights activism at the slaughterhouse. When I mention the smell of blood, an activist tells me they once brought incense to try and cover it up, but another says it's an important part of "bearing witness." When I ask how they can stand to undertake a vigil in this place where the smell of blood and the evidence of slaughter are so apparent, another activist says "It sucks, but when you share a video online, there's only a one-person separation between the person who sees it and the suffering animal, through you. It erases that sort of fairy tale mentality that it's not happening."

A transport truck arrives and stops to wait for an empty dock. We walk over to it. One of the activists speaks through the trailer slats in a high, soothing voice. Another says to the cows, "I'm sorry. I'm trying." The truck pulls forward, and the cows are offloaded. A second truck arrives, and we approach. The cows inside are covered in faeces. An activist comments on the irony of farmers and lawmakers ostensibly writing Bill 156 out of biosecurity concerns when they leave animals caked in their own filth. Another activist

weeps as she apologizes to the cows. A third truck arrives, airbrakes hissing as they engage, and the engine idles. Cows shuffle and moo in the trailer. An activist peers through the slats and says, "You are a person. I see you." Another says, "You're beautiful. We see you. I'm so sorry." A passerby shows interest in the vigil, is greeted gently and invited to look inside one of the trucks. The activist who invites him asks, "Isn't it funny that there's a slaughterhouse right here in the neighbourhood?" The trucks arrive. We approach. The trucks pull forward. We retreat. A truck driver demands of an activist that none of us touch the trailer, and she communicates this to the rest of us. He shouts, "It's all private property!" One of the activists shouts back, "It's not private property! These are animals!"

Between the arrival and departure of trucks, I listen to Joe's story, who says he's been vegan for twelve years and was an activist almost the moment he went vegan but "did it alone." It was only later that he found out about the animal rights community. I also learn about a vegan soup kitchen in Toronto that was started in response to the accusation that vegans only care about animals. We discuss effective activism between truck arrivals, concluding that it differs according to place and community. One activist says "We're fighting for the rights of the oppressed, and animals and the environment are oppressed." Another says, "It's not about you. It's not about what you like. It's about suffering animals, and the reality is that most people do not need to eat the flesh and secretions of animals to survive."

A pickup arrives pulling a long trailer. There are lambs inside. An activist asks permission for us to take photographs of them, and we approach again. I look at the

lambs, and I take a few photos. It occurs to me that I have never been to a vigil like this one before, that I am not prepared for this, and that these animals are not even a year old. Gulls cry overhead. The pickup driver watches us with an incredulous expression on his face. I whisper to the lambs, "I'm so sorry" while an activist next to me says, "I love you. I love you, babies. I love you, sweetheart." We retreat. A young activist begins to shake and sob as the driver backs into the dock, so I take her into my arms.

Figure 16: Toronto Cow Save Vigil Group Photo
(MacCath-Moran 2020i)

Analysis

Performance scholar Una Chaudhuri proposes the neologism "zooësis" to identify "the myriad performance and semiotic elements involved in and around the vast field of *cultural animal practices*," adding that "zooësis is the discourse of animality in human

life, and its effects permeate our social, psychological, and material existence" (Chaudhuri 2003, 647). In a later article, Chaudhuri advocates a "pro-animal zooësis" that reaches beyond the intellectual limitations of speciesism to meet animals on their terms for their benefit, but she also problematizes the effort, writing that:

> A pro-animal zooësis faces the following dilemma: How to perform the animal *out of* facelessness (a political necessity that organizations like PETA have responded to with hundred of images of appealing - in both senses of the word - animal faces) without burdening it with an oppressive and necessarily anthropomorphic faciality (Chaudhuri 2007, 16).

This is a central concern of "bearing witness" in an animal rights context. Activists all over the world attend slaughterhouse vigils and interact with animals in their last moments of life to whatever extent the local law will permit. So it is worth asking what these activists are performing, why they are performing, and for whom they are performing at these vigils, when it must be acknowledged that the voices raised for the voiceless are those of human animals raised for non-human animals in an endeavour that cannot escape its own "anthropomorphic faciality."

The answers to these questions are complex, but we can begin to search for them in familiar territory. While the comparison between veganism and religion remains fraught, slaughterhouse vigils may be viewed as sites of secular pilgrimage for the performance of ethical belief. Activists believe that animals are sentient beings worthy of compassion and self-determination, and slaughterhouses are places where these beliefs are violated. Like participants in the annual motorcycle pilgrimage to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC, these activists bear witness at slaughterhouse vigils to memorialize a

troubling and painful issue of concern. Their mission is serious, and their goals are both ethical and political (Dubisch 2008, 300-305).

Slaughterhouse vigils may also be viewed as roadside memorials for the dying. Political scientist Herbert Reid and cultural anthropologist Betsy Taylor write that:

> To look at a "mountaintop removal" is to face forms of annihilation that beggar thought and feeling within us, just as they smash habitations (of human and nonhuman creatures) around us. To save mere cents on a load of coal, King Coal coerces us into hardly bearable labours of mourning - not only for the lives and places lost but also for the loss of the *conditions for life* (Reid and Taylor 2010, 11).

It is a hardly bearable labour of mourning that motivates animal rights activists to sob, to declare the personhood of cows, to profess their love for lambs, and to apologize for the appetites of their fellow human beings. Moreover, this public pilgrimage and roadside memorial for the dying is a profound and unsettling disruption to the carnist gaze because it insists that a truckload of cows is not a single unit but a vehicle where individual beings are waiting to be herded into a facility that reeks of blood, forced to wait in line while the cow in front of them is fired upon with a captive bolt pistol, and when it is their turn, hoisted into the air and parted out whether they are dead or not.[28] *What* these activists are performing, in significant part, is grief for both the conditions of life these animals have been raised in and the conditions of death they are about to face. The grief is their own; they cannot perform the grief of cows. However, they can insist by their performance that

28 Whistleblowers have routinely uncovered evidence that animals are often conscious when the process of dismemberment begins and die by pieces while they are boiled, skinned, and gutted (Warrick 2001; Dalton 2021; Kindy 2023; “Undercover Investigations” n.d.).

the slaughter of each individual cow is worthy pilgrimage, memorialization, and mourning.

Consequently, this grief is more than a personal or collective expression of sorrow. It is interpretive, persuasive, and rhetorical. Activists place themselves between the carnists and the cows to share videos online that create a one-person separation between the people who see these videos and the "suffering animals," erasing the "sort of fairy tale mentality that it's not happening." They speak back to the carnist assertions of truck drivers that cows are private property by insisting - much as Gary Francione has - that animals cannot be property. They insist that they are fighting for the oppressed, that animals are oppressed, and that "the reality is that most people do not need to eat the flesh and secretions of animals to survive." Finally, they resist the aggressions of those whose gaze they have disrupted by declaring that they're "here for the love." This is *why* the activists perform; to reframe the unmarked event of a cattle trailer arriving at a slaughterhouse into a marked event in which the cows inside that trailer are oppressed individuals who do not need to die. It is a counter-hegemonic performance that endeavours to "guide the construction of meaning," accumulating resonance with the arrival of each truck in the hope that a broader, more compassionate tradition of ethical belief will someday emerge (Noyes 2016, chap. 5).

Because slaughterhouse vigils are performances of pilgrimage, memorial, and persuasion, we must conclude that there is more than one intended audience for them. We must also distinguish between these audiences and the intended beneficiaries of the performances, whose cognitive ability and present circumstances inhibit their

understanding of what animal rights activists are attempting on their behalf. The first of the audiences is the animal rights community itself. Photographs and videos taken at slaughterhouse vigils find their way onto the social media profiles of activists and the social media groups they participate in, where they receive the comments of fellow community members. The following screen capture of a public post on the St. John's Animal Save Facebook page is a good illustration of this:

Figure 17: St. John's Animal Save Facebook Post (St. John's Animal Save 2018)

Take note of Barbara J. Lilly's comment in support of the Country Ribbon slaughterhouse vigil, which employs the insider language of the animal rights movement to describe the chickens as "innocent, defenseless, helpless" victims of "use, abuse, torture, and murder" at the hands of "ignorant, evil, sadistic, savage human beings." The original post and photos offer Lilly the opportunity for vicarious participation in the pilgrimage and memorial, while her response provides ethical reinforcement to the in-person participants and the broader animal rights community. This paradigm is so common among animal rights activists that it led a prominent member of the Toronto community to tell me that she believes vigil attendees only perform for the camera and for one another. I would not characterize these performances as wholly self-serving, but neither would I characterize them as wholly selfless. Rather, in addition to the nuanced aims and goals discussed above, animal rights activists utilize these kinds of posts and comments to build and situate themselves in local and online communities.

I need to jump in here and put on a third hat for a moment to introduce the discussion that follows. From 1997-1998 I was an over-the-road transport truck driver who held a US CDL Class A license with a Hazmat endorsement, which means I was qualified to drive transport trucks containing hazardous materials in the United States. So I have some expertise about the operation of these trucks that benefits my research, and I'm going to share that with you as Ceallaigh the truck driver. I'm embarrassed to admit that in my time behind the wheel, I accidentally tore the rear-view mirror off another transport truck as I passed it in a parking lot and bent a trailer door out of shape as I exited a loading dock. Reader, I

didn't feel a thing from the driver's seat. These trucks are big, and they have a lot of inertia. I can also tell you that a small vehicle behind my trailer is in my blind spot if it's closer than 30 feet away. So I didn't believe the truck driver at St. Helen's Meat Packers when he asserted that the young woman in the white car had struck him from behind. The kind of force it would have taken for him to feel that collision from the driver's seat would have left a mark, and there was no damage to either vehicle. He also could not have seen her car collide with his truck while slowing to park behind it because she would have been in his blind spot. Finally, he didn't appear to collect information for an incident report, and he wasn't the one who called the police. So I believe he was just bullying her, and you need to know that, because the following discussion is built on that belief.

The second of these intended audiences is comprised of people animal rights activists are endeavouring to persuade. In the case of the Toronto Cow Save demonstration at St. Helen's, activists hoped their "protest of love" would motivate carnists at the slaughterhouse and online toward greater compassion for farmed animals. However, counter-hegemonic performances that problematize the treatment of these animals are often sites of conflict wherever they take place because they also motivate carnists to reassert their ethical boundaries in response to the disruption of their hegemonic belief systems. The truck driver's manufactured laughter in the loading bay, his false accusation that the young woman had struck his trailer, his transgression of her boundaries when he leaned under her car, and his sarcastic reply to her expression of good will were all examples of this. More specifically, they were instances of what folklorist Moira Smith

characterizes as a "strategic use of humour to provoke a humourless response" and the kind of unlaughter "used deliberately by both joke instigators and members of joke audiences to highlight the supposed differences between them and so heighten exclusionary social boundaries" (Smith 2009, 150-151). The truck driver was indeed bullying the young woman, but his behaviour was not capricious. Rather, he was employing a strategy rooted in unlaughter to reify his ethical belief system in the face of efforts to change it. Similar strategies include mockery of vegans and animal rights activists, angry rebuttals to vegan ethical perspectives and arguments, and threats of violence toward animal rights activists.

Finally, there are the intended beneficiaries of animal rights activism, who are also the subjects of Una Chaudhuri's concern about "anthropomorphic faciality." Her argument is not a critique of animal rights activism, but she is right to point out that in order to advocate on behalf of animals, organizations like PETA and individuals like those at the slaughterhouse vigil frequently draw cognitive and emotional correlations between human and non-human animals. Indeed, a fellow vigil attendee at St. Helen's commented to me that one of the cows waiting for slaughter was crying, and this cow did have tears on her face. But were they a sign of distress, as the activist suggested, or was she guilty of burdening those tears with human emotion? A 2017 review of scientific literature in *Animal Behaviour and Cognition* asserts that:

> cows are far more sophisticated and sensitive than the simple grazers they are perceived to be by many members of our own species (Herzog, 2010; Joy, 2009). These ideologies held by humans, which are incongruent with extant scientific understanding, have been largely maintained by powerful economic

> and political forces. Moreover, the body of scientific knowledge has been similarly shaped and limited by this ideology (Marino and Allen 2017, 490).

The specifics of this review suggest the cow's tears might well have been a sign of distress, but cows are not alone in their ability to make sense of their circumstances, as the Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness asserts (Low 2012). More importantly, animal rights activists do not limit the scope of their endeavours to beings who demonstrate cognitive skills and emotional capacities they can map to human equivalents. Rather, they ask the same question Jeremy Bentham did of animals: "Can they suffer" (Bentham 1781, chap. 17)? A "yes" answer is reason enough to alleviate that suffering whether or not it is anthropomorphized along the way by activists who empathize with it and want to facilitate empathy in others. With this in mind, the question "*For whom* do they perform?" demands a complex answer. Animal rights activists perform for themselves to build and belong to community. They also perform for carnists, often in the face strident boundary reification. However, if you had asked the activists at St. Helen's why they were there that day, they would have told you they were there for the animals.

Lambs
St. Helen's Meat Packers
February 21, 2020

I cannot see them anymore;
soft, pointed ears turned toward the slaughterhouse,
wide, dark eyes fixed upon my little camera,
and the trust, that awful trust,
they are gone.

Sunday brunch in a week.

Have they arrived, Lady Hel?
Is there a meadow, where you are, under the world?
They will be confused and in need of familiar...
Ah, but I forget.
Meadows were not familiar to them in life.

Shearling mittens in a month.

Offer something unfamiliar then;
the echo of their names in the grind of machinery,
a swift, cold caress,
peace, and a blessing of sleep without fear.
These are in your power to give, I pray.

Blood meal for bright blossoms in the spring.

Lady, if they have souls
(and if they do not, divide mine among them)
that come to the gates of Helheim, begging for succour,
tell them I was there, that I bore witness.
Say that I will speak of their passing -

in summer flower gardens,
to warm-handed strangers,
at Easter dinner tables.

Know that I will never stop.

- Ceallaigh S. MacCath-Moran

Figure 18: Lambs Waiting for Slaughter Outside St. Helen's Meat Packers (MacCath-Moran 2020h)

Toronto Pig Save Vigil

"One minute!" A woman's voice calls out above the rumble of heavy traffic as I approach the Sofina Foods slaughterhouse from the crosswalk. I cannot see her; there is a transport truck stopped midway through a right-hand turn onto the lot, and it blocks my view. I round the back of the trailer and find her standing in front of the tractor, one hand held aloft in a peace sign, the other holding up a stopwatch. "Twenty seconds!" she calls out again to a second woman in a white coat and pink knitted hat kneeling beside the trailer. This woman is offering water from a bottle capped with a long plastic tube to the pigs inside. "Clear the truck!" the first woman calls and steps away from the tractor. The

second woman stands and backs away from the trailer as the truck finishes turning into the slaughterhouse lot.

Figure 19: Two Activists Hold Signs on the Sidewalk Outside Sofina Foods (MacCath-Moran 2020n)

The second woman, Gretchen, drops her bottle on the sidewalk next to the others and pulls me into a long, welcoming hug. I introduce my research to both women and ask how I can be most helpful at the vigil. The first woman, Lori, tells me to offer the pigs water when the transport trucks roll in. So many of them are thirsty, she says, and there aren't enough activists to help them all. Gretchen tells me she chants mantras for them. "Give them water and love," she adds, "and look into their eyes, but be calm. If you're upset, they'll get upset too." During the conversation that follows, Gretchen mentions that she is

a chemotherapy nurse and tells me that chemotherapy has increased sixty percent in recent years because of cancers caused by the consumption of animal flesh and secretions. At a recent vigil where she mentioned this, a transport truck driver called her assertion "bullshit." When she gave him her bona fides, he replied that he hoped she got run over by a truck. She concludes by telling me that he was "just disconnected."

I learn from her that Toronto Pig Save has an agreement with Sofina Foods to stop each transport truck as it arrives and offer water to the pigs for two minutes. From Lori I learn that most of the drivers do stop, but others try to run over the activists, and this is why police are present. I look around. Two police officers are posted on the other side of the entrance, and a man who might be in the employ of the slaughterhouse stands nearby, in front of the fence, watching us. Later Lori tells me that the previous week, a driver tried to run her over on his way in. Police went into the slaughterhouse to find him but arrested the wrong person. The guilty driver was never apprehended, and no charges were laid. Later still, Lori tells me that an activist I had just met was present at the vigil on a day when a police officer assaulted her. A third activist who was present that day went to hospital for possible kidney damage sustained during the incident.

Activists continue to arrive. I speak with a former slaughterhouse inspector and vegan animal rights activist who is preparing to film a documentary with other members of his profession about the problems facing workers in the industry. He is interested in my research and wants to participate, but he is concerned that he is being watched, and my security provisions are not sufficient to his needs. We discuss the possibility of meeting for an interview in a few months, when his project has been completed. Our conversation

is interrupted by the arrival of a transport truck, and we go to the pigs. They shuffle, grunt, and squeal, but those who can reach the water bottles drain them quickly. My voice is low and reassuring: "Good morning. Would you like some water, sweetheart?" Around me, the other activists speak to the pigs in high, gentle tones. Two minutes later, Lori's voice cuts through it all: "Clear the truck! Clear the truck!"

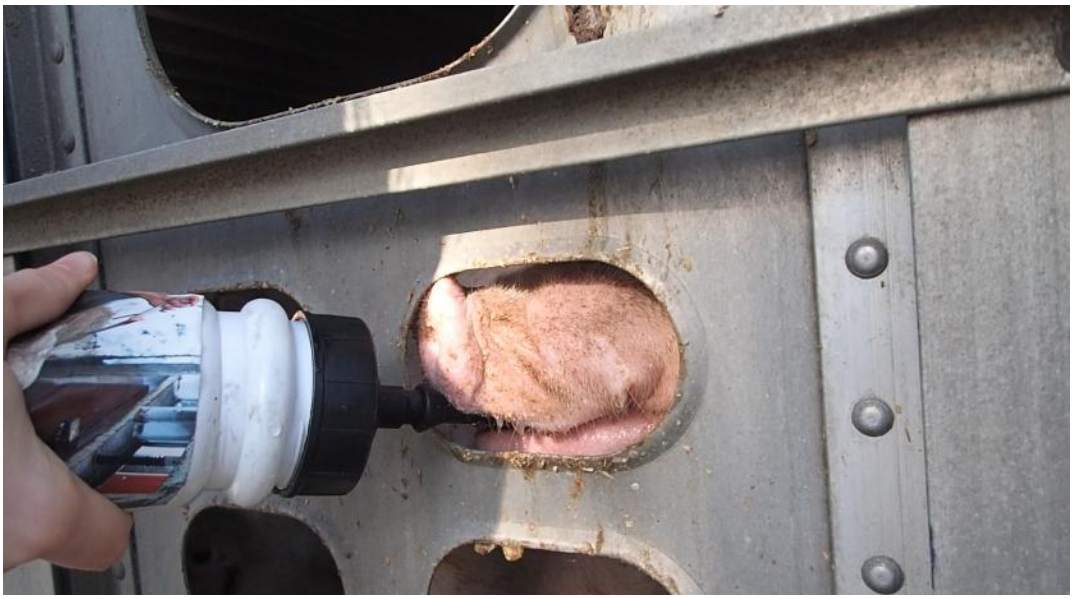

Figure 20: A Pig Drinks Water at the Toronto Pig Save Vigil (MacCath-Moran 2020j)

Afterward, I mention that one of the pigs was partially blind. Gretchen replies that another pig's mouth was frozen to the trailer. A third pig vomited when she tried to feed him water. There were perhaps two hundred pigs aboard, some healthy, some injured. None refused the water we offered. Twenty times a transport truck arrives, stops, and pulls forward. Twenty times we slip the long plastic tubes of our water bottles through the trailer slats. Between the arrival of trucks, we discuss the specifics of my project, activism in general, and the ways cruelty to animals is normalized in society. Lori tells the story of

a truck breakdown the previous summer, during a heatwave. The activists went onto the slaughterhouse lot with water because the pigs were dying in the heat, and they saw a young boy laughing while he shocked the pigs with an electric cattle prod to force them out of the trailer his grandfather was hauling. Later she tells the story of an overturned truck at the intersection. Many pigs died in the accident, but those who survived were herded down the street and onto the lot. Two collapsed along the way. A prominent local activist from a farmed animal sanctuary offered to take them in and pay for their medical expenses, but one was ushered onto the kill floor with the rest, and the other was shot dead in front of the activists.

Figure 21: Activist Is Pushed By a Moving Transport Truck (MacCath-Moran 2020k)

Near the end of the vigil, one of the truck drivers stops for the activists but begins to pull forward before the allotted two minutes have expired. He pushes Lori backward with his truck. She shouts "Whoa! Whoa! We have thirty seconds! Thirty seconds!" walking

backward as he advances. Meanwhile, activists disengage and step away from the moving vehicle. The driver continues to advance. Police intervene, not to stop the driver but to usher Lori out of the way. The truck drives on, into the slaughterhouse lot.

Analysis

After the Toronto Cow Save vigil on February 21st but before the Toronto Pig Save vigil on March 4th, I interviewed Julius Sandor and discussed the vigils with him. He said:

> The workers and the transport truck drivers can be very aggressive sometimes...Not so much at St. Helen's. At Fearman's,[29] the pig slaughter place. I mean, it's dangerous to the point where I'm amazed someone hasn't gotten killed...I always beg the girls, I say please, please thank the driver for stopping, because I sometimes feel that some of these guys are like 10-year-old boys, and they're not getting attention. The animals are getting all the attention. They're told to stop, but they're not getting attention, so they get angry. And they just do what they do. They just ram through putting many people's lives at risk. And I think if you just thanked them and acknowledged them for stopping that it might save some lives (Sandor 2020).

A few months later, Regan Russell was killed in just the way Julius feared, when she was struck by a transport truck while standing in the crosswalk outside Sofina Foods.

Because I witnessed violence against animal rights activists at the Toronto Pig Save vigil, because activists there reported other incidents of violence to me, and because this violence was a direct precursor to the manner of Regan Russell's death, my responsibility to this ethnographic material is especially complex. Our discipline no longer holds the view that "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly

29 Sofina Foods is also called Fearman's Pork. They are the same facility.

belong" (Geertz 1973, 452), and indeed, Dwight Conquergood offers an important critique of Clifford Geertz' position when he writes that:

> Instead of listening, absorbing, and standing in solidarity with the protest performances of the people, as Douglass recommended, the ethnographer, in Geertz's scene, stands above and behind the people and, uninvited, peers over their shoulders to read their texts, like an overseer or a spy. There is more than a hint of the improper in this scene: the asymmetrical power relations secure both the anthropologist's privilege to intrude and the people's silent acquiescence (although one can imagine what they would say about the anthropologist's manners and motives when they are outside his reading gaze) (Conquergood 2013b, 38-39).

Conquergood echoes Frederick Douglass' counsel that we should listen, absorb, and stand in solidarity with the protest performances of dispossessed people. I am applying that counsel in this discussion of the hegemonic apparatuses in the animal agriculture industry and the province of Ontario, which enforced discipline by way of violence against Toronto Pig Save activists who would not consent to carnist hegemony (Gramsci 1989, The Formation of the Intellectuals). Further, while my association with Lori, Gretchen, and other vigil attendees was certainly brief, I stand in solidarity with these activists, whose counter-hegemonic efforts to mark slaughter-bound pigs as beings in need of mercy were so thoroughly undermined that the transport truck driver who killed Regan Russell was only charged with a traffic violation and not a criminal offence. In order to better analyze these incidents of violence, I will begin with a timeline of events.

Timeline of Events

October 2019

In an October 2019 safety report presented to Sofina Foods, local police, and the Ontario Ministry of Transport, Toronto Pig Save founder Anita Kranjc writes that "A small group of dangerous transport truck drivers are weaponizing their vehicles, that is, using transport trucks as a weapon against activists threatening to run them over by running into them" (Kranjc 2019). She also writes that "there is often friendly banter and relations with the security guards and police which the drivers, regardless of their behaviour, are aware of plus the drivers are not spoken to when they run into activists so the drivers are actually encouraged to be repeat offenders" (Ibid).

December 2, 2019

Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, introduces Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020. Among other provisions, this legislation permits owners and occupiers of farms, animal processing facilities, and transport trucks to arrest animal rights activists without a warrant and further provides that:

> the owner or occupier of the farm, facility or premises shall not be liable for any injury, loss or damages suffered by that person unless (a) the owner or occupier created a danger with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person; or (b) the injury, loss or damages were caused by actions taken by the owner or occupier with wilful or reckless disregard for the presence of the person (Hardeman 2019).

March 4, 2020

I attend a Toronto Pig Save vigil at Sofina Foods, where:

1. Gretchen reports that a transport truck driver at a previous vigil expressed the hope that she would be run over by a truck.

2. Lori reports that a transport truck driver tried to run over her the previous week and that she was assaulted by police at a previous vigil.

3. I film a transport truck driver endangering the lives of Lori and other activists by pulling forward before the allotted two minutes had expired and pushing Lori backward with his truck. I also note that the police officers present do not ticket the driver for weaponizing his truck against these activists.

June 18, 2020

Ontario Bill 156 receives Royal Assent with the aforementioned provisions in place.

June 19, 2020

During a scheduled Toronto Pig Save vigil at Sofina Foods, veteran animal rights activist Regan Russell is struck and killed by a transport truck accelerating into a right turn from the left lane outside the facility entrance. The short documentary film "There Was a Killing," made several months after the tragedy, shows smartphone camera footage of Russell standing in the crosswalk outside the gates moments before she was struck. Activists who were present that day and later interviewed by documentary filmmaker Shaun Monson indicate that the driver was aware of them and saw Russell before he turned (Monson 2020; MacCath-Moran 2021).

July 20, 2020

Local CBC correspondent Samantha Craggs reports that the Halton Regional Police Service has charged a 28-year-old Brussels Transport truck driver with careless driving causing Regan Russell's death but add that "there were no grounds to indicate that this was an intentional act, or that a criminal offence has been committed." Later, this truck driver is identified as Andrew Blake (Craggs 2020b; Casey 2022).

September 9, 2020

Tyler Jutzi, vice president of Brussels Transport, writes in an article for the Hamilton Spectator that "When Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020 received royal assent, I could have never imagined the danger that activist groups would put our drivers or themselves in. Police have been repeatedly warned about the rising risk, but we have seen limited support" (Jutzi 2020).[30]

Discussion

Before I offer commentary as an ethnographer about the information I've provided above, I want to weigh in as a former transport truck driver again. Any driver who receives a Class A license in Ontario takes a test similar to the one I took in Indiana. The Official Ministry of Transportation (MTO) Truck Handbook is the study guide for that test, and it includes the following guidance:

> ***Stopping for pedestrian crossovers***
> ***Drivers, including cyclists, must stop and allow pedestrians to cross. Only when pedestrians and school crossing guards have crossed and are safely on the sidewalk can drivers and cyclists proceed.***
>
> ***Driver conduct***
> ***Bluffing: Drivers who use the large size of their vehicles to intimidate others and force their way through traffic may create serious hazards (Government of Ontario 2022).***

I wasn't able to find corresponding legislation in the Ontario Highway Traffic Act that criminalizes breaches of this guidance, but the Government of Canada Justice Laws Website advises that "everyone commits an

30 Jutzi's remarks are more thoroughly explored in Chapter One of this work as part of the "Carnist Hegemony and Vegan Counter-Hegemony" discussion.

offence who operates a conveyance in a manner that, having regard to all of the circumstances," is dangerous to the public, causes bodily harm to another person, or causes the death of another person (Legislative Services Branch 2023). So the transport truck drivers who weaponized their vehicles against animal rights activists knew this conduct was a violation of their training, and the police officers who watched them do it knew they were committing criminal offences when they did.

Another issue of concern is the practice of turning right from the left lane. Here's a diagram of the proper way to execute a right turn in a transport truck:

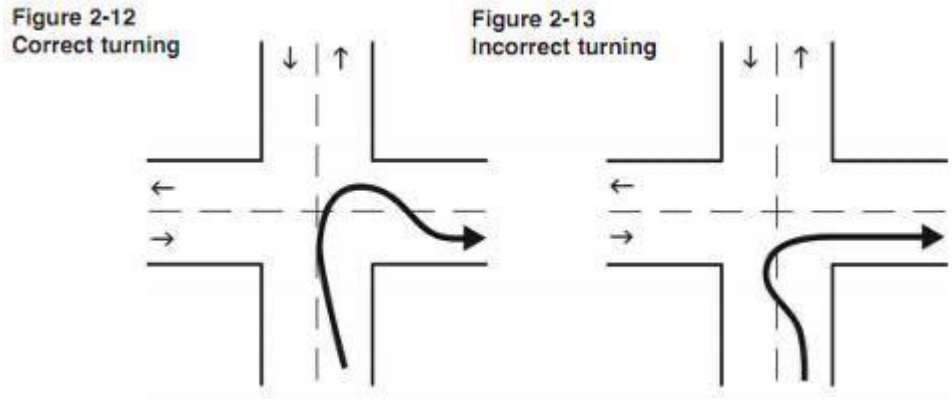

Figure 22: Managing Space in Turns and Traffic - Right Turns (High Road Online CDL Training n.d.)

Transport trailers are too long for the execution of tight right turns, so drivers compensate by proceeding into the intersection past the midline and turning back into the lane they plan to occupy. They <u>do not</u> turn from the left lane or swing into the left lane before turning, because this creates a road hazard for other vehicles. Activists I spoke to at the Toronto Pig

Save vigil offered the opinion that the drivers I witnessed turning from the left lane were trying to discourage them from approaching by forcing them to stand in the right lane if they wanted access to the pigs. Andrew Blake, who killed Regan Russell, occupied the left lane for several light cycles before he accelerated into the turn that ended her life.

So the drivers knew better than to weaponize their trucks, and the police should have cited them every time it happened. The drivers also created pedestrian and vehicle hazards by executing improper right turns into the Sofina Foods lot from the left lane. That said, I would have been nervous about having so many people close to my tandems even if they were orderly and kept their hands out of my trailer, as the activists did while I was present. I can also understand how this would be stressful for drivers who delivered pigs to Sofina Foods on a regular basis. However, I am utterly unsympathetic to the ways they acted on that stress, and I hold the Halton Regional Police Service responsible for not ticketing drivers for the weaponization of their transport trucks every time it occurred. I also do not believe stress was the sole or even the most salient reason this dynamic existed between drivers and police.

It is possible that I did not witness a representative example of activist behaviour around transport trucks at the vigil, but the behaviour I did witness was in line with the guidance for attending vigils published on the Toronto Pig Save website at the time. It should also be remembered that according to Lori's report, the Halton Regional Police Service pursued a transport truck driver into the slaughterhouse after he tried to run over her. Of course, the police report filed in October 2019 indicates that similar incidents of

violence were ignored, and Lori reported that she and others were victims of police violence as well. Slaughterhouse workers also engaged in performative violence against pigs while activists were present, notably when they killed an injured pig in front of a farmed animal sanctuary owner begging for his life. As an ethnographer, I wonder what nuances of hegemonic performativity motivated Sofina Foods to permit Toronto Pig Save access to pigs arriving for slaughter but also turn a blind eye to violence against these activists. There are similar nuances in the text of the legislation and the timeline of events, and together they facilitate a cooperative hegemony maintenance on the part of legislators, police, and the animal agriculture industry that endorses the use of violence to discipline those who counter that hegemony.

Some of these nuances are situated in the construction of narratives that support hegemony maintenance. This dissertation has already examined in general terms the ways proponents of Ontario Bill 156 utilized the legislation to set and enforce the terms of discourse about animal rights activism in the province.[31] However, there is also an implied threat of sanctioned violence in the bill, which states that animal agriculture workers have the right to arrest people who trespass in "animal protection zones" and holds them harmless from injury, loss, or damages suffered by trespassers unless they create "a danger with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person." As we have seen in the matter of Regan Russell's death, which occurred the day after Bill 156 received Royal Assent, the Halton Regional Police Service found there were no grounds to indicate that Andrew Blake had committed "an intentional act" when he weaponized

31 I again refer the reader to "Carnist Hegemony and Vegan Counter-Hegemony."

his truck against vigil attendees as so many others had done before him. Consequently, they concluded, no criminal offence had been committed.

The text of Ontario Bill 156 provides wide latitude in the treatment of animal rights activists to animal agriculture workers with a vested interest in maintaining carnist hegemony, going so far as to excuse the harm they do unless "deliberate intent" (a phrase open to interpretation) can be proven. We cannot know if Andrew Blake intended to harm Regan Russell, and we cannot know if the Halton Regional Police Service had the text of the legislation in mind when it asserted Blake had not committed an intentional act. However, we know that the same police service did little to deter the weaponization of transport trucks against vigil attendees for nearly a year prior to Russell's death, and we know that the same police service employed language that echoed a law less than a day old in its decision to charge Blake with nothing more than a traffic violation. So it is at least feasible that Ontario Bill 156 provided the Halton Regional Police Service with the authority to downplay Andrew Blake's violence against Regan Russell, and knowing this, they used it. But whether or not these narrative constructions of carnist hegemony were linked in this instance, both the bill and the police statement sanctioned the violent discipline of vegan counter-hegemony as it was practiced by Toronto Pig Save vigil attendees.

Three months later, *The Hamilton Spectator* published an Opinion written by Blake's supervisor Tyler Jutzi, who situates himself as a bewildered executive in a beleaguered industry and accuses "animal extremists" of "escalating aggression" (Jutzi 2020). It is noteworthy that in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the crosswalk in front of

Sofina Foods was the site of significant counter-protests on the days Toronto Pig Save vigils were scheduled. Counter-protesters endeavoured to stop activists from approaching the trucks with a banner that read "Safety 1st Do Not Cross" and shouts of "This driver does not want to stop for you" (Rankin 2020)! Counter-protesters also carried signs that contained derogatory references to Russell, including one that read "Regan Russell committed suicide." In the weeks that followed, similar counter-protests occurred at unrelated animal rights demonstrations in Toronto and elsewhere (Singh 2020). Coming as it did on the heels of these, Tyler Jutzi's sensationalized rhetoric about Toronto Pig Save vigil attendees served to reinforce existing prejudices about animal rights activists and lay the blame for his employee's violence at the feet of its victim.

Other nuances are situated in performances of subtle but powerful in-group cohesion by slaughterhouse workers, transport truck drivers, police, and legislators. As we have seen, carnism is so pervasive an ethical belief system that it is rarely recognized as such. When this belief system is troubled by vegan animal rights activists calling for an end to animal use, individual reactions of anger, frustration, or bewilderment that might otherwise find various kinds of expression are sometimes transformed into collective resistance. In the present discussion, this is noted in the cooperation between the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the animal agriculture industry to craft and support a bill containing provisions that may be employed to harm activists with impunity. This is also noted in the friendly banter between police officers and truck drivers that encourages police to be lenient with drivers who threaten the lives of activists

with their trucks. These behaviours are not part of a specific conspiracy to harm or kill activists, but neither are they a coincidence.

Rather, they may be understood in terms provided by anthropologist Laura Eramian, who has researched the cultural impacts of genocide in Butare, Rwanda and who writes that "Two decades after the genocide, Rwandans are still grappling with vexing questions of how an ordinary population could be mobilized to kill their neighbors, colleagues, and friends and what this means for their collective futures" (Eramian 2018, 2). Local theories about the genocide infer that this "ordinary population" was comprised of people whose bounded, cohesive, and autonomous selves were eclipsed by porous, composite selves comprised of relationships with others, leaving them "so enmeshed in social hierarchies that they were unable to resist the influences of superiors to commit violence" (Eramian 2018, 3, 9). Eramian further writes that:

> Butare residents—both Tutsi and Hutu—speak about positive and negative emotions or ideas being contagious. They say it is hard, but essential to steel oneself against the “negativity” of those who cannot move past the genocide, either because they harbor anti-Tutsi sentiment or because they are mired in grief. This logic of contagion is based on the idea that the person is inherently porous; it supposes that it is natural and inevitable that people take on the prevailing outlook(s) of those around them (ibid.). Thus, to explain why so many of their compatriots followed orders to join the massacres in 1994, Butare residents rely on the notion that exposure to the ideas of proximate others means that a person will eventually absorb and act on those influences (Eramian 2018, 10).

The logic of contagion and its impacts on the porous self are important reasons why it is crucial that we understand carnism as a hegemonic ethical belief system and not simply as *senso comune*, or "the way things are" (Crehan 2016, Common Sense). In the present discussion, the unexamined hegemony of carnism coupled with the porous self that seeks

relationships fostered situational in-group cohesion between lawmakers and the animal agriculture industry, and between police officers and truck drivers. In this way, individual bewilderment, frustration, and anger at the perceived absurdity of the vegan animal rights position became collective disregard for that position that grew to encompass the people who held it. As local animal rights activists continued to trouble local expressions of carnist belief, that collective disregard escalated into violence on the part of truck drivers that police and the judicial system were empowered by Bill 156 to minimize afterward. This is how an ordinary population mobilizes against its neighbours, in the aggregation of individual certainties about the wrongness of another group's beliefs or behaviours and the collective decision to respond from a place of surety and wrath.

Regan Russell's death drew the attention of animal rights activists all over the world including Oscar-winning actor Joaquin Phoenix, who issued a statement of solidarity from a Pig Save vigil in Los Angeles a few days later (Craggs 2020a). Phoenix also demonstrated with Toronto Pig Save in the months after she died (Craggs 2020c). "Go Vegan 4 Regan" became an international slogan in the animal rights movement, and Russell herself became a martyr. Demonstrations in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria, and elsewhere have been conducted in her name (Animal Save Movement 2020; UNOFFENSIVEADMIN 2021a; 2021b;), and Toronto Pig Save still holds annual vigils in memory of her.

In March 2023, Andrew Blake pleaded guilty to careless driving. He was ordered to pay a $2000 fine and received twelve months of probation, which included a driving restriction that only permitted him to operate a vehicle for necessary purposes during that

time. Outside the courtroom, Russell's partner Mark Powell told a reporter that "Regan's loss has shattered the family. She loved everyone she met, and she embraced everyone, and she was just a loving, caring person." Lori, who was at the Toronto Pig Save vigil on the day Regan Russell was killed, told the same reporter "I saw her lifeless body there. I was calling 911, shaking. And I just don't understand what just happened now. Because they said he was going a normal speed. If he was going a normal speed, we wouldn't be here today" (The Canadian Press 2023).

Regan Russell was struck and killed by a transport truck whose driver was engaged in a patterned performance of carnist hegemony maintenance whether or not he, himself had ever engaged in the pattern before that day. The Halton Regional Police Service engaged in a patterned performance of carnist hegemony maintenance in its treatment of the case, and there is ample evidence that officers had been engaging in a similar pattern for months. The authors of Ontario Bill 156 engaged in a pattern of carnist hegemony maintenance preceded by ag-gag legislation in other parts of Canada, the United States, Australia, and elsewhere. These patterns utilized the power of legislation, law enforcement, and the animal agriculture industry to discipline and silence counter-hegemony in the animal rights movement via narrative construction and in-group cohesion even when it meant excusing violence.

What happened to Regan Russell can and does happen in other ideological movements. In any situation where there is a vast power disparity between ideologies, the more powerful group can and does maintain hegemony by disciplining the less powerful, counter-hegemonic group. Narratives constructed through legislation and law

enforcement support the powerful group while downplaying and silencing the less powerful group, while in-group cohesion among the powerful serves to coordinate that disenfranchisement. So whether or not we agree with the ethical beliefs held by those movements, we have a duty to our discipline and to our fellow human beings to illuminate the abuses of power observable within the range of our expertise. This is what I have endeavoured to do here, and I hope that I have been a good student of Douglass' and Conquergood's solidarity in doing so. More importantly, I hope that I have written about the violence perpetrated against the members of Toronto Pig Save with the dignity it deserves, and I offer my profound condolences to all who loved Regan Russell.

Figure 23: Regan Russell
(Cseke 2020)

GRASS Bar Isabel Protest

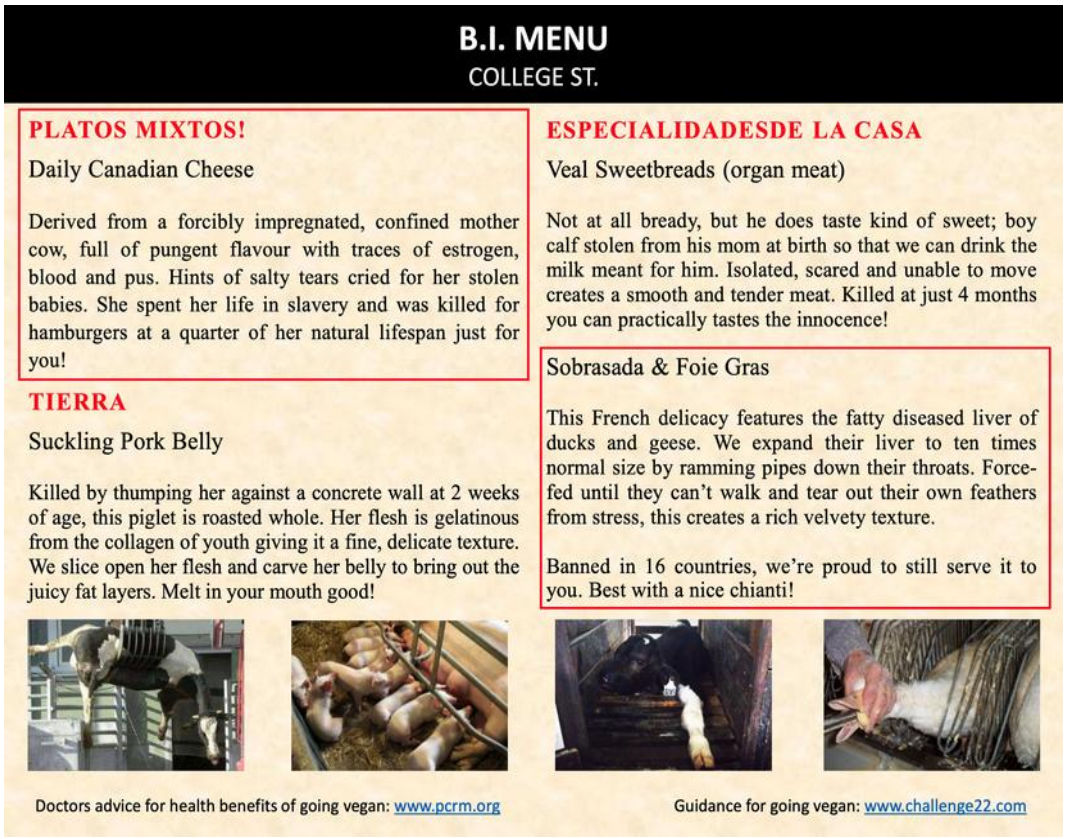

Figure 24: Marni's Recreated Menu Derived from the Bar Isabel Menu (Grassroots Anti-Speciesism Shift, 2020)

The curtains are drawn at Bar Isabel when I arrive, and there is a police van parked across the street. Marni tells me both are the work of the restaurant owner, Grant van Gameren, who limits patron exposure to the protest outside and requests a police presence every time Grassroots Anti-Speciesism Shift (GRASS) comes to protest the presence of foie gras on the menu. She has already written an informative letter to van Gameren about the cruelty associated with the production of foie gras and asked to meet with him, but he has refused. In the letter, she writes "While our long-term request is that you switch Bar

Isabel to a completely vegan menu, for now we are asking that you remove foie gras and replace it with some vegan alternative. If you remove it, we will not continue protesting, but if you do not remove it, we will continue indefinitely" (Marni, n.d.). A second activist arrives and says, "Back at it again!" Marni offers copies of her recreated menu to the newcomer, which will in turn be offered to restaurant patrons as they arrive and depart. A third activist, Liam, arrives with several protest signs, and we make our introductions to each other. Meanwhile, two more activists arrive, take literature and signs, and position themselves beside the restaurant door.

Figure 25: Protesters Gather Outside Bar Isabel (MacCath-Moran 2020p)

Two Toronto police officers emerge from the van, walk over to the group, and engage me in conversation. One of them tells me they know Marni and most of the protesters, but they're on the lookout for newcomers who might be there for reasons that have nothing to do with the protest. We discuss the problem of "false flag" operations at events like these, but it's clear they're probing me for information. I am reticent to share my identity with them out of concern for my research participants, but eventually I tell them I'm a researcher with Memorial University present in Toronto to learn more about animal rights activism. I also tell them I am an insider to the animal rights community, but I am bound by my university's ethical regulations, which is the reason for my hesitation with them. We make casual conversation for a few minutes thereafter, and then they return to the van. Marni tells me a moment later that some activists believe the police "fake their niceness," but she has seen them side with activists on occasion. I am not so sanguine about their motives.

The protest intensifies. Marni offers the recreated menu to restaurant patrons and says "It's the truth, what's on the menu. We're telling the truth." When patrons take the literature, she thanks them. When they do not, she calls them out. To one departing patron she says, "You'd rather cause violence and not face it. That's unfortunate for the animals. They're victims, and you paid to eat dead bodies. They're victims. Your victims." To another she says, "Are you willing to cause violence and not face it?"

A few more activists arrive. Marni describes one of them as "fierce." Another patron, a young woman, emerges from the restaurant and refuses Marni's recreated menu.

In response, Marni asks, "Why would you pay for violence but not want to know the truth behind it? They're victims. You literally paid for victims, for animals to be killed."

"There are better ways..." the young woman begins, faulting Marni's methods.

This is a common complaint levelled at animal rights activists, and we have a standard reply. "What better ways?" we ask in unison. "Show us."

The young woman is angry now. "This is bullshit. I'm a vegetarian. You don't have to be so aggressive."

The fierce activist says, "Being vegetarian is aggressive." Then she looks over at us and adds, "You know why she's so defensive? Because she's vegetarian. She participates in the cruelest part of animal agriculture."

The young woman gives up and walks away. Marni shouts at her back. "Dairy kills animals. Dairy kills cows. Face what you're doing."

The police across the street are laughing at us now. They get out of the van and approach again. Liam tries to hand an officer a recreated menu, but he demurs and says he's only a little bit vegan. Liam replies, "That's like saying, 'Officer, I only beat him up a little bit.'" I ask another officer what he thinks of the protest. He replies, "It's like politics. Everyone's got their own politics." Then I ask for clarification of our protest boundaries. He responds with some bluster, so I offer my bona fides again and tell him that everything happening here will go into my field notes. A third officer takes exception to having his photo taken and demands that it be deleted. The activist who took it asks, "Isn't it legal to take pictures in public?" He replies that it is, but he has the right to demand that she not take pictures of him. Clearly unsettled, she does as he asks. The police return to the van.

Marni tells me, "It's good cop, bad cop. We get it. We've been trained by Animal Justice." Shortly thereafter, another police van arrives with two more officers in it.

The protest continues but is subdued for a while. A departing patron tells us he's vegetarian. Marni asks him to please take her literature anyway. He replies that he has the right to choose what he eats; a common argument. We respond that the animals on his plate don't have a choice; a standard reply. He asks a common question: "What about the animals that get killed in the wild?" We offer a standard answer: You're not eating animals killed in the wild. He says that he doesn't see vegans in Africa, where his people are from, and we are privileged because his people "used to get eaten by those motherfuckers." He adds that he respects our cause, but "Nature has a way of making it all work out." Marni says "Slaughterhouses aren't nature." I recommend *Sistah Vegan* to him, which is written by a vegan scholar of colour. The conversation ends.

The newly-arrived police officers cross the street. I tease one of them as he approaches. "You didn't bring anything for us? No cocoa?" One of the officers tells us he tried oat milk recently, and Marni replies that Starbucks is "ditching dairy." I converse with another officer about my recipe for almond milk, but we agree that oat milk is better because it's creamier and the oats are grown in Canada. I also discuss protest boundaries with this officer, and he explains them more politely than his colleague did. After a brief conversation about the political theatre of protest, I endeavour to draw him out with the comment that I am surprised at the good relationships activists have with Toronto police. He replies that it's their job. They aren't supposed to be adversarial. Late in the

conversation, we make our introductions to each other, and when he departs I am left with the impression that we have had a positive exchange.

Again, the protest is subdued for a time and then resurges. At one point, Liam responds to a patron's anti-vegan argument with a standard counter-argument employed for its shock value: "Yeah, I don't beat up my wife enough. I don't rape my kids enough." Marni remarks afterward that he used to be the nice guy. Later, she shouts into the restaurant as the door opens. "Foie gras is banned in 16 countries but not Bar Isabel because they don't give a shit! Bar Isabel supports violence!" A few moments later she shouts into the restaurant again. "It's better to know the truth than live ignorantly! It's better to know the truth!" Later still, she shouts, "Violence! Victims and violence! Welcome to Bar Isabel, where we support violence and serve victims!" Another activist echoes her. "Bar Isabel hates animals!"

Late in the protest, Marni talks to a pair of women as they depart the restaurant and then says to the activists, "Yes! We're causing stress to the customers! Woohoo!" She adds, "There were victims tonight. These women went into the restaurant and had such a good time, and now we've ruined their night. These poor victims. We stressed their bellies." Then she tells me that causing the customers stress is a good thing. If they complain to the manager, as these women did, he's more likely to meet with her. Around the two-hour mark, the protest begins to wind down. Activists trickle away, and I follow suit. The protest site becomes a city sidewalk again.

Figure 26: GRASS Activists Pose for a Group Photo (MacCath-Moran 2020o)

Analysis

The Bar Isabel protest was a dynamic one in which a small group of vocal animal rights activists demanded the removal of foie gras from a restaurant menu by appropriating the place directly outside and challenging patrons as they arrived or departed. Many of the people who encountered the protest that evening went away believing it was the work of angry, thoughtless radicals. However, the performances of activists were just that, and they had a strategic purpose. The performances of Toronto police were strategic as well; their increasing numbers throughout the evening, their periodic appropriation of the place already appropriated by activists, and their choices to

interact with us in friendly and unfriendly ways by turns. Both groups acted with deliberation, and there were specific spatial and verbal tensions at the protest as a result. These are the focus this discussion.

The evening of March 6, 2020 was bitterly cold in Toronto, so Marni expected a small turnout for her scheduled, two-hour protest. However, she was no stranger to neighbourhood restaurant activism, having developed cordial relationships with some of the restaurant owners she had opposed in the past. For the most part, she would request incremental changes to menus, usually the deletion of a particularly cruel food item and the addition of a plant-based food item. Because her requests were reasonable, she often got what she wanted, and some restaurant owners consulted with her afterward about ways to better accommodate vegan diners. Sometimes she would reach out by letter and ask for the menu changes first, and other times she would hold a protest or two and then write the letter, but her goal was always to maintain pressure on restaurant owners until they relented. In my interview with Marni on the evening before the Bar Isabel protest, she discussed this approach with me:

> My real strategy is just consistency because these restaurant owners don't expect, especially when it's minus 20 and it's snowing or it's plus 40 and it's sunny, they don't expect you to be consistent. They just think...It's adorable. "Let them be here a couple times. They'll go away." If I'm consistent, then eventually they say, "Uh oh, she's not going away." So when I reach out to them, they're pretty desperate. And you know, Bar Isabel. He's being stubborn, by the way. Bar Isabel's background is, he's part owner of a vegan restaurant, Rosa Linda, and he serves foie gras, which is banned in 16 countries. So I am not going away. And that's why I just escalated, because he actually didn't respond to my email, which is rare. But again, that means creative escalation. Sounds like something violent. It's not. It just means I recreated his menu with the truth, and I tagged him in my posts, which I know he sees. And now he's getting nervous. He's saying, "Uh oh." That's my

> strategy. I'm sure if we ever sit down, it will be nice, because it always is. But that's my goal, you know, to sit down with them (Marni 2020).

With this strategy in mind, the appropriation of place and verbal challenge of patrons can be understood for what they were; deliberate efforts to shake things up until GRASS got what it wanted. However, GRASS was not alone on the evening of March 6th. Toronto police made the same deliberate efforts to appropriate place from the activists and challenge them verbally. Police occupied the sidewalk three times, each time engaging activists in probative or disruptive conversation that demanded their full attention. After each occupation, GRASS reclaimed the spatial and verbal ground it had ceded, but the shift was never immediate. But while both groups came to Bar Isabel with similar strategies in mind, the deployment of these strategies was specific to the goals of each group.

The Appropriation of Space

Humanistic geographer Yi Fu Tuan writes that places are centres of established values created out of spaces,[32] making them physical, mental, and ideological constructs. He also writes of the ways we crowd one another; in spaces where we are too many occupying too small an area but also in places where we feel observed, where conflicting activities occur, and where the world frustrates our desires (Tuan 1977, 54-65). Accordingly, the unmarked space of a Toronto city sidewalk is also a marked place of Bar Isabel ingress and egress with all of the associated expectations attached to it; a pleasurable meal, the

32 This is the reason for my use of the word "place" above; to denote a space that has been overlaid with human constructs.

company of friends, and so on. It is a subtle stage for subtle performances, and on a normal evening they are almost indistinguishable from those of the unmarked sidewalk itself and its passersby. However, when GRASS activists appropriate this space and its overlaid place, performative crowding occurs. Suddenly, the subtle stage and its performances are overlaid again, this time with a conspicuous stage and performances designed to challenge the hegemonic ethical belief system of carnism with counter-hegemonic vegan messages. Literature and signs depicting gavage - the force-feeding of ducks and geese against their will to fatten their livers - help transform the appropriated place into a site of protest. Activists stand on either side of the door and proclaim that patronizing Bar Isabel supports cruelty to sentient beings, that meals consumed there are the product of violence, and that patrons should take personal responsibility for their participation in these atrocities. As a result, these patrons are not only crowded physically as they enter and exit the restaurant, they are crowded mentally and ideologically by activities and messages that conflict with their expectations for the evening and leave them feeling observed in a negative light.

However, the conspicuous stage and performances generated by GRASS are not the topmost layer of placemaking on this Toronto city sidewalk. Police engage in a second appropriation superseding the first, this time with an ineluctable stage and performance that force activists to pay what folklorist Dorothy Noyes calls the "social tax" of their attention to a greater authority. Activists must anticipate and meet police demands, monitor the moods and deeds of officers, and make pleasant conversation with them (Noyes 2016, chap. 5). The performative crowding that ensues is physical; police are

uniformed, armed, and imposing. It is mental; activists are forced to respond in ways that acknowledge police power. It is also legal; while activists have the right to be present outside the restaurant, police have the right to dictate the terms under which the sidewalk may be appropriated. Performance scholar Baz Kershaw writes of the difficulty environmental movements have in developing reflexive protest dramaturgy capable of withstanding the performative crowding of corporations, governments, and police (Kershaw 2002, 128), and we see this difficulty in the animal rights movement here. Toronto police know how to disrupt the disruptors; by forcing activists to stop the performance, cede the stage, and pay attention to them. As a result, GRASS activists are obliged to negotiate with a social power greater than their own, which is there at the behest of the restaurant owner they are endeavouring to persuade and includes individuals who demonstrate their opinion of the protest by laughing at the activists. In fairness, the behaviour of officers on duty at Bar Isabel is nuanced; characterized by professional training and the exigencies of the situation but also informed by personal tolerances for the event and its participants. However, Marni's comments about "fake niceness" and "good cop, bad cop" are telling observations about a police appropriation of place that has a similar effect upon activists as their own appropriation of place has upon restaurant patrons.

Verbal Challenges

Another important component of performative crowding is tied to the imposition of unsought verbal experiences via the content and tone of messages delivered by GRASS

activists and Toronto police. I am again borrowing from Dorothy Noyes' discussion of tradition and attention here, this time to situate the verbal lore of animal rights protest among "those genres that are associated with surprise or shock, notably parody and legend" (Noyes 2016, chap. 5). Like parody and legend, the insults, retorts, and taunts of activists "bear new information or unearth repressed truths; they come unheralded; they interrupt and contaminate the discursive surround" (Ibid). The inescapable incursions of "fake niceness" and "good cop, bad cop" also belong here even though their contributions to the verbal environment are closer to cooperative social scripts that "express the characteristics of the task that is performed and not the characteristics of the performer" (Goffman 1959, 47-48).[33] While they do not have the turbulent energy of GRASS contributions to the verbal environment, Toronto police do capture the attention of listeners and hold it, sometimes endeavouring to guide the internal and external responses of activists toward desired outcomes (Noyes 2016, chap. 5). Folklorist and linguist Dell Hymes gives us a good model for ethnographic analysis of these verbal experiences when he writes that "There seem to be three aspects of speech economy which it is useful to consider separately: *speech events*, as such; the *constituent factors* of speech events; and the *functions of speech*" (Hymes 1962, 24). In the present discussion, we can apply his model in a more general way by situating the inception of unsought verbal experiences with GRASS activists or Toronto police, analyzing the speech events, and asking what these verbal experiences contribute to the goals of each group.

33 Many thanks to Dr. Ian Brodie for his Facebook conversation with me about possible social scripts used in police de-escalation, which helped to clarify my thinking on this matter.

There is considerable traditionality in the verbal challenges GRASS activists bring to restaurant patrons. Marni uses the word "violence" in reference to the deaths of animals for food, situates that violence with those who consume animals, and describes the animals as their "victims." *"Are you willing to cause violence and not face it?"* she asks one restaurant patron, and to another she says "*You literally paid for victims, for animals to be killed."* In reframing Bar Isabel meals to bring the deaths of the animals comprising them into focus, Marni is utilizing language other vegan animal rights activists often use in activism of this kind, especially online. Her goal is similar to that of this dissertation where absent referents are concerned; foie gras is made from fatty duck and goose livers, and she wants patrons to understand what that means for the ducks and geese whose livers are on their plates. Naturally, some patrons are discomfited at this unheralded interruption to their expected pleasant meal, and in their responses we also find traditionality. *"There are better ways..."* one young woman asserts, and while it is true that provocation is part of the GRASS protest strategy, the complaint itself is frequently levelled at animal rights activists whenever their activism causes discomfiture. This is why we are able to answer *"What better ways? Show us."* in unison. Of note, the young woman's claim that she is vegetarian provokes a pair of responses that clearly demonstrate the vegancentric nature of this protest: *"You know why she's so defensive? Because she's vegetarian. She participates in the cruelest part of animal agriculture"* and *"Dairy kills animals. Dairy kills cows. Face what you're doing."* Many vegan animal rights activists assert that the dairy industry is far crueler to farmed animals than the meat industry and see no substantive difference between the ethics of vegetarianism and the

ethics of carnism. So while the young woman believes her vegetarianism positions her ethics in proximity to those of GRASS activists and feels unjustly harassed, activists do not share her perspective and level harsher criticism at her than they would at a person who eats animals. Finally, while I do not have the precipitating comment that engenders Liam's *"Yeah, I don't beat up my wife enough. I don't rape my kids enough"* response, there is also a level of traditionality here. Vegan animal rights activists sometimes draw attention to the violence committed against animals in the agriculture industry by way of analogy. Animals are routinely abused in farm and slaughter settings, and the reproductive systems of female animals are routinely manipulated via forced pregnancy and lactation. Activists who use analogies like Liam's for their shock value reframe these activities as physical and sexual assault and compare them to physical and sexual assault against humans, hoping to startle carnists into "making the connection." As with the rest of the verbal lore employed by GRASS activists, Liam's response is pitched to contaminate the discursive surround of the Bar Isabel entryway with ethical messaging restaurant patrons are unaccustomed to hearing in strident tones they cannot possibly ignore.

I have fewer direct statements from Toronto police. I also do not have insider knowledge of the training they receive and might have employed at the GRASS Bar Isabel protest. However, there is a brief discussion to be had of the ways they guided and disrupted the attention of activists via the tone they set in conversations with us. The first two police officers are friendly with me but probative and say they are concerned about false flag operations at the protest. They are seeking information, but they want to put me at ease so I will offer it comfortably and freely. The second officer answers my question

about his thoughts on the protesters with a non-committal *"It's like politics. Everyone's got their own politics,"* but his subsequent tone in answering my question about protest boundaries is full of bluster, which is also tactical and pitched to alert me that he holds the power in our conversation. Meanwhile, his partner engages in another display of power by harassing a young activist who has taken a picture of him and demanding that she delete it from her phone. By the time I engage in conversation with the final police officer, I am in agreement with Marni that Toronto police are engaging in socially scripted "good cop, bad cop" behaviour to exert periodic control over the protest. They are performing a professional task as a team, and while there are elements of nuanced individuality in the ways they perform it, the goal is control and not conversation.

The Bar Isabel protest was the smallest and most dynamic of the demonstrations I attended; a hyperlocal effort to achieve a specific goal using a strategy that had worked for Marni on previous occasions. However, as I write the words of this summary, Bar Isabel still serves foie gras to restaurant patrons. The COVID-19 pandemic and other events in the lives of activists disrupted Marni's efforts to bring consistent pressure on Grant van Gameren to remove the offending item from the menu. I do not even know if GRASS exists as an animal rights initiative anymore. It was, as the name suggests, a grassroots organization. Still, having analyzed the similarities between activist and police strategies, I wonder how successful GRASS' strategy would have been in protracted opposition of van Gameren's position when police were so well-prepared to counter it. But whether or not this particular effort would have achieved the desired result, hyperlocal, dynamic demonstrations like the GRASS Bar Isabel protest are an important

part of protest dramaturgy in the animal rights movement. They disrupt the expectations of carnists where they eat and shop; unhiding the absent referent in the foods they consume, and bringing the lives and deaths of animals back into the frame.

Performing Animal Rights Activism

The animal rights movement employs a wide variety of performative strategies to encourage ethical change in its audiences. I have discussed a march, two vigils, and a hyperlocal protest here, but there is room for further research that might include educational Cubes of Truth facilitated by Anonymous for the Voiceless, Open Rescue as advocated by Direct Action Everywhere, and farmed animal sanctuaries, among others. As ag-gag laws become more widespread, whistleblowing tactics will adapt and change, so there might be interesting avenues for research of tactical innovation among animal rights activists as well. Of course, there is also room for the diachronic research of protest theatre I intended to undertake in this dissertation, which would enable a richer comparative analysis of the animal rights movement in general.

Another avenue for research lies in the exploration of animal rights activism as it is performed by individuals in their everyday lives. For example, the vegan who reads a food label to ensure the contents contain no animal products is performing her ethics privately, but this performance is also counter-hegemonic because it utilizes her purchasing power to reject foods that do contain animal products. Collectively, these private performances motivate industries that produce packaged food to change their formulations and/or provide options she will purchase. As the numbers of vegans and

plant-based dieters increases, so do these accommodations, which potentially threaten the profits of the animal agriculture industry and prompt hegemonic pushback. Notably, the dairy industries in the European Union and the United States have responded by demanding that their respective regulatory bodies reserve words like "milk," "yoghurt," "buttery," and "creamy" for packages that contain the excretions of animals (Associated Press 2023; Southey 2021). While the economic elements of this conflict play out at the industry and regulatory levels, they are driven in large part by individual performances of ethical belief, which is the province of folkloristics. So there is potential work to be done in the intersections of private animal rights activism, economics, and public policy.

A third avenue of research lies in small-scale animal rights activism undertaken by individuals among their families and communities. Dane Reeves values this sort of activism above all others, and he discusses the reasons why in the following interview excerpt:

> I honestly think that the most effective form of activism is 1) leading by example, and 2) really listening to somebody and really connecting with them and relating to them. You want to support them, not kick them down, and that requires a lot of understanding. It's really hard, because veganism is a pretty tough topic to talk about and address. You know, we're talking about murder, and torture, and all these things, right? And I think there really are a lot of arguments for veganism, and they're very clear, and people don't want to listen to it unless you really get to know them, really listen to why, *their* why. And I think along with supporting too, I think it's really good to praise and give credit to the steps that they have taken, right? That way, they feel like, 'Oh, I am possibly kind of doing it already' (Reeves 2020).

Dane believes that leading by example is one of the most effective forms of animal rights activism. Ryan Patey calls this "being vegan and simply living that way," and in my

analysis of Ryan's interview excerpt, I refer to it as "the vegan in the room effect."[34] This sort of activism is uniquely equipped to address the nuances of everyday carnism because it occurs in the contexts of Thanksgiving dinners, retirement parties, church socials, football games, and similar events. Dane also believes in meeting carnists where they are by endeavouring to understand them and "to praise and give credit to the steps that they have taken." This is a good antidote to the carnist belief that veganism is an ethic of perfection because it rewards the compassion of people Dane personally knows and educates them about ways they might do more to benefit animals.[35]

Before I returned to university for my PhD, I was a volunteer wildlife rescuer with Hope for Wildlife. During that time, I brought a number of animals to veterinarians for euthanasia; a raccoon caught in a snare trap for so long it was embedded in his flesh, a raven poisoned by lead shot after eating an animal killed with it, and gulls whose wings had been broken beyond mending when they were hit by cars, among others. I also rescued an eagle poisoned by lead shot and brought him to a veterinarian for palliative care, and the day I signed the purchase and sale agreement for my house, I pulled a wounded seal pup off the highway and drove the mouthy creature four hours to the Hope for Wildlife facility, where she was rehabilitated and later released. This was also small-scale animal rights activism (or at least it was for me), especially since most of the wild animals I rescued had been harmed by their interactions with my fellow Nova Scotians. I felt better about my ethical beliefs when I was doing this

34 See "Current Ethical Beliefs and Practices" in "Chapter Two: Vegan Voices."

35 See "Vegan Voices" in "Chapter Two: Vegan Voices."

work than I have at any other time, even though I was often helping animals to gentler deaths than they would have had without me.

Finally, I would again encourage ethnographic inquiries that foreground the perspectives of individuals and groups who are unsympathetic to the animal rights movement; counter-protesters, animal farmers, slaughterhouse workers, and others. Such an inquiry would do well to remember that carnism is a hegemonic ethical belief system, not to debunk the convictions of people who espouse it but to disentangle carnism from *senso comune* and study it. We lose nothing by illuminating a belief system so hegemonic it is nearly invisible, and we stand to learn a great deal about our nuanced relationships with animals. We also stand to learn a great deal about the prevailing antipathy for those who defend them.

Conclusion

At the 2023 American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Tok Thompson delivered a paper titled "Interspecies Folklore of Humans and Other Animals" in which he argues that animals have ethics. He points to interspecies friendships, interspecies compassion, animal language, and animal theory of mind as proof of this and goes on to argue that we can use folkloristic principles to understand the culture of animals (Thompson 2023). The capacity of animals for expressing resistance to suffering and the complexity of this resistance can also be viewed through a folkloristic lens. Many of my research participants would agree, having objected to the idea that animals are voiceless sufferers who cannot communicate with us. So while the title of this dissertation is taken from the animal rights movement, it does not reflect a universal opinion among animal rights activists about the capacities of animals for communication, emotion, reasoning, and thought.

Much of this dissertation rests on the argument that carnism is a system of ethical belief, that it can be studied like any other system of belief, and that it is hegemonic. When we accept this argument, we are able to think more clearly about carnism itself and about other systems of hegemonic belief so embedded in society that we receive them as *senso comune*. This helps us interrogate them, inquire about the reasons we adopt them as individuals and groups, and seek nuance among believers. For example, it may be argued that the ovo-lacto vegetarians mentioned throughout this work are carnists,[36] because their

36 E.g., Skye Tostowaryk's and Camile Labchuk's mothers and the vegetarians at the Bar Isabel Protest.

ethical beliefs permit the consumption of animal secretions. However, these people also refrain from eating animal bodies. This introduces a level of complexity to the model of hegemony and counter-hegemony where carnism and veganism are concerned as it demonstrates that while carnist ethics are always hegemonic, carnist *performances* of these ethics may be counter-hegemonic. With this understanding in mind, we can analyze and contextualize vegetarian performances of carnism with greater specificity. In a similar way, the work of my dissertation may be useful outside the scope of the present study in the contextual interrogation of other taken-for-granted ideologies. In the case of carnism, we are able to address misconceptions about those who champion counter-hegemonic systems of ethical belief like veganism. In other cases, we may be able to address misconceptions about individuals and groups who champion counter-hegemonic ideologies of different kinds.

All of the vegans I interviewed are vernacular theorists who undertook this work as part of their transitions to veganism, even though they all arrived at a counter-hegemonic alternative to carnism by different roads. Their perspectives as communicated to me reflect the rich philosophical arguments for animal rights put forward by Josephine Donovan, Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and others, but they are not limited to the writing of these scholars. Rather, the ethical beliefs of my research participants are shaped and informed by the socioeconomic and regional circumstances of their lives, the intellectual rigour they brought to the interrogation of their ethical beliefs, and their innate compassion. Their threshold experiences and epiphanies may also be of use outside the

present study in folkloristic analyses of shifts in ethical belief, the life events and personal reflections that precede them, and the new ethical beliefs that follow.

It may be argued that counter-hegemonic ethical belief systems inevitably give rise to vernacular resistance, and this is another argument for ethical belief studies in folkloristics. In the case of this study, my research participants resist carnism by eating a plant-based diet (foodways), adopting cruelty-free clothing and cosmetics (material culture), engaging in persuasive discourses with carnists in their everyday lives (narrative), and participating in protest theatre (performance). It is reasonable to conclude that other counter-hegemonic ethical beliefs motivate performative resistance on the part of their adherents. Further, because vernacular resistance often meets with hegemonic power "which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (Gramsci 1989, The Formation of the Intellectuals), the friction between ethical belief systems and the performative strategies utilized to uphold them is also worthy of folkloristic inquiry, especially when adherents of a minority ethical belief system are marginalized, threatened, or killed, as in the case of Regan Russell.

With the foregoing in mind, the study of ethical belief in folkloristics needs the interest and attention of more folklorists and performance theorists. Phillips Stevens Jr. called his fellow folklorists to action during the Satanic Panic (Stevens Jr. 1996, "Satanism: Where are the Folklorists?"), and I am following his lead now. Public discourses of ethical belief are contributing to marked and increasing societal polarization, especially online, where individuals communicate in echo chambers comprised of fellow believers and social media algorithms reward conflict. There is a

great need for folklorists willing to seek nuance in these polarized discourses, the ethical beliefs underpinning them, and their performances in the everyday lives of adherents. As I have demonstrated here, we can bring the same folkloristic tools of inquiry to studies of the abortion rights debate, the gun control debate, and others. In some of these inquiries, we may find notable power imbalances as I have in the relationship between carnism and veganism. In others, like the abortion debate, we may find a synthesis of ethical and religious or ethical and secular belief. In all cases, we *will* find humanizing nuance and vernacularization of these beliefs because they are held and communicated by individuals. Vegan animal rights activists are not monolithic in their ethical beliefs and performances of activism, and neither are those who identify as pro-life or pro-choice, gun advocates or gun control advocates, and so on. We would do our polarized society a service by bringing the tools of our discipline to bear on the nuances of our ethical beliefs.

There is also a further need for sympathetic ethnographies of vegan animal rights activists. Not only does the hegemonic carnist worldview encourage violence against them, there is evidence of a regrettable bias against them in scholarship. My research participants have faced many kinds of danger in the performance of their beliefs, and they are not alone in this. I have not been able to find aggregated information on violence against animal rights activists, and indeed it might not exist, though I would welcome this information should any reader have it. However, there has been a troubling rise in violence against environmental activists in the last decade (Kwong, Hanson, and Sofia 2021), and I have encountered many individual reports of violence against animal rights activists beyond those reported by my research participants. At the very least, we must

interrogate the language of our academic discourses about the vegan animal rights movement. When we use "extremism," "militancy," "terrorism," and other such words and phrases to describe these people and groups, we set the tone for conversations outside the academy. Policy-makers, journalists, and individuals incorporate the knowledge we make into their own endeavours, so if we tell them that the efforts of vegan animal rights activists are monolithic, dismissible, and dangerous, they will act on that knowledge to the detriment of people the reader has met in the pages of this dissertation and the person who has written it. I came to the study of folklore convinced I needed to bring objectivity to my research and conclude this dissertation with a much stronger understanding of positionality. With this new understanding in mind, I would again ask that scholars who read this work consider their own positionality as it regards vegan animal rights activists before they write about us.

Finally, there is a great need for internationalization of this research. There are notable contextual differences between the beliefs, discourses and performances of vegan animal rights activists in St. John's and Toronto, and both of these cities are Canadian. We can conclude from this that other notable differences will be found elsewhere in the world. I remain curious about the widespread proliferation of vegan animal rights activism in Iceland, where the climate cannot fully support a plant-based diet but where vegan animal rights activists are vocal members of the national community. In my 2017 paper on the topic, derived from ethnographic research conducted in Iceland earlier that year, I write that research participant Kristín Kolbeinsdóttir's decision to open a plant-based restaurant outside Akureyri was based in part on the existence of a high school club for vegetarians

and vegans, which would have been unheard of in the recent past. Kristín also mentioned that young people were coming to her because they were vegetarian or vegan and did not want to eat animals. When I asked her why she thought this might be happening, she said:

> I think because we are more aware of what's happening environmentally around the world, not just here, but around the world. And young people seem to have this open mind…ah…to change their behaviour. So, probably more education, better education, more social media spreading the word around, I think (MacCath-Moran and Kolbeinsdóttir 2017).

I am also curious about the recent Himalayan Vegan Festival, which took place in the cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal between September 15-20, 2022 ("Himalayan Vegan Festival" n.d.). Billing itself as the "biggest plant-based event ever in the Himalaya," it featured speakers from all over the world on topics ranging from animal rights, plant-based nutrition, and veganic permaculture to the place of Buddhism in the movement. These are only two among many international expressions of vegan animal rights culture, so an internationalized study of the intersections between ethical belief, discourse, performance and place would help broaden our knowledge of the movement and help dismantle the mistaken presumptions that veganism and animal rights activism are solely Western phenomena.

Dwight Conquergood writes that:

> Moral and ethical questions get stirred to the surface because ethnographers of performance explode the notion of aesthetic distance. In their fieldwork efforts to grasp the native's point of view, to understand the human complexities displayed in even the most humble folk performance, ethnographers try to surrender themselves to the centripetal pulls of culture, to get close to the face of humanity where life is not always pretty (Conquergood 2013c, 66).

In a general sense, I would agree with Conquergood that ethnographers of performance do good intellectual work when they immerse themselves in their communities of interest. However, this has not been my experience in undertaking the present research project, especially as it regards my ethnographic work related to protest theatre. Because I am a vegan animal rights activist myself, there was no aesthetic distance between me and the people whose protests I came to study. The distance between us was comprised of my ethical duty to them and my intellectual duty to scholarship. Inasmuch as I shared many of the values held by my research participants, I was also grateful for these distances. I relied upon them in the field to help me remain engaged with the analytical work at hand, and I relied upon them again in the writing of this dissertation for the same reason. In the six years I have invested in this work, I have made a conscious effort not to surrender myself to the centripetal pull of culture in the animal rights movement, even when the complexities of vegan vernacular resistance got me close to the faces of humanity animals see when we make them suffer. Rather, it has been my goal to illuminate the received systems of ethical belief that underpin that suffering by studying ethical and performative resistance to it among vegan animal rights activists. My research participants have undertaken rigorous intellectual work to arrive at vernacular theories that counter the common sense of carnism, and they have applied these theories in their private lives, their interactions with others, and in the public theatre of protest. Their purpose is two-fold; to live in alignment with their ethical beliefs, and to help others undertake the same intellectual work in the hope they too might become voices for those who have never been voiceless.

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