

Animal's People: Animal, Animality, Animalisation

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* is a story of political violence, environmental degradation, and extreme poverty. With its provocative possessive, the novel's title foregrounds the categorical division and priority implicit in the relationship between 'animal' and 'people', and announces the text as invested in the entanglements with and distinctions between animals who are not people, and humans who are. *Animal's People* is a story of movement between these categories, of animalisation and Western traditional imaginings of animality and humanity, and of the nature of the boundaries between them. The eponymous Animal is, by birth, a human boy living in Khaufpur, a fictional city modelled on Bhopal in India. Poisoned by chemical fallout from an explosion in a pesticide factory, Animal suffers from a severely warped spine which deforms and disables him, and compels him to walk as if a four-footed animal. His outrageously disfigured body functions as the symbol of an exploited body politic, as an interrogation of racist discourses which depend upon the inferiority implied by the term 'animal', and a dismantling of the notion that there are stable conceptions of humanity and animality with stable relations to material bodies. Indeed, *Animal's People* can be read as a novel characterised by disfigurement—disfigured bodies, disfigured and disfiguring politics, texts and metaphors, traditional ideas, and conventional forms. Animal takes a name which specifies his failure to meet, and his consequent rejection of, the defining conditions of the Western 'proper' human, and his disfigurement analogises the misshapeness of the discourses which legitimate and excuse the abuse, exploitation and

neglect he suffers. Animal's disfigurement is not, however, a wholly negative transformation; his deformed body both challenges the insistence of cultural figurations and points to ways of reimagining those key figures and symbols that impair what could be rich and compassionate relationships among humans, and between humans and other animals. In this chapter, then, disfigurement in *Animal's People* is developed as a trope that questions the traditional figures of the human and the animal and the nature of the discursively drawn boundaries between them.

In *Animal Rites* Cary Wolfe argues that both humans and animals are vulnerable to animalisation; the discourses of animality attribute such bestial characteristics as irrationality, savagery, and limited intelligence to othered humans and other species, locating them in the category of 'the animal' to diminish their claim to their own interests (2003, 101). Animalised beings are thus constructed and imagined in opposition to the equally constructed figure of the rational, civilised human. Jacques Derrida describes the figure of the animal as the *animot*, mobilising the traditional ontological and ethical distinctions between human and animal under a single concept which acts to obscure the many and complex differences and similarities between humans and other animals. This chapter reads *Animal's People* in the light of the concepts of animalisation and the *animot*, developing articulations of the ways its hero is, as a literary entity, folded into a complex of political, cultural, and philosophical encounters with the idea of the animal. It interrogates the idea of the human and the animal as distinctly different conditions of being, and considers Animal's carefully plotted questioning of the discourses which disfigure him. *Animal's People* is not, though, a story about a boy seeking his rightful status as an autonomous and properly upright human. It is instead the story of the unavoidable entanglement of a self and a world, and of a human animal and his struggle to disentangle himself from the categories and politically driven practices which frame him as an aberrant and worthless less-than-human.

ANATOMISE, ANIMALISE

Animal begins life on the margins of human society, born into poverty in the hovels surrounding a pesticide factory in Khaufpur, India. Echoing real and catastrophic events in Bhopal, the Indian city overwhelmed by a toxic gas cloud in 1984, an industrial explosion leads to the poisoning and death of thousands of Khaufpuri people and animals. Animal,

only a few days old on what the Khaufpuris call 'that night', is found abandoned in a doorway, his parents, presumably, dead (Sinha 2007, 5). Six years later, toxins in Animal's body wipe his memory of his former self, including his name, and cause his spine to twist so that he must walk on all fours. In consequence, he becomes one of the most abject members of an abjected community, surviving on begged and scavenged scraps of food, despised or ignored by the local authorities. His grip on life is so precarious that he takes the name Animal, for if he cannot enjoy the security and recognition enjoyed by 'proper' humans, then he is not, he says, a human, but an animal with no possessions, entitlements, or social responsibilities. Even so, he lives in a rich network of human relationships in the city of the poor, including one of mutual care and affection with Ma Franci, an elderly and intermittently sane French nun. He joins a protest group when he meets Nisha and her chaste, saintly lover, Zafar, an activist who campaigns for compensation for poisoned and disenfranchised Khaufpuris. Zafar's efforts centre on attempts to make 'the Kampani' (Sinha 2007, 14) accept responsibility for the eruption of the toxic gas cloud, and to force them to assist in a clean-up. When Elli Barber, a young and idealistic American doctor, sets up a free clinic for the poor, she offers Animal the hope that, with money and the right contacts, his back can be straightened and he can become human again. However, there is no such fairy-tale ending for Animal, for although the novel relies on features not characteristic of realism, it is founded in the unending bitter reality of Bhopal's struggle against corporate power and global indifference.

Animal's People is a fictional engagement with the politics of exclusion and oppression typified by the plight of the Indian city of Bhopal (rather than a fictionalisation of Bhopal itself), where an explosion at a suburban factory manufacturing the pesticide Sevin created the world's worst industrial accident to date. The Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) factory was operated by its subsidiary, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), 22% of which was owned by the Indian government (Broughton 2005, 1). Campaigners allege that the Bhopal plant operated at significantly lower safety standards than its sister factory in West Virginia, USA, with inadequate and poorly trained staff, shut down or redeployed safety equipment, and a failure or inability to enforce or follow safety systems. In consequence, when a small leak in a chemical storage tank was detected on the night of 2 December 1984, the necessary steps to halt and neutralise a build-up of toxic gas were not taken.

A massive leak of methyl isocyanate gas (more than 40 tons) erupted from the tank and spread through the air above the sleeping inhabitants of Bhopal. The poisonous gas cloud killed approximately 3800 people almost immediately, mainly in the slums around the factory, along with, as Edward Broughton (2005, 1) and Upumanyu Pablo Mukherjee (2010, 135) report, large numbers of buffaloes, cows, dogs, and cats. Another 10,000 humans died over the next few days. Accounts of the number of premature deaths that followed in the next 20 years vary—Broughton suggests 15,000–20,000, while Mukherjee reports up to 60,000—but no final figure is likely ever to be settled upon as many people left Bhopal after the accident and their subsequent health has not been recorded. The remaining inhabitants of Bhopal suffer long-term health problems including psychological and neurobehavioural disorders, chronic eye, respiratory and gastrointestinal conditions, and increased chromosomal abnormalities leading to birth defects. The inadequately cleaned factory site still contains toxic chemicals and heavy metals, and these are contaminating water supplies and soils. Primary gas poisoning, then, continues to be exacerbated for the original victims and their children by these secondary effects. While the contaminants remain, future generations of Bhopalis will be unable to escape the effects of UCC's foreign risk relocation.

UCC has refused to take legal responsibility for the disaster, and has fought a protracted and hugely expensive series of courtroom manoeuvres to avoid paying for decontamination. UCC did accept moral responsibility and made a full and final settlement of \$470 million, which Broughton says amounted to an average award of \$2200 to families of the dead. The settlement calculation rests on apparently significantly different valuations of an Indian life compared to that of an American one, for Broughton observes that

[h]ad compensation in Bhopal been paid at the same rate that asbestos victims were being awarded in US courts by defendants including UCC—which mined asbestos from 1963 to 1985—the liability would have been greater than the \$10 billion the company was worth and insured for in 1984. (2005, 3)

Clive Ponting relates that, when asked how the compensation offered to the people of Bhopal compared 'with a \$10 million out-of-court settlement the company had recently made with the family of a brain-injured

American child, the official spokesperson for the company replied: '\$500 is plenty good for an Indian' (2007, 370). While Ponting does not offer a source for this remark, it chimes with a profound corporate contempt on the part of UCC and its associates for the lives of the poor and disempowered of the world. In legal, political, ethical, and economic terms, they do not matter. Legal actions by the Bhopali people lack the full support of the Indian government and legal system because UCIL is part-owned by that government. When the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Act was implemented in 1985 to process claims, the victims became legally represented by the part-owners of the company they were fighting. The story of Khaufpur in *Animal's People* echoes the frustrating twists and turns of the story of Bhopal, with its intransigent and unrepentant 'Kampani', as Animal calls it, corrupt and/or complacent Indian government officials, violent and corrupt police, and bureaucratic and unsympathetic legal processes. All these agencies frame Bhopal/Khaufpur's beset, sick and brutally deprived people as less than human, and as irritants to the profitable functioning of the corporate and official bodies that caused their suffering in the first place.

Animal's People is a picaresque tale of animalised delinquency, narrated in an idiosyncratic and unapologetically crude vernacular by Animal. His narrative style is marked by frequent obscenities, and this coarse language resonates with his living conditions, which are obscenely poor, and crudely deprived of everything most humans would consider essential to everyday life. Animal's quirkily idiomatic language is also the medium that he uses to argue that he is an animal and an avatar of conditions against which the 'proper' human is defined. His rich use of language and complex storytelling indicate that the conventional understanding of what an animal is—a being with no capacity for human speech, rational thought, self-awareness, or moral understanding—is not applicable to him. Nevertheless, Animal insists that he is an animal. *Why* he does this is a question of *how* he is an animal; that is, it is a question of how he fulfils the generic requirements of the category of animal, and fails to meet the specific attributes of the category of the human. Animal argues that because he is poor and weak, he is treated like an animal. In consequence, he is judged to be an animal by those responsible for this abjection. But, the generic conceptions of animals and of animality, upon which he bases interpretations of his condition and situation, are as constructed as the idea of the proper human at which he directs such scepticism.

The basic biological principle of a human is the same as that of any animal; that is, all animals are dynamic living organisms characterised by voluntary movement and a capacity to make complex reactions to stimuli. But this lowest common denominator definition is an insufficient explanation for human experience of self and world. Although humans may on one level know themselves to be nothing more than an, at present, particularly successful animal species among many other more or less successful species, on another level they conceive of themselves as distinctively different to other animals. Philosopher Mary Midgley identifies two dominant uses of the word ‘animal’: the first covers ‘the immense range of creatures, including ourselves, from blue whales to tiny micro-organisms’; the second, however, is the more common usage in which we ‘contrast all other organisms with our own species, speaking of *animals* as distinct from humans’ (2004, 135). Both of these understandings are used readily in everyday life, but the word ‘animal’ can be used to ‘draw a hard dramatic black line across this continuum’ (Midgley 2004, 136). Although the species *Homo sapiens* is encircled by the definition of ‘animal’, the concept of humanity is not; the human being as an imagined state is thus outside the state of being an animal or the conceptual characteristics of animality.

If one believes that humans and other animals share a basic set of conditions for life, but that human engagement with life is qualitatively distinct from that of all other animals, then there is a tacit agreement that the differences between humans and animals are of more significance than the shared characteristics. If, therefore, Animal declares himself to be a non-human animal he must have a set of categorisations that defines what a human is—a list of qualities that he cannot find in himself. For Animal, humans possess distinctive qualities that exceed the base animal state, so that even if a human is an animal who differs from other animals only in the way all species are physically and cognitively distinct from each other, a human is also distinctively not an animal by virtue of a set of physical and cognitive advantages. Ideas about the general category of animal as an inferior state emerge from a tangle of biological, metaphysical, and theological conceptualisations of what a human is.

If we want to know what an animal is, there are many philosophical and scientific theses to turn to. Thomas Sebeok, for example, describes the biological category of animal as a living system maintained in a system of negative entropy—the concentrating of a stream of order on itself by an organism, thus (temporarily) escaping the atomic chaos sought

by entropy, or the decay of systems (1988, 63). Or in other words, an animal is the fleeting (in terms of cosmic time) combination of atoms into a living body, a brief Bergsonian eddy in the current of space and time. This conceptualisation does not, however, explain anything about the nature of life or about a living, breathing, animated body, and an animal, human or otherwise, does not experience itself as a brief coalescing of matter, or as a set of transmutative processes. Certainly, for humans at least, this does not even begin to explain how it is possible for a human to ask what an animal is, and the capacity to ask such a question is, humans believe, what makes us distinctively different. Indeed, Tim Ingold (1988, 3) observes that the question of what an animal is tends to be construed as a question about ourselves. In talking of animals, we are, in fact, articulating the ways in which we are distinctively not animal, and imagining ourselves as the positive property in a structure which automatically relegates non-human animals (beings we assume are unable to question what they are) to inferior status. Thinkers across human intellectual history have wrestled with articulating terms, conditions and categories which will explain the ways in which humans may or may not differ from all other animals. The thinking of Aristotle, Descartes and Linnaeus stakes out an indicative range of the arguments relevant to this discussion.

Aristotle's treatises in *The Parts of Animals* represent the first systematic, biological classification of animals: organisms are divided into *vegetalia* and *animalia*, with animals further divided into *sanguineous* and *bloodless* (c. 350 BCE, 1.2). Aristotle includes humans in the category of *animalia*, and his detailed genera are, apparently, based on first-hand observations which sought meaningful biological and behavioural criteria with which to group species, but some of his interpretations are distinctly metaphysical. Aristotle describes man as a 'political animal' and does so as a biologist, defining man as by nature endowed with speech, reason, and a sense of morality. With these natural capacities, he can articulate the ethical foundations of a just *polis* of those beings with the same natural capacities (c. 350 BCE, 10). In the just city, however, only men—men like Aristotle—are fully in possession of these natural capacities. Women (for whom—a neat trick this—silence is the character of their particular virtue), children and slaves are discursively divested of the rational speech of the political animal (c. 350 BCE, 36). Rene Descartes also treated speech as central to the identity of the human, for language is tied to the rational, immaterial, and transcendent soul possessed only

by humans, whereas animals, being speechless, are less intelligent than even the most ‘dull-witted or stupid’ of men (1985 [1637], 140). For Descartes, the reasonable soul stakes out an absolute category of human difference from ‘beasts’ (1985 [1637], 140). The effects of Descartes’s and Aristotle’s thinking have lingered into the twenty-first century.

In the eighteenth century, Carolus Linnaeus drew up the foundations of modern natural history in his binomial system of taxonomy, *Systema Naturae*, which sought to understand the natural world and to describe its laws with a methodical system of naming and classification. According to Paul Farber, Linnaeus acknowledged that ‘his method did not reflect any “real” order in nature’, but was an artificial system which attempted to articulate God’s plan in it (2000, 8). Giorgio Agamben, though, addresses the tension for Linnaeus between what he believed natural science dictated about the correct classification of humans, and theological disapproval of its more appropriate location. Linnaeus, says Agamben, explains in *Menniskans Cousiner (Man’s Cousins)* that natural science can see no meaningful difference between anthropoid apes and man, although he acknowledges that there is a clear difference at the moral and theological level (2004, 23).

Linnaeus places humans in the family *Hominidae*—the great apes—but, against his better judgement as a naturalist, separates them from other apes into the genus *Homo*, species *sapiens*; he does not, however, leave the matter there. Agamben argues that

Linnaeus’s genius consists not so much in the resoluteness with which he places man among the primates as in the irony with which he does not record—as he does with the other species—any specific identifying characteristic next to the generic name *Homo*, only the old philosophical adage: *nosce te ipsum* [know yourself]. (2004, 25)

In Linnaeus’s classification, says Agamben, man lacks any specific identifying characteristic other than self-knowledge: ‘man is the being which recognises itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human*’ (2004, 25). Taxonomy recognises that the living world is immensely complex, and peppered with ambiguities which impede absolute taxonomic classification, and biologist Richard Whittaker observes that taxonomic classes ‘are products of human contemplation of the living world ... [and] the various systems may be judged by their relative success in expressing those broad relationships

which seem most important' (1959, 221). A taxonomy is, thus, a provisional representation of what seems significant to humans at a given time, and the taxonomic relationships between the members of the family of *Hominidae* remain subject to how humans perceive their significance among other apes.

Animal's People's Animal was born to human parents, and therefore, as Darwin tells us, he is, phylogenetically, *Homo sapiens*, a vertebrate, mammalian, primate species in the kingdom Animalia. He, like all other humans, is thus taxonomically an animal and an ape, but located in a separate genus (genus *Homo*) from our closest relatives, the chimpanzees (genus *Pan*). Taxonomists do not, however, agree on the taxonomic correctness of separating humans from other closely related members of the order Primates. In *The Third Chimpanzee* Jared Diamond defines taxonomists as either traditional or cladistic. Traditional taxonomists group

species into higher categories by making somewhat subjective evaluations of how important the differences between species are ... [and] place humans in a separate family because of distinctive functional traits like large brain and bipedal posture. (2002, 20)

Cladistic taxonomists argue that humans should be in the same genus as chimpanzees and pygmy chimpanzees (bonobos) so that there are three *Homo* species, with a good argument for including gorillas as a fourth (Diamond 2002, 21). Tom Tyler, however, points out that even if the cladistic view seems less anthropocentrically exclusive, '[r]eclassifying chimpanzees as humans suggests once more that humans are in some sense prior to, or preeminent among, the great apes' (2012, 252). He suggests that humans can discover 'a new "we"' if the chimpanzee genus name *Pan*, stemming from the Greek meaning 'all', is taken to apply to *every* one of the species within our chimpanzee genus, including humans (2012, 252–253). Such fine principles and tinkering with words offer little to alleviate Animal's immediate suffering, and Linnaeus's dictum to know himself leaves him, paradoxically, unable to recognise himself as a human. Like the traditional taxonomists, and unlike Linnaeus, Animal sees bipedalism as an essential defining characteristic of the human, and his failure to be bipedal signifies his failure to be properly human.¹ For him, his warped posture is a disfiguration of the natural form of a human, deviating too far from the standard model for easy assimilation into ordinary human life.

Animal's most striking physical feature is that he walks, he says, 'on four feet' (Sinha 2007, 11), although at some unremembered point in the past he 'walked on two feet just like a human being' (1). He does not, in fact, have four feet, but is instead obliged to employ his hands in the same way as he would feet as a consequence of having a spine 'twisted like a hairpin, [so that] the highest part of me was my arse' (15). To Animal, his contorted and tormented body represents a horrible and categorical failure, a failure to resemble the distinctively human form of the biped. He avoids mirrors, expresses his 'raw disgust' (2) at the sight of his own shadow's shape on the ground, and rages against everything that needs only two points of contact with the ground to function efficiently and normally. His 'list of jealousies' (2) includes women carrying pots on their heads, children playing hopscotch, performing bears, a one-legged beggar with a crutch, goalposts, possibly a bicycle. These are entities which meet the specification of their own kind or function, and fit the niche the human world prescribes for them. Animal fits no functional niches or standard specifications, but his appearance does suggest a simple and reductive category to tidy up his awkward nonconformity. His ape-like form and quadrupedal department gesture towards the animal forebears of the modern human, and the regression implied by this resemblance aligns him with ideas of the uncivilised, the savage and the less-than-human. Animal is bound up in a human social network of physical, categorical and behavioural expectations, all of which he fails to meet, so that his refractory body is located in a discordant relationship with a world that, in contrast, goalposts and women carrying pots seem to slip into with such ease.

As indicated by Aristotle's *The Parts of Animals*, circa 350 BCE, the human search for an order in nature has a long history. The method and science of this search accelerated in modernity, enabled by advances in technology and natural philosophy, but the enlarged understanding of nature these advances provided did not necessarily promote a radical epistemic break from a sense of an underlying, pre-existing natural order. In believing in resemblance as a form of supposedly natural ordering—a system of metaphysical prototypes—which expresses what is either human or animal, Animal could be described as a Platonist, comparing himself with some *sui generis* of humanness. He argues that 'if I agree to be a human being, I'll also have to agree that I'm wrong-shaped and abnormal' (Sinha 2007, 208), articulating his faith in a Platonic idea that there are definitive properties with which a normal

human body must accord. He describes himself as having an 'invisible other self' (139) which stands upright, and which emerges from the point where his spine twists. This imaginary perfect form torments him with its impossibility. Two-footedness and an upright body are properties of humanness, properties which Animal's twisted body does not express. If he does not express the exemplary properties of a human body then he must be expressing those of another kind of body, and in expressing the property of quadrupedalism, he has a share of a generic notion of animalness. Animals are not, of course, generically quadrupedal, but for Animal, four-footedness is a demonstration of general non-exemplification and non-conformance to human being as the pinnacle of evolutionary achievement. And to him, four-footedness qualifies him not just for exclusion from the conceptual glory of being human, but also from its physical privileges, comforts, and security.

Animal observes that '[t]he world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level' (Sinha 2007, 2), the eye level, that is, of a standard human body. His eyes, however, are at crotch level where a '[w]hole nother world it's' (2). Down here, Animal knows 'which one hasn't washed his balls', he 'can smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides ... , farts smell extra bad' (2), and it stinks, literally and metaphorically. And it is not just that the air smells less sweet down at the excremental level—any physically disabled person's engagement with ordinary human life is of a distinctly inferior nature. Disabled People International (DPI) distinguishes between impairment as a 'functional limitation within the individual', and disability as 'the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers' (1982, 1). These terms, says Dan Goodley, medicalise impairment and 'politicise disability' (2011, 8). The spinal twist that forces Animal down on all fours limits the functionality of his hands, effectively disbaring him from interaction with humans and the features of the human world in the way they expect. The business of the world goes on above his head, its machinery controls, pedals, door knobs, tables and chairs intended for an upright body with two hands free to press buttons or carry trays. Whereas the medical framing of 'impairment' as a biological or other difference locates the fault of the disconnect between an impaired body and 'normal' life in that individual, 'disability' draws attention to the assumption that the furnishing of the world according to a 'normal' human body is natural. Animal's crotch-level eye line disfigures this normality. For him, damaged by

industrial poisons, it is the world that has disabled him and obstructed his access to it, and then, as a final twist, excluded him for his inability to interact with the human world in a human way. In doing so, the world of humans makes no distinction between disabled humans and animals, for they are equally not taken account of in its geography. Conflating animals with human disablement via the body of a boy named Animal, who walks as if a four-footed animal, does not, though, analogise disability and animals. Rather, it foregrounds that all beings who differ from ‘normal’ humans are equally excluded from sharing any part of an environment that has been made ‘natural’ to those humans.

Animal’s friends describe him as ‘like a monkey’, and a ‘baboon’ (Sinha 2007, 77) and these are companionable comparisons rather than definitions, but when his fellow orphans call him ‘Animal, jungli Animal’, Animal muses ruefully that ‘some things have a logic that can’t be denied’ (16). He takes their mockery as his name, in an ironic move which points out that his animalisation is confirmed and reinforced by the bestial behaviours which result from his original animalisation. This vicious circle is exemplified by Animal’s apparent capitulation to a set of beastly behaviours long since subdued by more civilised humans. In one of his early lapses Animal bites a child who accidentally knees him in the face during a game of football, his knee-height head being vulnerable to kicking legs and his teeth more readily available as retributive weapons than his fists. There is something particularly wild and savage about a vision of bared, spittle-coated incisors, and humans, having devoted considerable effort to developing sophisticated and effective hand-held tools of maiming and destruction that obviate the need for violence as intimate and personally risky as biting, locate biting outside proper human behaviour. Biting humans unsettle a belief that animals bite because they are animals, while humans do not because they are not; biters breach the veneer of human civilised behaviour, and open up a vision of the primitive chaos that would follow a failure to label a biter like Animal as beastly. As Mary Midgley argues, the animal ‘is a symbol for the forces which we fear in our own nature, and do not regard as a true part of it’ (1988, 35). This symbol is a dramatisation of natural forces, of ‘our “animal nature” [which] exists already as a Trojan horse within the human gates. Only constant vigilance can stop it playing an active part in human life’ (Midgley 1988, 35). Animal’s acquiescence to his ‘animal passions’ marks him as less like a rational human and more like a savage beast.

Savagery is not Animal's only crime; he has other appetites which confirm his descent from humanity to animality. His extreme poverty leaves him persistently on the point of starvation, and hunger drives him to scavenge the scrapings of other people's meals from restaurant bins (in the company of his scavenging colleague, a dog), to eat a vulture's egg he finds on the city dump—a scavenger eating a scavenger—and even chew lumps of dry, horny skin which he breaks from his own feet. These menu items would not generally be treated as food by humans, but to hungry Animal, waste and conventionally inedible matter are made edible, and even tasty, by necessity. He has not the luxury of discrimination, for his life on the farthest margins of a marginalised people insists that there is no place for civilised delicacy in his diet. Linnaeus, among some other rather dubious subspecific classifications in *Homo*, provided a taxonomic location, *Homo sapiens feras*, to describe wolf-children, and although of the three characteristic features of *ferus*—*tetrapus*, *mutus* and *hirsutus*—Animal expresses only walking on all fours, ferality describes the nature of his exclusion. Feral children in Linnaeus's taxonomy are, says Agamben, 'the messengers of man's inhumanity, the witness to his fragile identity' (2004, 30), and as Animal lurks among the rubbish of human civilisation the discomfiting sight of his human face upon his animal body with its animal eating habits dislodges any sense of certainty that human behaviour is absolutely distinct from that attributed to non-humans. Agamben further draws attention to Pico della Mirandola's thesis in *On the Dignity of Man*, that 'man was created without a definite model ... and must shape it at his own discretion in either bestial or divine form' (2004, 30). In this formulation, Animal is doubly damned, for in gnawing old bones found on the city dump, he has either deliberately shaped himself in degenerate, bestial form, or is unable to exercise a discretion proper to a human because he is instead already a beast. Animal's vile eating habits—especially his willingness to consume his own skin—are a figuration of the fear that those immoderate fleshly urges supposedly superseded by rational, civilised human society have not been left behind in our animal past, and the proper human risks being consumed by them at any time.

Steve Baker, in *Picturing the Beast*, observes that, in language, the animal comparison is almost always negative and suggestive of contempt. An exception to this (if a rather superficial one), says Baker, is sexual predation (2001, 87). Animal—who is the proud bearer of an exaggeratedly large appendage, his famous 'lund' (Sinha 2007, 46), or

penis—illustrates that such a comparison, while made from contradictory and competing connotations, tends to reinforce the belief that animal behaviour is governed and limited by the urge to reproduce, while non-animal humans have freed themselves from such base compulsions to pursue higher and nobler ends. Animal's friends joke to him, 'My god what a lund. Fucker is made like a donkey ... Jaanvar you are hung like ... a jaanvar' (Sinha 2007, 46). While being 'hung like a jaanvar'² earns Animal the admiration of his male companions and, indeed, provides him with some 'joy' (46) in his otherwise joyless existence, it offers only solitary pleasures. He is often accused of having doggy-fashion sex with his street-dog companions, but, in truth, the resilience of his virginity torments him. Unable to lure Nisha, whom he adores, away from Zafar, or to pay for the temporary affections of a prostitute, Animal's lust distracts him constantly. He complains that his penis is 'a relentless monster, no peace does it give me, always it's demanding, demanding, in my hand it feels hot and stupid' (226). Plagued by irrepressible erections at inappropriate times, he views it as 'beastly', and a 'brute', and demands to know 'who's in control here?' (226). His penis, he imagines, is a separate entity to his intellect—mindless matter warring for control over his thoughts and actions—and, in keeping with widely held cultural analogies of uncontrolled lust with animality, he believes that his uncontrollable passions represent the victory of animal bodily and instinctual irrationality over human rational mind.³

Jealous of the time Zafar spends alone (quite innocently) with Nisha, Animal drugs his rival in an attempt to suppress his supposed ardour. He hopes that the drugs he administers to Zafar in his tea will make him too sick to trouble Nisha's modesty, and at the same time reduce Zafar's transcendent saintliness by making him as subject to bodily urges as Animal is himself. This project does not produce the desired results, for the drugs are made of the aphrodisiac *datura*, thus forcing Zafar to exercise great, and therefore very saintly restraint. Moreover, Zafar later proves that his rational mind has absolute control over the mindless demands of his body when he endures a hunger strike almost to the point of death. For Animal, then, Zafar seems to exhibit an exemplary humanity that serves to highlight his own ungovernable libido, and to further condemn his behaviour and refractory body as too bestial to be human. We should not, though, take this simple opposition at face value. Zafar's hyperbolic abstinence and Animal's engrossed and beastly penis draw attention to the exaggerated proportions of the opposition between

virtuous humanity and beastly lustiness, and to its significance in marking the boundaries of the proper human. Here, a penis and a saintly body, traditional symbolic tools of ideological control, are remade as the figurative, extravagant tools of irony.

Human hands are tools, and Martin Heidegger saw them as the means for humans to ‘grasp’ the world in a way that makes them distinctively not animal. Animal, whose quadrupedal posture inhibits the freedom of his hands to engage with the world and manipulate it at will, fails Heidegger’s metaphysical test of the ‘proper’ human relationship with the world. Derrida, in ‘*Geslecht II: Heidegger’s Hand*’, chases down Heidegger’s assertion that apes, for example, have organs that can grasp, but have no hands. He interprets Heidegger’s hand not as a metaphor to explain how a human can conceptually grasp the world, but as the essential difference from organs that are only prehensile paws, claws or talons, and between which there is an infinite gap of being (1986, 173). ‘[M]an’, says Heidegger, ‘is not merely *part of the world* but is also master and servant of the world in the sense of “*having*” world’, whereas ‘the animal is *poor in world*’ (Heidegger 1998, 177; quoted in Derrida 2008, 153). For Heidegger, says Derrida, the animal

can only *take hold of, grasp, lay hands on the thing*. The organ can *only* take hold of and manipulate the thing insofar as, in any case, it does not have to deal with the thing *as such*, does not let the thing be what it is in its essence. (1986, 175)

An animal cannot *have* the world because it cannot grasp its essence—it knows only things, not objects or their conceptualisation—whereas human understanding of the world is implicit in our engagement with it, placing humans not as a simple part of the world but ‘over against’ it in a “*having*” of world’ (Heidegger 1998, 176–177; quoted in Derrida 2008, 152). Through the hand’s capacity to use and manipulate tools and the world, and to encounter the world as ‘ready-to-hand’, a specifically human relation with the world is established. This proposition, says Derrida, marks Heidegger’s text with a metaphysical humanism that inscribes an ‘absolute oppositional limit’ (1986, 172–173) between humans and animals. For Heidegger, an animal’s relation to the world is irrevocably of a different quality from that of a human, in a formulation of animalness which encloses animality in its ‘organic-biologic programs’ (Derrida 1986, 172–173), and separates humans irretrievably from the rest of the world.

To wilfully misuse Heidegger's concept of grasping, Animal can, in one sense, grasp the world, and in another cannot. He has human language with which to grasp the world conceptually, and is present to himself as a being. However, his inability to complete the connection between hand, speech and thought frustrates the mode of being which enables him to conceive of things as objects. He refers to his hands as feet and paws, and observes that 'if you go on all fours you have only one hand plus mouth free to carry things' (Sinha 2007, 25), and claims that '[a]n animal must use its mouth, no other tool does it have' (26). Thus, although Animal has hands, his flawed capacity to make use of the tools of thought (his hands) means that his capacity to 'stand over against' the world is defective; the world and its 'equipment' are for him *conceptually* waiting to be used, but not *actually* 'ready-to-hand' (Heidegger 1962, 98–100). Animal's relationship to the world is instead characterised by an *unreadiness-to-hand* in which, rather than achievement being hindered by the breakage or obstinacy of an external object, the limitation lies in his own recalcitrant body; his hands are no longer the unnoticed, untheorised manipulators of the world, but are instead the locus of a fracture with ordinary human life. The disfigurement of Animal's grasp on the world from readiness to unreadiness introduces a zone of uncertainty into what Matthew Calarco describes as Heidegger's uncritical acceptance of 'two basic tenets of ontotheological anthropocentrism: that human beings and animals can be clearly and cleanly distinguished in their essence; and that such a distinction between human beings and animals even needs to be drawn' (2008, 30). Crucially, here Animal's hands as the non-expression of a human essence do not figure the idea that simply because he can no longer physically grasp, he is therefore not human; his hands can instead be seen as a disfiguration—a making incongruous or unseemly—of a fundamental metaphysical figure of human distinction and definition.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger argues that a lizard lying upon a rock is in its own relation with that rock in that, if moved from its position, the lizard will return to it in order to lie in the sun, but will not relate to that rock *as* rock. He suggests that the word 'rock' should be crossed out, but

if we cross out the word we do not simply mean to imply that something else is in question here or is taken as something else. Rather we imply that whatever it is is not accessible to it *as a being*. The blade of grass that the

beetle crawls up ... is not a blade of grass for it at all; it is not something possibly destined to become part of the bundle of hay with which the peasant will feed his cow. The blade of grass is simply a beetle-path. (1995, 197–198)

Lizards and beetles have no awareness of rocks and grass; they cannot ponder upon the abstract potential of the furniture of the world, and cannot therefore encounter the existence of an object or being *as such* beyond the immediate but unreflected-upon facility it provides, or need it meets. All animals, this formulation says, live in the same limited relation to the world, and this is a reductive animalising which provides all animals with a set of common features which define them over against the human. Animal meets a lizard on a rock in the sun who, upon pleading successfully with the starving, humanity-rejecting Animal not to eat it, tells him that ‘your nature you can never change. You are human, if you were an animal you would have eaten me’ (Sinha 2007, 346). Thus, this biological determinist lizard with its own unreflective, speechless, and unchangeable animal nature, is also a self-subverting Heideggerian philosophical figure who articulates a philosophy prohibiting the speech it makes.

Heidegger’s motif lizard is just one of a number of references made by *Animal’s People* to the human–animal distinction in the Western metaphysical tradition, and to attempts to mock or dismantle it. There are allusions to Agamben’s *The Open: Man and Animal* and his concept of the ‘anthropological machine of humanism’. This presupposition of the human produced ‘through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman’, seeks to articulate the process of animalisation by which animality is identified, isolated and excluded from humanity (Agamben 2004, 29, 37). *Animal’s People* performs a similar politics to *The Open* by rejecting the premises that construct ‘the human’ to reveal the limitations of prevailing legal, political and sovereignty models. The conceptual apparatus of the novel also resonates with that of *The Open*. When a drug-befuddled Animal asks, ‘Am I a man?’, the reply from his delusory world is, ‘WHAT IS A MAN?’ (Sinha 2007, 347), a rhetorical question that, as Agamben says, has no answer because the anthropological machine outlines a ‘perfectly empty’ zone containing no traits definitive of the human (2004, 38).

Animal’s People incorporates specific features of *The Open* into the thematics of its plot: Sanctimonious activist Zafar invents the principle

of ‘the nothing’ (Sinha 2007, 54) around which to unite the poor and ailing of Khaufpur, echoing Agamben’s critique of Heidegger and boredom; and a musician expounds on frog music (Sinha 2007, 48), recalling the frog concertos cited by Agamben (2004, 63–70). Animal mocks the thoughtless and impractical rhetoric of ‘the power of nothing’, and, bewildered by the too-dignified pathos of the musician, can hear nothing but a frog ‘happily looking for another frog to fuck’ (Sinha 2007, 48). Calarco draws attention to the inability of *The Open* to escape the limitations of anthropocentrism, for Agamben’s writings ‘focus entirely and exclusively on the effects of the anthropological machine *on human beings* and never explore the impact the machine has on various forms of animal life’ (2008, 102). *Animal’s People* seems mindful of this, and draws attention to Animal’s construction of himself as the symbolic category of ‘THE ANIMAL’ (Sinha 2007, 345), rather than just an animal. Roman Bartosch argues that the novel is ‘humanist in its ethical impetus’, but that at the same time, Animal, recognising the oppositional but hollow categories of the human and the animal, ‘initiates a complex process of what it means to be (post)human’ (2012, 12). Although, like Agamben, and because Animal is human, *Animal’s People* is more interested in the effects of animalisation on humans than on animals, it is conscious of the structures of thought and language which make such processes possible.

ANIMAL, ANIMOT

The opening manoeuvre in Animal’s story is a provocative one: ‘I used to be human once’ (Sinha 2007, 1), he says, because as he goes on to argue, proper human status is not assured by birth, but bestowed by self-interested guardians of ‘the human’, and they can take their gift back. If he is no longer human Animal is, nevertheless, not recognisable as any particular kind of animal. Instead, he represents the generic idea of ‘the animal’, and embodies what such a concept means for the organisms encircled by it. As Animal demonstrates, once pushed across a conceptual boundary into less-than-human animalness, he ceases to be protected by an ethics that recognises his person and body as sacred, society is no longer in a mutually responsible relationship with him, and he lacks legal ownership of himself, his identity, or a share of the ground he walks upon. Once members of a society no longer recognise Animal as a human very like themselves, they then recognise him in ways very like

the ways in which they recognise and relate to animals. That is, he is—often unconsciously—perceived as having a lesser claim to those things humans ‘like us’ assume an entitlement to. Jacques Derrida describes this lesser claim with his neologism, the *animot*. The *animot* occupies a fundamental, if contested, place in literary animal studies, and merits detailed attention to establish how later theory, including that developed in this book, responds to and moves beyond Derrida’s thinking.

Derrida’s passionate but typically playful engagement with ‘the question of the animal’ (2008, 8) finds lucid expression in a series of lectures at a 1997 conference entitled ‘The Autobiographical Animal’. These lectures, simultaneously autobiographical and philosophical, were later published in print form as *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Derrida’s purpose in these lectures is to examine and deconstruct ‘the name of man’ (1997, 83), ‘the abyssal limit of the human’, and the violence perpetrated upon animals by the singular concept of the animal (2008, 29). He addresses the discourses of domination and the ‘ontology, mastery by means of knowledge’ (2008, 89), found in the concept of the animal in Western philosophy. With particular reference to Descartes, Kant, Levinas, Lacan and Heidegger, Derrida makes a systematic critique of the history of Western thought, and its unquestioned assumptions about what he describes as the chimaera that is ‘the animal’.

Derrida’s meditation is inspired, he says, upon finding himself, in the bathroom *sans* bathrobe one morning, to be shamed by his nudity in front of his cat. Faced with the cat’s unembarrassed gaze, Derrida asks, ‘[H]ow can an animal look you in the face?’ What does it mean to find oneself being *seen* by an animal? What does it mean to ask if the animal responds? Can one ‘know what *respond* means’ (2008, 7–8)? Derrida’s real, living, individual cat (not a philosophical cat, but ‘*truly a little cat, this cat*’) (2008, 6) is, Michael Naas says, ‘the animal that is first seen seeing and [Derrida is] the human that is first seen seen’, for philosophy’s gaze has always failed to take account of, or has looked away from, the gaze of animals (2010, 225). That an animal may have an experience of seeing, Derrida says, has been disguised, denied and misunderstood, for humanity is ‘above all anxious about, and jealous of, what is proper to it’ (2008, 14). Derrida makes two hypotheses as he embarks on what he describes as a ‘*chimerical* discourse’ on the shades, hauntings and myths from which humanity builds the right and authority to name ‘the animal’ (2008, 23).

Derrida’s first hypothesis identifies the past two hundred years as a period of ‘transformation in progress’ in ‘the *being* of what calls itself

man or the *Dasein* with what he himself calls, or what we ourselves are calling, what we are still daring, provisionally, to name in general but in the singular, *the animal* (2008, 24). The altered relationship of which he speaks is constituted in forms of knowledge and kinds of intervention into animals' lives and bodies. It is located in the industrialisation of farming, laboratory experimentation, genetic manipulation, and genocidal endangerment and extermination of species on a global scale. Violence to animals and their subjection to human will is of much longer standing, but we are now, he says, 'passing through a critical phase' (2008, 29). As Peter Singer does in *Animal Liberation* (1975, 5), Derrida (2008, 27) cites Jeremy Bentham's footnote question on animals, 'Can they *suffer*?' (Bentham 1996, 236); but although Derrida's interests are ethical he does not follow Singer's focus on the extension of moral consideration to all sentient beings. Calarco argues that Derrida is instead interested in the potential of Bentham's question to revolutionise the 'ontological and proto-ethical dimensions of the question of the animal', for the capacity to suffer contains 'an interruptive encounter' (Calarco 2008, 117). Derrida argues that

'Can they suffer?' amounts to asking 'Can they *not be able*?' And what of this inability? What is this nonpower at the heart of power? What is its quality or modality? How should one take it into account? What right should be accorded it? To what extent does it concern us? Being able to suffer is no longer a power; it is a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible. Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish. (2008, 28)

It is not a question of merely acknowledging that animals can suffer, but of, as Calarco says, encountering and being moved by 'an animal's *inability* or *incapacity* to avoid pain, its fleshy vulnerability and exposure to wounding' (Calarco 2008, 118). Suffering is power if only humans feel it, are unable to avoid it. It elevates human interests above those of any organism that is taken to avoid suffering by not to being able to suffer. If a non-human animal is taken to be able to suffer, then suffering is no longer unique to humans, and so loses its power to distinguish absolutely between one set of interests and another based on the capacity to

suffer; it becomes a non-power. Once the possibility of animal suffering is taken into account, the question becomes one of compassion and not just argumentation, of acknowledging—unlike Descartes's refusal to witness—'the *undeniability*' of animal suffering which precedes, is older than, the question of the animal.

Derrida's second hypothesis is concerned with what feeds the 'logic of the limit'—*limitrophy*—and the 'abyssal rupture' that divides the 'so-called human' (the human that names himself and others) from 'The Animal'—a singular category of 'creatures' that are not man (2008, 29, 31). Here Derrida is interested in transforming the limit by 'multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line' rather than effacing it, for not only is there a difference between what man *calls himself* and 'what he *calls* the animal' (2008, 29–31), but there are multiple forms of difference and heterogeneity between humans and animals along a many-folded edge. To highlight that a heterogeneous multiplicity of living organisms and relations is being delineated by and reduced to a single word, 'animal', and at the same time to reflect the implied symbolism and conceptualising effect of the word, he asks his lecture audience to silently substitute the singular word *l'animot* (2008, 41) whenever he says 'the animals' (les animaux—the homophones—*maux* and *mot* (word) make this neologism more immediately powerful in French). The *animot* as concept and word acts as a reminder of the noun and the voice that names, of the plural heard in the singular, and of allowing that the absence of the name and the word can be thought of as something other than privation. *Limitrophy* and the *animot* insist not on any actual distinction between humans and all other animals, but on distinction instituted by the discursive categories of 'the human' and 'the animal'.

The concept of the *animot* is a compelling one in its singular encapsulation of the simple exclusion that divides humans and other animals, while also conveying the discursive nature of this exclusion. Calarco finds Derrida's talk of an 'abyssal rupture' not entirely satisfactory. He argues that Derrida is vague in his conclusions, and despite speaking in terms of a multi-leaved rupture, fails to make a systematic articulation of the elements of this rupture. Calarco says that '[i]n complicating our understanding of the differences between those beings called "animal" and those called "human", Derrida is seeking to do little more than create the conditions of possibility for another way of rethinking the forms of relation that obtain between these singularities' (2002, 24). Although,

he says, Derrida works to demonstrate the failure of the philosophical tradition to recognise that the ontological and ethical assumptions upon which it has worked do not stand up to rigorous examination, his focus on the rupture seems to operate as a validation of the binaries that he has insisted should be transformed. Calarco believes that ‘Derrida’s insistence on maintaining and reworking the human–animal distinction is profoundly mistaken’, but he affirms, nevertheless, that Derrida provides, not a systematic theorising, but a means by which to think about a previously obscured philosophical orientation (2008, 148–149).

Derrida’s two hypotheses underpin his dismantling of key Western philosophical orientations. Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas and Lacan fail, he says, to take account of essential and structural differences between humans and animals. Instead, they create a privative ontology of mastery by reason, language, consciousness, and authenticity, to legitimate practices that are forbidden to be carried out on humans, but are acceptable on animals. Kant is taken to task for establishing humans as rational animals through the use of the autodeictic, auto-referential and self-distancing ‘I’. The capacity for self-representation defines Kant’s man, which, by signifying a unity of consciousness that remains the same throughout all its modifications, raises him in power above and in opposition to ‘things’ that are incapable of expressing self. According to Kant, in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, says Derrida,

what the nonrational animal is deprived of, along with subjecthood, is what Kant calls ‘dignity’, that is to say, an internal and priceless value, the value of an end in itself, or if you prefer, a price above any comparable or negotiable price, above any market price. (2008, 100)

Only the rational human has the privilege of dignity and autonomy while, according to Kant, the animal retains its identity as the Cartesian machinic body and has no end in itself, but is only a means to an end for humans.

Rational humanism carries within itself a set of historical and anthropocentric, discursively constituted assumptions which reinforce the misunderstandings and violent disavowals against which Derrida argues. Levinas, says Derrida, despite his ‘subversion of the subject’ and ‘submitting of the subject to a radical heteronomy’, continues the Cartesian tradition of making this subject of ethics a face, a face which is ‘first of all a fraternal and human face’ that, thus, places the animal/*animot* outside

ethical consideration (2008, 106). The animal is not even an other. The commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is, to Levinas, the primary rule in the doctrine of human socialisation, and is translated by him as 'You shall commit no murder'. It forbids murder, says Derrida,

namely homicide, but doesn't forbid putting to death in general, no more than it responds to a respect for life, a respect in principle for life in general ... It is a 'Thou shalt not kill' that doesn't forbid one to kill an animal; it forbids only the murder of the face. (2008, 110)

Levinasian animals are not 'persons'; they are not a subject of ethics because they are faceless and cannot therefore be murdered. That is, they can be put to death without committing murder, without committing the crime of murder. Animals are removed from human standards of ethical concern because they cannot respond or have ever responded or have the right to nonresponse; they are unable to say, 'Here I am', to make an *'autotelic, autodeictic, autobiographical movement, exposing oneself before the law'* (2008, 111–112). Derrida points out that Levinas undermines himself when he is asked what the significance of a face is, what having a face implies. Levinas replies that he 'cannot say at what moment you have the right to be called "face"'. The human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal. I don't know if a snake has a face. I can't answer that question' (Levinas 1988, 171–172). If Levinas does not know if a snake has a face, then, Derrida argues, he does not know what a face is, what the word means, and what governs its usage. This, Derrida says, renders insufficient, without renouncing, the concept of the subject by calling into question the whole legitimacy of the discourse and ethics of the face (2008, 118).

The face is a figure that describes and augments human distinction, and as such it participates in the 'plural and repeatedly folded frontier' between humans and animals (Derrida 2008, 30). A human face designates a unique individual among other similarly unique humans, over against the homogeneous set of individually indistinct animals. The human face constitutes ethical subjecthood before the law, and confirms an individual's non-continuity with other auto-deictic, auto-referential, self-defining human subjects in their social and administrative context. A human face is, however, not just meaningful in structures of legal responsibility; it is meaningful within the context of the verbal, visual, conscious, and unintentional exchanges which constitute the daily

experience of inter-subjective social life. It is a complex assemblage of the physical features, emotional expressions and social interpretations implicated in the many physical and cognitive operations and relationships at play when humans recognise each other through facial distinctiveness. Human faces thus matter to humans *prior* to the law, but in law the individual distinctiveness of human faces plays an integral part in affirming the responsibilities it treats as entailed upon human personhood.

The Khaufpuri people of *Animal's People* recognise and affirm their unique value to each other, but neither the Kampani nor legal and administrative systems will face them or respond to their call for responsibility. Facelessly submerged into the masses of the poor, their ties with ethical subjecthood are loosened. The shackling of the face with ethical subjecthood as the province of the human forms a privative and exclusionary figure which distinguishes the human from its animal or irrational others, and, in addition, ignores all non-facial forms of recognition between other animals. Derrida argues that it is

not sufficient for an ethics to recall the subject to its being-subject, host or hostage, subjected to the other, to the wholly other or to every other. More than that is required to break with the Cartesian tradition of an animal without language and without response. (Derrida, 118)

Animal, of *Animal's People*, takes up this Cartesian tradition with his disfigured body to dramatise the discourses of the face and test the conditions of a life lived before a law which does not recognise the ethical subjecthood of an animal human.

MULTIPLYING FACES AND FIGURES

Aristotle's and Descartes's insistence on speech and language as the absolute distinction between humans and animals has not lost its power in the twenty-first century. Animal of *Animal's People*, though, argues most forcefully that possession of language is not itself a guarantee of full humanity. Although he always possesses the capacity for speech and language he does not necessarily have a voice with which to be heard saying, 'Here I am', for animalisation and poverty precede and talk over anything he might have to say. His contorted body is a symbol of these inequalities and injustices, and his animal silence—his suppressed and overwritten voice—is a figuration of the processes and effects of his

animalisation. A tape recorder provided by a journalist offers Animal a medium to claim a literally hearable voice and document his life story, and thus offers him the potential to transfigure himself into a 'proper' human subject. There are, however, factors which disrupt the progress of such a transfiguration, for *Animal's People* does not locate Animal's education and growth in a traditional Western bildungsroman. Instead, the novel seeks to disfigure conventional trajectories oriented toward claiming forms of subjectivity located in the figure of the 'proper' human. Through the form and aesthetics of Animal's representation *Animal's People* searches for a social and political agency that is not tied to the Western model of the human.

The bildungsroman form proposes, broadly, that its 'heroes' travel from youth to Western humanism's ideal of individual and cultural maturity. *Animal's People* takes this traditional Western form as an outline to describe Animal's trajectory from depraved vagrancy to social responsibility, but Animal's development is not that of rehabilitation to the humanist model. His story is, instead, a negotiation between formal narrative expectations and a resistance to being read via a Western narrative model, and, as Roman Bartosch describes it, a 'tension between narrative convention and the limitations of understanding' (Bartosch 2012, 18). Within the familiar formal conventions of the bildungsroman and the picaresque, Animal insists on a voice for his animal non-specificity, and with his mutated body and uncivilised behaviour dismantles Western morality in a process of 'disfigurement'. Animal's self-narrative is prefaced and framed by a fictional editor's note, asserting that what follows is a faithful transcription of a nineteen-year-old boy's (Animal's) tape-recorded words. Such a metafictional framing opens the novel with what appears to be a relinquishing of editorial control to Animal's voice that, at the same time, draws attention to the enclosure of that voice, and its dependence on a 'proper' Western human to make its speech audible. Like the (possibly fictional) ancient Greek fabulist, Aesop, who was described as 'of loathsome aspect ... a portentous monstrosity ... speechless' (Hansen 1998, 111), and who was not perceived as human until granted the power of speech by the gods, Animal is a misshapen, less-than-human creature gifted a human-sounding voice by a journalist. There are, then, questions of authorship at issue, and these participate in a negotiation of conflicting discourses defined by Bartosch as hybridity.

Roman Bartosch argues that hybridity and metafiction in *Animal's People* function to create complicity, for 'there is complicity in telling

stories just as there is complicity in neocolonial ecological and economic practices' (2012, 18). When Animal struggles to find a way to explain his life to the strangers who will become his readers, the journalist suggests that he imagines 'thousands of other people are looking through his [the journalist's] eyes' (Sinha 2007, 7), and to tell his story to the journalist's one pair of eyes as a conduit to the many. Speaking to his implied listener/narratee Animal says, 'you are reading my words, you are that person. I've no name for you so I will call you Eyes. My job is to talk, yours is to listen' (13–14). You, the reader (or, in fact, us, the Westerners reading his story in English), he argues, participate in this story, for your desire to know is implicit in the structure of its telling. Animal's invoking of both eyes and ears as the receivers of his narrative suggests that although he is taking advantage of the power implied by narrative voice to control the telling of a story, he is also aware that *Animal's People* will be a written text intended for reception and interpretation by the Eyes—Eyes that will occupy the position of voyeuristic spectator. From the safety of economic and geographic distance, the Eyes can take a ghoulishly horrified pleasure at his tormented body and subhuman habits without being obliged to reflect further on any connections between him and 'us'. 'Well bollocks to that' (9), Animal says, for his project is to collapse the distance between the Western voyeur and the fascinatingly exotic catastrophe victim in Khaufpur. Any perceived distance between Western privilege and poor other, *Animal's People* argues, is an illusion that conceals the complicity of the former in the suffering of the latter, and the inextricable entanglement of their lives.

Hybridity indicates a new form made from two separate forms, and Animal's twisted body is the figuration of a painful collision between the human and the animal. For the Eyes who watch Animal, it seems that the appropriate trajectory of his story is towards the curing of his deformity—the re-forming of his twisted spine in the image of the proper, physically upright human to end the pain of non-conformance. American doctor Elli raises American money to pay for corrective surgery that will give him a normal human body with a straight back, and useful productive hands, but Animal rejects the American offer of 'normality', for it requires that his back must be broken before it can be remade, and his potential literal breaking is a figuration for the breaking of his deviant otherness to fit a single model of perfect humanness. Such a Procrustean reshaping would leave Animal on crutches or in a wheelchair, and thus his entry to humanity could be only partial. He refuses to be remade

as an imperfect rendering of the authorised model of the human, and remains 'four-foot ... The one and only Animal' (Sinha 2007, 366), untidily different and uncategorisable. Here, *Animal's People* articulates a refusal to be confined to traditional Western models of the upright and thus moral human, disfiguring through Animal's resistant body the traditional animal tropes and metaphors which construct such models.

Philosophy and literature have always been populated with animal figurations. Rather than utilising only attributes which exist within animals themselves, humans reimagine animal bodies to perform explanatory figurations, or superimpose qualities to exhibit and discuss human behaviour. This renders the original living creature invisible. In either case other animals function as a mirror to the human gaze, and as a source of rhetoric to describe human culture, in which, as Steve Baker says, '[c]ulture shapes our reading of animals just as much as animals shape our reading of culture' (2001, 4), and in which their autonomous existence is subordinate to their reproduction as figurations. In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard establishes a (simplified) typology of animal representation which articulates the means by which '[h]umans can both be, and be compared to, animals' (2012, 153). Garrard divides representations into two columns: Likeness (metonymy) includes crude and critical forms of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism; and otherness (metaphor) includes mechanomorphism and allomorphism. As anthropomorphism describes the transformation of animals to humans, so zoomorphism describes the remaking of humans as animals (2012, 154). *Animal's People* exposes the capacity of crude forms of zoomorphism to create reductive and simplistic associations, and uses critical forms of zoomorphism and anthropomorphism such as those developed by some ethologists, which employ 'the language and concepts of human behaviour' in non-anthropocentric, conscious, and careful ways (2012, 157) to disfigure destructive language and habits of thought. Garrard acknowledges that his typology is a generalised construction, but reiterates the importance of distinguishing between crude and critical forms of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism, and the necessity for a vigorous theoretical confrontation with 'the ugly history of zoomorphism' (2012, 169). Intensely conscious of the way animal imagery is utilised in human political and ethical discourse, *Animal's People* interrogates not just this ugly history, but its effects.

In *Animal's People's* Animal's body—his bent spine, 'bestial' urges, chemically induced ailments and ethnicity—is a vehicle for multiple

figurative constructions of disfigurement, animality, pollution and racialisation. His deformity illustrates and then annuls figurations that relate bodily attributes to character—a tradition established very early in philosophy and literature. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, a winged chariot rhetorically and allegorically represents the soul, and comprises a charioteer and two horses. The horses are described in binary terms:

The right-hand horse is upright and cleanly made; he has a lofty neck and an aquiline nose; his colour is white, and his eyes dark; he is a lover of honour and modesty and temperance, and the follower of true glory; he needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only. The other is a crooked lumbering animal, put together anyhow; he has a short thick neck; he is flat-faced and of a dark colour, with grey eyes and blood-red complexion; the mate of insolence and pride, shag-eared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur. (Plato 360 BCE)

The soul's struggle between its good and bad sides employs the figural structures of light and dark, *dexter* and *sinister*, beauty and ugliness, uprightness and crookedness, to correlate a particular physical appearance with a particular quality of soul. The white and physically glorious horse is noble, agreeable and godly, while the dark, ill-favoured, and stunted animal is base, offensive and monstrous. This simple bundling together of traits into horse-shaped icons as the representative shorthand for good and bad, is a form of crude anthropomorphism. A real horse acts only as the outline for a heavily stylised image and a body to carry human characteristics, and associates good and bad with, respectively, humanity and animality in the guiding of the white horse by word and the compulsion of the dark horse by 'whip and spur'. The figural relation between physical deformity and deformed character proposed by the perfect horse and the warped horse is reproduced in Animal. The people of Khaufpur point him out, he claims, '[T]here he is! Look! It's Animal. Goes on four feet, that one. See, that's him, bent double by his own bitterness' (Sinha 2007, 11). Animal's deformed body and animalistic identity function as the traditional metaphorical monster performing the unacceptable and therefore animal aspects of human nature which must be brought into line by the charioteer. However, Animal's active adoption of animal status draws attention to the crude symbolism of a deformed body, both as an abject singularity and as Khaufpur's body politic.

Body as figuration is, in *Animal*, an act of critical anthropomorphism and of critical zoomorphism. The body as metaphor is, say Lakoff and Johnson, a 'basic domain of experience' in which bodies act as multi-dimensional 'experiential gestalts' (1983, 117). Through image schemas such as containment and orientation, and bodily actions such as breathing, dying and posture, the body becomes a coherent concept built from more than one metaphor to perform a 'structured whole' (Lakoff and Johnson 1983, 117). This whole emerges in the conceiving of the body as a bundle of natural experiences produced by physical, mental, and emotional faculties, interactions with the physical environment (moving, manipulating objects, and so on), and interactions with other people in our culture. *Animal's* body is a bundle of physical experiences such as hunger, illness, pain, suffering, joy, sexual desire, and the need to breathe, and his deformity produces cognitive and social experiences of social alienation and fractured relations with his environment. As such, *Animal's* body is a condensation of all the biological, political, ethical, and economic difficulties of the people of Khaufpur, and he is the textual gestalt for the pain and injustices suffered by the multitude. In what Rob Nixon describes as the 'symbolic economy of *Animal's* body', crippled by the Kampani's chemicals, there is 'an implicit yet unforgettable image of a body politic literally bent double beneath the weight of Khaufpur's foreign load' (2009, 450). His body is a multidimensional metaphorical figure which reveals the disfiguring boundaries between rich and poor, human and animal, body and environment. Bundled into his twisted spine are notions of ethical voids, humanist and environmental purity, and recursive structures of crude zoomorphism and crude anthropomorphism.

'Animalisation' is a term used across multiple disciplines to imply broadly the same action—a change of state, physical or otherwise, of something from a previous condition to an animal condition of being. In postcolonial studies this change implies a hierarchical downward transmission of a being from a human to an animal state. This is not a biological metamorphosis, but instead may take the form of a discursive interpretation or representation of the physical, behavioural, cultural, or political characteristics of a person or group of persons in such a manner as to explain them in terms of generic animal rather than human traits. Garrard describes this as crude zoomorphism, the most vicious kind of which is racist representation (such as describing Jews as rats or African people of colour as apes) which depends 'upon a prior, crudely

anthropomorphic projection of despised human qualities—the “Beast Within” is a precondition for the racialised “beast” without’ (2012, 155). Animalisation means that, through poverty, some incapacity, or a perceived failure to measure up to an authorised human standard, a person or group is treated like an animal—that is, they lack recourse to the political, ethical, and juridical structures which protect self-ownership (the Kantian ‘I’) and the subjectivity, agency and voice of the self-determined human, and merge into a silenced, homogeneous, unindividuated mass.

The rationalist ideology which underpins Western definitions of humanity involves a form of anthropocentrism which justifies the colonisation of non-human nature. By defining the rational human in opposition to the irrational, uncivilised and savage non-human, modern humans naturally prioritised humans and human interests above those of animals. Val Plumwood describes this structure as emerging from the conception of the ‘hyperseparated self’ as sharply separated from the female, racial or animal other, enabling the radical exclusion of this other through instrumentalisation as an object whose interests are secondary (1993, 144). Past prioritisation of Western interests depended upon the drawing of species-based, malleable ontological distinctions, and was employed to legitimate oppression of the poor, human slavery, and colonial appropriation across the world by white Europeans. Through the discursive recreation of indigenous peoples as savage and animalistic, by downgrading their humanity and animalising them, it became possible to treat them as if they were animals—to own them, or make their pain, suffering or loss of freedom morally unproblematic. Animalisation ensured that non-European lands were inhabited only by ‘not-humans’ and animals, and were therefore ‘unused, underused or empty—areas of rational deficit’, available to the human prior claim (Plumwood 2003, 53). This way of thinking permits not just racist oppression and exploitation, but also enables women, homosexuals, the disabled, the elderly, and many others, to be othered and denoted less rational and thus to be treated like animals—as commodities, or of lesser or no value.

‘Treating a human like an animal’ implies that that the human is being degraded and treated badly, and that their humanity is being abused. This framework depends upon the ethical acceptability of what Derrida describes as the ‘non-criminal putting to death’ (2008, 111) of animals, in which the suffering and death of non-human animals—whether sought or not—is acceptable and legitimate, and in which non-human

animals are downgraded below or are invisible to human standards of moral concern. This is because, Marjorie Spiegel says in her challenging book *The Dreaded Comparison*, 'we have decided that treatment which is wholly unacceptable when received by a human being is in fact the *proper* manner in which to treat the non-human animal' (1996, 19). Or, in other words, owning, incarcerating, killing, or eating animals is morally unexceptionable, while to abuse, imprison, impinge upon the free will of, experiment upon, or kill humans is impermissible. Other animals are located in a separate category of moral concern because humans are insufficiently attentive to the crudely anthropomorphic criteria which say that beyond the boundary of the human all creatures are generically brute, stupid, lack the fine quality of human emotion, are irrationally subject to their bodily instincts and urges. Other animals are measured against those attributes said to define humanity—love, altruism, responsibility, conscience, morality, temperance, joy in life, spirituality and so on—and judged to be failures. The expression of crudeness taken to characterise animals, and the civilised sensitivity which is the domain of human being, validates—however insubstantial and unproven the criteria may be—a moral hierarchy.

The term 'animal rights' encompasses a broad range of approaches, including Peter Singer's preference utilitarianism, Tom Regan's contractarianism, Martha Nussbaum's capabilities theory, and Gary Francione's abolitionism. All of these propose that an assortment of rights providing protections similar to those guarding human lives and bodies should be extended over a set of qualifying animals. Virtue philosophers such as Peter Carruthers contend that animals should be well cared for, but that our duties to them are indirect and are really duties to other humans. For Carruthers, the animals' importance rests in their importance to us, and the qualities they invoke in us. Caring for animals before caring for the many starving and abused humans in the world is, Carruthers argues, the easy option (1992, 7, xi). In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin challenge this frequently reiterated criticism of suggestions that humans should radically reconsider the foundational principles of our treatment of animals. They set out four difficulties characteristic of such debates: Animal metaphor has been and still is used to justify a range of exploitations of human individuals and societies, and it is hardly surprising if such groups insist on a separate subjectivity; pressure on land brings humans and animals into conflict; cultural differences in the treatment of animals can lead to the racialised vilification

of one group by another; and, as Carruthers asks, how can animals be prioritised above, say, starving children (1992, xi)? Huggan and Tiffin argue that ‘while there is still the “ethical acceptability” of the killing of non-human others—that is, anyone represented or designated as non-human—such abuses will continue, irrespective of what is conceived as the species boundary at any given time’ (2010, 137). This summation of the problem does generate some discomforts; the idea that humans could find it ethically unacceptable to kill anything whatsoever seems like utopian day-dreaming, and the idea that we would need to find abuse of non-human others unethical before we could stop abusing humans is difficult to accommodate. Huggan and Tiffin do argue that improvements to the lot of humans, other animals, and the environments they live in are not separate issues, but should ‘proceed together’ (2010, 138). This formulation offers a broad in-principle method with which to propagate actions sited in a reimagining of relationships between humans, other animals and environments. Such a method, though, unavoidably invokes questions of what humans should be responsible for, and of who is qualified to decide.

The United Nations General Assembly’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights is founded on a faith that the ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’ (1948, 217, III). Its highest aspirations are freedom of speech and belief, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, and it seeks to establish the right of all humans to ‘life, liberty and security of person’ and ‘recognition everywhere as a person before the law’ (1948, 217, III). These are high and worthy ideals, and represent a sincere attempt to articulate the mechanism of a just commonwealth for humanity, but they rest upon the assumption that the discursive criteria of the ‘human’ are firmly fixed to what we all know to be a human. Thus, says Joseph Slaughter, the administration of human rights rests on a banalised, common sense understanding of what human equality entails which precedes its articulation as rights (2007, 6). Under these circumstances, the Age of Human Rights is also the Age of Human Rights Abuse dispensed by ‘increasingly systematic, corporate, and institutional’ violations (Slaughter 2007, 2). For Zygmunt Bauman there is an incurable aporia enshrined in the Declaration which is constituted in the gap between the proposal of a universal ethical code and the possibility of it. The Declaration, he argues, is motivated by a faith in metaphysical absolutes

of right and wrong which exceed humans, but which are instead politically contextual and made by humans (Bauman 1993, 10).

In *Animal's People* Animal's contorted body and animalised status both bespeak the Age of Human Rights Abuse, and are a figure of Bauman's aporia. Mukherjee suggests that when Animal proclaims his identity as no longer human he

gives voice to a scandal that lurks beneath the tragedy of Bhopal: if there are those who, by dint of their underprivileged location in the hierarchy of the 'new world order', cannot access the minimum of the rights and privileges that are said to define 'humanity', what can they be called? (2010, 144)

Animal's answer to this is unequivocal: The refusal of Union Carbide/the Kampani to acknowledge the claim of the Bhopalis/Khaufpuris to recompense for the harm visited upon them equates to an affirmation that, since they cannot claim the legal and ethical rights which 'Amrikans' take for granted as indistinguishable from the state of being human, they cannot claim the state of being human implied by this sovereign epistemological power, and are thus relegated to a much impoverished version of the human. Animal, though, refuses to accept that there are shades and nuances at the boundary between human and non-human. If the universal ethical code which administers the proper treatment of humans does not recognise him as a human, regardless of his biological and phylogenetic body, then he must be something else. He opts for the politically symbolic 'Animal', in the absence of some other category. He argues that 'you'll talk of *rights, law, justice*. Those words sound the same in my mouth as in yours but they don't mean the same. ... [S]uch words are like shadows the moon makes in the Kampani's factory, always changing shape' (Sinha 2007, 3). Rights, law, and justice—even if they propose to be the means by which a prior ethical code is facilitated—are, Animal finds, malleable terms, with the power to manipulate them resting beyond his reach.

In *Postmodern Ethics*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that ethics in modern society is a 'man-made artifice' (1993, 9). Where once morality was a set of absolutes of right and wrong ordained by God, and invested in belief in an ethics natural to humans and their participation in the divine metaphysics of the universe, in modernity the individual makes choices using a rational legislative, administrative code interested in what is

‘economically sensible’, ‘aesthetically pleasing’, and ‘morally proper’ (1993, 5). This code discourages individuals from using their freedom to do wrong by training them to develop a self-interest-based better judgement. Ethics in modern society is therefore, says Bauman, aporetic, because although it is designed to regulate prevailing conditions by humans, it is ‘animated by the belief in the possibility of a *non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code*’ of theological origins (1993, 8–10). Universal morality is thus, he says, mythical and utopian, the proposition of it related to a politics of power, and modernity characterised by an insularity which deepens differences and renders it unfit for any universalisation (1993, 10–15).

Bauman’s sense of the ethical aporia constituted in modernity is satirically manifested as negative terms and invisibility throughout *Animal’s People*. Animal is frequently arrested for begging and scamming, and he appears in court as what he calls the ‘mystery defendant’:

- Case against boy known as Animal ...
- Where is the accused?
- Your honour he is here.
- Where? I don’t see him.
- Right here, your honour, in the dock.
- Don’t be silly. I am looking at the dock, there’s no one there.
- Your honour, accused is of unusual stature (Sinha 2007, 51).

Animal is made literally invisible to justice by his disfigurement; the judge, as an individual and as a representative of the law, will neither change his actual and legal position so that he may see Animal, nor remove the barrier (the judicial dock and the human–animal distinction) between them. Animal is *unseen* and made faceless by a judge who refuses to acknowledge his existence as a subject before the law. In his role as the body politic of Khaufpur, Animal illustrates that the capacity for an individual or a group to be subjects before the law is not guaranteed by mere physical presence, and points both to the failure of the Kampani to face the poison victims in court and of the Indian legal system to facilitate such a case. Although Animal believes that there is some freedom in not following human social rules, his symbolic animalised form demonstrates that his invisibility before the law pushes him below the juridical and ethical boundary entitling humans to respect for their right to live well, and to a responsibility for this from other humans. Not fitting standard categories, his body is unrecognisable as a subject

of ethics in the administrative ethical code the judge accepts as morally proper. By calling himself Animal, he clearly signals that his abjected condition is the same as that of any animal, so that while he may be the object of some moral concern, he has no stake in the reciprocal duties and benefits a human with full subject-status lives among.

Animal's lack of human subjectivity is intimately connected with his physical form, for his environment, and political and economic influences on India are as significant in the constitution of his living bodily matter as his individual flesh and blood. During the gas eruption from the Kampani's pesticide factory, Animal's six-day-old infant body was penetrated by toxic chemicals, the later effects of which deform his spine and lead to his displacement from full humanity to an unstable borderline status. This blurring of his identity is a product of the incomplete distinction between his body and his environment, for his body is literally colonised by the products of imperial and corporate activity, and the chemicals lying abandoned in the factory, leaching into local water systems to contaminate the ground and food supplies, supplement this initial dose of poison every single day.

Cary Wolfe's evolving posthumanist critical approach offers a vocabulary for articulating Animal's apparent loss of proper human autonomous and individual integrity. Wolfe's sense of posthumanism emphasises two points; that 'the human' is achieved in the transcendence of the body, biology, and animal origins, and that posthumanism exactly opposes this, not in the sense of being posthuman and 'after' the transcended human body, but 'posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment itself' (2010, xv). It therefore comes before and after humanism; 'before' is the naming of 'the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)'. The 'after' of posthumanism

names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms ... a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon. (2010, xv)

Animal is such a decentred posthumanist body, one which exemplifies that ‘there can be no talk of purity’ (Wolfe 2010, xxv); his body and identity are in a constant state of exchange with physical and social surroundings through permeable boundaries, and involved in a network of bodies, events and discourses which exceed his specific geographical location.

The posthumanist premise deletes the notion that loss of purity automatically equates to purity’s antonyms of contamination, corruption and pollution, but for Animal and the Khaufpuris, sociopolitical and environmental taint is a significant constituent of their flesh. The pesticide made in the Kampani’s factory has become so much part of the bodies of the Khaufpuris and of the land they live on that it no longer seems possible to imagine it as a pollutant in a previously healthy landscape; it has instead become part of the local ecology, an unwelcome and unhealthy part, but one which at least part of the plant life of the ecosystem tolerates. However, animals can neither accommodate nor transcend the penetration of toxic chemicals. Animal remarks that sandalwood trees and scented herbs have returned to the derelict Kampani factory site, but it is a quiet place—the animal population consists only of poisonous snakes and rabid dogs; there is ‘[n]o bird song. No hoppers in the grass. No bee hum. Insects can’t survive here’ (Sinha 2007, 29). In the factory, only symbolically evil snakes and mad dogs survive, and all animals suffer alike, but their suffering does not emerge from only local factors. The poison in the soil and the air produces the involuntary incorporation of Animal and all other animals (human or otherwise) into global systems of exploitation and oppression, for foreign environmental risk has been outsourced to impoverished Khaufpur, while the capital it generates is concentrated in distant states and corporations. This erodes the taken-for-grantedness of bodily integrity, and disperses agency and self-ownership across a set of other agencies. Such dispersal divests the Khaufpuris of their self-identification as people. Instead, they are identified as ‘poison victims’, or terrorists, depending on who is categorising them and for what purpose. The Khaufpuris are obscured and overwritten by the interests of socially distant economic and administrative organisations, who redescribe the Khaufpuris to nullify their claims and achieve their own aims.

Bauman argues that social space consists of three interwoven but distinct processes—cognitive, aesthetic, and moral ‘spacings’—which stand in a metaphorical relation with physical space (1993, 145). Social

spacings exist in knowledge and understanding of others; we live with other beings *like us*, that is, we assume that our experience of ourselves and other people constitutes what is normal and natural. Our relations with them are constituted in the *zuhause* (ready-to-hand) mode and we never reflect on them. When objects (or, in this case, people) produce misunderstandings by behaving outside knowledge and understanding of what is natural and normal, they are *vorhanden* (present-at-hand)—beings suddenly visible as not *like us*. Social spacings, which are not specifically related to physical proximity or distance, are in this way plotted between poles of what is known and understood (intimacy) and what is not known and understood (anonymity) so that, Bauman says,

[a]t the anonymity pole, one cannot really speak of social distance at all. A truly anonymous Other is outside or beyond social space. Such another is not truly an object of knowledge—apart at best, from a subliminal awareness that there is, potentially, a human who could be an object of knowledge. For all practical intents and purposes, she is not human at all, since humans we know are always ‘specific’ humans, classified humans, humans endowed with categorical attributes through which they can be identified. (1993, 149)

Anonymous humans have no personal identities other than that derived from the class or category to which they have been assigned by humans who know *of* them, but understand them only through typification. The strangeness and threat of others to the safe, ordered and classified world of people *like us* is neutralised by reproducing these others as a homogeneous, de-individuated and dehumanised mass.

Bauman argues that ‘when the Other dissolves in the Many, the first thing to dissolve is the Face. The Other is now Faceless’ (1993, 155). Those others who are distant or anonymous in social spacing, who are faceless, are not objects of moral concern. Jacques Derrida also equates the metaphorical face with a politics of inclusion and empowerment for the human subject, and with the absence of individual sanctity for occupants of an undifferentiated homogeneous mass that is foreign to the ‘ethics of the person as face’ (2008, 111). For Derrida and Bauman, responsibility for the sanctity of the other dissolves beyond the margins of recognition of the face. But the concept of the face should not end—as it does for Derrida and Bauman—with a description of facelessness as absence and anonymity; the story of the inconsiderable, amorphous mass

of animals and of the amorphous mass of socially anonymous humans can be thickened by the idea of defacing.

To ‘deface’ has two different but related meanings here. One involves taking away the face, and the other the assigning of a new face. To deface is to remove the face, a metonymic description of a failure to perceive a moral responsibility to the other owing to their degree of otherness. To deface is also to spoil, mutilate or obliterate, and this usage describes the metaphorical overwriting of an individual’s or a grouping’s self-conception or non-human interests with an externally imposed category. Among other animals, a group of cows, for example, becomes a beef herd, and a pigeon becomes a feral pigeon becomes a pest. Among humans, Union Carbide and other power groups have defaced the people of Bhopal, making them other, less, pests, victims, terrorists. As Mukherjee describes, UCC (which no longer exists) refused to be brought to court in either the USA or India, contending, first, that they were a US company and were not therefore under the jurisdiction of Indian courts, and second, could not be tried in American courts because Americans would not be able to comprehend the daily realities of Indian life. Mukherjee argues that

[t]his legal defence is in effect a philosophical position that assumes an unbridgeable gap between two apparently discontinuous worlds. What is human in one, is not so in the other. What is understood as the environment in one, is incomprehensible in the other. (2010, 142)

UCC, supported by the US legal system, found the Bhopalis’ lives not to be *semblable* (as Levinas would say) with American lives, and found their difference too great to be imaginable in American understandings of what constitutes ‘normal’ human life. UCC’s representation of a vast difference between an American and an Indian life, and their refusal to respond to or take responsibility for Bhopali lives, legally enshrined these lives as less than human, overwriting—defacing—their fundamental human resemblance to Americans. It is not, though, that Americans in general consciously think of people in Bhopal as animals, rather that this is what UCC’s legally defensible argument implies.

The people of Khaufpur, in *Animal’s People*, are sure of their defacement and animalisation. An old Khaufpuri woman confronts a Kampani lawyer, arguing that ‘we lived in the shadow of your factory, you told us you were making medicine for the fields. You were making poisons

to kill insects, but you killed us instead. I would like to ask, was there ever much difference to you?' (Sinha 2007, 310). To imperialist forces, she argues, she and her community, with their complaints and illnesses, are pests who impede expansion and the accumulation of capital through absorption and assimilation of new parts of the world. The people of Khaufpur are further defaced by authorities and individuals who have close geographical proximity, but distant social spacing. A wealthy local doctor believes that '[t]hose poor people never had a chance. If it had not been the factory it would have been cholera, TB, exhaustion, hunger. They would have died anyway' (Sinha 2007, 153). Here, he reiterates a framework of understanding that defines the people of Khaufpur as unpreventably always already dying. The Khaufpuris become the genus 'poor'—a type whose economic poverty is an effect of their supposedly natural inability to thrive—so that subjecthood and a human right to moral concern is simply graffitied over with a rhetoric which represents them as herd-like masses with inferior, limited, animal expectations being weeded out by natural forces. The loss of the figural face is here shown to be a disfiguring—the discourses of the figural face produce the literal disfigurement of poor and poisoned Khaufpuri bodies, and in the same move disable the freedoms and ethical entitlements attached to the figure of the face by assuming its absence. The figure of the face, taken to signify human sanctity, is itself shown to be a deforming practice which, in the hands of corporate and administrative power, specifies a single but malleable model of humanity, deviations from which are refigured as something other than human.

Ma Franci, the slightly mad French nun with whom Animal lives, seemed to suffer neurological damage in the Apokalis, and from being able to communicate freely with the Khaufpuris in their own languages became unable to understand anything but French, or *la langue humaine* as Animal calls it. She insists that the Khaufpuris talk 'gibbering nonsense' (Sinha 2007, 40), and that '[t]he Apokalis took away their speech' (100); that is, the frustration of communication is a fault in the Khaufpuris, not in her. Their failure to speak a language she understands allows her to diminish them, and reimagine them as creatures who, animalistically, 'gibber', even though the loss of understanding is hers. Ma Franci's simultaneous compassion for, but inability to talk with, those for whom she feels compassion, is representative of the transformation that the Apokalis wrought upon the Khaufpuris and upon perceptions of them. The crippling abjection precipitated by the toxic gases, and the

subsequent defacing subjection to the motives of external agencies has redefined the relationship between the Khaufpuris and the rest of the world. Ma Franci's Cartesian perception of them as having no capacity for language analogises their crude zoomorphic descent into animality in their failure to be recognised as responding, even to kindly meant Western charitable ministrations. The Khaufpuris can, of course, speak as well as they did before the Apokalis. What has been lost is Ma Franci's willingness, in her capacity as a figurehead for the West, to find what they say to be meaningful. The language barrier between them symbolises the West's rejection of a claim by the Khaufpuris to the same privileges enjoyed by Westerners, a guilty refusal to translate the accusation of Western wrongdoing manifested in the Khaufpuris' suffering bodies into recognition and responsibility, and the preference of the West for the convenience of the idea that the differences between the two groups are of an insurmountable nature. Chillingly, the West is increasingly seeking to actualise symbolic and experiential barriers between rich and poor, us and them, as real fences—razor wire on Hungary's border keeps Syrian refugees out of the EU, while Donald Trump's Mexican Wall, even if it is never built, proved a vote winner. Such exclusion depends on the vilification by the West of the world's poor for the poverty that the West itself is implicated in perpetuating.

Animal, by embodying the defaced and animalised status of the Khaufpuris, enacts Derrida's concept of the *animot*. Animal is flogged by police during a riot, and thinks despairingly that 'neither man am I nor beast. I don't know what is being beaten here. If they kill me what will die?' (Sinha 2007, 313). Derrida points out that animals and humans alike can be killed, but only humans can be murdered and meet their death in a framework of good, evil, responsiveness, blame and responsibility to sanctity. 'There is no murder other than of the face', Derrida says, 'that is to say, of the face of the other, my neighbour, my brother, the human, or another human. Putting to death or sacrificing the animal, exploiting it to death—none of those, within this logic, in fact, constitutes murder' (2008, 110). Lack of a human face means that an animal is incapable of responding, of ever having been able to respond, or of being the victim of murder, for it lacks the individual subjecthood of the face, submerged as it is in the amorphous body of the animot. For Animal, this distinction is brought sharply into focus as he lies on the ground in expectation of his imminent (although unrealised) death. A human identity enjoys the privilege of a sanctity of self, and to destroy

this sanctity by beating him to death is to murder. Ethical code interdicts murder of a human, and makes it an immoral and evil act. An animal that is beaten to death suffers only a ceasing to live; only a body dies as there is no autotelic, autobiographic, autodeictic 'I' that has lived knowing it will die. Animal does not know if he can be murdered, as he encounters, autotelically and autobiographically, his potential death. Will his death be ethically acceptable? Will his broken body be shovelled to one side with tomorrow's rubbish, in the way that politicians gave instructions for dead Khaufpuri humans and animals alike to be thrown into the river the day after the Apokalis? Will any possible sanctity invested in his dead body be disregarded, his life lacking a subjecthood, a Kantian 'I', and the entitlement to dignity which this entails?

Doubts about the criminality or otherwise of Animal's potential violent death brings evaluation of his condition of being to a decisive point. Is Animal primarily a human whose chief concern is to satirise the crude zoomorphism which cripples him and his contemporaries, and in so doing to critique the crude anthropomorphism which makes such racism possible? Is he primarily an animal who wishes to question the coherence of humans' visions of themselves? Is the biological and phylogenetic definition of *Homo sapiens* to have the final word and pronounce Animal as irrevocably human? Whether Animal is human or animal, the ghost of other possibilities of his being always haunts him, and this spectre hovers over any insistence upon certainty about what he is. Animal thus inhabits a zone of uncertainty; if he is to be an animal, that is, a non-specific creature inhabiting the amorphous designation of non-human animal by dint of being deprived of the additional characteristics that identify the humanist human, he must be an Aristotelian non-political animal, driven by instinct, with a Heidegger's-lizard-like being of body only, and with no Cartesian capacity to doubt his existence or to reflect upon his death. Clearly, this is not the case as Animal is a self-conscious self-narrator meditating upon what will follow his death, and the inverse should therefore apply. However, the politics of animalisation and of the humanist notion of the proper human upon which animalisation depends, both exist in, and are subverted by, Animal. The Kampani lawyers, who leave Animal 'contemplating how it is that in the same world there are people like the lawyers and creatures like me' (Sinha 2007, 263), are the means by which the traditional definition of 'human' becomes questionable. If to be human is to be unthinkingly cruel or dully indifferent to the suffering of others, in the manner of a Kampani lawyer, then Animal does

not want to be human, but Heidegger's lizard makes plain to him that he also fails to qualify for the traditional definition of animal as limited by instinct, and defined by 'tooth and claw'. The question of what Animal is, then, cannot be framed on the oppositional basis of humanity and animality, and in him the absolutes of modernity and the bounded human individual dissolve into uncertainties.

The impossibility of dividing Animal's biological condition from his political form of life is revealed and figured forth in the industrialised deforming of his spine. Animal describes his spine as 'melted' in a 'furnace', and reshaped by 'the hammer-blows that beat his humanity out of him' (Sinha 2007, 219), and so frames his affliction in the metaphor of the smelting works and the changes wrought upon organic and elemental matter by the tools of human industry. The mutation of his body by the pesticides which are intended to adapt and integrate India's agrarian base into Western agribusiness, incorporates him and his material existence into global and corporate structures, and diffuses his identity across multiple agencies. Animal makes clear that the penetration of industrialisation by imperial forces into his body and those of the unwilling indigenous Khaufpuri population is at the root of his suffering as a living being, and that the physical binding of his material existence with his political context is irrevocable, and existed prior to his birth.

Neil Badmington articulates how posthumanism enables an approach which accepts that all the signifying strands will not necessarily be tied off, and in which

it is not possible to arrive at a moment of certainty, mastery, satisfaction. Meaning keeps on moving, and cultural criticism must learn to hear the 'yes' with the 'no', to read the disfunctioning alongside the functioning, to announce how every 'supposed system' is at once a deposed system. Humanism is there and not quite there. It comes and goes, it flickers, it drifts. (2001, 12)

For Animal, humanism does indeed 'flicker' and 'drift'; sometimes he qualifies as human, sometimes he does not, and thus he performs the inadequacy of modernity's distinction between human and animal. Having spent his story searching for a category to define himself by, Animal closes his narrative by resolving to remain an animal of no fixed species, and to be 'the one and only Animal' (Sinha 2007, 366), rather than the privileged, bounded and impenetrable human individual that

Western modernity proposes is the solution to his problems. He hopes, as Matthew Calarco and Donna Haraway hope, to let the human–animal distinction go.

The concept of ‘the animal’ infiltrates all aspects of the idea of ‘the human’, and *Animal's People* stages the complexity of human political, cultural, legal and social encounters and entanglements with animality. The novel proposes that crude anthropomorphism and crude zoomorphism are disfigured and disfiguring discourses, and reveals the frameworks of thought and practice which animalise humans. The suffering of humans as a result of the hypocrisies and legitimations of animalisation is very clearly set out, but *Animal's People* is not always as self-conscious in its disfiguring of animality as it is of humanity. Animal's lizard does nothing to interrogate its supposition that other animals are, by definition, wholly subject to instinct. Animal himself views animal life as wild and free, and while this may be relevant to a human subversion of the restrictions imposed by notions of the proper human, the text does not reflect upon a conflation of wildness and freedom as part of the apparatus of animality. While, therefore, the text disfigures the idea of the human, and addresses some of the disfigurements created from the generality of the *animot*, some of the many folds at the edge between humans and other animals remain unexplored. But Animal is a human animal. Maybe, readings of other animal representations can unfold them.

NOTES

1. See F.L. Coolidge and T. Wynn, *The Rise of Homo Sapiens: The Evolution of Modern Thinking* for discussions of the evolutionary trajectory of species of the tribe *Hominini* as the only members of the family *Hominidae* to evolve bipedalism, and for the consequent adaptive complexes of locomotion, diet, reproduction and behaviour and their contribution to advanced encephalisation. See W. Haviland et al., *Evolution and Prehistory: The Human Challenge* for discussions of the evolutionary opportunities offered by bipedalism (Coolidge and Wynn 2009; Haviland et al. 2007).
2. In Hindi and Urdu *jaanvar* (or *janvar*) means ‘animal’ or ‘beast’, a word derived from *jaan*, meaning ‘life’.
3. In Hinduism, lust is a vice to be avoided (Edwards 2001, *A Brief Guide to Beliefs: Ideas, Theologies, Mysteries and Movements*, 138). In Islam, lustfulness leads to immoral conduct (Bano 2003, *Status of Women in Islamic Society*, 136). Similarly, in Christianity, lust and lewdness are viewed as base and sinful (Knust 2006, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient*

Christianity). All these perspectives on lust are as subject to reinterpretation and politically motivated manipulation as any other social discourse.

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