

This thesis begins by examining the aesthetic regime in the postglobal phase of the twenty-first century, which is marked by the end of universalism. In this chapter of my study, I follow the trace of the dystopian novel *Cadáver exquisito* (2017) by Argentinian author Agustina Bazterrica. Following this literary trace, while engaging with theoretical texts, enables a wide-ranging and profound diagnosis of the crisis characteristic of this moment, providing answers to its urgent questions. These include the manner and criteria by which Western traditions of thought construct human-animal relationships in the twenty-first century; the reasons for the widespread acceptance of the suffering of so-called farm animals in Western cultures; and the legitimization of hierarchies based solely on anthropological difference. In the 1970s, Peter Singer proposed a utilitarian ethics equally applicable to all sentient beings, including nonhuman animals, centered on a critique of speciesism. Analogous to racism and sexism, Singer defines speciesism as discrimination against beings on the basis of the morally arbitrary criterion of belonging to a particular species (see Singer [1975] 2009, 6). Bazterrica's literary text addresses this issue by fictitiously transferring the practices of the meat industry from nonhuman to human animals. The text's implicit exposure of the Western cultural anthropocentric perspective and its positioning of humans as the pinnacle of creation as a form of speciesism is particularly noteworthy.

In her dystopian novel, Bazterrica incorporates an animal ethic within the broader context of a general social critique, thereby underscoring the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the human-animal distinction in Western thought. An ethical regime as articulated by Singer's utilitarian conception of ethics would prove ineffective in the narrated world, as all slaughtered beings *are* human. Thus, the novel's narrative provides a clear indication that the biopolitical dimension of the crisis of modernity is particularly concentrated in contemporary human-animal relations. This first trace, therefore, not only reveals the limitations of an ethical theory based on similarity but also enables a critique of the entire ethical-normative system that has been globalized by Western neoliberal capitalism in the modern era. The narrative allows us to look behind the facade of the slaughterhouse.

In the fictional text, all similarities are meaningless, because thinking in terms of similarities also encourages hierarchical gradations of obligation, as the ethicist Markus Wild points out in reference to Derrida: "In the event of a conflict, those relations would prevail that we maintain with those who are close and equal to us" (Wild 2014, 12). However, a binary-hierarchical "ethics of difference," based on differences and repeating the dualism between animals and humans of a logocentric worldview, does not resolve the narrated (and real) dilemma.

Bazterrica's decision to focus on the slaughter industry in her dystopian novel is no mere coincidence. This particular industry, both within the text and

in the extratextual reality, serves as a prime example for the entanglement of lives in the modern world, both human and nonhuman. This first trace thus also addresses racism, sexism, and classism. This helps to show that the dichotomy between the animal and the human is not merely an isolated ideology; rather, it is deeply connected to other exclusionary (and inclusive) mechanisms that are likewise founded on antagonistic principles. This literary approach as presented in the dystopian novel serves to elucidate the broader context of a biopolitical conception of power—one that impacts the lives not only of nonhuman animals, but also of human beings.

It is through the distancing perspective of the dystopian novel that the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion—inscribed in logocentrism, at the core of which lies the animal-human distinction—become visible and accessible as literary knowledge. The distinction between human life and animal life that may be deemed acceptable to kill is therefore revealed as malleable in its definition. It is, namely, literary dystopia that can distance an object and thus make this *disjunction* perceptible and audible, in the sense elaborated by Deleuze in his book on *Foucault* (see Deleuze [1986] 2004), and thus make visible the invisible reality behind the facade of slaughterhouses. The dissent that, for Rancière, lies at the core of the concept of the political (see Rancière 2009a, 265) becomes perceivable as disjunction. Bazterrica's novel, with its emphasis on discourse, exhibits a metareflective level that is less evident in other texts. This level can be interwoven with the book's theoretical analyses in such a way that discourse becomes tangible to experience, even as experience gains conceptual force: it is not only “engaged literature” that points out injustices, but also literature as fashioned by Bazterrica that becomes politically effective as literature by revealing the dissent, that is to say the friction between the visible and the sayable.

*Cadáver exquisito* (2017) reveals the necessity of social transformation as a challenge for the present day. To circumvent the impending collapse of an ethical framework rooted in Western logocentrism, it is thus imperative to develop alternative modes of thinking concerning human-animal relations. The question that arises is: What does this entail? A preliminary response to this challenge is to problematize it, undertaking a radical interrogation of its linguistic foundations and its logocentric and binary-hierarchical underpinning. This endeavor is not solely motivated by the concern for nonhuman animals, but also for the sake of human well-being. It implies using the loopholes offered by the “fine cracks” (Bazterrica 2017, 13) present in language itself, as these may also indicate potential “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 1975, 15). Only if we are able to conceptualize animals beyond established discourse can we plausibly elaborate a different ethic, one that would be an ethic of relation rather than an exclusive dualism or a complementary lack.