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“A TIGER WILL PERHAPS TEAR YOU TO PIECES, BUT HE WILL NOT STEAL YOUR LIFE”: THE POLITICS OF ANIMAL USE IN BARBARA CHASE-RIBOUD’S *HOTTENTOT VENUS: A NOVEL*

Abstract

One of the most emotionally and politically charged features of Barbara Chase-Riboud’s 2003 neo-Victorian biofiction is the laying bare of the mechanism of commercial and scientific animalization of a human being in the context of both colonized Africa and early nineteenth-century Europe, in addition to examining the limits of individual resistance to it. While focusing on specific – racialized and hypersexualized – humans who are animalized, the novel employs nonhuman animals primarily as symbols and stereotypes: only occasionally are they recognized as living and breathing victims of capitalist-imperialist commodification. The paper examines the many uses of animals in the novel in order to discuss the politics of their treatment in the framework of Chase-Riboud’s passionate commitment to feminist anti-imperialism.

Keywords

Animalization; (nonhuman) animal; capitalism; imperialism; race

1. “How come I here?”: Introduction

Hottentot Venus (2003) details the “noncriminal putting to death” (Derrida quoted in Wolfe 2003: 7) of a historical person, Sarah (Saartje) Baartman, a Khoekhoe woman born in 1789, brought to Europe in 1810 to be exhibited before English and French audience as a titular mock-goddess – an emblem of “primitive” sexuality and the missing link between “beast and man” (Chase-Riboud 2004: 5). Marked by protruding hips (diagnosed as “steatopygia”) and the so-called

“Hottentot apron”, Baartman, the novel reveals, was exhibited, examined, hated, pitied, sensationalized, raped and prostituted by her Afrikaner and European husband-masters-owners while alive. The “traumatic litany of self-dispossessions” (Kohlke 2013: 14) of this baptized Christian, however, does not stop with death: in a chillingly rendered autopsy scene, organ after organ is excised from her, measured, judged worthy of preservation or discarded – “[t]he slop pail holding my internal organs including my heart would be thrown to the pigs” (Chase-Riboud 2004: 284)¹. Baartman’s body was famously dissected by one of “the masters of the world” (220), Baron Georges Léopold Cuvier, before the audience of fellow scientists; her brain and genitals preserved in a jar and exhibited, together with her skeleton and a full body cast, at *Musée de l’Homme* until 1974 (1994²). The novel is told by Baartman in 2002, from an omniscient posthumous perspective that is also employed by another neo-Victorian author, Sheri Holman in *The Dress Lodger* (2000), with whom Chase-Riboud shares the engaged examination of the violence of the nineteenth century pathological anatomy. Baartman’s sections, which comprise the greatest part of the novel, are intersected with sections narrated by fictional Alice Unicorn, her English servant, and Nicolas Tiedeman, “the animalist”, in addition to historical figures such as Reverend Robert Wedderburn, Baron Cuvier, and Jane Austen, but are “never interlinked by a heterodiegetic narrator” (Kohlke 2013: 17).

The novel answers the question asked by Sarah at the moment of her death: “How come I here?” (Chase-Riboud 2004: 12), and in doing so offers a genealogy of the animalization of a human being through the multilayered violence of imperialism – poverty and the attendant servitude/slavery on the one hand, and the race and gender ideologies and politics of the early nineteenth century England and France on the other. While both the novel and Baartman herself have been examined extensively in the context of the nineteenth-century European scientific racism, neo-Victorian biofiction, trauma and gender studies, modern pornography and postcolonial neo-slave narratives (Hill Collins 1999; Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010; Willis 2010; Kohlke 2013; Romero Ruiz 2013; Iannaccaro 2015), the question of the animal tends to be unexamined – apart from the variations on the ubiquitous “she was treated/exhibited like an animal” remark. This paper seeks to rectify this omission and to discuss in greater detail the uses to which animals are put in Chase-Riboud’s novel. The “use of animals” that the paper proposes to examine is a deliberately ambiguous phrase: on the one hand, there is the multifaceted exploitation of actual animals in the context of scientific anthropocentrism, capitalism and imperialist commodification of Africa that the novel depicts; on the other is Chase-Riboud’s deployment of animals primarily as symbols/beastly stereotypes in her criticism of gendered imperialist violence. The former, moreover, is of interest to Chase-Riboud insofar as it provides a pattern for the animalization of the heroine.

2. “I was fed the peanut oils and corn porridge and honey”: Animalization, sex/pornography/prostitution

By animalization of a human being is understood the transference of practices and acts usually committed to animals onto human beings in specific contexts such as slavery, death penalty (see *Burial Rites*) or various “states of exception” (Agamben), but perhaps most visibly in the intersecting contexts of economy, racism and gender ideologies fuelling the traumatic colonial encounters. The practices include reducing humans to the animal property status and a whole array of disciplinary, restraining and exploitative instruments – the bamboo cage as an indispensable element of the Hottentot Venus show; the stick that Sarah is prodded with by Master Hendrick (Chase-Riboud 2004: 116), the thick chain used on both bear and Sarah by Sieur Réaux (195). Animalization, moreover, comprises the discursive practices of associating animals/animalized humans with bestiality, dirt, irrationality, danger and excessive sexuality, as well as the procedures and institutions such as the zoos, circuses, museums and scientific experimentation that display and “prove” the inferiority and essential otherness of animals/animalized humans, which in turn justifies their exploitation and de-criminalizes the death to which they are subjected. While it is indisputable that “tropes of animalization have historically been crucial to colonial and imperial domination” (Philip Armstrong quoted in Lopez and Gillespie 2015: 97), the animalization of Jewish people under Nazi regime is also well-documented (see Wistrich 1999), as well as the long tradition of associating criminals with animals (see Olson 2013). Going further into the past, slaves are virtually equated with nonhuman animals in the writings of Aristotle, Xenophon, Cato the Elder, Varro and Columella (Bradley 2000). The animalization of human beings, therefore, has a very long history: it is vitally important, however, to recognize it as the “process that subjugates *both humans and animals*” (Lopez and Gillespie 2015: 5, italics added). The capturing, transporting, restraining, disciplining and exploitative techniques produce “the animal” as much as the animalized human, primarily as “a status that justifies substandard or inhumane treatment” (Lopez and Gillespie 2015: 2). The animals of the zoos, circuses, the dancing bear explicitly referenced by Chase-Riboud (204), the chained birds in the garden belonging to Muséum national d’histoire naturelle, the animals in the nineteenth century collector’s “cabinet”, as well as the modern lab, therefore, are not “natural” and “innate” anything – they are the products and measures of the violence of capitalism, imperialism and scientific materialism.

The greater part of the novel is devoted to tracing the various forms of European imperialist animalization of a specific human being, and by extension the race/continent she is made to represent. Examining how animalization and racialization overlap to produce the “African [as] the most dehumanized Other” (Scott 2007: 36), Chase-Riboud demonstrates a fierce devotion to anti-imperialist ethics and cultural praxis – at the price of the novel’s failure as a work of art³. Yet as a feminist, she avoids what Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) terms “the

failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy”, showing remarkable awareness of the animalization of women in native patriarchal cultures, even before the lethal interventions of the many colonizers. “In the colonial situation”, as Oyeronke Oyewumi writes, “there was a hierarchy of four, not two, categories. Beginning at the top, these were: men (European), women (European), native (African men) and Other (African women). Native women occupied the residual and unspecified category of the Other” (Ashcroft et al. 2005: 256). While Chase-Riboud shows that in the colonial situation this unspecified category of “the Other” bleeds into the category of “the animal” through scientific racism/misogyny, she also details the animalization of women under native patriarchy. The “Hottentot Venus”, exhibited, examined and raped for her physical features by European masters, is already treated in Africa like an animal: fattened up, her body parts (labia minora) modified in order to increase her price on the market, in a “masculinecentred official economy” (Plumwood 1994: 10) of (hetero)sexuality:

Aunt Auni made two incisions on each side so that the flesh curved downwards and placed a small pebble within. As the stones stretched the delicate membranes, she would insert a larger, heavier pebble until the flesh had descended to the length she desired and found beautiful. She explained, but I already knew from my sisters, that for my future husband, the act of love was not only the penetration of my vagina but also the enfolding of his gland within those fleshy lips. This would augment the ultimate moments of his pleasure. For my husband, I could procure rapturous levels with this apron of pulsing flesh filled with racing blood, fluttering like the burning wings of a butterfly or the fiery folds of a medusa. Each month the pebble got heavier and my bride-price increased (22).

Chase-Riboud details the artificial production of “the Hottentot apron” in order to refute the nineteenth century interpretations of it as proof of Khoisan women’s innate, natural and/or God-given animality and moral depravity. While it is possible to see “the Hottentot apron” as an expression of a culture that cultivates sophisticated sexual pleasure and body modification, and is therefore far from primitive/barabarc⁴, it is nonetheless conspicuous that Sarah, reproducing her aunt’s lessons, talks only about “his pleasure”. Later on she will mention “the Yousha tribe and the Fula and the Sarahuli [who] excised part of their women-folk’s sex, then sewed them up so that it took ten minutes to urinate and ten days to complete their menses” (51). The infamous FGM (female genital mutilation) is seemingly the opposite of “making sex more attractive by artifice” (22): both are, however, expressions of heteronormative patriarchal domination under which women, animal-like, do not possess the right to bodily integrity. “My shape became me and I became my shape” (22) Sarah pronounces, and while these words prophesize her European and postcolonial future, they are uttered in a distinctly African context and refer to the Khoisan traditions so old “they couldn’t even be explained” (23) Thus, as Glen Coulthard states, “the colonial relation should not

be understood as a primary locus of ‘base’ from which (...) other forms of oppression flow, but rather as the inherited background field within which market, racist, patriarchal, and state relations converge” (quoted in Day 2015: 113).

The market, racist and patriarchal relations are even more pronounced in the European setting, converging in the pornographic exhibiting of Sarah Baartman in England and France. The animalizing aspect of the display was criticized extensively by Patricia Hill Collins, who saw in it the formation of “one of the original icons for Black female sexuality” (Russell 1993: 99) that set the pattern for the treatment of women of colour in contemporary pornography: “the continuation of the historical treatment of their actual bodies”, which is the treatment of animals – slavery, bondage, breeding (98–99). Alice Walker, too, continues this line of thought: “where white women are depicted in pornography as ‘objects’, black women are depicted as animals” (Russell 1993: 100). Yet Chase-Riboud, committed to defending Sarah’s humanity, chooses to emphasize Sarah’s resistance. Subjected to the gaze of the audience for ten hours a day, Sarah is metaphorically consumed/raped as so many victims of modern-day pornography (animals as well); yet she refuses victimhood through disassociation, induced and maintained by *dagga* (marijuana), morphine and alcohol, and the leather mask covering her face – the mask which, ironically, both gives her agency and “turn[s] her into a generic representation of African womanhood” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 116). In an attempt to assert her human status – defined as the never questioned distance from the animals – Sarah rejects pity from her audience, as pity, too, is reserved for “the animal”:

Cries, insults, shouts and laughter would at times overwhelm me as if the waves of the ocean engulfed me except it was not salt they deposited but liquid hatred, which beat upon my naked skin, my bare feet, my burning face and scorched brain. I had learned over the years to divorce myself from the crowd, to hover just above it like a purple heron in flight. I learned to feel not, to listen not, to think not. I decided to understand no language, not even that of pity or compassion, for this too was part of their game; to pity the monster, the animal, the dis-human, the ugly, the heathen, the Hottentot (4–5).

Chase-Riboud treats Sarah’s depression and addictions as the measure of her humanity in the face of the pornographic-animalizing display of her body as less than human, for the confirmation of her audience’s sense of mastery – pornography, after all, is about making violence sexy⁵ (and profitable). Moreover, Randy Malamud’s observation that the zoo, as the collection and exhibition of captive animals, is a fundamental construct of imperialism applies equally to the quasi-scientific sensationalist exhibition of Sarah Baartman, which predates it (see Rothfels 2008): “The zoo itself acts as both a model of empire (where humanity holds domination over lesser species arrayed for our pleasure, our betterment, our use) and simultaneously as a metaphor for the larger, more important imperial enterprises in the sociopolitical hierarchy in which it flourishes” (Sorenson 2008: 198).

Prostitution is yet another form of the discursive and actual racialization/animalization to which Sarah is subjected, as reducing a living being to specific body parts purchased for sensuous pleasure is arguably not so different from enjoying animal flesh – moreover, there is a huge degree of symbolic, metonymic and literal interchangeability between animal flesh and a female body in patriarchal cultures (see Adams 2010). Racializing Sarah as a subhuman prostitute begins as a dangerous assessment – her bigamist husband-owner, Alexander William Dunlop, states with all the authority of a medical doctor that “[t]here is no difference between the Hottentot and the prostitute, so there is no moral deterrent to using one as the other . . .” (63, ellipsis in the original), thus voicing what will become the “dominant Victorian stereotype of prostitution as a genetic flaw, an atavistic regression and racial pathology” (McClintock 1995: 287). The stage name Sarah is given, moreover, positions her immediately as a prostitute, as “[t]he name ‘Venus’ is not a form of praise. Venus was the protector of Rome sex workers who erected a temple in her honour where aspiring courtesans were taught the arts of love” (Tate 2015: 19). Dunlop’s pronouncement and Sarah’s stage name become self-fulfilling prophecies when desperate and destitute Sarah starts to “fuck men for money” (263) near the end of her life.

Here it would be worthwhile, also, to tease out some of the implications of Rosemary Hennessy’s proposition that “the history of sexual identity . . . has been fundamentally, though never simply, affected by several aspects of capitalism: wage labour, commodity production and consumption” (Hennessy 2000: 4). Produced and consumed as the animalized “Other”, a supposed deviation from both humanity and femininity, participating in/performing her own subjugation⁶, racialized as hypersexualized, Sarah ends up as no longer a sexual being: “I fucked men for money” (263), “the men I serviced for Réaux” (11) – it is all labour with no pleasure on her part. The loss of sex drive is perhaps not the most obvious form of animalization, but it is in fact a common experience of “exotic” animals in captivity, and the so-called “domestic” animals, both female and male. Sarah was labelled “a stupid cow” by Dunlop (126): actual cows, who are far from stupid, are routinely raped in the process of commercial production of milk, by humans who perform artificial insemination as the exhausted, confined, overbred animals do not possess a natural sex drive anymore. The new sexual identity of Sarah Baartman, fundamentally affected by imperialist capitalism, is arguably that of a sex-repulsed, sex-performing asexual. Thus she comes to embody highly specific “slow”⁷ violence of colonization defined as “the deadening of sense, the establishment of a body in social death, as one that lives and breathes its potentiality as death, and so working and reproducing its force at the somatic and affective level” (Butler 2006: 17).

3. “Everything walking was edible”: Animals as commodities/symbols

Though she refrains from portraying the colonized as the protectors of animals to whom they are mystically attuned – the much-abused trope that is fundamentally racist – Chase-Riboud shows that the wide-scale abuse of animals is initiated by the white colonizers. The Khoisan lifestyle is depicted as eco-friendly and sustainable – though, as shepherds, the Khoekhoe do not abstain from meat and animal products. The “Heroine’s Note”, on the other hand, introduces the intensely ironic, self-conscious anti-imperialist tone of the novel as it identifies the legacy of the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers as “syphillis, smallpox and slavery (...) private property, land theft and fences” (Chase-Riboud 2004: xi), but also the commercial use of animals, to be refined by the British. Upon entering Cape Fort in 1805, for instance, Sarah notices: “Men carried cages filled with everything from snakes to parrots. Anything that could walk was on a leash and everything walking was edible. There was nothing that was not merchandise” (33). The passage is sharply contrasted with the pages immediately preceding it depicting Sarah’s journey through South Africa represented as “a garden richer and more beautiful than the painted illuminations of his [Rev. Freehouse’s] Bible, filled with birds of paradise, flamingos and white cranes, rhinoceros and Cape lions, tree monkeys and orangutans, river buffalo, carp and bullfrogs” (29). Description is itself a political act, as Salman Rushdie claims in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991: 13): animals are not only emblems of African innocence and a non-exploitative relationship between human beings and the natural world; they are also, emphatically, beautiful. Sarah, who will be deemed monstrous and ugly because of her supposed animality, while commenting on the animals unwittingly summarizes her life as well: “They were beautiful to watch, these gentle creatures that caused harm to no living thing, not even the trees they nibbled on” (29). The potential empathy that might arise out of the recognition of the animals’ beauty and harmlessness, however, is very soon drowned in a series of traumas, and Sarah’s desperate clinging to her humaneness at the price of normalizing animal abuse.

Animals’ beauty and harmlessness are never visited again: from the moment of Sarah’s entry to Cape Fort, animals – both “domestic” and “exotic” – are depicted as subjects to the processes of commercial and scientific animalization in the context of the nineteenth century exoticism, consumerism and the production of knowledges about “others”, and as occasional symbols of amoral purity, by which is understood relationship with other beings not based on capitalist considerations of profit but sheer instinct. This particular deployment of animals in Chase-Riboud’s novel is exemplified by Reverend Wedderburn’s words: “[t]he tiger will perhaps tear you to pieces, but he will not steal your life” (134). Amoral purity does not exclude death, but a painful tiger-inflicted death is unambiguously preferable to the slow draining of Sarah’s life, rendered in excruciating detail on almost 300 pages. In “Introducing Economies of Death”, Patricia J. Lopez and Kathryn A. Gillespie make a similar point: “We are not, then, opposed to death itself; rather, we are concerned with the way economic processes of commodification and capital

accumulation make lives killable, and exploit bodies, lives and labor in ways that bring on premature death” (Lopez and Gillespie 2015: 3).

Additionally, animals – birds in particular – figure as traditional symbols of vulnerable femininity and equally vulnerable freedom. Chase-Riboud plays with the constraints placed on freedom in property-centred civilized societies. When Sarah is issued a passport, for instance, she is informed that it is her “personal property” which she should not lose. When she inquires about the meaning of the passport – “Am I free?” – Dunlop replies, “as a bird” (70). Yet birds in civilization – in the garden belonging to Muséum national d’histoire naturelle, for example – have legs “fettered with brass weights so that they cannot fly away” (223). The purple heron who appears regularly at different moments in Sarah’s life is too employed for the symbolic potential suggesting the shared vulnerability of all women⁸ before male violence – from the moment of Sarah’s mother’s death to her encounter with Alice Unicorn, the heron with a lovely neck “bent forward in a double curve as if someone had broken it” (31) stands for women in general, conveying not so much feminine beauty as typically feminine exposure to male harm. Cattle – mute, bought and sold, slaughtered mercilessly – offer a metaphor for Sarah’s position within both patriarchal and colonial framework too: “Sometimes in the evening, before I bathed, I would walk amongst the cattle, corralled for slaughter or sale, and count horns, Khoekhoe style” (54). Sarah is exercising nostalgia for a lifestyle forever lost, but Chase-Riboud’s symbolism is clear. Yet no compassion is extended to the animals, by the heroine and the authoress both.

4. Class/poverty

Hottentot Venus’s politics is firmly feminist, anti-imperialist and postcolonial: while it is true that, as Christopher Taylor puts it humorously, “postcolonial studies was not entirely hospitable to Marxism, and [...] plenty of postcolonial critics could not recognize class struggle if they were standing on a barricade in the banlieu” (Taylor 2015: 334), Chase-Riboud does touch upon the animalizing aspects of capitalist wage labour and poverty which transcends racial boundaries. In order to convey the violence of poverty and capitalist work discipline, Chase-Riboud yet again resorts to animal similes. In St. Luke’s Orphanage, to which Sarah returns penniless at the age of 16, having lost a child and a husband, she encounters a quintessential colonial/patriarchal pedagogic scene: “thirty or more colored women all dressed in the same white smock” being instructed by a mistress in the art of ironing shirts. The women “resembled a troop of penguins with their white starched bosoms and their white starched caps, black arms flapping, heads bobbing in rhythm with the teacher’s lips, not able to make any sound themselves. Perhaps, like penguins, they had no vocal cords” (38). Disciplined, silent and trained, animals, moreover, offer behavioural role models for the colonized natives in the context of the master/servant relations. Narrating her stay at the Caesar farm, Baartman ironically comments, “I was grateful, quick, docile,

affectionate and trusting. Just like the other animals belonging to the family: four dogs, one cat and a parrot” (44).

Sarah’s animalization continues in Europe in an arguably more noticeable way, as Sarah is exhibited in a bamboo cage, “plucked and prodded” (157). Butchered by Baron Cuvier’s sharp scalpel in “the slaughterhouse of science” (285), Sarah, moreover, spends her last months in *Les Halles*: the notorious meat district of Paris. Yet Chase-Riboud consistently emphasizes the underlying cause of this animalization – poverty resulting from imperialism. In fact, Sarah’s consent to be exposed to “the liquid hatred” (4) of the English is financially motivated. Just like the impoverished, criminalized and animalized Agnes Magnúsdóttir who knows that being decent costs money (Kent 2013: 179), Sarah too comes to the realization that being human, with rights, dignity and control over one’s life/body, is predicated on money. This is why she accepts Dunlop’s and Hendrick’s proposition to go to England.

I would be somebody one day and the haughty English who despised me and had conquered my country, would pay gold to see the original landlords of the Cape in the flesh. The insignificance of my former life, my former slavery, my poverty would be washed away. I would invent a new existence that mattered, become a real person, able to exhibit my true nature. I would be recognized as a human being with dignity and power over my destiny (104).

When Sarah is later, animal-like, sold as property to actor Henry Taylor and then lost to Sieur Réaux over a game of cards, the owner of the dancing bear applies the same instruments of restraint to Sarah, with due deference to the requirements of civilized appearance: “under my skirts, my feet were hobbled by a thick chain. I was Sieur Réaux’s prisoner, yet to a passerby, with his arm around my shoulders enfolding me tenderly, he seemed like an attractive husband or guardian steadying me against the movement of the ship and the slippery wetness of the deck” (195). But through Alice Unicorn Chase-Riboud again explicitly links this specific instance of animalization with poverty: “We are prisoners because we are poor” (264).

Yet what Sarah and Alice do not realize is that throughout the nineteenth century, much as today, “property ownership [as] a prerequisite for proper political subjectivity and citizenship”, as Athena Athanasiou states,

was also, at the same time, attached to race and gender requirements – that is, whiteness and maleness – that signified proper (and propertied) civilized human subjectivity. Subjectifying and simultaneously desubjectifying and dispossessing violence (as in the genealogies of colonialism and the slave trade, but also the new imperialism and the neoliberal international order, and their gendered implications) emerged as a prerequisite for (property-owning, white, male) subjectivity; such a subjectivity is constituted through, and inhabited by, processes of desubjectifying others, rendering them usable,

employable, but then eventually into waste matter, or of no use: always available, always expendable (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 32).

In order for some to be human, others have to be dispossessed, desubjectified, dehumanized and animalized – that is, indeed, the proper functioning of the modern anthropological machine according to Agamben (Oliver 2007: 1), and Chase-Riboud.

Thus poverty as a weapon of mass destruction and animalization, while inevitable in colonial relations, is not limited to race. Chase-Riboud is aware of this as she positions English working class next to animals during the Hottentot Venus' shows (169). Victor Unicorn, Alice's disabled little brother, is costumed and paraded as a "turtle boy" for profit; Alice herself reminds Sarah of the purple heron and her own mother in flight from the Boers' swords. The violence of capitalism, moreover, does not end with the animalization of the workers but in a Dickensian manner infects the setting as well, and is conveyed through animal similes in a passage that deliberately echoes *Hard Times*'s description of Coketown. "There was rattling and trembling from the ironworks and foundries that sounded like the screams of mad elephants" (170), Sarah recalls her introduction to the English urban centres. Out-of-place mad elephants are coupled with brightly colored people – "Once, in Bensham, hundreds of men with red eyes and green hair came from the brass works and frightened me more than I amazed them" (169) – pointing primarily to the essential unnaturalness of capitalism, which is defused and diverted via cultural obsession with only one colour. On the subject of the shared victimization/animalization at the hands of the capitalists, Chase-Riboud, too, has Reverend Wedderburn make the following observation: "The English working class, the Scottish peasantry, the black Haitian, the African slave, the Irish bond servant, the American Indian are all one and the same" (135). While this kind of statement would be greeted with a lot of understandable hostility among the nationalists, there is a grain of truth in his impassioned, universalizing declaration – animalization through capitalist/imperialist production of poverty knows no racial bounds. Sarah herself claims that "Alice had had a life more wretched than a Hottentot's" (177).⁹

5. "A rare and beautiful giraffe skin of more than eighteen feet in length and a genuine female Hottentot": Museums and science

As stated earlier, animalization of both living animals and humans comprises the discursive practices of associating them with bestiality, dirt, irrationality, danger and excessive sexuality as well as the material practices, procedures, and institutions such as the zoos, circuses, museums and scientific experimentation that display and "prove" their inferiority and unpardonable otherness, which in turn justifies the exploitation to which they are subjected, in legalized and legitimized contexts.

One such context is education. William Bullock, the proprietor of the Liverpool Museum, offers “edification” as the ultimate legitimating force behind animal abuse: “My museum of natural history is designed not only to display the natural world as it is, but also to influence the minds and behavior of the people who visit my museum to contemplate their own higher, rationalized human behavior and establish the distance between human and animal nature” (Chase-Riboud 2004: 142). Tony Bennett, in “The Exhibitionary Complex” (1988), calls attention to the pedagogic/disciplinary aspects of the nineteenth century museums in much less lofty terms:

Museums were...typically located at the centre of cities where they stood as embodiments, both material and symbolic, of a power to ‘show and tell’ which, in being deployed in a newly constituted open and public space, sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state. If the museum and the penitentiary...represented the Janus face of power, there was none the less – at least symbolically – an economy of effort between them. For those who failed to adopt the tutelary relation to the self promoted by popular schooling or whose hearts and minds failed to be won in the new pedagogic relations between state and people symbolized by the open doors of the museum, the closed walls of the penitentiary threatened a sterner instruction in the lessons of power. Where instruction and rhetoric failed, punishment began (Bennett 1988: 99–100).

While Bullock calls the (implicitly but unquestionably white) visitors “to contemplate their own higher, rationalized human behaviour”, Monique Scott emphasizes that “many museum visitors interpret human evolution exhibitions as linear, teleological narratives of progress from bestial African prehistory to a civilized, European present” (Scott 2007: 1), thereby pointing to the role of the museums in the wide-scale cultural project of naturalizing imperialism. Yet when Dunlop proposes to Bullock that Sarah be displayed in his Liverpool Museum that boasts of “thirty-five-foot-long boa constrictor, his seven-foot-tall North American brown bear, the albino alligator from the Congo and fifteen thousand birds” (90), the man refuses, but not before providing Sarah and her owners/keepers with the stage name that will make her famous. He recognizes Sarah’s human status and shrinks away from the exhibition of a “live human being in an animal museum” (141). The dead human being apparently poses no such problem – in France.

Scientific animalization/bestialization of both human and nonhuman animals is in the novel depicted primarily through the discourse and practice of French anatomy which is inseparable from racist ideologies and politics. In a narrative procedure typical of postmodern neo-Victorian fiction, Baartman’s story is intersected with authentic historical documents, including excerpts from Baron Cuvier’s lectures and letters. These excerpts establish the absolute difference between human and animals – the difference that Chase-Riboud is at pains to deconstruct in connection with the “masters” – and position variously classified humans in

the Great Chain of Being. Yet animals themselves are animalized by science, constructed in such a way so as to be indispensable cogs in the “anthropological machine”. From Plato and Aristotle to Cuvier, animals are regarded as wholly instinctual beings, guided by appetite – in Cuvier’s curiously sweeping and faulty generalization, the appetite for flesh:

Thus, if the viscera of an animal are so organized as only to be fitted for the digestion of recent flesh, it is also required that the jaws should be constructed as to fit them for devouring their prey; the claws must be constructed for seizing and tearing it to pieces; the teeth for cutting and dividing the flesh; the entire system of limbs or organs of motion for pursuing and overtaking it; the organs of sense for discovering it at the distance (245).

The excerpt comes from Cuvier’s “Discourse on the Revolutionary Upheavals on the Surface of the Globe”. If the state of the animal, moreover, is blind appetite, then the measure of humanity is the distance from it. It is the measure of beauty also:

The Caucasian race, to which we ourselves belong, is chiefly distinguished by the beautiful form of the head ... Second comes the Mongolian, and then the poor last: the Negro race is confined to the south of Mount Atlas. Its characteristics are black complexion, woolly hair, compressed cranium and flattish nose. In the prominence of the lower part of the face and the thickness of the lips, it manifestly approaches the monkey tribe (125).

This passage comes from Cuvier’s “Thirty Lessons in Comparative Anatomy”, but it is obvious that these are lessons in scientific racism/racist aesthetics as well, with the animal – “monkey” – as the reference point. Animals, themselves discursively produced, classified and imaginatively controlled, are thus employed in the scientific production of knowledge of (other) “others” – in the production of race in particular. Race and animals are intimately connected: as Cary Wolfe states, summarizing Foucault’s stand on the function of racism within biopolitics, “you can’t talk about race without talking about species, simply because both categories – as history well shows – are so notoriously pliable and unstable, constantly bleeding into and out of each other” (Wolfe 2013: 43). And, as Ta-Nehisi Coates emphasizes, “race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming ‘the people’ has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy” (Coates 2015: 7). Dorothy Roberts, too, defines race accurately as “a political category that has been disguised as a biological one” (quoted in Weheliye 2014: 6).

The infamous autopsy scene exemplifies Roberts’s and Coates’s claims: Baron Cuvier pronounces decisively that “Sarah Baartman is the true transitional figure between man and ape” (282), naming her later the “missing link” (287) – not yet human. This earns her a place in Cuvier’s and Geoffroy Saint-Hillaire *The Natu-*

ral History of Mammals (1819), between “the white polar bear” and “the spotted leopard” (287). The book is, appropriately, bound in “the smooth exquisite kid-skin” (286).

Yet even in the French scientific, elite setting, animals are not employed only in the production of racist and speciesist knowledges, and in the building of scientific careers – they are also status symbols, and food to be consumed. When Sarah experiences a nervous breakdown at the Duc de Berry’s ball, she jumps onto the table and treads, “like a heifer” (256), over elegantly displayed dead animal bodies, animal body parts and processed animal secretions:

I jumped onto the banquet table laid with silver and crystal candelabras, flowers and all manner of edibles: cantaloupes, radishes, butter, anchovies, olives, tuna fish, shrimp bisque, veal consommé, salmon hollandaise, York ham, filet Richelieu, queen’s mouthfuls, pigeon salami with truffles, fillets of sole, ducklings, roasts of pork, pheasant, oysters, wild boar... (256).

The image is that of a living animal expressing rage over dead animals: the poignancy of the scene, as Chase-Riboud intends, lies in the fact that Sarah is an animalized and equally elegantly/brutally consumed human.

6. “Je ne suis pas un animal” – resisting animalization, confirming bestial stereotypes

Possibly the most emotionally and politically charged feature of *Hottentot Venus: A Novel* is the laying bare of the mechanism of commercial and scientific animalization of a human being – in addition to examining the poignant limits of individual human resistance to it – within the framework of settler colonialism and the multifaceted practices of capitalism/imperialism that include producing, disseminating and profiting on the tropes of animalization and bestiality of the colonized. While at pains to deconstruct stereotypical representations of Africans as beasts/animals, however, Chase-Riboud deploys the tropes of animalization herself in order to apply them to the colonizers. The cumulative political effect of the consistent deployment of bestial tropes in connection with the white scientists, masters, and an Emperor is the equivalent of Sarah’s angry “fuck you sirs. You are no gentlemen” near the end of the novel (Chase-Riboud 2004: 285), directed at “Dapper and Barrow, Levaillant and Diderot, Voltaire, Jefferson, Kolbe, Rousseau, Buffon” – no gentlemen and, according to Chase-Riboud, not even human. Attempting to uncover the bestiality of the civilized, enlightened and evolved masters, however, Baartman and Chase-Riboud confirm the dominant Western constructions of animals – the very constructions instrumental in the imperialist animalization of people of colour. With the exception of Count Henri de Blainville who is depicted as birdlike (224–5), all the other metaphors and similes in the novel are predominantly those of apes – Cuvier’s “monkey tribe”

that the African people in general, and Sarah Baartman in particular, are associated with – and “beasts”.

The association of white men with apes begins early in the novel. A nine-year-old orphaned Sarah is sold by her aunt to Reverend Cecil Freehouse, whose “breast and arms sprouted a mysterious black pelt, like an ape” (18). Before 16-year-old Sarah leaves for Cape Fort, after the death of her first husband and her baby son, she visits a Khoisan medicine woman who warns her that she will die “within ten winters” if she leaves Africa, as there is “no medicine against a world not made up of human beings” (26). Thus the opposition between Khoekhoe, “People of the People”, and Europeans in terms of their respective humanities is established early on and runs as Sarah’s personal counter-narrative against the massive narratives of animalization and bestiality.

One aspect of the massive narratives of animalization and bestiality establishes Khoekhoe women as so indistinguishable from animals as to copulate with orangutans. A historian and polygenist Edward Long, for example, states on the topic: “I do not think that an orangoutang (sic) husband would be a dishonour to an Hottentot female; for what are the Hottentots? They are . . . a people certainly very stupid, and very brutal. In many respects they are more like beasts than men” (quoted in Scott 2007: 25). Yet in the very first encounter with her future master, Colonel Caesar, when Sarah is forced into performing a specific sexual act, it is the white man who is depicted “more like beast than man” – an orangutan no less: “He opened his breeches, took out his organ wild with red hairs like an orangutan’s posterior” (40). In England, the civilized audience “seemed to bay and bray like my father’s herds of longhorn cattle” (107); Sarah experiences “the eternal hyena laugh of the world” (108). Reverend Robert Wedderburn, too, comments that during the show, “[t]he crowd was like hounds at bay” (112), while Jane Austen declares that they “verily acted like a bunch of baboons” (157). The last of Sarah’s masters and owners, Sieur Réaux, the owner of a dancing bear, is described by Sarah explicitly as resembling his bear, “his face (...) covered with a large thick beard and moustache, so that his mouth was invisible. His nose resembled a snout with large wide nostrils” (187). “I smelled the beast” (193), Sarah says later, deliberately vague on whether this refers to the bear or his master.

While French scientists exhibit the same behavior as the English crowd (“The white men stood in a circle like hyenas, laughing at me” (225)), Cuvier is, at first, associated with a venomous snake – it is his “cold stare of a cobra” (222) that makes Sarah identify him as “a murderer” (222). Yet the Baron is not merely cold and murderous reason but a (white) man as well, which in *Hottentot Venus* means he is a potential rapist (of black women). Indeed, after Sarah’s breakdown at the ball, he does attempt to force himself on her. Chase-Riboud yet again resorts to animal similes and metaphors: “I stared at the baron’s erection, defenseless, and knew I was going to die here in this lion’s den as the Baron crouched there, his eyes gleaming, his wild red mane rising, ready to rape. A savage beast poised to pounce on me, his lamb. I wouldn’t have been surprised to see him flip his tail like a panther or grow horns like a rhinoceros. This was the jungle”

(259). In a fascinating study on the discourse of the jungle in American literature and culture, Michael Lundblad (2013) identifies “two broader assumptions about animality that are essential to the discourse of the jungle: first, animals are instinctually heterosexual; and second, representations of animals are legible signifiers of human sexuality” (Lundblad 2013: 41). Both of these are employed by Chase-Riboud: both of these, moreover, say more about the human construction of “wild” animals than the actual animals.

In the scene of the autopsy, Chase-Riboud reverts to the familiar trope of a baboon as an emblem of bestial violence and male (hetero)sexuality – the scene is delivered as rape, with the Baron’s knife and hand doubling as instruments of penetration/possession.

The baron’s scalpel completed the extraction of my sex and anus and held it high like a flag.

-Prepuce, pubes, pudendum, he exhorted as he put the organs in another jar. The audience rose as one, applauding wildly.

-Gentlemen, I have the honor to present to the Academy the genital organs of this, my Venus Hottentot, prepared in a way that leaves no doubt about the nature of her apron ...

-Ahhh, a strangled cry like that of an excited baboon erupted from the baron’s thin lips.

-The great Chain of Being. The great Chain of Being! The great Chain of Being, he cried out as he ejaculated, his hand deep in my entrails. He was stuttering like a Hottentot. M-m-my pri-pri-primary research, he babbled, has as its subject this extraordinary appendix which nature has made, I can verify, a special attribute of Sarah’s race (282).

Other powerful white men, including Napoleon, are bestialized as well. The Emperor, forcefully examining Sarah’s genitals while tapping her with his stick and making “the clucking sound a coachman makes to urge his horses on”, is two sentences later transformed from a coachman into a predatory animal: “His eyes were the eyes of a jackal. He made snorting, clucking noises like a naked ape” (249). Crème de la crème of Parisian society, gathered at Duc de Berry’s ball, too, “sweated and exuded their feral smell” (255), and Charles Darwin is described by Sarah’s ghost like this: “I had never seen a white man who so resembled an ape” (292).

The political intention is clear: the men who set out to prove that “Sarah Baartman was not human” (247) are in turn revealed as bestial and inhuman, in an impassioned indictment against the violence of imperialism, and “[t]he stigmatization of African peoples as bestial and ape-like [which] has left pervasive political and psychological residues throughout much of the world, including Africa itself” (Scott 2007: 36). Thus it is not surprising that a significant form of a political, feminist and anti-imperialist struggle that Chase-Riboud enacts in the novel is siding with anthropocentric humanism as a necessary strategy for resisting

imperialist animalization. “My humanness was the only thing I possessed”, Sarah states early in the novel (6) – ironically, the verbs that are intended to demonstrate her humanness are indistinguishable from animals: “I was real, I existed, I ate and slept and pissed and shat and loved and fucked and cried and dreamed and bled” (6). Later on, she insists on the humaneness of the social outcasts, as opposed to the civilized masters: “Only the-things-that-should-never-have-been-born remain steadfastly loyal and human” (263), thus unquestionably establishing loyalty and protectiveness as exclusively human traits. The abused animals are recognized as such, yet Chase-Riboud refuses to extend sympathy to them. In the poignant scene where Sarah releases the birds from Muséum national d’histoire naturelle’s garden, for example, it is clear that releasing the birds offers a vicarious taste of freedom to the virtually enslaved woman: “They scraped against the wire mesh, searching for a way out, then understanding, at last, the wedge took flight, fleeing the prison as I never could, striking a wingbeat as they rose as one, circling higher and higher, swooping into a trajectory due east” (250). Moreover, while claiming, memorably, that “[p]roperty is theft” (258), Sarah enjoys and collects “kid gloves” (7, 86, 99, 267), in an attempt to appropriate the tropes of English femininity and be recognized as human. Yet being human is clearly predicated not only on property ownership, race, gender and class, but on animal abuse as well: kids are slaughtered for ladies’ gloves just as they are for scientific monographs’ covers.

The tropes of bestialization and animalization, while serving a political function of deconstructing any claims of moral or cultural superiority – indeed, humanity – of the “masters of the world”, thus reinforce the stereotypical representation of animals invented and deployed by those same men. Cuvier’s assessment that animals are dominated by appetite, excessive sexuality and violence – faulty as it is – is reinforced in all the encounters between Sarah and her white hairy rapists. Alice Unicorn’s sentiment – “I hated what men had done to her, all of them, with their locks and their contracts, their penises and their pretensions, their dicks and their diplomacy, their codpieces full of hot air, their wars and their science, their factories and their industries, their progress and their enlightenment” (276) – is palpably present in the novel’s many depictions of heterosexual encounters as a power play between the sexes and the races.

7. Conclusion

The deployment of animals in *Hottentot Venus: A Novel* is politically motivated and is a part of Chase-Riboud’s anti-imperialist struggle: animal metaphors and similes are primarily mobilized to deconstruct the very claims of humanity of “the masters of the world” and to expose their supposedly evolved, civilized and enlightened world as “the jungle”. Having situated *Hottentot Venus* in the wider context of the early nineteenth century scientific racism/misogyny on the one hand, and the culture of pornographic exoticism and imperialist museums on the

other, Chase-Riboud lays bare the role of what Claire Jean Kim terms “species meanings” in the discursive and material production of the differences such as race and gender (class as well, to a certain degree). Chase-Riboud’s exploration, moreover, does not stop with “species meanings”, but also covers the disciplinary, restraining and exploitative techniques whereby (potentially all, but historically highly specific) human beings are animalized, suggesting Agamben’s lethal anthropological machine. Animalization, as Chase-Riboud reveals, comprises the discursive practices of associating animals/animalized humans with irrationality, danger and excessive sexuality, in addition to the procedures and institutions such as the zoos, circuses, museums and scientific experimentation that display and “prove” the inferiority and essential otherness of animals/animalized humans, legitimizing the exploitation/death to which they are subjected – transforming murder into a “noncriminal putting to death”. In the specific case of Sarah Baartman, the supposed excessive sexuality is coupled with the pornographic displaying of her body in a cage, in a leather mask, in a costume made to resemble her naked skin, amidst the widely circulated discourses of Khoisan women having orangutans as sexual partners. Prostitution, furthermore, is revealed to be the inevitable consequence of her systematic impoverishment at the hands of the masters, and is treated not as a racial marker but as alienated labour stripping Sarah of her sexuality, aligning her with the animals trapped in the hell of capitalist production.

Yet Chase-Riboud demonstrates a curious and conspicuous silence on the subject of nonhuman animals. Aware of the commodification, restraint, kidnapping, exhibiting and utilizing of harmless “gentle creatures” (29), her exploration stops at drawing parallels with Sarah’s treatment and condemning, justly, the imperialist violence of which Sarah Baartman is one specific, tragic victim. But imperialism and capitalism have claimed (and continue to do so) billions of nonhuman victims as well: at no point in the novel is it made clear that this is wrong and that it should be condemned as well. What Chase-Riboud is primarily interested in is the animalization of a specific human being, not animals themselves. In a variety of passages, the colonizers’ practices with animals – from hunting to taxidermy and exhibiting live and skeletal “specimens” – include the colonized human beings: consistently, the message is that humans, *unlike animals*, are not to be hunted, that they do not belong in a zoo or a circus. But it is vitally important to recognize the treatment of animals for what it is – a storehouse of practices of discipline, exploitation, punishment and consumption that are always-already potentially applied to animalized humans as well, but wrong in and of themselves. Chase-Riboud’s silence is all the more conspicuous if we bear in mind that *Hottentot Venus* is a novel that does not shy away from clear and explicit condemnation – to such a degree that Giuliana Iannaccaro feels Chase-Riboud uses it “just as a platform from which to denounce colonialism, neo-colonialism, and ruthless capitalism” (Iannaccaro 2015: 53). More troublingly, while deconstructing the humanity of the white masters, Chase-Riboud draws from and confirms European stereotyping of specific African animals (baboons, orangutans) as hypersexual beasts, legitimizing the wider assumption that “both human and

nonhuman animals are ‘naturally’ inclined toward heterosexuality and violence” (Lundblad 2013: 33). Thus she herself commits the very same injustice to which she is rightly so sensitive when it is directed at human beings. Employing animals as mere symbols, also, confirms human exceptionalism, erases the animal’s complexity and hierarchizes suffering on the basis of species, and is, therefore, a form of violence.

In a dialogue with Carla Freccero, Claire Jean Kim (2013) raises two points relevant for our examination of *Hottentot Venus*: one, that “[p]ersistent anthropocentrism has kept some progressives from recognizing the articulation of species with other classification systems they take more seriously (the ‘holy trinity’ of race/gender/class)”. Two, that “[i]ntersectionality and similar concepts can help bring the animal into fuller visibility, even as they can remind animal studies scholars of speciesism’s imbrication with other forms of domination” (465).

It is precisely this kind of intersectionality that is lacking in Chase-Riboud’s otherwise passionate commitment to anti-imperialism and feminist liberation: no claim for liberation is made on behalf of the animals. In his equally passionate and justified criticism of opportunistic mainstream animal studies, Steve Best (2009) condemns “studying exploited beings without explicit commitment to ending their oppression”. Foregrounding the “stealing of life” of an exploited human being via the procedures, techniques and even instruments applied to animals, Chase-Riboud stays silent on the subject of ending animal oppression, implicitly siding with the European representation of animals as amoral, cognitively impoverished and incapable of complex (human-like) suffering – all of which has been successfully disputed (see, for instance, Bekoff and Jamieson 1996; Rogers 1997; Bekoff and Pierce 2010; de Waal 2014).

As a final point, the novel, despite considerable flaws, offers the crucial recognition “that what is currently theorized as the financialization of life as ‘human capital’ in neoliberalism brutally and routinely occurred and continues to occur throughout the course of modern empires” (Lowe 2015: 197). What is missing is the condemnation of the financialization of nonhuman animal life, as the two are crucially connected. At the very beginning of the novel, Sarah describes the meat district of Paris where she will die: “All kinds of animal, human and otherwise, lived here, on exhibit: elephants, giraffes and camels, tigers, snakes and parrots, and all the parasites they brought: fleas, ticks, lice, mice” (8). The sentence offers a summary of the novel and its limitations – all the animals are displaced from Africa, and function as visible emblems of the traumas of “the colonial genuflection to the fetish of profit” (McClintock 1995: 229): just like the various narrative voices in the novel, the traumas of humans and animals run parallel but are never united.

Notes

- ¹ The reason for this is both prosaic and deeply poetic: decades after the autopsy, in a dialogue between the aged Nicolas Tiedeman and Charles Darwin, it is revealed that the heart is the same in all humans, which is why “[a]natomists don’t consider it a scientific organ of measure”. As Cuvier’s racist science is interested in identifying/producing difference as the basis for classification, Sarah’s heart is discarded. It is a metaphysical organ, after all, as Tiedeman suggests (Chase-Riboud 2003: 295).
- ² Marie-Luise Kohlke notes that, while not on display after 1974, Baartman’s body parts “were included in external exhibitions as late as 1994” (Kohlke 2013: 2).
- ³ I agree with Giuliana Iannaccaro’s assessment that “the novel, *as a novel*, is weak, and (...) its literary weakness diminishes the strength of its socio-political stances. (...) the final result has more to do with confusion and inconsistency than with complexity” (Iannaccaro 2015: 49, italics in the original). Iannaccaro rightly locates the “the greatest weakness of the novel” in the heroine: “[T]he character of Sarah Baartman is inconsistent. In search of the ‘true voice’ of the Khoikhoi woman, this novel in the final reckoning finds none. Chase-Riboud’s Sarah wavers between the submissive and excessively trusting colonized subject and the fully conscious spokeswoman for Western feminism and anti-racism. She is (and remains until the end) both a helpless girl thrown into the grips of white people whose ways and language are alien to her, and a post-1968 young feminist who develops a subtle political understanding of her oppressed situation; sometimes she discusses things on the same level as her (white, male, learned) interlocutor, employing a fully articulate English language” (52). Kohlke, moreover, notices another problem – the ethics of appropriating a historical person’s trauma for what is ultimately entertainment: “the quest for immediacy and direct access to Baartman’s suffering through first-person confession risks supplanting the Other’s real historical trauma. (...) Baartman’s recitation of abjection transforms the novel into something akin to the analyst’s couch or the talk show stage” (Kohlke 2013: 5–6).
- ⁴ It is through the voice of fictional Nicolas Tiedeman that Chase-Riboud challenges the dominant Western construction of animals/animalized Khoekhoes and “proper” humans in terms of their respective sexual appetites: “Humans are the most sexually active primates and humans have the largest sexual organs. Thus a human with larger than average endowments is in proportion, if anything, more human—not to mention the connection between human sexuality, the brain and conscious imagination...” (243, ellipsis in the original). The connection between human sexuality, the brain and conscious imagination, however, remains largely negative as the only instances of sexuality depicted in the novel, apart from Sarah’s trial marriage, are violent ones, leading to depression, alcoholism and drug abuse.
- ⁵ I’m borrowing the phrase from the title of the collection of feminist anti-pornography essays edited by Diana E.H. Russell (1993).
- ⁶ While simultaneously performing resistance to it as well, through isolating, self-destructive habits as alcoholism, drug abuse and trained dissociation.
- ⁷ I’m adopting the phrase coined by Rob Nixon to refer to “violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (Nixon 2011: 2). The case of Sarah Baartman is a strange one, indeed, as it combines slow violence with the spectacle.
- ⁸ Jane Austen’s widely criticized appearance in this novel serves to call attention to the fragile and provisory nature of white women’s “safety and invulnerability”. Having written a letter to Cassandra brimming with decorous pity for “that strange, humiliated, black creature” (158) – she even claims, “I shudder to think I actually paid to see this!” (158) – Austen muses: “What had I really felt, standing there in the crowd with Mary, witnessing this cruel humiliation of one of my sex, but a secret, sniveling joy at my own safety and invulnerability . . . wasn’t that why I loved freak shows? She, the Venus, was the Other, I was me, Jane, safe within the confines of my privileged provincial white world. I could never be she. *As long as I did nothing to trespass it*” (159, italics added).

- ⁹ There are hints that Alice, too, experiences the loss of sex drive like Sarah due to a trauma: she is raped at least twice and always carries “a weaver’s knife” (253) on her person, specifically for protection against men. She does not seek any relations with either men or women: Sarah explicitly states that “Alice couldn’t stand to be touched except by Victor and me” (252).

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