

Australian tongue and Ag-gag law

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Abstract

I address my main subject, Australian cows, through an animal studies reading of Susan Hawthorne's collection of poems, *Cow* (2011) and Francesca Rendle-Short's novel *Bite Your Tongue* (2011). I begin, however, with reference to an earlier text, Tim Winton's novel *Shallows* (1984). Winton's novel is concerned with the whaling industry that operated in Western Australia up through the 1970s, and with the growing public awareness that drove the industry to a halt in 1978. This was the same decade that industrial farming of animals escalated in Australia and elsewhere in urban-industrialising countries. *Shallows* is significant for animal rights groups and animal studies scholars in its consciousness-raising for the freedom and grace, above the economic value, of cetaceans. *Bite Your Tongue* and *Cow* reference an animal species, *Bos taurus*, that is less favoured for its intrinsic value. Nonetheless, animal studies scholars, animal rights activists, ecocritics and environmental activists are raising pressing questions about those animals. This essay aims to contribute to their questions by commenting on current debates about attempts by the meat industry to introduce agricultural gag (so-called Ag-gag) laws into Australia. The issue of silencing is taken up through references in *Bite Your Tongue*, set in Queensland in the 1970s, when radical conservative organisations sought to remove works of literature from school libraries and to suppress the freedom of political speech. The essay also addresses a much older history of cattle farming through the reading of Hawthorne's paean to cows, a poetry collection situated in the literary and cultural traditions of Australian pastoral.

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The recent 'material' turn in ecocriticism reflects there is renewed interest in the connections between literary theory and material ecologies after a period of intense theorisation of the discipline (Bladow; Slovic; Iovino and Oppermann). The relatively new area of inquiry of animal studies, a discipline that took shape at the turn of the twentieth century, also supports the work of scholars interested in the animals that shadow their figural representations (Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* 99). My reading of Susan Hawthorne's poetry collection *Cow* (2011) and Francesca Rendle-Short's novel *Bite Your Tongue* (2011) is motivated by those two leanings in ecocriticism and animal studies. I focus on the material connections between the figural animals of the texts and public debate about real-world, material consumption of the animals that shadow their figural counterparts—namely, Australia's industrially farmed 'cows': the colloquial term (regardless of sex) for beef cattle in general, and a term that is used alongside other terms such as Baby Beef, Bobby calf, Bob veal calf, Bullock, Cull cow, Fat, and Finished Stock. I begin, however, by briefly commenting on an earlier text, Tim Winton's novel *Shallows* (1984), which concerns whaling in Western Australian coastal waters, and the anti-whaling protests that were instrumental in bringing the industry to a halt in the 1970s, at the same time intensive meat production escalated in Australia and elsewhere.

***Shallows* and the early days of activism**

Most of the events of *Shallows* take place in 1978, the year the whaling industry finally ground to a halt, but interspersed with those events is the narrative of an American whaler named Nathaniel Coupar who in 1831 abandons the whaling ship *The Family of Man* at Angelus, a port at the southern tip of the state (a fictionalisation of the historic whaling town of Albany) (39). Unusual for being a whaler who cannot abide eating the flesh of whales—and for being literate—Coupar keeps a journal that is later found by his grandson Daniel Coupar. Daniel passes the journal on to his grandchild Queenie, who has sympathy for the cetaceans hunted near Angelus and, as the local townspeople remember, would as a child converse with dolphins and whales and believe they were ‘God’ (4,7). Her husband, Cleveland (‘Cleve’) Cookson, an outsider to Angelus, objects to Queenie’s involvement with the anti-whaling organisers, the ironically-named ‘Cachalot & Company’ (40). The couple separate, as Queenie moves to the coastal city of ‘Paris Bay’ and befriends the organisers. Cleve, now in possession of and reading Coupar’s journal, slowly and painfully comes to accept Queenie’s beliefs and is prepared to compromise his own.

When *Shallows* first appeared in print, the modern environmental movement was barely a decade old, but by that time, in the 1980s, many Australians were no longer willing to support cetacean slaughter in Western Australia. At the same time, Australians continued to be unduly concerned about the slaughter of domestic animals such as cows, pigs, sheep, and chickens. Today, most Australians continue to consume the flesh of those animals as environmentalists and animal advocates ask pressing questions about intensive meat production. In addition to the role that industrial farming practices play in global warming, and, in the particular case of Australia, the destruction of the environment, there is the issue of the ethical treatment of animals that are industrially farmed. In the following, I focus on efforts by animal activists to publicise the ethical shortcomings of industrial animal farming practices and the meat industry’s response to those efforts by seeking to introduce agricultural gag laws. These are the so-called Ag-gag laws, a term coined by Mark Bittman in a *New York Times* article entitled ‘Who Protects the Animals’ (‘Ag-gag laws’). And in 2015, the New South Wales government signed into law the Biosecurity Bill 2015. It is being criticised and labelled as ‘the advent of Australian “ag-gag” legislation’ (‘Ag-gag Legislation’).

Ag-gag

In the United States, Ag-gag laws already operate in eight states (O’Sullivan). In Australia, under the proposed Ag-gag laws, an individual or group of individuals can be prosecuted for acts such as ‘accepting work on farms without disclosing links to animal groups’, ‘capturing images without permission’ and ‘distributing those images via the media’ (O’Sullivan). Voiceless, the Animal Protection Institute—an Australian-based animal advocacy organisation—describes the laws as generally targeting ‘undercover investigators, whistleblowers and journalists’ by the strategies of ‘[criminalising] the undercover or covert surveillance of commercial animal facilities,’ ‘[requiring] that any footage obtained must be turned over to enforcement agencies immediately rather than given to animal protection groups or the media and ‘[requiring] potential employees of commercial animal facilities to disclose current or past ties to animal protection groups’ (‘Ag-gag’).

Proposed Ag-gag laws in Australia so far have received limited support from members of parliament. One of the most notable of those in favour of the laws is the Minister for Primary Industries, New South Wales ('Animal rights activists "akin to terrorists", says NSW minister Katrina Hodgkinson'). However, if the proposed Ag-gag legislation is accepted, ethical choices about animal food products will depend more than ever on 'the work of a trespassing animal advocate...not the work of farmers who...would prefer as few people as possible to know how Babe came to bacon' (O'Sullivan).

O'Sullivan refers to the popular children's film *Babe*, which the late ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood positively critiques in 'Babe: The Tale of the Speaking Meat', a chapter in a posthumous essay collection entitled *The Eye of the Crocodile* (55-74). A highly effective 'work of art which takes a group of the most oppressed subjects [pigs] and makes an effective and transformative representation of their situation', the film addresses several farmed animal species inclusive of pigs from their point of view (Plumwood 55). Plumwood's critique of *Babe*, directed by the Australian filmmaker Chris Noonan, based on the novel *The Sheep-Pig* by Dick King-Smith and shot on a location not far from Plumwood's home in Australia, was inspired in part by the pig populations she learned about at the time she first saw the film at a cinema in North Carolina, 'the second highest US state for intensive hog production' (57). As Plumwood argues in 'Babe: The Tale of the Speaking Meat' and other chapters in *The Eye of the Crocodile*, older practices of animal farming, which she defends under the term 'ecological animalism,' contrast with the newer industrial practices, which distance humans from the animals that provide them sustenance and betray disrespectful 'non-use' of those animals (80). Her own interactions and relationships with animals, which make up much of *The Eye of the Crocodile*, represent transgressions of the nature/culture boundary that is 'so constitutive of our civilization' (53). In challenging that binary, Plumwood sorts through and explains complex sets of attitudes toward different animal species: industrial farmed animal species, native animal species such as the salt water crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) and animal species that were introduced to Australia and later became unwanted (for example, rabbits).

For sure, the material that animal advocacy groups do publish about industrial animal farming, whether by print or social media, is often 'graphic and confronting', but they counter that such material promotes 'public awareness' and in many cases is 'the only window . . . into the treatment of animals on factory farms' (Gartland 2014). One of the first whistleblowers to expose the hard facts of industrial animal farming was Ruth Harrison (1920-2000). Her book *Animal Machines* (1964), a 'faultlessly documented and indignant assault on the excruciatingly intensive housing of veal calves, chickens and pigs', was to the meat industry what *Silent Spring* (1962) was to the pesticide industry; indeed, Rachel Carson wrote the foreword. It was published in seven countries and led to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes (Free 2000).

Bite your Tongue: Ag-gag and the art of injunction

Rendle-Short's partly-autobiographic novel *Bite Your Tongue* is not an ostensible or even implicit critique of industrial animal farming. It is a critique of the efforts by such historical groups as STOP (Society to Outlaw Pornography) and CARE (Committee Against Regressive Education) to ban socially progressive works of literature (e.g. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). Nonetheless, the novel raises tantalising questions for ecocritics as well as animal studies scholars in

its descriptions of the effort to cut out ‘the tongue’, metaphorically speaking, of writers in the world of linguistic construction. This resonates with meat industries’ Ag-gag efforts to silence environmental and animal rights activists in the material world of abuse and suffering.

In *Bite Your Tongue*, the central character Gloria Solider tells-of growing up in Queensland in the politically conservative decades of the 1960s and 1970s. She is protectively flanked by her mother, MotherJoy Solider, an active member of the ‘Moral Right’ movement (Rendle-Short 43). When ‘the swinging sixties’ takes ‘a hold of the rest of Australia’, MotherJoy, along with most of Queensland, digs ‘its heels in’ (29). MotherJoy actively supports two radical conservative groups, ‘STOP’ and ‘CARE’ (29, 57), which refer to the so-named actual groups. In the 1970s, their members campaigned to ban from being taught in schools’ literature that that was considered to be morally objectionable (Bruce; Gray). MotherJoy, similar to one of the historical STOP’s main figures, the ‘puritanical’ Rona Joyner (Bruce), is a self-proclaimed ‘moral guardian of the children of Queensland’ (Rendle-Short 57). She rails against ‘alternative lifestyles’, ‘unabashed sex education’, ‘moral corruption’ and homosexual marriage and lesbianism, and she burns books in the incinerator in the back yard (2, 57, 200-202).

We are first introduced to MotherJoy when Gloria, now a middle-aged woman, flies up to Queensland to care for her terminally ill mother. The reunion brings back memories of Gloria’s childhood, when she unquestioningly accepted MotherJoy’s radical conservatism. Her love for her mother has not abated; nonetheless, she recalls living in the house on Durham Street, St. Lucia—when ‘the going was pine-apple-sweet’ (29)—in ways that also suggest to readers that she no longer accepts her mother’s values. One of those signposts is Gloria’s descriptions of the dish of ‘cow tongue’ that she used to relish as a child and which MotherJoy served weekly to her family—for Gloria, Gloria’s five sisters (Elsie, Mary, Ruthy, Eve and Gracie) and their father (the quiet, patient and forbearing ‘Onward Solider’). Of all the ‘red, soft and squishy, sometimes dribbly’ meat that Glory once helped MotherJoy to cut, chop, freeze, and cook, cow tongue most reminds Gloria of the links that her mother made between that flesh and the ‘tongue’ of literary writers and ‘Communists’ (46).

Ostensibly, the novel’s central trope of animal tongue brings together complex textual and narrative relationships between speech, ideological control of Glory’s thinking and speech and MotherJoy’s ambitions to suppress other people’s freedom of speech. For animal studies scholars and ecocritics, the trope additionally highlights current debates about controlling the circulation of information about inhuman animal-rearing practices inclusive of Ag-gag legislation. A powerful reference to actual cows’ tongues, it thus provokes questions about the denial of ‘speech’ (or ‘rights’) to other-than-human animals.

Sacrificial Meat; Demonising Freedom of Speech

The first chapter, entitled ‘It’s a Sin’, ambiguously refers to Gloria’s consumption of ‘cow tongue’ and to the publication of literature that is on MotherJoy’s list, ‘Burn a Book a Day’ (240). Gloria begins her story from the point of view of a younger, ignorant ‘Glory’ who ‘wishes she could remember her very first taste of tongue, the first mouthful, that first bite. It is like trying to remember her very first kiss’ (9). ‘You see’, the older Gloria continues, speaking in the third person about herself:

tongue was Little Glory's favourite food. She asked for it as a special treat on her birthday even though the Solider family had it served up to them by MotherJoy at least once a week . . . So they ate pressed tongue and boiled potatoes with the smoothest of white sauces served with the mushiest of pale-green peas from a tin. (9)

There is something disturbing about being taken onside, during Glory's descriptions of cow tongue in *Bite Your Tongue*. Something is amiss also about little Gloria's memory of the weekly indulgence and 'pagan communion' of consuming cow tongue. In the chapters that follow, the sense of discomfort for readers further intensifies. When Glory and younger sister Grace accompany MotherJoy to attend an 'anti-Communist march in Queen Street', she gives them placards to hold up that bear the slogans 'The Communists Want Your Children' and 'Burn a Book a Day for Jesus' (46, 86). MotherJoy tells the young girls that 'the Communists want to take over' Queensland' and '*get in first*' and the Communists who are 'behind the bamboo curtain' in China and other countries in Asia are people who 'cut out the tongues of "brave Christians"' (85). That same evening, she serves the family cow tongue and describes the cooking and preparation of it in a revision of Old Testament terms as 'punishment for Communists'—"A tongue for a tongue" (86). 'The price of [the Communists'] sin', she says in tones of righteousness and triumph, is 'this precious organ of speech' (86).

Thus, whilst Glory relishes cow tongue, she has increasing misgivings about consuming it. She uneasily associates it with the tongues of literary writers—which specifically include Ray Lawler (*Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*) and George Johnston (*My Brother Jack* and *Clean Straw for Nothing*) (240)—as well as, more generally, 'Communists' (86), an allusion to the historic Communist Party of Australia (established in 1920) and its campaigns for equal rights, and civil rights for indigenes, which were generally unpopular in Queensland. However, because she is young Glory does not judge her mother's moral crusading. She simply observes that if MotherJoy had her way 'with her morals campaign, her anti-smut ways, she'd not only burn all the books in the world, but she'd cut out the tongues of all the writers of all the wicked books in all the world' (86).

Glory's gradual awareness of dissenting views heightens rather than ameliorates her awareness of her mother's 'Moral Right' activities (43). This new sensibility is cultivated through a cohort, Lisa, who persuades Gloria to give up her packed lunch of 'leftover tongue' because 'you should never eat anything that has done an important job in a previous life' (52). From 'then on,' Gloria brings to school a sandwich of 'crunchy peanut paste and homemade marmalade' (51). This hardly constitutes evidence of Glory's wish to convert to vegetarianism or veganism let alone Lisa's. However, it does bring up questions about why Lisa believes (as her mother does) that cows have 'done an important job' in their previous life so should not be consumed (52). Although Lisa's philosophy would continue to put her in a minority of Australians today, her character raises questions about the intrinsic worth of an animal species that is not usually considered in those terms.

Animal Studies and Animal Farms

Industrial farming of animals for consumption as meat, inclusive of the animal species *Bos taurus*, became common in the western world in the decades following World War II. A mode of food production 'requiring mass servitude, imprisonment and slaughter' of animals (Clark 186), it emerged alongside the industrialisation of much of the food system in urban-industrialising countries. In that period of time, the older network of small-scale

diversified farms was replaced by mass factory farms ('Evolution of Factory Farming'). In addition, demand for meat increased as the price of meat decreased and lobbyists for the meat intensive industry successfully lobbied for laws that favoured factory farm operators and disadvantaged the older networks of food production ('What is "factory farming?"'). Animal advocacy groups such as Animals Australia and Voiceless bring notice to that history of meat production and consumption. In the areas of inquiry of animals studies and ecocriticism, some of the most important studies include Carol Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) (a text that now has 'classic' status in animal studies); Marie-Monique Robin's *The World According to Monsanto: Pollution, Politics and Power* (2010); Richard Twine's *Animals as Biotechnology: Ethics, Sustainability and Critical Animal Studies* (2010); Paul Waldau's *Animal Studies: An Introduction* (2013); Cary Wolfe's *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003) and *What is Posthumanism?* (2010); and Wolfe's edited collection *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (2003). A popular bestseller text that addresses industrial animal farming in the USA is Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001). It was subsequently made into a film (2006) (directed by Richard Linklater) and it is joined by other films such as *We Feed the World* (2005) (Dir. Erwin Wagenhoffer), *A River of Waste* (2009) (Dir. Don McCorkell) and *Speciesism* (2013) (Dir. Mark Devries). Important publications that focus on industrial animal farming in Australian contexts include Adrian Franklin's *Animal Nation* (2006); Carol Freeman, Elizabeth Leane and Yvette Watt's edited *Considering Animals* (2011); Val Plumwood's posthumous *The Eye of the Crocodile* (2012); Deborah Bird Rose's *Wild Dog Dreaming* (2013); Peter Chen's *Animal Welfare in Australia* (2016); and Robert Garner and Siobhan O'Sullivan's edited *The Political Turn in Animal Ethics* (2016). Those studies focus on older animal farming practices as well as the rise of industrial animal farms. MotherJoy's intent to silence political speech and literary expression, to rip out (metaphorically) the tongues of Communists and the tongues of writers, resonates with current debates about efforts by the meat industry to silence the speech of animal rights activists by demonising that speech, or making it 'a sin'. Her use of cow tongue as a metaphor for freedom of political and literary expression especially evokes those debates and the claim by opponents of the proposed Ag-gag laws that they are an attempt to silence whistleblowers rather than improve agricultural farming.

Poor Cow: A Rural take

Hawthorne's poetry collection, *Cow*, is a playful and appreciably feminist and linguistic celebration of etymology, comparative literature, philosophy, Sanskrit and Ancient Greek, 'bovine' myths. The title refers to the figural cows in those distant textual worlds rather than to cows of the nearer, and arguably dearer and more real, worlds of the farmed species of *Bos taurus*. There are, however, several references in *Cow* to the domestic animals who lived and died in Australia by the millions between the time when first brought to Australia and today. In addition, Hawthorne leads her readers to the fields of Indo-European languages initially through the historical paddocks of Australian cattle farming, as if she is saying that no text written about cows by an Australian writer can begin without some notice of those material sites. Although those introductory poems will raise questions for ecocritics and environmentalists, who demonise the cloven-hoofed cattle for their impact on the thin top-soil of Australia, and for their 'carbon hoofprint' (livestock emissions make up about twelve per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions and seventy per cent of its agriculture

emissions – the third largest source of Australia’s emissions and almost equal to all transport emissions (Bekoff 2013), Hawthorne foregrounds an animal that has been part of Australia’s economic, environmental, and cultural identity for the last two hundred years.

In the semi-autobiographical poem, ‘the philosophy cow’, the speaker recalls a scene from her rural childhood. As she leads a cow and her calf to the milking yard, she comes close to a ‘grand’ cow, who strikes out at her ‘with its horns’ (1-2). For some time, the narrator avoids cows but overcomes her fears by learning something that evokes Plumwood’s principle of ‘ecological animalism’, that which includes ‘respectful use’ (as opposed to disrespectful ‘non-use’) of animals (80). The speaker learns to ‘stand [her] ground’ against a cow who challenges her and to give in to the animal’s interests (3). In the same poem, which consists of six sections, Hawthorne lists some of the cattle breeds that British and European colonisers and settlers brought to Australia before and after Federation (1901). These include Jersey (dairy), Guernsey (dairy), Ayrshire (dairy), Holstein Friesian (dairy) and Brahman cattle (meat) (6). As the narrator ironically expresses, in contrast with convicts sent to the continent by the British empire, ‘there was no [possibility of] emancipation for good behaviour’ for the cattle that continued to be transported after 1901 (5).

Cowpastures: The bid for Freedom

As Alfred W. Crosby summarises in *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, in 1788, a ‘discomforting number of livestock’ were picked up from Cape Town, South Africa, and transported to Botany Bay aboard Captain Arthur Philip’s First Fleet (180). Within months of their arrival, two Black Cape bulls and six cows disappeared. When next ‘spotted’, in 1795, their number had increased to sixty-one and the animals were grazing in an area that came to be known as ‘Cowpastures’ (180). By 1804, the feral herd had increased to between 3,000 and 5,000 (181). The colonial government at first saw the cattle as ‘a very great Advantage and Resource to this Colony’ (181). But by 1824, ‘convinced that humans, not cattle, had been ordained to be the dominant species’, the governor of New South Wales, Major-general Thomas Brisbane, ‘ordered the last wild descendants of the stray of 1788 destroyed’ (181). Nonetheless, the slaughter was accompanied by the order to import more cows (this time mostly of European, rather than South African, ancestry) (181). Thus, by 1820 New South Wales’ domestic cows numbered 54,103; by 1830 they numbered 371, 699; and ten years later they numbered in the millions (182).

Australian pastoral

As ecopoet and ecocritic Mark Tredinnick notes, Australia ‘rode to prosperity and nationhood on the sheep’s [and cow’s] back’ (123). The country continues to survive by pastoral enterprises. Indeed, the world’s largest cattle station (six million acres) is located in Australia, at Anna Creek, South Australia. Australian ‘cow’ literature is part of that larger history of Australian pastoral. The former includes such classic works as Ion Idriess’s *The Cattle King* (1936), a biography of the pastoralist Sidney Kidman (1857-1935), and Mary Durack’s historical study, *Kings in Grass Castles* (1959). The recent popular film *Australia* (2008) also celebrates that national tradition. The Australian pastoral, however, is not viewed in predictably flat, laudatory terms. More nuanced versions of it include a robust post-pastoral tradition, which reflects that while affection and respect for settler Australian pastoral persists, there is greater awareness of the environmental costs of cattle and sheep farming, and of the unjust seizure of indigenous

land by pastoralist interests (Tredinnick).

Les Murray, 'Boetian' poet and 'bush bard' (Chiasson 136), stands at the fore of literary pastoral. He is considered to be its most distinguished purveyor (McCooley 901) as well as Australia's most technically accomplished poet (Kane 79). Much of his poetry carries direct and unsentimental allusions to Australia's farmed *Bos taurus* species, often from their imagined affective perspectives as well as from those of the humans who struggle, often hopelessly, to make a living by farming cattle. 'December: Infant Among Cattle' (*On Bunyah* 64-65) describes a bull urinating and not understanding why the humans who are near him repulse him, 'with buckets and screams and a shovel'. He is 'like a huge prostrate man, bewildered by a pitiless urgency'. 'The Cows on Killing Day' (*On Bunyah* 32-33) describes the distress and anguish of a cow in the final moments of her life, when her human keepers first stun her and then slit her throat: 'Me shivers and falls down / with the terrible, the blood of me, coming out behind an ear' A shining leaf . . . works in the neck of me / and the terrible floods out, swamped and frothy' (65). 'Cattle Ancestor' (*Translations from the Natural World* 25) describes cows from an indigenous Australian perspective; 'Cattle Egret' (*Translations from the Natural World* 27) describes the symbiotic relationship between cattle and egrets from the perspective of the birds as they ['skitter'] and ['dive'] in fields of grass among their 'sleep-slow compeers, red and dun' (27). 'Walking to the Cattle Place', a poem that Hawthorne's collection as a whole most complements, is 'an etymological sequence' that was inspired by the word 'cow', 'the oldest root we can trace in Indo-European languages' (Murray, qtd. in Kinsella). As Murray also describes, his poem 'Walking to the Cattle Place', is where 'Celt and Zulu and Vedic Aryan' cattle herding traditions come together (qtd. in Wilde, Hooton and Andrews).

Animal slaughter

Matthew Calarco notes that while 'human violence towards animals is certainly nothing historically novel', it has 'increased and accelerated at an exponential rate' in 'the past two centuries (and in the past century in particular)' (109). The reasons have to do not only with the decrease in the price of meat and the introduction of laws in the early to middle decades of the twentieth century that favoured large-scale animal farming. Fairly recent hard-fast moral distinctions between humans and other animals, or the 'human/animal binary', also contributed to that increase in violence (Calarco; Wolfe; Twine). In a recent memoir 'Another Country' (*Meanjin* 2016), by Gabrielle Chan, chief political correspondent for *The Guardian*, Australia, makes a brief allusion to that history in Australia. She relates her experience of living in rural Australia and asks why it is that we regard some animals as part of our own human family and yet disregard other species entirely. For instance, she describes her beloved sheep dog Soda, a 'blue kelpie with green eyes', and asks, 'How can one animal mean so much and thousands mean so little? Like people we love, we invest so much in the animal we know while assuming others are dumb . . . *The millions*' [italics added] (55). The 'we' in Chan's sentence is of note here. Although they are not intensively farmed for their meat, wild dogs (both *Canis lupus dingo* and *Canis lupus dingo*) in Australia are routinely killed by 'doggers' (who string up the carcasses of the dogs on fences as 'trophies'), and by pastoralists who drop dingo bait by plane on rural areas (Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming* 56, 85, 97-98). Elsewhere in the world, dogs also are slaughtered for their meat, if they are not industrially farmed. For example, in Guangxi, China, thousands of dogs are killed at the time of the Yulin Dog Meat Festival to celebrate the summer solstice. Chan adds, 'It doesn't pay to ask too many questions in

this line of work' (54). She doesn't directly ask questions, and certainly not 'too many questions' about industrial animal farming and other kinds of animal slaughter in her 'line of work' as a writer and journalist. Nor do Hawthorne and Rendle-Short, but, like Chan, they raise the specter of those questions. The continued slaughter of cows, and other species that taste good to the human palate, has not been challenged to the extent that whale slaughter has. However, animal advocates, environmentalists, ecocritics, and animal studies scholars are challenging industrial farming practices on moral as well as environmental grounds that include claims for the right of 'speech' of nonhuman animals.

Rounding-up the texts

The ostensible subject of Rendle-Short's *Bite Your Tongue* is efforts by radical conservative groups to prevent works of literature from being taught in schools and a takeover by the Communist Party of Australia. However, references to the beef industry are embedded in the novels central trope of the staple Anglo-European dish of 'ox tongue' (Rendle-Short 46). For ecocritics and animal studies scholars, the trope generates analogies between efforts of such organisations as STOP and CARE to suppress political and literary expression in the 1970s and steps by industrial animal farming interests today to deter activists from making public the industry's abject practices—that is, not only to cut out the tongue of the animal, but of the animal rights activists, by barring them from publishing their findings. As animal advocacy groups, and writers, put pressure on the meat industry, it has become more clandestine. In seeking to introduce Ag-gag laws, it aims to prevent public access to its charnel houses and the wagging tongues of reporters. Hawthorne's *Cow*, an homage to the animals—*Bos taurus*—that have long been a backbone of the Australian economy, foregrounds cows even as it distances readers from Australian cows and the history of cattle farming in Australia. A collection of poems that mostly refers to the figural cows of Sanskrit and Ancient Greek myth, *Cow* nonetheless belongs to a perdurable tradition of contemporary Australian pastoral literature. *Shallows*, which earned for Winton the sobriquet of 'a latter-day Melville crossed with Peter Singer' (Ward), is important for both ecocritics and animal studies scholars who are interested in the debates surrounding present and past slaughter of animals in Australia, animals that include the 'cows', 'bulls' and 'calves' of cetacean species. Together with *Bite Your Tongue* and *Cow*, Winton's novel raises questions that animal rights and environmental rights activists are asking about where human rights end and animal rights begin, an uncertain boundary that includes the question of 'the speech of dumb beasts' (Tiffin 137).

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