

**MEAT, SEX, AND POWER:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORLD OF *BEASTARS***

by

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

11 August 2023



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I would like to thank eight of my fellow creatures.

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Abstract

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This dissertation presents an examination and analysis of the world depicted in the Japanese mangaka/comic artist Itagaki Paru's *Beastars* and *Beast Complex* serialised manga narratives. The analysis is comprised of three primary sections that delve into meat and other animal products, sex and gender, and power relations. These concepts are respectively discussed by focusing on the way in which this fictional world facilitates the use of meat/animal products despite all animals being persons, the way in which sexual and gendered aspects, which are typically attributed to human animals, are attributed to animalised classifications, and the way in which a variety of factors simultaneously operate to enforce power relations between different persons and groups in this fictional world. The analysis makes use of semiotics, ecofeminism, critical discourse analysis, animal studies, and critical theory in general.

Vleis, Seks, en Mag: 'n Analise van die Wêreld van *Beastars*

Hierdie dissertasie bied 'n ondersoek na en analise van die wêreld wat in die Japanse mangaka-/strokiesprentkunstenaar Paru Itagaki se *Beastars* en *Beast Complex*-mangaverhaalreeks uitgebeeld word. Die analise bestaan uit drie primêre afdelings wat onderskeidelik vleis en ander diereprodukte, seks en gender, en magsverhoudings ondersoek. Hierdie konsepte word bespreek deur te fokus op die manier waarop hierdie fiktiewe wêreld die gebruik van vleis-/dierprodukte fasiliteer, ten spyte daarvan dat alle diere persone is; die manier waarop seksuele en gender-aspekte, wat tipies aan menslike diere toegedig word, aan verdierlikte klassifikasies toegedig word; en die manier waarop 'n verskeidenheid faktore gelyktydig werkbaar is om magsverhoudings tussen verskillende persone en groepe in hierdie fiktiewe wêreld af te dwing.

Die analise gebruik semiotiek, ekofeminisme, kritiese diskoersanalise, dierestudies, en kritiese teorie oor die algemeen.

Inyama, Isini, kunye neGunya: Uhlalutyo lweHlabathi le*Beastars*

Le thisisi ibonisa ukuhlolwa kunye nohlalutyo lwehlabathi elibonakaliswa kuthotho lwamabali eencwadi zokonwabisa i*Beastars and Beast Complex* ze*Japanese mangaka*/umzobi weencwadi zokonwabisa uParu Itagaki. Olu hlalutyo lubandakanya amacandelo amathathu aphambili aphonononga iimveliso zenyama kunye nezinye zezilwanyana, ezesondo kunye nesini, kunye nobudlelane ngokwamagunya. Ezi ngcamango zixoxwa ngokulandelelana ngokugxila kwindlela eli hlabathi lamabali aqwetyiweyo eliququzelela ngayo ukusetyenziswa kweemveliso zenyama okanye zezilwanyana nangona zonke izilwanyana zingabantu; indlela apho iinkalo zesini kunye nobuni, ngokuqhelekileyo ezayanyaniswa nabantu, zithi zayanyanise khona nohlelo lwezilwanyana; kunye nendlela apho iintlobo ngeentlobo zezinto zisebenza ngaxeshanye ukunyanzelisa ubudlelane ngokwamagunya phakathi kwabantu kunye namaqela ahlukileyo kweli hlabathi lamabali aqwetyiweyo. Olu hlalutyo lusebenzisa ithiyori yokunxulumene nemiqondiso kunye neempawu (*semiotics*), ithiyori ehlola unxibelelwano phakathi kwabasetyhini nendalo (*ecofeminism*), ithiyori yohlalutyo lokusetyenziswa kolwimi kumagunya nakwezintlalo (*critical discourse analysis*), izifundo zezilwanyana, kunye nethiyori yohlalutyo lwezintlalo nenkcubeko ngokubanzi (*critical theory*).

Key Terms

Animal Studies, Critical Theory, Semiotics, Meat, Sex, Gender, Power, Performance, Manga, Graphic Novels, Comics, *Beastars*, *Beast Complex*, Itagaki Paru

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Anthropomorphised animal characters have been used in broader culture for thousands of years, from Ancient Greek sources like *Aesop's Fables* to modern pop cultural sources like Disney's *Zootopia* (called *Zootropolis* in some regions). Anthropomorphised animal characters have served a myriad of narrative purposes, but often fall into the realm of children's fiction. The two previously mentioned sources, respectively, deliver various moral lessons or serve as allegorical narratives to explore human social issues.

The anthropomorphised animal narrative that I have decided to focus on in this dissertation is Itagaki Paru's *Beastars* manga (and the *Beast Complex* spin-off). This manga series presents the reader with a realistic humanlike world in which the only real difference is that the population that inhabits that world is not merely human, but more anthropomorphically animal in nature. Therefore, as it (generally) tries to adopt a realistic perspective, there are non-human animal-specific behaviours, customs, and so on, that these characters adhere to in their society.

It would be easy to try to view *Beastars* as an "adult version of *Zootopia*", but that is not entirely accurate. A film like *Zootopia* presents its world as almost purely allegorical; the herbivore characters represent white/coloniser peoples and the carnivores represent people-of-colour/the colonised, but the allegory is immediately problematic because the carnivore characters are biologically descended from more "savage" animals than the herbivores are, and this is where *Beastars* differs.

Beastars does not present a one-to-one allegory and instead produces a messy distinction between herbivore and carnivore that *could* be compared to racial or gendered differences but cannot accurately be called either. This is what makes *Beastars* worthy of analysis. It denies the binary. It shuffles in the grey rather than being black or white.

This makes it a worthy candidate for various analyses as a sort of thought experiment. Chief of which, for this analysis, is its inherent use of the gaze. Herbivores perceive carnivores to be one way and carnivores perceive herbivores another way, and neither perspective is factual as each is skewed by personal and societal bias. This can, in addition, present us with parallels to human behaviours surrounding perception of the Other.

This, in general, indicates that this narrative could be used as a way to understand humans as well as the literature that humans produce. The narrative may be about anthropomorphic

animals, but it relates to the messy nature of human life and existence. It tells us about ourselves and may offer means of determining how we could embrace an existence in which we all live together in a more harmonious society.

It should also be noted that this dissertation will focus on the English translation of *Beastars*, which was originally published in Japanese. Errors and misunderstandings in translation can always occur, but the utmost caution has been taken with regard to this. In addition, I have extensively researched Japanese culture and history (Sansom, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c; Gordon, 2003 & Benedict, 2005) and manga history (Suzuki & Stewart, 2022) to ensure as thorough and accurate an understanding as possible. Furthermore, I have a personal history with and fondness for anime and manga that extends into my early childhood. Hopefully, this will minimise misinterpretation.

1.1. What Is *Beastars*?

It may be beneficial to discuss the text in question to some extent before engaging in an analysis. *Beastars*, and the spin-off *Beast Complex*, are manga series written by Itagaki Paru, and they tell the story of a world filled with anthropomorphic animals who live in a human-like world. They have jobs, they wear clothes, they have human relationships, they have schools, and so on. Essentially, the world is one in which humans are simply replaced by humanoid animals, but this is a world in which this has always been the case, and humans have never existed. For this reason, it is also practical to consider these animals to be persons.

A central difference is that these anthropomorphic animals are still, ultimately, animals. In other anthropomorphic animal media, like Disney's *Robin Hood*, the characters are humans but designed to look like upright animals, but *Beastars* goes further than that. *Beastars* deals with human issues, like romantic relationships between characters, but all of these human stories are tinged with something more animalistic, such as a relationship between a carnivore and herbivore being fraught with understandable difficulties.

The binary between the carnivores and herbivores forms a central aspect in *Beastars*, and it causes intense tensions between people. For instance, there is a veiled racial component in which certain groups believe that there should be a racialised separation of herbivores and carnivores. Effectively, a “separate but equal” mentality.

An issue that plagues the possible equality of this society lies in the binary of herbivore and carnivore as carnivores, traditionally, eat herbivores. However, because they live in a society with one another, this is considered illegal but is an aspect that will be extensively explored in the following dissertation. Meat forms a central aspect of the world of *Beastars*, and how different characters respond to meat becomes an important part of the central narrative and the world.

The central narrative involves several characters as their stories intersect with one another. The central protagonist is Legoshi, a grey wolf who is a quiet loner character until he meets and falls in love with Haru, a white dwarf rabbit. Legoshi is in his school's drama club, and he becomes the early rival and later friend of Louis, an affluent red deer who serves as the head actor of the drama club.

Other characters form the periphery of these three main characters as they grapple with a love triangle, a dangerous carnivore gang, a murderer at the school who devoured a fellow student, and various other trials and tribulations along the way.

Meat, the difficulty in discerning hunger from love, and power relations all form part of that central narrative and the world as a whole. This dissertation primarily focuses on the world itself rather than the central narrative, although that central narrative does often form part of the overarching world.

There are some additional points worth noting for clarification purposes.

The people in *Beastars* are animals with human characteristics, and while they do have animal traits, such as Legoshi having a strong sense of smell, they are not wholly anatomically correct. For instance, the various cat characters in the world are not hypercarnivores as they are in the real world. All carnivores in *Beastars* are portrayed as being able to survive on a predominantly lacto-ovo vegetarian diet with insect protein as an additional nutritional source. Effectively, none of them *need* meat, they simply *desire* meat.

Another important point is that carnivores in *Beastars* do consume milk. In the real world, only humans consume the milk of other species. There are various animals, mostly birds, that do act as brood parasites and are purposefully raised by the wrong species, but these creatures are generally not mammals and so even brood parasites do not consume the milk of other species. The vast majority of the main cast in *Beastars* are mammals, and the vast majority of the carnivore cast are also therefore mammals. This means that in *Beastars*, carnivores

consume milk as non-vegan humans in the real world consume milk. This is, like the lack of hypercarnivores, not anatomically correct, but it does simplify the narrative to some degree.

Omnivores do not exist in the world of *Beastars*. While non-human animals like dogs are able to survive on a herbivorous diet in the real world, they are actually omnivores. However, *Beastars* ignores this for the sake of simplicity. There are only two major groups, which could be considered a form of racialised groups, in *Beastars*: herbivores and carnivores. Much of the world is otherwise modelled after human society, with a primary focus on high school students both in and outside of a school setting.

Lastly, one may ask: What is a Beostar in the first place? The name of the manga and the general world does not intuitively answer this question. In this fictional world, a “Beostar” is considered to be a figure who is, in some way, special on a societal level (chapter 6). This could mean that someone who attains the title of “Beostar” is a politician, athlete, or public figure of some other kind who has high standing in this world. The concept is not explored all that often in the text, but it can be beneficial to know why the manga has this title.

1.2. Literature Review

Beastars, as a text for academic analysis, is still extremely neglected in English-speaking academia. Hence, exposing a gap in knowledge that should be explored. This could be due to it being a relatively recent text, as it was serialised from September 2016 to October 2020, or it could be because it is a manga, and Japanese popular culture tends not to be the subject of much English academic scrutiny. It may also be because of the common bias against “comics” and “animation” in general in academia.

Whatever the case may be, there are only a handful of academic pieces that discuss it in any real sense. There is only one academic article (Akshaya & Chellerian, 2021), that I could find in English, that is actually about *Beastars*, although it does share centre stage with *Zootopia* (furthermore, it discusses the *Beastars* anime adaptation rather than the original manga itself). It is predominantly focused on the animation found in the adaptation, with a mild focus on aspects of the narrative. These tend to be focused on the supposed allegorical aspects in *Beastars* and on the references to possible intertextual comparisons with *Romeo and Juliet* (at least as far as the main narrative of *Beastars* is concerned). However, this particular article is

rather poorly written and edited despite being published in an academic journal. For this reason, it may be best to ignore this particular article.

This rather weak text is the only one that is explicitly *about Beastars*, but several other academic texts do mention it. Three theses discuss three other manga and/or anime, but they do mention *Beastars* in passing. Belt (2021) discussed the fan community around Yana Tobobosa's *Black Butler*, and it briefly mentions *Beastars* when stating that animal allegories have been used in manga/anime in the past, with *Beastars* being such an example (2021:9). However, this is all it discusses. Another thesis, which also looks at the fan community around an anime/manga, also only mentions *Beastars* once. Merila (2020) looks at Oda Eiichirō's *One Piece* manga/anime and the fandom surrounding it; they also only mention *Beastars* to state that it too uses anthropomorphic animal characters (2020:8). This is the full extent of its contribution.

A third thesis, which is focused on the manga/anime *Mob Psycho 100* by ONE, does not focus on a fan community but rather on how anime and manga should be treated as a serious academic point of discussion by invoking Nietzschean concepts around beauty and the Sublime with regards to *Mob Psycho 100* (Boutheina & Khawla, 2021). This thesis only mentions *Beastars* once, much like the others, and only in relation to a Nietzschean conceptualisation of envy in relation to existential feelings, which can be found in the relationship between *Beastars*' protagonist, Legoshi, and his friend/rival, Louis (2021:15-16). The thesis does not mention *ressentiment* or anything else found in *The Genealogy of Morals*, in which these concepts were explored (Nietzsche, 1989). In addition, it also compares *Beastars* to *Watchmen* and *Catcher in the Rye* as a means of legitimising manga and anime.

The final thesis that mentions *Beastars* is not about anime or manga at all but rather concerns itself with a discussion of the history of the furry fandom (Dunn, 2021). *Beastars* is mentioned, along with other anthropomorphic animal media like Disney's *Zootopia*, *Robin Hood*, and *The Lion King*, when discussing pieces of media that fall within the furry aesthetic (2021:32). It says nothing about *Beastars* itself and simply uses it as one example of several for an entirely unrelated discussion.

The last academic text that mentions *Beastars* is an article that focuses on the use of *kawaii* (or "cuteness") in animated anthropomorphic animal aesthetics (Teodorescu, 2021). It discusses, in some depth, *Aggretsuko*, *BNA: Brand New Animal*, and *Dorohedoro* and how these anime series utilise cuteness as a form of counterculture. However, despite being the

fourth example that this article mentions (and it only mentions four), it does not discuss *Beastars* any further (2021:57). Perhaps this is because it implies that *Beastars* is, by proxy, similar to these other texts, but that is pure speculation on my part.

This is, therefore, the sum total of all the academic work, in English, that I could find, for *Beastars*. Although there have been a few in other languages, but not many. For instance, there has been an Indonesian character analysis of the protagonist of *Beastars* through a Freudian lens (Darmawan, Meidariani & Meilantari, 2022) and a Catalan examination of gender roles in various instances of female-authored *shōnen* manga, including *Beastars* (Royo, 2022). This should indicate the general lack of academic material about this particular text.

In terms of other sources, Itagaki Paru, the author, has given a handful of interviews, although they were mostly focused on her personal life, thoughts, beliefs, and so on. A Manga-News interview (2019), which had to be Google translated from French, did offer some insights into her upbringing and why she draws anthropomorphic animal characters. For instance, she considers her stories to still be human stories despite the setting, such as in this answer (please note that, considering the automatised translation, it may not be the best representation of her words):

As my story is a human drama, I take modern society as a model, even if I am not necessarily always aware of it. For example, it is not dealt with in the first two volumes, but we will see at some point the importance of social networks. Displaying photos of carnivores and herbivores, united, will bring popularity... It is all these aspects, a little strange, of everyday life that serve as models for me (Manga-News, 2019).

Despite the clunky English, this does indicate her desire to produce a narrative that, regardless of the animal nature of characters, is still a “human story.” In a second interview, with Otaquest (2020), she explicitly denies the usual argument that the different “races” in *Beastars* allegorically represent real-world race or gender differences. She states:

Regarding a world where animals are the main characters, in children’s media there might be a paradox that a dog character that walks another dog as a pet. There were a lot of people around me that would point out the absurdity in that. I didn’t like their attitudes on how ‘unrealistic’ that was. I’d always wanted to make a story that respects how different species would actually interact with each other. But I also felt that pointing out the lack of realism was rude, and I wanted to see if I could make something

that could convince even those people. I wanted to make a world full of animals that was realistic. So that's where it came from (Otaquest, 2020).

She does also state that she was influenced by some of those other anthropomorphic animal media stories, and even states: "I think if there was no Disney there would be no *Beastars*" (Otaquest, 2020).

The few academic sources discussed above were found using Google Scholar, but after a thorough perusal of sixteen other academic databases (including ProQuest, JSTOR, EBSCO, Taylor & Francis, and many others), there appears to be no other English language research on *Beastars* or Itagaki Paru in general (or at least, none at present). Therefore, as there is so little academic research on *Beastars*, I determined that it would be best to turn to the closest approximation of academic analysis: amateur internet analyses. There are multitudinous videos and several blog posts that discuss various aspects of *Beastars*, but many of them are essentially just reviews or summaries with mild commentary. One of those reviews does contain a useful, if somewhat clunkily phrased, comment:

While people don't fear being eaten literally by others in their day-to-day life, metaphorically many of us do. We fear that with how we look, those we want to love, and the looks we'll get for admitting to it, or how we go about our day-to-day life, will make society hurt us, and for many it can cause severe consequences (AH Brandon Reviews, 2020).

However, none of the other reviews contain meaningful insight, but there are multiple internet analyses that do offer something meaningful, and a discussion of them will follow.

One of the more prominent among them is the YouTuber Jack Saint, who produced three video essays that discuss animal allegory media and *Beastars*. His first criticises several existing pieces of animal racial allegory media, including *Zootopia* (which is often compared to *Beastars*), because these narratives tend to produce problematic associations, such as predators in *Zootopia* being biologically different to prey, which can be seen as a justification for segregation (2020a). His second video specifically discusses *Beastars*, but as something that cannot truly be compared to things like *Zootopia*, because it cannot be considered a one-to-one allegory (2020b). His third and final video discusses various characters in the manga and draws attention to the sexual allegory aspects that can be noted, such as predation being likened to sexual assault (2020c).

The second-most prominent YouTube analyser goes by the name Kamui Miracle, and he has released multiple video essays that discuss various characters, such as how Bill develops as a leader (2020c), how Gosha and Yahya are connected (2020f & 2020d), how Louis serves as a strong juxtaposition to Legoshi (2020a) and how Riz serves as a different kind of juxtaposition to Legoshi (2021), how seemingly dangerous carnivore groups stand in peaceful solidarity with one another (2020b), and even how different ideas of fatherly relationships evolve in the series (2020e).

The remaining video and blog essays do not form parts of a series and are instead once-off discussions. It should first be noted for those unfamiliar with internet culture, but many individuals tend to go by online handles rather than proper names. Hence the strange assortment of names below.

Bonsai Pop (2020) relates Legoshi's experiences with masculine privilege (and also briefly discusses the Japanese concept of carnivore and herbivore men; this will be discussed in more detail within the dissertation itself). Kross (2020) discusses the relation between *Beastars* and *Zootopia* and how the former contains a more realistic portrayal of issues while the latter is more idealistic. Nopal Dude (2019), Syngato (2020) and ToTaLA (2020) discuss carnivores with relation to masculinity (which is something I will also focus on). Lab (2021) provides something of a confused allegorical discussion in which they state the somewhat contradictory claim that *Zootopia* is both more nuanced *and* more simplistic than *Beastars*. Just Stop (2021) and darfox8 (2022) reinforce the idea that one should not draw one-to-one allegorical relations between *Beastars* and the real world especially with regards to the biological aspect prevalent in *Beastars*' world. Saberspark (2020) discusses how *Beastars* can be used as a vehicle for discussing human themes relating to racism, sexism, and classism. Fujitsu (2020) authored a short piece that had one quote worth highlighting: "*Zootopia* focuses on discrimination and self-actualization, whereas *BEASTARS* focuses more on the conflict between instinct and self-consciousness."

Lastly, Parker-Dalton (2020) discusses the allegorical issue and puts it rather well when he says:

(...) we must be careful with how liberally we come to interpret the world of *BEASTARS* and the thematic messages it poses because the division between carnivore and herbivore could easily be taken as an allegory for our own world's division between black and white, between races. Yet the connotations of such an allegory would be

alarming, somehow suggesting that there is some kind of fundamental biological or physiological difference (between) black and white peoples when the only real difference is the amount of melatonin in our skin. Thus, I prefer to see the diverse world of *BEASTARS* as a vehicle through which the problems of modern society as a whole can be explored, as opposed to a one-to-one representation.

The majority of these non-academic sources are, essentially, elaborated reviews rather than strong analyses. The closest to pure analyses are the works of Jack Saint and Kamui Miracle, although the latter does merge artistic vocal performance with analysis. This is all the academic, and a substantial proportion of the non-academic, research that has been done on *Beastars*. Far more could be done, and this dissertation would provide an opportunity to perform a far more focused, academic analysis. Hence my decision to choose this as my topic.

1.3. Purpose and Thesis Statement

It should be noted that the particular reason for choosing this particular text for this analysis is because there is an utter drought of academic material on it (or at least a drought with regards to English language academia in terms of this particular text). This text, and other more pop cultural texts, are often neglected in favour of the classics (a trend I have noticed over years embroiled within academic learning), and this gap should be closed because, while it may be hard for many academics to stomach, there is often hostility towards classic literature in younger people (simply speak to the majority of high school students to verify this viewpoint), and a more approachable text like *Beastars* could serve as a motivator for others to analyse non-standard texts and learn as they do so, because there is meaning to be found in the strangest of places. Pop cultural focuses like Roland Barthes's analyses of professional wrestling (Barthes, 1991a) and strip-teases (Barthes, 1991b) should be enough to show this reality.

***Beastars* presents an imaginative and critical exploration of the intersections between meat, sex, and power. The ultimate purpose of this analysis will be to show how the anthropomorphic world and characters of *Beastars*, and the spin-off *Beast Complex*, present, question, and critique the interconnection of the typical real-world human binaries relating to these aspects.**

This is, in basic terms, the thesis statement. There needs to be a focus on all three of these aspects in this analysis, as indicated by the title of the dissertation. As has been discussed, a variety of non-academic secondary sources discuss aspects surrounding *Beastars* and its elaboration on meat, sex/gender/sexuality, and power relations between characters and entire classes of people. However, every non-academic source is just that: non-academic. This dissertation will provide a far more comprehensive analysis and discussion of these interlinking themes than a non-academic source generally would.

In addition, each of the academic secondary sources either tends to mention *Beastars* in passing or they focus on an aspect that is incredibly narrow in scope, such as the animation in the adaptation. Therefore, this is the first, or so it would appear (based on multiple searches), comprehensive analysis focusing on *Beastars* itself in English. Where others had focused on small, individual aspects, this analysis will provide a detailed breakdown and close reading of the text so as to relate it to broader questions, topics, and discussions.

Literary analysis can often be argued, from a cynical perspective, as something unnecessary or without practical benefit to society. However, literary works can also be argued as mirrors to society, and even when said mirror portrays a fantastical society of animal people, it can still be used as a way to further understand humanity, to explore aspects of ourselves through these narratives. In addition, it can help us understand our relationships with the non-human animals who share our world (as a world without non-human animals, as presented in *Beastars*, changes the way in which we can interact with and think about them). Or, in the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss on the usefulness of animals as a source of comparison to humans: “We can understand, too, that natural species are chosen not because they are ‘good to eat’ but because they are ‘good to think’” (Lévi-Strauss, 1991:89). So, let us think through animals.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This research is, by necessity, interdisciplinary in nature. One must analyse literature through a variety of theoretical perspectives if one hopes to understand the interconnected, interrelated nature of a text that bears relation to the real world; a world that is itself interconnected and interrelated. For this reason, this analysis, while broadly falling under animal studies, is more specifically related to ecofeminism, postcolonialism, and critical discourse analysis.

Animal studies is an immensely broad label under which one could classify all manner of academic discussions. If they involve non-human animals in any capacity, it can be labelled as animal studies. Therefore, as *Beastars* concerns anthropomorphised animal characters, it falls under the purview of animal studies. Some of the central thinkers of note in this area include Peter Singer (2015), Tom Regan (1983), Christine Korsgaard (2018), J.M. Coetzee (1999), and Mary Midgley (1984 & 2002). Each of these writers tends to focus on non-human animals from a purely ethical perspective, hence the need to supplement it further.

Ecofeminism and animal studies tend to be intrinsically connected to one another (which cannot *necessarily* be said of the other theoretical areas that have been mentioned). Ecofeminism is concerned with the intersection of sex, gender, sexuality, nature, and non-human animals and as such, it is a perfect point of departure for much of the analysis to come. The work of Carol J. Adams in understanding human-animal representation (1995, 2007, 2010, 2018 & 2020), Lori Gruen's view of entangled empathy (2015), Val Plumwood's critique of binary thinking and her examination of humans as potential meat (2003, 2005 & 2012), and Greta Gaard's focus on queer and gendered aspects of ecofeminism (1997 and 2011) will be of integral use as they can aid in breaking down and understanding the relations between non-human animals and human animals.

While ecofeminism is specifically concerned with the intersection of humans and nature (although many focus quite strongly on animals in particular), postcolonialism is immensely beneficial for understanding power relations in oppressive systems, and, as *Beastars* can be seen as at least somewhat allegorical to race at times, the intersection of animality, race, and oppression is an important area of focus. The work of foundational post- and anti-colonial thinkers like Albert Memmi (2003 & 2006), and Frantz Fanon (1967 & 2004) will be of interest, while the work of Achille Mbembe (2001, 2017 & 2019) will be of integral importance as his work draws definitive connections between animality, colonialism, and race.

The final primary area of theoretical importance is in critical discourse analysis, which also operates as a methodology but works as a foundational theoretical lens too. Critical discourse analysis can aid in understanding power dynamics from a more poststructural rather than postcolonial lens (and will be discussed in more detail shortly). The integration of both postcolonial and poststructural lenses will provide a stronger overall theoretical basis from which a fully rounded analysis can take place.

Of final interest is the central theoretical concept of the gaze as elaborated by thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre (2011:478-555), John Berger (2008:37), Michel Foucault (2003a:86 & 1995:195-229), Frantz Fanon (1967:86-88), Laura Mulvey (1993:116), and bell hooks (2003). This concept should be taken as central to this analysis as the gaze, in its many iterations, is integral to understanding the perception of oppressor and oppressed groups to one another; a theme that is a constant in *Beastars* and in power dynamics in general.

1.5. Methodology

As this dissertation will be, in essence, a textual analysis, there is no need for ordinary forms of data collection. Instead, this dissertation will adopt a qualitative, hermeneutic, content analysis approach through a subjective interpretive lens that will utilize a blended approach that makes use of close reading, semiotic (predominantly of the Saussurean tradition), and critical discourse analysis methodologies.

This approach is adopted whenever committing to textual literary analysis as there is little recourse outside of simply reading and analysing the text. While this text is technically a manga, which does also make use of visual representation as well as written dialogue, it can still be viewed as a traditional “text,” albeit with some caveats. To ensure that there is no confusion in visuals versus writing, the utmost care will be taken to present the world and narrative as accurately as possible during analysis. Furthermore, there is no need to analyse this text from a linguistic perspective as the focus is on a subjective, qualitative response that requires philosophical, sociological, and psychological discussion. It is being used in this analysis because it is the only way to analyse the meanings embedded within a text.

The primary source in question is a fictional text that will be subject to a detailed close reading to uncover aspects related to the beforementioned concepts of meat, sex, and power. Thanks to this, each of these overarching concepts will need to be thoroughly and qualitatively defined and explored.

A close reading will entail reading the text with an eye towards deeper meanings that may not be immediately noticeable on the surface level. This is done because all deeper aspects must be carefully noted, examined, and discussed. This close reading will entail extensive notes

on every pertinent aspect of the text. This close reading will need to be supplemented with a semiotic eye.

Semiotics allows for the analysis of signs within a text that can be related to wider society. The semiotic approach as articulated by de Saussure (2013) will be of primary interest here. However, there are alternatives, elaborations, and additional explanations made by theorists, whose work is also of methodological importance, such as Barthes (1983), Eco (1976), Jakobson (1988a & 1988b), Lodge (1991), Peirce (1991), Chandler (2017), and van Leeuwen (2005).

In general, the semiotic approach will allow for the examination of signifiers, as identified through a close reading, so as to elaborate on and discuss a variety of signified meanings. For instance, the text has a strong focus on meat, and this signifier will allow for a larger discussion of the signified meaning that meat represents in this narrative. It should be noted that semiotic analysis does not necessarily entail direct use of semiotic terms at all times, but rather through a general approach to analysis.

In addition, it may be of benefit, when discussing the “power” aspect of this dissertation, to make use of a critical discourse analysis approach as developed through practise by Foucault, in various texts, such as *History of Madness* (2006), and elaborated on by Fairclough (2010), Taylor (2011), and Lazar (2007).

This methodology effectively entails examining discursive formations to show how they contribute to a hegemonic diffusion of power. For instance, there is a strong discourse in *Beastars* around the dangerousness of carnivores to herbivores, and this discourse, this fundamental belief, is reinforced through the words and actions of both herbivores and carnivores; the herbivores see carnivores as dangerous and this leads the carnivores to internalise this gaze and thereby label themselves as dangerous. This could, in addition, influence their behaviour, as being labelled can lead one to accept and even embrace the label, in a similar sense to labelling theory (Sherry Lynn Skaggs, 2023).

1.6. Analysis Objectives

Anthropomorphic animal media can be used as a way to provide a commentary on human societal issues, prejudices, and so on, and as such, an analysis of a text like *Beastars* can allow

us to comment on and further understand humanity. In this case, the dissertation, as a whole, will focus on, explore, and evaluate the three predominant areas as mentioned in the title: Meat, Sex, and Power: An Analysis of the World of *Beastars*.

Firstly, it should be of note that the subtitle of this dissertation is: “An Analysis of the World of *Beastars*,” and as such, it is not an examination of the central narrative or main characters, but instead of the world in which this plot occurs. The plot itself is a far smaller story within this larger world, a world in which herbivores and carnivores tenuously co-exist with one another. By focusing on the world that exists within this text rather than the central narrative, this analysis will allow for real-world societal discussions that are mirrored or examined in this text. In a sense, it could be labelled an extended thought experiment as it will allow us to further elaborate on concepts that could be applied to our world.

Secondly, the title itself: “Meat, Sex, and Power” reveals the three primary areas of focus that will be analysed. How do each of these aspects intersect with one another? How does meat-eating manifest as power and sex? How does sex find its way into meat and power dynamics? How does power pervade this entire world and regulate the consumption of meat and the proliferation of sexual acts? This then leads to an overarching question of how these are, in some sense, analogous to the real human world.

This is, broadly, the overarching purpose and objective of this analysis. It is intended to show that we can analyse a text, even a seemingly fantastical one, with a view towards reality, what it says about reality and what lessons we may stand to benefit from engaging with the material.

As a qualitative textual content analysis, this research does not operate in the realm of hypotheses and testing, and the ultimate research objectives are, instead, to arrive at an understanding of the text and its wider applicability. Various objectives can be determined with regard to this research.

Firstly, to determine whether meat culture in the world of *Beastars* is, in any way, analogous to the real world, and to evaluate whether there are ethical parallels between the consumption of perceived sentient creatures versus the consumption of what we broadly perceive as non-sentient creatures.

Secondly, to evaluate meat-eating from an ethical standpoint. This will take the form of a *Beastars*- and real-world-oriented discussion.

Thirdly, to evaluate sexual (in the broad sense) themes in the text. Themes with regards to sexual intercourse itself (as there is a discussion of the interspecies morality of the act in the text), gender (as there are broadly masculine and feminine features attributed to entire classes of people, and to determine whether these features present a parallel to the way in which masculinity and femininity are attributed to various genders, races, and classes in reality), and sexuality (as there are a variety of sexually mature characters in the narrative, and their approach to their sexuality can offer parallels to the power relations often inherent in sexual attraction).

Fourthly, to examine the power relations inherent between herbivores and carnivores in the text and how these power relations are analogous to real-world power differences based on various group identities, such as those focused around gendered, racial, and sexual hegemonic authorities.

Lastly, to define several new terms that can be applied more broadly. Namely, the carnivore/herbivore gazes and carnopolitics.

1.7. Key Concepts

There are several other terms worth exploring in this dissertation too, and this is an alphabetical list of some of the most important of those terms:

Absent referent – a concept developed by Carol J. Adams (2010 & 2020). This concept concerns non-human animals and their relationship to the meat humans consume. The animal, upon being dismembered, deanimalised, and consumed as meat, disappears and becomes absent; one does not see the murdered animal, but rather the pristinely presented food product that is the result of their murder.

Carno-Phallogocentrism – a concept developed by Jacques Derrida (2008b:104). This concept concerns the way in which we, as a society, have centred the meat-eating (carno-) male (phallo-) perspective above all other perspectives. This may also be somewhat supplemented with Melanie Joy's (2020) concept of carnism, which societally centres the meat-eating perspective above the non-meat, vegan perspective.

Carnopolitics – a term that I have coined specifically for use in this analysis of *Beastars* (although it could be adapted for use in media that adopts similar themes). A term developed

out of Foucault's "biopolitics" (1978 & 2003b) and Mbembe's "necropolitics" (2019) and is used to describe the way in which, in *Beastars*, the bodies of carnivores are both controlled and monitored (thereby alluding to biopolitics) and how the dead bodies of herbivores are then siphoned away for consumption by carnivores (thereby alluding to necropolitics).

Entangled empathy – a concept developed by Lori Gruen (2015). This concept posits that we, meaning all creatures that live on earth, are entangled with one another. Therefore, this entanglement allows us to see how all earth-beings are connected with one another; a realisation that necessitates a deeper empathetic connection and mutual care for all living things. Various other concepts will also be explored to further elaborate on this general idea.

Discourse – a concept developed by Michel Foucault that formed much of the basis of his work but was perhaps best formalised in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002:89-90). This concept refers to a specific form of knowledge and power that is expressed through language, and it is, in more basic terms, the specific way in which we discuss/think about a specific topic.

Episteme – a concept developed by Michel Foucault was used throughout Foucault's work but was perhaps best formalised in *The Order of Things* (2005: xxiii-xxiv). This concept refers to a specific period of time in which a specific discourse is considered normalised. We have progressed through several major epistemes throughout human history in which significant changes have occurred with regard to how we have formulated certain forms of knowledge through language.

Gaze (Carnivore/Herbivore) – the baseline concept of the gaze, of a subject rendering a fellow subject into an object through visual perception, has been developed by numerous writers, such as Sartre (2011:478-555), Berger (2008:37), Foucault (2003a:86 & 1995:195-229), Fanon (1967:86-88), Mulvey (1993:116), and hooks (2003). However, I have developed this general concept into two new terms with specific relation to *Beastars*, although they may have a wider application (as will be discussed and elaborated on in the dissertation):

- Carnivore gaze – the way in which a specific gaze, that of looking upon a fellow creature as helpless prey, and how this gaze leads to a heightened sense of fear, distrust, and fatalism in the herbivores who receive said gaze.
- Herbivore gaze – the way in which a specific gaze, that of looking upon a fellow creature as a dangerous predator, and how this gaze leads to a heightened sense of resentment, cultural reaffirmation, and restraint in the carnivores who receive said gaze.

Hegemony – a concept developed by Antonio Gramsci as “cultural hegemony” (1992, 1996 & 2007), but that we will shorten to simply “hegemony” for the purposes of this analysis. This concept is the consensual allowance of power to be wielded by some over others; how power forms part of ideology and influences those with less power to conform to the culture of those with more power.

Performance – this is a term that has been used by several thinkers, notably Judith Butler (1988, 1990 & 2004b). This refers to the way in which we may *perform* certain actions in our lives, such as performing our gender roles. Butler often uses the term “performative,” but this can be a source of contention as it conflicts with performatives as used within speech act theory. For the sake of convenience, “performance” has been used to reduce any potential confusion.

Predation – a somewhat unusual term yet one that is fairly commonly used within the world of *Beastars*. This refers to the act of preying upon someone to consume them, such as being the predator in the predator-prey relationship. Predation, and the act of predating on herbivores, is a central theme within this narrative and world.

1.8. Analysis Structure

Our last point to discuss before we move into the analysis itself is that this dissertation will be structured around five chapters. The first and last chapters serve as an introduction and conclusion while the three central chapters form the base content of the analysis. Chapter 1, which is the chapter currently being read, discusses and introduces the dissertation as a whole. This section provides a review of the literature, a general overview of the methodology, and an explanation of the theoretical framework to be used throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter 2, titled “Meat (and Other Animal Products),” is geared towards a discussion, generally from an ecofeminist and broader animal studies perspective, with regards to the way in which *Beastars* presents the reader with a world filled with carnivore and herbivore characters who live within a state of perpetual disharmony as carnivores continue to crave meat. This chapter will look at ideas surrounding animal welfare, meat itself, the perspective of the consumed, and carnivorous ideology.

Chapter 3, titled “Sex,” entails a discussion, generally from an ecofeminist and traditional feminist perspective, with regards to the way in which *Beastars* presents the reader with a world in which femininity and masculinity are correlatively tied to one another while said gender expression is, generally, disconnected from biological sex. Furthermore, sexual relations between different species, and especially across the carnivore/herbivore divide, are discussed. This chapter will look at ideas surrounding biological sex, gender, sexuality, and sexual intercourse.

Chapter 4, titled “Power,” provides a discussion, generally from postcolonial, Marxist, and critical discourse analysis perspectives, with regards to how *Beastars* presents the reader with a world in which power relations between the hegemonic herbivore class’s political power juxtaposes against the force-oriented power of the carnivore class. This chapter will look at ideas surrounding hegemony, carnopolitics, and the herbivore/carnivore gaze.

Finally, chapter 5 is the conclusion that wraps up the analysis. This is where the dissertation comes to an end. With this final section of the introduction concluded we can, ironically, begin the analysis. The next chapter will introduce and explore the ideas surrounding meat and other animal products as they are used in the world of *Beastars*.

Chapter 2: Meat (and Other Animal Products)

Meat is something that can be found in both our world and the world of *Beastars*. It is a highly pervasive part of both of these worlds, but *Beastars* brings it to the centre of the narrative. For this reason, it becomes an integral aspect of any analysis of this particular fictional world. This chapter of the dissertation examines and explores an array of instances of meat from a variety of perspectives and how they relate to the larger fictional world on display, and how that fictional world may relate to our own.

2.1. The Beggar: Fingers for Food

In the real world, meat is considered by many to be an utterly ordinary fact of life. It is what we eat. We have been eating it for millennia, and we will continue to eat it. However, the ethical strands against meat-eating have grown more prevalent in recent decades. Ethical abstinence from animal products in general has become a wider practice than ever before.

Beastars, as a fictional narrative that involves anthropomorphic animal characters who live in a human-style society, is clearly not the real world. It does, however, present us with an interesting examination of a world where meat and personhood are connected. Personhood tends to remove one from the realm of victim with regards to meat, but in the world of *Beastars*, carnivores and herbivores coexist within the same society. There cannot be consumption of meat without dire ethical and legal ramifications; imagine eating your human neighbour. The same basic logic would apply here.

The beginning of this analysis should coincide with the first presence of meat itself in *Beastars*. The protagonist, Legoshi, does, at one point early in the narrative, restrain himself from eating someone, but that is explored more from an instinctual perspective. There is also a brief expositional mention of it in chapter 6 when Legoshi enters a cafeteria, in which it is explained that meat is a banned food item. However, that is still not the true introduction to this side of the *Beastars* world. Instead, it comes in chapters 22 and 23 when Legoshi, along with a group of carnivore friends, happen to stumble upon a frail herbivore beggar. He slowly lifts

his hands to reveal the existence of multiple price tags hanging from his remaining fingers. If you want to have a bite, you will have to pay.

This is a vicious, violent, and powerful introduction to meat. A world in which meat comes from the corpses of people is a little different to meat coming from the corpses of animals who are hidden from view. In this fictional world, herbivores are meat, but not legally so, and section 2.2 will elaborate on the grey legality of this practice, but for now, it would be best to focus on what this means for this world.

If a majority of the population is meat and the rest is meat-eater, then those who eat meat must create a dualistic viewpoint of the world. Plumwood (2003) and Gaard (1997:117-118) elaborate on the ways in which dualisms are created. This occurs in the world of *Beastars* too, albeit adjusted to its version of reality. According to Plumwood (2003, 48-55), there must be a backgrounding of knowledge, wherein the carnivores must deny the idea that meat and people are one and the same, they must hyperseparate themselves from the herbivores and perceive themselves as something entirely separate. They must then define themselves in relation to meat; they are only carnivores because they eat herbivores, and so they must then objectify and instrumentalise the herbivores so as to render them into something Other, before finally perceiving themselves as a dominant category above the herbivores; they must be superior. The dual reality must be upheld or else the carnivores will need to acknowledge the wrongs of their philosophy towards the fellow people they cannibalise.

However, there must be a system in place to justify this superiority, this separation. In the real world, sexism must exist to reinforce the binary of men above women, and racism must exist to separate white people from people of colour. In the world of *Beastars*, there must be something to justify it, and while the series never uses this term, Joy's concept of carnism works well here (2020:30-40).

This concept exists within our world and is defined, by Joy, as the opposite of vegan philosophy. This is the philosophy that justifies meat consumption in the face of the claim that consuming the corpses of non-human animals is unethical. Carnism is needed to maintain the perceived reality that eating meat is normal, natural, and necessary (Joy, 2020:95).

In the real world, various justifications are made with regard to eating meat, such as how non-human animals are less intelligent, which has been disputed (de Waal, 2016), or it could be that animals have no emotions, which has also been disputed (Bekoff, 2007:25-56 & de Waal, 2019:132-184). It is also claimed that some creatures, like fish, cannot feel, so it is

perfectly fine to eat them – except that they can feel (Braithwaite, 2010). One could also simply claim that to eat meat is natural, and we are animals and so, therefore, it is morally allowable for us to eat meat (Lestel, 2016:xxi), but that, firstly, commits the naturalistic fallacy¹ in terms of ethics by claiming that what is natural is therefore morally permissible, and, secondly, presumes that humans do not have the choice to go against that supposedly biologically-wired nature (proof against which would be the existence of vegans, although vegans are also not “natural,” but can serve as a response to this meat-centric claim).

Aside from Lestel’s arguments, none of these justifications can be used by carnivores in *Beastars*. Herbivores are people. There is no denying that. They go to the same schools, they work alongside each other at the office, and so on. They are not animals as we perceive them in our world, they are simply animalised humans. This means that carnism alone cannot be enough, similar to how it is not enough in our world for most meat-eaters.

This is where Carol J. Adams’s term “the absent referent” becomes crucial (Adams, 2010:66-67). The absent referent is the semiotic removal of the animal from the meat. Animals must die to become meat, they must then be defined as meat, and the animals themselves must become something merely metaphorical, a loose signifier (Adams, 2010, 66-67). It was explained succinctly by Coetzer in his dissertation on the motif of meat in South African literature: “The absent referent is centrally about stripping animals of their subjectivity. It involves representing animals – specifically their dismembered body parts in the form of meat – without recognising them as holistic, significant subjects” (Coetzer, 2015:52).

The absent referent reduces an animal to meat. It is not an animal. It is simply a steak. However, the beggar, who is cleverly positioned before the introduction of the black market, exposes the absent referent. Those fingers that you can buy are attached to a living, breathing person. If you want to eat them, you need to acknowledge the person you are disfiguring for your own appetite. The black market, for those who are incapable of killing and eating someone or those who do not wish to pay a beggar to eat his fingers, is the place in which the reclaiming and exposure of the absent referent becomes more prominent. It is also how most carnivores consume meat in *Beastars*. This will be explored further in section 2.2.

The carnivores, as can be seen through this simple interaction, need to separate themselves from the herbivores if they want to perceive themselves as possessing an ethical life. It is very

¹ The naturalistic fallacy refers to the fallacious argument that something termed “natural” must, by its very nature, be good (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012).

similar to the way in which we, as humans, need to separate ourselves from non-human animals. We need to think of ourselves as superior beings, but our biological husks are full of problems (Lents, 2018), from unnecessary bones (37-41) to our allergies (146-152). We also want to believe that animal behaviour and human behaviour are distinct from each other, but, as Lents (2016) points out, many animals play (17-48), some can perceive unfairness and justice (48-68), some have empathy (69-91), some grieve (160-196), and the list goes on. We want to believe that only we can do these disparate things, but that is not true. According to Balcombe's work (2006), many animals can feel pleasure in play (69-89), in food (90-105), in sex (106-124), and in many other areas that are generally perceived as distinctly human spaces. Even Darwin noted the lack of superiority of the human in the animal kingdom (Darwin, 1976:72-81). As Birke (1995:51) states: "Humans are indeed unique, but so are dogs, ostriches, and parrots, or anything else."

Neither humans in the real world nor carnivores in *Beastars* are superior to their fellow creatures, yet humans often tend to assert their superiority by literally consuming the flesh of others. For humans, we perceive it as meat-eating, but for the carnivores, it is cannibalism, even if they do not wish to acknowledge that that is what it is. The carnivores may, in some ways, be a signifier for humans in general. We see ourselves as above the other animals and so we can consume them, but as has been mentioned before and will be elaborated on later, it is far more complicated than any kind of direct allegory.

It may appear, at times, like it is a stretch to compare real-world humans and the carnivores in *Beastars*, but the connection is not all that difficult. We may have different reasons against eating meat, as cannibalism is significantly more taboo than simply eating the corpses of non-human animals, but this narrative allows us to see ourselves reflected in the mirror of the carnivores. Humans can often be bloodthirsty animals that readily give in to a variety of desires, and it is the carnivores of *Beastars* that are presented in this way rather than the herbivores. This increased level of desire and willingness to pursue our goals may contribute to the superiority that humans feel that they possess.

Another potential reason that we as humans see ourselves as superior (and the same can be said of carnivores) is that we rhetoricise ourselves as separate (in line with the discourse of human exceptionalism). We *want* and *need* to see ourselves as separate and superior, and so we make sure to have a philosophy and language of superiority (Goodale, 2015:26-31).

However, as humans, we can use this rhetoric quite easily, but the carnivores in *Beastars* cannot. You cannot use rhetoric to escape the idea that you are eating an actual person.

Beastars presents us with a narrative that does not hide from meat, as many narratives do, and for this reason, two further quotes by Coetzer are applicable here even if he was specifically discussing South African literature. He states:

While animal flesh is everywhere in our books, it is mostly treated as simply being part of the *mise-en-scène*; an unremarkable aspect of the backdrop. Meat is pervasively depicted as a sanitized and unproblematic part of our cultural surroundings, as normal or quotidian, to the extent that the animals whence it came are forgotten. Animal subjects – who, as demonstrated above are necessarily put through great suffering in the process of becoming meat – are disconnected from these depictions of meat (2015:25).

And secondly:

Ultimately, while meat is so readily infused with a diversity of meanings in South African literature, the most obvious and intrinsic one – the fact of animal death and animal suffering – is the one most often elided or ignored (2015:28).

This is not the case in *Beastars*. It is not a part of the background. It is front and centre for all to see. *Beastars* does not hide the bloody underbelly of meat consumption. It metaphorically turns meat-eating on its back to be exposed to all.

We should not see ethics surrounding animals as being particularly distinct from human ethics, as they are not unrelated to one another (Midgley, 1984:9-10), and the same could be said of animal narratives. In the real world, eating meat may be unethical in the sense of harming sentient beings, but it can also be perceived as bad because it causes environmental destruction (Carson, 2002, Gruen, 2011: 87-89 & Lappé, 2010:39-51) and public health emergencies (Gruen, 2011: 89-91). Furthermore, it is uneconomical (Gruen, 2011: 92) and wasteful (Moore Lappé, 1991:108). These are not issues in *Beastars*, and they are never explored in the narrative, but that does not mean that a narrative like this does not have a lot to say about our relationship with meat.

The following three sections are primarily focused on the knowledge that, in the world of *Beastars*, meat consumption is clearly and unambiguously morally wrong, but from section 2.5 onwards, everything becomes far more complicated.

2.2. The Black Market: The Sale of Meat

If the beggar is the shocking revelation of the absent referent and the enforcement of the reality of meat, then where is the absent referent exposed? It is exposed in the black market. The black market is a place for carnivores to go when they feel they need to eat meat but do not want to acquire it for themselves through violent means. For humans, maintaining the absent referent is relatively easy, but not for the carnivores. In *Beastars*, the black market is a place where carnivores can relieve their urges. In the narrative, the beggar is positioned directly before the introduction of the black market, and in chapter 23, Bill, the masculine, meat-affirming tiger character, informs Legoshi that the black market keeps the carnivores from killing people out in the wider world; it is a necessary evil.

In chapter 24, Gohin, the psychologist panda character, informs us that the meat from the black market is not harvested from living herbivores. Instead, it is from hospitals and funeral homes. These corpses were already dead. This implies an immediate grey morality because no one was intentionally killed for this meat. There are those who hunt and are addicted to meat and those who profit off and use meat as a signifier of their authority (explored in sections 2.3 and 2.4), but the majority of the carnivore population simply feel that they need something to satisfy their carnivorous nature. These are the carnivores who do not want to kill people; they simply want to eat what they crave.

The carnivores want to see meat as an abstract term that is utterly divorced from the animal that died for it; they, like many humans, want to ignore the subjective individuality of the being who died so they can get a meal, as Adams (2018:5-8) argues to be the case of most humans' perspectives of meat. The carnivores in *Beastars* want to suppress those desires.

However, the black market is also home to predatory practices that sever carnivore parts for food (chapter 80), a fur market that involves hunting down those with desirable fur (*Beast Complex*, chapter 10), and a livestock trade so carnivores can eat a living person who has been raised in captivity; these livestock animals live in appalling conditions that are comparable to livestock conditions of real-world non-human animals (chapters 33 & 158). Furthermore, the black market is ruled by various criminal gangs; it is a crime-ridden and extremely dangerous place (chapter 156), but this is further explored in section 2.4.

The black market is a place where crime is rampant, and where animals, both living and dead, are trafficked, as Adams would put it (2018:97-116), for consumption. This takes a toll on the herbivores who are forced to live and work there (chapters 64-65), and those who are forced to work there suffer under terrible conditions that can, at times, be considered similar to the conditions that can be faced by those working in the meat industry in the real world (LeDuff, 2003:183-198).

The carnivores conceal their visits to the black market because it is shameful. There is inherent shame in meat-eating, and, much like the real world, few who eat meat want to discuss where their food comes from (Adams, 2010:96). The carnivores feel veiled shame in eating meat much like many humans in the real world feel veiled shame in eating meat (but the human instance of veiled shame is generally only seen after confrontation about the origins of meat, because many humans who eat meat do not wish to know the gristly details of the lives that were ended for their meal). This is why we separate, we create the absent referent, we do not wish to speak plainly, which is something that Midgley advocates when discussing meat (2002:xxix). What does it mean to speak plainly with regard to meat? It is to call it what it is: deanimalised animal flesh intended for consumption.

Most carnivores in *Beastars* (as well as meat-eating humans) agree that there is an ethical line one does not cross in terms of how to live one's life, such as not taking the life of another person. In the real world, this requires the removal of animals from such ethical lines (Baier, 1985:216), but the same is not true of the world of *Beastars*. They feel, despite a lack of biological necessity, that they need to eat meat, and that necessitates consuming the flesh of people, but the black market allows them to pretend that they have not crossed that line. They have not killed anyone.

However, this illusion is shattered when an uninitiated subject enters the scene. This can be shown by relating it to the real world because when a human child first learns what meat is, they tend to be disgusted, but “because of the dominant discourse which approves of meat eating, we are forced to take the knowledge that we are consuming dead animals and accept it, ignore it, neutralize it, repress it” (Adams, 2010:241). The same applies to the carnivores in *Beastars*. They had to learn that meat was fine to eat from somewhere, because “culture has to come from somewhere, and there is no supernatural being called Society to impose it. Society is past and present people” (Midgley, 2002:203). Culture, and the ethics associated with it,

must come from somewhere, and it is passed down through familial lines by those who do not want to question it (Baier, 1985:208).

This is why Legoshi, who serves as the primary protagonist, acts as a blank-slate character (and therefore a strong stand-in for the human reader). He is a carnivore, yet he does not fall into the dominant carnivore culture. He is, instead, disgusted by the black market. He is, in this sense, signified as a child-like character, and, as Adams (2010:106) states:

Children, fresh observers of the dominant culture, raise issues about meat eating using a literal viewpoint. One part of the socialization process to the dominant culture is the encouragement of children to view the death of animals for food as acceptable.

He cannot see it as acceptable. He sees himself as being part of the world, the same world as the herbivores, a world distinct and perhaps superior to the world of the carnivores. He is not detached from it. He sees himself and them as one and the same. A viewpoint that Midgely encourages (2002:135-138). A viewpoint that is not shared by many other meat-eaters, both in *Beastars* and in the real world. Most simply see meat as a desirable item. One that could be argued, from an external perspective, as a form of narcotic.

2.3. The Hunger: Meat Consumption as a Narcotic

Humans do not require meat in their diets. It is not something that we truly *need* for full nutrition, but there are fellow creatures who do require it, such as various cats and other hypercarnivores. However, *Beastars* makes it abundantly clear that the carnivores do not *need* meat, they simply crave it. They want it, they desire it, they feel compelled towards it.

The carnivores are able to subsist on soy products, as many human vegetarians/vegans do, but the difference is that the carnivores do seemingly need additional protein from animal-derived sources. These sources are technically voluntarily provided, such as eggs and milk, although there are complications with both these animal by-products (see sections 2.5 and 2.6).

However, despite there being no technical necessity for meat, the carnivores in *Beastars* still possess a hunting instinct. They want to hunt; they want to rip and tear into meat. In addition, meat has a very real impact on them that meat does not have on humans, such as acting as a performance enhancer of sorts when someone may need a bit of a push (chapter 14), or

carnivore athletes who need to perform in their peak condition (chapter 63). Even a central herbivore protector-type character in the latter half of the narrative morbidly uses the corpses of carnivores to fertilise his agricultural setup (chapter 117); it is implied that it allows one to possess more strength and power. Even Legoshi consumes the foot of a friend (see section 3.1), an entirely voluntary act within the narrative, and he becomes stronger and more capable because of it (chapter 96).

The carnivores, much like us humans, do not want to admit their own ferocity (Midgley, 2002:22). As was explored in the previous section, consuming meat is shameful even if it is something perceived as necessary. Most consume already deceased meat, but the hunt is different. The hunt, to a carnivore or a human, is somewhat akin to a sexual act, as Marti Kheel says (1995:117), the hunt is a tension-filled event that must end with a climax, one akin to an orgasm. However, the idea of hunting as a sexual chase is elaborated on in section 3.1. Here, there will instead be an examination of the idea that the hunt fulfils an addictive need.

A rather interesting essay by Stanescu (2012:27) discusses the concept of a “dark animal studies” that focuses on and highlights the darker side of animal nature from human, non-human, and fictional “animal” perspectives. This is the idea that we should examine the *desire* to consume, the *desire* to hunt, the *desire* to kill. It is satisfying for many, including the carnivores of *Beastars*, to bite down on flesh. It is an enjoyable activity.

Meat-eating is unofficially tolerated in the world of *Beastars* and almost wholly accepted in the real world, but for the carnivores who desire more than only the meat itself, they must go to other avenues. They must hunt and maim, and this orgasmic release of meat-craving desire can become addictive. The narrative explicitly compares this to a drug addiction by showing images of carnivores in withdrawal (chapter 24), a living addict with lessening fur and a jittery temperament (chapter 68), and the advent of blood and bone mixes intended to get young, more ethically minded carnivores hooked on meat (chapter 113). Even Legoshi, the protagonist, goes through withdrawal after consensually consuming the foot of a friend (chapter 101). All these examples from the text illustrate how it is shown to be an addiction on par with real-world narcotics. However, the difference is that narcotics are often synthetic or specially processed chemicals in our world, but in *Beastars* these are made from the blood, flesh, and pain of living beings.

At one point, Legoshi thinks to himself that meat-eating cannot be evil because carnivores are biologically wired to want it, but that they do have a choice in whether or not they give in

to their desires (chapter 116). However, those who do hunt and consume others, such as the central figure of Riz, who ate a classmate, do not often see it as an addiction, and they instead attempt to justify it through spiritual language (chapter 77), but the shame is still present (chapter 84). Those who consume meat feel the need to try to justify their consumption of it.

Val Plumwood (2012:9-22) was an ecofeminist writer who, when still young, almost became a meal for a crocodile. She was canoeing and a crocodile snatched her and subjected her to multiple death rolls before giving up and releasing her. Her perspective on her own body changed as a result. She knew she was made of meat. For herbivores in *Beastars*, every day may be like that one terrible day Val Plumwood experienced. They know they are meat to their friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Living that kind of life is the perfect nesting ground for less scrupulous carnivores than Legoshi who want to maintain that kind of power over herbivores.

2.4. The Shishigumi: The Ones in Charge

In the world of *Beastars*, carnivores are generally far stronger than herbivores. In the real world, some of the physically strongest animals are actually herbivores, such as elephants or rhinoceroses, and while these animals are also physically capable in *Beastars*, the narrative conveniently neglects to focus on them in any real capacity. It renders the binary of the carnivore/herbivore system too complex when too many creatures cross that binary. So, for the purposes of this analysis, it would be best to operate under the presumption that carnivores are physically stronger than herbivores, and this gives them a sense of power over them. The fourth chapter of this dissertation goes into more detail about power in general, but with regard to meat and the power of the carnivores, it would be beneficial to consider this here.

Some carnivores want to use their physical strength, as well as their meat diet, as a form of power over herbivores. Meat itself becomes an object and a signifier of this authority. Those who consume the flesh of others are above those who do not, and they are especially above those they consume. Some do not wish to have this power over herbivores, such as Legoshi, but some are very interested in maintaining this power, such as the Shishigumi.

Those who want to be above others, to the extent where they will happily consume others, must lack any form of sympathy towards those others even when they claim that this is not the

case, and so their sense of morality will be irrevocably altered to the point where they are capable of killing and devouring another while not considering themselves to be in the wrong; their sense of morality will be fundamentally different and distorted (Baier, 1985:172-173).

This brings us to the question: who are the Shishigumi? They are a gang comprised entirely of lions with their own code of personal and business conduct. They are essentially an organised crime syndicate that facilitates the black market and actively profits from the sale of meat. We should generally not put too much focus on those who would derive profit and power from the suffering of others (Baier, 1985:141-142), but they, and purveyors of suffering in the real world, are too central to the worlds in which they exist to be utterly ignored.

The Shishigumi, in general, rule parts of the black market, but also engage in activities like the kidnapping of live animals to be eaten by them (chapter 34). An integral portion of the first quarter of the narrative entails the leader of the Shishigumi subjecting Haru, the protagonist's love interest, to a perverse combination of sexual assault and eating ritual (chapters 37-41), but this will be explored further in section 3.1.

It is later revealed that the Shishigumi is not the sole gang in the black market, but the others are of little interest as they are hardly part of the bulk of the narrative (chapter 156). What matters is that the Shishigumi use their strength to force their authority, and they do so directly to benefit themselves and no one else. They are capable of doing this, in general, because they do not conform to the more impassioned versions of meat-eating on display in *Beastars*.

While the first leader of the Shishigumi engages in more sexualised meat-eating behaviour, the others do not. They do not act like the meat addicts from the previous section. They are, instead, a more refined form of meat-eater. They do not become jittery, they do not sexualise, or allow meat to overwhelm them. They simply lack the compassion to care, and they even see herbivores, before they have been processed as meat, as an absent referent (Adams, 2007:21-37). They only see the meat, and they use that to hold power over all others.

This is to the point where the Shishigumi are even able to use a live herbivore as if he were a living piece of meat. During the second quarter of the narrative, Louis, the red deer who is a rival turned friend of Legoshi, is made the leader of the Shishigumi solely so that he, as a famous figure in the world of *Beastars*, can lend them respectability (chapters 50-51). They wish to use him to gain even more authority because he can make them appear as if they are not as vicious and dangerous as they are; he is there as a puppet. There are even those in the

Shishigumi who mention how they are excited to be done with the farce, because they want to eat him, although not every member shares this sentiment (chapter 57).

To the Shishigumi, Louis is a means to an end and a walking piece of meat. As Adams states: “All carnivorous animals kill and consume their prey themselves. They see and hear their victims before they eat them. There is no absent referent, only a dead one” (2010:77). They are more than happy to simply use a herbivore, living or dead, for their own ends. However, as this is a narrative, the Shishigumi ultimately come to love Louis and no longer wish to consume him; he is the exception that proves the rule.

Once he has left them, they gain a new leader. This leader shows something rather interesting: how easy it is for this power to be stripped away. Melon, the central antagonist for the second half of the narrative, is a violent, psychopathic hybrid animal (see section 3.8). After he becomes their leader, he acts brutally towards his new subordinates, and he also limits the amount of meat they can eat even while he eats meat in front of them (chapters 131-132).

By removing the meat from their diets, he has removed the signifier of their power. He has removed what they use to justify themselves to themselves. They lose a piece of their identity when they can no longer consume meat, and through this, their power is shown to be fragile. It can be lost. They need meat to be the Shishigumi. Without the power to eat meat, the Shishigumi lose their capacity to intimidate and control others. To not consume is to respect, to respect is to lose that power.

This depiction of meat as something that both can and cannot be used to signify power throws the supposed power provided by animal products into disarray. This is a theme that will be further explored in the following sections of this chapter.

2.5. Eggs: An Optimistic Story of Capital

This is where the complications start. There is a quote by Mary Midgley that is applicable here: “Animals are not machines; one of my main concerns is to combat this notion. Actually only machines are machines” (2002:XXX). This is a clear response to the Cartesian view of the non-human animal as biological automata (Descartes, 1976:60-61), nothing but a machine that we, therefore, cannot hold any obligations towards. Leading from this, we need to consider the short side-story within *Beastars* about a chicken character named Legom.

Legom's story is told within one chapter, chapter 20, and it shows how this young chicken sells her eggs as a part-time job while studying. It brings in some extra money for her, and many chickens do this on the side, but Legom takes it far more seriously than the others. She makes sure to get sufficient sleep and exercise, and she maintains a healthy diet. She wants her eggs to be the best eggs they can be. She also secretly spies on Legoshi, who eats her eggs on the day they are on sale. He loves her eggs but is unaware of where they come from. One day, Legoshi stops buying her eggs and Legom becomes distraught, she loses an aspect of her identity. However, she discovers that the shop owner who sells her eggs simply switched the days her eggs were sold so that they could be available on a busier day because of how popular they are. She becomes content in the knowledge that Legoshi will eventually realise the switch and will return to enjoying her eggs. The end.

A simple, short narrative within the larger whole; one that may immediately lead one towards a Marxist interpretation as it involves paid labour. However, while there could be something to say with regards to the shopkeeper *technically* keeping the surplus value of Legom's labour, in terms of "The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value" chapter in *Capital Volume I* (Marx, 2016c), or while there could be a focus on how certain animals within this world, like chickens, can earn passive income by selling what their bodies naturally produce, that will not be the focus here. Such a discussion would be better suited to the next section. Instead, the focus will be on a deontological response: is the sale of eggs ethically right?

It would be best to first examine animals and deontological ethics. According to Kant (1976:122-123), animals exist to be used and we have no direct duties to them. They are not worthy of any additional rights. Academics like Joseph Rickaby (1976:179-180) and D.G. Ritchie (1976:181-184) concur by claiming that animals cannot have understanding and so cannot have rights. We do not even have indirect duties to them.

This viewpoint was heavily contested by several academics, most thoroughly by Tom Regan and later Christine Korsgaard. Regan's approach (1983), in general, focused on the applicability of negative rights to animals, such as us having the duty to not harm them. Korsgaard (2018), on the other hand, focused on disputing various aspects of Kant's work to claim that he, as the founder of deontology, was incorrect in his application of his own approach with regard to non-human animals; he was wrong about what he had written.

These two academics are clearly discussing non-human animals in the real world, and the applicability of them would not be relevant to the world of *Beastars*. If there was a world like

the one in *Beastars*, the various animals would be perceived as people who deserve full positive and negative rights, and even Kant would not likely have been able to deny them their rights as they are effectively humans with fur, scales, or feathers.

However, while modern adherents of deontology, like Regan and Korsgaard, would never use that ethical framework to justify discrimination, it has been used for that purpose in the past. It always depends on who it is that determines what is a “right” and what is not. This may be labelled as a misuse of the categorical imperative², but it may be a legitimate alternative way of viewing the issue. In the world of *Beastars*, if a carnivore fundamentally sees herbivores as lesser than carnivores, then they may see a categorical imperative like “thou shalt not kill a fellow animal” as non-applicable. If a carnivore decides that a herbivore does not fall within the category of “animal,” but is instead “meat,” then the entire ethical system falls apart from that perspective. This is, of course, a poor application of this viewpoint, but one that those who adopt a “might is right” mentality might adopt (and there are many carnivores throughout *Beastars* who do adopt this basic viewpoint).

One could claim that someone who does this may be applying deontological ethical categories in an arbitrary manner, and it could be argued that Kant did so as he specifically excluded animals from his ethical framework by claiming that they were not rational, autonomous ethical agents. Many others have followed along these lines to uphold certain hierarchical ways of thinking. This is something that is of specific focus in the abovementioned book by Korsgaard (2018). This is especially explored along racial lines in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. However, the fact that some can simply decide which categories count, and which do not, can throw deontology into some level of disarray. Who can decide on the universal applicability of any imperative? If we state that we should not kill and that that should be a categorical imperative that is never broken, then does that apply to those we kill in self-defence or by mistake? Does it apply to non-human animals? If so, which are excluded? Dogs would likely be included, we cannot kill a dog, but a cow? As a vegan, one may be against the slaughter of cows, but what about cockroaches? What about a tardigrade that could be accidentally killed while cleaning a surface these microscopic creatures may occupy for a time? What counts as “killing,” and where does the definition become so stretched that it loses all meaning? Does “thou shalt not kill” become “thou shalt not kill that which is capable of

² The categorical imperative is a central concept in Kantian deontological ethics which refers to a kind of rule that is universally applicable, such as murder being unethical (Kant, 1997:25-26).

experiencing pain” or “thou shalt not kill that which is capable of feeling emotion?” The deontological experiment starts to lose its applicability when it is wholly applied.

Others, like Donovan (1993:169-170), criticise deontological perspectives like Regan’s because they focus entirely on rationality, and through rationality we can exclude certain groups. If, for instance, we say that we cannot kill intelligent life, then what happens to human infants, the mentally disabled, or those with brain injuries? Do they stop being worthy of our ethical protection simply because they are less intelligent? This is the argument from marginal cases, which was brought to prominence by Singer (2015:48), and it is a basic concept in animal studies, because defining those with “moral worth” as requiring attributes like rationality, emotion, or the ability to feel pleasure, may exclude even humans on the periphery.

Let us, at last, return to Legom’s story. Many who read this story may see something wrong in it as there are no exact parallels to humans selling what their bodies produce, although, a comparison could be made to a human “selling their body” in terms of sex work, but the comparison is not exact as the human body does not *produce* something that can be readily sold in a typical sense. For this reason, selling your own eggs for profit is a strange thing, but that is because humans are not egg-laying machines, or at least not edible egg-laying “machines.” There are humans who can sell their eggs, but they are not intended for eating, and therefore, they are not considered to be in the same category. Some non-human animals are, in a sense, the machines that Midgley denies. So, Legom will naturally produce eggs and there is no pain for her when laying or selling them. Eggs are unfertilised and so do not contain a living creature.

According to Kant’s categorical imperative, if we can claim something to be universally applicable, then it can be allowable? If we were to consider Legom’s story, can we safely say that it is entirely ethical to sell one’s own unfertilised eggs for profit? Perhaps. However, it does depend on where that profit goes. The next section will explore that issue, but in this case, Legom does receive the near-full benefit of the sale of her labour, if it can be called that in this instance. Is it ethically and morally allowable? Can we universalise this to all others? May we sell our eggs for profit?

A deeper Marxist analysis could be explored here, although the text of *Beastars* does not provide as much information as would be preferable to perform a thorough analysis of the capitalistic elements of this side narrative within the larger text. There will be some additional elaboration in this direction in the next section of this analysis, but as capitalism does not

present much of a role in *Beastars* in general, it may be best to leave an examination like this for a separate investigation.

This is a complicated case that, because of its otherworldliness, exists more as a thought experiment. The next section is far less complicated from a deontological perspective as it involves overt exploitation, but perhaps another ethical theory would be able to justify it.

2.6. Milk: A Pessimistic Story of Capital

We must return to the Mary Midgley quote from the section above: “Animals are not machines; one of my main concerns is to combat this notion. Actually only machines are machines” (Midgley, 2002:XXX). Legom’s egg production was an aspect of her identity, and it was mostly voluntary, provided we do not consider unconscious societal factors that connected what she produced to her sense of self-worth, but the same cannot be said of the soon-to-be-discussed short narrative within *Beastars* about milk. However, it would be best to first consider real-world milk production.

Dairy cows are subjected to terrible conditions, such as separating them from their calves (Gaard, 2017:56-57), selectively breeding and altering them through gene refinement and artificial insemination (Wicks, 2018:54-61), restricting their movement, and subjecting them to overproduction that can leave them bloated and unfit with inflamed mammary glands that cannot even accommodate their own children (Wicks, 2018:62-67). All of this is also, of course, big business (Wicks, 2018:52-53). Until now, the way in which meat is “produced” in *Beastars* differs in many ways from the real world, but that does not apply here.

In chapter 102, there is a dairy factory in which cows are employed as milk producers, and they work in cramped conditions while attached to machines that hurt them. In addition, because these particular cows are older, working-class cows, they are forced to take drugs that increase their production so that they can attempt to match factories that employ younger cows. These drugs cause side effects and these general conditions are, quite obviously, reminiscent of real-world dairy farming conditions.

This combines general animal advocacy as well as Marxist labour critiques. These cows are subjected to terrible working conditions, they are exploited, and they lose all the surplus value of their labour to the snow leopard managers and owners who run the dairy factory (Marx,

2016c:1492-1885). This is, however, where the Marxist aspects end. There is not enough information here to persist with an analysis in line with *Capital Volume II* (2016d) or *Volume III* (2016e), or even with *The Communist Manifesto* (2016a) in any particularly meaningful sense.

These cows are clearly exploited by capitalist carnivores for profit, but this discussion, instead, in line with the previous section, examines this from an ethical standpoint. In this case, this section will analyse this issue from a utilitarian perspective.

Utilitarianism, as developed by Jeremy Bentham (2000) and John Stuart Mill (2009), effectively entails a form of calculus based on pleasure and/or suffering. Does the pleasure or goodness from a certain act outweigh the suffering caused by it? For instance, a surgery will lead to significant pain, but it is generally seen as entirely ethical for a doctor to cut someone open with a sharp blade and remove organs, so long as the endpoint of this action is a desired outcome, a positive outcome. Does the good outweigh the bad? It is essentially a cost-benefit analysis applied to moral decisions.

These original two thinkers were also quite sympathetic to non-human animals. Mill defended Bentham when utilitarianism was criticised for its possible allowance of the ethical consideration of animals (1976:131-1032). It was also Bentham who made a statement about non-human animals that was considered so powerful that animal advocates have used it ever since: “The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*” (Bentham, 1976:130).

Peter Singer quoted these words in his quintessential work *Animal Liberation* (2015:36) in which he used utilitarianism to explicitly explore animal welfare concerns. Much of the text is concerned with exploring what we do to non-human animals, and so it is often considered to be an introductory text for those becoming acquainted with animal welfare in general. However, the text also provides a utilitarian approach that questions whether our use of animals can be justified.

Does a human’s pleasure in the consumption of meat outweigh the suffering that that animal was forced to experience because of that human’s desires? Can we really justify the use of animals in cosmetic experimentation? Is it ethical to pour undiluted shampoo into a rabbit’s eye to see how bad the damage can be? Within Singer’s approach, these are obviously not allowable (unless the positives can definitively be seen to outweigh the negatives), although he does go into significantly more depth about when such things may or may not be justifiable.

However, as Donovan (1993:170-173) points out, this approach can be flexible and therefore used to justify animal experimentation for other purposes. If the “pleasure” of being cured of cancer outweighs the suffering of the animals that received the many drug trials required to bring a treatment to market, then that experimentation is conditionally justified. One could even justify vivisection as it contributes to total human knowledge, and is that not more important than the life of the comparatively few animals that had to be tortured to death for that knowledge?

We can rationalise our way to seeing it as entirely ethically allowable from an abstract theoretical perspective, but is it ethical in terms of the standard, concrete usage of the term? Is it acceptable to do what may be compared to torturing animals for the benefit of humans? This is where we must now return to the chapter of *Beastars* that opened this section: the dairy cows and their terrible working conditions.

There is an aspect of this short narrative within the broader *Beastars* narrative that was not discussed before, and that is how it ends. There is generally resolution to any standard narrative, although there are narratives, especially in the postmodern tradition, that defy this. However, *Beastars*, while uncommon in its presentation, is fairly standard as a narrative. Therefore, the fact that this dairy factory does not see a systemic improvement, or any kind of abolition is unusual. Instead, there is an individualised response that changes nothing.

There is a major category of figures in the setting of *Beastars*, the *Beastars* themselves, and the Sublime *Beastar* above all of them. This figure is effectively meant to be a symbol and a force for good. In practice, this means he is akin to a high-level police officer who settles issues between herbivores and carnivores. He, in disguise, goes to this dairy factory and confronts the carnivore owners. However, instead of ending anything, he gives the owners money to improve the facilities and to get the cow workers off the drugs they have been forced to take.

This means that this figure for justice does not enact it. Instead, he acts in a similar capacity to someone like Temple Grandin (2018:1-6). He wants to improve these terrible conditions rather than dismantle them. It is better to lessen the suffering than to attempt to end it entirely, because to end it completely would be to upset the status quo, and utilitarianism is often an instrument to maintain the status quo. It can be used subversively, but we must work towards the greater good, must we not?

Under utilitarianism, what happens to those dairy cows can be argued as permissible because the carnivores in *Beastars* need/want the milk they produce. The pleasure of the carnivores is

more important than the suffering of the cows who must work in appalling conditions to provide them with the milk they desire. However, this is only because the cows do not die. As soon as they die, a line has been crossed in the world of *Beastars*.

In the real world, humans can justify their consumption of milk for similar reasons along utilitarian lines. The good generated for humans can be seen as higher than the suffering caused to the non-human animals in question. One of the reasons for this could be seen in the prevalence of vegetarian versus vegan diets. The former generally allows for milk while the latter does not. Milk still involves the use of non-human animals, but it does not generally involve their deaths, and so to those who are not well-versed in the realities of the dairy industry, this can appear far less damaging than the deaths required in the meat industry. It can *appear* as if the positives of the milk that comes from the cows outweigh the negatives, but this does come from a general lack of understanding of the conditions faced by dairy cows. The same could be said of the carnivores in *Beastars*. They may not even consider the conditions or, if they do, they may see said conditions as acceptable within the context of employment.

2.7. The Fertilised Egg: Choosing to Do Good

Do the desires of those who enact suffering, even if unconsciously, matter more than the actual suffering of those who must provide for those desires? According to utilitarianism, it depends, and according to deontology, it depends on how you define the subjects and objects that are under discussion. However, another short, single narrative within *Beastars* may shine a light on this.

Chapter 155 primarily involves Bill, the beforementioned masculine, meat-affirming tiger character. In this chapter, he has his lunch, as usual, and cracks an egg over it. This is a seemingly common occurrence for carnivores. However, a very uncommon thing then occurs: the egg he cracks is fertilised, and a prematurely formed chicken pops out of it. In that instant, he considers what to do. These chance occurrences are obviously not all that common, but does that mean that he should be able to simply eat this now-living creature?

He is torn, but before he can make his decision, another character enters the room entirely at random. This character is Pina, a herbivore, and he immediately stands over Bill and asks

whether he is going to eat this living bird. Bill does not. Instead, he, Pina, and a friend named Aoba raise the chicken for a week. Once it is properly formed, they bring it to the authorities.

In the aftermath of this experience, Bill states that he will not eat chicken again. The others tell him that he should abandon meat altogether. He is not quite willing to commit to such a change, but this experience may have planted the seed that would eventually blossom into abstinence from meat. This is never revealed and is instead left to us to consider.

This small experience that this man had was enough to change an aspect of his life. He learnt compassion for this creature, and when he saw that the chick looked at him with no fear in its eyes, he knew that he could never eat one again. He had seen that it was alive. It was like him. It was not meat. It was instead a creature worthy of care and compassion. He had learnt a new virtue.

Virtue ethics was not as in vogue in the modern era as ethical theories like deontology, considering the prevalence of deontology in global ethical systems like the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, but it persists as a tradition descended, perhaps most significantly in the Western canon, from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1984), and it has seen a resurgence in recent decades through the work of figures like Alasdair MacIntyre (2007). In general, this viewpoint posits that one must learn virtues to become a virtuous person and achieve human flourishing, as one cannot simply be virtuous or flourish. It takes work and effort.

While the following section's ethical framework is typically not compared to virtue ethics, it can be seen as a form of it. Compassion and care may come naturally to some, but not to most. It is something that must be learnt, and so the feminist tradition in the ethic of care could be seen as a form of virtue ethics in how it is meant to be more contextual and situational while being oriented around the virtue of care (Donovan & Adams, 2007:2).

2.8. The Burial: Meat as a Person

Correct burial methods tend not to be an aspect of ethical theories, as ethical theories generally focus on those who are alive, but there tends to be a moral viewpoint of the correct and incorrect way to dispose of a body. We do not usually see burial as "disposing of a body," but that is what it is in the plainest, most unemotive terms. Therefore, the correct disposal of a corpse is

tied to ethical systems even if it is not typically discussed. We tend to believe, for instance, that it is disrespectful and/or blatantly unethical to eat a human corpse, yet it is perfectly fine to do so with the corpse of a non-human animal. Even satire about eating humans is often frowned upon (Swift, 2013). Why is this the case?

The impetus for this entire discussion, with its strong focus on ethics, arises from events in a single chapter, and a single set of events that are never repeated. In chapter 66, Legoshi is training himself to withstand the smell of meat so that he can more effectively handle the effects of the black market on his carnivore mind. He sits with a large chunk of meat and must refrain from attempting to eat it. He adopts a more meditative method for denying his desires, and, with time, he loses his desires to the point where he can touch meat without wanting to devour it. It is at the end of this training that he does something of note.

He has the realisation that this meat was once a person, and as a person, they deserve to be buried. He does not want them simply to rot away or to fall to the fate that meat typically befalls in *Beastars* (and in the real world). As Carol J. Adams states: “(...) meat eaters bury animals in their own bodies” (Johnson & Thomas, 2013:123). Legoshi does not want this body, this corpse, to be buried within the body of another. He believes that it should be treated as if it was the corpse of a person; it needs to be properly buried.

What does it mean to bury something? To bury something is to respect the now lifeless corpse. It is to know that it should not simply be consumed. This is, of course, entirely irrational, and often incorporates spiritual components. However, all bodies are generally eaten (aside from specific human instances like cremation). They may not be eaten by a large animal or a human, but they are devoured by bacteria, worms, and insects. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the consumption of flesh as almost all flesh is ultimately consumed by something. This means that burials are not rational actions, they are emotive responses. A corpse is not a person. It is an object, but we have reverence for certain corpses over others.

This is why rationality is not the answer to our ethical quandaries. Midgley decried how emotionality has been demonised in ethics (1984:33-44) and Plumwood criticised the heavy reliance of thinkers like Peter Singer and Tom Regan on rationality as a grounding principle for ethical theories regarding animals (2005:143-166). This does not mean that rationality must be discarded, as it is an immensely useful aspect of moral and non-moral life, but it should not be viewed as the sole arbiter of anything.

For this reason, it may be preferable to consider alternatives to deontological and utilitarian ethical theories. This does not mean that they should be disregarded, but rather that uncritical adherence should not be paid towards them in favour of the possibility of alternative approaches. This is why a different approach should be interrogated, which does not mean that it is a system without flaws, but rather a fresher approach. However, to understand this approach, it may be best to consider first a variety of viewpoints that are often seen as unrelated yet espouse similar views.

In African philosophy, the concept of *ubuntu* means the recognition of humanity within humans, to understand others as simultaneously singular selves and collective beings, although this theoretical concept *can* be used to exclude non-human animals (Horsthemke, 2010:125-127). There is no reason that this viewpoint cannot be extended towards animals even if it has traditionally not been extended to them. This viewpoint is inherently an empathetic/sympathetic view with regard to seeing all as part of the whole.

Empathy has been viewed as a grounding for some moral ways of thinking for millennia, and Lori Gruen developed her concept of “entangled empathy” by combining empathy and the “entanglements” that she identifies, such as the way in which our lives are inherently connected to one another’s; what you do can affect me (Gruen, 2015:42-81). A simple way to see these entanglements is to consider something like the global economy or climate change. Clothing is created using labour from around the world before it is shipped, and mass pollution in one part of the world can affect a country on the other side of the world. We are inherently enmeshed in each other’s lives; we are entangled with one another. Therefore, to empathise truly, we must understand and consider these entanglements.

There are issues with this, as these entanglements are extremely pervasive and all-encompassing. It can lead one to become morally lazy by simply neglecting these hard truths (Jenni, 2016:33-36), and this is indeed a substantial problem. To combat this, it would be best to attempt to understand why it is important to gain this kind of other-centred perspective.

J.M. Coetzee, using his Elizabeth Costello character, proposes the concept of the sympathetic imagination (Coetzee, 2016:331-35). This is the ability to imagine oneself into the life of another, and Costello is specifically discussing the lives of animals in this case. We cannot lessen suffering in the world if we do not attempt to understand the Other, and Coetzee “attempts to come to terms with suffering by means of his sympathetic imagination and thereby empower the reader to do the same” (Northover, 2014:37).

The sympathetic imagination can be used as a tool to complement this empathetic viewpoint that Gruen suggests. It can aid one in understanding, and through imaginatively and sympathetically understanding the Other, we will be able to increase our empathetic responses to them.

However, there are detractors of the focus on empathy. For instance, Bloom (2016) explores the idea that we should not cling to empathy and should instead embrace what he calls “rational compassion.” In fact, his definition of it is quite similar to Gruen’s entangled empathy. Furthermore, Albert Schweitzer’s reverence for life is a more spiritual form of this same basic idea; life needs to be taken on a contextual basis (Schweitzer, 1976:133-138). We need to kill plants to eat them, but they are also alive, and so we should only kill or harm when absolutely necessary. We need to gain this empathetic view for all living things, not only humans, not only animals but even plants and minerals, something critical plant studies emphasises (Gaard, 2017:27-46). All is interconnected, all is entangled in the same life.

It is here where the veil should fall, to some degree, because as Deane Curtin suggests, we should alter our perception of ideas like “empathy” and “care,” because these are often perceived as something innate rather than something learned, and we should also forget all these other terms like “entangled empathy” and “rational compassion,” because the term “compassion” already exists, and she claims that “compassion” describes all of this already without having to develop new terminology (Curtin, 2014:69).

Curtin was not the first to suggest this, because Schopenhauer’s fourth book in *The World as Will and Representation* (2017a) and his essay *On the Basis of Morality* (2017b) encourage compassion as a basic means of denying the ego and living a truly ethical life. Compassion allows you to understand that you are not the only being in the world, and there are instead a seemingly infinite number of beings that have, do, and will exist. You are not the sole subject in existence, you are simply one of a theoretically infinite number of subjects. You are not ultimately a unique being or, put another way, you are unfathomably unique, but so is everyone else. You do not deserve special treatment above anyone else. Some ecofeminists, like Donovan (1996:86-90), ultimately agree with this viewpoint.

Compassion should be the basis of ethical life, and compassion can lead one to care. If you foster a virtue of compassion, you can become a being capable of caring for others. It was Gilligan who first created the idea of the feminist ethic of care, but her focus was predominantly

on the idea of gendered views of morality (Gilligan, 2003), and it was thinkers like Baier and Tronto who expanded on it before it was co-opted by ecofeminism.

Baier dismissed the gendered aspect, saying: “It is clear, I think, that the best moral theory has to be a cooperative product of women and men, has to harmonize justice and care. The morality it theorizes about is after all for all persons, for men and for women, and will need their combined insights” (Baier, 1987:56).

Tronto elaborated on the ethic of care to an extraordinary extent. She viewed “care” as the ability to reach for something other than the self and asserted that it is inherently active (Tronto, 1993:102-103). An issue with views like deontology is that if you do not murder, do not rape, and so on, then you are, effectively, “doing good,” but by passively avoiding a behaviour, one is not “doing good” as much as one is “not doing wrong.” These are not the same thing. Action requires effort, refraining from evil generally does not.

According to Tronto, this view of care, as something in which the self understands themselves as needing to care for another, is inherently not restricted to humans, it is not individualistic, it requires ongoing attention, and it is culturally dependent as care can differ from one society to the next (Tronto, 1993:103-104). This means that the ethic of care does not attempt to universalise what care is, in the way that deontology attempts to universalise rights. It is fundamentally context-specific.

Tronto (1993) specifically identifies four main elements of the ethic of care: attentiveness to those who require care (127-131), responsibility towards those who require care (131-133), competence with regard to how care is administered in each case (133-134), and responsiveness to changes that may need to occur within individual, contextual situations (134-136).

To care for something can also entail learning more about the particular subject that requires care, as Antonio (1995:271) discusses when examining how wolves need to be cared for. This can, of course, be more generally applied outside of the realm of wolves alone.

Furthermore, by clinging to more rationality-based ethical theories, like those of Regan and Singer, we generally perpetuate the idea that emotion has no place in ethical considerations (Luke, 1995:369-405). Deontology and utilitarianism have their place, but they cannot adequately account for all that needs to be understood when considering ethical implications.

At last, we come to the ethic of care with regard to animal studies, and as Donovan and Adams state:

The feminist ethic of care regards animals as individuals who do have feelings, who can communicate those feelings, and to whom therefore humans have moral obligations. An ethic of care also recognizes the diversity of animals—one size doesn't fit all; each has a particular history. Insofar as possible, attention must be paid to these particularities in any ethical determination concerning them (2007:2-3).

Why do we need this ethic of care? Other ethical theories tend to be highly theoretical and do not focus on the day-to-day minutiae of life and instead use various high-concept thought experiments to justify them, like an axe murderer knocking on your door for Kant or a trolley problem for the utilitarian. Other ethical theories are highly discursive, and as Marx states: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways. What is crucial, however, is to change it” (2016b:324).

To care is to change things because the status quo clearly does not work, and while the ethic of care does lack specificity and definitive rules, it is wholly context-specific and can adapt to any situation easily. It is also more than only the justice-oriented nature of other ethical theories (Baier, 1987).

How would the deontologist or the utilitarian respond to the origins of this section of the dissertation? How would they respond to a burial? A corpse is not a being capable of receiving any moral actions. Does a burial matter to these theories? It does to those engaged in the ethic of care because when Legoshi goes to bury that meat, he does not do so from a rational perspective.

In fact, Legoshi does not simply bury the meat. He goes to pain-staking effort to discover the names, occupations, and hobbies of every individual corpse he buries. He needs to find this information by going to the black market, discovering where each chunk of meat came from, and tracing it back. This was not a rational thing to do, it was a compassion-influenced, care-based, and highly emotional thing to do. Yet, most will likely instinctively see it as the “right” thing to do, and that may have nothing to do with utilitarian calculus or deontological imperatives (although some may argue that Legoshi's actions were motivated by a sense of deontological duty, but to whom?).

However, an issue with the ethic of care is that it can often be connected to a more spiritual perspective, and while the following section does not wholly entail the ethic of care, it does involve a more spiritual ethic. Despite this, it does not change the secular perspective of this interpretation of the ethic of care but only reinforces it.

2.9. The Ocean: A Different Philosophy

The ocean, in the world of *Beastars*, is a fundamentally alien place to the land creatures that make up the majority of its cast. The ocean also plays a rather small role in the central narrative and is more of a smaller, side-aspect of the world after Legoshi meets Sagwan, a seal who has found employment on land and so has left the ocean behind for a time. It is through this character that we learn about the ocean and how things are so different there.

We learn in chapter 108 that sea creatures have an entirely different language, currency, and customs. They are intrinsically different from every creature Legoshi has met before. It is also in this chapter that he meets and befriends Sagwan. Sagwan influences the way that Legoshi thinks about the world going forward, but he does not provide much in the way of narrative progression. He is primarily in the narrative to provide information to Legoshi.

Through chapters 108-109, he explains some of the differences between the culture of the ocean and the culture of the land. The ocean is a place of constant death and life. The creatures of the ocean produce massive numbers of offspring when they reproduce, as is true in the real world, and, much like the real world again, the vast majority of those babies die. The ocean is a place with no distinction between herbivore and carnivore. It is a place in which everything eats everything. It is not out of a sense of malice or a need to consume flesh, but rather because that is simply the way things are. Consume or be consumed. Furthermore, being the consumed does not classify as a negative act as all must eventually die.

The ocean is a place that could be considered wild in comparison to the land's tameness, but the tameness of the land has led to issues between herbivore and carnivore. It has led to an adversarial relationship that does not exist in the ocean, and Sagwan explains that this is because of the philosophy of the ocean as a singular place made up of the collective, a place in which all is one and one is all. It must be a place for all to live and die.

According to Merchant (1990:1-2), nature was seen as an organism that both coexists with and sustains us, but the scientific revolution changed that in the minds of many within the scientific establishment as well as the common consciousness, although there have been those who have worked against this viewpoint, such as Lovelock's view of the interconnectedness of the planet (2000:10). The ocean is, for lack of a better word, in a more (supposedly)

“primitive” episteme; a pre-scientific revolution episteme. It is a place of spiritual adherence to the view that all are part of the circle of life and so murder cannot exist. All are meat.

This could be compared to more traditional, non-Western perspectives, such as those held by Native American peoples and Buddhists (to a degree), but likely predominantly to a more Daoist perspective (Laz Tzu, 2018). Sagwan suggests a more carefree, events-will-transpire-as-they-transpire perspective that is decidedly non-Western. There could even be something of an alteration of an *ubuntu* mindset, but rather that “you are meat and so I am meat” instead of a focus on collective humanness. However, this is only explored in two chapters and so there is not much that can be additionally analysed and understood.

Legoshi struggles to understand this perspective during those two chapters, but he does come to appreciate it as a differing viewpoint. It has an effect on him for the remainder of the narrative and does influence his personal perspective. It is also something that Sagwan does not want to be judged about; it is his culture, and he finds land culture peculiar, yet he does not attack it. He implores Legoshi to act similarly, and Legoshi does just that.

One of the spin-off *Beast Complex* chapters, specifically chapter 20, tells the story of a sea otter character who feels ostracised by his land animal co-workers because of the seafood he eats. Sagwan, no doubt, wants to avoid a similar situation. Although, there are also some additional humorous aspects to this culture clash because as soon as Sagwan is home, he strips. The ocean is not a place for clothes, and Legoshi finds this display to be bewildering. He does ultimately, despite his initial discomfort, accept the differences between himself and his new friend.

This entire viewpoint is so different to the more traditional forms of ethical convention that we are accustomed to perceiving, but one cannot escape the fact that Sagwan’s perspective is far more spiritual in nature. It requires believing that there is a specific circle of life that binds us all, but to return to the ending of the previous section, spirituality cannot be a basis for an ethic of care as some may suggest.

While this specific spiritual perspective holds a contextual kind of care, it cannot be universalised. For instance, there is another *Beast Complex* chapter, chapter 16, in which Legoshi and Sagwan pass by an octopus mother who asks them to look for her child. They soon find that her child is dead and is being grilled as food in the black market. Sagwan immediately buys and consumes the grilled octopus. He knows that the mother would have preferred a sea

creature to eat her child than a land creature who does not have the same respect for life and death that sea creatures in *Beastars* possess.

This kind of understanding cannot be universalised. It is highly contextual to a specific spiritual perspective. The Christian spiritual views of men like Aquinas (1976:56-59) and Descartes (1976:64) would never correspond to this form of spirituality. Sagwan, in the above example, exercised his care by eating someone, but that cannot apply to other belief systems. Furthermore, a spiritual component to eating meat is explicitly condemned in an aspect of *Beastars* that is discussed in section 3.1 of this dissertation.

Care is contextual. An ethic of care may incorporate a spiritual component, as Sagwan expresses a form of care by eating a fellow sea creature, but one cannot place spirituality as the central lynchpin of an ethic of care. Especially because of the prevalence of those who feel no spiritual connection whatsoever; they are, after all, still capable of care.

However, this does not mean that *Beastars* does not stumble and misunderstand its own messaging immediately before the entire narrative comes to an end.

2.10. Fish Sausage: A Weak Compromise

One of the final chapters in *Beastars* involves a compromise. The events of the entire narrative have occurred, a lot of blood has been spilt, and the black market is even torn down. However, there is still a fear that carnivores will want to return to meat in some capacity. This is when the compromise is made.

In chapter 193 (and there are 196 chapters in *Beastars* in total), Yahya, the Sublime Beastar mentioned in section 2.6, holds council with an ancient whale who has seemingly lived for centuries. The two of them contemplate the danger of carnivores returning to meat, and so the whale gives Yahya a fish sausage. This sausage is made of fish meat and will now be exported to land en masse to help the carnivores lose their taste for flesh. This is stated as explicitly and ethically right because the ocean has such a fundamentally different philosophy of life; they do not see death the same way.

This, however, flies in the face of the recently mentioned chapter of *Beast Complex* in which Sagwan knew that an octopus mother would prefer he, a fellow sea creature, eat her child rather

than a land creature. The ocean community may have a different view of life and death, but that is because of their epistemic perspective. Meat has never been formalised as a systemically collected commodity for consumption by carnivores. This fish sausage, and what it represents, will forever alter the way in which ocean life sees death.

This is an attempt to universalise the ethics of the ocean to the ethics of the land. It will alter everything, and it was an immensely poor compromise to make. It will not work. If sea creatures are people too, then it would not take long, after the narrative's conclusion, for these people to rise against the hunting of their people when they are no longer in a reciprocal relationship with who they hunt and who hunts them. The dynamic will be forever broken.

The only way in which anyone could be free in this, or our world, is through complete abolition. Steven Best (2014) advocates for this type of complete abolition of all injustices (21-50) and argues that there cannot be liberation for non-human animals until there is total liberation for all humans too (79-106). Only when everyone and everything is free can true equality between all creatures occur.

As Adams and Donovan (1995:9) state: "We believe that all oppressions are interconnected: no one creature will be free until all are free—from abuse, degradation, exploitation, pollution, and commercialization." It is only when meat has been completely removed, along with all other forms of injustice, that true liberation can occur.

Compromising and exploiting the spiritual perspective of one group because they would effectively "not mind it" is not the correct solution to a problem like meat. It must be entirely undone. However, for it to be undone, a lot more would need to be undone too, including the inherent sexualisation and animalisation of gender and meat, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Sex

The world of *Beastars*, much like the real one, is a world that is surrounded by various elements of sex. In this case, the term “sex” is used as a catch-all term to refer to various sexual elements, including the oft-discussed “binary” of sex and gender, sexual orientation, sexual intercourse, and even sexual assault. However, it should be remembered that each of these elements are still connected to power and, especially in terms of *Beastars*, to meat too. This chapter of the dissertation examines the intersection of these various sexual elements as they relate to both meat and power within the world of *Beastars*.

3.1. Lustful Devouring: Instinct and the Loss of Control

Beastars is a narrative that fundamentally connects itself to discourses surrounding meat, but its connection to meat is also intrinsically tied to the sexualisation and animalisation of gender. While sex, gender, and sexuality form component parts of the whole that will be explored throughout this chapter, this particular section will focus on the connections between meat consumption and sexual intercourse after a few introductory paragraphs.

The connection between femininity and animals may, to some, appear as a strange comparison, but this comparison was explicitly made with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (2014). This text, originally published in 1792, is considered a foundational work in proto-feminism. However, the year it was published, a response was also published. This response was in the form of a long essay by Thomas Taylor titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (2017). It was a satirical response to Wollstonecraft’s application of rights to women. He claimed, in that text, that if we give rights to women then we might as well give them to animals too. He, of course, intended this as an insult, but it usefully demonstrates the real-world connection between femininity and animals.

Animals and women have long been metaphorically connected to one another. Women are often compared to animalistic forces, like emotion and nature, while men are compared to more human forces, like reason and culture (Plumwood, 2003:43). It was Carol J. Adams who

formalised a connection between gender and meat with her concept of the “sexual politics of meat,” which she defines as follows: “It is an attitude and action that animalizes women and sexualizes and feminizes animals” (Adams, 2010:4).

Horsthemke (2010:v) opens one of his books by stating that he refuses to use the collective pronoun “they” for animals, and instead alternates, at random, between “he” and “she” as a way of affirming the sex of animals. There are problematic issues with this, as contemporary usage of “they” is considered a respectful term when one does not know the gender of someone, and it also enforces a gendered order on animals in the real world where there may not necessarily be “gender” per se.

In contemporary common usage, “sex” refers to the biological distinction based on factors such as genitals, secondary sexual characteristics, and chromosomes. Whereas “gender” refers to societal impositions that are connected to how one believes a certain sex *should* act and present itself to the world. Therefore, it may be an incorrect application of gendered pronouns to apply them to non-human animals. However, English lacks the vocabulary to distinguish between sex and gender on a pronoun basis. This is a short and simple examination of some of the issues that are present in terms of sex and gender with regard to non-human animals in the real world.

In *Beastars*, as has been explored, the characters are all humanoid animals. They live what are, ostensibly, human lives with a few specific animalistic differences. For this reason, we can examine the application of gendered concepts like femininity and masculinity to the animal characters in this narrative.

In broad terms, herbivores in *Beastars* are feminised whereas carnivores are masculinised. This will be explored in far more detail in sections 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7, but for the sake of simplicity, it will be presumed here that herbivores are rendered as feminine characters even when they are biologically male, and vice versa. The majority of the examples that will soon be discussed concern female characters being consumed, but one of them is a male. He is, like the others, rendered into a sexualised object once he is consumed.

Connections between woman, child, and animal abuse have been prevalently documented (Adams, 2018:135-153 & Adams, 1995:79-82), with all three of these groups being subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual domestic abuse. However, these kinds of connections, much like domestic violence in general, are often rendered invisible, and when something is rendered invisible, we cannot have knowledge of it (Adams, 2018:145). We do not see these connections

unless we are the victims in these circumstances, but *Beastars* draws this connection into full focus.

We often use meat imagery as a metaphor for rape and rape culture, such as victims reporting that they feel like “a piece of meat” when subjected to these abuses or how they are metaphorically segmented into body parts, such as a woman’s buttocks or breasts being highlighted rather than their holistic selves (Adams, 2020:45-48). Furthermore, when animals are butchered and eaten, they are literally penetrated and segmented (Adams, 2010:81-84). The rape metaphor has become a prominent one.

This metaphor has been perceived as problematic by many feminists who do not appreciate the connections drawn between animals, butchering, and rape, and Adams elaborated and somewhat disputed this issue in some depth:

When I use the term ‘the rape of animals,’ the experience of women becomes a vehicle for explicating another being’s oppression. Is this appropriate? Some terms are so powerfully specific to one group’s oppression that their appropriation to others is potentially exploitative: for instance, using the ‘Holocaust’ for anything but the genocide of European Jews and others by the Nazis. Rape has a different social context for women than for the other animals. So, too, does butchering for animals. Yet, feminists among others, appropriate the metaphor of butchering without acknowledging the originating oppression of animals that generates the power of the metaphor. Through the function of the absent referent, Western culture constantly renders the material reality of violence in controlled and controllable metaphors (Adams, 2010:68).

This is a valid concern to have with regard to the correct use of vocabulary. Under ordinary, real-world circumstances, this is a powerfully valid concern. Can we use terms of intense trauma of one group for another? However, *Beastars*, through its feminisation of herbivores, allows for a combination of both butchering *and* rape. Their connection is laid bare.

Carnivores in *Beastars* are essentially labelled as predators. They may no longer be hunters in the wild, and to hunt is instead to murder fellow citizens for their meat, but the instinctual aspects remain. In this narrative, it is revealed that carnivores and herbivores, despite living with one another in a society for generations, still possess strong instinctual drives towards hunting and being hunted, respectively.

Carnivores want (and some believe that they *need*) to hunt. Herbivores perceive their existence as the hunted and can succumb to their instinctual fate when they give in to being consumed, which is shown in chapters 43-44 where Haru nearly submits to being eaten by Legoshi. This latter aspect, in which feminised herbivores effectively allow themselves to be eaten, is potentially problematic but does somewhat fall in line with the way prey animals can eventually appear to give up when they know they have been cornered. They may give up and seem to allow themselves to be eaten because fighting is not worth it any longer (or through the previously mentioned state of exhaustion). However, given the connections between the animal characters in *Beastars* and humans in the real world, this can be problematic, and it relates to another Adams quote: “To accept that animals want their deaths, we have to believe a rather ludicrous contradiction: animals have no will or legitimate desires with which we need to concern ourselves, yet animals have the desire to be our food” (2020:130).

Carnivores have the instinct to hunt and devour, but *Beastars* does go to some pains to show that not all carnivores are predators in its world (meaning a being that actively hunts, or predated on, others), but that there is the chance they could become one, such as the recurring way in which Legoshi needs to regulate himself and his desires, which he learns to understand as something natural. This was also pointed out by Kruuk (2002:5-8) because carnivores are not inherently bad in the real world; the consumption of meat is not naturally wrong, but societally wrong.

Carnivores eat herbivores in the real world, but in the world of *Beastars*, this becomes something illegal. The desire for meat becomes infused with other desires. Other illicit or potentially immoral desires. These desires often lead to a complete lack of control. A carnivore could entirely lose themselves in the hunt as their hunger fuses with sexual desire (although there are problematic associations that will be explored below with regard to supposed “desire”). However, some can maintain some level of control while indulging in these kinds of desires. The remaining paragraphs of this section will be dedicated to examples from the text that suggest this connection between a desire for meat and a desire for sex.

Firstly, it would be best to consider the fully controlled, non-sexual consumers. There are two major incidents of highly controlled, non-sexual meat-eating in *Beastars*. In chapter 51, Louis, a herbivore, eats meat to establish a sense of unofficial and localised authority with the Shishigumi, the gang of lions discussed in section 2.4. He has no desire for meat, yet he consumes meat (or at least allows the other lions to believe that he has eaten meat, but he

generally regurgitates it after excusing himself). Another instance is in chapter 95 when Legoshi consumes Louis's foot in an entirely consensual capacity. These two incidents of meat-eating do not form part of an uncontrolled desire for meat, but they are, clearly, extremely context-specific instances that are not likely to occur particularly often.

However, when it comes to uncontrollable meat consumption in which meat and sex combine, one only need look at three major incidents in *Beastars*.

The first involves the Shishigumi. The Shishigumi, in general, regularly consume meat and they do not engage in an uncontrollable rage when they do so. However, their first leader orders the kidnapping of a white-furred person, which happens to be Haru, in chapter 34. Then, between chapters 37-41, he forces Haru to strip, tries to force her to bathe, and then engages in a sexualised assault in which she is meant to become his meal. She is saved, but the direct comparisons between rape and meat-eating are made clear in this early section of the narrative.

Later, in chapter 119, a friend of Haru, a fellow rabbit named Ako, is dating a lion named Eado. Once alone, this couple starts engaging in a sensual session that is implied to be highly sexual kissing. This "makeout session" ends with Eado maiming and nearly killing Ako. He entirely lost control while they engaged in this sexual behaviour. It was not the near-rape mentioned above, but a complete and utter loss of all control that led to a man nearly lustfully devouring someone. Later, in one of the *Beast Complex* chapters, chapter 18, these two characters reunite and Ako is heavily physically scarred from the experience. An eternally visible reminder of the trauma she suffered.

Lastly, the most graphic and detailed act of lustful devouring is actually the first. The very first scene, in chapter 1, involves an unknown carnivore hunting down and eating Tem, a male alpaca. It is later revealed that Tem was murdered by Riz the bear, but he was not murdered in an ordinary capacity. They became friends before the murder. Riz stopped taking his medication because he wanted to show Tem who he truly was, and then, in an act that he saw as immensely spiritual and beautiful, he ate his friend. It is revealed in chapter 89 that Riz saw this as consensual. He believed that Tem was now within his body forever, a part of him. It was a spiritual, homoerotic experience that left one man dead and another eating his corpse.

There was no rape, but the way in which he describes his love for Tem, his supposed *pure* love, may not be connected to sexual attraction in Riz's mind, but it is clear to any outside observer. He believes it was spiritual and beautiful. However, in the words of Marti Kheel:

“Saying a prayer before you kill an animal is no more acceptable than saying a prayer before a rape” (1995:141).

To Riz, the hunt and the consumption of the friend he loved were, as Kheel describes with regard to real-world hunting, like the orgasm at the conclusion of the hunt (1995:117), which is literarily echoed in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* hunting scene (Golding, 2001). The final burst of joy before the afterglow begins to fade. Riz, who is not a criminal like the head of the Shishigumi or someone who spontaneously lost control like Eado, has to justify himself. He needs to claim that this lustful devouring was a good thing, but he does eventually admit to Legoshi and himself in chapter 94 that Tem was never his friend. It was a murder. It can also be compared to a rape, even though it technically was not.

We cannot justify our lustful consumptions. As Acampora points out, if there was a group of cannibals with a spiritual system connected to consuming humans, we would not have much respect for that supposedly “spiritual” connection (2014:210-214). It cannot be justified. It can never be justified.

It would be best to pause for a moment to consider something problematic that *Beastars* may suggest. In the real world, rape is not usually considered to be a purely sexual crime, but rather a violent one. It is an act of force, a show of power. The lustful devouring portrayed in *Beastars* draws comparisons between rape and meat-eating, but these two elements become fused in desire rather than pure power. While a figure such as the Shishigumi leader mentioned above enacts his lustful devouring through a more controlled sense of power rather than desire gone wrong, the same cannot necessarily be said of some of the other instances of this aspect of the world of *Beastars*.

When Eado, the lion, maims his rabbit girlfriend, it is portrayed as an act of lost control. He is immediately horrified at his actions as soon as he has harmed her, and this would suggest a loss of control that cannot be likened to rape. Rape is purposeful. Rape is an act of violence for power. There could be instances of rape existing for pure sexual satisfaction, but they are not likely the predominant instances of rape that exist in the world. Our typical view of rape, as we would understand it in the human world, is never shown in *Beastars*. Lustful devouring is shown. A combination of rape and meat-eating that is not entirely one or the other.

This does also mean that we cannot directly call lustful devouring a parallel for rape. It is, like many aspects of *Beastars*, something that does not have a one-to-one allegorical place within the human world. There are similarities between lustful devouring and rape, but they

are not one and the same. Desire is shown to play a particularly strong role in lustful devouring, as it fuses with the instinctual drive to consume meat, but this cannot be seen as entirely analogous to rape in the real world. Rapists do not generally consume the flesh of those they have assaulted, aside from a few specific cases, such as certain serial killers.

However, this does show the problematic nature of a direct comparison between rape and lustful devouring. They are not one and the same but can be seen as related to one another in the sense that power is involved, there is a forced sexualised component, and it involves a predator and a victim. It should be remembered while going forward with this analysis that these aspects are not exactly analogous, as is the case for most of the elements in *Beastars*, but it can serve as a means of exploring these concepts.

This particular discussion shows that there is a connection between meat and sex (albeit forced sex), and *Beastars* simply exposes that connection. This is a connection that is further elaborated by the overt display of sexuality seen in the black market's strip club.

3.2. The Strip Club: Playing as Prey

Strip clubs, in the real world, are effectively a place for overt sexuality while customers drink and/or dine. Many strip clubs double as so-called "breastaurants," with the more benign form of this dining experience being less overtly sexual chains like Hooters (Adams, 2020:68). These "breastaurants" allow men (usually) to indulge in sexual gratification while consuming food, often meat.

In *Beastars*, there is only one strip club that is ever mentioned, and it is introduced in chapters 64 and 65. This strip club exists within the black market. A place to consume illicit food will always be the kind of place in which sexual practices also blossom. This particular strip club allows masculine-coded carnivores to satiate their desire for meat while also enjoying striptease performances.

When Roland Barthes analysed stripteases in *Mythologies* (1991b), he noted that there is an ironic aspect to the striptease itself. The performer loses their sexuality as they strip. A clothed stripper is a stripper with full sexual *potential*, and as the clothes are stripped away, so the *potential* is replaced with reality. Reality is never as alluring as potential fantasy. However, it could be argued that one particular performer in the strip club in *Beastars* inverts this reality.

Cosmo is a sex worker who works as both a stripper in the club and as a full-service sex worker outside the club. She is also an okapi, a herbivore. She enters the stage as more than simply a sexual object for the gratification of men. She enters the stage as prey. As she performs, a cage descends to protect her from the carnivore patrons who may otherwise lose their minds and attempt to attack her. She begins clothed, as a person, and as she becomes unclothed, she becomes meat. She inverts Barthes's view of the striptease. She is a sexual object to them, but she is also a piece of meat, and she is attempting to elicit a response from them and, of course, to make as much money as possible from their lustful hunger.

In the cases of lustful devouring discussed in section 3.1, the connection is not explicitly stated between sex and hunger. It is indeed *shown* in an unambiguous capacity, but in the strip club, it is explicitly *stated* that Cosmo ignites both their hunger and their lust.

The performance she gives is obviously catering to the carnivore gaze, especially the gaze of male carnivores. The gaze, in general, will be explored in far more depth in section 4.1, but it is worth pointing out its immense obviousness here. The male gaze is often poorly hidden, but in a strip club, it is front and centre. Cosmo is there to be seen and lusted after by the carnivore men who patronise the club. She invites the gaze unto herself.

This clearly shows a fictionalised depiction of Derrida's carno-phallogocentrism in action (Derrida, 2008b:104). Carno-phallogocentrism is the centring of the male meat-eater's perspective, often through his gaze. In this instance, the male meat-eater views both a sexualised woman and sexualised meat in the image of Cosmo. Kappeler (1986:63-81) channelled the work of Berger (2015) when she showed us how gazing at a woman in pornography can be seen as something akin to gazing at an animal in a zoo. A strip club is live pornography in which men are expressly asked to gaze upon the female form and, in *Beastars*, to *want* to devour that form.

Cosmo is inviting a desire to devour. She possesses a nihilistic mentality in which she is simply attempting to run out the clock until it is all over, and she even dances knowing that the last herbivore dancer was killed by a patron. She dances so carnivores will simultaneously want to eat her and have sex with her. She uses that to make her living, to survive in the world. She also uses her dancing to encourage additional income through full-service sex work.

In chapter 64, while performing fellatio on a client, the carnivore client tries to devour her. As the narrative cannot allow this small side character to die such a grim death, she is saved by the Shishigumi after Louis becomes their leader. She does not have much of a role after this

brief section with her, but the fact that she was engaging in direct sexual activity (firstly in a consensual capacity and then in a non-consensual capacity), as well as both her dancing and full-service sex work, indicates that the connection between meat and sexual intercourse (as well as its relations to power) is an ironclad aspect of the world of *Beastars*.

Concerning real-world men, Gwen Sharp states: “I think porn has also contributed to men feeling very free to criticize bodies and express desire/lack of desire to fuck any women they see. See the comments sections on youtube or any gossip site for examples” (quoted in Adams, 2020:81). The man who nearly devoured Cosmo clearly believed that he was entitled to a lot more than criticising or desiring bodies. He believed that he could devour her amid a sexual act. This act may have started in a consensual sense, provided that we consider sex work to be consensual in our general understanding of the term, but it quickly lost any semblance of consent and instead showed the power this carnivore wished to exert over this herbivore.

She did not succumb to lustful devouring as in some of the cases in section 3.1, but Cosmo, unlike the others, attempted to use the carnivore’s desire to devour. She wanted them to act that way (to a point; the possible lustful devouring was unintentional). For her, it was business, but there will likely be those who claim that “she was asking for it.” This is an offensive and disingenuous response to sex workers falling victim to violence as many are forced to act promiscuously because they know that is what the client wants, and they need the cash. However, much like the real world, other feminine people, herbivores in *Beastars* and women (in general in the real world), are not typically doing anything that could disingenuously be seen as “asking for it.” Yet, they also fall prey to sexual violence. For instance, did Haru ever “ask for it” with her sexual behaviour?

3.3. The Promiscuous Bunny: Personhood and Meathood

Promiscuity and sexuality in general have been subject to change over time. What is considered overtly sexual and what is considered restrained, normal, and so on, has changed considerably from one episteme to the next. The same is true of the world of *Beastars* (although epistemic changes are mostly discussed in section 4.1), but the narrative does not tend to show changes in perspectives on sexuality over time, so some level of estimation will be required for this section.

Foucault, in his *History of Sexuality* series (1978, 1986, 1990 & 2021), tracks the changes in views on pleasure and sex through several epistemes. However, these analyses tend to show the *general perspectives* on topics such as sex, because there will always be those who deviate in some way from the norm. In the contemporary real world, there have been considerable changes with regard to the view of sexuality, especially since the sexual revolution of the 1950s/60s. Views of sexuality have, in the West, generally transitioned towards a more progressive overall viewpoint. However, there are still strong conservative voices that seek to repress this kind of expression.

Beastars is set in a world that is, essentially, the same as the current real world in terms of technology and standard culture. The animalistic aspects are in place, but most people in this fictional world appear to view monoamorous couplings as standard in sexual relationships. This is why Haru stands out.

Haru is a white dwarf rabbit. She is small and vulnerable. She is biologically weak and fragile. However, she is introduced as a polyamory-practising character. Her polyamorous relationships are more in line with the kind of polyamory endorsed in texts like *The Ethical Slut* (Hardy & Easton, 2017). She enjoys the pleasure of the act, and she does not consider herself beholden to anyone in any romantic sense simply because she wants to engage in casual sexual behaviour.

This attitude leads to her being bullied by some of the other female characters in her school (chapters 4 & 18) and she is subject to the male students spreading rumours about her or exchanging stories about their sexual exploits with her (chapter 8). She enjoys sex with various characters, and she does not care what anyone thinks about that. She lives her sexual life for herself and not for anyone else.

However, she is shown to hold a romantic interest for Louis, the red deer. This is first shown in chapter 17 but is elaborated on in chapter 26. When Louis and Haru first met, she was already sexually active, and she was not impressed with Louis's wealth or status. She saw him as just another person, a vulnerable person. She has romantic and sexual feelings for Louis but engages in polyamorous sex with others regardless of that.

Later, after several events in the narrative, Haru falls in love with Legoshi. She eventually admits her love for him (chapter 83), and the two of them start dating once he drops out of school and she starts college (chapter 121), they eventually kiss (chapter 173), and, in the *Beast Complex* spin-off, it is revealed that the two of them are still together an indeterminate time

after the conclusion of the main narrative in *Beastars*, and, furthermore, they have still not had sex by that point (*Beast Complex* chapter 14).

Haru maintained a polyamorous sexual lifestyle until she fell in love with the virginal protagonist. She effectively gives up sex and becomes entirely monoamorous. There are issues with this, as it could imply that there was something wrong with her polyamorous lifestyle. Her existence as a polyamorous character had to fall away when she entered a monoamorous relationship with “the right man.” The problematic nature of this narrative thread is rather obvious.

Sadly, Haru’s presence in *Beastars* diminishes after her kidnapping. She is a central character until then but, once that has transpired, Legoshi starts to view her as a pure object that must be defended. While she moves towards an abstinence-centred lifestyle, Legoshi goes on to prepare for the various challenges that await him. The two of them do, ultimately, pair up, but the romantic aspect of the narrative lessens over time.

However, the point at which Haru’s presence lessens is one of note: her kidnapping in chapters 34, 35, and 38. Her kidnapping was explored in section 3.1, in which the leader of the Shishigumi tried to subject her to a lustful devouring. She was, essentially, the victim of sexual assault, and while some may try to claim, if they were misogynistically inclined, that a character like Cosmo the okapi stripper from section 3.2 was “asking for it,” because of her sexual profession, when she was nearly lustfully devoured, the same cannot be said of Haru.

While Haru is certainly a highly sexual person, she also does not physically appear like a stereotypically sexualised character in a narrative. She dresses modestly, she does not flaunt any sexual aspects of herself. She does not project the image of someone who, a misogynist would argue, is “asking for it.” Yet she was the victim of sexual assault, of an attempted lustful devouring. Sexuality has nothing to do with the desire of carnivores to lustfully devour anyone. If she were a stripper, she would be meat to them. If she were a small modestly dressed rabbit, she would be meat to them. If she were a male alpaca student, she would be meat to them.

It does not matter what a herbivore does. A herbivore’s personhood is subjugated under the gaze of the carnivore. This can be seen as akin to how women in the real world are treated by men. Certain men may claim that a woman was “asking for it,” and that is why she was raped, but it does not matter what a woman wears, what a woman does, or where a woman goes; they will always be the potential victim of a predator. Haru is a herbivore, she is a woman, and it

does not matter how much sex she engages in, she will never have true personhood in the eyes of carnivores. Instead, she is meat. They only see her meathood.

However, regardless of all that, the overall depiction of her sexuality, including instances of sexual assault, in *Beastars* is problematic. It may not matter how sexual she is, because a carnivore will eat any herbivore, but her depiction leaves a lot to be desired. She assumes people only want sex from her (chapters 8, 9, 43 & 44) and it is revealed that her relationship with sex is born out of trauma (chapter 38). From this perspective, we can see her shift towards a monoamorous relationship with Legoshi as being a form of healing brought on by the patriarchal and potentially condescending love of a male (which is yet another problematic element of the depiction of love and consensual sex in *Beastars*). A love that said male struggles to understand for much of the narrative.

3.4. Love or Lust: The Difficulty in Distinction

What is love? What is lust? These are often concepts that are taken for granted. According to a classic examination of love, the First Book of Corinthians, Chapter 13, from the Christian Bible, love can be described in both positive and negative terms. Love is positively defined through ideas such as an abundance of patience, kindness, protectiveness, and trustfulness and negatively defined through ideas such as a lack of envy, pride, anger, and boastfulness (verses 4-7). This indicates that love is an inherently optimistic attribute.

Furthermore, there are distinctions based on different categories of love. For instance, C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* (1960) discusses four broad categories of love, namely affection (42-68), friendship (69-105), eros (106-132), and charity (133-160), or the work of Erich Fromm, which contains an alternative classification of forms of love (1962). These, in several ways, mirror views of love from Ancient Greece. Plato's *Symposium* (1997) discusses several different forms of love through various characters and their interpretations of love, such as distinctions between more "heavenly" and "common" forms of love (465-469) or how love is a means of joining people to their metaphysical "other half" (472-477). These various views of love show that love is not inherently sexual in nature, and there are other forms of love, such as the love of friends or family. Although, from an evolutionary psychology perspective, love

is more of a chemical reaction that may be more closely related to a reproductive desire (Campbell and Loving, 2016:485-487), towards lust.

Lust is generally seen as far easier to define. Lust involves an inherent desire for something, generally something sexual. Lust does not necessarily entail sex, as one could call an overwhelming desire for food a kind of “lust,” but others would still simply define that as hunger or, perhaps, one of the many types of yearning that bell hooks describes (2015:21). Although, hunger is also a desire for something, much like how lust is considered a desire for something.

In this context, lust is clearly something that connects with sexual desire, but we have long-held difficulties in the distinction between love and lust regardless of our supposed knowledge that they are distinct. Lust is often confused with love. When you want to have sexual intercourse with someone, many mistake that desire for love. Lust can also serve as an initial aspect that may lead to love, but bell hooks said it best in this lengthier quote:

Erotic attraction often serves as the catalyst for an intimate connection between two people, but it is not a sign of love. Exciting, pleasurable sex can take place between two people who do not even know each other. Yet the vast majority of males in our society are convinced that their erotic longing indicates who they should, and can, love. Led by their penis, seduced by erotic desire, they often end up in relationships with partners with whom they share no common interests or values. The pressure on men in a patriarchal society to ‘perform’ sexually is so great that men are often so gratified to be with someone with whom they find sexual pleasure that they ignore everything else. They cover up these mistakes by working too much, or finding playmates they like outside their committed marriage or partnership. It usually takes them a long time to name the lovelessness they may feel (hooks, 2018:129).

Lust can be connected to love, but they are not necessarily inherently connected. As hooks mentions in the above quote, the pressure on men in a patriarchal society to focus on the lust side of attraction can lead to unintended and unwanted complications, and that is one of the reasons that this section will predominantly focus on a more masculine view of love.

However, it may be best to first ask: How do we know that we love? In her definition, hooks blended M. Scott Peck’s view of love as the will to nurture the spiritual and emotional growth of yourself and someone else with Erich Fromm’s insight into the fact that love is not just a

feeling, but also action (2004:71). So, love involves continuous care and attention, in much the same way as the ethic of care discussed in section 2.8. It is not solely about personal desire.

This means that it can be difficult to identify when we love, as humans in the real world, because how can we know that we want to help both ourselves and someone else grow? However, simply caring for someone is not the same as loving them (hooks, 2018:22). You can care for someone without love, so while hooks defines love as holding a dimension of care, it is not the sole component of it. Love is also complicated because we are simply never taught about what it is, as hooks states:

Our nation is equally driven by sexual obsession. There is no aspect of sexuality that is not studied, talked about, or demonstrated. How-to classes exist for every dimension of sexuality, even masturbation. Yet schools for love do not exist. Everyone assumes that we will know how to love instinctively (hooks, 2018:17).

Is love instinctual? Does it mix with other potentially instinctual drives to confuse us and cause us to conflate feelings with love, lust, or several other emotions? This whole concept is confusing and context-specific for us, but in the world of *Beastars*, it becomes even more conflated and difficult. Same-species couplings tend to match up far easier in *Beastars* without complications, beyond standard human ones, although these couplings tend not to be the largest focus in the narrative. Women are also not the largest focus, but things are more complicated for the love between carnivores and herbivores (although herbivores are shown to find it easier to love).

In *Beastars*, it is the carnivores, the more masculine-coded characters, who struggle with feelings of love. They struggle with understanding when something is love because there is an additional complication for them. As has been shown, meat-eating and sex are connected in this world. The previously discussed concept of lustful devouring is an obvious response to the connection between attraction and lust, but not necessarily to love.

However, Legoshi, who does enter a relationship with a herbivore and falls in love with her, spends much of the early narrative struggling with those feelings. When he first enters the black market in chapter 23, he cannot help but salivate in meat-hunger, but his internal thoughts while he lusts after meat are not purely on meat. Instead, he thinks about Haru. He wants her at that moment.

Furthermore, Gohin, the previously mentioned psychiatrist panda character, tells him that he is confusing hunger and love, and even gives him pornography of rabbits to see if he truly is in love with Haru or if he simply has a fetish for her (chapters 24 & 25). This connection is further amplified when he learns that Haru has been kidnapped by the Shishigumi. He does want to save her, but as he rushes to do so, he cannot help but think of Haru as his prey, prey that the Shishigumi stole from him (chapter 39).

We do see a happy ending with Legoshi and Haru as they later become a couple, and he never eats her, but how did they get to that point? Or, more accurately, how did *he* get to that point? Once Haru decides that Legoshi is the one for her, she simply ends her polyamorous lifestyle, as discussed in section 3.3, but *he* spends much of the narrative viewing her as a special object of his desires rather than truly as a person he can be with. By the end of the narrative, he appears to have resolved this problem, but he needed to get to that point because his relationship with love was far more complex to him than love was to Haru.

Legoshi falls in love with Haru for several reasons. When he and Haru have their first proper interaction, Haru attempted to have sex with him³. Legoshi is confused by this first proper interaction he has with her because he had thought to simply ask her something and she mistook it for lust, but in the aftermath of that event, he felt something new (chapter 9).

That move towards sexual activity led Legoshi to see his own masculinity reflected in the gaze of this herbivore. He sees her as being the first person to look at him as a man and not just a person. This is, effectively, an affirmation of his masculinity. Then, when he sees Louis and Haru affectionately touching each other in chapter 28, he becomes jealous. When she tries to have sex with him a second time, after he saved her from the Shishigumi, she enters a kind of “preyspace,” which could be compared to something like the BDSM concept “subspace” (Smith & Brito, 2021), in which she simply accepts her role as prey, but he refuses to engage in sexual activity under these conditions (chapter 43 & 44). This can be seen as a form of sexual respect that he views as more stoic. Then, most prominently, he views himself as a protector because he is larger and stronger than she is (chapter 59) and this can perhaps best be shown in how he decided to save her from a dangerous gang (chapter 37). To him, love comes out of

³ As a quick aside, it is worth noting that the use of the term “proper interaction” is because their first true interaction was a moment of weakness in which Legoshi instinctively hunted a random herbivore (who turned out to be Haru).

her confirmation of his masculinity, his jealousy, respect, and protective instincts. All of these are generally considered more masculine traits.

When Haru and Legoshi finally declare their love for each other in chapter 83, Legoshi, as part of his declaration of love, swears to protect her. His love is a fundamentally masculinised love. Furthermore, while he often questions his own thoughts about whether he truly loves her, he eventually realises and affirms his own love. It took him longer to truly acknowledge and accept his own love, but he does eventually do so.

There is a lot to say about Haru and Legoshi in this regard because he never eats her, and also because they are primary characters. When Riz the bear devoured Tem in the first chapter of *Beastars*, he later rationalised that action by claiming affection for Tem. He held an intense “love” inside him when he ate his friend (chapter 77), or at least that was part of his justification. This has already been discussed in section 3.1, but it is worth reiterating it here. Riz *may* have loved Tem. We will never know, and neither will Riz. He ate the man he claimed to love. His story of love will never be told.

It is only Legoshi and Haru’s complicated carnivore-herbivore love relationship that is explored and elaborated on, and Legoshi is eventually seen as something of an interspecies love expert because of it. Juno, a fellow wolf character, believes that she is falling in love with Louis, the red deer, and has the same questions about her affections. Does she really love him? Does she actually want to eat him? Can she love him? Is she confused, and so on? When she has these questions, she goes to Legoshi for advice about them (chapter 137).

Juno, while she is a female character, is masculinised because of her existence as a carnivore character. She has the same concerns as other carnivores who feel that they may be confusing their lust for meat and their love for a herbivore. The masculinisation of carnivores in *Beastars* is a prominent recurring aspect of the world.

3.5. Carnivorism: A Masculine Trait

The first question that may come to mind is the question of why there would be a connection between meat-eating and masculinity in general. This is a connection that may not appear entirely obvious at first glance but becomes more pronounced over time. In terms of *Beastars*, this connection is more metaphorical, as Itagaki could have written the herbivores to be more

masculine, but she did not. It would be best to first consider the real-world connections between meat-eating and masculinity.

Adams points out that, in general, there is a view that men are, in some way, entitled to meat in a way that women simply are not (2010:4), and masculinity is inherently tied to a carnivorous diet (2010:16). To be a man is to eat meat. We can also see this in how cannibals in media are almost exclusively depicted as men (2010:49); women do not eat people, but men do. The ability to afford meat, to be able to consume it, and to have the privilege to do so is an act of masculine restoration (Adams, 2020:31-33). The man must consume meat to be a man. The woman must allow the man to consume meat when meat is scarce because to consume meat is to be strong (Adams, 2010:56). Furthermore, Gambert (2018:133-136) pointed out how, in contemporary human society, meat and milk have become masculinised items whereas soy and, by implication, a vegan or vegetarian diet is feminised. If a man refuses to engage in meat-eating, then his masculinity has taken a hit. He is less for it. This is not as much the case for women, who are more culturally allowed to refuse meat, but it should be noted that this is a cultural expectation rather than a biological reality. They do not need the power and strength that meat provides a man, after all.

This is a concept that has been explored by numerous ecofeminists in their work and is the central conceit of the previously mentioned Derridean term “carnophallogocentrism,” which describes how our society has centred the meat-eating, male perspective (Derrida, 2008b:52-118). To eat meat is to be a man, a real man. All a man needs to do to learn this is to engage in a meat-free diet while in the company of meat-eaters. His very personhood as a man will be interrogated.

While things are not entirely the same in *Beastars*, there are aspects of this for the carnivores. It is considered entirely ordinary for a carnivore, despite the illegality of the action, to engage in meat-eating. A carnivore, even though the world’s natural laws do not necessitate that any carnivore biologically *must* consume meat, is expected to eat meat. The justifications are both biological and cultural, much like it is for humans in the real world, and how carnivores are masculinised also operates along biological and cultural lines.

Carnivores in *Beastars* are, typically, physically bigger, stronger, and more capable of harm. Biologically, carnivores can kill more easily than herbivores. To even the playing field, a herbivore must either engage in intense training or use a weapon, but, much like men with women in the real world, carnivores are more capable of harming herbivores with their bodies

alone. This is a more biological aspect of masculinity, and it is intrinsically tied to the cultural side, which tends to receive more attention.

In *Beastars*, carnivores are also more culturally masculine. They are generally more aggressive, assertive, violent, willing, and excited to take damage, and so on. Much like in the real world, masculinity needs something to define itself against, it needs something it perceives as weaker (Kheel, 2008:36-41). Like masculinity in the real world, carnivores define themselves by their strength and anger, their ability to be mad, violent, and violating (hooks, 2004:23). They must be a potential danger to others if they truly want to see themselves as carnivores, as masculine. A good way to see this in the real world is with masculine rites of passage, and, in many cultures, a rite of passage for a man is the killing of an animal (Kheel, 2008:49-53). A real man will kill and eat an animal. A real carnivore will eat a herbivore even though the *people* around them are herbivores.

Beastars is full of carnivore characters, who are both male and female, who engage in masculine displays. It is worth first noting that male characters are simply more represented in this narrative. There are more of them, but the few prominent female carnivores are depicted in a masculine sense too.

Early in the narrative, in chapter 6, two carnivores bump into each other in the cafeteria and immediately start fighting in a masculine display of dominance. Later, in chapters 15 and 16, Bill the tiger uses rabbit blood as a form of doping because he feels a need to be seen as assertive and confident so that his carnivorous sense of selfhood can be affirmed. Bill digs his claws into Legoshi's back and permanently scars him in a display of superiority (chapter 16) and Bill brags about sexual conquests (chapter 22); he is a typical specimen of stereotypical masculinity.

However, Juno, a female wolf, asserts herself and what she wants when she, in the early narrative, is infatuated with Legoshi (chapter 26). She also acts more feminine in public, as a way of intentionally putting herbivores around her at ease, but as soon as she feels that Louis is standing in her way, she threatens to eat him and acts highly competitively (chapter 31). She even tries to prove her womanhood above Haru, over Legoshi's affections, by trying to be threatening and domineering over the small rabbit character (chapter 45); she is willing to use her biological strength and stature to terrify someone. This also shows that masculinity and womanhood are not necessarily opposing attributes in this world. Later, when Juno and Louis

become a couple, she is the one who takes the initiative (chapter 105), and she is the one who acts assertively on their dates (chapter 136).

Other examples include how a common game that carnivores play to test their strength is a tug of war using their jaws (chapter 67). When what is effectively a game serves as a way to show who is the strongest person because of bite force, a way of crushing the bones of prey, the masculine carnivorism of that game becomes apparent. The person who can deal the most damage is the most masculine, the most carnivore.

There are also more culturally odd yet taken-for-granted aspects of masculinity, like a sense of honour over common sense. When Legoshi learns that Riz the bear, a fellow student, is a murderer who ate a mutual friend, he does not go to the police. Instead, he feels that the two of them must engage in an honourable duel (chapters 85, 91 & 93). This calls to mind stories of human chivalry, which are almost entirely male-centred. It also calls to attention the fact that to be masculine is not to be invulnerable, but rather to be able to take damage and live through it (Hodges, 2009:14); a midnight duel will entail pain and damage, yet it is far more masculine to do that than to simply win without being hurt. It is perhaps also a nod to the traditional Japanese notion of honour (Benedict, 2005: 136-162).

Each of these examples entailed a more behaviouristic angle to masculinity and carnivorism, but there are also broader cultural viewpoints. For instance, Bill claims that meat-eating is *culturally* (even if it is not a biologically needed) part of being a carnivore; it is necessary to be a *real* carnivore (chapter 23) in *Beastars*' world (with "real" being a nebulous concept on par with being a "real man"). Furthermore, the Shishigumi, the criminal gang of lions, define themselves through their meat-eating (chapter 51). Meat-eating is an integral and central aspect of being a carnivore, and, as has been shown, to be a carnivore is to act in a masculine way.

However, this is not universally applicable. As Connell points out with regards to real-world gender, it is neither wholly biological nor wholly cultural, and it entails social practice (2003:113-119). If carnivorism is inherently tied to masculinity, then there is a gendered component to this depiction of carnivores.

To be masculine is to engage in more hegemonic thinking. Hegemony, in this sense, is derived from the Gramscian sense disparately discussed in *The Prison Notebooks* (1992, 1996 & 2007) and later elaborated by others. Hegemony is defined by Hartley as:

In contrast to domination (or the moment of force and dictatorship), hegemony is conceived as the intellectual, moral and political leadership which allows a class or group to attract spontaneously kindred and allied groups, and which evokes the consent of those who are led (1987:38).

Whereas Jones defines it as:

Hegemony is present, and society is, in consequence, stable, when the underlying population has embraced the world view of the dominant class as their own (i.e. when it has become the ‘common sense’ of the society); and it is this ‘acceptance’ of the received ideas that makes the subaltern classes willing participants in their own subjugation (1993:238).

Broadly, hegemony is the cultural acceptance through consent, both conscious and unconscious, of a certain dominant viewpoint. In the real world, there are many types of masculinity, and Connell has identified several of those types, including hegemonic, marginalised, and subordinated masculinities (2005:77-81). However, as Connell states: “Exemplary masculinities in Western societies are typically defined by a specific body-reflexive practice: sport, violence, heterosexual performance, bodybuilding” (2000:86). This implies that there is a “correct” type of masculinity, and Connell furthermore adds:

In popular ideology (at least in the English-speaking world) masculinity is often believed to be a natural consequence of male biology. Men behave the way they do because of testosterone, or big muscles, or a male brain. Accordingly, masculinity is fixed (2000:57).

There is a view that a certain type of masculinity is more correct. It is the strong, tough version that can be likened to more contemporary views of what can be called “toxic masculinity,” where the darker traits of masculinity are elevated and given preference over all others. This is hegemonic masculinity, and it is considered to be the hierarchically superior form of masculinity that other masculinities have therefore consensually agreed to (Connell, 2000:10-11). We also tend to view hegemonic and subordinated masculinities as a binary; the hegemonic form is superior and must subjugate all other forms of masculinity and femininity (Mate, 2017:3-4).

We often act as if there is one thing called “masculinity” and it is the way that men are “supposed to act,” but that is not true. Similarly, there is no one way to be a carnivore in

Beastars even if there is a hegemonic carnivorism which claims that things should be a certain way. This can be seen as a means of critiquing the usual associations that we make between meat-eating and masculinity and between vegetarianism/veganism and femininity, or at least perceived masculinity and femininity.

When Legoshi's friends excitedly decided to eat a beggar's finger as discussed in section 2.1, Legoshi was the only one who immediately fled from the situation. However, his friend Aoba eventually found him and told him that he too could not consume the finger because he could not help but think of his herbivore friends (chapter 25). Not everyone falls into the supposedly "correct" way to be, and not everyone consents. While some are not like the rest, who do not wish to engage in harm, the overarching culture in *Beastars*, much like real-world culture, needs to be addressed (hooks, 2004:67), but this has been explored in the above paragraphs.

Those who deviate do not receive much prominence outside of Legoshi in the central narrative, but that is because he is the central protagonist. So, if anyone was going to deviate from the norm it would be a central character. Men and, by extension, the carnivores in *Beastars*, need to challenge notions of masculinity/carnivorism to attempt to improve themselves (hooks, 1984:122-123) because we and the society of *Beastars* see hegemonic masculinity/carnivorism as the correct type of man/carnivore, but that is not correct (Robertson, 2019:24). Most do not fall within what is considered hegemonic (Robertson, 2019:25); it is simply what we have convinced ourselves is correct.

In terms of meat-eating in the real world, Adams said that "because of the dominant discourse which approves of meat eating, we are forced to take the knowledge that we are consuming dead animals and accept it, ignore it, neutralize it, repress it" (2010:241). There are those in our world who refuse to accept, ignore, neutralise, and repress it. They would be considered vegetarians/vegans in the real world, and in the world of *Beastars*, Legoshi serves this role. His oppositional nature will be more fully explored in section 3.7, but before that can be done, the opposition of carnivorous masculinity must be discussed: herbivorous femininity.

3.6. Herbivorism: A Feminine Trait

In many ways, the feminisation of herbivores in *Beastars* is simply an oppositional definition to the masculinisation of carnivores. This can be viewed as a binary that the narrative creates while simultaneously undermining it, but to simply state that and move on from the discussion would be to take the oppositional nature for granted. Instead, it would be best to interrogate it on its own terms.

If to be masculine is to be a carnivore, then to be feminine is to be a herbivore. However, is this necessarily true in the real world? To refuse to consume meat, or to be incapable of consuming meat (as is the case for herbivores in *Beastars*) is to live a more feminine life. Merchant analysed how the natural world, including animals, is feminised in Western culture (1990:2) and Plumwood further discussed how women, and by extension feminine individuals, have been associated with nature and animality (2003:19-22). To be a woman is to be defined using terms deemed closer to nature than terms used to define men, such as natural versus civilised, emotional versus logical, and so on. Adams states: “From Aristotle forward, the conception of ‘manhood,’ the public, civic man, depended heavily on seeing women not merely as lesser humans than men but as less-than-human, as closer to animals” (2020:107).

Subservience is traditionally seen as an integral aspect of femininity, as women and animals are there to serve or be served up; they are there to be used (Gruen, 1993:61). To be a man, to be masculine, is to define oneself in opposition to perceived femininity and, as has been shown, to be a man is to eat meat. Furthermore, hunting has traditionally been a male activity in most societies. For this reason, a woman *can* eat meat, but a man *must* eat meat. Femininity is not harmed by a lack of meat, but masculinity is harmed by its exclusion, because “meat eating is a measure of a virile culture and individual, our society equates vegetarianism with emasculation or femininity” (Adams, 2010:27).

The inherent connections between animals and women are shown in a variety of real-world instances, such as the fundamental connections in meat farming, in which the vast majority of the animals that are the most exploited are female animals (Davis, 1995:244-269), or how those who are the most likely to be considered the caretakers of animals are women (Chang & Ralph, 2013:151-165), or how the “crazy cat lady” archetype is inherently feminised (Probyn-Rapsey, 2019:257-271). To be feminine is to have a non-violent connection with animals and, in terms of humanity, it is also to be closer to a herbivore than a carnivore.

The traits that are most associated with femininity, in general, include passiveness, submissiveness, timidity, precarity, and various other less-active attributes than masculinity. In

Beastars, this is the case too. When Tem is murdered in the very first chapter of the narrative, Legoshi decides to tell the girl who Tem liked that he (Tem) liked her. This girl is a herbivore. So, when Legoshi decides to tell her that Tem always meant to ask her out and starts to follow her, she assumes he is stalking her to eat her. As a herbivore, she fears carnivores. This is similar to how, in the real world, women are taught to be afraid of men in public. You should never walk alone because a man might catch you.

When a predation event occurs outside their school in chapter 21, herbivore students are not allowed to leave but carnivores can because they are not in danger. A minor character named Seven is belittled and called “lamb-chan,” an infantilising term using Japanese honorifics, by her carnivore colleagues, and she feels that she cannot stop them and falls into a depression (chapter 100). In fact, those carnivores only treat her with respect when they happen to see her outside work with a carnivore friend, whom they presume to be her boyfriend, and this carnivore, who happens to be Legoshi, corrects them when they call her that term (chapter 110). They only respect her when a carnivore (and man) confronts them. Herbivores are too afraid to correct a carnivore, to be around a carnivore. They know they are in danger.

This calls to attention Butler’s concept of precarity, in which certain individuals belonging to specific groups live in a dangerous state that is always precariously perched; they could fall at any time (2004a, 2009 & 2015:33). Herbivores, and women in the real world, are subjected to a kind of mental colonisation, the kind of which Fanon explored in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004:171-172 & 246) in terms of colonised peoples, in which they have internalised an inferiority and fear that is now natural to them. They have been told that men/carnivores are entitled to them and their bodies; sexually and/or literally (Manne, 2020:35-53). They are prey in the eyes of a carnivore who is constantly watching. They are like Val Plumwood (2012:9-22) in the eye of the crocodile, and the predator could strike at any moment.

Outside of that precarity, which is an overarching view that most herbivores in *Beastars* perceive, there are other feminising aspects. For instance, when the womanising goat character Pina is introduced, he is quickly established as a playboy-type character. He engages in promiscuous sexual acts with a variety of women and does not do so in the same way that Haru’s polyamory is presented. Pina makes these girls believe that he is dating them. He is, as previously stated, a playboy. However, he is queer-coded and presented as a feminine form of the promiscuous type (chapter 58), such as through seemingly being more effeminate in general and taking better care of his appearance. He is not like Bill the tiger, who brags about women

he has slept with and is instead a seemingly perfect, queer-coded boyfriend who also just so happens to cheat on every girl he engages with. At one point, Legoshi even notes that he smells like a woman (chapter 63). So, even when a herbivorous character engages in seemingly masculine acts, such as misogynistically using women for personal pleasure, it is presented through a feminised lens.

Other small instances that present the way in which herbivores are more feminine include how Legoshi remarks that herbivores are more family-oriented than carnivores when he has dinner with Haru's family (chapter 125). Engaging with one's family is not necessarily feminine, but those who are feminine are often expected to play a larger role in overall family life. There are also cases such as the bear writer character in the *Beast Complex* spin-off, chapter 7, who pretends to be a female herbivore in his writing because he knows that people will not find his romantic work appealing if they knew a carnivore wrote it.

Femininity, the more timid attributes, and the precarious existence of it all relates to women in the real world and herbivores in *Beastars*. However, much like typical, hegemonic masculinity as discussed in section 3.5, some go against this. Not everyone is willing to allow themselves to succumb to what they believe their biology is demanding of them. If Legoshi is the one who subverts the norm for carnivores, then Louis is the one who subverts the norm for herbivores. A herbivore character who would willingly eat meat to appear stronger (chapter 51) is a herbivore who refuses to act like a herbivore stereotypically would act.

3.7. The Two Boys: Subversion of Norms

Gender is a complex topic as it is determined by a variety of factors, many of which we cannot necessarily see. However, much contemporary thought tends to create a distinction between sex and gender. Sex is biological and gender is socially determined, and masculinity and femininity typically form part of the latter. They are societal aspects of gender, although there is an immediate difficulty in this distinction as aspects of a person, such as stature, can form part of their masculinity or femininity. So, biological aspects can become part of gender.

In sections 3.5 and 3.6, the connections between masculinity and carnivorism and between femininity and herbivorism were explored. At times, these incorporated both societal and biological attributes as the supposed binaries between them are often somewhat thin. It

becomes muddled. Not all herbivores are physically weak and, at least in *Beastars*, not all carnivores desire meat. The biological and societal aspects can generally intermingle with one another. They form part of one another.

This is best shown through an analysis of those who do not necessarily conform to the way that they are “meant” to be. In the real world, this may be done by analysing groups such as drag queens or masculine women, as thinkers like Judith Butler (1990:137-139) and Jack Halberstam (1998:5-9) have done, but in *Beastars*, it will need to be a little different. There will need to be an analysis of a herbivore and a carnivore who undermine the gender norms and binaries. In this case, it will be the two central male characters: Legoshi and Louis.

Firstly, it would be beneficial to interrogate gender itself. Butler states:

(...) gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988:519).

Gender is not something fixed and immutable. It is subject to change, and it is also not something that can be viewed as definitive. When it comes to the notion of something like the category of “women,” the whole notion of it is enforced through judicial power that naturalises and reinforces a static image of womanhood (Butler, 1990:2). Society enforces what it means to be a woman, and what it means to be a man. It is society and social construction that reinforces what it means to be a certain gender. Is there even such a thing as one’s “true gender” (Butler, 1990:136)? Robertson points out that our views of masculinity have changed over the years but that there still tends to be an overarching concept of “boys will be boys” in our society, and that there is a sort of biological determinism that we believe constitutes maleness (2019:18) and, by extension, femaleness too.

The concept that will best allow us to understand this is performativity in Butler’s sense, which entails performance in a broader sense. Butler explored the concept of gender performance in *Gender Trouble* (1990), which, in their view, “is not just about speech acts. It is also about bodily acts” (Butler, 2004b:198). To understand this, one needs to have some passing familiarity with the theory that in turn influenced aspects of their work: Foucauldian discourse.

The bulk of Foucault's academic output concerns discourse in general but the concept has been more formalised (2002:89-90). Discourse is the way in which the world is understood at a certain point in time, as much of human knowledge is conveyed through language. Knowledge, as language changes through human history, is also subject to change. Each of the periods of time in which a certain form of knowledge is believed to be the truth is labelled as an episteme, which will be further discussed in section 4.1, but to understand it with regards to Butler's view of gender performance, it needs to be somewhat understood here too.

Gender, like all sets of discourses, is subject to change as human history continues. Butler's work attempts to expose that because, as they point out, gender is a regulatory norm that serves as a background for an idealised version of what we *perceive* to be correct gender presentation (Butler, 2004b:52-53). When someone does not conform to the way they are "meant" to perform their gender, they can be subject to violence, ostracism, and so on. However, what is considered "correct gender presentation" changes over time. Modern European men, for instance, are not expected to be willing to duel to the death. Or at least, not generally, yet that was considered a chivalrous form of masculinity at one point in human history.

This is why Connell and Pearse stated this:

Being a man or a woman, then, is not a pre-determined state. It is a *becoming*, a condition actively under construction. The pioneering French feminist Simone de Beauvoir put this in a famous phrase: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' Though the positions of women and men are not simply parallel, the principle is also true for men: one is not born masculine, but has to become a man (Connell & Pearse, 2015:17).

What it means to be a man or woman, to be masculine or feminine, or to be a carnivore or a herbivore, is subject to change over time and it cannot be deemed a pre-determined state of being. When discussing where gender is established, Connell (2003) pointed out that it is established in the family (157-163), the state (163-171), the outside world (171-174), and the gender order itself (174-180). There is no one place where gender comes from, and each of these abovementioned components is subject to change over time, which thereby changes what they influence.

Gender forms part of power relations, how we produce and consume gendered aspects of life, how we establish emotional relations, and how we determine cultural aspects of masculinity and femininity (Connell & Pearse, 2015:112-115). This would therefore imply

that, as everything is so subject to change, men in the real world and carnivores in *Beastars* can change too.

Gaard discussed how attempts to change masculinity, such as through the concept of metrosexuality, did not improve men and instead acted as a new form of consumerism that did not change the underlying dominant male structures in the world (2014:320-331). Furthermore, eating meat is still perceived as masculine. It may be difficult to change, but that does not mean that changes cannot occur. The epistemic nature of gender, as something that changes with human development, language, and so on, indicates that it can all change. Change implies that improvements may come from this too.

We tend to view gender as something binary. One is either masculine or feminine, but, as Connell and Pearse explain:

Psychological research suggests that the great majority of us combine masculine and feminine characteristics, in varying blends, rather than being all one or all the other. Gender ambiguity can be an object of fascination and desire, as well as disgust (Connell & Pearse, 2015:17).

Can people change? Are people only masculine or only feminine? Are we all combinations of various attributes? As hooks states:

It is not true that men are unwilling to change. It is true that many men are afraid to change. It is true that masses of men have not even begun to look at the ways that patriarchy keeps them from knowing themselves, from being in touch with their feelings, from loving. To know love, men must be able to let go the will to dominate. They must be able to choose life over death. They must be willing to change (hooks, 2004:15-16).

Some are willing to change. In *Beastars*, there are two characters who both *want to change*. This is where we finally discuss Legoshi and Louis in terms of their presentation as carnivore and herbivore in *Beastars*.

A previously mentioned quote is applicable here. Adams states:

Children, fresh observers of the dominant culture, raise issues about meat eating using a literal viewpoint. One part of the socialization process to the dominant culture is the

encouragement of children to view the death of animals for food as acceptable (Adams, 2010:106).

Legoshi is like a child. He was never exposed to meat in any real way growing up, and so when he does finally encounter meat, he is a metaphorical child. Legoshi is a person haunted by what we do to herbivores; he is wounded by this knowledge and horrified by how everyone else does not appear to see it. This hurts him and isolates him. This is similar to how one could describe J.M. Coetzee's character, Elizabeth Costello, and her response to meat-eating in general (Diamond, 2008:46).

When he refuses to engage in any kind of meat-eating, Legoshi is seen as someone against the correct carnivore order. He could be seen as someone possessing a pseudoscientific disease like orthorexia nervosa, a disease invented by Dr. Steve Bratman to pathologise vegans in the real world (Stanescu & Stanescu, 2019:205-206) or he could possess another invented malady like zoophilpsychois, which describes the female feelings of too high a sentimentality towards animals (Gruen & Probyn-Rapsey, 2019:17). These are real-world pseudoscientific ideas, but they should be applicable here too. When someone does not want to engage in the destructive behaviour associated with their gender or, in the case of Legoshi, their carnivorism, they are treated as an outcast with a mental illness.

Adams states that "Men who become vegetarians challenge an essential part of the masculine role. They are opting for women's food. How dare they? Refusing meat means a man is effeminate, a 'sissy', a 'fruit'" (2010:63). While Legoshi is never called homophobic slurs, he is treated as if he is less of a carnivore by some of the carnivores he meets. He embraces something that is, in a sense, akin to a more feminist human manhood (hooks, 2004:106-170), and refuses to become a disempowered outcast like he is "meant" to become with his refusal to adhere to the dominant ideology (Mate, 2017:128).

There is a Japanese term called "herbivore men," and it was coined by Maki Fukasawa to describe how there was a change in Japanese society towards men who did not feel the need to engage in overtly and traditionally masculine activities or behaviours (Morioka, 2013:1-2). This was, of course, co-opted by many to claim that there was a decrease in masculinity in the country, but it is an interesting immediate association. Even Mahatma Gandhi first, although he did later change his mind, saw meat-eating as masculine and bestowing a form of strength (Sannuti, 2001). To be a weak man is to be a herbivore. Is that what Legoshi is? Furthermore, as he refuses to engage in meat-eating or herbivore discrimination, is he a kind of vegan

feminist killjoy like the real-world Kathryn Gillespie describes herself (2019:122-124)? Someone who makes other carnivores uncomfortable because he exposes the negatives in their lives?

According to Adams:

The first step in the vegetarian quest is experiencing *the revelation of the nothingness of meat* as an item of food. The nothingness of meat arises because one sees that it came from something, or rather someone, and it has been made into no-thing, no body (Adams, 2010:227).

Legoshi had this experience and changed as a result. He can never go back. He can no longer act like a carnivore. He is a carnivore, yet he wants to act like a herbivore. He wants to be a herbivore. Early in the narrative, he tries to lose a fight on purpose, so he does not have to appear strong (chapter 6), and he flees from sexual intercourse, which is often considered to be a masculine pursuit (chapters 8, 9 & 43). He does not do what a carnivore “should” do. He wants to hide from it, and while he attempts to feminise himself, he does start to change.

When Bill drinks rabbit blood, Legoshi attacks him (chapter 14), and the scars from that fight, and the fight with Riz (chapter 90), become symbols of his more masculine shift (chapters 15, 16 & 90). He even embraces an ultra-carnivorous attitude when Haru is kidnapped and needs to be saved (chapter 39), and he is even willing to go for the kill to save her (chapter 41). When he performs actions such as this, he appears to affirm a masculine carnivorous attitude, but he subverts it.

This is perhaps best shown with signifiers of carnivores: their claws, their fangs, and their size. In the early narrative, Legoshi clips his nails every single day to appear less like a carnivore, although he is likely the only one who notices this behaviour (chapter 11). However, by the time he fights Riz, he no longer sees claws as a negative and instead sees them as a means of protecting others (chapter 94). In Chapter 118, he even pulls out his fangs in an attempt to show that he does not want to be a carnivore, although he does soon get dentures because being toothless is not ideal (chapter 120). Lastly, in terms of his size, Legoshi first hates his stature because he knows that he scares herbivores around him, but later sees it as a means to protect herbivores (chapter 59), which could also be seen as a stereotypically chauvinistic “protection of women” narrative element.

Legoshi's change from hating his carnivore self to embracing an aspect of it while altering it is in line with a more subjugated form of masculinity. He does not wish to conform to the hegemonic standard. He is not an ordinary carnivore; he wants to be more. He wants to be better, and he wants to use herbivores as a model for this change.

When Legoshi decides to change, he starts an intense training regimen both to learn to fight without killing and also to lose his desire for meat (chapters 61, 62, 68 & 69). He only embraces his carnivore self once he entirely denies what defines most carnivores to themselves. During his training, which is in preparation for his fight with Riz the bear, he decides to eat a grub to try and put himself into the mind of his enemy, but this attempt at a masculine life-taking "need" instead instantly transforms into a more feminine appreciation for life as he decides to never do anything like that ever again (chapters 82 & 83). He is not willing to eat people or insects. He is not willing to take a life. From that moment onwards, he becomes a form of carnivore vegan; one who can only see total liberation for herbivores from carnivore hunger as the route forward, which is what Steven Best (2014:xii) advocates in the real world.

Everything is somewhat reversed when it comes to Louis. Louis starts the narrative as someone who instantly subverts the supposed passivity and submissiveness of a herbivore. The first time we see him truly interacting with Legoshi, he grabs Legoshi's tail in a somewhat homoerotic dominant display (chapter 2). This happens before the narrative has time to establish the norms of the world, and so we are introduced to Legoshi as a more feminised carnivore and Louis as a more masculinised herbivore. They are the exceptions to the rule.

Louis, to demonstrate his more masculine presentation in the early narrative, refuses to treat an injury (chapter 5) that later causes him to collapse in the middle of a theatrical performance (chapter 12). Despite his injury, he insists on pushing himself (chapter 7) and, when he does collapse, his only concern is that the curtains closed in time for him to finish his performance as he cannot be seen in any kind of vulnerability (chapter 13). He needs to *appear* strong to reinforce his own desire to be as strong as a carnivore. He despises his herbivore body yet acknowledges his biological weakness by keeping a gun to level the playing field if ever necessary (chapter 30).

He later uses that gun to kill the leader of the Shishigumi (chapter 42) and, once he becomes the new leader of the Shishigumi, he engages in direct carnivore behaviour by pretending to consume meat (chapters 50 & 51). He also hides the fact that, as a herbivore, he cannot digest

meat (chapter 56). He must present an image of himself that is strong and masculine. He must appear powerful even if he is struggling inside.

This desire for a more carnivore mentality and physicality only decreases with two people in his life. When he first meets Haru, he is in a vulnerable position (chapter 26). However, his true vulnerability begins when he befriends one of the Shishigumi. Ibuki is his second-in-command, and Ibuki is the one who sees through his carnivorous performance and gives him a salad so he can keep up his strength (chapter 56). The two of them bond over shared childhood trauma (chapter 80) and, when Louis decides that his time at the Shishigumi is over, Ibuki forces him to kill him (chapters 91-93). He does not actually do so, as Ibuki dies at the hands of another member of the Shishigumi, but, regardless of this, Louis begins his change towards a more feminised herbivore from there.

He softens. He is no longer obsessed with denying his existence as a herbivore. He drops his hostility towards Legoshi and becomes his friend. He embraces more femininity while Legoshi embraces a masculinity that is tempered by herbivore sensibilities. The two of them become new men. They are no longer the typical binary of carnivore and herbivore, but instead a seemingly altered version of both. They both take the other side into account and affirm their roles with new sensibilities.

Nietzsche developed the concept of the *Übermensch* in the first part of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 2003:1-60). The *Übermensch* is one who rises above the old gods and becomes the new people of the world. The superior people. In a footnote on language choice, Čeika (2021:24) states:

This Nietzschean concept is often translated as ‘overman’ or the cartoonish ‘superman,’ but I prefer using the original German. First of all because the original German ‘*Mensch*’ is gender-neutral, unlike the English ‘man’ (and if the *Übermensch* would be beyond good and evil, it is fair to expect them to be beyond gender too).

While Legoshi and Louis are both male characters, these kinds of changes towards an *Übermensch* perspective and way of being is not definitively male. Therefore, the question stands here: are Legoshi and Louis, because of their denial and affirmation of aspects of carnivorism and herbivorism, approaching the realm of the *Übermensch* within a *Beastars* context? Meaning that they may be characters who are able to move beyond the ideals of the society in which they reside. There are always problems in every society, and the need to

transcend those problematic elements of society could lead to figures in that society who serve as potential role models for a new iteration of society.

They do not adhere to the typical realities of the world they inhabit, and they want to create something new, something different, something better. They may be genuine revolutionaries of social change because of their willingness to adapt and change, and, as Čeika states with regards to real-world revolutionaries: “(...) genuine revolutionaries do not need to be granted legitimation. Value-creators of the future, they legitimize themselves” (2021:14).

Legoshi and Louis deny and reaffirm the binary, but can the binary be crossed in different ways?

3.8. The Party: Mocking the Binary

When people change the way they act, they also change the way they can be perceived. However, this is generally a lengthy process, as it is for Legoshi and Louis, but there are other ways to change perception without the same level of permanence. This is where we come to the interspecies party that only occurs once in the narrative.

The party is first shown in chapter 127 and is never seen again after chapter 129, and it is introduced through the experience of a character who never recurs in the narrative. A jackal executive character lives a high-end life, but she bores of it. She wants more, she wants something different. This is why she attends the party, which is explicitly shown to be a high-class affair in which meat, despite carnivore attendance, is frowned upon as something too low-class. The herbivores and carnivores who attend this party are not interested in transgressing the binary in that sense. Instead, they want to transgress it through temporary hybridisation.

The people who attend the party don masks that obscure their species, and everyone fornicates and parties with everyone. In the outside world of *Beastars*, engaging in sexual activity across species lines is not illegal but it is somewhat frowned upon. At the party, everyone engages with everyone, and no one knows who anyone is. Everyone drinks and engages in drugs, sex, and queer sexual exploration. All binaries are crossed while the masks are worn, and no one shares their real names. It is a place to let go of the restraints that society puts upon the individual.

This is all a performance for those involved, as they consciously ignore gender, sexuality, species, and hegemonic ideals. Everyone interacts with everyone. It is, effectively, a party that adopts the carnivalesque that Bakhtin discussed as “carnival” in *The Problem of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* (1999:101-178) and later elaborated in *Rabelais and His World* (1984).

The carnivalesque is the intentional subversion of what is meant to be serious and hegemonic, and thereby turning it on its head through humour and chaos. The carnival denies what is serious and important; it undermines binaries playfully. This party represents a place for those who tire of the binary to transgress it without needing permanent change. They can transgress society’s expectations without consequences the likes of which Legoshi or Louis faced because of their transgressions.

The party is also the setting for Legoshi to meet Melon, the main antagonist of the second half of the narrative. It is also the introduction of another aspect of crossing the binary. Melon is a hybrid, a real hybrid, not someone pretending to be something else. He is introduced to Legoshi in chapter 129, where he is arrested for his crimes, but sweet talks Legoshi into releasing him after he claims that he wishes he could be what the party claims it wants. He is a hybrid, but he does not fit in with this crowd.

He does, as the antagonist, end up being seen as a liar as his sweet talking is simply an excuse he uses to escape and, in the process, shoots and wounds Legoshi. Melon is what leads to the second half’s weakening of its own transgression narrative because hybrids become a central aspect of the narrative for the remainder of its duration.

3.9. Crossing the Binary: Interbreeding and Hybridisation

Whether a narrative weakens at some point is, by its very nature, highly subjective. However, the latter half of the narrative’s insistence on the concept and exploration of biological hybrid characters does render many of the earlier aspects weaker in retrospect. It is never suggested that Legoshi and Haru could ever have children because to have children would mean that two separate species would be able to interbreed, and that is biologically impossible under most real-world circumstances. There are creatures in the real world, such as mules, who are hybrid animals, but they are, because of their incompatibility, rendered sterile from birth. Therefore, non-genetically manipulated hybrids do not exist in nature.

The utter lack of any hybrid animals in *Beastars* up until the point hybrids are introduced also indicates that the love Legoshi and Haru shared before was entirely based on personal love, and never the idea that they could eventually have children. Reproduction was never suggested to be possible, and its sudden inclusion comes out of left field.

Furthermore, as the narrative progresses near its conclusion, various narrative threads are picked up and dropped, such as a rabbit character who teaches Legoshi to fight and then the entire fighting style that that rabbit teaches him in chapter 160 is later neglected. By the end, the narrative as a whole ends on a far sorer note than it started. This could be down to the gruelling pace expected of manga authors in which new chapters need to be produced on a weekly basis with only minimal time for rest (Collins, 2019). However, this is merely speculation. Either way, these weaker narrative threads and concepts are in the text, and so they should be interrogated.

The first hint of something approaching hybrids is in chapter 25. Gohin, the panda psychiatrist character, is introduced as a character who has the body of a carnivore and the diet of a herbivore. This is, somewhat, in line with pandas in the real world. Pandas were once carnivores but then transitioned to a herbivore diet. This is the closest *Beastars* gets to a type of hybrid that makes sense within both the narrative's world and our world.

The major true hybrid character who is explored is Melon. Melon is introduced in chapter 124, and in that chapter, he murders an elephant. This is possibly done to show that Melon, despite looking like a gazelle, is actually as strong as a carnivore. He is a gazelle/leopard hybrid, and the entire latter half of the narrative (chapters 124-192) is dedicated to Legoshi's pursuit of him.

Melon is shown to be psychopathic, as well as someone who lacks a sense of taste (chapter 139). He claims that he has the hunting instincts of his leopard mother and the escape instincts of his gazelle father (chapter 150), and he was ridiculed as a child to the point where he became so disillusioned that he killed his own mother (chapter 162). It is suggested that his existence as a sociopathic character is tied to his existence as a hybrid and that he has massive biological and cognitive differences because of that hybrid parentage.

This comes out of nowhere, and, speaking of narrative threads that are dropped, his father re-enters the scene in chapter 188 and is seemingly forgotten about in favour of Melon's defeat. It also does not make much sense because there is another hybrid character who never exhibited any of these seemingly psychopathic tendencies: Legoshi.

Legoshi is never suggested to be a hybrid until hybrids become a part of the narrative. This does feel as if it was added with little forethought. However, his heritage is shown to be part wolf, part Komodo dragon. His grandfather is a Komodo dragon who married a wolf (chapter 189), and they had a child who appeared to be a full-blooded wolf. However, by the time she reached the age of nineteen, she started to grow scales (chapter 133). The intermingling of fur and scales led to depression, but, before that, there was no sign of any mental health issues associated with being a hybrid.

After the appearance of the scales, she found and co-habited with a full-blooded wolf in an attempt to leave behind a pure wolf legacy in the form of a child (chapter 133). Thereafter, she became a recluse and only once she was certain that Legoshi was a full-blooded wolf with no scales did she end her own life (chapter 134). She is not mentally ill because of her biology, but because of environmental circumstances and a belief that she could no longer exist in society with her body becoming a mix of fur and scales.

Legoshi is also shown to be a full-blooded wolf, besides the poison immunity that he inherited from his grandfather, but he is never shown to have a personality disorder because of his hybrid existence. His feelings about himself as a carnivore are related to his environment and his carnivore urges. He is, for all intents and purposes, a full-blooded wolf until the narrative decides to introduce the concept of hybrids.

Only once hybrids are introduced does Legoshi seemingly realise that he could have a child with Haru. Strangely, he never realises this before seeing as he is a hybrid himself, but society tends to discriminate against interspecies relationships. It is shown that the government has subsidies for same-species marriage (chapter 127) and that there are restrictions on poisonous animals interbreeding with non-poisonous animals (meaning that Legoshi's grandfather and grandmother had an illegal relationship), and that land and sea creatures cannot interbreed either (chapter 98).

So, whether or not Legoshi and Haru can have a child, and whether that child would be born a psychopath, is never truly explored. Did Melon become what he was because of his upbringing? That would not explain his lack of ability to taste, which he attributes to being a hybrid, but it is never implied that Legoshi or Legoshi's mother could not taste.

The hybrid concept is poorly explored and then dropped with little examination before the narrative comes to a somewhat abrupt end which was briefly explored in section 2.10. The

narrative ends with no real resolution to these questions. This is why the concept of hybrid characters was not explored in much depth in the preceding sections of this dissertation.

The ways in which the binary of carnivore and herbivore is transgressed are presented throughout this chapter of the dissertation and narrative. However, it would also be worth exploring how power dynamics and relationships integrate with this binary and with the depiction of meat as explored in chapter 2 of this dissertation. The next chapter will explore this dimension of *Beastars*.

Chapter 4: Power

Power is something incredibly pervasive, as will be explored in the section below, and it intersects with meat and the various elements of sex that have already formed part of this analysis. However, it is worth exploring power on its own terms, and in ways that have not yet been explored. This chapter of the dissertation explores the way that power dynamics are at play in the world of *Beastars* through smaller narrative threads within the central narrative and how these elements of power may relate to the real world.

4.1. Metaphorical Racial Divides: A Society Based on a Binary

The world of *Beastars* is one based on what can be seen as a racial binary. Until this point, the distinction between herbivores and carnivores has been presented and discussed as if it were a natural aspect of this fictional world. However, this aspect of the world is worth examining more deeply for that supposed naturalness. Even if it is presented as such, is it truly allowable to state that this binary is natural?

To state that any text's world is in some way reflective of the real world is to acknowledge how a literary text can reflect our political reality back on us in some way (Jameson, 2002:19). This dissertation has discussed how the carnivores of *Beastars* created these binaries and reinforced them in section 2.1. It was discussed how carnivores must mentally separate themselves from herbivores to be able to see themselves as morally justifiable in their consumption of herbivores, and this is in line with Plumwood's analysis of real-world dualisms (2003:41-68).

However, this separation is also somewhat treated as biologically natural in this narrative even though species (as we have defined them), in the real world, are partially a socially constructed entity that is problematically defined through human language despite having a basis in biology (Elstein, 2003:57), in a similar sense to how human racial categories are defined through imperfect language usage (Mbembe, 2017:10) even if there are physical differences, like skin colour.

There are biological aspects to the distinction between herbivores and carnivores in *Beastars*, and in the real world between human races, although the biological differences in *Beastars* are considerably more substantial. For instance, the different races of humans have differences in melanin levels in the skin and differences in body and facial structure. These differences are effectively aesthetic and attempts to define the superiority of certain races over others in the real world have led to a variety of issues, such as the adoption of eugenics by various societies in history to attempt to explain, promote, and enforce the supposed superiority of one race over another.

In *Beastars*, herbivores and carnivores have vastly different bodies, nutritional needs, sizes, and so on. However, the extremely dualistic division into only two categories presents problems that can be used to imply a racialised component, even if it is best to take that as metaphorical and not entirely allegorical. Although, this was perhaps best stated in this very dissertation on the first page of the introductory chapter:

Beastars does not present a one-to-one allegory and instead produces a messy distinction between herbivore and carnivore that *could* be compared to racial or gendered differences but cannot accurately be called either. This is what makes *Beastars* worthy of analysis. It denies the binary. It shuffles in the grey rather than being black or white.

However, in terms of the potentially allegorical aspect, the use of only two categories may make sense. Many narratives that adopt anthropomorphic animal characters will also turn certain species into certain races, such as *Zootopia*'s predators effectively being a stand-in for people of colour. However, there have long been connections between animality and race, and certain human races have been compared to various animal races, generally as a means of insulting a racial group (Kim, 2015:52-114 & Coetzer, 2015:40-41). This both is and is not applicable to *Beastars*.

There are some potentially allegorical aspects, but they are not as clear as they are in a narrative like *Zootopia*. In chapter 1, it is established that herbivores tend to be wary of carnivores because of the inherent danger they pose. In addition, when a predation incident occurs, in which a carnivore eats a herbivore outside the school (chapter 21), the herbivores effectively systemically profile carnivores and presume their guilt rather than such incidents being viewed as individual acts. It is perceived as a problem with carnivores as a group, not with singular carnivores who happened to fall to their desire for meat.

There are other incidents, such as a herbivore character named Pina explicitly stating that carnivores cannot be beautiful (chapter 58). This is a very explicitly stated aesthetic racialised statement that rings true in the real world, in which certain racist groups will claim that other races cannot be beautiful, such as white supremacists using Western beauty standards to denigrate the different skin colours and facial structures of all non-white people. Such statements may not be as serious as something like a hate crime, but they can perpetuate the philosophy that could lead to one.

Furthermore, there is an incident in the school that clearly shows the biological differences between herbivores and carnivores: a carnivore student accidentally pulls the arm off a herbivore because he forgot his own strength (chapter 71). This shows a stark biological difference, but the most interesting aspect of this is that it later contributes to a schoolwide segregation policy, in which all herbivores and carnivores are separated from one another and all interspecies club activities are banned (chapter 78). This shows how a policy decision can lead to very real segregation along more racialised lines, but the character of Gosha, a komodo dragon who is biologically venomous (another distinctly biological distinction between species), intentionally separates himself from others because he otherwise faces discrimination and may need to defend himself physically if anyone wanted to harm him (chapter 106).

Frantz Fanon noted that the Jewish individual was always defined by the non-Jew, as the black person is defined by the non-black person, and so on (1967:73). This is similar to how the herbivore is defined by the carnivore and the carnivore by the herbivore. This is an underlying concept that has been explored several times throughout this dissertation. One is often defined by the other and not by oneself.

In the real world, humans often wish to distinguish themselves from non-human animals. Midgley stated that “we are not just rather like animals; we *are* animals. Our difference from other species may be striking, but comparisons with them have always been and must be, crucial to our view of ourselves” (2002:XXVII). We are animals, much like how both the herbivores and carnivores of *Beastars* are animals. Neither of them is superior because there is no linear progression in evolution. In the real world, no animal is more or less evolved, simply differently evolved (Midgley, 2002:101-114). Humans are no more evolved than any other animal, and neither herbivores nor carnivores in *Beastars* are more evolved than the other.

The world of *Beastars* presents many tensions between herbivores and carnivores, but there are also aspects of stronger solidarity, for instance, how a power outage in a large public park

led to all the carnivores surrounding the herbivores to protect them because carnivores tend to be able to see better in the dark (chapter 32) or how Juno the wolf explains to a large assembled group how Legoshi saved a herbivore (chapter 47), and that speech then caused various carnivores to come to her to thank her because herbivores started to treat them with less distrust after the speech (chapter 52).

These aspects show that while there are many tensions in this world, there can be change. How does change occur? It is worth noting that, much like the real world, the world of *Beastars* has progressed through epistemic changes that have altered the way life progresses and how the people within it think. The analysis of epistemes and changes in discourse formed the basis for various works by Michel Foucault, but was most formalised in two of his texts (2002:89-90 & 2005:xxiii-xxiv). It was further elaborated and theoretically explored by a variety of other thinkers (Fairclough, 2010, Feder, 2011 & Lazar, 2007).

In essence, the ways in which people think and communicate with one another are determined by the epistemic period they reside within. Knowledge is historical and changes over time. Nothing can be definitively claimed as a fact in our world because “facts” can be superseded with time, and generally are superseded, even supposedly scientific facts (Arbesman, 2013:10), such as new understandings of science replacing older ones or the constant changing of medical knowledge. The same is true of the world of *Beastars*. However, unlike in the real world, *Beastars* is a fictional narrative that spends most of its time on the present situation rather than historical ones, but there are some brief mentions of how life has changed tremendously within this world.

It is revealed in chapter 145 that the formalised category of “meat” was only created after a major war between herbivores and carnivores that led to the present society. It then further explores how this came to be in chapter 154.

In ancient times, there were no herbivores and carnivores, but instead “nature animals” and “life animals” that respectively filled those categories. The life animals, effectively, lived by the sword. They were strong and resolved conflict by fighting one another and devouring the loser. This was simply their culture. The nature animals were instead frailer creatures who lived more peaceful lives, but not much else is stated about their specific culture.

Eventually, the nature animals accepted the life animals into their ranks to serve as protection and to help one another. Thus, society was formed. Furthermore, this society tamed the life animals to some degree but their contemporary existence as carnivores, presumably,

held onto a similar culture to the original. Then, as the nature animals continued to reproduce at a faster rate than the life animals (as is analogous with real-world predator and prey animals), conflict emerged. The herbivores, with a clear majority, held most of the power, and these tensions eventually led to the Carni-Herbi War. This war is hardly explored, but the apparent appearance of a giant whale ended it (this is the same whale discussed in section 2.10). It is a rather abrupt and anticlimactic end to a war that is hardly explored, but it does provide some information on how everything became as it is now in this fictional world.

This is all that we are told. All of this information comes from two chapters, but really only from one chapter. There is a brief mention in chapter 49 of a family dispute that led to the war between the herbivores and carnivores, but this is otherwise all the information we are given about the history of this fictional world.

This means that we can separate the world of *Beastars* into three broad epistemes: pre-societal, integration (the transitional period that culminated in the war), and societal. At the beginning of the narrative, the societal episteme is in full swing. The carnivores have been forced to repress their base instincts to integrate into a society full of herbivores.

However, how is this society upheld in the present day? It is upheld through three major concepts that will be further explored throughout the course of this chapter: the gaze, carnopolitics, and discourse.

The gaze refers to the longstanding concept of the gaze as it was elaborated by a variety of thinkers. The concept originates in the existential work of Sartre, in which “the look” is a concept that entails the way in which gazing upon something renders it an object within your personal, subjective world, and the realisation that others look upon you with the same gaze can force you to realise that you are merely an object within the gaze of another (Sartre, 2011:478-555).

This was later elaborated by a variety of thinkers. Berger (2008:37) introduced the male gaze, which was later elaborated by Mulvey (1993:116) in a more formalised sense, and this is how the male’s perspective is given precedence over the female perspective, such as through the sexualisation of women in media for the enjoyment of men.

The oppositional gaze, as developed by hooks (2003), highlighted an oppositional nature to racial perspectives, in which there is an inherent danger for a member of a discriminated group to gaze upon a supposedly “superior” group. This is also something that Fanon explored

through his concept of the white gaze (1967:86-88), in which “the white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me” (Fanon, 1967:91). The perspective of the white individual is the thing that forces a viewpoint onto the black individual, and Mbembe specifically labelled this the colonial gaze (2017:111). There is a superiority in the one who can gaze upon the other.

Foucault used this concept in line with the medical gaze, in which the gaze of the medical professional infantilises the patient (2003a:86). Foucault used the gaze somewhat extensively, and perhaps most famously, in his view of panopticism (1995:195-229), in which all are gazing upon all and thereby all lead to the self-regulation of all.

Memmi, however, noted that the act of the coloniser viewing the colonised (2003:123-185) and the colonised viewing the coloniser (2003:47-120) creates an expectation and view of both that is capable of psychologically harming and scarring both sides. This will be explored throughout this chapter.

It is first worth noting that the animal gaze is also a concept that has been explored in this sense, and this specifically shows how the gaze can be turned on the human. Berger first noted the animal gaze in zoo settings (2015a:7), but Derrida elaborated on it as the way in which the animal can gaze upon the human and cause the human to realise themselves within the eyes of the animal (2008a:4). Or as Woodward stated in the introduction to her book *The Animal Gaze*:

This book is about looking - the ways an animal looks at a human and how a human responds to such a gaze. Animals watch humans constantly, monitoring us for whatever comfort, affection or threat we might embody. In turn, we look at them, regarding them as spectacles of beauty and wildness or relating to them as fellow occupants of our homes (Woodward, 2008:1).

The gaze, as this demonstrates, is a two-way street. One gazes upon the other and vice versa. This is where the concept of the herbivore and carnivore gazes must be established. These concepts will be used throughout the remainder of this dissertation. In *Beastars*, when the carnivore gazes upon the herbivore, the herbivore is aware and changes according to it. When the herbivore gazes upon the carnivore, the herbivore is aware and changes according to it.

In the carnivore’s gaze, the herbivore realises their own physical weakness, such as when Haru and Legoshi first had a meal together and Haru was instinctively terrified when in Legoshi’s line of sight (chapter 19). This gaze also affects the carnivores who gaze, because when Juno gazes upon Haru, Haru is afraid to be within that gaze, but, at the same time, Juno

realises how different herbivores are to a carnivore like herself and she believes in her inferiority because of it (chapter 79). Existing within the gaze of the carnivore for the entirety of their existence, the herbivores are shown to have a festival in which they give thanks that they have not been predated yet (chapter 166). Within the gaze of the carnivore, the herbivore is rendered into prey.

On the other hand, the herbivore's gaze discriminates and acts on the carnivore in an oppositional sense. When a predation incident occurs at the school, herbivores instinctively gaze upon Legoshi, who is a particularly large wolf, as if he is a predator (chapter 1). This has a profound effect on Legoshi, as he sees himself as lesser, as something that must be feared. This is also shown on a societal, systemic level because when Haru and Legoshi have an altercation on a train, the nearby herbivore onlookers presume that he is a dangerous carnivore intimidating a herbivore, and the pair of them are forced to flee because Legoshi gets profiled and chased by the police because of this (chapter 29).

The gaze of the herbivore affects the carnivore and vice versa. This concept will be further explored throughout the chapter.

The next concept to be discussed is the concept of carnopolitics. This is a merging of Foucault's biopolitics (2008 & 2003b) and Mbembe's necropolitics (2019). Biopolitics is the way in which living creatures are effectively controlled and moved without that necessarily being the desire of the body that has been forced to move. It becomes a coercive force that has, according to Foucault, generally replaced the more monarchist power of old, in which the monarch could hold life and death over an individual. Now, threatening one with death is perceived as far less efficient than controlling life. However, Mbembe revealed that controlling death, through necropolitics, is still a commonly used colonial and neo-colonial tactic. Control over when one can be killed becomes an integral aspect of life.

This is where the new concept of carnopolitics arises. Carnopolitics refers specifically to *Beastars*, although it could, theoretically, be applied elsewhere. Within the world of *Beastars*, it is carnivores who need to be accommodated and controlled. There is an aspect of biopolitics that uses and adopts a necropolitical need.

In *Beastars*, carnivores are shown to be stronger and more dangerous. They need to be controlled, and so they are controlled through various factors, such as the predation registry that will be explored in section 4.3. The life, the bio-side of this new paradigm, of carnivores must be tightly controlled and regulated. However, it needs to be regulated through death.

Carnivores in this narrative do not technically require meat, but they desire it, and so it becomes allowable to feed them death. The black market, as explored in section 2.2, is a means for carnivores to satiate their desire for flesh. Flesh that belonged to the living bodies of herbivores. This is the necro-side of this new paradigm. Carnopolitics, similarly to the gaze, will be further elaborated on in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Lastly, discourse in general is worth understanding. The beforementioned Foucauldian sources explore Foucault's deep-seated usage of critical discourse analysis, in which changes in discourses through various epistemes change the way we think. There is no new formulation of discourse to be explored in this chapter, but it will be a consistent presence throughout it.

As Fanon pointed out, the way a group thinks at one point in time can form part of their consciousness as a group (2004:159-208) or their culture (2004:243-244). Furthermore, this consciousness and culture can form part of the psychological problems that arise from that culture. Fanon was specifically discussing how colonialism affects colonised (and coloniser) peoples (2004:245-293), but this can be applied to the herbivores and carnivores of *Beastars*. They have been mentally colonised by the society they live in, and this can massively affect their perspectives. However, the colonial aspect of *Beastars* is a little more tenuous as there is reference to a certain pacification of the carnivores following the Carni-Herbi War mentioned above, but it is not explored in much depth, and the "mental colonisation" is more metaphorical. This is also why one could relate the way in which herbivores and carnivores think, respectively, to the slave and master morality that Nietzsche explored (1989:57-96), even if there was no real slave and master dynamic at any point in their history.

Everyone in *Beastars* expects same-species couples rather than interspecies couples. In chapter 43, Haru and Legoshi enter a love hotel⁴, and a same-species couple sees them and looks at them with judgement. Even Haru, in chapter 47, tells Legoshi that he should romantically pursue another wolf rather than a rabbit like herself. In the second chapter of the *Beast Complex* spin-off, a tiger and beaver are childhood friends with one another, but they feel that their relationship may not last forever because they believe that things will change as they age; they have been conditioned by society to believe that they cannot always remain friends.

⁴ A love hotel is a form of cheap accommodation found in Japan and they are often used for sexual activities.

These aspects of the world point towards a need for change. Over the course of the epistemes in *Beastars*, much has changed, but the societal episteme they live within is clearly one rife with problems across this metaphorical racial divide.

In the real world, decolonisation did not necessarily turn out the way many wished (Memmi, 2006 & Mbembe, 2001), but perhaps our lives can be improved by accepting the differences between cultures and embracing the pluralism within society (wa Thiong'o, 2003). As Gaard tells us, we need to understand that “the many systems of oppression are mutually reinforcing” (1997:114). We cannot fix anything in isolation, but there are places to start. In the world of *Beastars*, characters who defy the status quo, like Louis and Legoshi, or major factors such as the abolition of the black market, may be the best way to seek real, systemic change.

The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to a discussion of a variety of generally smaller, more specified instances within *Beastars* that, in some way, entail differences in power. As Foucault said: “One sees why the analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions or even to the study of all those institutions that would merit the name ‘political.’ Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social” (2020b:345). We cannot simply examine the overarching structures; we need to look at a more individual level too because power is a pervasive entity that surrounds us. Therefore, that is what we will now do.

4.2. Political Power and Authority: The Herbivore Lion Mayor’s Ambition

Power is a peculiar thing. Standard definitions consider it to be somewhat tangible; it is a thing that those in positions of power and authority possess. A queen has power over her subjects, a teacher over his students, and parents over their children. However, this does not enter into any kind of tangible explanation of what power actually is or what it does, but Foucault saw power as something that is not a substance but is instead a relation between individuals, and it is determined by a large number of factors (Foucault, 2020a:324-325). Lynch examined Foucault’s idea of power and explained it thusly:

Foucault’s theory of power suggests that power is omnipresent, that is, power can be found in all social interactions. (...) power is omnipresent - that is, that power is co-extensive with the field of social relations; that power is interwoven with and revealed

in other kinds of social relations - does *not* mean that power functions as a trap or cage, only that it is present in all of our social relations, even our most intimate and egalitarian. Nor is Foucault saying that all relations reduce to, or consist of nothing other than, power relations. Power does not ‘consolidate everything’ or ‘embrace everything’ or ‘answer everything’; power alone may not be adequate to explain all, or every aspect of, social relations (Lynch, 2011:15).

Power is everywhere, and there are a variety of different types of power, such as disciplinary power, pastoral power, biopower, and older, premodern forms of sovereign power (Lynch, 2011:13-14). One can gain some kind of power through actions, through appearance. There are many ways to gain some kind of power over others; the ability to decide for and control others.

This is where we come to an unnamed character from *Beastars*. He is a lion and the mayor of the city which serves as the narrative’s setting. He has also done his very best to appear to be a herbivore. He is first introduced in chapter 35 when Haru is kidnapped by the Shishigumi and he, as the mayor, must make a decision about what to do. He decides that the perception of lions, as the Shishigumi are lions and so is he, is more important than the life of a single girl who has been kidnapped by them. He decides against doing anything.

Then, in chapter 36, the very next chapter, he confronts Louis. He informs Louis about the kidnapping, but that nothing can be done. He knows that Louis has some level of sway as an aspiring Beostar and the son of the head of a powerful corporation, but he threatens Louis with personal information that will be discussed in section 4.4. Louis decides against doing anything because of the threat.

Furthermore, and most interestingly with regards to the lion mayor’s view of power, he explains that he has received extensive facial surgery to appear more like a herbivore and he has had his fangs removed and replaced with herbivore-like dentures. He wishes to appear as unthreatening as possible to the herbivore majority who may not re-elect him again if he looked like a dangerous predator. It is all about appearances.

This is a form of performance that operates on the level of the body itself rather than simply in behaviour, which Butler also explored in the real world (1993:27-56). The body is affected by our choices, but it would not be accurate to call these choices purely behavioural as they have very real, physical effects on a body that then forms part of overall performance. In the case of the lion mayor, he is performing the role of a herbivore.

He has established a strong sense of self-regulation to achieve a hegemonic herbivore ideal. He is also a big-picture thinker, and, in this sense, his ethical view of the world is decidedly utilitarian (as explored in section 2.6). He thinks in terms of the greater good. One herbivore girl can die and can be sacrificed if it means that wider society will continue to accept lions, specifically himself, as members of society. The benefit, in his eyes, massively outweighs the cost.

He performs this aspect of his body in a particular way and makes the decisions he makes because he wishes for the positive effects of the herbivore gaze upon him. He does not wish for the herbivore gaze to fall upon him and see him as a carnivore, he wishes for them to see yet another herbivore; someone they can trust, someone they can vote for. He desires his political position and is willing to do what others may deem a moral evil as well as the changing of his very nature for the sake of it.

Fanon said that “to speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture” (1967:34). This lion mayor wishes to speak the metaphorical language of the herbivore to appropriate their world and culture. He wants to become one because it would be beneficial to do so. If he is successful, then he would no longer receive the fearful eyes of herbivores upon him, and he would be able to better wield power over both them and the carnivores because of that acceptance. This would also allow him to wield greater authority, in the sense that Robert Wolff expressed (1998:4), because if he is accepted as a herbivore ruler, then he will have the right to exert his wishes over both them and the carnivores.

The use of power, in the sense of carnopolitics (as discussed in 4.1), will be further explored in the next two sections. The punishing of the undue taking of life and the use of innocent life will be respectively explored.

4.3. Punishing Predation: A Crime Akin to Sexual Assault

In section 2.1, the concept of the black market was explored. It was explained that, within the world of *Beastars*, the black market and meat-eating in general are considered permissible because they aid in controlling carnivores and their desires. It was shown that the black market had dubious legality, yet it was seemingly ignored by the authorities.

This greyer legality is associated with the fact that the black market, generally, deals in already dead herbivores. An already dead thing does not have life and so, from a more logical perspective, it is not unethical to consume them. However, the same cannot be said of the various incidents of predation that occur within this fictional world; when carnivores hunt and kill the living. In section 3.1, this was connected to the concept of lustful devouring. Here, that sexual component is continued.

In *Beastars*, those who predate are punished. Predating is an undue consumption of life that cannot be permitted in the same way that the black market is permitted. Throughout the course of the narrative, we only truly see three characters who are punished for their consumption of meat.

In chapter 1, Riz the bear lustfully devours his friend and, after his fight with Legoshi, is arrested for his actions (chapters 97-98). His murder of Tem was obviously more than simply consuming flesh as it was also, first and foremost, a brutal murder. Then there is a Tibetan fox side character who decides to turn herself in to the police after Gohin, the panda psychologist, helps her overcome her meat addiction (chapter 86). We do not get to see how she is punished, but we do see how one carnivore is punished for predation.

In the fight against Riz, Louis, in a consensual act, offers his foot to Legoshi as a means of aiding his friend in the fight (chapter 95). Legoshi accepts and eats the foot. It is shown to be entirely consensual, but that does not matter to the police as he is placed on a predation offender registry because of it. He did not commit a moral crime, in the eyes of the one whose foot he devoured, but according to the actual law, he did commit a crime.

This has an immediate impact on him as the predation offender registry has a few stipulations attached to it. For instance, he cannot go to certain schools, he has a criminal record, and he cannot marry a herbivore (chapter 98). Effectively, this is akin to a sex offender registry in the real world. It explicitly punishes and separates carnivores from their possible future victims. The lustful devouring aspect, especially in the case of predation incidents like Riz or the original Shishigumi leader, is immensely prominent and so the punishment, and its sexual implications, makes sense.

The severity of the punishment no doubt varies from one offender to the next. Legoshi did not kill anyone, after all. However, it could be presumed that if Riz were to be released from prison, he would likely be placed on a predation offender registry too. He still has prison time to face though. So, that will likely only occur long after the narrative itself concludes.

Adams has, most notably, explicitly linked men with meat-eating and sexual violence (2010:65-66). In addition, the beforementioned eye of the crocodile that Val Plumwood (2012:9-22) found herself in, helps to show how, in *Beastars*, being a herbivore is both akin to being within the carnivore gaze and being subject to the sexual violence of a possible lustful devouring.

The meat-producing gaze of the carnivore needs to be restrained, and the possibility of being placed on a permanent registry is a strong incentive against predated. Kruuk (2002:xi-xii) claims that carnivores in the real world are predominantly misunderstood because they are beautiful, if dangerous, creatures, but is this true of *Beastars* too? No doubt a carnivore could be perceived as beautiful by many, but if they could lustfully devour you for your meat, would that not suggest that carnivores are fundamentally dangerous to the herbivore characters who populate this fictional world?

According to Hoffman, disciplinary power includes the observation, judgment, examination, and subjugation of bodies (2011:27-40). In *Beastars*, the authorities must limit carnopolitics. In the carnopolitical world of *Beastars*, carnivores are permitted to eat meat because it is believed that it will help restrain them, but when a carnivore steps a toe over the line, when a carnivore devours meat that has not been permitted, they must be punished. Carnopolitics attempts to control the bodies of carnivores (in a biopolitical sense (Foucault, 2003b & Foucault, 2008)) and through the corpses of herbivores (in a necropolitical sense (Mbembe, 2019)).

When the line is crossed, carnopolitics can no longer be adhered to, but because *Beastars* exists within a similar contemporary-style episteme to our real-world existence, the authorities cannot punish through ancient means. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault traces how punishment and imprisonment have changed over Western history, and by the time we reach the current episteme, the old ways are supposedly dead; no more bloody executions, no more torture, only “humane” punishments are allowed (Foucault, 1995:91), or at least these are the ones that are publicly condoned. The world of *Beastars* is in a similar episteme. One could not simply execute a carnivore who has crossed the carnopolitical line. Instead, they must be “humanely” punished.

However, carnopolitics is enacted to a strong degree, and the more explicitly illegal rather than grey aspects must be punished. For instance, the use of innocent life for carnivore consumption.

4.4. Livestock: Trading in People

In his book *The Moral Status and Rights of Animals*, Kai Horsthemke proposes a thought experiment that goes as follows:

Suppose we succeeded in breeding human slaves by and largely contented with their lot, say, by means of genetic engineering. They would have no ‘family ties’ and no ‘outside interests’ to speak of. Their being confined to some extent would be no source of discontent; nor would their having to perform certain tasks and labour displease them, as long as their basic physiological and safety needs were catered for. Would it be justifiable humanely to kill them if the need arose (for whatever reason, provided that ‘need’ is defined in terms of ‘ours’, and not ‘theirs’)? (Horsthemke, 2010:88)

This thought experiment is intended to ask whether or not it would be justifiable to effectively breed people who do not feel any kind of discomfort in their confinement. Most would likely say that this is still wrong, yet this is what livestock often attempts to be (or claims to already be). Thinkers like Temple Grandin typically attempt to reduce the horrors of the life of livestock (Grandin & Whiting, 2018), but that implies that the lives of the creatures kept as livestock should be improved rather than the creatures being liberated. They should remain livestock, but simply have a better time being livestock. Is this still justifiable?

The animals that are used as livestock are trafficked in a similar sense to human trafficking, or at least this is an argument that Carol J. Adams makes (2018:97-116). They are trafficked, used, abused, and rendered invisible. According to Adams, livestock animals are invisible animal machines, and so we only truly pay attention to natural animals with regard to welfare (2018:80-83). However, those who advocate for animals consider it to be wrong to keep animals in captivity the way we do with livestock; as future meat kept in tight, confined quarters. According to Gruen (2011), animals deserve liberty (141-144), autonomy (144-151), and dignity (151-155). They receive none of this while they are held in meat production-oriented captivity.

However, only animals can be livestock. Or at least, under ordinary circumstances. Perhaps there are humans out in the world who are kept as livestock and are later eaten, but that certainly is not the standard human experience. When humans are trafficked, it is often for the purpose

of forced labour and/or forced sexual services rather than to be confined and later consumed. This may be why we consider it somewhat horrifying when media depicts supernatural creatures that keep humans as livestock of some kind, such as the Leviathan from the seventh season of *Supernatural* or the vampires from the first *Blade* film. Keeping humans as meat is something horrifying to us. We are not meant to be animals, after all. In fact, a reminder that we, much like non-human animals, are made of meat is something that we often do not wish to be reminded of.

This is, no doubt, why it is perhaps seen as somewhat dreadful to know that livestock exists in *Beastars*. In the real world, we can pretend that the creatures we consume are not alive. We can fully embrace the absent referent and live in the blissful ignorance of not knowing. However, that cannot be the case in this fictional world. You cannot be a carnivore and deny that meat is a person. It cannot be done.

The black market, and those who solely consume the meat they purchase there, may be better able to pretend that they are not eating a fellow person, but it is still incredibly hard to do so. It would require a good amount of mental gymnastics truly to perceive meat as an absent referent in the world of *Beastars*, especially when some meat is sold whole in the black market, such as rabbits. And, as a citizen of that anthropomorphic world, you cannot live your life without ever meeting a rabbit. You know they can talk, you know they can feel, and you cannot deny that; you simply want to eat flesh.

The livestock aspect of *Beastars* is only explored through the lens of one main character. There is another set of characters who are livestock, but even their experience is through the lens of that one main character. In chapter 33, Louis has a flashback to his early life as a livestock animal/person. He was kept in a cage with a few other young animals, and whenever one of them was taken away from the basement, they were never seen again. These livestock animals/people are branded (Louis has the numeral “4” branded into his foot), denied socialisation, and any kind of education. They cannot speak, read, or truly communicate in any way. In a sense, they are feral children. Furthermore, they are kept in small cages and only see sunlight once a day (chapter 158).

Louis managed to escape this fate because a rich businessman happened to be reproductively sterile, and so he needed an heir. He simply purchased Louis. This does also imply that slavery may exist in the world of *Beastars* as one could purchase someone from a livestock business.

However, the reason this business exists within this fictional world is because some carnivores want to be able to kill someone themselves, but they do not want to go to prison for predation.

According to Gruen, in modern societies, meat is generally something that humans do not kill on their own because it typically comes pre-packaged for our convenience (Gruen, 2011:76), but that is not the case with the carnivores who buy livestock. They want to kill something and eat it. They do not want to be given something packaged. They want the thrill of the hunt without the actual hunt. They are essentially the sorts of people who pay to engage in canned hunting in our world.

This is obviously illegal in *Beastars*. Keeping people alive as meat to be painfully murdered and eaten alive is something that would definitely result in someone finding their way onto the predation offender registry (at the very least). This is the use of innocent life for the sustenance of carnivores. It is illegal, and nothing like the grey morality of the black market.

The carnopolitical allowance of the black market does not exist here. As discussed in section 4.3, public predation must be punished because there cannot be allowances made for everything a carnivore does, but there should be a wide enough berth of allowances so that carnivores can continue their lives, while consuming meat, without being punished for it. This section has shown that in the world of *Beastars*, if you have the money, you can still engage in predation, you simply cannot do so in public.

There are boundaries to how far carnopolitics can be allowed. However, the next section moves on from carnopolitics to a strange inclusion that *Beastars* needed to address because in a world where lions and wolves and bears coexist without humans, how can a domestic dog possibly exist?

4.5. Eugenics: The Perfect Beast

It is immediately strange when one pauses to think about why there would be domestic dog breeds in a world like *Beastars*. It makes perfect sense for there to be lions, tigers, wolves, and seals because these are all naturally occurring animals that exist outside human design. The same cannot be said of dogs. In this fictional world, who manipulated the genes of wolves to create Labradors?

In chapter 49, it is shown how Legoshi became friends with the character who is his best friend throughout the narrative. This character is Jack the Labrador, and he and Legoshi became friends when they were both children. Jack is depicted as highly intelligent because he has been bred for it, but that he lacks the strength and belligerence of his ancestor race, the grey wolves. Legoshi is a grey wolf, and this leads Jack to have a high level of respect for him upon first meeting him (chapter 49). It is also revealed that an aspect of their friendship lies in the fact that Legoshi does not want to be a wolf and Jack does not want to be a dog.

By the time these characters reach chapter 153, in which they are in the last few years of high school, Jack is shown to still have immense reverence for Legoshi as a living ancestor. This points towards a reality of evolution. Real-world evolution moves through a process of natural selection as one generation gives birth to the next generation and desirable traits are given preference over negative ones in mating (Darwin, 2009a & Darwin, 2009b). Furthermore, a point used in section 4.1, Midgely explains that there is no linear progression in evolution (Midgely, 2002:101-114). No animal is any more or less evolved than any other, and so the same is presumably true in *Beastars*. Domestic dogs and wolves both exist in our world even though one is an ancestor of the other. However, the big difference is that the development of dogs in the real world was intentionally guided by humans.

Eugenics is the controversial and now generally abandoned science that was most famously adopted by the Nazi regime in an attempt to create the perfect race of humans. Eugenics is the intentional removal of “undesirable” traits and persons from the gene pool. When eugenicists possess political power, as they did in Germany in the years before and during the Second World War, they tend to act against those “undesirable” people through genocidal means.

The Nazi regime is clearly most famous for its genocidal actions against the Jewish people, but the regime also targeted others for genocide. Various ethnicities, such as the Romani, were targeted, but also those with mental disabilities, severe physical disabilities, congenital issues, hereditary diseases, and so on. Essentially, anyone who had a negative trait that could, possibly, be passed on to the next generation needed to be purged. The mass murder of these groups was obviously halted when the Nazi war machine was stopped and this led the Nazi leadership either to commit suicide or to flee to escape justice, but many were arrested and put on trial at Nuremberg (and some, like Adolf Eichmann, were hunted down and eventually brought to justice decades after the fact (Berenbaum, 2023)).

Eugenics was once a “science” in vogue, but in the present day, any association with literal Nazis tends to reduce the popularity of something. Therefore, the presence of a eugenics-oriented species in *Beastars* may be something of a cause for alarm. In fact, in chapter 153, Jack reveals that the top students at their school are all dogs like him, and they are given special classes that no one else receives. They are treated as if they are superior, and Jack is shown to be genuinely worried that there will one day be a dog dictatorship in the world as more and more dogs reach higher positions of power and use their intentionally bred superiority to seize political positions.

This inherently implies that eugenics works in this world. Now, in the real world, we do actually have a long-term eugenics experiment that most humans appear to be entirely fine with, but it does not involve humans: the selective breeding and genetic manipulation of animals for our use, and the most famous and diverse of these animal groups is the domestic dog.

Domestic dogs, in the real world, are bred for various specific purposes and they are bred to be as perfect as possible for that purpose. This means that, in a sense, eugenics works in our world too. However, it does not work in the long term. We have intentionally repressed the gene pool of the dog and that is why thoroughbred dogs tend to have more genetic problems than their mixed-race conspecifics.

Thoroughbred dogs are famously bred and then selected based on “desirable” traits, but, as soon as one adopts one of these animals, one must learn the complications that come with having one. English bulldogs suffer from breathing problems (Pedersen et al, 2016), the lower limbs of a Dachshund weaken because of their long spine (Seath, 2019), Labradors are prone to arthritis (Cecchi et al, 2020), and so on. We have chosen to create dogs who have hereditary problems because we happen to prefer the shape of one type of ear over another.

The domestic dog, in the real world, with relation to the abovementioned genetic problems that thoroughbred dogs experience because of the way in which they are selectively bred, indicates that there are downsides to the eugenics model. Furthermore, the potential benefits of eugenics could be deemed provable through the extremely specified nature of thoroughbred dog breeds. This would suggest that eugenics both would and would not work. It may allow for extremely selective genes and traits, but the genetic downsides may often be unexpected or disastrous.

One can breed a race into a superior form of itself, but that race will then have issues that translate across the race. This means that while Jack is terrified of being superior, has he also been bred with the same weaknesses that eugenics left real-world Labradors? This is never shown. However, what we are shown, on two separate occasions, is theatre.

4.6. Adler: Theatrical Reinforcement and Denial of Expectation

The depiction of one form of media within another form of media, in which the one comments upon the other while commenting on itself, is an exercise in metatextuality. Generally, we would consider a book about books or a film about films to be metatextual, but the explicit use of another narrative medium within the primary narrative medium allows for the exploration of concepts using a metatextual lens.

Beastars is a manga, and the adaptation is an anime, but many members of the main cast are in a drama club in their school. Drama clubs do what drama clubs do: they put on dramatic performances. However, theatre depicted within another medium (or any medium depicted within a separate medium) can often be used to comment on something within that fictional world. The same is true of *Beastars*.

Theatre says something, like all art, but theatre, within a pre-existing narrative medium, is something else entirely. Theatre, in both the real world and when depicted within a fictional one, can reinforce or deny expectations. A theatrical piece that maintains the status quo within a world is one that simply reinforces expectations. Many such narratives exist within the real world. There are dramatic productions that do not challenge the status quo, but rather act as comforting pieces that shun critical thought. On the other hand, there is theatre that subverts expectations.

The subversion of expectations can be done to undermine some kind of authority or power (while a reinforcing text serves to reinforce that authority or power). Many pieces of theatre (and all other mediums) can be used to, in some or another sense, undermine the status quo of a particular episteme. For instance, theatrical pieces like *The Vagina Monologues* by V (formerly known as Eve Ensler) (2001) attempt to subvert our expectations of gender, or Reza de Wet's *African Gothic* (2006), attempts to subvert traditional views of Afrikanerdom.

This is where we come to *Adler*. *Adler* is a play in *Beastars* that the drama club performs at two points in the narrative. We will discuss the first showing first. In chapter 2, we are introduced to this play. It is about a grim reaper who decides to save the life of a woman he loves rather than kill her as he is meant to, and then, after fighting for her life, the pair of them die. There may be some similarities to the Terry Pratchett book *Mort* (1987), but the narrative of the play itself is not as important as who plays whom.

In the first performance, which culminates in chapter 12, Louis performs the role of the reaper, and a minor female character plays the role of the woman the reaper loves and attempts to save. This comes across as a fairly typical allegorical narrative; the man saving the woman. It has been done many times before. However, in the world of *Beastars*, there is significance in this narrative because the reaper is played by a male herbivore who is meant to be representative of societal coexistence.

However, plays can be taken, reworked, recontextualised, and rewritten. For instance, texts in the more post- and anti-colonial tradition can do exactly this, such as with works like *The Island* by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona (2004), which incorporates Sophocles' classic *Antigone*. Other post- and anti-colonial texts include Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (which reworks Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe*) (2014) and Janet Suzman's *The Free State* (which reworks Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*) (2000).

It is not only in the more post- and anti-colonial tradition that these kinds of rewritings and recontextualisations occur. Some of the most common include rewrites of ancient texts that are, in some way, indicative of potentially misogynistic angles. Some of the most common of these include the many uses of the Persephone myth that have been re-used or the re-writing of fairy tales in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (2006). These rewrites, recontextualisations, and reworkings are generally to subvert and undermine the authority and power of dominant hegemonic beliefs, such as patriarchy, racism, and so on.

This is mentioned because while *Adler* in *Beastars* is certainly a text that affirms and reinforces a certain hoped-for solidarity between herbivores and carnivores, it does also maintain a certain aspect of the status quo. This is why, during the second performance of *Adler*, it is revealed that the reaper character will be played by Juno, a female carnivore (chapter 79), and the "damsel in distress" character will be played by Pina, a male herbivore (chapter 87).

The new casting decisions both undermine and subvert the expected dominance of herbivores as the ones in the position of power. It also undermines the gender order that may place women below men by recasting the heroic character as a woman and the damsel in distress as a man. This is an inversion and subversion of both the gender and species aspects of the world of *Beastars* and so, perhaps, acts as a feminist *and* post/anti-colonial reworking of itself.

While theatrical pieces like *Adler* can serve both to subvert and reinforce, another force in this fictional world is only truly shown as a force for pushing a certain desired status quo. A status quo in which herbivores and carnivores get along with one another and conflict is rendered entirely absent through a complex performance, and that force in this world is social media.

4.7. Beast Book: Social Media and Clout-Chasing

Social media, in the world of *Beastars*, is effectively the same as it is in the real world. It consists of PC/mobile websites/apps in which users produce the content that is then consumed by all participants on that service. Some of the most famous social media services in the real world, at the time of writing, include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.

Each of these services is a means of portraying a certain performance aspect of oneself for an online audience that does not necessarily know, or want to know, the “real you.” This is why one will often find social media accounts that are used by individuals to present their real selves in a better-than-real sense. They portray the way they want things to be rather than how they are. Possibly the simplest way to see this is the way in which individuals on Instagram and TikTok will post images/videos of themselves that have been augmented through AI-driven filter software to beautify their faces. The other important aspect of many social media platforms is clout-chasing; it is easy to project a progressive image of oneself on social media. It is easy to support positive causes without needing to do something physical, such as attending a real-world protest.

This is where we come to *Beastars*. In this world, there is only one social media platform that is mentioned: Beast Book. Despite the name, which is reminiscent of Facebook, this social media platform is more in line with Instagram. People post pictures and they are shared and

liked by others. Everything to do with this social media service is shown in chapter 70. This chapter is yet another of the short side stories that deviate from the primary narrative.

In this chapter, it is shown that one of the major aspects of Beast Book is that people use it to post images of themselves with other species. Herbivores want to appear as if they are progressive and have carnivore friends, so they pull random carnivores into their photos to project an image of themselves. They perform as if they are something they are not, as something desirable within this episteme.

This chapter follows one particular female cheetah character, Sheila, who is offended by this clout-chasing behaviour after she is pulled into the photo of a herbivore student. This character is not her friend, and so Sheila assumes she is doing it to be part of this herbivore-carnivore bonding performance that has become a fad of sorts at the school. It is “cool” to have a carnivore friend, which may be analogous to the long-standing issue of those who have embedded racist viewpoints claiming that they are not racist because they “have a black friend.”

This leads Sheila to eventually confront the herbivore student, but it simply turns out that this particular herbivore did not believe Sheila would want to be her friend. Ultimately, there is a happy ending as the pair of them bond and form a genuine friendship. This may say something about how an internet performance may lead one to something real and genuine, but it is, much like the issue of the milk production problem discussed in section 2.6, an instance of an individual solution to a systemic problem. It is certainly a good thing that these two particular characters managed to become friends, but that may not be the case with the many other carnivores who may feel as Sheila originally felt. They feel that they are simply props in the lives of other people, props in the gaze of a herbivore.

When someone literally seeks to render other humans into props for, what is effectively a public relations photo opportunity, it calls to mind the overused online concept of “virtue signalling,” where someone signals their virtue by saying the right thing rather than necessarily doing anything. This concept is generally used to refer to virtual displays, but one could adopt this strategy offline, and so it may be beneficial to produce a secondary distinction as “virtual virtue.” The basic term, virtue signalling, was popularised by James Bartholomew (2015), who described it by claiming that “no one actually has to do anything. Virtue comes from mere words or even from silently held beliefs.” This concept was quickly taken as a label that the online right-wing used against the left to claim that their care for what they claimed to care about was simply for online virtue points and that they were merely signalling their supposed

virtue to other online leftists. However, it is a term, albeit with some contemporary baggage, that has some level of applicability here.

A person, in the real world or in *Beastars*, who uses a person from another race as a prop to present a better image of themselves, only does this as a form of insincere masquerading of progressive inclusivity. For instance, one could take the many capitalist uses of progressive ideology, such as the Gillette advert that focused on combating toxic masculinity (Gillette, 2019) or how corporations alter their online logos to use rainbow colours during Pride Month, as an example of this. It does not matter whether or not instances like these are sincere or not, they serve a specific function. They are there to signal that a particular person or brand is “one of the good guys.” This means that you can then trust them or buy their merchandise.

This affects those who are used as props in someone else’s world, and in the world of *Beastars*, this turns carnivores into mere objects who are transplanted onto the eternal gaze of a captured photograph. Herbivores and carnivores seeing other herbivores and carnivores seemingly bonding with one another in social media posts maintain the status quo belief that everything is fine in this otherwise divided society. There is no need to be concerned about the very real issues that plague the perceived binary of herbivore and carnivore when posts, by regular people, constantly reaffirm that everything is fine in the world. There is no need to be afraid.

The ones who stand to benefit the most from this are the majority, and in *Beastars*, the majority are the herbivores. Appearing to accept carnivores in an online performance provides a sense of cultural authority to the herbivores who participate in it. They cannot be speciesist if they clearly have a carnivore friend.

4.8. Pets: The Near-Utter Omission

The divide between herbivores and carnivores is certainly a strong and persistent one throughout the depicted narrative within *Beastars*. However, it is not only in the positive space that we can see or learn something but in the negative space too. What is not shown can be just as important as what is shown. We are shown the performance aspect of social media in this fictional world, and we are further shown that two characters broke through the performance aspect to become, supposedly, genuine friends, but we are not shown the many other carnivores

who may not have attained what Sheila attained. What other negative spaces exist then? A seemingly obvious one is the near-utter omission of pets.

Pets, as they exist in the real world, obviously cannot exist in a world like *Beastars* because we keep non-human animals as pets in the real world. We keep dogs and cats. No one can keep a dog or a cat as a pet in *Beastars* as that would amount to slavery in their world. There are no pet animals. Slavery is generally considered wrong without needing to pontificate over the ethics of keeping another person as property, but we often do not consider the ethics of keeping another living being, like a non-human animal, as property.

In the real world, pet ownership is a morally complex situation that many animal advocates appear unwilling or uncomfortable discussing. Non-human animals cannot consent to us keeping them (Korsgaard, 2018:336-340) and we also tend to want to mentally separate pets from livestock animals (Plumwood, 2005:162-163). The title of Melanie Joy's book indicates this issue: *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows* (2020). Pets are not food. They are not slaves. They are not servants. Pets are our friends and companions. However, they are friends and companions who do not consent to become either. We confine them to our homes, destroy their autonomy, dictate when they can and cannot eat, exert a level of judicial power over them and punish them when they misbehave, and yet we have the audacity to say that they are our friends and companions. There are those in the real world, those who embrace a vegan lifestyle, who cannot reconcile their belief in liberation for animals with the fact that they also own a thoroughbred dog that they purchased from a breeder. Pets are clearly a tricky situation in the real world.

In the world of *Beastars*, things are a little different. Obviously, one cannot keep a fellow animal. Fellow animals are people in that world. However, there is one character who is shown to keep a pet: Legoshi. Legoshi is shown to be unafraid of insects at the beginning of the narrative and he even has a pet rhino beetle (chapter 2). This beetle actually dies later in the narrative while Legoshi is trying to rescue Haru from the Shishigumi (chapter 41), as discussed in sections 2.4, 3.1, and 3.3. This beetle is never brought up again and is subsequently forgotten. However, when Legoshi is attempting to enter the mindset of Riz the bear before their fight, he does eat an insect (chapter 82), but this was further discussed in section 3.7. After he consumes an insect, he realises that all life, including the life of insects, must be respected. The narrative never looks at insects again, so there is no follow-through with this line of thinking, but that serves as the negative space.

The lack of genuine discussion over this pet issue reduces insects within this fictional world. They are not worthy of being considered at all. They are merely there to be pets, for those who bother, or food, because insect protein is an aspect of the standard carnivore diet in *Beastars* (which will be further discussed in the next section).

Pets, in the real world and in *Beastars*, are considered less than persons. They can be used, kept, stored, or killed on a whim. They do not even factor into the carnopolitics of this world. Their deaths do not matter. Their lives do not matter.

An interesting side note here would be that Legoshi, our primary protagonist, is attracted to insects while Haru, the love interest, is attracted to plants. Both plants and insects form part of what we are allowed to use and consume at will. They are considered to be non-persons. It is simply interesting that both of these primary characters are so attracted to living things that are non-persons in both their own world and in ours.

4.9. Can Eat: Insects, Eggs, Dairy, and Fish

It may be best first to mention that, of the things that can be eaten in the real world and in the world of *Beastars*, plants are often considered entirely morally and ethically allowable to consume. There are certainly issues with this from a critical plant studies perspective (Pollan, 2013 & Gaard, 2017:27-46), but that would only serve to elongate this discussion. So, for the sake of brevity that should be addressed at some later point, it will be presumed in this section that it is entirely morally justifiable to consume plants. Instead, we must focus on what may be considered animal non-persons and animal by-products.

As was discussed in section 4.8, focusing on the negative space can tell us a lot about a fictional world. The narrative of *Beastars* spends a considerable amount of its duration with a strong focus on meat, the issues of meat, and the immorality of it, but what does it not perceive as fundamentally wrong? What does that tell us?

The first major creatures that it does not consider immoral to eat are insects. In chapter 82, it is revealed that insects are an integral part of the carnivore diet in this world. They are crushed into protein flours that are commonly used to create various foods eaten by carnivores. It may therefore be understandable to say that insects are not explicitly eaten, but rather that food is derived from them.

When Legoshi eats a live bug to attempt to understand the mindset of Riz the bear, he realises the sanctity of life, as has been discussed several times. He even hallucinates that grub as a moth who speaks to him and tells him that insects live more simple, refined lives than the supposedly “higher order” animals live (chapters 82-83).

However, even though this society does not explicitly eat whole insects, they do render them into a definitive absent referent that is detached from their moral perspective. When the people of this fictional world need to justify their consumption of insects, they can. During a particularly strange part of the later narrative, as plot threads were being established and dropped leading up to the conclusion, there is a quiz that Legoshi is forced to play against the central antagonist (chapter 168). One of the questions in this quiz states that insects cannot communicate and so they can therefore be eaten. This is something Legoshi takes issue with, as someone fond of insects (as shown in section 4.8), but the quiz masters deem his rival to be correct that insects are complete non-persons and so they can be eaten.

Ultimately, insects are an aspect that is obscured by the absent referent, and therefore not explicitly eaten, but several other foodstuffs are explicitly eaten.

As was discussed in section 2.5 and depicted in chapter 20 of the narrative, eggs are considered something entirely ethically allowable to eat. The potential capitalistic moral considerations that would see people selling their unfertilised eggs to be eaten by others may appear strange and otherworldly to us, but that is not the case in the world of *Beastars*. This is something entirely normal to them. No one, not herbivores nor carnivores, raises concerns about eggs.

We can, as we did in section 2.5, discuss and consider this, but that does not change the way things are depicted. This is a non-issue in the world of *Beastars*. It never forms part of any narrative aside from that one short side story in the first quarter of the narrative. Eggs are not worthy of the same scrutiny as meat, because no one gets hurt, no one is consumed, and so on. This does, however, say something about the bodies of those who produce eggs. They are allowed to be animal machines that produce for the sake of another. There is no fight for them. There is no way to tear down the black market and stop it from occurring. There is no debate over whether or not eggs are alive as humans argue over whether or not a week-old foetus is alive. They are rendered silent.

The same goes for milk. Milk was explored in section 2.6 of this dissertation and explained in chapter 102 of the narrative. There are explicitly depicted problems with milk production,

but not with the existence of the production itself. Instead, the problem is in the individual factories that produce milk. If the factories that employ cows for milk are exploiting said cows, then that is obviously a terrible thing that should be stopped. However, the systemic milk industry is perfectly fine. It is never suggested that milk itself is a problem. It is only shown that individual bad actors are the problem. There is nothing wrong with the system, nothing wrong with the societal acceptance of milk. Do not concern yourself with such things. It is fine to drink that milk.

Things become more complicated when it comes to fish. In chapter 20 of the *Beast Complex* spin-off, an otter character is ostracised by his land-dwelling colleagues because he eats fish. In his ocean-based society, there is nothing wrong with consuming fish. This was explored in section 2.9. However, land creatures clearly consider eating fish to be ethically problematic. This is why the fish sausage discussed in section 2.10 is such a strange thing.

The fish sausage, like the consensual consumption of Louis's foot in chapter 95, is consensually provided, or at least it is implied to be consensual. Fish are people though. They order takeout, have jobs, and possess intricate inner lives (chapter 108). This is how they are depicted in the narrative, yet they are seemingly fine to eat.

The narrative suggests that when the whale character casually tells Yahya that society is going to adopt fish sausages from now on to help carnivores get off meat (chapter 193) that this is perfectly moral. The narrative contradicts itself in more ways than one. In section 2.10, it is argued that ocean society would be against the fish sausage idea as it would fundamentally change their philosophical viewpoint of all life being consumable, but it also contradicts itself because land creatures clearly see fish as people.

We are told, quite definitively, that the fish sausage is a good idea, but is it? Would it actually work? We have already explored why it would not work for ocean life, but would it work for land life? Their view of fish as persons would beg to differ. However, the narrative does depict them as fine to eat. The same cannot be said of land persons.

4.10. Cannot Eat: Meat and Non-Human People

If it is morally allowable to eat insects, eggs, dairy, and fish, then what cannot be eaten? People cannot be eaten. There is, of course, the grey legality of the black market, as discussed in

section 2.2, but that is a fragile viewpoint. Practically everyone in *Beastars* knows that eating other people is wrong; they simply have cravings that they feel they need to satiate. Biting into flesh satiates that desire. So, they know it is wrong, yet they do it anyway.

The consumption of meat is permitted through discourse, carnopolitical means, and enforced political power, and is ideologically permissible through the twin gazes of herbivores and carnivores. The black market is argued to be justifiable because it keeps carnivores and their urges suppressed, but it does need to be somewhat regulated. However, it is rendered allowable because the carnivores gaze upon the herbivores as meat and the herbivores gaze upon the carnivores as predators who may one day consume them.

This all comes to an end when everything is no longer obscured. In chapter 190, the fight between Melon, Legoshi, and the various gangs in the black market rages on. The crowd makes such a noise that outsiders start to enter the black market, they start to see it. The herbivores see the black market, and they see how they are turned into nothing but food. In turn, the carnivores see the herbivores seeing the black market, and they are filled with guilt. There is no longer any hiding it. The absent referent is shattered. The meat has seen its fate.

Without words, without prompt, the herbivores and carnivores instinctively make a decision and start to tear down the black market. This act of sudden solidarity does not stop Melon, the central psychopathic villain of the piece, and he ultimately needs to be detained (chapter 191). His refusal to accept it does not stop the black market from falling, and it is officially demolished two months later (chapter 193).

What does this mean? Well, the carnivores always actually knew, deep down, that what they were doing was a moral evil. They simply never stopped. It took the gaze of the herbivores, with all the other carnopolitical forces, political power, and discursive justifications falling away, for them to truly realise it. The realisation of one's own moral crimes can cause a strong reaction.

Once again, it is perhaps, ironically, best to mention Steven Best. His book *The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st Century* (2014:xii) argues that only through complete liberation, in which all injustices are combatted, can all injustices end. It does not help to focus only on the plight of non-human animals in the real world when there is also racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and so on. They must all be combatted in a non-hierarchical sense. They are all wrong. They must all go.

The divided society that *Beastars* depicts cannot be fixed if only the black market falls. The fish sausage is not a solution. The black market's destruction will likely only lead to a new, more underground black market. One in which the authorities have even less sway. Furthermore, only when the things that they "can eat," as explored in the previous section, are dissolved in addition to everything they supposedly cannot eat, will society truly begin to heal. Until then, it is nothing but a weak compromise that accomplishes nothing of real note.

The gaze of the herbivores caused the carnivores to look upon themselves and understand their follies. The gaze is a powerful thing, but can the gaze last? Will the gaze serve as an eternal reminder to never again return to meat? That cannot be answered. *Beastars* does not provide the answer to that. There is no happy ending for society in this fictional anthropomorphic world, but at least Legoshi and Haru officially become a couple. There is some light in the darkness. Sadly, the love of two individuals is not enough to change society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Itagaki Paru's *Beastars* and its spin-off, *Beast Complex*, provide a striking world that is simultaneously quite like our own and also vastly different. It is a world in which the connections to the human world are often immensely obvious, yet the general structure of the world is based on fundamentally distinct rules that also, for the most part, make sense within that setting.

While there certainly are problematic issues with some aspects of the imagined world of *Beastars*, and there are a number of missteps (especially in the latter half of the narrative), it is, ultimately, a worthwhile text that can be explored in a more popular sense to many more academically-inclined narratives. The idea of a world in which people may eat their own neighbours appears foreign to us, yet it is not necessarily as foreign as we may instantly claim if we acknowledge certain realities about our own world.

If we acknowledge the creatures with which we share our world and perceive them as fellow creatures rather than brutes we have been granted dominion over, either from a divine or secular perspective, then perhaps *Beastars* may hold a few questions for us. Is it right what we do to them? If they are our fellow creatures, as Christine Korsgaard titled her book (2018), then perhaps what we do is not particularly forgivable. Perhaps we are devouring our neighbours.

5.1. An Overview of the Analysis

When it comes to this analysis of Itagaki Paru's work, the response was far more multi-faceted than simply examining whether we are consuming our fellow creatures. According to the very first chapter of this dissertation, the thesis statement of this analysis was that "the purpose of this analysis is to show how the anthropomorphic world and characters of *Beastars*, and the spin-off *Beast Complex*, present, question, and critique the interconnection of the typical real-world human binaries relating to meat, sex and power." Now that the analysis is at an end, has this initial goal been attained?

Such a question would be highly subjective, but I think it has been attained (at least to some degree). The analysis began by focusing on the way in which meat is introduced as it is the

lynchpin around which the remainder of the narrative is presented. It is also commendable that *Beastars* itself was quick to draw attention to this too. The idea of meat being central is established early through the awful display of a beggar presenting their fingers for sale.

This is a powerful narrative moment and a strong way to introduce a concept. This introduction of something so horrendous combines both a capitalistic world in which one may need to literally sell their body to be able to live and a heartless one that would allow people to be food. The animal characteristics of the characters somewhat fall away when one starts to read this narrative because it appears to be, mostly, aesthetic, but the dedication to meat and its deadly implications will likely disturb this immediate assumption.

Animality is combined with humanity throughout this narrative, and while characters engage in regular school activities or the adolescent worries around whether or not they can find a romantic partner of some kind, one can be lulled into a false sense of security. The animal may come out at any moment. Around these human activities and worries, one is never far from the black market that sells carcasses for consumption, the deadly hunger that comes with being a carnivore, or the gang of carnivores who kidnap people and eat them. The human world slowly slips away but is always present. It is easy to see some of these aspects as analogous to real-world issues.

Some of the real-world issues are especially prevalent when looking at the depiction of aspects of the world like eggs and milk. In the real world, these are not attained through the death of non-human animals, but through an imprisoned life (although an unpleasant death is the ultimate conclusion of any lifelong imprisonment). While the prison does not exist in a literal sense in *Beastars*, the section that discusses the milk industry involves a metaphorical cage. The old cows who have no skills outside of being used for their milk imply a capitalistic cage. They could “find another job,” but much like the real world, they likely do not have the education to do so. This is all they have. This both combines the human with the animal. The physical use of the body of the animal and the mental control over the person.

There certainly are aspects of *Beastars* that are a little more unusual. The juxtaposition between the ocean and the land does not much relate to human experience (at least insofar as it is depicted in this narrative), but it does make sense within an animalised human world such as the one depicted in this manga serialisation.

However, one may take issue with some of the sections of this analysis, namely the second content chapter, that focused on the sexual aspects of the world and narrative. Figures like

Carol J. Adams have made a career out of pointing out the connections between meat and sex in our world, but those connections are more metaphorical and societally imposed than natural. There is nothing natural about the notion that men *should* eat meat even if that is often a societal belief.

In *Beastars*, this more metaphorical perspective is given physical weight. The oft-discussed concept of “lustful devouring” throughout this dissertation can attest to this. Eating meat in the world of *Beastars*, on its own, may not be sexual, but when Itagaki decided to depict the hunt as more sexual, there was a certain metaphorical weight behind that. We already often see sexual predators as hunting “animals” in the real world, and this can even be seen through the use of the name “sexual *predator*.” They hunt those they assault, and in a world in which those predators can also eat, why would they not assault their prey for sexual, power, and meat-oriented gratification?

The fact that one may not be particularly surprised by this depiction says something about our real-world society. The focus on gender, however, may be a harder sell. Three separate sections of this analysis focused on the gendered rather than directly sexual aspects, but while it may not have been an intention to depict carnivores in a more traditionally masculine sense and herbivores in a feminine one, that is what happened.

Perhaps this also says something about how our society sees human predators as predominantly male and, on top of that, predominantly expressing a form of toxic masculine dominance through their predatory behaviours. Is it surprising then that a world of division between herbivores and carnivores would depict the carnivores, even the female carnivores, as masculine coded? They are tough, they are strong, they are aggressive, they are assertive, and so on. It may not have been intentional, but it certainly is present.

It is worth pointing out that one of the weakest aspects of the world of *Beastars* comes from the seldom-mentioned hybrid narrative threads. The idea of hybrids is inserted into the narrative at a point when the villain introduced on page one, the carnivore who killed and ate one of their classmates, has been apprehended. In many ways, the narrative could have concluded at that point, but the narrative did not conclude. This could be because Itagaki Paru genuinely believed that there was more story to tell (and some aspects beyond that point are interesting, such as the whole concept of the ocean), but it is also quite likely that the narrative continued because *Beastars* became popular, gained an anime adaptation that became an international hit, and there was suddenly a desire for more *Beastars* content. The genuine

reason for the narrative's second, much weaker, half cannot be known, and it would be unfair to speculate, but many of those aspects were neglected in this analysis because they added little.

Much of the last quarter of the narrative is all about fighting, and plot threads are picked up and dropped for no real reason, and the narrative as a whole became decidedly more *shōnen*. For those unfamiliar with this term, it is a genre in manga/anime that is aimed at teenage boys and usually entails adventure, colourful characters, and fighting. It is likely the most famous manga/anime genre, and it is exciting for many. However, *Beastars* lost something when it moved in that direction, and there was less of interest to discuss. Or at least, there was less to discuss in my opinion. There was less that was pertinent to this particular dissertation's goals. It is worth mentioning this though as it may be disingenuous to ignore certain aspects entirely without mentioning them in the slightest.

Finally, the fourth chapter of this dissertation focused on a more disparate array of narrative points. Many of these points were smaller narratives within the world that showed a more power-oriented pervasiveness. We are shown that some are willing to literally alter their bodies to attain more political power, we see how those who engage in predation are punished, certain people are kept as literal livestock, and several other points.

That section does not form the kind of coherent wholeness of the first two content chapters but rather provides snapshots of power in various forms. Perhaps this could even be related to this previously used quote on power by Foucault:

One sees why the analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions or even to the study of all those institutions that would merit the name 'political.' Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social (2020b:345).

Power surrounds us and cannot be easily focused on various institutions, but can rather be seen in numerous places, and not all of those places will necessarily be easily identifiable. My analysis of various points of power within the world of *Beastars* is incomplete, but every analysis of power will always be incomplete. None of us can see it all.

That final content chapter concludes with two sections with the primary titles "Can Eat" and "Cannot Eat," and these last two sections return to meat, the point from which this analysis began. Much like in the real world, we separate possible foodstuffs into these two binaries of

what we can eat and what we cannot eat, but this binary is immediately problematic. No one agrees, in our world or in the world of *Beastars*, about what is definitely in which category.

We may say that in our society, it is definite that eating people is wrong. However, our convictions about this can change. What happens if we are trapped somewhere with no food, someone dies, and their body could serve as meat? This has happened in the real world, such as with the famous Andes plane crash of 1972 (Atkinson, 2022). People have resorted to cannibalism. This immediately shows that even people can be food under the right circumstances. There is also, of course, the existence of cannibalistic societies that have very much endorsed humans as meat. We may say with our contemporary morals that those people were wrong, but can we ascribe our morals to others, especially to others from historical periods?

We, generally, agree that it is perfectly moral to eat plants, and many see it as moral to eat non-human animals, but neither of those is necessarily certain. Critical plant studies for the former and animal studies for the latter could argue against both. In the world of *Beastars*, meat is generally seen as wrong yet ultimately necessary. Even at the conclusion of the narrative, the careless concept of the fish sausage is used to continue the status quo of meat consumption. We will often find ways to justify the status quo.

When the central narrative of *Beastars* comes to an end, the herbivores truly *see* the black market for the first time. They see and understand, and can no longer hide, from the reality of what they are to carnivores. Carnivores, in turn, gaze upon the herbivores who gaze upon their ultimate fate. The gaze becomes a reciprocal gaze that leads to a mutual understanding, and, together, the herbivores and carnivores tear down the black market. This is seen as the symbolic end of meat in their world that is then quickly undercut by the addition of the fish sausage, but it is a pleasant idea for a conclusion until that point.

However, will we get to experience something similar? Non-human animals cannot gaze upon their fates with an understanding that allows us to understand their understanding. Will we get to see the error of our ways through the gaze of the animal, or will we continue to use non-human animals for our own desires without the reciprocal horror reflected in their eyes?

5.2. Suggestions for Further Study

The world of *Beastars* is one that could provide a researcher with several possibilities for further research. The world itself is one that is perfect for animal studies in general as it provides a meat-oriented world that can draw strong parallels between the human world and the fictional one depicted in this narrative. However, there are numerous other avenues that a researcher could explore.

This dissertation only spent a brief duration on various ethical theories and how they can be applied to this fictional world. Further work could be done in this area as the world of *Beastars* provides one that is detached enough from our world, yet simultaneously similar enough, that ethical questions can be given new dimensions. Furthermore, there can be work in gender theory with the depiction of herbivores and carnivores in a more particular sense than is expressed in this dissertation. There is a strong focus on the characters of Legoshi and Louis in this analysis, but further analysis could be applied to other characters. This could also be tied in with ethical considerations as masculinity and ethics is an area that may be of particular interest in the field of masculinity studies.

There are also purely literary avenues that could be explored. For instance, character analyses, the use of exposition in various parts of the narrative, and the general structure of the narrative's subjective decline in quality and its possible relation to the capitalistic realities of the manga industry. However, there are many other possible areas of further study that could be applied to the world and narrative of *Beastars*.

5.3. Closing Thoughts

Beastars has a lot to say, and much of that can be related to our world, but the solutions it presents do not apply to us. The world, while fantastical, is not necessarily too foreign, but the solutions are fantastical. The solutions are fantastical in both our world and theirs. These solutions will not fix anything. Or, at least, not in the long-term.

However, *Beastars*, despite not necessarily providing any solutions to the actual problems that we face, can serve as a means to confront readers with certain unpleasant realities about the real world. Perhaps these confrontational aspects of the narrative could influence a reader in questioning some of the assumptions that they had always taken for granted. That may allow

Beastars to be a potential catalyst for changing one's perspective. Or at least, we can hope that this may be the case.

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