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"I HAD BECOME A COW": KIMURA YŪSUKE'S *SACRED CESIUM GROUND* AND ROBERT MOORE'S *FIGURING GROUND*

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ABSTRACT. ***"I had become a cow": Kimura Yūsuke's* Sacred Cesium Ground *and Robert Moore's* Figuring Ground.** This paper shows how Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* (2016; translated 2019) and Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* (2009) expose the biopolitical manipulation of humans and animals thereby demonstrating the possibility of transcending narrow species boundaries. These authors both employ literary techniques such as humorous absurdism, embracing madness, and cultivating activism, while at the same time engaging with the ethical questions raised by critical animal studies. Of particular importance for the comparative discussions of Kimura and Moore's texts will be Donna Haraway's identification of herself as a philosopher of the "mud" and her derision of the philosophy of the "sky" or the abstraction employed by Deleuze and Guattari. This paper likewise employs Carol J. Adams's ideas of the shared absent referent in meat eating and pornography and the development on this thought in Nicole Shukin's theory of rendering. This paper moreover draws attention to the rupture created through the violence of the slaughterhouse and the slaughter of cattle following 3/11 in Japan to show the suffering of animals and the necessity of acknowledging the shared experience of species. Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* and Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* thus allow for the movement from the historical capitalist preoccupation with cattle as commodity to an understanding of cows as part of a trans-species community.

Keywords: *cows, slaughter, suffering, literature, biopolitics*

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REZUMAT. *„Devenisem o vacă":* Sacred Cesium Ground *de Kimura Yūsuke şi* Figuring Ground *de Robert Moore.* Articolul de faţă urmăreşte modul în care *Sacred Cesium Ground* de Kimura Yūsuke (2016; trad. 2019) şi *Figuring Ground* de Robert Moore (2009) dezvăluie manipularea biopolitică a oamenilor şi animalelor, demonstrând astfel posibilitatea de a transcende limitele înguste dintre specii. Autorii utilizează amândoi tropi literari cum ar fi absurdul umoristic, adoptarea nebuniei şi cultivarea activismului, abordând totodată probleme etice semnalate de studiile critice despre animale. De o importanţă specială pentru discutarea comparată a textelor lui Kimura şi Moore este modul în care Donna Haraway se auto-identifică drept filozof al „glodului" şi luarea în derâdere a filozofiei „cerului" sau abstracţiei utilizate de Deleuze şi Guattari. De asemenea, lucrarea cooptează ideile lui Carol J. Adams despre referentul comun absent în consumul de carne şi în pornografie, şi dezvoltările acestei concepţii în teoria redării a Nicolei Shukin. Lucrarea mai atrage atenţia asupra rupturii create prin violenţa abatoarelor şi masacrarea vitelor după dezastrul din 3/11 din Japonia pentru a evidenţia suferinţa animalelor şi necesitatea de a accepta experienţa comună a speciilor. Cele două cărţi facilitează trecerea de la preocuparea capitalistă istorică faţă de şeptel ca marfă spre o înţelegere a bovinelor ca parte a unei comunităţi trans-specie.

Cuvinte-cheie: *bovine, sacrificare, suferinţă, literatură, biopolitică*

Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* (2016; translated 2019) and Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* (2009) demonstrate the powerful ways in which fiction and poetry can work to expose the biopolitical manipulation of animals and the experience of personhood that transcends speciest distinctions. These authors both attempt to pass through the permeable species border through acts of imagination and immersion in the life and death of cows. By employing a humorous absurdism, embracing madness, and cultivating activism, these authors engage with wide-ranging ethical questions explored in critical animal studies. Thus, the close readings of these texts are informed by various theorists and perspectives offered by critical animal studies. Moreover, the exploration of violence—both through the slaughterhouse and through the slaughter of cattle in Japan after 3/11—is a moment of rupture through which it is possible to build an undifferentiated and posthuman ethic of personhood. Robert Moore's *Figuring Ground* and Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* thus allow for the movement from the historical capitalist preoccupation with cattle as commodity to an understanding of cows as part of a trans-species community.

To facilitate a critical entry into these texts, this paper will first give a brief outline of both Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground* and Robert Moore's

Figuring Ground. Written in 2016 in Japan and translated into English in 2019, Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground and Isa's Deluge: Two Novellas of Japan's 3/11 Disaster* are set in the era directly after the 2011 triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami, and meltdown of a nuclear plant in Fukushima. Keijiro Suga notes that "the Great East Japan earthquake was the single most important moment of crisis in post-World War II Japan and it profoundly affected Japanese society" (174). In the aftermath of 3/11, the Japanese government ordered the slaughter of all the irradiated cattle and other animals in the Fukushima region. One man defied the government orders to slaughter the cattle and rather continued to care for the irradiated cows at the ranch he called the Fortress of Hope. *Sacred Cesium Ground* is set at the Fortress of Hope and told from the first-person perspective of Nishina, a woman from Tokyo who volunteers to help care for the cattle. The story explores Nishina's first encounters with the cattle as mediated through various technological means and her experience of learning about the lives of the cows through work on the ranch. The novella moves between Nishina's growing identification across species lines through her senses and then her baptism or immersion in the refuse of the cows' lives to her past in abusive relationships. Through her various experiences with the cattle, and particularly through smell, Nishina recalls incidents from her life as an alienated worker and the abuse she endured as a child and then as a woman. Nishina comes to celebrate all life-as-life following immersion in a pool of rotting animal waste. Various forms of violence against animals and women repeat through the text and ultimately culminate in an act of violent activism, called terrorism by the Japanese media.

While Kimura Yūsuke overcomes hierarchical and patriarchal modes of binarizing human and cow through an immersion in the muck and mud of the lives of the cattle, Robert Moore's exploration of cattle consciousness asks the reader to imagine themselves as cow. This initially brings to mind the difference in theoretical perspectives offered by Donna Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari, such that Haraway quips "I am a creature of the mud, not the sky" (Haraway 2008, 3). Haraway's attack on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is grounded in her sense of animals as companion creatures, a belief that counters the abstraction she argues characterizes Deleuze and Guattari's "scorn for the homely and the ordinary" (Haraway 2008, 28-29). Haraway argues that Deleuze and Guattari are too "sublime" (28) in their approach to animals, and ignore the everyday concerns of non-human animals. Haraway thus names Deleuze and Guattari as the philosophers of the "sky" (Deleuze and Guattari) and claims for herself the "mud" of the everyday. The distinction between muck and sky asserted by Haraway is useful when theorizing these two works by Kimura and Moore. Kimura's description of immersion in the muck as the experience which leads

to becoming cow aligns her with Haraway's "mud" of everyday life. On the other hand, Moore's poetic thought experiments are characterized by a more abstract or "sky" philosophy. These parallel philosophical approaches aside, both Kimura and Moore facilitate the imaginative crossing over of the species boundary to become part of a trans-species community. Moore does so through a series of poems that require the reader to "pretend" to be a cow (59), thus entering the cow's consciousness and perspective. I would characterize both Kimura's baptism in shit and Moore's pretending to be a philosophical cow as absurdist in nature, and humorous if realized in the muck and mooing of lived experience. These approaches, whether muck or moo, similarly embrace a mad exuberance in being animal and demonstrate through "sky" and "mud" ways of being animal that break down humanist hierarchies and boundaries of experience.

Before turning to Kimura's work more specifically, this paper will briefly engage with critical animal studies in relation to biopolitics. Biopolitics first emerges from the work of Michel Foucault on the regulation of human life through the power of social institutions legitimized through the networks of global capitalism. According to Foucault, biopower—and by extension biopolitics—is a uniquely modern invention that differs from the "sovereign" power that precedes it. Whereas sovereign power places authority over life and death in the hands of a sovereign ruler, biopower is predicated upon myriad institutions of self-regulation, from office schedules to workout regimens and diet guides, that discipline individual bodies to the tune of enlightenment progress. Although Foucault's brief work on biopower did not focus on animals, as Nicole Shukin notes, "[a]ctual animals have already been subtly displaced from the category of 'species' in Foucault's early remarks on biopower" (2009, 9). However, Rick Elmore argues in "Biopolitics" that "there has been a growing body of work that brings together the discourses of biopolitics and animal studies" (2018, 80). Therefore, Shukin demonstrates in *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009) that "discourses and technologies of biopower hinge on the species divide" (2009, 11). Similarly, as noted by Shukin, Cary Wolfe writes that "as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social order of *whatever* species—or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference" (Wolfe 2003, 8; Shukin 2009, 10). While the human species per se is not the central concern of this paper, Shukin and Wolfe both note the extension of speciest logic to persecution and violence against any species. Thus, Shukin notes the use of the animal as "semiotic currency" at the same time as "animals are reproductively managed as protein and gene breeders" (2009, 12). Shukin employs the term

rendering to denote at one and the same time the mimetic quality of the word, as in copying or reproducing, but also the "industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains" as rendering (20). Thus, the textual and visual politics appropriated in the rendering of animals can no longer be read in isolation from the material realities of the rendering of the remains of animal life.

Foregrounding the discourse of biopolitics and its connections to the semiotic and material manipulation of animal life is a necessary prelude to the discussion of Kimura Yūsuke's *Sacred Cesium Ground*. While Kimura's text moves back and forth between the human animal and the human animal's perception and shared experience with the cattle, the first-person narrator, Nishino, becomes aware of the exploitation of herself and the other human workers in her nameless workplace before she identifies and extends her understanding of biopolitics to other species. Nishino was fired from her unnamed workplace after she questioned whether she should address "the excessive work and responsibilities [that] were wearing everyone down" (Kimura 2016, 13), especially "given how many people in the office were taking leaves of absence or quitting entirely" (Kimura 2016, 13). Moreover, while trying to address the problems of exploitation at the workplace, the other people at the office act to reinforce the culture of overwork and exhaustion necessary for capitalist profit and the ongoing power of biopolitics over the human. People at the office start to bully her calling her a "leftie liberal" and a "regular commie" (Kimura 2016, 13) for her identification with the biopolitically manipulated workers she describes as "younger colleagues who were working all-night mandatory unpaid overtime or straight through their weekends and holidays, black circles under their eyes" (Kimura 2016, 13). When Nishino attempts to stand up to the exploitation of "younger colleagues" she is fired from her job and becomes reduced to an isolated existence in her dark apartment. This experience of isolation, enclosure, and darkness, during which time she endures an ongoing and escalating chauvinism and emotional abuse, shares characteristics with the cattle penned in dark interiors before slaughter. In fact, Nishino's husband suggests that death by suicide is the solution to her lack of usefulness. The emotional abuse from her husband eventually culminates in a violent altercation where her husband reduces her to her reproductive capabilities and finally identifies her as a cow. Keijiro Suga writes of the novella that "all the signs of social and domestic oppression surface in the course of the heroine's narration that encompasses problems of social structure, job, gender, family, her own past, the disparity between Tokyo and the rest of Japan, especially Tohoku, and so on. It all boils down to society's attitude toward life in general, be it animal or human" (Suga 2018, 179). Thus, Suga notes the attitude of society, the manifestation, that is, of the biopolitical manipulation of life as being enforced through social structures

that include work and, it should be particularly noted here, the "disparity between Tokyo and the rest of Japan" (Suga 2018, 179).

Before delving into a more intimate discussion of Nishino's experience of abuse by men and how this connects her to the experience of the systemic abuse of the cattle, this paper will look at the work of Carol J. Adams and Jean O'Malley Halley. O'Malley Halley shows how her personal journey as a girl and then as a woman intersected at various points with the oppression of non-human animals. The abusive male figures in O'Malley Halley's life also harmed and murdered domestic animals. The very intimate details and intertwined narratives of abuse of women and other species are characteristic of many eco-feminists who identify the oppression of animals with the oppression of women. O'Malley Halley and other eco-feminists argue that women are particularly attuned to the suffering of animals because of this shared experience of oppression by the patriarchy. Both Carol J. Adams and Jean O'Malley Halley work across species lines to show the ways in which the power structures that assault, slaughter, objectify, and sexualize women also enact this violence on other animals.

Like Nicole Shukin, in order to give voice to the stories of women and cattle, both Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990; 2015) and Jean O'Malley Halley's *The Parallel Lives of Women and Cows: Meat Markets* (2012) work in the area of biopolitics; that is, the manipulation of all animal life and normalization of violence on both women and cattle in order to allow for the continued control and thus exploitation, of the labour, the profit, and the sexuality, of both. Shukin's discussion of rendering thus brings together the material and the symbolic, disallowing the semiotic to replace the material reality of the slaughtered animal with a symbol divorced from the material. Adams argues that it is this process of disengaging from the actual body of the animal, woman, or more-than-human, that allows for the abuse of the human woman and the animal body. Adams shows that through slaughtering the animal becomes the absent referent and that for the human to consume meat, the animal that precedes the meat must cease to exist. The animal that must be there for there to be meat, must be absent from the food (Adams 1990, 66). The absent referent allows the person eating the dead animal to forget about the animal and consume the meat or protein that has filled the absence left by the death of the animal. Adams argues that in the same way that animals are replaced by the absent referent in meat so too the women is made absent in pornography. Thus, Adams argues that "through the function of the absent referent, Western culture constantly renders the material reality of violence controlled and controllable metaphors" (Adams 1990, 67). Notice Adams use "renders" in this discussion as it anticipates the idea of rendering taken up

later by Shukin. To boil down, or even render, Adam's argument, while meat-eating and pornography appear to be discrete forms of violence, they comingle in the absent referent. Patriarchal culture thus must erase both the animal and the woman, such that the fleshy bodies of both are absent in the referents for meat and pornography. While making compelling arguments for shared violence through absent referents, or the biopolitical manipulation and normalization of patriarchal values that promote the guilt-free consumption of both meat and the sexualized body of women in pornography, these arguments fail to entirely overcome the biopolitical manipulation of life. Thus, Carol J. Adams shows the insidious nature of biopolitics in creating the absent referent that renders the embodied material and fleshy subject, human female or more-than-human cow, absent. However, Shukin argues that through a process of rendering both the fleshy subject and the associated semiotics can be made present and forced to comingle and give full presence to the animal. Thus while Adams identifies the problems created for both women and other animals through the absent referent, Shukin identifies a process whereby the semiotic and the material can again be made present. This paper, then, argues that Kimura demonstrates that the cow must be seen as an entity outside of its use value, semiotic or material, and that it is only by introducing and exploring ways of seeing the intrinsic worth of life-as-life—cow-as-cow, in this case—that speciest values can be overcome.

Returning then to Kimura's earlier veiled allusion to cattle in dark pens before slaughter, Nishino, in her darkened apartment, is confronted with a daily and escalating male violence that serves to reinforce her only value as an alienated worker or vessel for childbirth, and not in her life-as-life. Thus, Nishino as a woman becomes increasingly conscious of her alienation as a worker and of her husband's abusive identification of her with the bovine species. The escalating chauvinism and emotional abuse at home culminates in a violent altercation where her husband reduces her to her reproductive capabilities and finally identifies her as a cow. Without her earning power as a worker her husband deems her worthless and suggests "What if you just gave it up. Not as though you get any pleasure out of life, right?" (Kimura 2016, 29). At this point, Nishino begins to seriously consider going to volunteer at the Fortress of Hope, a farm dedicated to preserving the life of cows contaminated by the fallout of 3/11 and ordered to be slaughtered by the government. When she explains to her husband that she would like to help at the Fortress of Hope he responds, "Give it up, give it up. What are you going to do there? You go someplace with that high level of radiation and, you realize, don't you, that you will never be able to have children" (Kimura 2016, 29). Nishino responds rationally and scientifically to this prejudiced and chauvinistic response with the following "That's just not true. That's the kind of bad science that has caused such pain to

the people who live in that region. Think of the people who were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki when those bombs were dropped: there is no proof that the radiation had any effect on their children" (Kimura 2016, 29). Later in the discussion he further reduces her to her reproductive potential when he states "it would be a waste, during the years when you can still give birth, be a full woman and all" (Kimura 2016, 30). While she challenges her reduction to this biological capacity, he further identifies her use value with that of a mere breeder in an attempt to silence her by shouting "Stop talking and eat already, you cow" followed by striking her head with a soup ladle (Kimura 2016, 31). After she screams "That hurt" he responds "A little thing like that? How could that hurt a cow like you?' He struck me again" (Kimura 2016, 32). It is at this point that Nishino identifies an initial crossing over: "I had become cow. With the hooves of my front feet I was skillfully holding the chopsticks and the rice bowl. He was getting angrier and louder, shouting, 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Eat!' A whack of the ladle. 'Stop it!' I tried to cry in response, but my voice had become a loud sound that stretched through the apartment: 'Moooooo'" (Kimura 2016, 32). While these incidents of domestic abuse are recounted in the text as memories triggered by her identification across specie lines with the cows she is helping to care for at the Fortress of Hope, it is these discussions that initially cement her resolve to help take care of the cows that society has deemed worthless because their milk and meat is contaminated and can no longer be of use to humans. Nishino defies her husband's condemnation of her as a worthless cow, when she identifies the value of volunteering at the Fortress of Hope to help other cows deemed worthless by the dehumanizing forces of capital. In her first act of defiance she resists acquiescing to mistreatment at her job and then when her husband deems her worthless because she is no longer working and further identifies her only remaining value as her reproductive capacity, she finalizes her escape from the capitalist and patriarchal values by participating in the useless labour of feeding and caring for living beings similarly condemned for their loss of value in the oppressive system that she has only recently escaped.

In her life in Tokyo, Nishino had never been in the presence of cows. Much of her first descriptions of The Fortress of Hope and the cows is at first mediated through technology in the form of the documentary. In fact, when she studies the cows for the first time her thought is immediately that "The documentaries had not conveyed their mass and oppressive presence" (Kimura 2016, 5). In setting foot at the farm for the first time she "let out an involuntary gasp of recognition" (Kimura 2016, 4). While the text does not document her initial encounters and experience with the cattle through cinema, Shukin, drawing on the work of Derrida and Akira Mizuta Lippit, shows how the communication

that takes place between animal and human animal in cinema works "by means of affective transference in the form of the spell-binding gaze between animal and human that Derrida describes as an *animalséance*" (Shukin 2009, 41). This gaze forces a recognition of kinship in the other. Thus the "gasp of recognition" from Nishino and the exchange of gaze in her first seeing of the cattle in person, involves also already the "rapid surges of nonverbal affect long associated in Western culture with an animal's electrifying gaze and sympathetic powers of communicability" (Shukin 2009, 40). Thus, while mediated through technology the affective component of communication between animal and human animal has already taken place and established kinship and is then further established in the sensory encounter at the farm.

The various details leading up to her arrival at the farm are likewise mediated through the technology she uses or perceives to be used at the farm. She views the Fortress of Hope from behind her wheel and through the front glass of her car window. While sitting in the car she thinks of the phone conversation of the night before in relation to the farm. She views the farm equipment, including Caterpillars and tractors, before she sees any living beings, cow or human. She describes the use of her GPS to get to the farm and the information that she is receiving via the technology of the Geiger counter. She notes "for some time now, [it had] been steadily beeping…*Bi-bip*…*Bi-bip*…" (Kimura 2016, 4). She sees the numbers register on the LED screen and then hears the "roar of heavy equipment from the other side of the electric fence" (Kimura 2016, 4). Thus, her first perceptions of the place are mediated through technology, just as her prior understanding of it was derived from images in the media. However, the mediation and distancing of the person from nature through the artificial conduit of technology is eventually broken down for Nishino through the bodily encounters with the living, breathing, shitting, dying, rotting cows. Once she is walking in the fields and closer to the cows, she still compares what she sees and orients herself through technological representations of the farm including "the website map" (Kimura 2016, 6). In seeing the real cows, she employs the metaphor of the photograph to describe the encounter, again distancing herself from the actual experience: "Pretty as a picture, it was, as those cattle trudged steadily forward under the trees" (Kimura 2016, 6). The personal and bodily knowledge that Nishino gradually gains is what brings about her full encounter with the real cattle, and her identification with the cattle as "we" (Kimura 2016, 6). Further, her experience as animal is later emphasized when it is compared to the artificial and performative way in which politicians and famous media personalities mediate and distance themselves through technology from the realities of the living and dying cows. To overcome the indifference facilitated by technology, activists bring attention to the dead animals in the

contamination zone by placing them around the city, thus forcing people to have a real and unmediated encounter.

Nishino describes the first encounter with the cattle at the Fortress of Hope in terms not dissimilar to Mary Louise Pratt's formulation of the *contact zone*, that place where different cultures meet and appraise the other, often in situations of uneven power relations. The encounter is described in human language and from the perspective of Nishino, and thus the exchange is weighted in favour of the human interpretation of the first moment of contact. However, there is also a detailed description offered of the sounds and movements of the cattle, and parts of this description are left untranslated and uninterpreted by the human participant in the encounter. Kimura writes from the perspective of Nishino: "When I looked up again, a group of large unmoving cows were planted directly in front of me. They all stared at me warily, some from the side, some straight on. Again, from the back came a bellowing, like from a conch-shell trumpet. I studied the cattle right in front of me, so close I could hear them breathing. They were huge, oppressive" (Kimura 2016, 5). The encounter is an exchange between the human and the cattle. Nishino looks at the cows and the cows "stared at me" (Kimura 2016, 5). She further interprets the stare as wary, but then moves back into merely descriptive language where she situates the position from which the cows stare. Nishino describes without interpretation the "bellowing" and then further reiterates that she is studying them from a very close range, so close she can hear them breathing. She then observes their size from this range and discusses this as threatening, employing words such as "oppressive" and "menacing," and noting that "If they had any wish to, these four-hundred-plus-kilo creatures could easily have trampled my lightweight body into unrecognizable pieces" (Kimura 2016, 5). While the author notes the possibility afforded the cattle by their size and the size of the human, it should be noted that the language associated with this threat rather emphasizes the treatment of cattle by humans. While the cows could have turned the human into "unrecognizable pieces" it is the human that does this to the cows. In fact, before the contamination of the cattle this was their destiny.

Nishina develops her relationship with the cows in a variety of ways that involve bodily encounters. While technology has made the cows artificial and distant, as soon as she is in the presence of the animals she begins to move towards an understanding of the cows as fellow beings with needs like her own. When she stepped out of her car and thus beyond the technology that encases her and protects her from the nature around her, Nishina "glanced at the ground and gasped. Right there next to my foot, black, curled like a swirling eddy or an ammonite fossil, was a cow patty" (Kimura 2016, 3). She connects the cow patty metaphorically to other ancient and natural objects that belong in nature and

immediately acknowledges that her shock was not a natural response, that "of course, [there are cow patties] it's a cow pasture after all" (Kimura 2016, 3). However, she continues to be wary and "always careful of that pile of shit" (Kimura 2016, 3). Again, it is her first encounter with the animal shit that fully registers her bodily encounter with the animals. Nishina "made off through the mud…but with the first step I gasped. I realized that this mire, although it looked like regular mud, was actually excrement and manure from the cows. Manure that is like mud; it was 'mudshit' (Kimura 2016, 8). The physical encounter with the animal is thus facilitated through the partial immersion and eventually full immersion in the animal waste. The description of her physical encounter with the "mudshit" continues as follows: "As soon as I pulled a boot from the sucking sludge I could see an intense yellow liquid had filled the space I'd left behind. Beyond the puddles it was firmer, a black, ankle-deep muck. It proved surprisingly sticky. I was afraid it would pull the boots right off my feet. All this while trying to sidestep the cow firmly blocking my path" (Kimura 2016, 8-9). After Nishina has passed through the manure she realizes on the other side "that the manure was less vile smelling than expected. A familiar compost smell was in the air, but nothing so strong as a stench" (Kimura 2016, 9). It seems significant that there is a crossing over that takes place and a going through a trial by excrement. In Turner and Turner's work on pilgrimage they would refer to this stage of crossing over as the movement into a liminal stage where the subject is open to becoming other, that is to change and growth through the journey. That Nishina recognizes something familiar and identifies the smell of the shit as less strong and displeasing than expected marks an openness to identification with the other and with her own nature as connected with, and similar to, that of the animal. What follows is Nishina's further immersion in the experience of the other and humbling before the other. Nishina says "I again found myself face-to-face with cow manure" (Kimura 2016, 9). When Nishina starts shovelling the manure she sends it flying and it hits a cow on the head. She immediately apologizes out loud with "I'm so sorry!" (Kimura 2016, 10) and interprets the expression of the cow as follows "In the face of my apology the cow raised his head, blinking with an expression as if to say, 'Unbelievable'" (Kimura 2016, 10). Nishina speaks in this case to the cow, acknowledging her mistake in the form of an apology. She also recognizes the intelligent and indignant expression of the cow in response. Thus, there has been a verbal and non-verbal exchange of information and emotion because of the exchange of shit heaved by Nishina accidentally at the cow. Later she sees the cows gathered in the distance "in front of the carcasses of their fallen comrades. Their heads extended over the fence, sniffing, as if engaged in an act of mourning" (Kimura 2016, 64). Here again she attributes action, thought, and emotion to the cattle in relation to other

cows. In fact, in relation to the death of other cows Nishina observes a collective act of mourning in the form of ritual.

Although Nishina, at this point, is able to observe and interpret the actions and feelings of the cows, she has still not crossed over into, in the terms of Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* (2008), "becoming with" the cows. Haraway notes in Part I of *When Species Meet* that "Two questions guide this book: (1) Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? And (2) How is 'becoming with' a practice of becoming worldly?" (Haraway 2008, 3). Haraway continues in the same section, "I think we learn to be worldly from grappling with, rather than generalizing from the ordinary. I am a creature of the mud, not the sky" (Haraway 2008, 3). To become one with the cows Nishina must like the biologist/philosopher Haraway, become a "creature of the mud," and not the "sky" of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Nishina must become a "creature of the mud" rather than observing the cows from the distance or "sky" of human abstraction. Nishina accomplishes this "becoming with" when she embraces both the living and the dead cows through an immersion in the muck of their lives. This crossing over into cowness takes place when Nishina is "walking through the muddy, swampy area" (Kimura 2016, 64). In the words of the author, "the earth heaved [and in] the next moment I found myself in the mud, like I had been thrown. I had outstretched both arms to brace myself only to find I was now submerged up to the ears in mud that smelled like pus from a festering abscessed tooth. Some must have gotten in my mouth because a sour, bitter sort of flavor was spreading across my tongue" (Kimura 2016, 64). Nishina is unable to get up out of the muck of excrement and decomposing dead cows and it is while literally stuck in this muck that she realizes her position as being the same as the cows: "I had just become one of those cows…covered in shit and piss beside the melting body of comrades, hollow-eyed and awaiting death" (Kimura 2016, 65). Following this baptism in the life and death of the cows, the pus and shit of their existence, she rises up and confronts the media personality that is filming a nice little piece about the cows. Nishina picks up the shit and shoves it in the famous media person's face shouting "Look at this! Take a good look at this! You see this? This is evidence of life. It is proof of life" (Kimura 2016, 66). As Haraway notes, and as this example illustrates "To be one is always to *become with* many" (Haraway 2008, 4). While the cesium that has condemned the cows to an existence outside of the use value of the cows to humans is invisible, the shit of the cows' existence is a physical presence that can be felt and seen. Nishina, in exalting this proof of life has thus done more than simply cross over into becoming one with the life and death of the cows. She has risen from the muck to proclaim the significance of "this mudshit, this cesium mudshit, this filled-to-the-brim proof-of-cows-that-had-lived-and-had-been-abandoned"

(Kimura 2016, 66). The madness of this identification with the abandoned cows and the need for this proof of the inherent value of all life is at the centre of this text. Nishina's defiance when it comes to the media personality coming in and filming the cows and the workers is her acting as a "we" with the workers and cows in opposition to being used as a thing for media consumption. She is making the mad proclamation that we—all of us—are living beings with value that the media and capitalism ignore and deny. Kimura Yūsuke writes "Radiation may be 'a thing unseen,' but this manure was 'a thing seen' and oppressively so" (Kimura 2016, 57).

Particularly significant to this philosophy of value beyond use in a capitalist economy is the living reminder that the "irradiated cattle" were viewed as "living debris" (Kimura 2016, 59). Sendō, the man keeping the cattle alive, wrote in his book "'They talk about them [the cows] like stuff made in factories'" (Kimura 2016, 59). This observation reminded Nishina of "the temporary staffing company where [she] used to work. We were always talking about 'human resources' or 'human capital,' but these were actual people, and whether for good or ill, they were being used as 'resources'" (Kimura 2016, 59). Tens of thousands of animals had been left to starve and die or were condemned to be slaughtered following 3/11 because they were no longer a resource for the use of humans. Thus, by keeping the animals alive, and further identifying the self as the same animal resource, Sendō and the others caring for the animals are defying the capitalist principals and inherent biopolitical manipulation of all life for gain and profit. Human and cow "are not simply 'resources'" (Kimura 2016, 60). When Nishina realizes her worth and the cows worth while immersed in the shit, she describes seeing the shit as "glittering like gold dust" and "brimming with life and death" (Kimura 2016, 65). Using the metaphor of the shit "glittering like gold dust" employs the stable capitalist measure of value to say that all evidence of life is of value and thus preserving this evidence has value.

In one of Nishina's ponderings about the power relations between humans and cows she wonders: "What if they were to throw off all the yokes that had been placed around their necks by the humans, what if they awoke to all the anger around them? What if they chose to run amok, to fight for their own right to live and for their own dignity?" (Kimura 2016, 64). This idea is not developed in the novella and in fact precedes Nishina's immersion in the shit and realization of the value of all life. However, in many ways this serves as a useful bridge to the work of the Canadian author Robert Moore's 2009 work of poetry *Figuring Ground*, a work whose philosophical perspective and abstract thought engaged in by various cow personae I characterize as something akin to the "sky" philosophy or abstraction of Deleuze and Guattari. In a long poem titled "Excerpt from *The Golden Book of Bovinities,*" Moore works to poetically

reimagine the power relations between farmer and cow and human and cow in a series of untitled stanzas that form the long poem of *The Golden Book of Bovinities*. The following is written from the clearly philosophical perspective of the cows:

> It is said that in the world before this one,
> cows ate men. We hid in their dreams
> and fell upon them while they slept.
> The sobs they made as the instruments
> were handed round struck all who heard them
> as vaguely cow-like. That part was the worst,
> almost too much to bear. And then
> it wasn't. (Moore 2009, 63)

From the perspective of the cows the "sobs" of the humans are "vaguely cow-like," surely a reversal of the common observation that the cries of suffering animals sound like the cries of humans. The cow personae notes that the sounds of the suffering of the slaughtered humans "was the worst,/ almost too much to bear" (Moore 2009, 63). However, the poem concluded simply with "And then / it wasn't" (Moore 2009, 63) making no excuses for the cows becoming able to not be bothered by the suffering of humans. This kind of endurance of the suffering of humans, clearly mirrors the tolerance of humans for causing the suffering of animals. In fact, this poem would seem to echo the acknowledging of the suffering of animals in the slaughterhouse identified by Upton Sinclair more than a hundred years earlier. As Sinclair writes in *The Jungle*, "One could not stand and watch [the slaughtering] very long without becoming philosophical, without beginning to deal in symbols and similes, and to hear the hog-squeal of the universe" (Sinclair 1906, 40).

In the poem that follows Moore continues the thought experiment involved in an alternate history where cows grapple with and eventually justify the mass slaughter of humans in ways that are like human justifications for the slaughter of cows.

> We'd gather them together in enormous corrals
> and try to explain over the loudspeakers
> that it was either them or us. Not once
> did they give us any sign they understood
> or in any way appreciated the time and effort
> that went into what amounted, in fact,
> to a kind of apology. Such creatures, we agreed
> were not only ungrateful but impossibly dim.
> So we tore them limb from limb. (Moore 2009, 63)

Attributing thought, emotion, reason, and feeling to cows is all a part of this "apology" to the human for slaughter by cows. Among the justifications for the slaughter of humans is that they are "ungrateful" and "impossibly dim." The justification of lack of intelligence is often used in imposing the hierarchy of humans above animals. Directly preceding *The Golden Book of Bovinities*, in the final poem of section Two of *Figuring Ground,* "The Old Gods Store Their Eyes in Animal Skulls," refers to the prehistory of cows. The poem opens with the speaker stopping the car to photograph cows beside a graveyard. The connection here between the life and death of cows and the memorializing of human life is made by the photograph, wherein the cows act as groundskeepers for a human cemetery. The second stanza invokes the elegiac season of autumn and the red of bloodshed in lines that read "silent red cattle, fiery autumn dusk / the last of Apollo's sacred herd" (Moore 2009, 53). The third stanza notes "this pasture touched with blood-" and then explicitly invokes slaughter, the knife, and history in the lines "if history's a slaughter-bench now is the knife" (Moore 2009, 53). While the history of cattle does involve slaughter and bloodshed, the "now" of the knife ushers in the present practices of mass slaughter of cattle in the global industrial beef business. Moore therefore establishes violence in the service of rapacious human appetites as central to the collection's theme.

Written from the perspective of the cows, the sextet that follows "The Old Gods Store Their Eyes in Animal Skulls" expands on the "now" by outlining the bare facts of the feedlots and slaughterhouses:

> You'd think weeks in crowded feedlots
> breathing in the acids of heaped manure and remorse,
> waiting day after agonized day to fatten sufficiently
> to have your throat slit while hanging upside down,
> and then be eviscerated while possibly still alive
> would wonderfully focus the mind. (Moore 2009, 62)

The poem concludes abruptly with "Well, yes, as a matter of fact, it does. / But so what" (Moore 2009, 62). The "now" of the knife is here a longer waiting process. The poem mentions the crowded feedlots and the acids of the manure, but also that the air is heavy with emotions of "remorse" (Moore 2009, 62). Moore makes the cows' awareness of the circumstances and foreknowledge of what is to come the body of the poem. The waiting in the poem is as agonizing as the actual cruelty of the process. But this knowledge of what is to come becomes an acute meditation on the suffering of life from bovine minds fully aware and focused. That this agony gives focus to the mind, however, does nothing to change the inevitability of the slaughter or the richness of life preceding it. However, that

Moore gives the cows intellectual and emotional agency raises the question of whether cows are indeed capable of conscious thought. The relationship between the farmer and the cows, and the farmer's children and the cows, suggests that there is more to the mind and being of the cow than the average burger consuming capitalist would like to admit. In fact, humans have so distanced themselves from the reality of the cows that our shared reality, particularly as commodities within a logic of late capitalism, has frequently been obscured. Moore writes, "We suspect that, for men, each day ends up / nicely wrapped in cellophane—its own / individually priced cut of hours" (Moore 2009, 68). For Moore, human life, like the life and death of cattle, is measured as a thing in the capitalist system where "time is money" and the hours of human life itself are a commodity administrated by biopolitical demands. In a further comparison and commodification of human life, the following untitled poem describes a cow hiding in a fast-food restaurant and going undetected because "people can't seem to bring themselves / to make the connection" (Moore 2009, 75). However, another and more pressing reason that a cow flipping burgers would go undetected is because both the human and the cow are commodities in the fast-food business—both are flesh to be consumed, one by the human customer, and one by the corporate enterprise eager to exploit human labour.

Short untitled poem, by short untitled poem, Moore examines the life and death of cows. That the poems are short and untitled reflects in their form the unnamed and indistinguishable lives of cows. The poems are unflinchingly written from the perspective of cows and draw attention to the many contradictions in humans' behavior and language around the use of cows. The poems describe "Every cow" as "a prophet for a new religion" (Moore 2009, 71) and question sayings such as "the milk of human kindness" (Moore 2009, 70). Other poems describe the mass depression of cows and contemplate the various thoughts, feelings, and actions that fill cows' days. Unlike writers such as Leonard Cohen and Isaac Bashevis Singer, Moore never goes so far as the former to call the farmyards "Dachau farmyards" or like the latter in *Enemies: A Love Story,* to note that in "the slaughter of animals and fish …in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right" (Singer 1972, 257). While Moore never condemns the entire human race as completely as Cohen or Singer for the mass murder of animals, he does lay out in poem after poem a feast of animal suffering. According to Cary Wolfe, the locus of Derrida's work on animals, and before him in a footnote to Jeremy Bentham's in *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, the real question when it comes to animals is not whether they can reason or speak, but can they suffer (Wolfe 2010, 63). This question of animal suffering, and

particularly the suffering of cows and human rationalization for making cows suffer, is at the heart of Moore's work. Moore's work is moreover an indictment of the human for using reason to cause the cows to suffer and using reason to rationalize the suffering they cause.

Unlike Nishina in *Sacred Cesium Ground*, Moore does not become one with the cows and muck; however, he does urge immersion through meditation in his first poem in "Excerpt From *The Golden Book of Bovinities*" "pretending to be cow" (59). After being guided through a meditative process of metaphorically becoming cow, the reader realizes that the poetic personae responsible for this perspective is bovine. Thus, the writer urges the reader to take the perspective of the cow and the writer takes on the personae of the cow, thus precipitating a long thought experiment in thinking like a cow.

In both works, the authors embark on a journey to better understand the relationship between the human and the cow and to understand the shared experiences of the cow and human. In the case of Kimura Yūsuke, Nishina first becomes cow as a result of her husband's abuse, and Moore likewise acknowledges the shared experiences of women and cows in the breeding process (Kimura 2016, 66) and when he ends a poem with the following "Little wonder / some of them suffer the name of cow" (Moore 2009, 69). However, Nishina most fully crosses the species barrier to become with the cows through her experience of caring for cows and eventual immersion in the muck of their life and death. In the case of Robert Moore, the narrator is a cow and the reader is urged to pretend to be cow with the bovine narrator. Thus, in both works the reader crosses over the human-cow barrier to hear, think, and feel like cows. But what changes for the human when they cross the species line to feel the suffering of the cows? Where is the milk of human kindness or even the barest of moral responsibility for causing the suffering of a fellow living and breathing species. Whether we are philosophizing about the lives of cows from the muck and mud of their lives with Haraway or the sky of abstraction with Deleuze and Guattari, the cows still suffer and die at the hands of the human.

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