Cinematic "Pigness": A Discourse Analysis of Pigs in Motion Pictures

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Abstract

The representations of "others" in film have been contentious since filmmaking began. Fraught with misrepresentations, cinema has been held responsible, and occasionally credited, for influencing cultural practices and helping to shape discourses in American society. This study suggests that the media representations of nonhuman animals also have a profound effect on how Americans think about animals and that these representations warrant examination to uncover the naturalized messages and assumptions that are presented about animals. Explored here are the extent to which these images depict animal-*ness* – moments of authentic nonhuman behavior or experience that are not simply a reflection of humanity but have meaning for the animals themselves.

This study highlights the case of "food animals" – specifically pigs. The disjunction between how we represent them – the narratological roles they fill in animal films – and the way that actual pigs are used in American society is vast and disturbing. One hundred million pigs are raised away from the light of day in factory farms and then slaughtered in each year in the United States, but they are continually presented as intelligent and charismatic characters in our stories.

Using critical theory and a discourse analysis methodology, this study is a close textual analysis of the feature films *Babe* and *Charlotte's Web,* along with incidental appearances of pigs on television and feature films. It explores how these works invite spectators to construct nonhuman beings as persons and how they present nonhuman perspectives, and then it interrogates the accuracy of the *pigness* of the characters

depicted. The study confirms that these representations portray many characteristics of actual pigs and that certain films present genuine challenges to viewers to examine the contradictions between treating these intelligent and personable animals as both friends and meat.

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The problems I encountered were mostly related to the same challenges that almost all "gradual" students face: knowing what to focus on and when to focus; finding time to teach, time to read (lots!), and time and places to write while still paying all the bills. I was challenged in many personal ways that do not need to be explained here, and I was fortunate to have had the chance to pay some of my bills while working on some exciting and rewarding film projects that were professionally fulfilling but did nothing to further this specific research or multiply the number of hours in each day. I am very grateful for the support and encouragement of my colleagues, Mary Beth Woodson, Manuel Pérez Tejada, Fernando Arenas, JaeYoon Park, Michael Graves, Jason Cole, Novotny Lawrence, Dr. Bruce Frey, Dr. Bonnie Johnson, Dr. Pete Porter, my band mates and many others.

I am grateful for the support and love from my family through the trying times we experienced together that coincided with my graduate work. Finally, I would be remiss, especially in a Human-Animal Studies related project, if I did not acknowledge the unspoken but soulful support of my nonhuman friends: Kong and Howie for leading me on the path, Jordan for his big heart, Candy and Bailey who did not get to see me finish, and Thurber, Roo, Willie, Jasper, and Penny who woof and purr with me still.

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A Note About Language Use

The term “animal” is, of course, inclusive of every creature from paramecium to pachyderms, along with humans. I begin this work by specifically referencing “nonhuman animals” to set them off from when I am talking about humans, but for ease of reading and writing, thereafter, except where noted differently, when I reference “animals,” I am referring to all animals except humans. This is an unfortunate convenience because distancing ourselves from the other animals has led to some of the abuses that I will examine.

Furthermore, though the industry that raises pigs for production primarily uses the word “hog” or “swine” to refer to pigs (thus the “hog industry”), which is sometimes accepted as a term specifically for domesticated pigs, though it technically refers to various other species as well, I will use the term “pig” and “pigs” throughout as that feels the most respectful and accurate to me. Likewise, I refrain from the use of the various terms for pig meat: pork, ham, etc. While often these words are not meant in any pejorative or misleading way as their etymologies easily show, I believe that consistency will serve my study best and that it helps to be clear that what these other words mean is, ultimately, pigs and meat from pigs. Likewise, the “food animal” industry has distinct nomenclature for these animals that relates to their age, sex, birth history, and even purpose: sow, gilt, boar, shoat, sucker, barrow, porker, finisher, et al. These recall industry practices, and for me, in some cases, they recall other instances of disrespectful colonialist terms for “others” that helped distance the “masters” from those they wished to exploit, often layered with semiotic meanings from which only one of those others could feel the pain. To avoid this, I will refer to females pigs, or male pigs, and the term mother pig when reference a female pig in relation to her piglets. Oh, I will use piglet. No one minds the word piglet.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The lenses of cameras have been focused on animals since photography was developed, but in light of the global environmental crisis, the implications of these representations have never had more important repercussions. The representations of "others" in film have been contentious since filmmaking began. Fraught with misrepresentations – stereotyping, misogyny, racism, ignorance, and intentional absence – cinema influences cultural practices and helps to shape discourses in American society. Most studies of the representation of "others" focus on humans, but the media representations of animals also have a profound effect on how Americans think about and talk about them.[1] This dissertation will interrogate motion picture representations of farm animals, sometimes called *food* animals, using pigs as a case study, in order to uncover the naturalized messages and assumptions that are presented about them – the discourse that circulates around these animals as characters in our stories and the discourse around them as meat.

Images of animals have been ubiquitous since humans began painting on cave walls. Many visual studies focus on the myriad symbolic uses of animals, and often these references are seen as a way to understand ourselves as humans – we project ourselves onto these images (or these images onto us) and gain insights into our own human-ness.[2] I am interested in studying the visual discourse within which animals are defined

[1] Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), xxxvi, 5, 25; Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion, 2002), 15.
[2] For example, see Roy G. Willis, *Man and Beast* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

separately from humans. Specifically, I will explore the representation of *animal-ness*, defined as moments of authentic nonhuman behavior or experiences that are not simply a reflection of humankind. Life on earth is facing an environmental crisis from such occurrences as ecological contamination, a record pace of species extinctions, and global climate change.[3] Understanding the discourse in media representations of animals commonly used as a food source is important in helping humans understand the complex relationships we have with other species and the implications of our actions that threaten the welfare of the earth – the essential habitat that we share with our fellow species.

The plight of what are often called *food animals* is especially illuminating.[4] The disjunction between how we represent them, the narratological roles they fill in animal films, and the way that, for instance, real life pigs are used in American society is vast and, when closely scrutinized, disturbing. Over one hundred million pigs are raised away from the light of day and then slaughtered in factory farms each year in the United States according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA),[5] but they are continually presented as intelligent and charismatic characters in our stories, usually living in idyllic family farm settings reminiscent of pre-WWII agrarian communities that have virtually disappeared from contemporary society.

While these representations are often informed by human motives and human emotions projected onto nonhumans, this study will show that authentic moments of animalness seep through. The long-held practice of denying or ignoring animal emotions

[3] Richard E. Leakey and Roger Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Humankind*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 6-8.
[4] *Food animals* is a relative classification and, in some areas, a legal one. The USDA reports statistics for cattle, pigs, chickens, turkeys, and sheep. These are, by the numbers slaughtered each year, the leading animals raised for food in the US.
[5] National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Livestock Slaughter 2008 Summary" (Washington DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 2009), 1.

in the scientific community is slowly giving way to an acceptance that many animals have a complex psychological makeup.[6] Critiques by biologists and scientific purists that dismissed animal representations as simply anthropomorphism are now being re-analyzed.[7] What we have in common with animals contributes to our understanding of them – traits like caring for our young and grieving over the loss of a mate clearly transcend some species borders. With these sorts of commonalities in mind, I will make the case that there are elements of authentic nonhuman perspectives in animal depictions and these may well have profound implications for our relationship with real animals.

I am most interested in representations of animals in motion pictures. In the latter half of the 20th century, film and television became the predominant cultural influences on American society,[8] and these media are especially significant in the American cultural conception of nonhuman animals. Many studies have argued convincingly that media representations of subordinated (human) groups have both positively and negatively influenced movements toward social equality and equal rights.[9] I know of no studies that have extended this argument across the species border. However, preliminary to this conclusion for animals, we must examine motion picture animal representations in detail. That is what this study will do.

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[6] For example, Marc Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2007); Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Donald R. Griffin and Carolyn A. Ristau, *Cognitive Ethology: The Minds of Other Animals: Essays in Honor of Donald R. Griffin* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1991).

[7] For example, Robert W. Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson, and H. Lyn Miles, *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*, SUNY Series in Philosophy and Biology (1997); Daston and Mitman, *Thinking with Animals*; Griffin and Ristau, *Cognitive Ethology: The Minds of Other Animal*.

[8] Nancy Signorielli, "Aging on Television: The Picture in the Nineties," *Generations* (San Francisco) 25, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 34-35.

[9] For example, Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2001); Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Using a theoretical framework of critical inquiry and a discourse analysis methodology, I will investigate the following questions: How does the presentation of this motion picture pig compare to actual pigs? What are the naturalized messages about this species and human-animal relations that are presented in this film? How does the work invite spectators to construct nonhuman beings as persons? How does the work invite spectators to take up nonhuman perspectives?[10] While classic critical theory work frames arguments from the viewpoint of the subordinated working class, I will reframe this discussion from the nonhuman animal viewpoint. I will perform a discourse analysis on various contemporary motion picture texts, primarily *Charlotte's Web* (2006) and *Babe* (1995), focusing on the representations of a single species, pigs, so that commonalities between texts can be highlighted and analyzed in detail.

Focusing on a single species as a point of commonality between the studies, especially when comparing these representations with real life nonhuman animals, will be useful. The clash between the plight of actual pigs and the increase in live-action pig characters in motion pictures in the last 15 years fascinates me. Pigs in the real world in the past 50 years have mostly disappeared into the factories of modern agriculture, officially designated Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations or CAFOs by the USDA, where approximately one hundred million are born, raised, and then trucked to a slaughterhouse where they are killed.[11] Pigs are one of the most intensely factory farmed food animals (second to chickens in numbers and portions of life spent in artificial

[10] These latter two questions, suggested by Porter (Pete Porter, "Engaging the Animal in the Motion Picture," *Society and Animals Journal of Human-Animal Studies* 14, no. 4 (2006): 400.) are adapted under a different methodology for my study.

[11] Gene Baur, *Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food* (New York: Touchstone, 2008), 10. "In 1950 the United States had 3 million pig farms and 55 million pigs. . . . By 2005, the number of pig-producing farms had dropped to 67,000." That makes an average of almost 900 pigs per farm.

conditions). Meanwhile, the resurgence of animated feature films and computer-generated imagery (CGI) have brought both live-action and animated pigs to theater, television, and computer screens as significant characters in major release films, animated series, and Internet-distributed videos.

The treatment of actual pigs is contrasted with the commonly accepted idea that pigs are especially smart and even friendly. Their intelligence is often equated with or thought to excel that of dogs – a comparison to which companion animal enthusiasts can relate.[12] Contemporary awareness of pig friendliness and personable attitude might be attributed to the surge in popularity and comparison of companion pot-bellied pigs (versus the larger breeds usually depicted in motion pictures and exclusively raised for food) in the 1990s and to popular depictions in films, though personal contact by this author and acquaintances affirms their sweetness and charisma, and there is a long history of pig-human interaction to corroborate the charm and intelligence of pigs. Gene Baur, an activist in farm reform legislation with a degree from Cornell University in Agricultural Economics, co-founded the non-profit organization Farm Sanctuary where he works with pigs on a daily basis. He describes them in this way:

> Winston Churchill knew what he was talking about when he once said, "I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals." Contrary to common lore about pigs, their homes are not "sties." Pigs are, in fact, very clean. At the Farm Sanctuary shelters, almost all of the pigs use the center of their barns as a communal toilet rather than the straw where they sleep. It's relatively easy to clean up after them.
>
> Pigs are actually very regimented creatures: certain pigs eat first, and each sleeps in a specific location. Pig

[12] Comparing intelligence across species is problematical at best. Any test for intelligence invariably encompasses a bias toward one species or the other or, as is usually the case, a bias toward the species doing the testing.

> hierarchies are not based on physical strength alone. Boots, for instance, is the oldest pig at the shelter in Watkins Glen. She has been weakened by age and couldn't defend herself if other pigs wanted to push her around. But none of the other pigs ever tries. All of them treat their wise elder with respect.[13]

There is a complexity and intelligence to pigs that does seem to trigger the human imagination. From Porky Pig (from Warner Brother's cartoons) and Winnie the Pooh's best friend Piglet to Miss Piggy (of the Muppets fame) and Charlotte's friend Wilbur, pigs are a ripe source for characters with character and charm.

Background and Problem

The early motion photography experiments of innovators such as Marey and Muybridge allowed us a new view on locomotion, primarily of animals: horses galloping, insects flying, cats falling and landing on all four paws. With the coming of motion pictures, the focus frequently remained on animals – often as the central subject of the films, from Edison's 1903 actuality film *Electrocuting an Elephant* to Hepworth's early narrative *Rescued by Rover* (1905). When cinema took the decisive narrative turn and storytelling became the dominant major genre for the burgeoning new film industry, non-human animals continued be to featured in films in a variety of roles – as domesticated tools (e.g., horses for transportation, cattle for cowboys to wrangle), as sidekicks to popular human stars (e.g., Roy Rogers's Trigger and Bullet – his horse and dog who appeared in most of his films with him and assisted him in his adventures), and even as leads: Strongheart (five films from 1921 to 1927) and Rin Tin Tin (29 films from 1922 to

[13] Baur, *Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food,* 128.

1931) in silent pictures and later Lassie (12 films from 1943 to 2005), Clarence the Cross-eyed Lion (1965), Francis the Talking Mule (seven films, 1950 to 1956), and many more. Not long after television brought moving pictures into American homes, animals also became part of the show. Animal-centered TV series included *Lassie* (three series starting in 1954, 1989, and 1997), *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin* (1954), *Mister Ed* (1961), and *Flipper* (1964).

The invention and development of the film industry coincided with industrial expansion and the advent of modernism at the end of the 19th and start of the 20th century. During this time, the average American's connection to the "natural world" was obscured more than ever before,[14] and his or her direct, daily contact with animals was significantly diminished.

> Animals enter a new economy of being during the modern period, one that is no longer sacrificial in the traditional sense of the term but, considering modern technological media generally and the cinema more specifically, *spectral*.[15]

In a sense, animals found homes in the human imagination as they were removed from the everyday routine of modern life.

Family farms slowly dwindled over the next 70 years, and the urbanizing, then suburbanizing, of the American population widened the distance between humans and non-human animals. In 1975, philosopher Peter Singer describes the anachronistic image of a traditional family farm scene:

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[14] John Berger, *About Looking*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 3-4.
[15] Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1.

> Consider the images conjured up by the word "farm": a house, a barn, a flock of hens, overseen by a strutting rooster, scratching around the farmyard, a herd of cows being brought in from the fields for milking, and perhaps a sow rooting around in the orchard with a litter of squealing piglets running excitedly behind her. Very few farms were ever as idyllic as that traditional image would have us believe. Yet we still think of a farm as a pleasant place, far removed from our own industrial, profit-conscious city life.[16]

Singer's description of a traditional family farm – where animals are allowed space to perform activities natural to their species such as cows grazing in fields, chickens scratching in dirt, and pigs rooting in the earth – matches the quaint, homey, and idyllic image of how many Hollywood films *still* portray agricultural practices 35 years after he wrote about the discrepancies.[17] The process of farm consolidation accelerated after WWII, with small family farms regularly swallowed up by large agribusinesses corporations. With the coming of these corporations, especially in the last 30 years, the methods of meat production have dramatically changed the lives of farm animals. Chickens and pigs, increasingly milk cows, and, to a lesser degree for part of their life cycle, beef cattle have disappeared into factory farms. Approximately 95% of the meat that Americans consume, more than 10 billion animals yearly,[18] live and die in factory farms – generally out of sight and mind of American consumers except in their eventual appearance, piecemeal, if you will, in the supermarket.

In the 21st century, we rarely meet the animals that many of us consume. We receive them packaged in the grocery store, often labeled in innocuous ways that distance

[16] Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: New York Review, 1975), 93.
[17] Besides *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe*, discussed below, see *Barnyard* (2006) and *Home on the Range* (2004).
[18] Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 271. See discussion of the calculations of this number in Chapter 5.

us further from the animal – "ham," "veal cutlets," "prime roast." On a daily basis, we may not interact with live animals at all unless we choose to have companion animals. While the factory farms and conditions within them are by and large obscured by the agribusiness corporations,[19] Hollywood continues to feature the now nearly-apocryphal family farm full of "food animals" as lovable, intelligent characters in both animated films and, with the advancement of CGI, live-action features. These animals still appeal to audiences and continue to be the protagonists – the heroes, occasionally villains, sometimes the victims or the magical helpers – in our film stories. There seems to be a major disjunction between how American society talks about and displays food animals – how they fit into the daily stories we tell – and how they are actually treated by society. In other words, we visualize and intellectualize these animals very differently than we treat them in real life. Cultural critic Akira Mizuta Lippit connects our representations with this distancing: "Modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity's habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity's reflections on itself; in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and technological media such as the telephone, film and radio."[20] Where Lippit questions how this may affect the human understanding of animality, this study questions what this distancing has come to mean for the nonhuman animals themselves.

At this time, we are facing cataclysmic repercussions of the human influence on the planet as a whole. In an increasingly developed and commercialized world, real animals are forced into extinction at greater rates than ever before – the sixth "great extinction" as paleontologist Richard Leakey describes our current epoch, the fifth great

[19] See Chapter 6 for details about food disparagement laws and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act.
[20] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 2-3.

extinction being the one that ended the reign of dinosaurs on earth about 65 million years ago. Through depletion by hunting, by contaminating ecosystems with alien species, and, foremost, by destroying and fragmenting habitats, humankind is driving unprecedented numbers of species to extinction.[21] Analyzing and understanding how we represent the natural world or the human connection to the natural world in our cultural products is more important than ever. I argue that understanding this connection is essential to our own survival as a species by examining the role these representations play in the discourses about processes and practices in our society.

Most studies of animal representations are occupied with analyzing how these depictions relate to humans and offer insight into the human condition. Even media and literary studies that are associated with the fairly new area of ecocriticism generally relate back to the human experience. The idea that animal depictions have value to the welfare of nonhuman animals is fairly new, and even these studies usually have to be justified at some point by offering value to human concerns (as I have, in a way, done by making the connection to the environmental crisis). It is part of what might be called a *speciesist*[22] bias to studies in the humanities – which, by definition, include a concern for the human condition. But where does such a concern for nonhuman animal welfare belong? Anthropology, by definition the study of humans, refers consistently back to humans even in its branches that focus on primates and prehominids. Biology, the science that studies living organisms, falls into the empirical sciences. The alternative is a new, cross-

[21] Leakey and Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Humankind*, 6-8.
[22] The term "speciesism" was coined in 1970 by British psychologist and philosopher Richard Ryder to "describe the widespread discrimination that is practised by man against other species . . . [speciesism] overlooks or underestimates the similarities between the discriminator and those discriminated against." Richard D. Ryder, *Victims of Science: The Use of Animals in Research* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), 16.

disciplinary field referred to as "Animal Studies" or "Human-Animal Studies."[23] It is a far-ranging and loosely defined field that can include such diverse areas as literary studies, geography, psychology, feminist studies, and colonial studies to name just a few. Scholars in this field are "interested in attending not just to what animals mean to humans, but to what they mean themselves; that is, to the ways in which animals might have significances, intentions and effects quite beyond the designs of human beings."[24]

This dissertation falls into this new field but is firmly grounded in Film and Media Studies. As I will describe in detail in the methodology section in the next chapter, I will adapt a fairly traditional theoretical framework and methodology, critical inquiry and discourse analysis, to interrogate a fairly unexplored subject, representations of animals in motion pictures.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 has served as a general introduction to this dissertation. Chapter 2 consists of this study's literature review and an explanation of the methodological approach that will be used. The literature review will be divided into six sections: the first three – Representation, Ecocriticism, and Animal Studies – review works that set the stage and inform the research that will be done in this study. The following three sections – Anthropomorphism, The Rise of the Factory Farm and the Life Cycle of the Modern Pig, and Animal Advocacy Sources – involve a discussion of critiques of animal studies,

[23] There is no foundational text or lead organization for this field. Two organizations of note are the Society & Animals Forum (formerly known as Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, found on the Internet at www.psyeta.org) who publish the *Journal of Human-Animal Studies*, and the more activist oriented Institute for Critical Animal Studies (www.criticialanimalstudies.org).
[24] Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

review literature from animal advocates that I reference in my study, and present a discussion of the contemporary practices of the pig raising industry that will be used in my study for comparison purposes. The methodology section will discuss the specifics of critical inquiry and discourse analysis as they pertain to this study while also discussing other works of animal studies that relate to this one.

In Chapter 3, I analyze in great detail the live-action adaptation of a classic of children's literature. In the 2006 adaptation of *Charlotte's Web*, perhaps still not as popularly known as the 1973 animated version of the book, the producers worked hard to capture the timeless feel from E.B. White's beloved book, even going to back White's archival notes on the story, to re-envision the tale with actual animals playing most of the roles of the familiar barnyard friends. In Chapter 4, I explore the paramount of live-action talking-animal films: *Babe* from 1995. Anecdotally, this work seems to have influenced more vegetarians than any other single film, even turning its vegetarian co-star, James Cromwell, into a vegan animal-activist.

In order to better understand the species of pigs and the complex relationship they have had with humans over the centuries, Chapter 5 is devoted to exploring the lives actual pigs, *pigness*, if you will: from human domestication and prohibitions against eating them, to the rise of modern agricultural practices, and ending with a brief summary of pigs in the wild and their natural tendencies when unfettered by human intervention.

Chapter 6 explores non-fiction and incidental appearances by pigs in motion pictures, beginning with a discussion of corporate agribusiness' prohibitions against cameras in factory farms and followed by an analysis of several pig farm investigations that used undercover footage to expose abuses, including a detailed analysis of "Belcross

Pig Farm Investigation with James Cromwell" (2000), which led to the first ever felony indictments for cruelty to animals by farm workers. This is followed by an analysis of the few promotional/education videos that are available that show conditions inside factory farms that are produced pig farmers or by consultants to the industry. I then examine "Pig Bomb," a 30 minute tabloid-like show that appeared on *The Discovery Channel,* one of the only non-fiction works available that discusses pigs in the U.S. without framing the discussion in either an anti-industry or a pro-industry stance. Moving back into the fictive arena, the chapter ends with an analysis of the series of incidental sinister-pig depictions that have cropped up in the last few years (such as those found in *Hannibal* (2001) and *Snatch (*2000)) that are in sharp contrast to the pigs as lovable characters, which I offer at the end of Chapter 6 with a brief overview of other live-action *cine-pigs.*

In Chapter 7, I place *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe* in historical context of their veiled or obfuscated diegetic time periods and summarize and conclude the main arguments and findings of my research. In this chapter, I will give some of my personal perspectives and motivations for this research as well as discuss the constraints I faced in this study. The "My Story" section also includes an analysis of one of my own video productions, a short music video piece, "Everybody Hurts: The Story of Howie the Pig," based on my own personal experiences in the rescue of a pig from an animal shelter. This video is available on the web and, while available on YouTube, had over 10,000 views. In consideration of the controversial nature of some of the implications of this study, it may suit the reader to peruse this section first to better understand the biases and personal convictions of the author.

My main focus is contemporary depictions primarily because the disjunction between fictional depictions and how most real pigs are handled has changed dramatically in the past 50 years (i.e., in 1965, a larger percentage of pigs were raised on family farms like Arnold in *Green Acres* was, than on factory farms, though I doubt any of them were as avid a television viewer as he was and likely none were actually sent conscription notices like in the 1966 episode "I Didn't Raise My Pig to Be a Soldier").

The samples I chose to study were made primarily because of their popularity and, thus, their significance in situating the image of the pig in contemporary American culture. The film *Charlotte's Web* is based on a children's literature classic. The choices made in bringing the iconic characters of Charlotte the spider and her pig friend Wilbur to life in a live-action Hollywood motion picture in the 21st century foreground the paradox of pigs as friends versus pigs as meat, and the disjunction between the writing of the book in the 1950s and the release of this film in the 2000s offer significant bookends or, if you will, keyframes – points of change over a transition, such as in an animation or on a timeline – to the changes in the treatment of pigs in the U.S. And *Babe* is, in itself, fast becoming a classic film – one of the first films that successfully integrated live-action animals with expert CGI work to match the movements of animals' mouths to spoken words, while also presenting a charming tale that captured the imagination of audiences. The study is not meant to be all-inclusive, nor do I contend that the representations discussed are *necessarily* those that have framed the pig for all audiences. Likely, very few people have actually considered, or maybe could even identify, where their feelings toward and attitudes about pigs were developed. As I stated previously, my intentions are to interrogate certain depictions, popular (Chapters 3 and 4) and others that may just be

categorized as “available” (Chapter 6), to analyze how the pig is often framed in our culture in motion picture presentations and examine the discourse that surrounds these representations in order to shed light on the paradox of these animals that humans love to eat and also love to see depicted as beloved characters.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

Literature Review

In order to interrogate the representations of animals in contemporary motion pictures, I will address three major areas of inquiry: representation, ecocriticism, and animal studies. Within the broad area of representation, I will focus on the part that most directly pertains to the theoretical framework I use in my study, that of critical inquiry. This first section of this chapter will review the literature that is relevant to these approaches and my research. In order to set the stage for my comparison of motion picture representations of pigs to actual pigs, I close the section with a review of literature from animal advocates that I reference in my study as well as a discussion of the contemporary practices of the pig raising industry that determine the life cycle of pigs raised for food. The second section will describe in detail the methodological approach and the methods used in this study.

Representation

The study of representation, a complex trope for understanding the generation of meaning in cultural works, is central to Cultural Studies as articulated by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. Essential elements involved in the examination of visual representation can be traced from the linguistic studies of

Ferdinand de Saussure through the semiotics of Roland Barthes and applied to film in the semiotics of Christian Metz.[25]

While the linguist Saussure focused his work specifically on language,[26] Barthes and others applied these linguistic concepts to the study of culture, specifically to popular cultural artifacts such as the world of wrestling and advertisements. In so doing, objects and images could serve as the signifiers of cultural meaning or multi-layered levels of meanings. Barthes separated the first level of meaning, *denotation*, from the idea of a second level of meaning coded in culture and context, *connotation*.[27] He also noted, contrary to Saussure, the significance of historical context in understanding the connotations of a given sign. In my analysis of motion pictures, what many people would call popular culture despite the aspirations of high art by many filmmakers, the historical context surrounding the discourse of the family farm setting that is often presented is significant to understanding the naturalized messages embedded in the filmic texts.

Michel Foucault took the idea of the creation of meaning beyond language and historical context and applied it to a complex system of representation he called *discourse* or the "production of knowledge through language."[28] Foucault proposes that what a society holds as Truths are really *regimes of truth*, reified by those in a society with the political and economic clout to make them true.[29] He calls such truths *power-knowledge* – linking these terms grammatically just as he proposes they are linked socio-politically. This idea of historicity in epistemology is based on his seminal work *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, in which he studied the treatment

[25] Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).
[26] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York,: Philosophical Library, 1959).
[27] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 1st American ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 31.
[28] Hall, *Representation*, 42-43.
[29] Ibid., 49.

of the insane through the Middle Ages in Europe.[30] He describes a regime of truth that was created around the idea of insanity – not necessarily based on medical science or religious beliefs but more often on the political and philosophical convenience of the times.[31] When the wandering "fool," previously treated with reverence, became an affront to "enlightened" minds, the insane were locked up in the conveniently empty hospitals that had been created to accommodate the previously plague-afflicted masses. Discourses around regimes of truth created by a society both inform and are informed by the cultural and artistic representations within that society. This sort of power-knowledge circulates through all levels of society. Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci describes this circulation as hegemonic power being reinforced by those striving to participate in the creation of the very power they lack but that they desire for themselves. In striving to achieve cultural power, subordinate classes can endorse and affirm cultural power in order to participate in it and achieve a measure of it for themselves.[32]

Foucault argues against institutional determinism or the inevitability of certain institutions or practices. That is, he claims things are not the way they are simply because they are inevitably so but because those in power saw it as convenient or favorable to their own positions for them to be so. Such wielding of power-knowledge is often done with no thought to the eventual repercussions. In a case relevant to this study, the agribusiness treatment of food production was not an inevitable shift but rather the result of a series of economic choices influenced by the availability of petro-chemicals and movement away from rural living after WWII. These choices have led to serious

[30] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).
[31] Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 48.
[32] Hall, *Representation*, 48.

environmental damage done by chemical farming[33] and a factory farming system that takes no consideration of animal welfare leading to horrific living conditions for farm animals.[34] And these choices have contributed to the environmental crisis that the whole world faces today.[35] Farmers were not usually forced to make these choices, but they were invited to do so by corporate coercion often involving the promise of a bright, profitable, modern future – as long as the farmers continued to buy into this hegemonic version of modernization that slowly enmeshed them in the petro-chemical world.[36]

Such analysis relies upon the application of Marxist theory as adapted by Foucault and Gramsci and applied to environmental concerns. The significance of representations of nature in human understanding of the natural world is at the heart of the growing field of ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism

Seminal works in nature criticism include Leo Marx's *The Machine and the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in American Culture* (1964) in American Studies and, in British studies, Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973).[37] In the 1970s, this area of literary analysis turned toward the serious question of how these representations might relate to human interaction with and abuse of nature. This was often an attempt to address, in literary studies, what many saw as the impending environmental crisis and was the start of the ecocriticism movement. The text often

[33] Rachel Carson, Lois Darling, and Louis Darling, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 15-18.
[34] Baur, *Farm Sanctuary*, 83-95.
[35] Howard F. Lyman and Glen Merzer, *Mad Cowboy: Plain Truth from the Cattle Rancher Who Won't Eat Meat* (New York: Scribner, 1998); Leakey and Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction.*
[36] Lyman and Merzer, *Mad Cowboy.*
[37] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism : Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, Blackwell Manifestos (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 13-14.

credited with being the first true work of American ecocriticism is Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1973).[38] Meeker, who holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature and a master's with postdoctoral studies in wildlife ecology and comparative animal and human behavior, is noted as the first scholar to hold a professorship of literature and environment. He calls his work *literary ecology* and describes it as "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works" and as "an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species."[39]

Ecocritical analysis has since been applied to other media, including motion pictures, though this is a fairly recent occurrence. The methodological application this analysis has often employed has been genre studies of "The West" and landscapes in film, such as in the collection of essays in *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns*, edited by Deborah Carmichael.[40] Character studies of nonhuman characters have been rare. While such studies pose a theoretical challenge, they also offer an important perspective of the study of nature in films by focusing on nonhuman themes. By turning our attention to the human-animal relationship with an emphasis on the nonhuman animals' interests, my work touches on ecocritical themes but more significantly draws from the emerging field of Animal Studies.

[38]Ibid., 16.
[39] Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 396.
[40] Deborah A. Carmichael, *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns: Ecocriticism in an American Film Genre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006).

Animal Studies

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the idea that animal depictions have value to the welfare of nonhuman animals is fairly new and is part of the cross-disciplinary field referred to as "Animal Studies" or "Human-Animal Studies." Many contemporary studies of animal representation begin with John Berger's 1977 essay "Why Look at Animals" as the starting point to analyze the animal in cultural works. In this work, Berger situates the animal as being distanced and even lost to humans in the 20th century culture of capitalism. With the onset of modern industrialization, our previously close contact with animals – an essential bond that helped shape human minds, language, and philosophy – is gone, and we are now grasping at this loss and what it means for our species as well occasionally considering what it might mean for the animal others.[41]

Acknowledging this loss, Steve Baker's *Picturing the Beast* explores how "the animal, conceived as the archetypal cultural 'other', plays such a potent and vital role in the symbolic construction of human identity in a variety of contemporary instances."[42] At the same time, part of what he does as well is to "question and to demythologize the idea of animal imagery as a 'natural' resource for saying-things-about-humans."[43] In *Animals in Film*, Jonathan Burt interrogates the animal in motion pictures and the power that such animal representations, even fictional ones, have over cultural practices and human-animal relations. He is interested in what he calls the "rupture in the field of

[41] Berger, *About Looking*.
[42] Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*, xxxv-xxxvi.
[43] Ibid., xxxvi.

representation" that animal images cause, a kind of "semantic overload,"[44] and what this might mean for the welfare of animals.

In *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (2000), Akira Mizuta Lippit positions the animal as an essential element in understanding modernity.

> Because they have been denied the status of conscious subjects, animals were now sought as the ideal figures of a destabilized subjectivity. Not only can the animal be seen as a crucial figure for the reading of that history, but the animal also serves as the very figure of modernity itself. The animal can be seen, in fact, as the figure of modern subjectivity. . . . the task of this text is to recover the traces of animality, to remember animals.[45]

Lippit explores animality in philosophy, literature, psychoanalysis, and film theory. He is looking not so much at actual animals, but the idea of animals within these areas – how Western thinking frames and contextualizes the animal. While I will look at actual representations of animals (and actual animals in the case of the live action motion pictures I analyze) and the animal-ness of these depictions, his work on animality in thought contrasts interestingly with my study and informed my early research.

Anthropomorphism

As anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's classic assertion states, animals are "good to think."[46] We use them as symbols, as allegories, as iconic figures in our children's stories. These studies inevitably bring up concerns about projecting human qualities onto animals. Worries of anthropomorphism have plagued biologists and

[44] Burt, *Animals in Film*, 11.
[45] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 25-26.
[46] Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 89. Levi-Strauss was studying the use of animals as clan names in various societies and was making the point that the logic behind the use of these names was not linked to a mystical belief, or because these animals were good to eat, but that animals are a convenient, familiar identity to these cultures – thus good to think with.

ethologists (those who study animal behavior) since the demise of alchemy and animism in the sciences. As Daston and Mitman point out, anthropomorphism is "used to describe the belief that animals are essentially like humans, and it is usually applied as a term of reproach, both intellectual and moral."[47] Scholars in Human-Animal Studies often argue that these worries have pushed scientists too far in the other direction. The problem is complex. "Anthropomorphism is neither prima facie bad or necessarily nonscientific. It can be both, but it need not be either,"[48] Bekoff and Allen note. The scientific community that so often in the past condemned the practice of investing animals with human traits because doing so was connected with pre-modern, un-*Enlightened* scientific practices often relies on the physiological similarities between various species to test medicines and treatments destined for human application. At the same time, since the scientific acceptance of Darwinian evolution, the biological line drawn between humans and, for instance, chimpanzees is no thicker than that drawn between chimpanzees and gorillas. In fact, it is logical to assume a level of continuity of psychological traits between related species and even some lesser level of continuity between fairly distant species.

A new field has grown up around the idea of studying the cognition of nonhuman animals – cognitive ethology. It has been met with varied resistance for its supposed over-reliance on anecdote, folk psychological explanations, and anthropomorphism.[49] However, strong arguments are made that introducing these elements in balance with empirical data validate this field of study. In their article "Cognitive Ethology: Slayers,

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[47] Daston and Mitman, *Thinking with Animals*, 2.

[48] Marc Bekoff and Colin Allen, "Cognitive Ethology: Slayers, Skeptics, and Proponents," in *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*, ed. Robert Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson, and H. Lyn Miles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 313.

[49] For example, by Celia Heyes and A. Dickinson, "The Intentionality of Animal Action," *Mind and Language* 5: 87-104; and Celia Heyes and A. Dickinson, A., "Folk Psychology Won´t Go Away: Response to Allen and Bekoff." *Mind and Language* 10: 329-332.

Skeptics and Proponents," Bekoff and Allen address the challenges facing this field and conclude that these attacks are often in unwarranted philosophical opposition and that the best reply to critics of the field is rigor: "There are no substitutes for careful and rigorous observational and experimental studies of animal cognition and detailed analyses of subtle behavior patterns that often go unnoticed."[50] These same sorts of standards can be adapted and applied to representational studies of nonhumans in motion pictures such as my own – I strive to recognize and draw parallels to nonhuman perspectives whenever possible, always with the cautionary awareness that such analogies may be subjective.

The Rise of the Factory Farm and the Life Cycle of the Modern Farmed Pig

In order to evaluate the pigness of the depictions I will study, an understanding of modern farming practices and a thorough understanding of the life cycle of the modern pig, to which these portrayals will be compared, is necessary. By the very nature of modern corporate agribusiness, all the reasons for the conditions and treatment of animals are based on what is efficient and cost effective. "Livestock" are commonly excluded from protections erected to protect animals from cruelty; thus the conditions are set, literally, by what is considered "standard practice" in the industry – legislation called Common Farming Exemptions (CFEs). As Erik Marcus describes:

> The majority of states have put CFE laws on their books. Fourteen of these states enacted CFEs since 1990, all of which carry similar language. Using words like "common," "customary," "accepted," and "established," CFE laws allow any method of raising farmed animals to continue, no matter how cruel, so long as it is commonly practice within the industry.[51]

[50] Bekoff and Allen, "Cogntive Ethology" in *Animals, Anecdotes, and Anthropomorphism*, 313.
[51] Marcus, *Meat Market*, 57.

The idea that society accepts that some cruelty protections are needed to prevent cruelty to animals but that "food animals" should be exempt from many of them seems paradoxical. Do they suffer less? Or is it our "need" of them that allows us to ignore their pain? In Kansas, for instance, the anticruelty law's exemptions states: "The anticruelty statute shall not apply to *normal* or *accepted* practices of animal husbandry."[52]

The only federal law that pertains to the suffering of food animals was the Humans Slaughter Act of 1958 (listed in Appendix B), a law that dealt not with the conditions under which animals were raised but with how they were slaughtered. The passage of this act has lead the to the use of the captive bolt gun, a mechanism that stuns animals when applied to their heads and is used on cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and pigs just before they are killed.

The lives of most actual pigs raised in America, and increasingly in Europe and China, after 1970 is radically different from their lives anytime in history or pre-history. The coming of factory farms – concentrated animal feed operations (CAFOs), as the USDA labels them – changed the lives of pigs and farmers dramatically. Gene Baur compiled the following summary from USDA agricultural statistics:

> In 1950 the United States had 3 million pig farms and 55 million pigs. That's an average of nineteen animals per farm. By 2005, the number of pig-producing farms had dropped to 67,000, less than 3 percent of what existed in 1950. These farms housed 60 million pigs, with some massive industrial production facilities confining many thousands.[53]

[52] Kan. Stat. Ann. s 21-4310(2)(f) (1988). Italics added.
[53] Baur, *Farm Sanctuary*, 10.

Erik Marcus adds to this that, between 1992 and 2002, the number of farms raising pigs dropped by two-thirds.[54] It is hard to confirm an exact number of animals raised in CAFOs.[55] Jonathan Safran Foer, a novelist whose third book is a non-fiction work about food consumption entitled *Eating Animals*, using 2007 USDA statistics and EPA regulations, estimates that approximately 95% of the pigs raised in the U.S. are raised on CAFOs. For 2007, that would be 107 million pigs of the 113 million raised in the U.S.[56] Donald Stull, an anthropology professor from the University of Kansas, and Michael Broadway, a geography professor from Northern Michigan University, wrote *The Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America* in 2004. They encapsulated the concentration of pig production by noting that in North Carolina, the state that leads the U.S. in pig production, 98 percent of the 9.6 million pigs raised in the state in 1997 came from farms with 1,000 or more animals.[57] Whether Foer's estimate at 95% is exact or not, it is safe to say that to talk about pigs raised under non-CAFO conditions is to talk about extreme examples, not the norm.

Female breeding pigs on CAFOs are artificially impregnated for the first time when they are eight months old and thereafter every five or six months, in contrast to wild pigs, who give birth once a year.[58] They spend their entire pregnancy, approximately four months, in a gestation crate, a practice just as confining for them as the more highly publicized cruelty of veal crates. This is Erik Marcus' description of them:

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[54] Marcus, *Meat Market*, 9.
[55] Baur pointed out, in a personal conversation I had with him, that it is hard to get an exact number on the number of animals raised in CAFOs. An official designation of CAFOs does not exist and numbers reported by the USDA are state by state, not operation by operation.
[56] This number is based on his own calculations from 2007 census inventory and EPA regulations Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 1st ed. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 271.
[57] Donald D. Stull and Michael J. Broadway, *Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America* (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004), 13.
[58] Ibid., 29.

Figure 1. Gestation Crates. (FarmSanctuary.org)

They offer no space to walk, or even to turn around. Nearly every large American pig operation uses gestation crates. The crates' small size maximizes the number of sows who can be kept in a building, while giving workers the ability to immediately locate any particular animal. Since management knows exactly when each sow has been impregnated, the animals are moved out of gestation crates and into "farrowing crates" a couple days before they are ready to give birth.[59]

Farrowing crates are not much larger but allow room for the newborn piglets to reach their mother's teats, while constricting her movement so that she cannot roll over onto the piglets and crush them. In the wild or in more *natural* conditions (that is, millions of years of evolution-shaped conditions that provide a scenario where the pigs choose the place in which to birth their offspring), mother pigs would form a nest from twigs and grass that would allow the piglets a cushion to avoid being hurt when she rolls over or stands up. But in CAFO conditions, it has been found to be more economical by the

Figure 2. Farrowing crate from the website of Gould Farm in Illinois. The caption online: "A warm, clean, well-fed sow and her litter of twelve piglets." (GouldFarm.com)

[59] Ibid., 28.

industry to not provide any bedding material, thus avoiding the cost of straw and making it easier to clean the stalls, letting the pigs give birth and nurse on hard metal grated floors and the urine and feces to fall between the floor grates. The hard floors and confined mother pigs result in various "losses" for the industry. It is common to lose 11% of the pre-weaned piglets born in CAFOs.[60]

Once weaned (17 to 19 days after birth), they piglets are removed to "nurseries" – "a deceptively pleasant word for what are often cramped windowless sheds with concrete floors or wooden flooring," Marcus writes.[61] They share the nurseries with other pigs of the same age to avoid being trampled by the larger pigs. After five to seven weeks, they are moved to "finishing sheds" or "grower houses" where they remain the final four months of their lives. About 2% of the females piglets are removed to become breeding sows.

Figure 3. Pig nursery from a Chinese farm equipment manufacturer. (Gladhander.cn)

> Compared with their mothers, piglets raised solely for meat live relatively short lives, just six months – in essence, they die in adolescence, since their slaughter age coincides roughly with sexual maturity. The male pigs are castrated as piglets – without an anesthetic – to avoid . . . unwanted pregnancies. Castrating males

[60] "The NAHMS 2000 data indicate that of the 11% pre-weaning mortality, 52.1% die from becoming crushed by the sow, 16.7% die from starvation, 11.5% die from 'other known problem,' 9.3% die from scours, 7.4% from 'unknown problem,' and 3% from respiratory problems. The majority of pigs are weaned at 17. 2 days of age, with an average of 19.3 days of age." "Management Tips to Reduce Pre-Weaning Mortality," Donald C. Lay, Jr., *Agricultural Research Service*, USDA (http://www.ncsu.edu/project/swine_extension/ncporkconf/2002/lay.htm).
[61] Marcus, *Meat Market*, 31.

> also results in less pungent-tasting flesh, removing what the industry calls "boar taint," which producers consider undesirable for American consumers.[62]

At six months of age, and usually weighing about 250 pounds, pigs are loaded into trucks and taken to the slaughterhouse.

In a USDA recommended site, livestock handling consultant Temple Grandin suggests the recommended "packing density" for 250 pound pigs as 4.26 sq. feet, 5 sq. feet in summer. Once in the trucks, pigs are sometimes transported hundreds of miles – 34% of time, they are trucked 100 to 500 miles away to the slaughterhouse.[63] During transport, they are subject to stressful conditions, and again, losses occur – sometimes ranging up to 2.4% of the pigs transported.[64] These sorts of losses are accepted as part of the process and as merely economic loss, though not one that is welcomed even by agribusiness.

Figure 4. A "growing house" or "finishing shed." (leCanadian.com)

The next and final stage of a pig's life, if he or she has survived birth, weaning, "finishing," and transport to slaughter, is the slaughter itself. In the case of pigs in the

[62] Baur, *Farm Sanctuary*, 132-33.
[63] Eric Bush, "Swine '95 Part II: Reference of 1995 U.S. Grower/Finisher Health and Management Practices," (United States Department of Agriculture, National Animal Health Monitoring System, 1996), 19.
[64] Robert Fitzgerald and Ken Stalder, "Reducing Pig Transport Losses," *National Hog Farmer*, 15 June 2009 (http://nationalhogfarmer.com/behavior-welfare/0615-reducing-transport-pig-losses/).

U.S., the slaying of a pig is done around 120 millions times each year, which equals 3.8 pigs killed every second.[65] In this case, I offer the words of Erik Marcus:

> Their final moments are brutal. They are prodded out of their holding pens and onto a narrow walkway. As they approach the front of the line, they often see the squealing animals ahead of them being stunned, cut in the throat, and hung upside down. In many pig slaughterhouses, stunning is done with electricity. This equipment if often unreliable. Records taken from one U.S. slaughterhouse during the late 1990s indicate that, despite stunning pigs up to four different times before slaughter, some of the pigs nonetheless remained conscious. . . . After stunning, the next step on the line is throat-cutting. A few minutes after the pig's throat is cut, his body is dropped into a scald tank. Most pigs have already bled to death by the time they hit the water. But there is evidence that at least some pigs are still alive when they enter the scald tank.[66]

Many pages could be filled with the stories – anecdotal and well-documented – about abuses in the slaughter process. The stories include both human and nonhuman abuse. Over one hundred years after Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*, animal slaughter is still a brutal business.

Animal Advocacy Sources

As a counter to these facts about modern agribusiness, I will use the work of a few significant animal advocacy sources that sometimes relate the very sort of evidence that Bekoff and Allen defend in their discussion of the methods involved in cognitive ethology. The most significant example of this is the work and the writing of Gene Baur[67] who co-founded the non-profit organization Farm Sanctuary. He tells the story of the sanctuary as well as offering an informative and insightful essay on the plight of farm

[65] These sorts of numbers inspired my experimental filmmaking urge in 2001 and resulted in a short film entitled "317.1," which represents the number of all types of "food" animals killed in the U.S. every second. This film is available on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTRxArJD3ak.
[66] Marcus, *Meat Market*, 33-34.
[67] Also known as Gene Bauston.

animals in his book *Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food.* The book includes his personal story as well as the story of many of the animals who Farm Sanctuary has rescued over the years. It also includes his personal investigations of the food industry with an emphasis on his work with slaughterhouse operations, CAFOs, and legislation that his organization has promoted to protect farm animals. He also serves the role of expert advisor on what is referred to in his book as "Pigmanship."

While working on a ballot initiative in Florida for the banning of gestation crates to which female pigs in CAFOs are usually confined before they give birth, he met with the manager of the swine unit at the University of Florida. Baur tells of the manager's seeming epiphany.

> They assume that because they feed and raise so many animals, they understand them. Our perspective is the opposite: you can't get to know animals when they are crammed in two-foot-wide cages, unable to behave normally. The animals are treated badly and the connection between the farmers and the animals is lost. "These animals aren't able to be who they are," I repeated to the manager.
>
> Then something happened. . . . His tone had been smug and combative, but now he spoke slowly and deliberately. "You know what's missing today on the farm?" he asked. Without pausing to let me answer, he declared emphatically, "Pigmanship."
>
> Pigmanship. I've since thought a lot about the term and what it might mean. It might mean good animal husbandry, the skillful understanding of an animal, one fostered over generations of farmers. It might mean professionalism, the application of information known to dedicated agriculturalists that allows you to understand the animals, their behavior, and their relationship to the land, so you get the outcomes you want without extreme manipulation. It might just mean a certain decency of behavior, a quiet respect for the interests and characteristics

> of the pigs in your care. It might be a combination of all these.[68]

Baur has worked closely with all the animals at Farm Sanctuary and while this experience is by its very nature anecdotal, it is uniquely informative and insightful. As he describes above, by the very nature of the practices of agribusiness pig operations, there is very little personal connection with these animals within the industry.[69] Most CAFO employees are uneducated and working for very low wages. They simply herd the pigs from one industrial building to another or onto trucks headed for the slaughterhouse – the only personal interaction is often assisted by a metal rod used to prod the pigs into their next cage or pen and, eventually, into the truck that transports them into the hands of the equally low-waged slaughterhouse employee who stuns the pigs and then cuts their throats and hangs them on a hook to drain the blood.[70] The pigs represented in the fictive motion pictures I interrogate live very different lives than these (though in some there is a hint that this was the fate from which they escaped). Therefore, the experience of someone who regularly works closely with the nurturing and care of pigs outside the CAFO environment adds essential insight into pig nature.

Another work that I reference is Howard Lyman's *The Mad Cowboy: Plain Truth from the Cattle Rancher Who Won't Eat Meat,* written with Glen Merzer. Lyman is a fourth generation dairy farmer and cattle rancher from Montana who, though raised on an organic farm, was educated in the 1960s in agricultural college about, as he calls it, "improving on nature" with "the new chemical agriculture."[71] When a tumor was found

[68] Baur, *Farm Sanctuary,* 85.
[69] Erik Marcus, *Meat Market: Animals, Ethics, & Money*, 1st ed. (Boston: Brio Press, 2005), 29.
[70] Ibid., 33-34, 224-25.
[71] Lyman and Merzer, *Mad Cowboy: Plain Truth from the Cattle Rancher Who Won't Eat Meat*, 53.

on his spine, he connected it directly to the herbicides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers with which he had been working closely since college. After surviving a successful operation that gave him a one-in-a-million chance of walking again, he made the decision to change his ways. At first, this meant attempting to turn the business back into an organic farm, but soon his new sensitivity to life and living creatures led him to becoming an environmental and animal activist. He is known nationally as the man who was sued, along with Oprah Winfrey, by a group of Texas cattlemen for bringing down the price of beef with his comments about Mad Cow disease and the dangers of "feeding cows to cows" that led Oprah to vow to never eat beef again.[72] Lyman has immense first hand knowledge of chemical farming practices and the livestock industry. Since leaving the agribusiness, he has researched and advocated on behalf of animal rights and environmental concerns. His book tells both an inspiring story and detailed facts about agribusiness practices.

Erik Marcus' *Meat Market* is an insightful and well documented book on the meat industry that draws from USDA statistics and industry reports. He gives detailed descriptions of the life cycles of the main victims of what he calls "animal agriculture" – cattle, chickens, and pigs. He then makes a case for why current animal advocacy groups[73] have not made significant strides toward their goals and offers an alternative that involves striving directly for the dismantlement of the animal agriculture system.[74] A portion of his argument rests on the idea that modern practices in animal agriculture have turned food animals into commodities – goods that are without qualitative differentiation

[72] Ibid., 14-20.
[73] Marcus divides animal advocacy into the three camps: vegetarian movement, the animal rights movement, and the animal welfare movement. Marcus, *Meat Market*, 69.
[74] Ibid., 79.

in the marketplace. A pork chop is a pork chop wherever you buy it. Such goods then compete only by the inexpensiveness of the items, and therefore, it is essential that the production of such goods is streamlined and industrialized to be as cheap as possible without regard to the now indistinguishable quality of them. This is what has fostered an animal agricultural marketplace driven by quantity and economy without any regard to the commodities as living beings. His dismantlement plan calls for an emphasis on the suffering of animals in factory farms and the cruelty inherent in the CAFO system. His detailed citations on the current conditions in CAFOs and his explanations of the historical contexts behind the practices in animal agriculture are informative and well documented.

While not really falling under the general heading as an animal advocacy source, I have found great insight and prodigious historical details on the history of pigs and pig domestication in Lyall Watson's *The Whole Hog: Exploring the Extraordinary Potential of Pigs.* With a doctorate in ethology and first hand experience on three continents befriending pigs and peccaries, Watson crafted his book with both exacting details and enlightening warmth toward pigs.

Methodology

Epistemology – Theoretical Framework – Methodology – Method

In this study, I adopt a constructionist epistemology – the idea that all knowledge and meaningful human reality is constructed between interactions in a social context.[75] All truth or meaning is created by society. I use a theoretical framework of critical inquiry and examine issues of power, domination, and subordination. The methodology with which I approach this study is discourse analysis within specific texts. I examine the selected motion pictures and look for the regimes of truth that are presented, the assumptions made in the representations of nonhuman animals, and the power relations between humans and other animals. The method I use in this study is close textual analysis of the of the representations of pig characters and the narratives within which they are presented. This analysis involves issues of cinematography, mise en scéne, performance, narrative construction, and character analysis.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is variously interpreted as a broad term or either of two fairly specific methodologies with varying emphases when applied to literary criticism or social theory. In my study, I use a contemporary interpretation that takes into account its Kantian and Marxist origins, acknowledges the influences of the Frankfurt School, and

[75] Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 8-9.

incorporates many of the sorts of applications to which contemporary feminist and post-colonial studies put critical theory.

Critical inquiry involves the critique of domination, often encouraging or even demanding action based on a socio-political inequity. I am particularly inspired by such activist/educationalist philosophers as Pablo Freire and the concept of "conscientization" – the idea of an awakening or rendering conscious from the application of critical thinking to social problems.[76] There is a strong normative vein that runs through much critical theory. While I believe that such concerns are what motivate much of my own research, I do not take a stance or try to answer the secondary, potentially "activist" questions my research raises.[77] Instead, I concentrate on an examination of the specific representations in the films at hand. My goal is to contribute significantly to the understanding of how these portrayals play an important role in the complex human-animal relationships beyond the scope of these texts. I hope to raise awareness of perspectives unfamiliar to readers and contribute to a *conscientization* for the reader of human-animal relationships in motion pictures and their potential repercussions in our understanding and relationships with nature and the environment.

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, critical theory "provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms."[78] My study consists of uncovering the underlying assumptions and ambiguities that spring from human representations of other

[76] The term *conscientização* [in Portugese] refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the opressive elements of reality. "Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000), 35.
[77] In the final chapter of this dissertation is a section that tells the personal story of my interest in this work and relates my "activist" leanings. It is there that readers will find my "call for change" to which I feel some of this study leads.
[78] James Bohman, "Critical Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/critical-theory/.

species in motion pictures. These assumptions involve issues of dominance and subordination, hegemonic oppression, anthropocentrically inclined *speciesism*, and occasionally simple gross misrepresentation of nonhuman animals.

Discourse Analysis

The methodological approach I use to examine these issues is discourse analysis (or, as Gillian Rose describes in *Visual Methodologies*, discourse analysis I).[79] This manifests itself in my work as an exploration of the structures and visual representations of pigness within the diegesis of a motion picture, including a discussion of what elements of the characterizations of the pig characters relate to actual pigs, as well as the statements and visual representations that connect pigs to food consumed by humans (meat).

Rose summarizes the strategy of approaching discourse analysis I as follows:

- looking at your sources with fresh eyes;
- immersing yourself in your sources;
- identifying key themes in your sources;
- examining their effects of truth;
- paying attention to their complexity and contradictions;
- looking for the invisible as well as the visible;
- paying attention to details.[80]

The major thrust of this study, indeed, is to look at motion pictures with "fresh eyes," from the perspective of nonhuman animals and from the standpoint of the animals' concerns. The key themes in these works include the physical performance of the pig characters, their relationships with the other animals, the discourse surrounding meat

[79] Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2001), 146.
[80] Ibid., 165-66.

within the works, and the manifestation of hegemonic control within the diegesis. These themes and the regimes of truth that define them have directed the organizational structure of the following chapters as will be described at the end of this chapter. I specifically address the "invisible" or the absences in the final chapter as I draw together my findings and conclusions.

One of the challenges of examining the discourse surrounding pigs in motion pictures as it relates to actual pigs is that much of science (and philosophy) has been devoted to distinguishing what is human from what is animal (or animality). A precise definition of authentic animal behavior is problematic. Most people in the 21st century get their "knowledge" of animal behavior not from interaction with live animals but from textual sources such as films, books, or television. I draw on the experience of individuals who have dedicated their lives to working with animals, my own experience, and the writings of cognitive ethologists who argue that a certain level of anthropomorphizing is valid in defining "authentic animal behavior."[81]

In this study, I perform a close textual analysis of various films that feature a specific species, pigs. I examine these texts and the portrayal of pigs in relation to the lives and behavior of real life pigs as described in several texts, including Gene Baur's book *Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food* and Lyall Watson's *The Whole Hog.*[82] I also use my own experiences as I have worked directly with pigs at Wilderness Ranch, an animal sanctuary that I visited and volunteered at several times over the past few years. I also had first hand experience with a pig who I

[81] Mitchell, Thompson, and Miles, *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals.*
[82] Other sources include Sy Montgomery, *The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007), and J. Moussaieff Masson, *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals,* 1st ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003).

rescued from an animal shelter and who I lived with for a month before finding a more appropriate home with other pigs for him. I describe this experience in more detail in Chapter 6 when I describe the short film I made about Howie the pig.

Because most of the representations I look at are fictionalized and even "humanized" depictions – that is, humans are directly involved in the performance of the animal, whether by voice or animation – one aspect I will be looking for is depicted behavior that seems to serve the primary interests of the nonhuman animal for his or her own sake, or for the sake of others while acknowledging the effect these behaviors have for the protagonist. Altruist actions are noted but only acknowledged as authentic nonhuman perspective if the protagonist is depicted as recognizing how these actions could affect his or her own narrative or if the character acknowledges the altruistic nature of the action.

I emphasize these moments because a common theme in depictions of "others" is that they work strictly for the sake of the dominant caste with no thought to themselves. Mammy and Prissy work hard for the O'Haras without being too concerned about their future as slaves or freed people in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). The animals in Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) charitably assist Cinderella in getting ready for the ball and even drive the carriage for her. Are they returning a favor or just being nice to a friend? There is no indication of their motivation, only of their subservience to an individual with much more agency and power-knowledge than themselves (pretty and friendly, though she was).

A useful model for the sort of discourse analysis I employ can be found in Cynthia Freeland's essay "Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films." She proposes a gender ideology critique that offers "a deep interpretive reading that criticizes or analyzes

a film's presentation of certain naturalized messages about gender – messages that the film takes for granted and expects the audience to agree with and accept."[83] Such an approach goes beyond a traditional feminist critique of the depiction of women by interrogating deeper elements such as narratological structure for masculine forms and rhetorical strategies potentially undermining what may be viewed as elements of traditional femininity. Her use of the word "ideology" is not related so much to Marxist theory as to the more generic idea of the "distorted representation of existing relations of power and domination."[84] Her critique asks such questions as:

> How do the film's structures of narrative, point of view, and plot construction operate in effecting a depiction of gender roles and relations? Does the film offer a "heroic modernist" narrative of mastery, centered upon a male character, offering up either a clear resolution or a noble tragedy? Or, is there a nonstandard narrative centered upon female characters, offering, perhaps, a more open-ended and ambiguous conclusion? . . . What are the film's implicit rhetorical presuppositions about natural gender roles and relations? Does the film present possibilities of questioning or challenging these presumptions?[85]

Pete Porter, in a conference presentation adaptation of his essay in Society and Animals' *Journal of Human-Animal Studies,* proposes a derivation of Freeland's approach for animal studies with the substitution of *species* and *nonhuman* for *gender* and *female* in the questions quoted above. Porter urges that these questions be adapted to the film under consideration, specifically concerning genre and filmic context. Naming such subgenres as wildlife films and talking animal films, Porter suggests that a valuable part of such an

[83] Cynthia Freeland, "Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films," *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Braudy & Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 637.
[84] Ibid., 637.
[85] Ibid, 639.

analysis would be to place the film within the conventions of other similar animal films, all of which I do in my analysis.

Part of the unstated assumption in Porter's adaptation of Freeland's work is that nonhuman animals should be treated with respect and given some level of rights to be represented fairly. Freeland's argument is based on the assumption that men and women should be represented on equal terms based on the belief that they are equal in society. While transposing such an assumption to animals makes this comparison ethically complex for some people, my analysis is elucidates a nonhuman perspective, and, throughout this study, I relate the plight of the represented animals to what I argue are fair and equitable comparisons to human challenges to which we humans can more specifically relate.

Interrogating the dominance relations within these texts is essential to understanding the discourse. As the exemplar of the dominant cultural ideology, the humans exercise their power-knowledge by valuing certain aspects within society. Leslie A. Grinner's SCWAMP framework is a useful tool in analyzing the influence of traditional Western ideology – it is defined by the acronym that encompasses all that this ideology most values – Straight, Christian, White, Able-bodied, Male, Property-owners.[86] For the sake of this study (and, perhaps, a more comfortable, Germanically-influenced pronunciation), I suggest adding an "H" for "Human" into this acronym and make it SCHWAMP. When studying texts with a mix of animal and human characters, the dominance of the mores of the humans is ubiquitous.[87] Grinner suggests this

[86] Leslie A. Grinner, "Hip Hop Sees No Color: An Exploration of Privilege and Power in *Save the Last Dance*," in *Race, Gender, Media: Considering Diversity across Audiences, Content, and Producers*, ed. Rebecca Ann Lind (Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2004), 199-205.
[87] In films, see *Cinderella*, *City Slickers*, *The Jungle Book*, as a few examples.

intersectional framework as a way to analyze "the privileges and benefits connected to [the components of SCWAMP], the ways in which they constitute societal norms, and the consequences associated with deviance from those norms."[88] The animal characters in these motions pictures deviate significantly from the societal norms and this offers another strategy with which to explore the power relations that surround them.

Part of the discourse analysis in this study involves a narratological analysis of these films, examining such devices as perspective, point of view, and character identification. A useful model of identification is offered by Murray Smith's *structure of sympathy*, which describes a specific process through which the spectator engages with filmic characters:

> In this system, spectators construct characters (a process I refer to as *recognition*). Spectators are also provided with visual and aural information more or less congruent with that available to characters, and so are placed in a certain structure of *alignment* with characters. In addition, spectators evaluate characters on the basis of the values they embody, and hence form more-or-less sympathetic or more-or-less antipathetic *allegiances* with them.[89]

Exploring *alignment* pertains to the point-of-view of the character in relation to the point-of-view that the film offers the spectator. Forming positive *allegiances* with the pig characters is essential to the narrative in the motion pictures I analyze and forms the basis for setting up the disjunction between the pigs as friendly beings and pigs as meat. But before identification can take place, I will *recognize* the "personhood" of these characters

[88] Grinner, "Hip Hop Sees No Color," 201.
[89] Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), 75. Parenthesis in original; italics added.

using Murray Smith's "person schema," which consists of the following features and capacities:

1. a discrete human body, individuated and continuous through time and space;
2. perceptual activity, including self-awareness;
3. intentional states, such as beliefs and desires;
4. emotions;
5. the ability to use and understand a natural language;
6. the capacity for self-impelled actions and self-interpretation; and
7. the potential for traits, or persisting attributes.[90]

While Smith's person schema of a character relates to simple recognition of the projected image of a human body as an autonomous and distinct "person," it easily applies to nonhuman characters with the simple removal of "human" from the first feature. Another level of complexity is involved when humans encounter animals of other species. Even in the pronouns we use for animals, common custom in English accepts the use of the neuter, inanimate pronoun "it" for animals even though nearly every creature in the animal kingdom has a sex. As suggested by Porter, Smith's person schema is a useful tool in identifying that a motion picture sound-image representation is a distinct and autonomous person –not a human person, of course, but a rounded, identifiable *being* within the diegesis of the text. This system of looking for *recognition*, *alignment*, and *allegiance* is one of the tools I use in my assessment of the nonhuman characters presented in these works.

[90] Ibid.: 21.

Porter also offers a helpful device for the analysis of character portrayals that he calls *cues of nonhuman personhood*. He breaks down the cues into primary, secondary external, and secondary internal. These relate to the performance of the character within a film. Primary cues involved the actions and vocalizations of the animal "actor" performing the character portrayal, secondary external involve the actions/reactions of surrounding characters to the character, and secondary internal involve the part played by human actors in the performance of a character (the human voice dubbed in for the voice of a nonhuman character, for instance).

These various frameworks combine to invest my analysis with a variety of tools with which to interrogate the representations under study. When addressing each film, I will use the same analytical approach:

1. A brief description of the production, distribution, and exhibition of the film including any awards it received and with some notes as to the critical reception of the film. This will serve strictly as background information as it does not play significantly into the textual analysis that I will perform.

2. Genre identification – how the film fits into animal films in general and specifically what other films use the same sorts of conventions.

3. A brief synopsis of the film that will remind the reader of the general outline of the film.

4. A detailed description of the first scene in the film. In both *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe*, the first scene establishes many of the relationships and the power structures that are evident throughout the film along with the conventions and

performance style of the leading pig character. Included in this will be references to:

a. Setting (i.e., barnyard, factory farm, forests)

b. Camera angles, including camera point of view (subjective vs. objective shots)

c. Details of mise en scène (costumes, props, lighting, scenery)

d. Performance analysis of pig character – external/internal performances (human voice, CGI-enhanced live action pig, etc.)

e. Editing style (classic Hollywood continuity conventions, montage, etc.

f. The use of sound and music (human vs. animal performance of sound, diegetic and non-diegetic sources of music, etc.)

g. Character identification (as per Murray Smith) – Is there recognition of the pig as a unique and autonomous person? Alliance of the character with the viewer (i.e., are we given the same information of the narrative as the pig character?). Allegiance – is the character presented as likeable or antagonistically?

After the detailed close textual analysis of the first scene in each film, I will arrange the succeeding sections along specific themes, much of which will include and expand on the characteristics listed above as each pertains to the discourse surrounding pigs and meat. The major themes I will address in sections of their own will be:

5. The Pig in Performance and Portrayal: This section will explore the mechanisms and human and animal performances used to create the pig character. It will also involve questions of the role in which the pig fills narratologically and among the other characters along with the relationships between the pig and the other animals.

6. The Question of Eating Animals: Here I will examine how meat and the idea of animals as meat are presented in the film and discuss the implications of the discourse surrounding meat in this film. I will also explore how the truth about humans eating animals and animals eating animals is presented in the film.

7. Power and Hegemony: In this section, I will discuss the various levels of power and hegemonic control within the discourse of the film, especially in how power-knowledge is manifested within the SCHWAMP framework of values that seem to be most highly esteemed within the film.

In Chapter 6, when I address non-fiction depictions and incidental appearances of pigs, I will perform a condensed version of this analytic method on the various works I examine.

Understanding the discourse that circulates around nonhumans in media representations is important in helping humans understand the implications of their actions that involve these others in a myriad of ways. I believe that media representations of animals have a profound effect on how Americans think about animals, talk about animals, and interact with them in person, in the legal system, and in their daily choices, all of which significantly affect the plight of animals – like the food we choose to eat and the ecological choices we make every day.

I am confident that my research is a unique and compelling addition to the burgeoning field of Human-Animal Studies, and I am on the leading edge of the few scholars who expand that field into Film and Media Studies. Likewise, I believe expanding the already significant area of representation analyses in Media Studies to include depictions of animals other than humans will add to the depth of our continually growing field.

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Chapter 3: Charlotte's Web

Charlotte's Web opened to mixed but generally favorable reviews in 2006.[91] "A whimsical and warmly appealing adaptation of the children's classic," wrote Claudia Puig of *USA Today*.[92] "[*Charlotte's Web*] may not be perfect, but it honors its source and captures the key elements – the humor and good sense, as well as the sheer narrative exuberance – that have made White's book a classic," wrote A.O. Scott in the *New York Times*.[93] Kevin Crust of the Los Angeles Times, however, wrote, "There is nothing discernibly awful about this *Charlotte's Web* other than it lacks the spark that would make it come alive on-screen."[94]

Wilbur is arguably the most famous pig in literature. After the technological, critical, and commercial success of *Babe* in 1995, it was inevitable that Wilbur, too, would get a live-action CGI makeover. Producer Jordan Kerner, while reading E. B. White's classic book to his children in 2000, realized it was overdue and went about bringing the book to the screen.

In this chapter, I will discuss the background of the film, give a brief synopsis of it, and then perform a detailed analysis of the opening scene of the film. Following that I will analyze various aspects of the performance and portrayal of Wilbur, starting with the physical performance of the character, the depiction of him – noting where he is treated

[91] RottenTomatoes.com, a website that sums up critics' responses to films, totaled the favorable reviews at 78%. ("Charlotte's Web," *Rotten Tomatoes*, http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/charlottes_web/).
[92] Claudia Puig, "Three Oinks for *Charlotte's Web*," *USA Today*, 14 December 2006.
[93] A.O. Scott, "White's Country Critters, Still Humble," *New York Times*, 15 December 2006.
[94] Kevin Crust, "In the Barn, There's Nothing New," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 2006.

like a pig and where as something else, the relationships between the various animal characters, and of the agency of Wilbur. In the next section, I will explore the discourse surrounding the question of eating animals in the film, studying the depiction of meat and the portrayal of how the animal characters respond to the reality of meat-eating in the film. Finally, I will examine the dominant ideological positions presented in the world of the film, paying special attention to which individuals are presented with agency in the film.

Film Background

Charlotte's Web (2006) was directed by Gary Winick and produced by Jordan Kerner from a screenplay written by Susannah Grant and Karey Kirkpatrick. Earl Hamner, Jr., the writer who adapted the E.B. White book for the 1973 animated feature film of the same name, was credited with the film story for the 2006 live action feature film. The film was financed by Paramount Pictures, Walden Media, and Nickelodeon Movies. The production companies involved were Paramount Pictures in association with Walden Media and Kerner Entertainment Company. Paramount Pictures distributed the film theatrically in the United States.

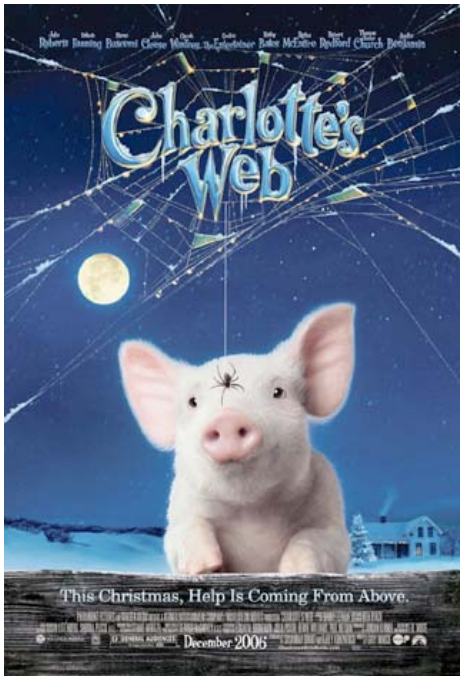

Figure 5. Movie poster for film release of *Charlotte's Web.* (Paramount Pictures)

The film won a Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for "Best Family Film (live action)" and a MovieGuide Award for "Best Film for Families" and was nominated and won various other lesser awards for performances by Dakota Fanning as Fern, Dominic Scott Kay for the voice of Wilbur, and Sarah McLachlan for singing the song "Ordinary Miracle," written by Glen Ballard and David A. Stewart. The film cost approximately $82.8 million to make and grossed $83 million theatrically in the US and $144 million worldwide.[95]

Charlotte's Web is a fictional, feature-length film usually identified as a Family Film, although it could also fall into the category of Live-Action Animal Films or, more specifically, Live-Action Talking Animal Films. It follows the convention of certain such films in that all species of animals except humans understand the speech of each other, though occasionally Fern, the lead human child featured, seems to get the gist of what the animals are saying to each other and the animals occasionally pick up on what exactly the humans are saying.

Synopsis

Fern Arable, who lives on a family farm in rural Somerset County, wakes to find that her father is about to kill the runt from a new litter of pigs. Fern insists that she be allowed to care for the runt, who she names Wilbur. As he grows, he is given a home with Uncle Homer, who has a barn with lots of animals. Here Wilbur meets an array of new friends – sheep, geese, a horse, a rat, and cows, soon the closest of which is

[95] Bruce Nash, "The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation," *Nash Information Services*, http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/index2006.php.

Charlotte, a spider who lives in the door of the barn. The animals all share a common language and speak freely with each other. As fall approaches, the barn animals realize that spring pigs are destined to be slaughtered and eaten, so Charlotte comes up with a plan to keep Wilbur alive. She writes words in her web about Wilbur that cause a sensation among the community of humans. Her plan works, and Wilbur is heralded as "some pig" and "radiant" and is entered into the county fair, where Wilbur the "humble" pig wins more adoration and helps teach everyone the meaning of friendship and ensures his freedom from slaughter. At the same time, Charlotte's lifespan is winding down, and with the help of Templeton the Rat, Charlotte's egg sack is saved and restored to the barn where, though mourning the loss of Charlotte, Wilbur greets Charlotte's children as they start their own journey of life and friendship.

The Opening Scene of the Film

The background for the opening credits are animated and are stylistically reminiscent of the illustrations by Garth Williams in the book. One minute into the credits, we hear a voice-over narration – a warm, friendly, elderly male voice with a hint of country twang in it (voiced by actor/playwright Sam Shepard) – who tells us that Somerset County is unexceptional, "a deeply ordinary place . . . The people who lived there were just regular people. And the animals? Well, they were just plain old animals. They didn't question the order of things." This is a rather profound and loaded statement. By reverse logic, it seems to invite the viewer to invest the animals in this film with an unusual level of agency – as if the animals are *able* to question things, but choose not to

question the current *order* of things, though they may question other things if certain occasions arise. The phrase itself – "they didn't question the order of things" – has a tone of a command by hegemonic powers in various stratified situations: serfs serving their lords without complaint or slaves submissively obeying their masters. While this is a theme that does not explicitly surface again in the film, the unequal castes portrayed – nonhuman animals submitting to the will of humans, scheming not to free themselves, but to change the minds of the humans who control every aspect of their lives – are inherent in the human-animal society portrayed in the film. The final line of the opening narration grants the impetus of the whole story to the human Fern: "One spring, on a small farm, a little girl did something. Something that would change everything." While this is an accurate attribution, it is certainly incomplete. It neglects the part played by the pig and, more significantly, by the amazing spelling spider who drives the entire story.

The animated credits, portraying an aerial shot drifting over quaint country scenes – a one street town and cattle and sheep grazing on grassy hills – dissolve into a long shot of the Arable Farm on a stormy night. The thunder awakens Fern, a young girl perhaps twelve years old, and she rushes from her house to the barn where her father, Mr. Arable, is assisting newborn pigs to their mother's teats. The barn is lit with a warm ambler glow. Overhead practical lights appear in the scene, but the light we see on Mr. Arable, Fern, and the pigs is classical Hollywood horizontal low-key lighting that illuminates faces especially well and allows the background to fall off into darkness, keeping the attention focused on the main characters with little distraction. Despite the low illumination of the background, we can see wooden walls and spacious wooden stalls that are carpeted with fresh looking straw, and there is not a leak from the steady rain to be seen in this barn. On

the walls appear what look like vintage farm implements – a wooden saw (a blade between two rough wooden handles), a wooden bellows (used for fanning a flame or coals), a rusted oil drum on a bench. No modern or power tools are seen, and the only hint of electricity is from the overhead lights. The rope hanging behind Fern is faded and tattered, and the chain below it on a post is rusted. The rain and flashes of lightning outside increase the comfort and safe feeling in the barn. The feeling here is that of a well-worn and rustic barn that would have looked aged and entirely appropriate if the year was 1930, even though the film is set in an ambiguous time period definitely more contemporary than that, as we will later see. The time period is actually very hard to identify throughout the film. Era-specific language and technology are absent. At this point in the film, the time and the place of the film are simply given a "here and now, but warmer and friendlier, less technological" feel. Later, the time period will be further paradoxical. This will be discussed in detail in the final chapter,

The film starts from Fern's perspective. The first appearance of pigs is Fern's subjective view on the scene, watching her father and the pigs, though not directly a point-of-view angle. We cut to her smiling face and then back to her father as he sits on a stool and assists the baby pigs. After settling the piglets in, Mr. Arable sits and watches them with a satisfied look on his face. Then, a lone piglet walks into the scene and attempts to nudge his way up to a teat, but none are available, and we hear him distinctively grunt. Mr. Arable sits back and sighs and then gets up and walks to a wall and grabs an axe and we hear a piglet squeal. Fern looks alarmed. Mr. Arable walks back and picks up the piglet who has still not found a teat and starts to walk away with the struggling piglet squealing and squirming in his arm. Fern questions him:

FERN: You're not going to kill it are you?

MR. ARABLE: It's a runt. Now go back to bed.

F: No, it's not fair! It can't help being born small. [She grabs at the axe.]

A: Careful!

F: If I had been born small, would you have killed me?

A: Of course not, a little girl is one thing. A runty pig is another.

F: There's no difference! This is unfair and unjust. How could you be so heartless?

Fern takes the piglet from him and he reluctantly acquiesces. At this stage, the piglet is an "it," with no name and no gender. There is no father-daughter discussion about the future of the other pigs, what their purpose on the farm is, or what destiny awaits them.

The language Fern uses to plead her case is quite striking. She equates "runt" to small. The difference in size between the "runt" and the other piglets is nearly indiscernible on screen. At best, what the audience is shown is that the runt is late to come to the mother's teats and none is available to immediately suckle. He walks fine when he approaches his mother and struggles rather heartily in his search for an open teat. This may help the audience relate to the hapless piglet. He appears fine to us, and apparently Fern, so we are left only to the evidently experienced farmer, Mr. Arable – the older, white, male authority figure, to distinguish the condition of this piglet from the others.[96] She immediately appeals to the argument against discrimination: the piglet is not

[96] Later in the film, and months later in the story, the audience is afforded a comparison with another spring pig and the size of Wilbur is indeed considerably smaller.

to blame for its apparent size. She then equates the pig's life with her own. Ignoring the species difference, she questions whether a size factor would have prejudiced her father in her own welfare as a baby. This is an extraordinary leap.

For centuries, adult humans did not make this leap of logic even within their own species when the value of life was associated with a lower caste, a lower class, a different race or even, in many instances, a different sex (female children were considered of less value in some agrarian cultures or warrior cultures). Is the flaw in her argument based on the idea that as a young human, Fern's ability to differentiate between individuals is less refined, or perhaps less prejudiced, than the ability of an adult? She focuses on the youthfulness of the potential victim in this situation. This "baby" is helpless and needs extra care. That he is from a different species does not matter to her. Her own chronological proximity and perhaps memory of being a helpless child in need of the care of parents might make her feel more of a connection to the plight of the piglet. Mr. Arable points out the species difference to her in his counterargument. His argument rests simply on the species differentiation; he offers no other reasons except in the connotations that the word "little girl" might have in contrast to "runty pig." She retorts with what seems to her to be the definitive answer and the answer that many animal rights organizations have used: "There's no difference." The animal rights version of this response is often couched in the quotation by early 19th century philosopher and legal reformer Jeremy Bentham: "The question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer?"[97] Fern implies that to acknowledge and treat other sentient creatures who can clearly suffer (as we hear from his frantic squealing after Mr. Arable

[97] Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London, 1907; Online at Library of Economics and Liberty, http://www.animalrightshistory.org/timeline-romantic/ben-jeremy-bentham.htm).

picks the piglet up) as if their lives have less value is “unfair and unjust.” She then passes judgment on those who do make such a distinction, saying, “How could you be so heartless?” The plea to emotion from his young daughter seems to hit Mr. Arable, though Fern aggressively and obstinately moves forward with her intention without his verbal consent, and soon the direction of the piglet’s life takes a new turn. This counter to the represented white, male authority will be discussed further in the “Power and Hegemony” section.

Some interesting assumptions and power relations are set up in this opening scene. The first glimpse of the mother pig with her piglets involves the human Mr. Arable assisting her. Female pigs are quite capable of birthing and feeding their offspring without the assistance of others, especially humans. But we are presented with what appears to be the fairly benign attention of the human farmer offering aid. He is the caretaker or overseer here. The largest danger in such a situation, as presented to the viewer, is of a piglet not being able to get to a teat for nourishment, and when such an occasion does arise in this scene, the immediate solution Mr. Arable offers is to put the piglet out of its potential misery. The option offered by the human is to kill the “runty” piglet immediately, likely to ensure that the others get their full nourishment and grow big as quickly as possible since we later find out that Mr. Arable will sell these pigs to raise money for new harvesting equipment. It is not said directly, but, of course, this means the pigs are being raised for meat. From the viewpoint of the production master, killing the piglet might be the most efficient answer. But there is also no reason to believe that if the piglet is runty and incapable of getting his turn at the food source, he would not have just eventually died on his own without causing any more problems, or, as happens

in the wild if a piglet cannot get nourishment, the mother pig might kill him or her. But here, the *power-knowledge* (as per Foucault) to "run" the farm lies in the hands of the (white, male) human. While Mr. Arable does concede the argument to his daughter, the discourse circulating in the barn is palpable: he is the hegemon and, in this case, he gives the child this allowance.

The significant absence in this scene is any mention of why there is a family of pigs in the Arables' barn and of the pigs' destiny as meat. Fern makes an adamant defense to spare the life of the runty pig, but what is she saving him for? It seems an obvious counter argument for Mr. Arable, but he offers no such contention to his daughter that the pigs will all be killed some day (in industrial agriculture, around the age of six months) anyway. No other animals are seen on the Arable farm and we later find that he makes his living with plant agriculture and the litter of pigs is simply a one-off venture to raise some money for new farm equipment. The presented discourse surrounding pigs in this opening scene is focused on the piglets as living creatures and what is best for them to grow up healthy but with no indication as to why this is a desired outcome among the humans who are having the discussion. There is no mention of meat or even any subtle references to it, though the very first shot of the next scene confronts that directly and will be discussed below in the "Depiction of Meat" section. The mother pig is only referenced in Mr. Arable's dialogue with Fern to point out that she has only ten teats and eleven piglets to feed. Fern latches onto the idea that she will feed the piglet herself and take care "him" – the last word in the scene, suddenly conferring to the now safe pig cuddled in her arms a gender identity.

The Pig in Performance and Portrayal

Performance

The opening scene in the Arables' barn features the mother pig lying on her side with ten suckling pig at her teats and Mr. Arable and Fern watching. The pigs are all actual pigs with nothing un-piglike about them whatsoever and no sounds from them that would not be made by any pig in that situation. Director Gary Winick notes in the DVD commentary that the pregnant pig was actually settled into the barn setting five weeks before shooting her scene so that she would be comfortable enough there to have her piglets there. The piglets pictured nursing in this scene were actually her piglets, though the runts that play Wilbur were brought in. When a lone piglet walks into the scene and attempts to nudge his way up to a teat and finds none available, we hear him distinctively grunt – a very pig-like sound. When Mr. Arable picks up the piglet and starts to walk away with him, the piglet squeals and squirms in his hand. While a few of the squeals of the "runt" pig are likely dubbed in, they are distinctly pig noises, and much of the sound in this scene could easily have been recorded directly from the actual pigs featured. The piglet struggles realistically when Mr. Arable picks him up with one hand (axe in the other), and the piglet grunts in what sounds like genuine contentment when Fern takes him from her father and holds him like a baby. Pigs are very vocal. They have excellent hearing and produce a myriad of sounds that have been classified into five distinct groups: croaks, deep grunts, high grunts, screams, and squeaks.[98] Eliciting the sorts of

[98] Lyall Watson, *The Whole: Exploring the Extraordinary Potential of Pigs* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 78-79.

sounds heard in this scene and capturing them on recording devices likely proved a simple task by the location sound recordist.

The performance by the piglet in this first scene are what Porter refers to as *primary cues* of personhood (working from the "person schema" of M. Smith's described in Chapter 2 in the Methodology section): the personhood of a character performed by an actual nonhuman performer in his or her actions and vocalizations that distinguish the animal as a (nonhuman) person – an individual being with self-impelled actions and self-interpretation, emotions, intentional states, and self-awareness.[99] The primary cues, in this case, the piglet's attempt to nurse, his struggle in the hands of Mr. Arable, and his quiet acceptance of the comfort in Fern's arms, are supported by *secondary external* cues (the behavior of the humans toward the animal) in naming him "runt" and "runty pig," in picking him up, and in identifying him as a "him."

Throughout the ensuing five scenes (the breakfast scene, Fern taking Wilbur to school, Wilbur in a baby carriage, Wilbur bathed in the sink, Wilbur sleeping in Fern's bed), the piglet is treated like a human baby by Fern, and there is very little performance involved in the character Wilbur's portrayal and no enhanced performance appears to have been used: no CGI, no sounds dubbed in for the pig that sound like anything other than those natural to a pig. The pig performance in these scenes continues to fall mostly into the secondary external cue category, with very little primary cue performance since the piglet actually does very little other than appear.

Halfway through the scene in which Wilbur is moved into Uncle Homer's barn (about ten minutes into the film), the aural performance of the character switches to a human-dubbed performance – the form that Porter calls *secondary internal* cues, where a

[99] Smith, *Engaging Characters*, 21.

performance is created aurally by a human performing the part of the voice of the nonhuman character. Identified now as a male pig named Wilbur and with a voice performed by the young male (human) actor, Dominic Scott Kay, the pig is now situated in a more traditional agricultural setting (though still of the early 20th century or before) – a pig pen in a barn. Throughout the film, the physical performance of the character is generally performed by an actual pig (actually, 47 pigs were used to portray Wilbur in this film), but now (starting with the shift in perspective and the human-generated voice of Wilbur) with CGI techniques employed for certain actions such as maneuvers that would be hard to train a pig to perform or would be inhumane to have a pig perform.[100] For instance, a close inspection of the fence-ramming scene reveals that the pig in this scene was CGI created – especially as Wilbur gets ready to run at the fence and the actual ramming of the fence. Later in the film, Wilbur does a distinctly un-piglike CGI back flip (he is showing off to a crowd after the word "terrific" has appeared in the spider web). He also enthusiastically plays in the mud in one scene and the movements are a little more dance-like than even the most exuberant actual pig can make. An animatronic stand-in for the pig is used only a few times in the entire film, once at the end of the scene at the breakfast table when Fern tucks Wilbur into her sweatshirt and sneaks him to school with her, and later for a couple over-the-shoulder of Wilbur shots.[101] Throughout the scenes

[100] As noted at the end of the film, "No animals were harmed in the making of this motion picture" and "Animals Australia was instrumental in finding homes for all the pigs used in this film and will monitor their well being for the rest of their lives." Animals Australia is "the only national animal protection organisation that actively exposes animal abuse and promotes a cruelty-free lifestyle. [They] are Australia's second largest and most dynamic national animal protection organisation, representing some 40 member societies and thousands of individual supporters." http://www.animalsaustralia.org/about/. "Forty-two [47 according to director Gary Winick] piglets were used in the movie, and Animals Australia, in association with Paramount Pictures, found every single piglet a loving, permanent home." http://www.savebabe.com/charlottesweb.php.

[101] The geese, on the other hand, are mostly created with animatronic puppets because of the difficulty in handling live geese and their habit of biting. The two geese characters are a mix of animatronic puppets and

where Wilbur and the other animals speak, CGI is used for the motion of the animals' mouths and, more subtly, for brow, ear, and eye movements. However, once the perspective of the film has shifted to the point of view of Wilbur as he is moved to Homer's barn, the grunts and snorts from before are all, if you will, translated into English and performed by the child actor. Wilbur's vocal performance is now entirely human-generated except for a few scenes where he is in close contact with humans and, as if the audience is hearing what the humans in the scene are hearing, we hear pig grunts from Wilbur. The discourse surrounding Wilbur's pigness shifts considerably when he begins to talk in English. This will be discussed below in the "Pig Agency" section.

Depiction

In terms of the distinctive "personhood" of the pig named Wilbur, he is differentiated from the other pigs in the suckling scene in his identification as a runt by Mr. Arable and in his physical separation – first in coming late to the suckling session, then in being picked up and removed from his mother. In terms of Smith's system of identification, by individualizing him in his struggle to suckle, including some distinctive sounds that separate him from the other ten piglets, he is positioned as a recognizable being with personal intention and desires. While he is not named yet, he is called a "runty pig" and a "runt" and then held in close physical proximity to both Mr. Arable and then Fern. The piglet is positioned with a high degree of allegiance. His situation as a newborn creature craving his mother's milk is an easily accessible condition that is easy to relate to for humans, as Fern suggests in the comparison she makes in her plea to her father and

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CGI with a just few longs shots of actual geese composited in among the other animals. Templeton the rat and Charlotte are entirely created by CGI. Gary Winick, *Charlotte's Web* (Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures Corporation, 2006), DVD, director's commentary.

making him a sympathetic character. The threat of extreme violence – a pre-emptive death by axe at the hands of Mr. Arable – the ensuing rescue by argument and pleading by Fern positions Wilbur as an innocent victim in need of help.

In the breakfast table scene, the treatment of the piglet is something between that of a nursing baby and a new pet. Fern's brother asks for a pig of his own (more on the pet side there, probably) and Fern nurses the piglet with a baby bottle protectively in her lap without touching her own breakfast. Wilbur's existence as something between Fern's pet and her baby continues as she sneaks him into her school classroom and gets sent to the

principal's office for her offense. Her mother articulates the nature of Fern's relationship with the pig as she escorts her out of the office.

> MRS. ARABLE: Fern, you know better. Okay? It's a pig. It's not a toy, not a doll, not a baby. It's a pig. You need to start treating it like one.

Cut to the next scene as Mr. and Mrs. Arable walk down a city street with Fern up ahead pushing Wilbur in a baby carriage. Overlaid with shots of Wilbur on his back in the carriage with a blanket pulled up to his chin and Fern looking down at him adoringly, we hear, mixed quietly with the natural sounds of the street, Mr. and Mrs. Arable talking

ominously about some truth that they need to tell Fern that Mr. Arable seems reluctant to share with her because she is "just so happy." In fact, once the piglet is removed from the barn in the first scene, there is very little pig performance in the portrayal of Wilbur, except that the role of Wilbur is performed by an actual pig, until five scenes later when the Arables send him to live in Uncle Homer's barn. While the parents verbally remind Fern that he is a pig, she continues to treat him as a human baby, even curling up in bed with him and singing him a lullaby.


Figure 7. Fern curls up in bed with Wilbur and sings him to sleep.

The parents are depicted as being conflicted about this problematic situation. Their concern is strictly for Fern, while her concern is entirely for Wilbur. Wilbur is wholly under the control of Fern, though lovingly so. He is pampered constantly, and he is presented as being quite comfortable with this sort of treatment. He yawns, seemingly contentedly, while in the baby carriage. He suckles eagerly at the bottle at the breakfast table and in Fern's desk at school. In bed with Fern, he grunts apparently contentedly in his sleep as she sings to him. His physical needs are met, though he is entirely disconnected from any natural pig behaviors or any other pigs at this stage in his life. The one pig-need that is continuously met in this stage of his life is the close contact with other beings – in this case, to his stand-in mother, Fern. Pigs make friends with other

species quite easily. Though a piglet naturally tends toward his mother in the pre-weaning stage, most pigs prefer to sleep in physical contact with others, and Wilbur's contended deep grunts are quite authentic in their portrayal here.[102]

When Wilbur is first moved to Homer's barn and the point of view of the film moves to his perspective (a significant transition I will discuss below in the "Pig Agency" section), he is seen to make a valiant attempt to break through a fence. His escape attempt is thwarted by two obstacles. The first is a fanciful narrative twist that serves the plot well, though it is unrealistic. After missing Fern's bus, he heads in a random direction and comes up short in front of the smokehouse – a remote brick building with black smudged bricks that we find out is the eventual final destination of most spring pigs like Wilbur. Wilbur senses the "wrongness" of the place and stops and then backs away suspiciously. All the other animals recognize the importance of the smokehouse to Wilbur's fate and express concerns about this encounter. Pigs' sense of smell is good, but there is very little reason to think that the smell of a smokehouse would strike any actual pig as suspicious or "wrong." More likely, the idea of the young, sweet Wilbur confronting the site of his possible roasting struck the filmmakers as a convenient way to begin the narrative thread about Wilbur's "spring pig" demise. Semiotically, the image of the smokehouse is imbued with the dark potential of Wilbur's death and introduces the concept and the motivation that drives the story forward – saving Wilbur from the fate of most spring pigs on the Zuckerman farm.

Figure 8. Wilbur confronts the smokehouse.

[102] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 25.

After Wilbur backs away from the smokehouse, Uncle Homer intrudes with the second interruption – breakfast. He bangs on a pail and begins slopping food into a trough in Wilbur's pen. As this is Wilbur's first morning in the barn, it seems unlikely that he would immediately know what the sound of the ladle on the bucket signifies (though pigs are easily trainable and it would only take an incident or two to familiarize them to this sound cue that food is coming), but the idea that the offering of food would lure a pig back into his pen is entirely plausible and adheres to normal pig behavior – they are very food-oriented. Even on animal sanctuaries with pigs who are very accustomed to human interaction, workers know not to get between a pig and his or her food. Pigs quickly become very single-minded and will use their bulk to clear a path straight to their food source. Wilbur is thus showing his true pig form as he turns his back on freedom and heads to the feeding trough.

This aspect of pigs is then dismissed a few scenes later when Wilbur is trying to get his fellow barn-mates to play with him in the mud. Though pigs are indeed delighted in mud, this is mostly because of their physiological need to cool down and the sensitivity of their skin to sunburn. Pigs do not sweat to cool down. They use cool mud on a hot day to lower their body temperature and to coat their skin with mud as a sun block. Simply playing in mud on a cold rainy day as Wilbur does is less common, though probably not unheard of. But when food is slopped into his trough, he is still dismayed at not being played with and is not interested in the food. This is a moment of anthropomorphism, a reaction that is more human-like than pig-like. For a pig in captivity who is only given food at set times of the day, the likelihood of him ever turning up his nose at food is very low. The idea that Wilbur might be bored when left in a pen without any pig company,

though, is realistic. Pigs are generally social animals. On farm animal sanctuaries, it is common practice to place pigs in environments with other pigs because they fare better with other pig companionship. In the wild, pigs are very social and live in close communities ranging from small family units of the African warthogs up to white-lipped peccaries (a close cousin of true pigs) who prefer communities ranging into the hundreds.[103] The same could be said of humans – a powerful counter to the accusation of anthropomorphism in these films. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 5 on "actual pigs," the aspects that seem so human-like in the depictions of pigs are often simply aspects that our omnivorous, intelligent, and socially-based species share. Thus, from a pig perspective, films that relish food and feasting like *Julie & Julia* (2009) or *Big Night* (1996) might be accused of suidaemorphication (suidae is the biological family to which pigs are classified).

Wilbur behaves, substantially, like a pig would in many of his actions. In his exuberance at the latest word that Charlotte writes for him, he does a back flip that is physically impossible for pigs to perform (as is the back flip with half-twist that he is described to perform in the book), but his intense food motivation is common and his strong desire for companionship is well noted in pigs.[104] Many people who have worked or lived closely with pigs note their intelligence, inquisitiveness, and their good nature. The film plays off of this nicely, creating the character of Wilbur out of these aspects of actual well known and well documented pig nature.

[103] Ibid., 49, 68.
[104] For examples, see Montgomery, *The Good Good Pig*; and Baur, *Farm Sanctuary*.

Relationships with Other Animals

The animal hierarchy is in this film is notable. While many films that feature farm animals, such as *Barnyard* and *Babe,* suggest a clear pecking order or class system among the animals, this one seems to lack such structure, though there is teasing between the species. The animals all add their quips and comments on the various activities that take place around the barn (usually, of course, involving Wilbur), but only Templeton the Rat and Charlotte the spider seem to be universally looked down upon. After Wilbur announces his new friendship with Charlotte, Templeton offers, "You picked someone even more despised than me!" Charlotte is spurned for various reasons, though Samuel the Sheep suggests that it is because spiders are so ugly, and the others seem to agree. When Wilbur announces his new spider friend, Golly the Goose says sarcastically, "Oh yeah, good choice!" and calls her creepy, but, after being scolded by Gussy for being rude), he qualifies that to "creepy in a nice way." The horse and cows seem to be afraid of spiders, and the cows even mutter to each other quietly, "They eat their men folk, you know" "I know!" While Charlotte's kindness and desire to help Wilbur soon wins the other animals over, Templeton the Rat is treated as a lower class citizen – a pest to be put up with and occasionally used when it suits their purposes. The great exception to this two class-tiered system is Wilbur. He is kind to everyone, and his benevolent attitude and extreme politeness toward all creatures becomes the central theme of the film, or, as *USA Today* reviewer Claudia Puig describes it, a "seminal story about friendship, determination and loyalty."[105]

[105] Puig, "Three Oinks for *Charlotte's Web*."

The other dynamic of interest here is the attitude of the animals to Wilbur. Before he has charmed them all, they seem to accept him as their equal, some even acknowledging that, as a pig, he may be very smart. Gussy the Goose, as if reciting an aphorism, replies to the question of what Wilbur is doing as he charges the fence with: "Probably something smart. Pigs are smart." Samuel the Sheep equates pig intelligence to dolphins, then gives the advantage to dolphins as Wilbur bangs his head into the fence in his attempt to get out. However, the other animals also recognize the truth of any pig's existence on this farm. They have met other pigs before.

GOLLY THE GOOSE: You know what happens to pigs around here.

GUSSY THE GOOSE: Yes, I do, and it should never be spoken of.

What we learn from this exchange is that the other animals recognize that Wilbur is an animal raised for food. They are each aware of the purposes they serve to the farm: sheep for their wool, cows for their milk, the horse for work (he is later seen pulling a wagon piled with hay bales – a rather strange sight on any farm that also includes 1960s era pickup trucks, but I will discuss the ambiguous time period of the film in Chapter 6); the geese's purpose is unclear, perhaps for the selling of their goslings, as is seen when a crowd comes to the farm later in the film. As we learn in a later scene, all the other animals have lived in the barn "all their lives," and this seems to imply that they each live out their lives serving the humans in some way that does not include their own slaughter, but that the pigs who occasionally come to the farm only serve one purpose – as food for humans.

This hard truth is eventually faced by Wilbur as well. A prelude to this is Charlotte's explanation of her own eating habits. During their first face-to-face conversation, Charlotte is interrupted by a fly getting caught in her web. She immediately climbs back onto her web to deal with it, and she narrates the procedure to Wilbur.

WILBUR: What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE: Making breakfast.

WILBUR: Oh boy.

CHARLOTTE: Relax. First, I give him a little nip to anesthetize him so he'll be more comfortable. It's a little service I throw in. Then I wrap him up. Then I just say grace because, well, that's always nice. And he'll make a perfectly delicious meal.

WILBUR: So you eat flies?

CHARLOTTE: No, no, no. I drink their blood.

This is apparently too much for the horse to hear, and he passes out. Perhaps this is presented as a way to introduce the concept of the cruelty of nature, but there is no follow up on this (in fact, later it is the miracle of nature that is extolled). But it also establishes one more level of the limited hierarchy of the animals present in the film. The flies are nothing but a nuisance and are further down in the caste system than even spiders and rats. There is also some slightly antagonistic banter back and forth between the various species in the barn. The sheep taunt the cows by calling them "rib eyes" (a specific cut of

steak) and the other species' harass each other about their respective usefulness to the farm.

The naiveté and selective wisdom of these animals is intermixed with awareness that exceeds their surroundings. There is a quiet muttering between the cows about how thankful they are that no one eats cows. These comments play off the naiveté of the cows about their own existence, though all the animals in the barn are quite aware of the fate of pigs on the farm. Samuel the Sheep knows of dolphins and their reputation for intelligence; Templeton the Rat knows the details of pig existence on this farm, and, seemingly, on other farms as well. This is fanciful and leads to amusing anecdotes and conversations within the film but also to obvious contradictions in the narrative. Often in talking animal films, associated with the ability to talk among each other is a world awareness far beyond what is logical, almost as if the ability to speak in English with each other gives them a direct connection to popular American culture (I say "American," because most Hollywood films are set in this country, but the accents of the animals often vary. For instance, Samuel the sheep, voiced by British comedian John Cleese, speaks with a British accent, though the other sheep do not.) Film producer Jordan Kerner's research into author E.B. White's papers at Cornell, some of which influenced adaptation choices in the film, suggests that White's interest in the newly formed United Nations around the time he was writing *Charlotte's Web* inspired the tolerant but slightly antagonistic relationships of the animals in the Zuckerman barn.[106]

This limited world-awareness of the animals initiates the discourse on pigs as meat in the film. The most contradictory aspect of this is that the meat discourse does not include any talk or knowledge of the other animals as meat. Although they do seem to

[106] Winick, *Charlotte's Web,* DVD producers/visual effects supervisor commentary.

have knowledge of the "creepiness" of the nature of spiders, eating their men-folk and drinking blood, none of them seem to recognize the reality of their own species' relationship with the human race – even if this farm that they happen to live on lets them live out their lives in peace. This will be discussed in detail below.

Pig Agency

Whereas Wilbur was previously positioned with no agency and depicted mostly as a human baby in the first ten minutes, when he is moved to the barn and the perspective of the film changes to his point of view, he now takes on a restricted level of agency. After the passing of what seems to be a few weeks (and ten minutes of screen time), the Arables explain to Fern that the piglet cannot be kept in their house and they do not have room in their barn anymore for animals – they have sold the rest of the litter to buy some farm equipment. The solution is for Uncle Homer, who lives on a small farm across the road, to house Wilbur. Mr. and Mrs. Arable tell Fern that Uncle Homer "sometimes keeps a pig." This is a foreshadowing moment. Why would Uncle Homer keep a pig *sometimes*? The audience will find out and it will drive the story forward. The audience may suspect, but neither Fern nor Wilbur know yet. Fern introduces Wilbur to Homer's barn, his new home, and then she heads to school. At this point, Wilbur's world and the nature of the depiction of Wilbur changes dramatically.

After carrying Wilbur into the barn, Fern sets him down. At this moment, the point of view of the story switches to that of Wilbur for the first time. We get our first Wilbur-point-of-view shot looking up at Fern as she explains her love for him and that she will be back soon to visit. We will begin to get more of these Wilbur-point-of-view

shots as the story takes up an alignment from his perspective. As she runs to the bus, we again see her from a ground level shot. Throughout this exchange, we hear small pig grunts from Wilbur. When he tries to follow her, poking his head unsuccessfully through the fence slats, the sound that Wilbur makes, under close aural inspection, sounds more like the sounds of a human than a pig. The subsequent grunts from Wilbur in his escape effort are also distinctly human-like – that is, they seem to be the dubbed in sounds of a human for the pig's performance. The effort that the pig makes in trying to follow Fern involves sighs and grunts that are generated by a human actor, presumably the actor who voices the character when he starts to speak a few moments later, Dominic Scott Kay.

The music track, scored by Danny Elfman, that accompanies the shift to Wilbur's perspective offers an interesting aural connection to classic Hollywood musical stylings of magical transformation. A gently plucked harp, weaving and building horn sections with tuned bells, and plucked pizzicato violins adding accents to each note are reminiscent of moments directly associated with magic throughout the Disney oeuvre and, more recently, in the Harry Potter movies. This is as common an aural semiotic device as the screeching violins to signify immediate danger that were first used in Bernard Herrmann's score for Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) shower scene and, notably, used throughout the stalking scenes from John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). The musically invoked enchantment here ushers the shift in perspective from the human's into the "other's" – into the non-human animal kingdom where all creatures communicate with one language and are part of a close knit community. The bleats, moos, snorts, and quacks from the other animals in the barn that accompany Fern's walk with Wilbur

through the barn become human-voiced quips, comments, and murmurings as Wilbur tries to force his way through the fence.

This magical shift reframes the discourse surrounding Wilbur and pigs in general. The discursive formations now stem from talking, sentient creatures, all with names and with distinctive personalities (and voiced by well-known actors). Whereas before this shift, the only threat to the piglet was from Mr. Arable in his dealings with a runty pig who could not get access to a teat – a threat that was removed within moments of it being established – now the threat is the future destiny of Wilbur, who has been coddled as a baby by a human for the past few weeks.

The setting in which we find him is a pig pen. His desire to join Fern, the will that he uses to butt open a board in the fence, is entirely bound up in his child-like desire to remain with his mother-figure, Fern, to whom he seems connected with no thought of his actual pig mother from whom he was removed shortly after birth. The time that has elapsed since his birth is not clear, though from a normal pig growth pattern, he looks to be just several weeks older than when he was born.

When Wilbur attempts to break through the fence, his effort is not toward escape (as Golly Goose encourages), but to follow Fern onto the school bus. Now that we are in the head, so to speak, of the nonhuman character, the first act of free will that we share with him from this perspective is not one of independence (which even his fellow animals recognizes as perhaps desirable) but of a longing to continue a close tie to the human who was his rescuer and his stand-in mother. While this choice is understandable and even follows a sense of loyalty that anecdotal evidence supports about pigs,[107] it subverts a

[107] For instance, Jan Hamilton, the founder and president of Wilderness Ranch – the animal sanctuary where I volunteered for several summers, tells the story of Rosy, a pot-bellied pig who befriended Rudy the

possible interpretation of the caged animal longing for freedom. Wilbur does not want to be free; he just wants to be with his (human) friend. This, again, parallels a common Hollywood theme of "others" who, despite their oppression by those with complete power over them, are often depicted seeking the friendly confines of their oppressors rather than their own liberty.[108] Wilbur takes charge of the new situation he finds himself in and proceeds to show great force of will – but only to regain the company of his stand-in mother Fern. After leaving the presence of his true mother on the night that he was born, we never see Wilbur give his actual family another thought. Wilbur accepts the "order of things" immediately – it serves him well to do so since there is not a teat available for him and his demise is the immediate alternative.

Wilbur, in true pig fashion, is adaptable. When his circumstances change, he changes. He goes about making friends with all his fellow animals (spiders and rats, included), and he is eminently polite to everyone. However, his level of agency drops quickly after he adapts to his new barn surroundings. He shows off a bit when a crowd comes to read Charlotte's words, but his only actions or intentions that serve to help secure his future after that is his continued politeness and a certain gleam that he maintains when he knows that his fate rests on impressing the humans – Homer and the judges at the fair. While he does nothing to increase his danger, following the trope of "the other" presented in so many Hollywood narratives, his fate lies in the hands of those with the hegemonic weight to determine his future – mostly older white male humans at

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horse. Every day, despite the danger to herself as a short-legged pig to be out and among long-legged herd animals like cows and horses, Rosy would find different ways to break through a fence to be near Rudy.

[108] One of the most striking examples of this is in the 1934 version of *Imitation of Life*, directed by John Stahl and starring Claudette Colbert and African-American actress Louise Beavers. Working as a maid and cook for the affluent Beatrice Pullman (Colbert), Delilah Johnson (Beavers) pleads to remain living with Pullman as a maid and cook even after her pancake recipe makes her independently wealthy.

the fair. The exception to this is the significant contribution that Charlotte the spider makes with assistance from Templeton the rat.

The Question of Eating Animals

Depiction of "Meat"

The opening scene in the Arables' barn transitions to the next with a cut from a close up of Fern cuddling the piglet in her arms to bacon frying in a pan in the Arable kitchen the next morning. If found in a montage, this is what filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein might call an *intellectual montage* edit. Visually, the adjacent images lack a direct connection, but the logical connection between them is quite compelling – jarring, even, as the juxtaposition of the image of the cute piglet cuddled in Fern's arms is butted up against the image of the inevitable destiny of pigs in contemporary American society. This is an example of what I will call a *category e disjunction* – a reference to Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni's typology of mainstream films that appear to embrace dominant ideology but are subject to "an internal criticism . . . which cracks the film apart at the seams."[109] Stuart Hall's cultural studies analysis shifts the contradictions found in films from the text to the spectator's "negotiated" or "oppositional" decoding of texts.[110] While the films I analyze in this dissertation are not generally regarded as subversive films, they have occasional category e disjunctions that offer insight into the complex human-animal relationship that inspired this study. It is my opinion that these

[109] Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, *Screen Reader: Cinema/Ideology/Politics* (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977), 7.
[110] Stuart Hall, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 136-38.

moments exist in the text, though spectators may or may not read them as subversive, and I will point them out and then discuss them in detail in the conclusion.

The intellectual connection between these shots is not addressed directly in the film. The dialogue around the breakfast table – Mrs. Arable, who is cooking the breakfast for the family, Fern, brother Avery, and Mr. Arable – includes no mention of the relationship between the bacon they all have on their plates and the pig that Fern bottle feeds in her lap. In fact, there is no mention of the bacon whatsoever. The paradoxical nature of this scene is left to the audience to wrestle with. I will come back to this moment and other similar ones that arise in the final chapter of this study, but the significance to my analysis here is not just that such an edit takes place but that the intellectual connection that is so potentially striking to the viewer is not addressed within the film at the occurrence.[111]

In the breakfast table scene, while bacon is on each of their plates, no one is actually shown eating any. Fern's brother grabs something off his plate and pops it in his mouth as he heads off to school, but the food item that he grabs is off screen and is covered by his hand as he does so. The directorial choice establishes the paradox of the situation, reminding us of the bacon's presence throughout the scene – repeatedly appearing on the plates of each of the family members – but not directly confronting it. I can speculate that while the filmmakers are interested in this ironic contradiction, and the very structure of the film is based on the idea of preserving Wilbur's life from the fate of most "spring pigs," the nature of presenting this story to a family audience left them with a line they decided not to cross – no pig is seen being eaten throughout the film. In fact,

[111] "It felt right and gave us the tone I wanted – it's okay to laugh and be ironic – at the nature of everything," says Director Gary Winick of the bacon in the scene. Winick, *Charlotte's Web*, DVD, director's commentary.

very little food is shown throughout the rest of the film, other than a couple scenes depicting the slop that is fed to Wilbur (some of which he shares with Templeton) and a few depictions of the food that Templeton finds at the fair. At the fair, Templeton is shown binging on French fries, cotton candy, and various items dropped to the ground – none of which are meat items, though he does come face to face with a box that is labeled "pork rinds," but no glimpse is seen of its contents. No meat is shown whatsoever other than the one-time appearance of the bacon on the breakfast table.

Portrayal of the Truth about Meat

The only references to any animal being eaten other than pigs (and flies) are some taunts by the sheep calling the cows "rib eyes" after banter back and forth between them about their species' usefulness to the farm and a quiet muttering of the cows to each other about how thankful they are that no one eats cows. These comments play off the naiveté of the cows about their own existence, though all the animals in the barn are quite aware of the fate of pigs on the farm. In fact, the film's central narrative conflict is contingent upon a truth that all the barn animals understand and which is made clear to Wilbur through the bluntness and honesty of Templeton the rat. He makes reference to Wilbur being "cured" and a future football, about his checking into the "smokehouse hotel," and being turned into sausage and bacon. "Few spring pigs get to see the snows of winter," Charlotte explains in a more poetic way than Templeton offers. Wilbur is aghast. "Humans love pigs," the pig exclaims. "Well, they love pork," Templeton replies. "I want to live!" Wilbur says and in saying, articulates what is likely in the minds of nearly all the children (and probably the adults, if they would admit it) who watch this film: Wilbur is a

polite, friendly, and playful character who we have seen presented as pig and treated like a human baby. We all want Wilbur to live, but we are faced with the harsh cruelties of the "adult" world that condemn most pigs – and all the spring pigs on this farm – to the smokehouse for slaughter and consumption.

Innocent as Wilbur is, his simple mind cuts straight to the heart of the matter when Charlotte explains how helpful it is that she cuts down on the insect population by catching flies in her web and killing them.

> CHARLOTTE: And just imagine how many bugs there would be in this barn – no, actually in the world, if spiders didn't catch them. Insects would take over the planet. The way I see it, I'm doing everyone a favor.
>
> WILBUR: Except for the fly.
>
> CHARLOTTE: [She laughs] Yes, except for the fly.

Though there is a logic to what Charlotte is claiming, the balance of nature or web of life argument, Wilbur – currently the metaphoric fly caught in the human web of the food chain – immediately points out that the individual fly does not benefit from this rationale. This is another category e disjunction – we have just extended our web of compassion to spiders, but what about flies? Well, they are truly pests, seemingly, and not worthy of concern. It is a fleeting moment, hardly a pause in the film, but it opens an opportunity for an oppositional reading of the film that challenges the very "order of things."

This moment also contributes to the discourse surrounding meat in the film. The narrator has pointed out, during the opening credits, that this is "a deeply ordinary place,"

filled with “just regular people,” and “plain old animals. They didn’t question the order of things.” In the order of things in the ordinary world, pigs are slaughtered for humans to eat (though in this world, cows, sheep, and geese are not). And flies are slaughtered by spiders – but for seemingly good reasons. However, the victims of this ordinary world (pigs and flies, as noted) are not so pleased with the order of things, and even the victimizers (Charlotte and the humans, primarily represented by Fern) recognize this. Charlotte laughs but agrees that the fly probably does not think that she is doing him or her such a favor. Thus, a limit exists in this world where compassion and a change from “the ordinariness” is not desired. The film, like the beloved and classic book, challenges humans to extend the continuum of compassion beyond what is ordinary – in fact, three steps beyond it: not just to pigs – cute, pink, and lovable that they are; and even to rats – rascally and self-motivated, but capable of good-hearted actions; but also to spiders – hairy, leggy, and creepy as they are, they, too, have an elegance and noble purpose in life. But within the discourse that is presented, we are allowed to cut off our compassion at the arachnids and leave the insects out of it. A spider has to eat, after all. But so do humans . . . within the film, this is where the disjunction raises its head with no answer given.

Power and Hegemony in *Charlotte’s Web*

There are two manifestations of knowledge-power that are presented in this film: the male wisdom and dominance that we see and hear from the older white male humans who control the society of the characters in the film; and the subtler, yet persistent,

hegemony of the *carnivores*[112] presented in the film, represented mainly by the humans, but also by Charlotte, the spider who feeds on insects.

The Hegemony of the Carnivore

The presence of the carnivore in the film is powerful. The threat to Wilbur of being slaughtered and eaten is what drives the story forward. As Templeton points out, "Humans love pork." That Wilbur will be killed and eaten is never said explicitly. However, in the understanding that Wilbur demonstrates of his circumstances, he displays the worldly knowledge that the other barn animals show – he understands that pork is meat from pigs and that Homer's reference to bacon is to the meat that will come from his own body. The presence of carnivores in the world of this family of animals, vegetarian or omnivorous that they all are in the barn, is a threat – though only to Wilbur (on this conveniently benign little farm).

Charlotte's power-knowledge resides in her writerly ways: her wit and intelligence. As the film progresses, she even shows a growing fortitude to take charge of the barn animals for the sake of saving Wilbur, convincing them all to help out in the worthy cause. At first, she takes on the challenge herself, promising Wilbur that she will come up with a way to save him from the demise that he finds out awaits all spring pigs in this barn. The agency she displays is limited and eventually requires the assistance of the other animals, especially the reluctant Templeton, but it is effective in the end.

[112] While humans, as a species, are more accurately described as omnivores, I will use the term here to highlight the persistent and ubiquitous human choice to raise and eat meat. The term carnivore does not include a precise definition of the ratio of animal tissue to plant-tissue a species eats. The term *obligate* carnivore refers to a species who strictly relies on animal tissue for its energy and nutrient requirements (i.e., most felines), while the term *facultative* carnivore refers to one that eats primarily meat, but also plant material. Arachnids are most often obligate carnivores that can more narrowly defined as insectivores. Wilson G. Pond and Alan W. Bell, *Encyclopedia of Animal Science* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2005), 591, 97, 670.

Charlotte's agency parallels the agency displayed by the other carnivorous presence in the barn – the human Fern. While Fern does not display her carnivorousness, there is no indication that she does not belong to that category of animals other than the compassion she shows to Wilbur. Fern's agency is seen in her ability to save Wilbur from his immediate demise in the first scene and later in her subtle manipulations of Homer when she places fliers about the county fair around the barn in hopes that he will think of entering his famous pig in the competition and have a reason not to kill and eat Wilbur. Fern is shown going about this task after she overhears Homer and Lurvy, the farmhand, talk about fixing up the smokehouse "especially if we're going to smoke any ham before the holidays" (causing Wilbur to faint, confirming that while he cannot speak human English, he can understand it quite well). When Fern confronts her father about this, Mr. Arable points out that the pig belongs to Homer now. "I wouldn't have sold him in the first place If I knew this is what they were going to do him," she says. Her father replies, "That's what happens to a pig on a farm, Fern. You know that." In keeping with the film's discourse surrounding meat and the way the world works, it is interesting her father uses the passive tense – the implication is that no one is responsible for this choice, it is simply a fact of life. But Fern is questioning the order of things, and it will take manipulations of Uncle Homer on her part and Charlotte's to save the pig.

The other carnivorous presences in the film are the humans. As the exemplar of the dominant cultural ideology, the humans exercise their power-knowledge by valuing certain aspects within society, as described by Grinner's SCWAMP framework (Straight, Christian, White, Able-bodied, Male, Property-owners – adapted, as I have suggested, by

adding an "H" for "Human" into this acronym to make it SCHWAMP).[113] I will explore this below.

Male Wisdom and Power

The voice-over narration establishes the hegemonic discourse of the film while the opening credits are still rolling, as described at the beginning of this chapter. The narration disappears once the live-action imagery begins and is not heard again until ten minutes into the film. And for these first ten minutes, there is no indication of any sort of animal agency. The patriarchal human hegemony prevails. The father rules the farm, dispenses justice as needed, and only grudgingly acquiesces to his daughter's pleading.

As the shift in perspective takes place with Wilbur's move to Homer's barn, and for the first time since the opening credits ten minutes earlier, we hear the narrator set the scene for us. It is as if, lest we get too far away from the hegemonic discourse with this new non-human perspective, we need the kindly male voice omnisciently narrating the story, assuring us that nothing will stray too far from the control of the existing power structure. Practically speaking, a narrator helps to keep the story moving along more cohesively, and it allows the continuation of thread of the story that we are just peeking in on normal, everyday activities on an "ordinary" farm. Note that the move to the barn involves only a shift in "ownership" of Wilbur from one SCHWAMP character to another. The pre-gendered, theistically undefined, nonhuman, non-white (pink, to be exact!), four-footed (thus, able-bodied, but without, say, opposable thumbs), vaguely male (performed by a female pig and pre-adolescent child) character who is not only

[113] See the Methodology section in Chapter 2 for a complete description of Grinner's framework.

legally prohibited from owning property but is considered property himself, is entirely under the control (at the mercy?) of his new owner, Homer Zuckerman.

Two scenes after Wilbur is confronted by Templeton the Rat with the realities of springs pigs on Uncle Homer's farm (38 seconds of screen time later), Mrs. Arable consults the family doctor about her concern for her daughter's behavior – Fern's curious fixation with spending so much time with Wilbur in the barn, reading to the barn animals, and having conversations with the animals. Dr. Dorian, played by Beau Bridges, offers kindly sage advice in a voice that sounds similar to the tone and demeanor of the narrator.

> MRS. ARABLE: Dr. Dorian, it's ridiculous, isn't it? To think that animals can actually talk?
>
> DR. DORIAN: I don't know, maybe an animal said something to me and I didn't hear it because I wasn't paying attention. Maybe children are just better listeners than we are. . . . There is a name for her condition. It's called a childhood phase. And, sadly, it's something she'll grow out of.

The fairly straightforward "prognosis" is prefaced by an enigmatic suggestion that leaves open the possibility that these nonhuman animal conversations take place in actual barns on actual farms throughout the "real" world. Some humans (*adults*, Dorian suggests) just do not listen closely enough to hear these sorts of conversations. Adults may not hear the animals, but implied through the doctor's statements is the idea that some higher level of animal agency than is normally afforded farm animals exists. A quick, crude summary of this conversation (one I would suggest a child might make) might be: Mrs. Arable

suggests her daughter might be crazy because she talks with animals, and Dr. Dorian replies that maybe the rest of us are crazy because we do not listen to animals, and it is too bad that we do not. This is no quaint country doctor; this is the magical helper of Vladimir Propp's formalist Russian folktale typologies.[114] He speaks with the authority and voice of the narrator – omnisciently and sagely. There is an authenticity to his folksiness that solidifies him as *of* the same world as the rest of the characters, but connected with the natural, enlightened wisdom that perhaps shallower beings cannot readily access. He even occasionally frames his wisdom in the form of Socratic questions. For such an authority figure – an older, white male endowed diegetically with the prestige associated with a medical doctor – to make such a statement bestows the patriarchal hegemonic seal of approval on the (very limited) agency of the barn animals.

By agency, I am suggesting that these animals are being recognized as self-aware and with self-will – the ability to control their lives to some degree. The scene follows just a few seconds after Wilbur's "I want to live" statement – the scene that ends with Charlotte dedicating herself to help save him from his spring pig fate. The legitimizing affect of the proximity of these scenes is clear – Wilbur has a justifiable claim that has been heard (by his fellow animals), and if humans would only listen more closely, we would hear such claims from many of the animals we interact with on a daily basis – perhaps before many of them have been slaughtered for our consumption. This moment is another instance of the category e disjunctions where the film confronts a contradiction, suggests a profound explanation, then backs away and leaves the contradiction unexplored. What *food animal*, if given a voice, would not also proclaim just as

[114] V. I. A. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2d ed., Publications of the American Folklore Society. Bibliographical and Special Series V. 9 (Austin,: University of Texas Press, 1968).

vociferously, “I want to live”? But by referring to Fern’s compassion and ability to listen to creatures not as empowered as herself as a “condition known as a childhood phase,” he diminishes the agency that she shows in the film (saving Wilbur in the first place and the part she plays in leading Homer to enter Wilbur in the fair competition).

Later, after “terrific” appears in the web, Mrs. Arable consults Dr. Dorian about the possibility that Fern is involved in creating the letters in the web. In this scene, the doctor pronounces the very existence of web-weaving spider as a miracle in itself.

> DR. DORIAN: Can you do it?
>
> MRS. ARABLE: I can knit a doily.
>
> DR. DORIAN: But someone taught you how to do that; the spider spins a web without anyone telling her how to – I’d call that a miracle.

Consulted as an authority on high, in his office that is secluded from the home and farm settings used for most of the film, the hegemon has spoken: nature itself is a miracle. His pronouncement rings of sentimentalism and even primitivism – the valorization of nature and the idea that life untouched by civilization is more pure or, in this case, magical. Dr. Dorian’s decree legitimizes the anthropomorphication of the animals – but in a back-handed way. This film imbues them with the ability to talk, and we humans can gain some insight into their extraordinary animal lives and learn just what wonderful miracles they are, as if animals are wonderful and magical in a way that is unknowable – mysterious beyond human understanding – while in reality, evolutionary biologists have a pretty good model for how such “miracles” as spiders’ ability to weave webs come

about, remarkable though it is. Charles Darwin developed the model explaining species adaptation and natural selection in the 19th century and biologists have repeatedly corroborated it with solid scientific.

What is fascinating about the doctor's comment is that it paves over the incredible leap that is the keystone to this story – amazing that the ability to spin webs is, it is of a higher order altogether for a spider to be able to spell and use English words correctly. We can dwell on this and make much ado, but it is here where, I suggest, the filmmakers, as did E.B. White in the original book, simply rely on the poetic license afforded them by their respective genre and target audiences: this is a family film, the book a children's book. Just as I am not discussing in great detail the concept of animals talking among each other, I will not spend a section discussing just how amazing it would be if such a transcendent lingual leap occurred. For the purposes of this study, it is not significant that the doctor conflates web spinning with cross-species writing, but it is significant that the doctor suggests that if we listen closely, maybe nonhuman animals say all kinds of things to us – but does not suggest that eating them may be problematical.

The film, however, does allow one "food animal" to speak up. Might we not get a similar plea for life from the fly that Charlotte catches during her first conversation with Wilbur? During Homer and Lurvy's discussion about fixing up the smokehouse, we see Charlotte looking on while she wraps up a moth that has been caught in her web. What does the moth think of Wilbur's predicament? The challenge presented by Fern and Charlotte to the hegemony of meat-eating males in their effort to save Wilbur is also a challenge to the SCHWAMP ideology that pervades the film, thus offering the classic narrative conflict to the screenplay structure that Hollywood scripts require. But the film

stops short in truly questioning the discourse surrounding "meat." As in my description of the category e disjunction, the film offers moments of dramatic discord that it moves on from without examining too closely. The final resolution of the film offers the final, paved over answer to these moments – not quite a religious take-it-on-faith answer, but an answer in a similar vein.

Both the film and the original book avoid any of the religious implications of this amazing event that takes place on the Zuckerman farm. After the first words appear in the web, the Zuckermans consult the minister (who, when we first meet him, is busy helping himself to some divinity – the dessert). He seems concerned and tells them to keep quiet about it until he can address it in his sermon. But they cannot help themselves and soon the word is spread all over town and we never hear the sermon or hear any further mention that it ever takes place.[115] As the crowds begin to visit the farm to see the web, the minister is seen in the appreciative crowd. Seemingly, the minister, a middle-aged white man, does not possess the authority of the older doctor. He fits a stereotype of the quaint country minister. The talk of miracles is never associated in the film with religious miracles. Instead, Dr. Dorian immediately associates the web with the miracle of nature, perhaps leaving the audience to associate this, however they like, with their own religious interpretation of nature.

The climax of the story takes place at the county fair. Though losing the blue ribbon, presumably for "best pig," to a much larger and fatter pig named "Uncle" (who, when asked by Charlotte, also indentifies himself as a spring pig. "What'd you think I was," he replies to Charlotte's inquiry, "a spring chicken?" He then snorts in laughter to

[115] In the book, the minister explains the miracle in his sermon: "The words on the spider's web proved human beings must always be on the watch for the coming of wonders." E.B. White and Garth Williams, *Charlotte's Web,* 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1952), 85.

himself at his joke.), Wilbur – "Zuckerman's famous pig" – is awarded a medal by the fair's governors "as a token of our amazement and our appreciation." The governors, who, it appears, are on stage for this ceremony, consist of six elderly white men and one woman. The pronouncement is made by one of the men. Then Uncle Homer takes the microphone.

> HOMER ZUCKERMAN: I know a lot of you folks have come out to the farm and you've seen the words and a lot of you have asked me how this could happen. I don't know, but it has happened. In a time when we really don't see many miraculous things. Or maybe we do. Maybe they're all right there around us every day [shot of Charlotte and egg sack]. We just don't know where to look. There's no denying that our own little Wilbur, he's part of something that's bigger than all of us. And uh, life on that farm is just whole lot better with him in it. He really is 'some pig.'

This is interpreted by all the characters that Wilbur's life is saved. He will not be eaten. Hollywood and Wilbur have the happy ending promised by the genre, by the film industry, and by the original book. Homer, like the SCHWAMP doctor, evokes the "miraculous" nature of life itself. What he means by "in a time when we don't see many miraculous things" is unclear. The filmmakers obscure the time period in which the film takes place, so it is unclear if the reference is to the 1970s or 1980s (the time period in which the model of the cars place the film), or 2006 when the film was made. Perhaps the 1950s when the book was written? Or the 1930s, the period of most of the farm

implements and practices? Or is Homer referring to a time back when magic and miracles were more common, perhaps a comparison based on a time in Christian myths relating to the miracles that Jesus performed? (The family attends a Christian church together earlier in the film). It seems most likely that the time is an *everyday* sort of reference to "now," whenever that is for any viewer, and the "miraculous" is another reference to the primitivist view of the wonder of nature, punctuated by the shot of Charlotte with her egg sack – the circle of life that is indeed "all right there around us everyday."

But the idea expressed in "There's no denying that our own little Wilbur, he's part of something that's bigger than all of us" is harder to fathom. What seems to be happening is that the humans are all buying the sales pitch that Charlotte has offered and they seem to be conflating the truly miraculous event – a spider spinning words in English in her web – with the pig to whom the words referred.[116] In the animals' world, Wilbur is something special. He is eminently polite, gracious, and friendly. His personality brings the other animals together in the effort to save him from the normal spring pig fate. He is more polite and outgoing than any of the other animals. While Charlotte is quite articulate and friendly, she does not take the initiative to reach out to make friends with the other animals as Wilbur does. Only when she befriends him and sees the need for the other animals' help does she connect with the other animals. But through the catalyst of Wilbur, the barn animals come together and even go through change to be more accepting of other species. The horse wills his way through his disgust for spiders to let the Charlotte's babies crawl over him on their journey out of the barn (chanting to himself, mantra-like, "spiders are nice, spiders are my friends"); the other

[116] See the note above – poetic license of the genre of children's movies/literature.

animals are appreciative of the babies as well, calling them “pretty” and “cute,” whereas before they questioned Wilbur in his appreciation of Charlotte’s beauty.

So Wilbur really is, within the context of the film, *some* pig – *radiant* and *terrific,* while still being *humble*. We know that from his actions. The humans seemingly guess it by the fact that he inspires a spider to transcend the communication barrier and write English words in her web. But part of what is presented here, even articulated by the narrator as he talks about the “ordinariness” of the situation, is that there is more to animals than we normally realize. Dr. Dorian speaks of having not paid close enough attention and thus perhaps having missed something said by animals. Homer talks of “just not knowing where to look” to see the wonders all around ourselves. What really happened here is that a mere pig, a runt at that, was plucked from dire circumstances and treated with love and care (human-like, at first, in his “baby” phase) and respected by the humans who had total control of him, and he went on to fame and fortune, influencing others and winning friends. While the Zuckermans already treated their animals pretty well (letting them live out their lives in relative comfort and security, except for the previous pigs), they went a step further in staying his execution and adding him to their “family” of animals.

The SCHWAMP power structure in this film is substantial and definitive. The kindly, speculative narrator downplays the uniqueness of the setting but assures the audience that the influence of Wilbur (and Charlotte) was felt by everyone around and that an important lesson was learned in this story. The wise doctor (the mentor or sage figure in heroic journey narrative analysis) touts the wonders of nature and gives “live and let live” advice (in dealing with children but, obviously, also applicable in Wilbur’s

case). Mr. Arable, who fades into the background after the first handful of scenes, also serves as a strong male decisive figure but one who is an obstacle overcome in the first scene in which Fern saves the piglet – foreshadowing the larger trial that Wilbur and the animals face in overcoming Homer Zuckerman's bent toward slaughtering spring pigs. Homer is depicted fairly benignly, considering he is the one on whom the fate of our beloved lead character rests. His one other comment about pigs and meat is in reply to Mr. Arable's concern for the entry fee money Homer will lose if Wilbur does not win at the fair. "I figure I can make it all back on the bacon alone," Homer replies (Hearing this, Wilbur faints again). Homer's opinions are really only articulated in detail when he accepts the special award for Wilbur and makes the quoted speech at the fair. Taken this way, the film can be seen as subversive: weak female characters (Fern for her age and size, Charlotte for her species and size) struggle successfully to overcome the cruel hegemony of SCHWAMP society. As the narrator describes, the result of this subversion of the status quo is a kinder, gentler world where even the "humblest creature" can manifest the "miracle of friendship."

Conclusion

Within the diegesis of the film, the threat to Wilbur is very vague. While Templeton is rudely sarcastic to Wilbur, his bluntness is still couched in vague terms, Charlotte's reference even more so ("few spring pigs get to see the snows of winter."). Adult viewers probably recognize that the decision is really up to Homer, but Homer is presented as fairly jovial himself, even before his philosophical resignation at the fair.

Despite the avoidance of any reference to factory farming, it is quite striking that the central plot of this children's film revolves around Wilbur's possible slaughter. According to Smith's structure of sympathy,[117] Wilbur was recognized in the first scene as a "person" with individual, autonomous desires. Since being moved to the barn, our point of view has been aligned with his viewpoint – we see the world from his vantage point (intercut with Fern's point of view in a handful of scenes that follow the subplot about her growing up and taking an interest in boys). And the values that Wilbur embodies are positive and sympathetic – friendliness, politeness and playful, affirming audience allegiance.

The statement that Dr. Dorian makes to Mrs. Arable indirectly addresses the major, unspoken contradiction toward meat in this film – no one in this extended family of humans makes any suggestion that they will adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, despite the amazing events taking place on this farm and the bond that many of them have formed with Wilbur. They all seem to agree that Wilbur is indeed a very special pig and worthy, by the end of the film, of living out, what is sometimes referred to as, a *natural* life. (This despite the fact that it was really the spider who performed the miraculous feat of crossing the language barrier between nonhumans and humans – and the written language barrier at that.) The humans all seem very impressed with Wilbur's personality and charm, but will this extend to other pigs? Or cows? And has this episode changed their attitude toward spiders? Though the film may have converted members of the film-going public to vegetarianism,[118] the characters make no such acknowledgement, despite having

[117] Smith, "Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema," 75.
[118] Rereading the E.B. White book reminded me just how influential that text had been on my own thinking on animals that later led me to adopt a vegan lifestyle. The live-action film of *Charlotte's Web* was not as

witnessed a miraculous event between animals and humans. In the final montage, we see the Arable and Zuckerman families sitting down together to a holiday dinner in which some dish that looks like turkey or poultry of some sort is being served. While it very well could be goose, Golly and Gussy do appear earlier in this montage, so we can safely assume that the meat was gathered from some unnamed source other than their own farms.

Has the saving of Wilbur led any of the human characters through a transformation? What will be different in the world of the human characters in this film since these events transpired? They seem to still eat animals. Will they pick up another pig somewhere, let him live in the barn with Wilbur, and then slaughter him for the next holiday dinner? The narrator and the trajectory of the film itself seem to indicate that, having presented us with the insight of the articulate world of these barn animals, we the viewers should truly learn to appreciate the wonders of life. Perhaps, if we pay close attention, we will hear what the animals have to say, or we will recognize the miraculous nature of life itself. But do not listen too closely or you might hear the frightened cries of every spider, fly, and moth along with the more cuddly animals, all begging for their lives and to also be the exceptions to the miracle of nature and the cycle of life.

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popular as the preceding film *Babe* which, anecdotally, influenced many people, including featured actor James Cromwell, to become vegetarians and even animal activists.

Chapter 4: *Babe*

The world in which the film *Babe* takes place has a significantly different atmosphere from that of Wilbur's world in *Charlotte's Web*. While both start with animated opening credits, *CW* creates a setting described as an ordinary farm with everyday sorts of happenings. *Babe* begins with a distinctive storybook feel that frames the film a fairytale. In various ways, *CW* sets its stage as a slice-of-life, versimiltudinous tale that could occur on any family farm in America, whereas *Babe* wants to tell a unique and charming story that could never happen anywhere else.

What the characters Wilbur and Babe have in common is their actual intelligence, their charisma, and a start to life in which humans declare them to be runts. They are both able to charm the other animals, including humans, and even bring together disparate species with little tolerance for each into a cooperative collective. The role of both pigs is performed by a variety of actual pigs and enhanced by CGI. In *Babe*, which was made in 1995, the protagonist is occasionally portrayed by an animatronic pig, whereas CGI was more advanced by 2006 and was used almost exclusively throughout *Charlotte's Web* instead of animatronics. They are voiced by humans, though Babe's voice was actually performed by an adult female actress, Christine Cavanaugh, in contrast to ten-year-old actor Dominic Scott Kay, who performed the voice of Wilbur.

The relationships between the animals in Babe's world is much more hierarchical than in *CW*. In *Babe*, Rex the dog lays down the rules that all the animals must follow,

and it is a known fact, at least among the dogs, that humans eat the stupider animals. The rules that Rex recites to the gathered animals include: “To each creature its own destiny. Every animal in its proper place.” Babe is a much more naïve character than Wilbur; he finds it hard to believe that dogs are as mean as the sheep claim and even harder to believe that humans eat any animals. Even when Mrs. Hoggett, the wife of Farmer Hoggett who wins Babe at the county fair, is measuring him for cooking, he simply takes it as play and laughs pleasurably at her attention.

In many ways, the filmmakers of *Babe* confront the disjunction inherent in a *food animal* as protagonist much more directly than was done in *CW*. The most obvious example of this is that the film introduces us to the protagonist in a very true-to-life setting – a factory farm or Concentrated Animal Feed Operation (CAFO). The reality of animals slaughtered for the consumption of humans is foregrounded much more in *Babe* than in *CW*. Farmer Hoggett actually kills an animal – off-screen, but we hear the aural slaughter of the duck we later learn was named Rosanna. We see Farmer Hoggett slicing the duck on the dinner table, while Ferdinand – the duck character we have been introduced to – describes the lovely disposition of his friend Rosanna. The actuality of human consumption is a more realistic fact of life known to all of the animals in the Babe’s world, though Babe, in his innocence, finds it hard to believe until late in the film.

As in *CW*, the hegemony of male domination is present in *Babe*, though the male influence is slightly diminished in comparison to *CW*. While there is cooperation between Farmer and Mrs. Hoggett, and the farmer even shows trepidation at revealing his idea of turning Babe into a sheep-pig to herd his flocks, Arthur Hoggett quietly rules the farm with the aid of his overseer in the form of Rex the dog, who keeps the animals in line.

Rex's mate, Fly, defers to Rex's authority, though she makes decisions on her own and checks with him later. The narrator here is black actor Roscoe Lee Browne, who speaks with a similar authority as heard in Sam Shepherd's voice in *CW*, though the point of view is slightly more animal-oriented in *Babe* – for instance, the narrator reveals the beliefs that the pigs in the factory farm hold, and he speaks of the valley in which the farm is found as "our valley," though no indication is ever given of who the narrator is or if he is human or a nonhuman animal.

There are also many similarities in the settings in which the pigs find themselves. Both films are set on working farms that emphasize something other than raising food animals, and the pigs find themselves to be the only pigs on these farms, but they are surrounded by several animal characters who have accepted their own respective roles as helpful to the humans. The most striking similarity between these films is that the major narrative conflict that drives the story involves the protagonist's possible death and consumption by the fairly benign secondary characters. While Babe is mostly unaware that this is his impending fate, Wilbur is well aware of it. But through their actions, with the help of their fellow animal friends, they save themselves from this fate.

Film Background

Babe (1995) was directed by Chris Noonan from a screenplay written by Chris Noonan and George Miller, who also produced the film. It was adapted from Dick King-Smith's 1983 book *The Sheep-Pig.* The production companies involved were Kennedy

Miller productions and Universal Pictures. Universal Pictures distributed the film theatrically in the United States.

The film won an Academy award for Visual Effects and was nominated for Best Picture, Directing (Chris Noonan), Art Direction, Editing, and Adapted Screenplay, and James Cromwell was nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role. *Babe* was nominated for many other awards and won a Golden Globe award for Best Motion Picture – Comedy/Musical and a Broadcast Film Critics Association award for Best Family Film. It also won a Genesis Award, created to honor "the entertainment industry and news media for raising awareness of animal protection issues," specifically by acknowledging "outstanding works in TV, film, print, and the arts."[119] The film cost approximately $30 million to make and grossed $63 million theatrically in the US and $246 million worldwide.[120]

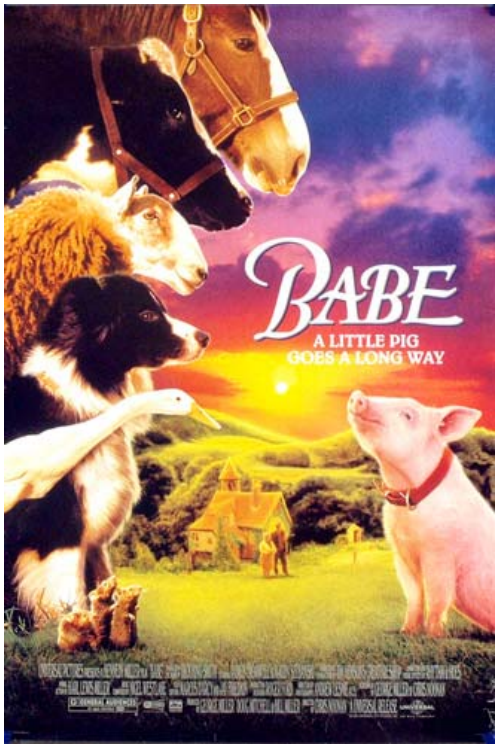

Figure 9. Movie poster for *Babe.* (Universal Pictures)

Babe is a fictional, feature-length film usually identified as a Family Film, although it could also fall into the category of Live-Action Animal Films or, more specifically, Live-Action Talking Animal Films. It follows the convention of many such films in that all species of animals except humans understand the speech of each other. In

[119] http://www.humanesociety.org/news/news/2010/01/24th_genesis_awards_011210.html.
[120] Nash, "The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation," *Nash Information Services,* http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/index1995.php.

several scenes, as the animals converse with each other, the film cuts to a shot of a human watching them and we hear the natural sounds of the animals.

Synopsis

Babe is removed from a factory farm to be given away at a county fair. Arthur Hoggett is a stoic sheep farmer who wins him and brings him home where his wife is thrilled to have a pig that they can fatten up for Christmas dinner. On the Hoggett farm, Babe is adopted by Fly the sheepdog into her litter of puppies to the annoyance of her mate, the supervisor of the animals, Rex the male sheepdog. Babe meets Ferdinand the duck, who lets him know that all animals must have a job or they will be eaten, which is why Ferdinand is busy trying to find himself a job to avoid this fate. He enlists Babe's help in a failed scheme inside the house, a scheme that is foiled in part by the mean-spirited cat. Babe meets Maa the sheep, who speaks ill of the dogs she calls "wolves" because of their harsh herding techniques, and consequently Babe decides never to think ill of anyone again. When Christmas comes, Farmer Hoggett is able to stay Babe's execution in favor of an unseen duck.

Babe proves his worth by alerting the dogs to sheep thieves. Hoggett notices that Babe has a propensity for herding and, on a whim, begins to train him for the sheepdog competition. Instead of threatening the sheep like the dogs do, Babe talks politely to the sheep to get them to follow his instructions. Rex strikes out at Fly for filling Babe's head with ideas outside a pig's "assigned role," and he is chained up after he bites both Fly and Farmer Hoggett. One night, Babe hears the sheep disturbed and finds feral dogs attacking

them. He fights them off, though not before they kill Maa the sheep. Babe is temporarily blamed for killing her but then is saved by the rumors among other farmers of feral dogs. Meanwhile, the cat tells Babe the truth about humans eating pigs and Babe is sickened and sad. Rex the dog actually comforts him by telling him he is needed to help with the sheep, despite what the cat said. Farmer Hoggett even shows a rare bit of emotion to cheer up the depressed pig by dancing a jig. Babe responds and perks up.

To the dismay of Mrs. Hoggett and the shame of the sheepdog association and amid the laughter of the crowd, Farmer Hoggett enters Babe into the national sheepdog competition. When Babe finds that these unfamiliar sheep will not listen to him, Rex runs back to the farm to get the secret sheep password that will get all sheep to listen to him. The sheep reluctantly give Rex the password after making him promise to be nicer to them and show them some respect. Rex runs back and gives the password to Babe in time for Babe to win the competition and amaze the crowd, and so Babe helps Farmer Hoggett regain his reputation, which was put in jeopardy with his introduction of a "sheep-pig."

The Opening Scene of the Film

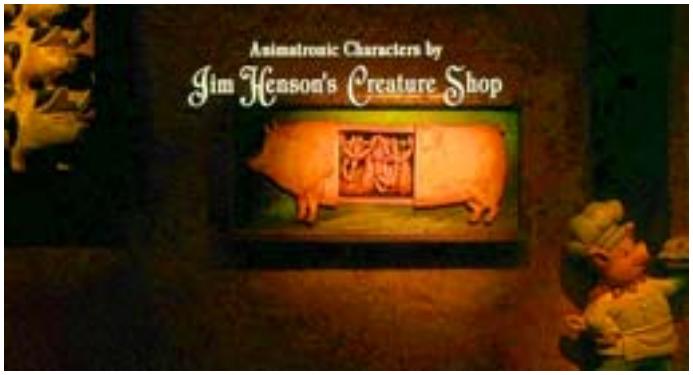

Figure 10. Opening credit still frame from *Babe*. The pig picture has just pulled apart to reveal the sausages within.

The film begins with the film title over a warm, red, textured background of a book that opens up to a slow pan that reveals various quaint pig pictures and figurines hanging on a wall.

In the third picture on the wall, a pig animates and divides down the middle vertically and reveals the insides of the pig: sausages hanging on a rod. This surprising reveal mere seconds into the film establishes the confrontational stance that the film expresses throughout the narrative. Just as many fairytales have a hard edge to them that is surprisingly brutal (witches who try to bake children, wolves who eat grandmothers), so *Babe* confronts some of the more brutal aspects of life as a pig right from the start of the film – a category e disjunction, if you will, within seconds of the opening of the film. This is a theme that continues throughout the film – cute images of pigs are juxtaposed with the reality that pigs face in the world: they are here to be eaten. Any exception to this reality will be out of the ordinary. The common Hollywood motif is not to show the ordinary, but rather to highlight the exceptional – exceptional individuals or extraordinary circumstances. The expectation of a film named after its lead character who is a cute pig seems to promise this from this first scene. The momentary reveal of the "truth" behind the pig, the sausages and cuts of meat, foreshadows the harsh realities that the film confronts and establishes the regime of truth pertaining to pigs as a species – they are animals that are made into cuts of meat.

The slowly panning shot passes various other pig images, more light-hearted in nature with bits of animated movement. One image is a pig in a chef's hat that holds a pie. While displacing the pig as a source of food, this image keeps the discourse focused on food. The next image is a picture of a clown-like human figure holding up a hoop with a paper star on it. A pig runs into the picture's frame and jumps through the hoop and out of the frame. A pig as a performer is a motif that will reoccur in the film as Babe finds his place in this world and stretches the discourse beyond pigs as food to pigs in the service

of humans. The panning settles as the camera pushes in on a black and white framed photograph of a piglet sleeping against other pigs on a bed of straw. This animated opening sets the stage for a storybook feel that persists throughout the film. The musical score mixed with harp runs and tinkling bells contribute to this feel. The music builds to an orchestral flourish that quietly fades into the background as the push-in settles on a CU of the photograph of the piglets and the sounds of actual sleeping pigs snuffling and snorting comes to the aural foreground. Accentuating the fairytale atmosphere throughout the film are the periodic chapter headings with titles. Each of these chapter headings is accompanied by squeaky voices reading the titles – voices that are revealed to be voiced by a trio of CGI-animated mice who also show up in a couple other scenes, though they serve no other part in the narrative. Producer/writer George Miller explains in the commentary that they purposefully created this storybook feel to harken back to the book from which the story was adapted.[121] This sense also offers a hedge for the film, allowing it to use the brutal fairytale conventions mentioned above without being interpreted as an advocacy or polemical film: it is simply telling a children's fairytale, not exposing the cruel conditions of *food animals* in modern society.

After settling on the black and white photograph, the image dissolves into color and live-action movement of the sleeping piglets. The shot intercuts with other live-action motion picture shots of sleeping piglets with ear twitches and wiggling tails. The piglets wake up and begin to nurse from a sow. As the piglets enthusiastically nurse, the voice-over narration comes in, voiced by the cultured baritone of Browne. It begins: "This is the tale about an unprejudiced heart and how it changed our valley forever."

[121] Chris Noonan, *Babe* (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2003), George Miller in DVD commentary.

There is no other mention of who this narrator is or why he calls it "our valley," but the voice is kindly and affectionate toward all the film's characters. The unprejudiced heart he refers to is soon revealed to be the piglet named Babe and this phrase offers an explanation of the strength of character of Babe – arguably the trait that allows him to transcend his predetermined fate and rise above his designated role in farm animal society. The phrase "unprejudiced heart" may also be abstracted to take on more metaphoric implications in a subversive or *oppositional*[122] decoding of this film as a commentary on humans contradictions concerning *meat*.

The narration continues: "There was a time not so long ago when pigs were afforded no respect except by other pigs. They lived their whole lives in a cruel and sunless world." The image pans from several sows with suckling pigs in about six by six foot metal stalls on cement floors with a thick straw bedding to reveal a dramatically darkly lit wide shot of a warehouse corridor bordered on either side by three-stories of rows of these stalls. Seconds into the film, we are confronted with another category e disjunction. A touching scene of a mother pig with suckling pigs is revealed to be placed in a cold, harsh prison-like setting. The ironic twist of the phrase about when this story takes place is that, of course, that time of keeping pigs in such conditions is now more than ever. But the authoritative voice of Browne implies that such conditions were intolerable and things have gotten better. In truth, they have not, but this in itself is the first example of the film subtly calling for change in how we think about these creatures. "Not so long ago" could mean a few years ago or, employing fairytale conventions, it could reference the proverbial "once upon a time" period that places it in a storybook

[122] Hall, *Culture, Media, Language,* 137-38.

time period outside our own time when dragons terrorize princesses and witches threaten children in dark forests. The irony of showing factory farm conditions but then hedging on the reality presented is another example of the subtly subversive nature of the film. It does not shy away from exploring these disjunctions. Instead, it immerses the story in them.

The narration continues: “In those days, pigs believed that the sooner they grew large and fat, the sooner they’d be taken into pig paradise – a place so wonderful no pig had ever thought to come back.” The music swells as a truck backs into the corridor amid shadows and fog, its brakes squealing as it comes to a stop.[123] While it is a controversial parallel to draw, this scene recalls images of trains arriving at Nazi death camps from Allain Resnais’ holocaust documentary *Night and Fog* (1955) and images created just two years before *Babe* from Spielberg’s holocaust film *Schindler’s List* (1993). This is a parallel that Yiddish writer and Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer makes several times in his writings. In his short story, “The Letter Writer,” he wrote "In relation to [animals], all people are Nazis; for the animals, it is an eternal Treblinka.”[124] Inspired by this quotation and Singer’s thoughts on vegetarianism and the holocaust, Charles Patterson wrote *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust,* which “examines the origins of human supremacy, [and] describes the emergence of industrialized slaughter of both animals and people in modern times.”[125] Even the narrator’s lines, alluding to the delusions of the pigs about their fate as they are led up the

[123] I have found, anecdotally, that these opening, ominous images are often forgotten when people recall this otherwise quaint and charming film. A reception study of this film would make an interesting separate study of this film.
[124] Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), 271.
[125] Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002), back matter.

ramp into the truck, recall holocaust survivors' stories of the lies that were told to them to get them into the trains that eventually took them to the death camps. This harsh comparison is obviously not one that the primary audience for this film, children, would recognize. But this sort of layered complexity is exactly the sort of depth that gives these films the alternative subversive reading that problematizes the disjunction that inspired this study. These iconic images strike a chord among audiences even if the comparison to the Holocaust is not immediately recalled. And these images contrast sharply with the quaint, fun-loving pig who we will get to know and love throughout the rest of the film.

While the narration refers to what is implied to be a mistaken belief by the pigs, it also imbues the pigs with the ability to believe and think, and we can infer from this that, at least in this fictive world, pigs have a culture and a cultural memory. While this is a backhanded way to do so, it nevertheless contrasts the harsh factory farm conditions that we see the pigs in with thinking and cultured animals who have devised beliefs that explain their world. It seems to offer the same sort of Western cultural elitist commentary on the naturalistic or even animistic beliefs in anthropological documentaries on indigenous peoples, spoken with almost with a wink and nod at their naïveté. In this instance, such an implied commentary results in recognition of nonhuman believers in an attribution of cultured spirituality, and it is spoken with an irony that implicates not the mistaken beliefs of the animals, but the humans who make such a pig paradise impossible because they slaughter these deprived animals rather than usher them into a potential "pig paradise."

Men come into the pig stall with an electric prod and poke the mother pig out of the stall and away from the piglets. This shot is shot from waist level (from about the

height of the full grown pig), and we see the men only from their torsos down. Pigs snort, and we hear the electrical hiss of the prod. A mechanical "udder" with eight or so rubber "nipples" extending out of a gleaming metal pipe is lowered into the stall and piglets rush to it and begin to feed. One piglet with a distinctive dark patch of hair on the top of his head (which will identify Babe throughout the rest of the film) stays at the bars of the stall staring off in the direction where the sow was taken. Cut to a medium shot head on of this piglet with his head pushed against the bars, and we hear him say sadly, with a voice of a young child: "Goodbye, Mom." The corridor is filled with adult pigs who are ushered into the back of a truck.

Figure 11: Babe says goodbye to his mother in factory farm.

Babe is given a voice seconds after he is distinguished from his fellow littermates, establishing his identity, his emotional state/existence, and even a significant element of his distinctive personality – his attachment to family. This connection between Babe and his mother is a stark contrast to how Wilbur is presented. Once removed from the barn and his suckling siblings and mother, he is hand-nursed by Fern and sleeps in her bed, and there is no reference to Wilbur's pig family again. Fern and Wilbur's friends in Homer's barn become his family. Babe, in contrast, misses his mother when she is removed from the CAFO. He misses her when he gets settled on the Hoggett Farm and Fly the dog comes over and invites him into her family unit. In a later scene that will be described below, he remembers his pig family again and mourns their loss.

By establishing Babe in the first scene, the film quickly initiates the discourse on pigs as autonomous, distinctive individuals– producing pigs as subjects, not meat. While there are numerous anonymous pigs in this scene, by immediately singling out Babe, the narrative establishes the discursive formation of these animals as individuals who have their own stories –this story just happens to be about this one particular pig. Even as the adult pigs are herded into the truck, the image of their indistinctive backs trudging up the truck ramp is juxtaposed with the piglet mourning for his mother.

Figure 12: Babe's mother and other pigs are loaded into a truck.

The narration continues: “So when the day came for their parents to go to that place of endless pleasures, it was not a time for young pigs to be sad, just another step toward the day when they, too, would make the journey.” The ironic discourse of “pig paradise” where they will find “endless pleasures” with the death in a slaughterhouse is reinforced in these lines. The contradictory nature of these images goes to the crux of the narrative that drives the film. It is the destiny of all pigs in this world to “make the journey” – not to pig paradise but to the slaughterhouse. This is the diegetic normative that will obstruct Babe’s narrative journey in this story.

The truck drives through an industrial complex, through gates and fences amid more fog with dramatic night lighting. The sign on the side of the truck reads: “Sunny Valley Meats: Choice to Your Table - since 1905.” The squeals of scared pigs and the brakes of the truck merge with the sounds of women screaming in delight in the next shot at a country fair on a bright, sunny day where Babe will be weighed and won by Farmer Hoggett.

Figure 13: Truck loaded with pigs drives through the factory.

The Pig in Performance and Portrayal

Performance

Babe the pig is portrayed by various actual piglets throughout the film, trained by animal handler Karl Lewis Miller, and occasionally by animatronic pigs created by the Jim Henson Creature Shop. The performance of the actual pigs are altered by CGI techniques to mimic mouth movements. The CGI techniques of 1995 were less refined than those used in *CW* eleven years later, so there is less brow and facial subtlety, and for impossible or untrainable body movements, the animatronics served to fill in for the pigs. Babe is recognizable throughout by the sprouted darker hair on the top of his head, creating a mini-*regime of truth* around this array of actual piglets and mechanical pig puppets that declares these depictions to be one character – Babe, a singular pig with a

distinctive personality. Once Babe is removed from the factory farm two minutes into the film, he is the only pig in the rest of the film, so this regime of truth is easily accepted by viewers as critics noted below.

The vocal performance of Babe is performed throughout by Christine Cavanaugh, an actress in her 20s, though there are some natural pig grunts and snorts in the opening scene described above and in the two times in the film when we get a human point of view of Babe talking with the sheep. At these points, the shot switches from a CU of the two animals talking (in English) to a long shot over the shoulder of Mrs. Hoggett or Farmer Hoggett watching them, and we hear the sounds of sheep bleating and a pig snorting. This distinctive concept of a language that all nonhuman animals speak to each other but not understood by humans, or a "pan-animal language" translated into English (for the viewers but not the diegetic humans) as scholar Susan McHugh describes it, was "a path forged" by the 1973 animated version of *Charlotte's Web* and the television series *Green Acres* (1965-1971).[126] This shared language helps create the community of animals that both *CW* and *Babe* construct, which is now a common trope in talking-animal films[127] and further establishes the clear delineation between the humans and nonhumans.

The performance of the character Babe is a mix of *personhood cues* throughout the film, according to Porter's cues of personhood scheme (see Chapter 2, Methodology section). Whereas Wilbur is always performed by an actual pig with CGI enhancements, Babe is occasionally entirely substituted for by an object – an animatronic puppet. The puppets are used for CUs that involve subtle movements or in scenes where the action involves movements that would be hard to train a pig to do (e.g., sitting quietly while

[126] Susan M. McHugh, "Bringing up Babe," *Camera Obscura* 17, no. 1 (2002): 180.
[127] Especially in animated films (e.g., *Barnyard, Home on the Range,* and *Over the Hedge).*

puppies tumble over him in play). This does not happen often (perhaps ten to twenty percent of the character's screen time) and sometimes it is a bit more noticeable upon close inspection than others, though film reviewers at the time remarked on the realistic continuity of the pig performance.[128] And, unlike Wilbur, Babe is almost entirely vocally performed by a human. So the *primary cues* of personhood are fewer, which means that there is a bit less of actual pig performance in *Babe* than in *CW*, that is less pig performance that is composed of a living pig moving in front of a camera.

The *secondary external cues* are substantial. The humans immediately treat Babe as a distinctive individual, first in picking him out of the farrowing pen and naming him a runt and throughout the film until the conclusion when he is recognized by the entire crowd at the National Sheepdog Trials as a talented sheep-pig. Babe's fellow nonhuman animals on the farm also continually treat him like a pig. Maa specifically treats him like a doomed pig, because she is aware of the fate of pigs on this farm, though diegetically it is not clear if the Hoggetts have ever had another pig on this farm. Ferdinand enlists Babe's aid in his failed scheme to steal the alarm clock because he is easily manipulated, perhaps more attributable to the naïveté of youth rather than any association with his species. And it is his very pigness that is the source of Rex's resentment when Babe takes in interest in sheepherding. His admonishment to all the barnyard animals, "To each creature its own destiny. Every animal in its proper place," is meant specifically to curb any of Babe's un-pig-like inclinations (and Ferdinand's un-duck-like ones as well).

[128] For example, Stephen Holden, *New York Times*. "The film's special effects, which serve the story rather than call attention to themselves, are beautifully effective," writes Kenneth Turan, *Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 1995.

As noted above, the *secondary internal cues* are consistently employed. His vocalizations are always those of a human performing the role with the two momentary exceptions noted above.

Depiction

In contrast to Wilbur, Babe is treated by the humans as a pig from the beginning and in circumstances that are quite common in pigdom. This distinction from Wilbur is significant. Wilbur is removed from the barn and becomes, as discussed in the previous chapter, a substitute doll/baby in the arms of Fern. Only when he is moved to Homer's barn does he resume a pig-like existence from which he was removed moments after his birth. While Babe assumes various roles on the Hoggett farm, even subbing for the sheepdogs, he remains pig-like throughout and it is his straying outside the normal behavior of a pig that causes him trouble among his fellow animals – mostly this troubles only Rex, the dog who seems to feel threatened and affronted at the audacity of a "lesser species" performing his job, and Duchess, the cat who seems threatened by the advancement of anyone but herself. Babe mixes with the dogs on the Hoggett farm, even sleeping in the hay with the puppies and with Fly, but he is always treated as different from them. After helping save the sheep, he does earn himself some of the privileges of dog-dom around the farm, but he is always distinctively a pig.

According to Murray Smith's *structure of sympathy*, the *personhood* of the pig named Babe is *recognized* early on. When his mother is removed from the pen in the first scene in the film, he is the only piglet of his litter who we see separated from the litter, mourning her loss, and refusing to immediately suckle at the mechanical nipples. It is at

this point that he is given a (human) voice and we see the physical attribute that will distinguish him from any other pigs, the tuft of darker hair on the top of his head. In fact, once he is removed from the factory farm, no other pigs are seen in the film. This "toupee" actually serves the filmmakers' purpose to add a distinguishing mark that might overcome any other minor piglet differentiating attributes among the various piglets who will play the role of Babe throughout the film, a choice that was made more subtly in *CW* with a small brown spot above Wilbur's right eye. Upon Babe's first contact with humans, he is *recognized* further, or distinctly singled out, by being identified as a runt, unworthy of even compensation to the company for his removal from the factory farm and apparent donation to the local charity. The only other reference to any runtiness about him is the concern with which Mrs. Hoggett shows in his lack of growth as she plans for her Christmas dinner.

Viewer *alignment* and *allegiance* with Babe is also established in this first scene. As Babe stares off at his mother in a medium shot, the film cuts to a long shot of the various adult pigs from behind as they are herded down the central corridor of the factory and into a truck. It is not a direct Babe-point-of-view shot, but editing makes the connection that this is the scene that Babe is watching. Babe longing for his mother, as in *CW* with the threat to Wilbur from Mr. Arable, is an emotion we can easily empathize with. In this case, the scene of their separation is actually even more tragic for the viewing audience because most of the humans, young and old alike, likely understand that the pigs are not being taken to pig paradise, as the narrator implies the pigs believe. Even if young viewers do not comprehend that irony, the mise en scene that is presented,

as described above, is dramatically dark and foreboding – whatever happens to these pigs, it is not presented with any connotations of paradise.

The narrative of the rest of the film centers on Babe on the Hoggett farm as a pig, even as he gradually takes on the role of a sheepdog and is given the respect that dogs engender on this farm – including being allowed in the house. While the story focuses on his training and assuming of the duties of the sheepdogs, the way he is treated reinforces that he is a pig, not a dog – a bright and polite pig, but a pig nevertheless. Much of the humor of the film rests in the contrasting image of these various activities, normally performed by dogs, being performed by a pig. In his physical movements throughout the film, he moves as a pig, though a well trained one. Unlike Wilbur, Babe does no back flips, though he does ram a dog and nips at a sheep at early points in the film before he learns to politely ask them for their cooperation. The substitution of the animatronic pig for an actual pig seem to be primarily in these sorts of CUs or close quarter shots of Babe or when he is lying down next to other animals. Actual pigs can get along well with other animals if acclimated to them, but lying still for a camera crew is probably not their forte and when cuddling with sheepdogs or in close communication with a duck, a puppet pig likely served to expedite the production.

By keeping the depiction of Babe in the role of a pig, the discourse around pigs in the world of *Babe* is kept clearly circulating around the polarizing opposition of pigs as friendly, helpful creatures versus pigs as meat. This latter aspect of the discourse is primarily foregrounded only by Mrs. Hoggett, though it is reinforced by several of the other animals. That will be discussed in the “Depiction of Meat” section below.

Relationships with Other Animals

In many ways, *Babe* is a twist on the classic coming-of-age story. Babe must find his way in a world where every animal has his or her place, and Babe's pre-ordained place, though he is not aware of it until late in the film, is to serve as food for the humans. The hierarchy among the animals on the farm is very clear, and those who attempt to disrupt it are treated harshly. This pattern is established early as Ferdinand the duck, a character not in the original book and added here primarily as comic relief or the "anti-Babe" as producer/writer George Miller describes in the DVD commentary,[129] attempts to break out of his own predestinated role as food by superseding the rooster's more stable role as the one who wakes everyone on the farm. But when Mrs. Hoggett buys an alarm clock, Ferdinand fears for his newly assumed job, and he enlists the gullible Babe to help in a scheme to preserve his job, sneaking into the house and stealing the "mechanical rooster." In explaining the reason for the caper, Ferdinand exclaims that this is a matter of life and death.

> FERDINAND: There is something you should know. Humans eat ducks.
>
> BABE: I beg your pardon?
>
> F: Most ducks prefer to forget about it but they like to eat plump, attractive ducks.
>
> B: Oh, I don't think so. Not the boss. Not the boss's wife.
>
> F: Oh c'mon. Humans don't eat cats. Why? Cats catch mice. They are indispensible. Humans don't eat roosters, why? They make eggs with the hens and wake everyone up in the morning. I tried it with the hens and it

[129] Noonan, *Babe*, George Miller in DVD commentary.

> didn't work, so . . . no sooner do I learn to crow then they get a mechanical rooster!

Ferdinand sets the stage for an animal who wants to break out of his or her assigned role, just as Babe eventually will. In the duck's failed attempt, he lays the groundwork for how an animal might go about such a task and how one may or may not be successful at such a disruption to his destiny. Ferdinand also lays out the reality of life on this farm – in case viewers were taken in by the fictive nature of this film with its talking animals and singing mice, Ferdinand's speech points out that this farm resembles actual farms in the sense that in this world, humans on this farm eat animals. Contemporary examples of films that avoid this seeming contradiction include *Barnyard* (2006) and *Home on the Range* (2004), both of which offer a rather minor aside that the farms who own these farms are vegan (*Barnyard*) or "friendly" to the animals and let then live in peace without threat of slaughter (*Home on the Range*).

While the animals around the Hoggett farm soon learn that Babe is indeed a smart animal, he is identified by Ferdinand as gullible. At this exchange between himself and Ferdinand, Babe seems to be skeptical about the dark truth of what humans eat, but no indication is given whether he believes Ferdinand at this point or not. Babe's reaction at most is that he understands that his new friend Ferdinand believes this and so he agrees to help him.

Babe repeatedly displays his naïve innocence well into the film. Thirty minutes in, Mrs. Hoggett measures Babe's length and girth – a common method to gauge a pig's

weight.[130] While the other animals have just discussed the barbarity of Christmas and the ominous dinner it includes, Babe simply laughs at her touch and enjoys the attention. But he also proves that his innocence is based in his innate goodness, a trait that is essential to his relationship with the sheep and one that garners their respect and allegiance as he begins to take on the role as a sheep-pig. As he wises up to the ways of the farm and the world, he makes a conscious choice to believe in the goodness of all creatures after a discussion with Maa, the matriarch of the sheep.

Left in the barnyard one day early on in the film, Babe discovers Maa, who is being kept in a shed because she has a cough and foot rot. She explains the sheep's view of the dogs – "brutal savages," she calls them. The narrator explains that Babe is troubled by what Maa tells him. We see Fly licking Babe on the face when the dogs return from working later that afternoon and the narrator explains: "The old sheep had to be wrong about Fly. And the pig promised himself that he would never think badly of any creature ever again." As in *CW*, we find that not only does the pig garner the respect of his fellow animals and the humans, this respect is founded on the conscious decision of the pig to be polite and kind.

But before Babe gets this respect, he gets in trouble in Ferdinand's caper to sneak into the house. Once in the house, Babe meets the mean-spirited cat, they cause a ruckus in the house, and the duck hides. After the debacle, in a dramatic scene that has an Orwellian feel to it, Rex the dog is perched on a hay bale in the barn with low key lighting. Rex lays down the rules for all the animals who are gathered around below him.

[130] John Pukite, *A Field Guide to Pigs* (Helena, MT: Falcon, 1999), 97.

REX: For now on, we'll all respect the Rules. To each creature its own destiny. Every animal in its proper place. And a pigs proper place is under the old cart, not in the barn, and absolutely never in the house. . . . Now Pig, regarding the company you keep. Being young, it's hard to discriminate so I'll make it easy for you. I forbid you to talk to or consort with that duck, ever. Have I made myself clear?

BABE: What's "consort"?

HORSE: It means, young man, you must not go anywhere near the duck.

REX: And as for the fugitive duck, when he shows himself let him know this: Being a duck he must behave like a duck. No more of this crowing nonsense. He should accept what he is and be thankful for it. That goes for all of us.

COW: Hear hear!

Figure 14. Babe is scolded by Rex for going into the humans' house (and spilling blue paint on himself).

While this talk goes on in the barn, the narrator tells us that in the house another talk was taking place: on whether the main course for Christmas dinner this year would be roast pork or duck a l'orange. "Pork is a nice, sweet meat," Mrs. Hoggett points out.

This caste system of the animals seems to be based on the species' usefulness to the humans. However, the animals interpret this system as based on their intelligence. And in this world, contrary to Wilbur's world, pigs are not assumed to be intelligent since they are simply raised for food, though from the dialogue Farmer Hoggett apparently has never kept pigs. The interplay between the animals on this farm is complex. Fly seems genuinely surprised that Babe is even smart enough to talk. This plays into the caste system that puts the dogs at the top of the system, just below humans. In fact, when the puppies first see Babe, one puppy asks their mother Fly, "What is it?"

FLY: It's a pig

PUPPY TWO: They'll eat him when he's big enough.

PUPPY THREE: Will they eat us when we're big enough?

FLY: No, the bosses only eat stupid animals like sheep and ducks and chickens.

(The puppies run to see him sitting on a hay bale in the barn.)

PUPPY ONE: He looks stupid, Mom.

FLY: Not as stupid as sheep mind you, but pigs are definitely stupid.

BABE: Excuse me, no we're not.

FLY: Good heavens, who are you?

BABE: I'm a large white.

FLY: That's your breed, dear, what's your name?

BABE: I don't know.

FLY: Well, What did your mother call you to tell you apart from your brothers and sisters?

BABE: Our mom called us all the same.

FLY: And what was that dear?

BABE: She called us all "Babe."

HORSE (looking on from the other side of the barn): Perhaps we shouldn't talk too much about, ahem, family.

BABE: I want my mom.

Fly comforts Babe in his loneliness and lets him curl up with her and the puppies, "until you find your feet," as she describes. Rex, the stern father of the puppies, reluctantly agrees.

Rex gives his mate, Fly, some leeway in this instance, but later he will physically attack her when he feels she has gone too far in allowing the pig to act beyond his "place." Rex is presented as the supervisor or overseer of the animals. His speech to the animals quoted above is presented in a way reminiscent of the pig Old Major's opening speech in George Orwell's 1945 allegorical novel *Animal Farm: A Fairy Tale*, a work that has inescapable comparisons with *Babe* as a farm animal-based story with pigs as central characters. Orwell's novel was openly allegorical, referencing the events and the people leading up to and after the communist revolution and Stalin-era Soviet Union. With Rex standing on a bale of hay, lit from above, and speaking down to the intently listening animals, he proclaims "the way things are" on the Hoggett farm. In *Animal*

Farm: A Fairy Tale, "At one end of the big barn, on a sort of raised platform, Major was already ensconced on his bed of straw, under a lantern which hung from a beam." Orwell's Old Major, usually associated with Karl Marx or sometimes a mix of Marx and Vladimir Lenin,[131] proclaims the way things are on Mr. Jones' farm by describing the evils of the human parasites (representing old Czarist Russia and the privileged upper classes). While it is an obvious reference, the parallels between *Babe* and *Animal Farm* are not profound or enlightening. Rex's speech is anti-revolutionary while Old Major's is exactly the opposite. It seems more likely that the filmmakers are simply playing with the image rather than making any profound statement in this scene.[132] Likewise, while Orwell ironically names his novel "a fairy tale," (in the original British publication's title) the allegory is clear and sarcastically biting. Neither the original text nor the film version of *Babe* seem to hint at any political allegory. As film critic Rita Kempley of the *Washington Post* described in her review, the film is "a captivating comic allegory about daring to be different in the face of conformity."[133] Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* called the film, "a fable about individualism and conformity . . . roughly parallel [to] a child's awakenings to the realities of the world."[134]

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[131] http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/animalfarm/canalysis.html.

[132] In the live-action, made-for-TV retelling of Animal Farm of 1999 (produced by Hallmark Entertainment and Turner Network Television), the visual treatment of Old Major's speech is very similar to Rex's speech. The Jim Henson Creature Shop also constructed the animatronics and puppets in this film, which were cleverly intermixed with live-action animals to create quite the disturbing retelling of Orwell's tale.

[133] Rita Kempley, "*Babe* (Film Review)," *Washington Post*, 4 August 1995.

[134] Stephen Holden, "Film Review: A Feisty Pig with Aspirations Beyond the Sty," *New York Times*, 4 August 1995.

One of the major departures between these two barnyard depictions is that on the Hoggett farm, as stated in Rex's speech, there is no hint at equality of animals. This is a clearly stratified society where dogs oversee the other animals and the "stupid" animals serve as food for the "bosses." This is reiterated by both Ferdinand the duck ("Humans eat ducks!") and, in her own way, by Duchess the cat. This discourse of inequality is reinforced by the tasks assigned to the various animals and also by the language they use. The animals use the term "boss" for Farmer Hoggett (Duchess uses it for the human she describes as *her* boss, Mrs. Hoggett). The word has a multitude of connotations, such as worker's union bosses, mob bosses, and as the term enslaved people in the U.S. used for their "owners."[135] It is this last connotation that seems to be circulating through the discourse in this film.

Parallels between plantation slavery and the Hogget Farm animal community abound, though again, this is a sensitive and potentially disturbing comparison, but one that has been made before in such books as Marjorie Speigel's *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*.[136] Chattel slavery communities were often stratified, with limited privileges awarded to more trusted servants. The restrictions from entering the house, a privilege stated early on in *Babe* that is reserved only for dogs and cats, recalls the separation between "field slaves" and "house slaves." The dogs' position as the supervisor of the "enslaved animals" parallels the plantation position of overseer, who was sometimes a free white man, sometimes a trusted enslaved black man. The cruelty that the dogs show toward the sheep, who use force and threat to motivate their

[135] Read a first-hand account of one such instance at http://www.ungardesign.com/websites/madison/main_pages/madison_archives/era/african/life/hughes/chap1.htm.
[136] Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison : Human and Animal Slavery*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

"inferiors" to obey their harsh commands, also reinforces this parallel. While whips are not used, it is not hard to envision the dogs' nipping and barking as the canine version of an overseer driving enslaved workers to follow their directions.

Though Farmer Hoggett is portrayed, following this analogy, as a kindly master, we are reminded several times that he makes his living by exploiting these animals. A later scene shows Farmer Hoggett putting up a sign that reads: "Sheepdog pups for sale. By Rex, Twice National Champion, out of Fly. Inquire within." The narrator says: "The time comes for all creatures when childhood ends and the doorway opens to life as an adult. And so it was for Fly's pups, though that time was all too soon for Fly." As a woman with a child and then an older man (played, incidentally, by the lead animal trainer on the film, Karl Lewis Miller) pick up the puppies to buy them, Fly and Rex look on. Holding three puppies, the older man nods to his pocket and Hoggett takes the man's wallet out and picks out some cash. Cut to a CU of Fly with, in my opinion, the saddest look ever seen on a dog's face.[137] Fly is sulking in the barn in the next scene. Farmer Hoggett pats her on the head and Babe approaches her and asks if he can call her "Mom" and she licks his face in reply. The narrator intones: "And so it was that the pig found his place on the farm. And he was happy, even in his dreams." While this scene is a turning point for Babe as he becomes a surrogate child for Fly, it also establishes that even the dogs, supervisors of the farm, are subject to the rule of the humans. And the scene plays out as nothing less than a slave auction scene. The mother servant is witness to the loss of her children for the monetary gain of her owner. Even with the narrator invoking it as a

[137] In the DVD commentary, writer/producer George Miller describes how well this shot worked and then how it was done. The dog playing Fly had a favorite food – chicken. The other dogs used in the film were fed chicken while this dog was made to watch. He assures the listening audience that after the shot was taken, that the dog was fed her share of the food.

passage of adulthood, it is only thus in a system that approves of the tearing away of children from parents at the decision of an overlord. In this sense, *Babe*, once again, does not shy away from portraying the harsh realities of animal farming practices. Despite the narrator's mollifying lines about the passage to adulthood, Fly's loss is depicted as painful and traumatic for her and narratively allows Babe another chance to show his sensitivity by consoling her.

Babe continually challenges the other farm animals' assumptions about pigs and even each other, though we do not know what their original assumptions about pigs are based on. For instance, the dogs' opinions of their fellow animals seem to be based on a mix of the regime of truth reinforced by the humans' running of the farm (i.e., sheep and pigs are eaten because they are not smart) and their own prejudices formed in their daily tasks (sheep are not smart because the way they act when the dogs are herding them). What the audience learns through following Babe's perspective of the story is that many of these assumptions are based on behavior that the animals have not taken the time to understand about each other. The sheep behave the way they do because they fear and dislike the "wolf-like" dogs' cruelty. This truth is revealed through a series of events in the story.

Rex eventually gets very frustrated with Babe usurping his role and physically fights with Fly about it. When Farmer Hoggett tries to break up the fight, Rex bites Hoggett, and Rex is temporarily retired because of his aggression. Rex is resentful about Babe's sheepherding skills until Babe saves the sheep from feral dogs and fills in for Rex. Reluctantly, Rex seems to acknowledge that it is for the greater good of the boss, Farmer Hoggett, that Babe can help out, and it is Rex who helps get Babe the secret sheep

password that allows Babe to win the sheep herding competition. So Babe wins over even his worst antagonist on the farm with his skills, his helpful attitude, and his genuine goodness, and he breaks down some of the barriers that reinforce the animal caste system on the farm.

Pig Agency

Whereas Wilbur's motivation is generally driven by the goal to save himself from sharing the fate of most spring pigs, Babe is a very selfless pig. Wilbur relies on the work of others, namely Templeton the rat and Charlotte the spider, to help make him stand out, though he certainly wins the animals over with his politeness and kindness in order to motivate them. Babe, generally oblivious to his own fate, takes an interest in all the goings-on at the farm and makes himself useful when opportunity arises without the goal of saving his life. In this way, he is depicted with limited agency. He is more self-driven than we see in Wilbur's restricted agency. Where Wilbur's fate depends primarily on the his animal friends proving to the humans that he is worthy of more than Christmas dinner, Babe inadvertently proves his own worth. He is certainly under the control of the human Hoggetts, and it is their decisions that will decide his fate, but through his own actions, Babe proves himself to be useful, courageous, and kind. He fills in even more efficiently than the dogs as a sheepherder. He twice saves the sheep from attack, once by thieves, once by feral dogs. Though there is no indication that the humans recognize his kindness, the audience is witness to his discussions with the sheep, so we know that it is only because of his "heart of gold," as Maa describes it, that the sheep respect him and follow his sheepherding requests.

Babe is motivated by his curiosity, his helpful spirit, and his generous nature. He takes it upon himself to investigate the strange sounds he hears, which leads him to save the sheep from the attacks purely out of concern for the sheep, altruistically putting himself in harm's way both times. Whereas Wilbur had Fern to defend him as a newborn, pleading his case to her father, Babe is in control of his destiny insofar as his actions insure that he has a place on the farm as a living member of the farm community, removing the likelihood that he will be eaten by the Hoggetts.

The Question of Eating Animals

Destined for the Table

The issue of pigs as a food source is confronted implicitly in the first scene – the adult pigs are prodded out of their pens in a factory farm and loaded onto a truck labeled "Sunny Valley Meats: Choice to your table - since 1905." While Babe is removed from the factory farm, the narrator's ominous story of "pig paradise" makes it clear that most pigs are not so lucky.

At the fair, the barkers try to persuade Farmer Hoggett to attempt to win the pig by pointing out his potential as food. "Don't keep pigs," Hoggett says in his quiet, stoic tone. "Oh, Christmas day, think of it. What a feast!" the barker pleads. Portrayed as a glowingly pink piglet who we have already heard utter the endearing "Goodbye, Mom" line, the human characters are single-minded in the purpose for this pig – dinner. Farmer Hoggett reaches down and pats the pig once on the head and says, "That'll do, pig" and the pig quiets down as he picks him up. The narrator says, "The pig and the farmer

regarded each other and for a fleeting moment something passed between them. A faint sense of some common destiny." Within the discourse of a G-rated family film, distributed by a major Hollywood production company, it is likely that no one mistakes this common destiny as death and being served on a platter for the pig any more than anyone thinks Farmer Hoggett will be slaughtered and served.

Once Babe is at the farm, Mrs. Hoggett is the gatekeeper of the discourse surrounding Babe and his destiny as roast pork at Christmas. She is the cook of the house and the planner of meals. She is also particularly pudgy, especially in comparison to the tall, lean Farmer Hoggett – body shape becomes part of the discourse surrounding food in this film – associating heavy-set humans with a desire to eat the pig and a negative tone of gluttony. Upon returning from the fair, she is polishing and placing her new trophy for her prize-winning preserves, with Duchess the cat perched on her shoulders: "What could we do with a pig, eh Duchess? Just think, two nice hams, two sides of bacon. Ooh, pork chops, kidney, liver, chitlins, pickle his feet, save his blood for black pudding." These lines are said in a sing-songy voice with obvious delight, but they are not clearly articulated – they are almost throw away lines of filler dialogue except that they are so shocking to anyone who was drawn to the sweetly portrayed piglet yearning for his mother that they catch the ear.

A few scenes later, we find Mrs. Hogget bringing food out to Babe. "Pig Pig, what a lucky little pork chop you are. You're going to grow up to be a big fat pig," she says in her sing-songy voice. This is another category e disjunction in that the we have been taken through Smith's *structure of sympathy* scheme of recognizing Babe, aligning with him through the story which is primarily told from his perspective, and likely most

of the audience feels an allegiance with him – he is a sweet, polite, and charming characters, and here we have another character within the film who is considering him as strictly *pre-meat*. This shocking contrast jars us into remembering that, charismatic though he is, Babe has a major hurdle to overcome. However, Babe is oblivious to her words (at this point it is not clear if the animals understand the words of the humans and it is never really established if they do, beyond basic commands that the dogs take as their cues for herding sheep). Babe is pretty focused on the food that she delivers and could likely be so distracted that he would not catch the disturbing dialogue she is directing toward him even if he could understand her. Later, as the narrator points out the dilemma that Mrs. Hoggett faces in deciding if Christmas dinner will be roast pork or duck l' orange, we look through a window at Farmer and Mrs. Hoggett and overhear her pointing out "Pork is a nice sweet meat." Then quieter, as the image circle-wipes to black at the close of the scene, she adds, "then there's the crackling, that always adds interest and texture." The crackling is a regional term for pork rind – the fried or roasted skin of a pig. The wipes centers on the smiling and excited face of Mrs. Hoggett as she contemplates the meal.

As Christmas approaches, Mrs. Hoggett comes outside to measure Babe and seems concerned that he is not getting very big. After taking the measurements of his length and girth, she tickles his stomach affectionately. Farmer Hoggett looks on with concern, as does Fly. At the tickling, Babe is seen in CU laughing gleefully. Mrs. Hoggett walks off staring at the measuring tape with a concerned look on her face. Cut to CU of Maa the sheep saying, "Eating pigs. Bleah. Barbarians!" This mixed message montage offers a miasmatic discourse on pigs as meat, as lovable characters, as friends, etc. Both

Fly and Farmer Hoggett seemed concerned in this very contemplation. Fly knows the destiny of pigs and Hoggett knows the intention of his wife and they both seem troubled at this apparent prospect. I hesitate to call this moment another category e disjunction because by this time, this contradiction is openly discussed by the characters. Rather than offering an internal criticism that "cracks the film apart at the seams," the film has broken through the disjunction and incorporated it into the film's very diegesis.

Later in that scene there is an exchange between Babe and Maa:

BABE: You're going back to the fields, Maa.

MAA: Oh young'un, tragic there aren't more of your kind. I'll be thinking of you, always.

BABE: I could come and visit you Maa.

MAA: I'd like that but, ahem, well, we shouldn't hope for too much.

As Maa is led out to the fields, Babe stands in the middle of the barnyard and sings "La la la" to the tune of "Jingle Bells," oblivious to his potential fate, in a scene of dramatic irony. Maa seems perfectly aware of what is likely to happen and, though concerned and sad for her friend, is resigned to the destiny that awaits him. The film basks in the very disjunction presented: Babe is kind and generous, friend to all the animals (except Rex) and plainly naïve to what is going on, whereas the audience and the other animals are well aware of what is at stake here.

Saved from Death

Babe is repeatedly saved from imminent death. At the factory, he is picked out of the pen – either because he has separated himself from the other piglets in his mourning for his "mom" or because he is a runt who will not be as economically profitable to keep. This is the beginning of the discourse surrounding his "specialness" – he is not just another piglet. He is a runt, as was Wilbur. Whereas Wilbur was saved from immediate death because of his runtiness, perhaps Babe was, too. He was not feeding at the mechanical nipples and the operator of the CAFO seemed to recognize his worthlessness since he gave Babe to the charity at no cost. But Babe also is recognized as having "an unprejudiced heart" as the narrator describes. This is a vague reference at first, but he later proves that he does, indeed, treat all animals fairly and without prejudging them, even when it is not in his best interest to do so as is shown in his dealings with both Ferdinand the duck and Duchess the cat. Babe has also singled himself out in mourning for his mother. His choice to ignore the mechanical feeding machine and grieve over his mother displays a sensitivity with which the human audience can identify – showing that, to him, she is more than just a feeding machine.

At the fair, he is rescued because the barkers at the booth convince Farmer Hoggett to take a guess. As Hoggett obliges them, they point out that this is the first time the pig has not squealed loudly when picked up. Hoggett lifts the pig up and down and guesses a weight, then lowers the guess as the piglet urinates (the pig grunts in a CU as if he is embarrassed by this act). The narrator intones the lines about sharing a common destiny. As Hoggett walks off, the crane shot pulls out to reveal a broad view of the fair and we see a man in a chef's outfit with a chef's hat step in and lift the pig as the barker

encourages him to guess the pig's weight as well. Again, the message is clear – this pig is a meal just waiting to be fattened up, slaughtered, and served. As we later see with Mrs. Hoggett, the chef is a particularly heavy-set man. This association of eating the pig with gluttony adds to the film's subversion of meat eating that slowly creeps in throughout the narrative. And keeping with this film's pattern of confrontation of the disjunction between pigs as friends and pigs as food, this scene juxtaposes the idea of a feast with the connection that Hoggett has with this pig the first time they meet. The very name given to the farmer reinforces this connection – he is a sheep farmer who does not keep pigs, but his name has the word "hog" in it. While Mrs. Hoggett is excited about winning the pig so she can serve him as the main course for Christmas dinner, Farmer Hoggett's quiet glances at the pig betray the bond of friendship and even respect that grows throughout the film.

The connection between Farmer Hoggett and Babe, the "common destiny," is reinforced several more times, though most of these connections take place after Babe is saved from the table by Hoggett. The only telling glance to imply that Farmer Hoggett thinks of Babe as more than a source of meat for Christmas dinner takes place when Mrs. Hoggett measures Babe a few days before Christmas as described above. As the measuring is taking place, we see a medium shot of Farmer Hoggett looking up from his work with his normal stoic look on his face. This shot is an excellent example of the Kuleshov effect, based on editing experiments by Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov. While actor James Cromwell employs hardly any facial reaction whatsoever in this shot, keeping his face emotionally neutral, any viewers keyed in to the purpose of Mrs. Hoggett in measuring Babe – an investigation to see if he has grown large enough to

make him worthwhile of feeding her family for Christmas dinner – is very likely to read the actor's expression as one of concern, even slight disapproval. This is the common reaction of a viewer who has identified with a character, especially if we use Smith's *structure of sympathy* system for understanding this identification: recognition, alignment, and allegiance. This film has aligned us with Babe throughout – most of the scenes have been ones that he was witness to (though not strictly), and the film has focused on him as the protagonist. And from the first scene, Babe has been portrayed, and even described by the narrator, as a pig of character – unprejudiced, loving, and polite.

The night before Christmas dinner, the moment of truth comes, and Farmer Hoggett in his stoic way, saves the day:

NARRATOR: And so it was Christmas eve and time had run out for the pig.

MRS. H.: So are you doing him tonight then?

FARMER H.: Hmmm.

MRS. H.: Good. The blood'll drain by morning.

FARMER H: Pity.

MRS. H.: Huh?

FARMER H.: Nothing

MRS. H.: What on earth are you babbling on about?

FARMER H.: Shame to miss out on first ham prize in the fair next year. Nice plump haunches he's getting. Beautiful. Still, silly to wait, I suppose.

On this last line, Farmer Hoggett dramatically slices a piece of paper, possibly butcher paper, with a sharp knife. Nothing else is said, but the ensuing scenes show that somewhere the decision was made to spare the pig.

The bond between Farmer Hoggett and Babe grows as the pig shows his interest in the welfare of the farm and the human realizes the cleverness of the pig. Hoggett affectionately picks Babe up to put him on the back of the truck after Babe has raised the alarm about the sheep rustlers. The next day (seemingly), as his son-in-law badgers him about his old-fashioned ways, Farmer Hoggett notices Babe separating the chickens by color, thus the idea of a sheep-pig is seemingly hatched in Hoggett's mind. As the narrative progresses and they begin to work closely together in Babe's training, the affection grows between the pig and the farmer. Eventually, the bond is so close that Farmer Hoggett brings the pig into the house and even dances a jig and sings to him when Babe becomes depressed and unable to herd. The threat of Babe being slaughtered and consumed seems to subside as Farmer Hoggett's interest in training him as a sheep-pig grows.

While the farmer's rationale to his wife on why they should wait to slaughter Babe rested on the idea that he could give them prize-winning cuts of meat if they wait longer, the viewers are in the know that this is just a façade – we have all presumably joined the conspiracy with Farmer Hoggett to keep Babe alive by that time and, with the helpful hints by the narrator, we know that their common destiny is greatness that will keep Babe from ever being served for dinner. The discourse surrounding Babe as meat has been rewritten – but not the truth about animals and meat in general.

Portrayal of the Truth about Meat

There is very little obfuscation about the nature of meat and its relationship to nonhuman animals in this film. While we never see any animal killed (Maa the sheep is wounded on camera in the attack by the feral dogs, then Babe finds her dead after running the dogs off), we hear the sounds of chopping as the duck, who we later learn is named Rosanna though we have never been introduced to her as a character, is killed. We then see a CU of duck "meat" being cut.

Early on, we get an example of how clear the relationship between meat and their fellow animals is to the animal community. Babe tries to follow the puppies into the house, but Fly tells him to wait outside. "Why? Aren't pigs allowed inside the house?" Babe asks. "Not live ones," one of the puppies replies quietly. "Only dogs and cats are allowed in the house," Fly explains, adding, "That's just the way things are." This is our first reference to the caste system or rules that the animals are expected to obey that results in pressure in the community of animals to stick to the role one's species is assigned. Moments later, Mrs. Hoggett brings food out to Babe and slops it into a trough while she says in a sing-songy voice: "Pig, pig, what a lucky little pork chop you are. You're going to grow up to be a big fat pig." Mrs. Hoggett is always very upfront with her plans for Babe as Christmas dinner and seems to have no ethical equivocation mixing these thoughts with tickling Babe or speaking sweetly to him. After eating, Babe tries to follow the dogs out the gate as they follow Farmer Hoggett to the fields. Fly tells him to stay behind: "We've got work to do. Your job is to stay here and eat your food." This again reinforces the regime of truth that is espoused by the humans and recirculated by the animals – stay true to your species, even if that means accepting your death and

consumption by the bosses. While Fly does not say this explicitly, this is the clear implication of her admonishment for Babe to stay behind – to perform his job and let himself grow fat for the humans' purposes.

Shortly thereafter, Babe gets his first lesson on the truth about animals and meat in the conversation with Ferdinand about humans eating ducks, which is quoted above. While Babe is skeptical about what he learns, this first laying out of the "way things are" helps to draw the clear distinctions on the farm for those of the audience who are well aware how actual life works (clarifying that this fictive world is no different from the one in which we live, in that sense anyway), and perhaps informs the younger viewers of something they had not thought of before – the meat on the plate once walked (and talked in this film) before he or she was turned into meat.

Twenty-four minutes into the film, there is a scene in which Babe is playing with the puppies. When he runs into a shed, the puppies all stop at the door and back away. Ominous music accompanies the scene in the dark shed as Babe looks around and sees meat hooks, butcher knives, and other sharp implements, accompanied by the distinctive buzzing of a fly. On the wall is an embroidered picture with the words: "What you eat today, walks and talks tomorrow." This adage, occasionally found posted in bakeries or small town grocery stores, seems to have a similar connotation as "you are what you eat." In the contemporary context of this film, I am not sure many people connect with it as such, but it is an interesting twist on what the film is presenting – walking, talking examples of creatures who may well be eaten and become part of someone's body. So while it does not necessarily refer to food that walks and talks today, in the context of a shed clearly used for killing live animals in a film in which the animals do walk and talk

today, the embroidered sign is an ironic and even dark comedic prop to find in the killing shed.

Hiding in the shed is Ferdinand (this takes place after the alarm clock stealing fiasco in the house), and he and Babe agree to keep quiet about this incident since currently the duck is an outcast and Babe has been warned to not consort with him. This incident parallels Wilbur's confrontation outside the smokehouse in *CW*. Babe may not know what the implements in the shed are for, just as Wilbur does not know specifically what is so ominous about the smokehouse, but he instinctively feels that this is not a good place for him. It is in this shed, later in the film, where Farmer Hoggett slaughters a duck. Why the puppies would shy away from this place is another interesting twist. Some of the puppies know that pigs are for eating and that dogs are not, from the conversation quoted above upon their first viewing of the pig. Yet, they seem afraid of the shed wherein the killing of other animals, presumably for their own eating, takes place. While it is a minor and fairly unimportant moment in the general narrative of this film, this choice of the filmmakers to have the puppies shy away from the shed metaphorically encapsulates many humans' own contradiction in eating meat – as mentioned in the introduction, very few contemporary Americans ever face or handle any aspect of the *animality* of the meat they eat – they buy it prepackaged and neatly wrapped up in the grocery store. In my experience, many people prefer not to even think about their meat as coming from living creatures – it is this disjunction that has lead many people I have met in my own activist work to eventually adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, following the thinking that, "If I don't like the idea of killing animals, than why is it okay to let others do the killing so that I can eat the animals?" On the other hand, there are many people who live much

closer to their meat – hunters and small farm operators, for instance, who indeed slaughter their own food regularly and seem to have no problem with this.

When Christmas arrives, the drama surrounding Babe's future is increased. The "chapter" begins with an intertitle (and mice reading it): "Pork is a Nice Sweet Meat." The children and grandchildren of the Hoggetts drive up as Farmer Hoggett places a Christmas decoration on the roof of the house. The family is seen in a long shot as they walk in the house together, watched from afar by a chicken perched on a cow, a goat, Maa the sheep, and the horse. Mrs. Hoggett's voice rises above the chatter: "And guess what we're having for Christmas dinner? Roast pork!" The granddaughter replies, "I hate pork!" Cut to the animals watching:

MAA (the sheep): Darn silly carry-on if you ask me.

HORSE: The cat says they call it *Christmas*.

Cut to Ferdinand perched away from the others on the weather vane. He says, "Christmas. Christmas dinner. Yeah. Dinner means death. Death means carnage. Christmas means carnage!"[138]

The film does not shy away from confronting this disjunction. The chapter title spells out what is at stake – Babe as meat. Whereas the animals' dialogue is presented as humorous and Ferdinand's diatribe is seemingly a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, from the perspective of these characters, these statements are accurate. If the

[138] He flaps off screaming something that upon repeated viewing I cannot quite make out. It could be "Christmas deserted!"

myths behind Christmas are not known or believed, the surrounding festivities could easily seem frivolous. And a celebration centered on a meal that consists of one of their own being killed and presented with great delight is indeed barbaric and based, literally, on carnage. The humor is based directly on this juxtaposition between the animals as sentient, personable characters and the animals as food and there is a black humor element to it. It is funny that Ferdinand would conflate Christmas with carnage, but his logic is not flawed.

While the animals who are not in imminent danger of being served as meat (the cow is a apparently a milk cow, so she is not in danger of slaughter – traditionally, at least until her milk runs out; the sheep seemingly until her wool growth is no longer productive – there are several references to sheep as human food, but their primary use on this farm seems to be for their wool) can look on with disdain, Ferdinand recognizes that ducks on this farm have only one purpose and he is understandably afraid and panicking.

After the light-hearted moment in which Babe somehow inexplicably gets the Christmas spirit and knows a Christmas tune (as he sings "La, la, la," to the tune of "Jingle Bells"), a very dark scene comes next. After Farmer and Mrs. Hoggett discuss holding off the slaughter of the pig until after the county fair, the establishing shot of the following scene shows the Hogget farmhouse at night, dramatically lit, as footsteps are heard. We see a CU of Fly looking concerned and a CU of Babe sleeping. We hear a chopping sound, and a duck squawks. Two CUs of Babe assure us that it was not Babe who was killed. The Hoggett family is singing in the house. The cat walks out of the shed licking her paws. This is followed by a long shot of Farmer Hoggett carrying something

Figure 15: Rosanna the duck is served for Christmas dinner.

to the house in a bag. The next day a group of the animals – the cow with a chicken and the rooster perched on her back, Babe standing in the back of a cart – watch through a window as the Hoggett family gathers for dinner. Mrs. Hoggett announces dinner. “Is it chicken?” one child asks. “No, it is duck l’orange,” she answers and walks into the dining room in a long shot with a steaming plate to the smiles of the family. We cut to the animals looking through the window, and Ferdinand hops up on cart behind the other animals. The cow says, “If you’re out here, then who is in there?” Ferdinand replies, “Her name is Rosanna.” This is followed by a CU of meat being cut. As the meat is cut in CU, we hear the animals talk outside the window.

FERDINAND: Why Rosanna? She had such a beautiful nature.

BABE: Oh Ferdinand.

F: I can’t take it anymore.

COW: Really.

F: It’s too much for a duck. It eats away at the soul. There must be kinder dispositions in far off gentler lands.

COW: The only way you’ll find happiness is to accept that the way things are is the way things are.

F: The way things are stinks. I'm not going to be a goner. I'm gone. I wish all of you the best of luck.

This is the only shot we see of actual meat in the film. It is a CU of steaming, medium rare duck arranged with slices of orange over it. It is presented in what, to a meat-eating viewer, could be called an appetizing presentation as the Hoggetts' son-in-law cuts it. We see Mrs. Hoggett in a medium shot clapping her hands together in smiling anticipation of the meal. We do not see any other shots of any other humans smiling about the meal, though we did see a glimpse of the smiling family in the long shot at the start of the scene. An air of uncertainty circulates throughout this scene. While Mrs. Hoggett is true to her character and is clearly relishing the idea of this meal, and the Hoggett's daughter says, "Oh Mother, it looks absolutely superb," one of the grandchildren says, "Yuck, chicken?" and then, after finding out it is duck, says "Well, I'm not going to eat any of it." Presumably this is the same child who earlier stated, "I hate pork." What does this child eat? Is she a vegetarian? The grandchildren are not really characters with any depth and are only spared one CU throughout the

Figure 16: The animals watch humans eat Christmas dinner/Rosanna the duck.

film, but this is an interesting aside. It offers yet another line of anti-meat-eating discourse that winds through this film – which could, perhaps, be summed up with by the thought that "eating meat is gross."

The community of animals watching from the window invest this scene with another twist on the presentation of the disjunction of animals as friends/animals as meat, the final category e disjunction in the film. Whereas the cow is never mentioned as potential food, cattle are a common source of meat, chickens are mentioned as meat within the scene, and Babe has just escaped the fate of being served here for dinner. These are the three species most commonly raised for food in the United States, and they all watch from the window at the fate of a member of a less common *food animal* – ducks are far behind chickens in numbers killed for meat in the U.S.[139] However, no chicken ever speaks in this film. And the unnamed cow character does not seem threatened by meat-eating, just as the cows in *CW* do not, though milk cows in the U.S. are the primary source of hamburger meat (when their milk production decreases with age). Also, the sheep seem to feel no threat to be eaten, though the dogs imply that they are occasionally one of the sources of human food. But this community of animals gathered at the window offers both an interesting take on a Greek chorus witnessing the humans feast on one of their own (the aforementioned, previously unnamed duck, Rosanna) and listening to Ferdinand's diatribe about the barbarity of life, the sweetness of Rosanna's disposition, and the futility of life as a duck on this farm. The nature of the category e disjunction here is that by this time in the film, an allegiance with Farmer Hoggett has been formed.

[139] In the U.S., 24,149,000 ducks were slaughtered in 2008 according to USDA reports. 9,075,261,000 chickens were slaughtered in the same year, and 35,507,500 cows and calves were killed. For comparison purposes, the number of pigs slaughtered in the U.S. in 2008 was 116, 558,900. (2008 Poultry Slaughter Annual Report, USDA, National Agriculture Statistics Service, Feb 2009 and 2008 Livestock Slaughter Summary, National Agriculture Statistics Service, Feb 2009.)

He has honored the special connection between himself and Babe and spared the pig from his appointed fate. But now he sits down to a meal of someone else the animals know. This is the final contradiction which the film does not ever quite confront. I will discuss this aspect in the final chapter.

The closeness of the animals staring in through the window at the humans –the chickens sitting on the cow's back, and, hardly noticeable, the mice crawling around the cow's horns – reinforce the "us versus them" attitude that the animals face in their dealings with the hegemonic humans. They are subject to the rules as created by the humans (and enforced by the supervising dogs) and they are continually encouraged to conform to them without question. It should be noted that it is primarily the non-*food* animals who discourage the questioning (or at least animals who are not seemingly regarded as food animals on this farm – the milk cow, the cat, and the dogs).

The community of animals is well aware of the realities of meat on this farm, though it takes cat's conversation with Babe an hour into the film to make him really believe it and accept it. After a second confrontation in the house between Babe and Duchess, the cat apologizes to Babe and then maliciously tells him some "truths." This is in a chapter entitled "Beware the Bad Cat," and the scene takes place late at night when Babe has been invited by Farmer Hoggett into the house (where, traditionally, only cats and dogs are allowed) and after the humans (and Fly) have gone to sleep. The scene is accompanied by the thunder and lightning of a storm outside.

> DUCHESS: Look, I probably shouldn't say this, but I'm not sure if you realize how much the other animals are laughing at you for this sheep dog business.

BABE: Why would they do that?

DUCHESS: They say that you've forgotten that you are a pig. Isn't that silly. They even say that you don't know what pigs are for?

BABE: What do you mean, what pigs are for?

DUCHESS: You know, why pigs are here?

BABE: Why are any of us here?

DUCHESS: Well, the cow's here to be milked. The dogs are here to help the boss's husband with the sheep. And I'm here to be beautiful and affectionate to the boss.

BABE: Yes.

DUCHESS: The fact is, pigs don't have a purpose. Just like ducks don't have a purpose. Alright, for your own sake, I'll be blunt. Why do the bosses keep ducks? To eat them. So, why do the bosses keep a pig? The fact is that animals that don't seem to have a purpose really do have a purpose. The bosses have to eat. It's probably the most noble purpose of all when you come to think about it.

BABE: They eat pigs?

DUCHESS: Pork, they call it. Or bacon. They only call them pigs when they are alive.

BABE: But I'm a sheep-pig.

DUCHESS: The bosses husband is just playing a little game with you. Believe me, sooner or later every pig gets eaten. That's the way the world works. Oh? I haven't upset you have I?

Dramatic music crescendos, amid the lighting flashes and thunder crashes. Babe runs out the dog door and into the barn. He consults Fly to see if what the cat told him is true.

BABE: Are pigs for eating?

FLY: Who told you that?

BABE: The cat told me. Pigs don't have a purpose except to be eaten by humans. Is it true?

FLY: It's true. for many pigs, it's true.

BABE: So my mother and my father and my brothers and sisters all?

FLY: Probably dear. Do you want to talk about it?

BABE: No, it's alright. I understand. I'll be alright. Even, the boss?

FLY: Yes dear.

Babe goes into a severe depression after this and only nurturing by Fly and then "the boss" (Farmer Hoggett) gets him out of it. The conversation with the cat recalls the existential nature of the lines by the narrator in the first scene in discussing pig paradise and Rex's speech about each animal accepting his or her place in the general scheme of things. While these themes are typical of a coming-of-age narrative where a youthful character is attempting to find his or her place in the world amid limitations of class (e.g., *Billy Elliot*, 2000) or gender (e.g., *The Whale Rider*, 2002), in the context of this film, the

place in the world in which the character finds himself is life-threatening and finding his place in this world means saving his own life, just as it does for Wilbur in *CW*.

Power and Hegemony in the film

The hegemonic force in *Babe* is centered on a species, humans, more than on the masculine that we see in *CW*, emphasizing the "H" in my adaptation of Grinner's SCHWAMP framework. The purposes of the animals, their daily activities and the narrative turns, hinge on the decisions and needs of the humans. This is a more visibly working farm than we see on either the Arable farm or the Zuckerman farm in *CW*. We find a horse drawing a cart in both, but in *Babe*, the dogs work the sheep, Farmer Hoggett shears the sheep, puppies are put on sale, and an animal is taken to the shed and killed for dinner. The animals' activities are lead by the male farmer, but in his actions and attitude can be seen the influence of Mrs. Hoggett. Farmer Hoggett does not insist that they delay killing Babe. Instead, he persuades her that they might benefit from waiting and letting him fatten up for the county fair. But it is clear that he feels a bond with this animal even before he plots to enter Babe in the national sheep herding contest. He also seems hesitant about admitting to his wife that he is experimenting with letting the pig herd the sheep, using her absence on a trip as his chance to carry out his plans.

While there is no mention of religion at all in *Babe*, the Hoggetts do fit into the other categories – SxHWAxP. They are a heterosexual couple of humans who are white, able-bodied and property owners – specifically, as I disccused in *CW*, they *own* the animals from whom they earn their living, primarily from the wool they gather from the

sheep flock. These are the traits that are valued within the ideology expressed in this film. As an indication of this, Rex the dog manifests some part of the power-knowledge on the farm as a kind of overseer for the human *owners*, especially when he calls the animals together and admonishes Babe and Ferdinand for their intrusion into the house. His maleness and able-bodiedness play into this power, as reinforced when he loses his dominant position after he hurts his paw and is no longer able-bodied. Likewise, Farmer Hoggett refrains from allowing the veterinarian to remove some of Rex's "maleness" when he refuses to have Rex neutered (see discussion below).

The only other masculine influences within the film are the short visit by the veterinarian to examine Rex after he has fought with Fly and bitten Hoggett's hand, the Hoggett's son-in-law who visits with the family for Christmas, and the rules committee at the sheep dog trials, all of whom are depicted with various levels of power-knowledge, but generally higher than other characters who are not as SCHWAMP-like as they are shown to be (i.e., they are all male, human, white, and able-bodied, with no indication otherwise that they do not match the other components of the framework). The vet offers a harsh option – neutering Rex – to lower his aggression (showing not only his own maleness but that he has the power over others to remove theirs). This option seems to shock Farmer Hoggett's sensibilities as well as concern him for Rex's earning potential as a stud for future litters of a good bloodline of sheepherding dogs. The son-in-law's input involves calling Farmer Hoggett's attention to his backward ways and lack of profit on the farm and will be discussed in the final chapter as it pertains to the setting of the film.

The rules committee is a group of six older, white males who confront Farmer Hoggett after finding he has entered a pig in the sheep herding contest. They reprimand him for flouting the rules of the contest but find that there is no specific prohibition in the rules to exclude the pig, so they let the contest continue. The male hegemony of the sheep herding community is overcome here by the semi-emasculated Farmer Hoggett, semi-emasculated in that he goes forward with his plans despite the possible scorn of his wife, but he does so when she is conveniently out of town and unable to offer him any immediate resistance. This hegemonic side-stepping is also mirrored in the emasculation of Rex, the nonhuman supervisor of the farm, who is also shunted to the side because of his over-aggression. Rex's emasculation is nearly literal at the suggestion of the veterinarian, but he is rescued from being neutered by Farmer Hoggett's disapproval – Hoggett seems worried about the lost profits from future litters Rex may father, but he also seem affronted at the thought of Rex's lost "manhood" and the end of his noble bloodline.

However, this film is rife with challenges to male and the wider SCHWAMP hegemony. Even the title character, while referred to in the masculine, is named with a word that is both slang for a good looking woman and a word that means "infant." Undiegetically, he is voiced by a female human and is portrayed by female pigs. It is a common practice in animated films to use female actresses to voice adolescent or younger male roles because the higher pitch of the female voice coincides with a male youth's voice before it has changed while allowing for a more experienced performer in the role. The choice to use female pigs to portray Babe (as was done with Wilbur as well) was made mostly for aesthetic reasons by the animal trainer so that the external sexual

organs of male pigs would not be visible.[140] Nevertheless, the lack of genitalia is visually notable and the name "Babe" does not confer any air of masculinity to the pig. Rex's aggression toward the pig as Babe takes on his duties recalls parallels in gender-based dramas where male characters felt threatened by the empowerment of female characters as they assumed traditionally male roles. These challenges to SCHWAMP ideology contribute to the mildly subversive discourse that circulates throughout the film.

Conclusion

I leave the final discussion of *Babe* for the conclusion in Chapter 7. The following chapter will discuss the lives of actual pigs in contemporary American culture with a historical overview of the domestication of pigs so that I may better contrast the setting of these films. In the final chapter I will bring together the analyses of both *Babe* and *CW* and other incidental and non-fiction depictions explored in Chapter 6 with a discussion of the enigmatic settings and time periods of *CW* and *Babe* in relation to the settings in which pigs are raised in the U.S.

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[140] Noonan, *Babe* (2003), George Miller in DVD commentary.

Chapter 5: The Lives of Actual Pigs

The discourse around pigs and meat in contemporary society has its historical roots in the transition of the human species from hunter-gatherer society to the development of agrarian patterns over 10,000 years ago. To fully understand the depiction of pigs in contemporary films, I will start with a discussion of the early domestication of pigs, followed by the development of pig meat industry in the U.S. and the development of pig slaughter practices and their influences beyond the meat industry. Following that will be brief section that will describe the life of pigs in the wild along with anecdotal evidence of the charm of pigs.

The Historical and Sacred Pig

The exact period and place that pigs were first domesticated by humans is not known, though anthropologists place it in the range of 4000 to 8000 B.C.[141] Pigs were an easily domesticated animal – almost domesticating themselves, as Lyall Watson points out. They enjoy the company of other species, including humans, and share a similar omnivorous diet as humans, including the convenient leftovers that we throw away. It was helpful in the domestication process that pigs are not continuous feeders like most herbivores and that they sleep through the night. Also, pigs are not territorial – they will follow traveling humans without the need of vigorous herding.

[141] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 96.

Pigs have a complex and sometimes revered relationship with humans in various cultures, and the prohibition against eating them in certain cultures and religions magnifies this complexity. There were boar cults of the Celts. Demeter, the Greek goddess of crops, was associated with pigs and was sometimes pictured wearing a pig mask. Sacred pigs are often associated with fertility, menstruation, and the magic of women in Pacific cultures. In Hinduism, Varaha, the great primal boar, was the third incarnation of Vishnu, who took the form of a pig in order to rescue earth from a demon. Various Christian saints have been associated with pigs, including Saint Kevin, Saint Blasius, and Saint Anthony.[142] But just as often as pigs have been held in honor, they have been associated with gluttony, lust, and greed – mostly simply due to their prodigious litters and their thorough enjoyment of food and sleep.

The religious prohibitions against eating pigs, most notably in Islam and Judaism, according to Watson, are based on historically practical and even economic reasons, and are not related to the misconception of diseases associated with eating pigs, diseases no more likely to transfer to humans than diseases found in cattle and sheep. In the beginning of the first agricultural revolution, which took place 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East, the human population grew rapidly beyond the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and societies had to make a choice between growing food and raising livestock. Feeding crops to pigs, who offered no other services or unique products beyond their meat, was inefficient and threatened the new agricultural system. Pigs, unlike grazing herbivores, eat the same food that humans eat. Pigs had become an ecological and economical hazard to more arid areas in the Middle East, so, as tasty as

[142] Ibid., 141-44.

their meat was, they were a liability to these societies and decrees were made forbidding the eating of pigs.[143]

Another historical strike against eating pigs is that certain cultures have never been comfortable with just how human-like pigs are. Smart and omnivorous like humans, early cannibals noted that pig flesh tastes similar to human flesh – an association with which societies claiming to be more "civilized" were not at all comfortable.[144] The danger to agricultural adaptations in early civilizations and the subsequent proclamations of pigs as unclean has besmirched the reputation of pigs in Western societies ever since, an association that has never taken hold in East Asian and Malay Archipelago societies where various species of wild pigs live in close proximity to humans, who have long included them in their diet. The East Asian and island habitats of pigs tend to be less arid, and the woodland or jungle undergrowth provides these pigs with plenty of easily accessible food that does not infringe on the humans' crops.[145]

Whereas pigs are now found living wild and domesticated on all continents except Antarctica, true pigs are not native to the Western Hemisphere. Relatives of pigs who share the same suborder (Suiformes), Peccaries have been classified under the distinct family Tayassuidae and are found in South and North America, having migrated across the Siberian land bridge about 10 million years ago.[146] They shared a common ancestor with pigs 40 million years ago, but the three living species of modern peccaries have distinctive features that separate them from pigs, though they have filled similar biological niches and have evolved similar adaptations as true pigs. Indigenous tribes of

[143] Ibid., 165-66.
[144] Ibid., 143.
[145] Ibid., 167.
[146] Ibid., 57.

Central and South America hunt peccaries and eat them, though none of the three species have ever been raised domestically.

The first true pigs were brought to the Americas by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493.[147] Eight pigs were turned loose in Hispaniola, and by 1497, their progeny could be found in Jamaica and Cuba as well. The first pigs to be brought to the mainland can be traced to Hernando Cortes who, in 1519, brought along a herd that was turned loose and that he and his men fed on during his eventual conquest of the Aztecs. In 1539, Hernando de Soto brought fifteen pigs with him (two male, thirteen female) to Florida from Cuba. In their journey through what would later be called the Southern states, de Soto's herd grew and was occasionally dispersed along the way with the American Indians, thus populating the area with pigs whose descendents can still be found roaming free today.[148]

The human relationship with pigs is complex and diverse throughout the centuries and throughout the world. For instance, England in the 14th through the 19th centuries saw the rise of the ubiquitous *cottage pig*: "an animal, often single, permanently housed in a pen or yard, and fed almost entirely on kitchen waste."[149] Cottage pigs were kept by the economically challenged lower classes, especially in large cities and might have contributed to the denigration of pig reputation. Pigs were often one of the most convenient ways for the economically challenged classes to avoid starvation or the poorhouse, raising the pigs literally in their houses or under their porches until the pigs

[147] Watson points out that there are some recent fossil finds in the U.S. that may indicate pigs showing signs of domestication were introduced to North America as early as the late Stone Age, but nothing has been identified definitively yet. Ibid., 108.
[148] Ibid., 109.
[149] Ibid., 119.

were large enough to bring a good price. The practice of selling their pigs so they could afford cheaper food for themselves was common among the poorest people.

Meat consumption was high in Europe compared to other areas and nowhere as high as in England.[150] As the English settlements grew in North America, the high meat consumption came with them, and this trend has continued into the 21st century. In 2002, the U.S. was second in the world in overall meat consumption, with 36 million metric tons consumed that year. China was first, with 68 million metric tons. In meat consumed per person, the U.S. is slightly behind Denmark, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Cyprus at 125 kilograms of meat per person in 2002. The world average is 40 kilograms per person.[151]

Before the 18th century, American pigs were mostly free range, even slightly feral, roaming the woods to be caught and slaughtered as needed. The American Revolution brought new economic opportunities for American goods, and pig herds began to swell. As people began to spread out west, their trusty pig herds came with them.

> The pigs of the time were well suited to traveling. . . . They were long in the leg, short-bodied, and slab-sided, with rough hair and capable of defending themselves against predators and more than ready to play their part in the winning of the West. They were called "stump-rooters," "snake-eaters," or "wound-makers," among other things, but they always came when they were called, and they trotted along behind the wagons in all weathers.[152]

In the U.S., pigs were a significant part of the early westward expansion of the 19th century, though their role was largely overshadowed by historical nostalgia of the

[150] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 54.
[151] Based on statistics collected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAOSTAT on-line statistical service (FAO: Rome, 2005). Earth Trends, World Resources Institute, displays FAO statistics online as the Agriculture and Food Searchable Database. http://earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/index.php?theme=8.
[152] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 122.

cattle culture of the further West. Early homesteaders found the Ohio and Mississippi River basins ideal for settlement and perfect for pigs. Indian corn, which proved to be a convenient and profitable feed for pigs, grew easily and converted lean pigs quickly into a valuable and easy-to-raise commodity, more valuable than the corn itself. The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged a further rush of European immigration that found this area perfect for settlement, though the ideal lands were already taken. They discovered that paying the bills was a challenge, and, while their farms generally centered on agriculture rather than livestock, homesteaders soon found that "hog money" from "mortgage lifters" (another pig nickname) often kept them financially afloat.[153]

Before refrigeration, slaughter was seasonal and took place in a central locations where the pigs were slaughtered, butchered, and packed into barrels and sent off on trains or flat boats. Cincinnati grew to be the center of pig "production," but with the coming of the Civil War, most of the slaughter and packing moved further north, away from the war and toward the greater railroad hub of Chicago, where it remains today.[154]

The Rise of the Slaughterhouse

The Union Stock Yards were the center of the meat industry in Chicago by the end of the 19th century. Various smaller companies worked out of the more than one-mile square complex in southwestern Chicago, but the five major companies (Armour, Swift, Morris, National, and Schwartzschild) slaughtered 90% of the animals who were

[153] Ibid., 127.
[154] Ibid., 126.

brought in – over 400,000,000 from the time it opened in 1865 to 1900.[155] It was in the Chicago slaughterhouses of the Union Stock Yards that Upton Sinclair, a young socialist and social critic, was so appalled and inspired to write his groundbreaking novel *The Jungle*, which exposed the horrific working conditions that mostly immigrant workers faced and the filthy conditions in which the meat was handled.

> Meanwhile . . . the men upon the floor were going about their work. Neither squeals of hogs nor tears of visitors made any difference to them; one by one they hooked up the hogs, and one by one with a swift stroke they slit their throats. There was a long line of hogs, with squeals and lifeblood ebbing away together; until at last each started again, and vanished with a splash into a huge vat of boiling water.
>
> It was all so very businesslike that one watched it fascinated. It was pork-making by machinery, pork-making by applied mathematics. And yet somehow the most matter-of-fact person could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests--and so perfectly within their rights! They had done nothing to deserve it; and it was adding insult to injury, as the thing was done here, swinging them up in this cold-blooded, impersonal way, without a pretense of apology, without the homage of a tear. Now and then a visitor wept, to be sure; but this slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory.[156]

Sinclair dressed as a worker and spent seven weeks in the Union Stock Yards doing his research.

Originally published in installments in the leading socialist weekly newspaper *Appeal to Reason* (published in Girard, Kansas) as a response to the meat industry lobby blocking the introduction of federal meat inspection laws, *The Jungle* piqued the interest of New York publishers who were interested in issuing the installments in book form but were intimidated by the power of the meat industry.[157] After an appeal for prepaid orders

[155] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 58.
[156] Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Pasadena: Upton Sinclair, 1920), 40-41.
[157] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 59.

for the book was made by the newspaper and 1,200 orders came in, Doubleday, Page and Company agreed to publish it, but only after they sent one of their editors into the stockyards to verify the conditions.[158] The effect of the book was immediate. Charles Patterson writes:

> *The Jungle*, which contains some of the most harrowing scenes in American literature, created an immediate sensation when it was published in January, 1906. The meat industry issued vehement denials, but to no avail. The public outcry over the diseased and rotten meat it was eating was so strong that within six months of the book's publication, Congress passed two new meat inspection laws – the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Beef Inspection Act.[159]

At the same time that meat inspection laws were being implemented, the process of slaughter became more and more mechanized.

The process of division of labor and assembly line (or *disassembly line* as Jeremy Rifkin, author of *Beyond Beef,* points out[160]) production of slaughter began in the mid-18th century, a herald of the industrialization of the manufacturing process of the modern era. First came the division of labor, which James Barrett describes:

> By the turn of the century, the job was still done by hand, but the all-around butcher had been replaced by a killing gang of 157 men divided into 78 different "trades," each man performing the same minute operation a thousand times during a full workday."[161]

In the Union Stock Yards, companies such as Armour and Company and Swift and Company developed this procedure to a high degree. The Union Stock Yards' assembly

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[158] Editor Isaac Marcosson writes: "Day and night I prowled over its foul-smelling domain and I was able to see with my own eyes much that Sinclair had never even heard about."Jimmy M. Skaggs, *Prime Cut : Livestock Raising and Meatpacking in the United States, 1607-1983*, 1st ed. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 119.
[159] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 64.
[160] Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* (New York: Dutton, 1992), 118.
[161] James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922*, The Working Class in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 25.

line dismantlement of animals so impressed Henry Ford that it inspired his innovative ideas in car manufacturing.[162]

This is the association through which Charles Patterson makes his argument that the industrialization of animal slaughter was directly connected to the Nazi's holocaust of Jews ("The road to Auschwitz begins at the slaughterhouse," Patterson writes[163]). Ford published anti-Semitic editorials in his weekly newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent,* which was distributed nationally by Ford automobile dealers. These publications, eventually brought together in a book-length compilation entitled *The International Jew* (known as *The Eternal Jew* in Germany), became a best-seller in war-ravaged Germany in the 1920s. It carried the weight of the Ford name, a famously successful American entrepreneur known throughout the world, though it is not clear if Ford ever read the articles himself or wrote the editorials that were written under his byline. Nevertheless, Hitler greatly admired Ford and obviously believed in the anti-Semitic leanings of *The Eternal Jew,* and so, as Patterson argues, assembly-line techniques developed by the slaughterhouses of the Union Stock Yards and adapted for automobile manufacturing and dispersed world-wide by the international arms of the automobile corporation of Henry Ford were adapted to efficiently kill Jews in concentration camps.[164]

A hundred years later, assembly-line slaughter is substantially the same process developed at the Union Stock Yards except for the much faster line speeds and the greatly increased overall volume.[165]

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[162] Henry Ford and Samuel Crowther, *My Life and Work* (Garden City, N.Y.,: Doubleday, Page & company, 1922), 81.
[163] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 53.
[164] Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka*, 73.
[165] Ibid., 64.

The Introduction of "Factory Farming"

Whereas the slaughter of pigs has not changed much in a century, the lives of most actual pigs raised in America, and increasingly in Europe and China, after 1970 is radically different from their lives anytime in history or pre-history as detailed in Chapter 2. The details of the rise of factory farming offers insight into the happenstance conditions that brought them about.

The first factory farm can be traced directly to Cecile Steele's egg business in Delaware in 1923 and a shipping error. Steele put in an order from a local hatchery for 50 chicks to replenish her laying hens and mistakenly received 500. She built a shed and raised them inside it, instead of sending them back, and sold the surviving 387 chickens for meat instead of eggs. The next year, she ordered 1000 and thus initiated the inventive new process of raising animals indoors, away from fresh air and sunlight . . . and predators.[166] The practice spread throughout the Delmarva Peninsula and the region became the leading producer of broiler chickens and a harbinger of modern farming practices.

The development of the factory pig farm was a bit more deliberate. Erik Marcus describes it:

> In the 1980s and 1990s, Wendell Murphy almost single-handedly restructured North Carolina's pig industry. Prior to Murphy, the industry was controlled by family farmers, who generally raised fewer than twenty pigs at a time. Murphy's company contracted with these farmers and arranged to build massive pig sheds on their properties. The farmers essentially became modern-day sharecroppers, raising more pigs than ever before, but now receiving only a small payment for each pig. Murphy, however, made out spectacularly. He became a North Carolina

[166] Ibid., 38.

> State Senator, drafted laws that were favorable to large pig famers, and rapidly became the pork industry's dominant figure.[167]

The concentration of animal production is one of the elements of what Ian Bowler in *The Geography of Agriculture in Developed Market Economies*, calls the *third agricultural revolution*, which originated in the U.S. at the start of the 20th century. It is characterized by "'mechanization,' 'chemical farming,' and 'food manufacturing' . . . to describe the rapid agricultural changes that have successively swept through agriculture in developed countries over the last 50 years."[168] "It aims to sell crops and livestock at the lowest possible cost, " Stull and Broadway add.[169] This third agricultural revolution also involves a shift of the importance from farmers caring for their animals – tending to their flocks or the idea of Pigmanship, introduced in Chapter 1 – to corporations treating animals as commodities – animal *units* whose *production* must be accelerate, regardless of animal welfare concerns, to not just maximize profits, but to continually increase profits for the sake of corporate shareholders. This is the reality of modern, corporate agribusiness.

The Lives of Actual Pigs

Details of the life cycle of factory farmed pigs are given in depth in Chapter 2. To balance the final conclusions in this study, I offer some details about pigs outside the confines of industrial pig farming.

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[167] Marcus, *Meat Market*, 9.
[168] Ian R. Bowler, *The Geography of Agriculture in Developed Market Economies* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1992), 11.
[169] Stull and Broadway, *Slaughterhouse Blues*, 10.

There are seven recognized species of pigs. Contemporary domesticated pigs have been bred from a variety of breeds, but the Eurasian boar (sometimes known as the "wild boar" or *Sus scrofa*) is the most direct relative in the wild to the common domestic pig, which is often now given his/her own subspecies title – *Sus scrofa domesticus*. Pigs in their habitats range from the ubiquitous but diminutive island pigs of southeast Asia to the African pigs – warthogs, bushpigs and forest hogs – to the pig-like peccaries of North and South America. The species, and breeds within the species, share many traits. In general, they are, like humans, intelligent, adaptable, and omnivorous. Lyall Watson, who holds degrees in marine biology as well as animal behavior and who grew up in Africa in close proximity to an orphaned warthog, clearly has an affinity for pigs and offers the following description:

> If I had to choose just one word to sum up the nature of pigs, it would have to be "gregarious." Pigs are highly social, living in family groups that maintain close contact and a gamy kind of togetherness that we associate more with primates than with ungulates. They are intensely aware of each other at all times, keeping in touch with a concert of small agreeable sounds, the sort of sounds that always get answered and help maintain group structure, even when they are out of sight of one another in dense undergrowth. It is not for nothing that such tight little societies are called "sounders."[170]

The males in most pig species are kicked out of the families after they mature, but in some, they stay in close contact with the family. Pigs are not territorial, but they usually adopt a home range that may overlap with that of other sounders. They have good eye-sight and good color identification and an excellent sense of smell. The basic unit is the mother family, which consists of a mother pig and her litter who stay attached until and sometimes after the next litter is born the following year. Most species build some kind of

[170] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 24-25.

nest for farrowing and sometimes for sleeping – something most species prefer to do up to 12 hours a day ("legendary and awesome sleepers," Watson affectionately calls them[171]). Some species sleep together in contact with each other, seemingly for the comfort of the contact as well as to keep warm in cold weather.

What seems to be universally held by anyone who has spent time with pigs who are allowed to be pig-like is that they are impressively intelligent – on par with apes and dolphins, even, if the anecdotal and rare scientific studies are accurate.[172] Watson sums up his regard for pigs with a pronouncement of the short-sightedness of ethological studies of pig consciousness:

> My contention is that present knowledge already shows that pigs can and do distinguish between self and non-self and that they are able to comprehend quite complex circumstances, and to respond to them in meaningful, perhaps even conceptual ways.
>
> Pigs process thoughts. They understand "if, then" situations, they apply previous experience to novel circumstances, and they interact with their environments, and with each other, as though they are conscious of the consequences.[173]

His enthusiasm aside, my own experience with pigs confirms these same conclusions – pigs, when allowed to be, are personable, intelligent, gregarious, and adaptable. They easily befriend humans and dogs. The puppies who lived with me when I gave home to a rescued pig, new to the world themselves, were quite confused and interested in this strange but playful animal living in my fenced-off garden. As was I. The games one plays with puppies are not quite the same that interested Howie the pig. He would not chase balls, but he was interested in the balls themselves. The closest thing to a game we came

[171] Ibid., 25.
[172] Ibid., 26.
[173] Ibid., 193.

up with was a sort of tag that involved darting from one spot to another in a great rush, and then stopping and staring at each other to see who would dart next.

I have never met a pig who did not relish a belly rub. A 600 pound pig, bred to grow quickly and be slaughtered at 250 pounds, can barely stand and move around when he is allowed to live out his life in peace at the various farm sanctuaries around the country. The older pigs at Wilderness Ranch outside Loveland, Colorado, would get up just a few hours each day to eat and drink and root around their yard before returning to the comfort of their nests. But they would all rouse themselves up enough to, at the first touch of a friendly hand, roll over on their backs to allow easy access to their enormous bellies for a rub. Full-grown men use electric prods, metal rods or, as can be seen in the figure from *Pork Magazine*, baseball bats to load and unload 250 lb. pigs from trucks, but I have seen a child's massaging touch to be enough to bring a snort of satisfaction and a gentle rollover by a 600 lb pig.

Figure 17. Image from "Fatigued Pigs: The Final Link" from *Pork Magazine.*

Conclusion

This chapter provides a basis on which to evaluate the presentation of pigs within the discourse analysis that I perform on *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe*, along with the incidental and non-fiction portrayals that I will explore in Chapter 6. I will bring these actual pig

details together in the discussion of the time and place setting in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

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Chapter 6: Non-Fiction, Television, and Incidental Depictions

In this chapter, I will first explore the depictions of pigs that fall into the category of documentary portrayals, or, more broadly, non-fiction depictions of pigs. These range from undercover investigations by animal activists and animal welfare organizations to promotional depictions by industry organizations and finally to a depiction of pigs on television produced in a tabloid news style by a cable network along with a discussion of pigs used in advertisements. The next section will give a brief discourse analysis of incidental depictions of pigs, ones where the pigs are not portrayed as characters but are used as a narrative device within a fictive film or television presentation.

Non-Fiction Depictions of Pigs

Images of factory farms and slaughterhouses are rarely seen. Surprisingly, brief appearances of an actual factory farm and a slaughterhouse were seen in two fictive films in the 2000s – I have only found these two depictions that have appeared in anything like a mainstream theatre in the U.S. in the past ten years. In the wryly comedic film *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004), the title character works for a few days in a chicken factory farm and the horrific conditions in which the birds live are used simply as in illustration of a really bad job (for the humans). In the fictive adaptation of Eric Schlosser's non-fiction best seller *Fast Food Nation* (2006), the executive from fast food chain

"Mickey's" visits the slaughterhouse and finds the deplorable conditions in which the mostly immigrant (mostly *illegal* immigrant, at that) employees work. Depictions of the beef slaughter process are depicted in explicit detail. The film was not a commercial or critical success, but it did offer a unique and insightful portrayal of the complex situations that slaughterhouse workers face, one that has rarely been seen (if ever) in even the art house theatres in which this film was mostly exhibited.

Actual pigs and actual factory farm conditions are rarely seen in documentary or non-fiction films because the agribusiness prohibition against bringing cameras into factory farms and slaughterhouses severely limits the ability of documentary filmmakers or activists in exposing the conditions that exist within them. On the side of agribusiness are food disparagement laws,[174] many of them strengthened after the loss in court and appeal by a group of Texas cattlemen against Oprah Winfrey and Howard Lyman.[175] "The Oprah victory," says Ronald Collins of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "was based on very narrow statutory grounds. And while it was an important win, it was a costly one, which would have bankrupted most other defendants. That is why these laws need to be repealed or struck down – because they punish the innocent for exercising their First Amendment rights."[176] More recently the Animal Enterprise Protection Act of 1992 was amended and strengthened in 2006 under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) which includes increased penalties for economic damages and classifies these acts as *terrorism* as well as penalizes them much more

[174] E.g., Texas' Title 4, Chapter 96: False Disparagement in Perishable Food Products, http://www.cspinet.org/foodspeak/laws/states/texas.htm.
[175] The suit was brought because Lyman discussed the practice of "feeding cows to cows" and the link from this to Mad Cow Disease – to which Oprah replied that she would never eat a hamburger again . . . and cattle futures dropped dramatically in response. See Howard Lyman with Glen Merzer, *The Mad Cowboy*, 1989.
[176] http://www.cspinet.org/foodspeak/.

harshly. “Under AETA, well-meaning citizens peacefully trying to bring about social change become the domestic equivalent of enemy combatants,” writes Law Professor David Cassuto.[177] Classifying peaceful animal activists as terrorists has increased the power of the agribusiness industries to discourage undercover investigations and, in an example of Foucault’s power-knowledge at work, decreased public access to and, likely, awareness of factory farming.

Undercover Depictions

The most explicit depictions of factory farming can be found in animal activist investigative documentaries. Two of the most coordinated efforts in this movement are simply entitled “Pig Farm Investigations” or alternately, “Belcross Pig Farm Investigation with James Cromwell” and “Seaboard Pig Farm Investigation narrated by Rue McClanahan.” Each of these are posted on the PETA.tv website as well as several places on YouTube. On YouTube, these two videos are listed as having around 25,000 views each by 2010.

“Belcross Pig Farm Investigation,” produced in 1999, features Oscar-nominated actor James Cromwell, the human star of *Babe*, as the host/narrator in a video produced by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which “with over two million members and supporters, is the largest animal rights organization in the world.”[178]

The nine minute and 25 second video begins with a medium shot of James Cromwell in front of a sign with the PETA logo on it and a slogan that cannot be fully read, but probably reads “Fighting Animal [Abuse] Around the Wo[rld].” Cromwell

[177] David N. Cassuto, “Crime vs. Terrorism: The Case Against AETA,” http://animalblawg.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/crime-vs-terrorism-the-case-against-aeta/.
[178] http://www.peta.org/about/index.asp.

speaks calmly and unemotionally. He introduces himself and then describes where the farm is (Belcross Farm in North Carolina) and he describes each scene as it appears, offering details beyond what we can see that must have been noted by the undercover investigator, who shot the footage while working at the factory farm for three months, such as the state of the pig (e.g., "pregnant") or why the animal is limping. Sometimes Cromwell describes what the image does not show clearly because of the nature of the acquisition of the footage. No special effects appear to be used and the video is shot crudely, sometimes with clear indication of the undercover nature of the recording, such as the visible sides of the bag within which the camera is concealed. The mesh covering through which the camera shoots is sometimes more prominent than other times. For nine minutes, Cromwell describes scene after scene.

Here is a list of the scenes with a brief description of the action seen:

1) James Cromwell appears on camera in front of PETA sign and introduces the video. (:30)
2) Lame female pig wedged in between rows of gestation crates being beaten and kicked by workers with an iron rod ("they know she can't walk, but they beat her and kick her for over an hour"). She is then shown outside the building, with her throat cut ("They choose to partially slice her throat, even though a captive bolt gun is available.") Finally she is killed with the bolt gun. (length – 1:30)
3) Female pigs moved out of gestation crates, beaten with metal rods, and sworn at by workers. (1:00)

4) Two female pigs are confined in gestation crates together and one is penetrated with cane. Worker is heard describing penetrating a male pig's anus the day before. (:30)

5) Lame female pig is driven out of building to incinerator and beaten with metal rod ("She is forced to walk to the incinerator where a farm manager beats here with a metal pole.") (:30)

6) Lame female pig, without the use of her back legs, is forced to drag herself outside. She is shot with a captive bolt gun. As she thrashes about afterward, a worker drops a cement block on her head repeatedly. (1:00)

Figure 18. The worker holds a cement block above the pig whose throat was just slashed. In the next moment, he drops it on her head. (PetaTV.com)

7) A lame female pig is dragged out of the building and is beaten with a pipe wrench. The screaming of the pig is heard clearly throughout this clip. After repeated bludgeoning, and while still thrashing, her throat is cut in successively deeper cuts. She continues to thrash. Cromwell's narration points out that experts viewing this video noted that the pig displayed various signs of consciousness as the workers begin skinning her with an instrument the size of an Exacto knife, including vocalizations, head movements, and eye blinking, even after half of her back is sliced open and skin peeled back. (3:45)

8) Cromwell appears on camera again in the same setting as scene 1. His dialogue is as follows:

> In recent years, the emergence of factory farms like this one has meant bad news for pigs. A decrease in the number of producers translates into an increase in abuses at all levels of hog farm production – from breeding farms, to transportation, to slaughterhouses. A sobering fact: the largest U.S. slaughterhouses kill one pig every three seconds. Such an accelerated speed means that millions of animals have their throats split or are dropped into scalding tanks while they are still conscious. Pigs are sensitive, intelligent animals. If you are moved at all by this film, please – do your part. Stop eating pigs. The world will be a better place for all of us. Thank you.[179]

The video ends with a full screen graphic with PETA's address and phone number.

The pigs in this video are not the shiny pink ones that are depicted in the films previously discussed. They are lit poorly and captured on tape with small, hidden cameras. They are dirty with their own feces (there is no dirt in these buildings, so there is no mud for them to roll in), and they are female pigs who have been kept in crates too small for them to turn around in for all their lives, so they are fat with no muscle tone to their bodies. We hear a variety of the sounds actual pigs make in these video segments. As mentioned in Chapter 3, pigs produce a myriad of sounds that have been classified into five distinct groups: croaks, deep grunts, high grunts, screams, and squeaks.[180] In this video, we hear the heart-wrenching screams that pigs are capable of vocalizing. In segment seven, the scream from the pig on camera is as long and sustained as any I have ever heard – for me, that sound is what caused me the most empathetic pain. Perhaps from repeated viewing of artificial violence in Hollywood films, it is possible to become slightly numbed to imagery of violence, but the best acting performance would be hard

[179] http://www.petatv.com/tvpopup/video.asp?video=pigfarminv&Player=qt.
[180] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 78-79.

pressed to ever imitate the pain and outrage that seem to be expressed in that pig's screams. And while outrage may sound like an anthropomorphic attribution, in viewing this video, it is hard to imagine that such a sentiment is not shared by these intelligent and sensitive animals.

This video depicts females pigs kept for breeding purposes and specifically ones who are nearing the end of their productivity as breeding pigs and it clearly shows abuses within an already harsh industry. The practices that are shown are not industry practices but abuses that led to indictments – the first ever felony indictments for cruelty to animals by farm workers.[181] While the fines were minimal ($221 to $500 plus court costs) and only one of the indictments led to jail time (140 days, plus each indictment involved suspended sentences and unsupervised probation), the precedent of such a conviction laid the groundwork for various other investigations. Another PETA investigation and video from 2000, this one this one hosted by actress Rue McClanahan, exposed abuses at a Seaboard Farms pig CAFO in Oklahoma. The abuses in this four minute and 23 second video were mostly done to injured or undersized pigs in the "nurseries" or "finishing sheds." Footage shows employees beating and kicking pigs, bludgeoning them with metal rods, and "euthanizing" undersized pigs by slamming them against concrete floors. This video led to "the first case in U.S. history in which a farmer pleaded to felony cruelty to animals for injuring and killing animals raised for food."[182]

In 2009, HBO Documentaries premiered a feature length film on its cable channel entitled, *Death on a Factory Farm*. This project was produced by HBO and featured an undercover investigator working for the Humane Farming Association (HFA), "the

[181] http://www.goveg.com/belcross.asp.
[182] http://www.goveg.com/seaboard.asp.

nation's largest and most effective farm animal protection organization." Founded in 1985, HFA's goals are "to protect farm animals from cruelty, to protect the public from the dangerous misuse of antibiotics, hormones, and other chemicals used on factory farms, and to protect the environment from the impacts of industrialized animal factories."[183] A worker at an Ohio factory farm, owned by Ken Wiles and managed by his son Joe, reported to HFA that it was common practice that when female pigs became less productive or lame, they would hang them with a chain around their necks from a forklift to euthanize them.

The film followed the preliminary work of the investigator, identified as "Pete" in the film, as he prepared to go undercover and work at the farm, then followed his investigation as he worked at the farm for six weeks and the ensuing trial of the Wiles and a farm worker at which Pete testified. The film effectively contextualizes the work that undercover animal abuse investigators go through to capture this sort of footage as well as the challenges of prosecuting those responsible for these sorts of abuses. The footage itself is very similar to the other pig farm investigations in quality and style. As in the Belcross investigation, we see that the aging female pigs pose a problem for these operations because the operators sometimes breed them until the pigs are unable to walk. "Sow culling," as it is called in the industry, is a major concern for these operations. If the female breeding pigs are kept too long, they cannot be transported to slaughter under their own power and must be euthanized. The Wiles farm would put the ailing pigs in a pen of their own and let them die there, presumably of starvation. If the pigs took too long to die, they would drag them out and hang them. Footage also showed Joe Wiles tossing piglets into carts to take them to the nurseries, sometimes missing the cart with

[183] http://www.hfa.org/about/index.html.

his tosses of the struggling piglets. Piglets who were undersized were, as in the Seaboard Pig Farm Investigation video, shown being slammed into walls and on the floor to "euthanize" them.

The investigation led to a court trial that met with minimal success. Joe Wiles was cited with minor cruelty to animals citations, and the other worker and owner Ken Wiles were found not guilty. While this was disappointing to HFA and Pete, the documentary itself and the publicity that it garnered for the humane treatment of farm animals and the raised awareness that it might lead to, especially since it appeared on a major cable network such as HBO with a potentially much greater audience than videos released on the websites of advocacy organizations, is of great value to the farm animal welfare movement.

Other videos of this sort abound. The footage itself is all very similar: shaky handheld (as opposed to shot from a tripod) camera footage under dull fluorescent lights, often shot from waist height (from inside a jacket or bag). Inherent in the creation of the footage is that there is only one camera angle on these scenes (one undercover investigator in any given situation where the footage is shot), so the editing is simply cutting from one scene to the next. The raw nature of these videos recalls the early conventions of Direct Cinema documentaries such as those developed by Robert Drew, D.A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock and Albert and David Maysles. The fly-on-the-wall technique of capturing footage without intruding on the subjects is intrinsic to undercover footage. The most powerful of these type of animal videos illustrate abuse by farm workers and the frequency of the mistreatment in these operations. Some videos simply document the practices of the industry – that is, no legally abusive actions are

seen; they simply portray the rarely seen actual conditions within a factory farm or slaughterhouse – which are usually eye-opening to most of the American public who rarely witness the way the industry operates and the way "food animals" are treated.

The organizations and individuals who produce this footage often make it easily available for repurposing and increased exposure. For instance, PETA incorporated some of the footage from the Seaboard footage into a video entitled "Meet Your Meat," narrated by actor Alec Baldwin. This video exposed the treatment of chickens, turkeys, veal calves, and pigs in modern animal agriculture. This was made available to local animal rights groups throughout the U.S. to show at tablings, festivals, and demonstrations. Activists sometimes employ "sidewalk video" displays, portable battery-powered video displays that can be wheeled around, driven around, or sometimes even worn in shopping and entertainment districts to expose people to videos like "Meet Your Meat" and the practices in the industry.

While many people are aware of the existence of such videos, probably not many people have seen them (thus the sidewalk video displays and "video van" displays). The footage is not easy to watch, especially for people who are sensitive to the suffering of others. Ironically, this very trait is what often drives people to become animal activists. Among some activists I have met, watching such videos is considered to be an essential way to honor the animals and spur on their activism. Witnessing the pain and suffering and acknowledging the practices that are part of our culture helps to drive these activists to work for change.

The discourse surrounding pigs within these videos is primarily about pigs as victims, helpless to the manipulations and abuses by the men who work in factory farms

and slaughterhouses. Women are rarely, if ever, seen working in these places within these videos. In HBO's *Death on a Factory Farm*, it was actually a female employee who alerted HFA to the abuses that led to the investigation, but she is never seen in the undercover video. The only women images of women in factory farms that I have found in my research of these non-fiction videos are in the industry promotional videos (see below, specifically the "Ohio Pork Queen") and Temple Grandin, who appears in her own series of videos about how to more "humanely" handle animals as they are prepared for slaughter.

The pigs in these videos are never attributed any agency or personality, except in their apparent resistance to giving up their lives. They are primarily portrayed as obstacles in the way of the men who are trying to manage these farms. But in a few of them, such as the "Belcross Pig Farm Investigation" video, an occasional pig seems to be singled out for special abuse. As the narrator points out, there is a captive bolt gun not far away in several of these instances, but the men instead seem to have a grudge against specific pigs, perhaps ones that have given them extra "trouble" as they move them from one confining crate to the next, or trouble in that they are lame and cannot walk quickly enough to their own death. Other times, the men perform random acts of violence against the pigs seemingly for their own amusement and the amusement of their co-workers. The pigs in these videos, while clearly pigs from their looks and their sounds, are, diegetically, hardly recognizable as the same species as Wilbur or Babe.

Industry Depictions of Pigs

Though the agribusiness industry discourages third parties from capturing images of actual pigs in industrial operations, industry-sponsored depictions are available. These are usually in the form of educational or promotional videos for farmers or for farm equipment. For instance, livestock handling consultant Temple Grandin has posted a series of eleven YouTube videos with her recommendations for the handling of cattle, sheep, and pigs, especially as they are being driven into slaughterhouses. While these videos show industrial conditions of slaughterhouses, they are clean and mostly empty of animals as Grandin discusses what to avoid in the construction of walls and gates. In "Pig Behavior During Handling," an eight minute and 21 second video on YouTube,[184] the images of pigs and pig handlers are all still shots, often only showing a partial image of a pig, along with whatever else she is discussing (the line on the floor on a border that pigs will shy away from or a particularly effective herding stick that will move pigs along a chute toward slaughter more effectively). In this video, of the 29 images that are shown, only two are live-action video images – one shows pigs being herded through a pen with a flag on poles and another shows pigs walking on non-slip flooring. In Grandin's "Electric Stunning of Pigs and Sheep" video on YouTube,[185] live-action footage of pigs being electrically stunned as they move on a conveyor belt system is shown briefly,

Figure 19. Temple Grandin shows where to place a captive bolt gun to kill pigs "properly" in her YouTube video "Electric Stunning of Pigs and Sheep." (YouTube.com)

[184] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oA2x2_eAv4w.
[185] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FEUfkmJQuA.

though most of the footage is charts of proper stunning procedures and stills of how to place the stunning mechanisms on the heads and necks of sheep and pigs.

The discourse surrounding pigs in these "how-to" videos centers on efficiency and economic savings – it costs agribusiness money when animals slow down the slaughter process or die at inconvenient times in the process. While the tagline on the last video mentioned is "Temple Grandin explains humane slaughter methods to insure good animal welfare at the pork processing plant," the *welfare* benefits the pigs in that they may be properly unconscious when they are slaughtered (though they are conscious for the stunning as their entire bodies contract from the electrical shock), but mostly it benefits the plant owners in that the pigs will cause fewer problems for the slaughterhouse workers, costing the owners less money in slow-downs or (very rarely) fines by meat inspectors.

There are also a few pig industry promotional videos available on YouTube. The Ohio Pork Farm Tour features several videos of shining clean facilities owned by families, two of which feature women who work at the farm, one of whom was crowned Ohio Pork Queen in 2008 (featured in a video entitled "Pig Pens & Tiaras"[186]). The YouTube "channel" is entitled "Ohio Pork Tour - Isn't It About Time You Knew The Truth?" In one of their videos, "How Baby Pigs are Really Treated," Jackie Roughton, who works at Cooper Farms,

Figure 20. The Ohio Pork Queen hosts a pro-industry video entitled "Pig Pens & Tiaras." (YouTube.com)

[186] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhV0kN-rmvQ.

describes why farrowing crates are helpful in preventing injuries (so the mother pigs do not crush the piglets . . . on the cement floor on which they are housed). She talks about how much fun she has with "her girls," as she calls the various mother pigs in the sparkling clean facility behind her. She repeated refers to her girls and calls the piglets "babies." She describes how she makes sure the babies get under the heat lamps so they stay warm (on the cold cement floors and away from their mothers who are kept inside farrowing crates). "They can get shoved off to the side and they can get cold and die, and then that's not good 'cause [she hesitates, and tilts her head to the side] then we lose our babies."[187] She talks about working on a family farm and loves the job. She even states that, if given the chance, she might even stay with "her girls" 24 hours a day, but "they" (presumably the family that owns and runs the farm) will not let her. The deliberately crafted discourse within this video is that this is one big, happy family that treats the pigs, mothers and "babies," like part of the family. The underlying discourse that is inescapable for me after studying the procedures of raising pigs on industrial farms (family-owned that they may be) that I discussed in the previous chapter, circulates around the absences and silences that are not shown or mentioned in this video. Does Roughton also participates in the tail docking (cutting the tails off the piglets) or neutering procedures, all done without the use of anesthetics, that are a part of industrial pig raising? How does she handle the euthanizing of the undersized "babies?"

These videos have the feel of 1950s educational videos for the "Kitchen of Tomorrow" or the classic Centron film "The Snob" (1958), with very staged settings and a clear message – in this case, something like "please ignore the animal rights footage of abuse at factory farms; all our animals are treated humanely and we provide clean healthy

[187] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjHJA3k218s.

food for America." The discourse that is also present is that these animals live healthy lives – enclosed in buildings, walking on cement (to avoid "parasites and diseases found in dirt," the producer of the video posts in a comment after one video), with mother pigs kept in small metal cages all their lives, unable to perform any of the activities that come natural to pigs. While it is a matter of some debate, animal advocates claim these industry-supported depictions challenge the definition of "non-fiction" depictions, just as the industry challenges the validity of the animal activists' undercover investigations (though they cannot challenge the authenticity of the footage itself).

Pigs on Television

In 2009, the cable network *The Discovery Channel* (part of the Discovery Network, which includes channels such as *Animal Planet, TLC,* and several others) aired a 30 minute show entitled "Pig Bomb." The show was done in the style of a tabloid news magazine report (ala *Hard Copy* or *A Current Affair*), with stylized video graphics and effects along with ominous music and sound effects to boost the menace involved in the reported dangerous explosion of feral pigs in the backwoods of the Eastern United States. Footage of the pigs was often captured using night vision technology (or the video was effected to achieve that look) and sometimes the footage was inverted into a negative image (or reverse image – the whiter a part of the image is, the blacker it appears), an effect that can make the tamest video look alarming. This video is now only available at the *Discovery Channel/Animal Planet's* website in what seem to be the show's segments as they were divided by commercial breaks (three to five minute segments with no order

listed for the segments –making the narrative, what little there is, even more choppy than originally aired).

Figure 21. Three stills from *The Discovery Channel's* "Pig Bomb": the title screen, a tabloid-like graphic about a pig incident, and a tinted night shot of a pig defending itself against hunting dogs. (Discovery Communications)

The discourse presented in "Pig Bomb" is that these pigs pose a dire and immediate threat to the survival of humans in the United States and that they are dangerous and wild animals likely to spring on unsuspecting citizens at any moment. The animated maps that show the "explosion" in the population of feral pigs and hyperbolic language used to describe the threat are reminiscent of the warnings of the "Africanized killer bees" that were moving northward from South America in the 1970s that led to sensationalized media reports and even spawned movies (e.g., *Killer Bees*, an ABC made-for-television movie in 1974, and *Killer Bees!*, a PAX Television production in 2002). The only actual footage of any pigs acting aggressively are several scenes shown in blurry, handheld footage as a single pig fights against a pack of hunting dogs that have trapped them him in the undergrowth before the hunter shoots him. In one of these scenes, a dog is gored by the pig's tusks. The threat to humans who are not pursing the pigs with packs of hunting dogs seems minimal, perhaps the same threat that "Africanized bees" pose to humans and the USDA offers similar advice to both of these encounters: Avoid contact and move away from them.[188]

[188] Bees: http://ars.usda.gov/Research/docs.htm?docid=11059&page=2. Feral pigs: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, "Feral/Wild Pigs: Potential Problems for Farmers and Hunters," United States Department of Agriculture, 2005.

The historical context about the arrival of pigs in the United States as depicted in "Pig Bomb" is approximately correct, and the basics of the lives of pigs in the wild is accurate, though sensationalized quite a bit. The show presents the idea that hunters have introduced Eurasian wild boars into the U.S. to interbreed with the feral pigs who have lived in the woods since de Soto established them (the show claims the pigs are descendants of those Columbus brought to the Americas, though Watson writes that those pigs never made it off the islands and it was de Soto's pigs who started the feral population in the U.S.[189]). The mixing of the breeds would seem to be not nearly as ominous as the show implied if viewers allow for the fact that they are substantially the same pigs, just separated by several hundred years. The show follows several hunters as they track down individual wild pigs. The hunters use packs of dogs and the dogs are shown getting gored several times by the tusks of the hunted pigs. This is used to show the danger that the pigs present to humans living nearby, but it seems clear that the danger is primarily to the dogs who are trained to chase the pigs. The show features one interview with a farmer who says that the growing pig populations threaten his crops. This is followed by night vision enhanced footage showing a family of pigs rooting in a field. The sensational nature of the show makes the threat from feral pig populations into tabloid media and trivializes the actual nature of the animals.

Several states, in fact, do have problems with feral pig populations. These problems stem partly from the escape of Eurasian wild boars who have been imported for canned hunts, hunting facilities that fence in specific animals and then charge hunters a fee to come into the fenced in area and shoot animals. The hazard is primarily from growing populations of feral pigs that are remnants of free-ranging domestic herds from

[189] Watson, *The Whole Hog*, 108.

the early days of European settlement of North America. The risk, according to the USDA, lies mostly in the diseases that the pigs may spread to domesticated animals (dogs, cattle, and domesticated pig herds) but also to crop destruction and soil erosion from the rooting behaviors of pigs, especially along rivers.[190] From published information by various states, the most serious threat that feral pigs pose is to hunters and wild "game" – animals that state wildlife management departments maintain to raise state revenue through hunting licenses.[191] Feral pigs threaten the habitat of these other species as well as compete with them for similar food sources.

Figure 22. The Boost Mobile "Unwronged" pig advertisement. (YouTube.com)

A different perspective on pigs is presented when they are employed in the advertising business. Pigs appeared in several television campaigns in 2009 and 2010. One of the most disturbing is a Boost Mobile phone advertisement that features two fairly realistic live-action (animatronic) pigs sitting at a restaurant table with a large serving plate in between them filled with pig meat. As one pig raises a fork full of meat to his mouth, he pulls it away and says:

> I like a nice ham. [the other pig nods] You think that's wrong? We're just enjoying the flavors of a fallen friend. [the other pigs says, "True"] I'll tell you what's wrong, a cell phone company that charges hidden fees. That's why I got Boost Mobile, their $50 monthly unlimited plan has no hidden fees. [Narrator:

[190] USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, "Feral/Wild Pigs: Potential Problems for Farmers and Hunters."
[191] E.g., Missouri Dept. of Conservation's website, http://mdc.mo.gov/landown/wild/nuisance/hogs/; Michigan's Dept. of Natural Resources and Environment, http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12145_55230---,00.html.

"$50 unlimited talk text and web on a dependable nation wide network. Learn more at boostmobile.com. Boost Mobile, unwronged."][192]

Businesses go to extremes to make their commercial advertisements stand out in the saturated media market of the 21st century. Presenting talking pigs eating pig meat adds a post-modern ironic twist to perhaps disgust, perhaps amuse viewers, into staying tuned and not skipping forward on their Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) or muting their televisions or simply ignoring the sales pitch. The discourse surrounding pigs is in this advertisement certainly includes the intelligence of the pigs (they are talking, and they cannot pass up a good deal on mobile phone devices) and the voracious appetites that "kept" pigs display that might drive them to even eat fellow pigs – "flavors of fallen friends," if you will – which generally pigs do not do, unless they are starved or in stressful situations. Cannibalism in pig production usually refers to pigs in the nurseries or finishing sheds who through the stress of their circumstances or under-nourishment, bite or chew the tails or ears, occasionally the flanks of their fellow pigs.[193] It can also refer to "savaging of piglets" by new mother pigs, which "occurs from time to time in many mammalian species (including young women), when giving birth for the first time and is thought to be related, in part at least, to the major hormone changes that take place around parturition [the act of giving birth]."[194] The discourse surrounding pigs as meat is paradoxical in this advertisement, since the pigs are immediately presented as both intelligent and discerning and as meat in the middle of the table and on the plates and forks of the two pigs. Again, analysis should not probe too deeply into such

[192] Available on the internet at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGObGID6Cr4.
[193] http://www.thepigsite.com/pighealth/article/366/vice-abnormal-behaviour-tail-biting-flank-chewing-ear-biting.
[194] http://www.thepigsite.com/pighealth/article/260/savaging-of-piglets-cannibalism.

presentations, for they are employed for shock value to make viewers pay attention to the commercial and perhaps remember it. The success of such campaigns are hard to measure, but my own anecdotal evidence is that many people remember the commercial, but few remember what it was actually advertising (myself included).

Burger King introduced a campaign for a new menu item which involves a pig talking to customers and inviting them to try Burger King's new barbeque ribs. The flying-pig-man in these commercials is a strange creature, mostly human with a pig head and feathery wings, but human arms and wearing jeans and a shirt. He flies in and delivers a plate of ribs to a man in his car. This seems to follow a theme of Burger King promotions that started with the Burger King "King" mascot (a man in a plastic king mask with a smile on his immobile plastic face who would follow people around or show up unexpectedly to surprise people) of strange, even disturbing or creepy imagery that catches viewers' attention.

Figure 23. Burger King's flying-pig-man delivers a plate full of ribs. (YouTube.com)

The image of the flying-pig-man who offers ribs (presumably pig ribs) also follows a recent theme of allowing animals to speak about eating animals. The most noted campaign that employs this uses a little more rational thought behind the narratives involved in the company's advertisements. Chik-fil-A, a chain of fast food restaurants

that primarily feature chicken related menu items, has a series of advertisements that feature cows encouraging customers to “Eat Mor Chikin” (sic). The idea that, if given the chance, cows would indeed encourage humans to eat chickens instead of cows, does have a logic to it. The disturbing part of this discourse, for some of us at least, is the proposed idea that these animals are aware of their fates and are fighting to change what we eat so that they will not be killed and eaten. This continues along a theme not entirely unlike the situations in which Babe and Wilbur find themselves, though their primary interest is in saving themselves, not directly encouraging the humans to choose one of the other animals from the barnyard to eat.

Incidental Fictional Pig Representations

The primary contemporary representations of live-action motion picture pigs, besides *Charlotte’s Web* and *Babe*, have been in incidental appearances in popular motion pictures in which the pigs have not been featured as characters but rather as a dark, menacing threat or narrative device used by villains for the disposal of human bodies. This is a trope that has been featured in movies such as *Snatch* (2000) and *Hannibal* (2001), as well as on television in various episodes of HBO’s *Deadwood* (2004 – 2006) and the 2009 season finale of *Criminal Minds* (“To Hell . . . and Back,” ABC, 20 May 2009). These representations are all very similar to each other, and they present a discourse that resembles that of the *Discovery Channel’s* “Pig Bomb.” Pigs are a shadowy menace, in these depictions, their omnivorous appetites overshadowed by their desire for flesh.

In *Snatch*, pigs kept by the gangster Brick Top are the threat that he wields over his minions and victims – after being killed by Brick Top, the bodies are fed to the pigs he keeps. In the various episodes of *Deadwood* (which first aired 21 March 2004), a western television drama which is set in 1876, the pigs belong to a Chinese man who runs a laundry business and a "disposal service" in a gold mining town that has no law. Wu's pigs are a convenient method for villains to dispose of bodies.

In *Hannibal*, the role of notorious cannibalistic serial killer Dr. Hannibal Lecter is reprised by actor Anthony Hopkins, who won an Oscar for portraying the same character in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Lecter needs no pigs to show his grotesque, cannibalistic killing sensibilities in *Hannibal*. He is confronted by one of his previous victims, whom he disfigured but did not kill. This former victim crafts a torturous death for Lecter that involves a corral with ravenous pigs (they appear to be undomesticated Eurasian wild boars by their bristly hair, extended snouts, and significant tusks), trained Pavlov-style to eat when they hear the screams of humans. Eventually, FBI investigator Clarice Starling, this time played by Julianne Moore, ends up shooting the bad guys in the corral, then freeing Lecter as the pigs break through a gate. The bad guys are eaten by the pigs as Lecter and Starling get away. The pigs are depicted as ferocious, deadly, and voracious. First seen trotting in silhouette and in slow motion at the beginning of the scene, the pigs

Figure 24. The pigs rend apart bad guys while Lecter carries Starling to safety in *Hannibal*. (Ridley Scott, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

eventually rush into the corral to rip apart the wounded bad guys, at which time they are shown at normal speed, shot from two feet off the ground as their feasting activity spreads blood all over the corral. While dramatically lit and dynamically edited with enhanced ferocious pig grunts, the pigs are doing what hungry actual pigs would do when confronted with hunger and a limited supply of food. In one interesting moment of authenticity, the pigs rush in while Lecter is still in the corral, carrying the now wounded Starling in his arms. Lecter stands calmly as the pigs rush in and around him and over to the wounded men lying shot on the ground on which they begin feeding. Pigs are browsers and rooters, not natural predators. Food to them is found lying on or in the ground, so it is quite rational that they would ignore the human standing still and head right over to the "food" that is lying on the ground and already bloody. Monsters that they are portrayed to be in the film, and trained to be so by the villain of the film, they are still sensible pigs and this is a nice authentic touch by the filmmakers. Ridley Scott, the director of the film, even mentions in his commentary for the DVD that the pigs were quite intelligent. "You look at them in the eye and kinda start to like them, they're kinda sweet," he adds as the film rolls on, showing the ferociously grunting pigs getting ready to attack.[195]

The episode of *Criminal Minds* involves a similar depiction (and in fact, seems inspired or derivative of *Hannibal*). The pigs are guilty by association with the serial killers, though they are no more responsible for the killing than they are for what they are given to eat. As in all these depictions, the pigs depicted are subject to the whims of what the humans feed them. The commonalities in the discourse of each of these depictions is

[195] Ridley Scott, *Hannibal* (Los Angeles: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2001), DVD commentary.

the insatiable hunger of these pigs, the menace that their appetite for human flesh offers to villains, and the general viciousness of the pigs. Pigs kept isolated and penned up without access to food will, like any animals – humans included – get very hungry and be less picky about what food they will eat. So while each of these present very dark and dangerous depictions of pigs, these portrayals are not inaccurate, though they show pigs carefully raised to be dark and dangerous. As noted above by various people, pigs are very trainable, even to such dark tasks, no doubt. None of these pigs are ever singled out as characters with names or distinctive personalities and thus would not fall into Smith's scheme as *persons*. They are all depicted by actual pigs, though there may have been some animatronic pigs in *Hannibal* in the CUs in the most violent shots. Their wants and needs are never explored beyond their basic survival need of food, though the discourse circulates the idea that they actually prefer human flesh over other food, though they are never offered anything other than human flesh in *Hannibal* or *Criminal Minds*.

Other Notable Cine-Pigs

These menacing portrayals are in sharp contrast to depictions of pigs as persons. In these previously mentioned depictions, pigs are not really the villains; they are simply tools of the villains. But once pigs are shown in all their pigness, they lend themselves to be lovable, intelligent, sensitive creatures, though occasionally they serve well as comic sidekicks, especially in animated portrayals.

There are two other live-action feature film lead roles for a pig, besides *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe – Gordy* was released in 1995, a few months prior to *Babe*,

and in 1998, the sequel *Babe: Pig in the City* was released. *Babe: Pig in the City*, though connected to the story line of Babe and directed by George Miller who produced the first film, was an entirely different portrayal of pigness. Farmer Hoggett is hurt, so Mrs. Hoggett attempts to make some money with a guest appearance with Babe at a fair, but their travels are interrupted by airport officials, and they end up in the big city of Metropolis, searching for a hotel that will accept "pets." What they end up in is a strange hotel with a menagerie of dogs and cats, along with a family of chimpanzees who dress in clothes, all of which launches a bizarre plot wherein Babe rescues the animals from eviction. This portrayal of Babe has very little connection to pigs other than in the cleverness that he showed in the first film, just as the apes have no connection to apes in the actual world. The discourse surrounding pigs in this film really revolves around pigs and other animals as "pets" with very little connection to the lives of most actual pigs (or most apes, for that matter).

Gordy was also about a pig swept off to a big city. The film's poster stated: "He's a small town pig whose family has been kidnapped. Now he's off to the big city to find them. He's got 2 friends and 1 secret weapon . . . He can TALK!"[196] This film was originally conceived in the 1970s by *Green Acres* creator Jay Sommers and writer Dick Chevillat as a spin-off for Arnold Ziffel, the most notable live-action television pig. They are credited for the story and as screenwriters after Leslie Stevens. This commercially and critically unsuccessful film[197] included a pig whose major activity involved helping a family of humans and was seemingly a vehicle for country singer Doug Stone, who never appeared in another film. Gordy spoke the same language as the humans and made a

[196] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113199/.
[197] It has a 17% favorable rating on RottenTomatoes.com (http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/gordy/).

name for himself by saving a drowning child in a pool. After more heroic episodes helping out humans, his fame and fortune allowed Gordy to save his whole pig family from a slaughterhouse. This ended up being a minor subplot of the film, which mostly focused on Jinnie Sue, a young country singer and her singer father, played by Doug Stone, and the antics involved in The Royce Company, which is owned by the father of the boy Gordy saves in the pool. Gordy eventually ends up as the mascot of the company and then as part owner after the owner dies and leaves it to his son and the pig. They then learn that Gordy's family has been taken to a slaughterhouse owned by the Royce Company and there is a race to save them, which they do, without any mention of closing down the slaughterhouse, even though it is now partially owned by a talking pig. Gordy is primarily played by an actual pig, with CGI techniques used to animate his mouth, though these were not quite as sophisticated as those used in *Babe.* Gordy is more anthropomorphized than the depictions of Wilbur or Babe, sometimes donning a tie (for formal occasions) and, as in the movie poster, sunglasses.

As mentioned, *Gordy* was inspired by Arnold Ziffel, a side character of *Green Acres*, a CBS television show that ran from 1965 to 1971. Arnold was a pig who was treated as the child of Mr. and Mrs. Ziffel, neighbors of Oliver Wendell Douglas (Eddie Albert) and Lisa Douglas (Eva Gabor), New Yorkers who move to the country so that Oliver can join the "salt of the earth." Arnold appears in only a few episodes in the first two seasons, but increasingly he had more and more episodes centering on his antics. Arnold generally did not wear clothes (except when he went to Hollywood to audition for a film). He was a notorious television watcher and could turn the TV on and off and lower the volume when Fred or Doris Ziffel, his "parents," asked him to. He did not

speak in English, though he understands it when spoken to him by humans. In season three's "Love Comes to Arnold Ziffel" episode, Arnold and a basset hound ("basket hound," as Lisa calls her) fall in love. The episode ends with the two of them speaking in their respective species vocalizations with subtitles translating into English their realization that it just will not work – their differences are too great (though earlier in the episode, Arnold does show the ability to bark like a dog).

Other notable episodes include season two's "I Didn't Raise My Pig to be a Soldier" in which Arnold is drafted and it is up to Oliver to convince the draft board that Arnold is a pig – of which they are very suspicious. While always played by an actual pig, Arnold does not display many piglike qualities (though I know of no scientific studies that would prove that pigs are NOT interested in television). But free food is still a big draw for him. In season three, "Won't You Come Home, Arnold Ziffel?" is an episode in which Arnold runs off to an event that involves a free matinee and free ice cream. Oliver and Lisa are in pursuit of Arnold. At the theatre, they find that Arnold has won a costume contest (for his pig "costume" . . .) and then left the theatre. They eventually find out that he was picked up by a pig farmer on his way to the slaughterhouse. Oliver and Lisa are shown looking at an outdoor pen full of pigs, but are unable to identify Arnold. At the outdoor pig pen at the slaughter house, Lisa calls for Arnold, but all the pigs squeal. The butcher offers to sell him back if they can find him, or, he threatens, they can find him in the supermarket at the meat counter and walks off. Lisa shouts, "Murderer! Pig-killer! Stormtrooper!" at the butcher. As they walk off, Lisa secretly opens the gate to the pig pen. Back at Ziffel's, Arnold shows up with six of his friends. The butcher arrives and implies that Oliver should pay for all the pigs that

escaped – over 200 pigs. When Oliver balks, Lisa says, “You can’t put a price on freedom.” Cut to shots on the television of battleships, cannons, and tanks firing – Arnold watches while his friends snooze around his chair as the episode ends.

Green Acres is a very light-hearted show, and Lisa is a comical character with her misunderstanding of American customs and pronunciation. However, her sensitivity and devotion to the welfare of the animals in the Hooterville community is consistent whenever she meets them. She worries about the loneliness of their milk cow and takes tender and personal care of their chickens. In this episode, she is outraged at the butcher’s attitude and even, seemingly, his profession – conflating him with World War One German Stoßtruppen, literally translated as shock troops, though usually translated as stormtroopers. The connection to warfare is continued in the last scene with the nobility to which Lisa and the show’s producers attribute freeing the pigs – “the price of freedom,” this time associated with the defense of one’s country. However, in this show, there is no mention of anyone in Hooterville who does not eat these animals, including Oliver and Lisa. In one episode, Arnold visits them in the morning during breakfast and Oliver whispers to Lisa to hide the bacon that she is cooking on the stove. Arnold starts to leave the room, but then comes back in when the bacon is hidden.

Cine-pigs have been confronted by this disjunction as a source of humor since they took to the screen. Over 40 years later, a brief appearance of a pot-bellied companion animal pig shows up in 2010’s *The Spy Next Door* – a family film that featured martial artist Jackie Chan. The youngest child of the family who lives next door to undercover spy sits at the breakfast table eating bacon and feeding scraps to the family pig. An older sibling, in disgust, tells her to stop feeding bacon to the pig, and she

innocently asks why. The older child whispers something in her ear, and she pushes the bacon away in revulsion. A brief summary of the highlights of “pigs in film” is located in Appendix A, along with a listing of notable pigs in feature films and pigs on television.

Conclusion

Pigs have been regularly cast in various supporting and leading roles in motion pictures. While recent crime dramas have carved out a new niche for them as a narrative device to dispose of the by-products of murder, the place of the pig in the hearts and minds of children and gentler adults is well secured. The Muppets’ Miss Piggy (see Appendix A for more info of these pigs) has a web page at muppets.com, Porky Pig appeared in a video as recent at 2006 (“Porky and Daffy in the William Tell Overture”), and Pumbaa of Disney’s *The Lion King* now stars in safety videos (“Wild About Safety: Timon and Pumbaa Safety Smart in the Water!" 2009). A new generation of children are meeting pigs on television in *WordWorld* and PBS’s *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks* (though the characters in this very popular series are, for all intents and purposes, just small children with little or no connection to the various animal species that they are drawn to look like). But the complex discourses that circulate around pigs – as friends, as intelligent and sensitive animals, as meat – continue to complicate the portrayals of pigs in all their various depictions. In the following chapter, I will tie together these depictions and the discourses that surround them.

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Chapter 7: The Final Analysis

In light of my exploration of the world of actual pigs (Chapter 5) and non-fiction depictions of pigs (Chapter 6), this chapter brings together the final analyses of *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe* in combination with the other works discussed, especially in relation to their ambiguous time and place settings. Following this is a discussion of the constraints of this study and suggestions for possible future studies. I follow this with a discussion of my personal journey in arriving at this study, including the impetus for focusing on the representation of nonhuman animals in motion pictures, along with a brief description of several of my own films that are relevant to this study. Finally, I recapitulate my findings, relocate them in relation to Fredric Jameson's essay "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," and offer my conclusions from this study.

Setting the Scene of *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe*

The time and place of both of these films are obscure and paradoxical. In this section, I will examine where and how these films fit into the world of actual pigs and discuss how the time and place contribute to the discourse surrounding pigs and meat in these films.

The Time and the Place of *Charlotte's Web*

Some attentive viewers might pick up that the setting for *CW* is in Maine (as is stated clearly in the book) but only from car and baby carriage license plates. What is never made clear is in which year the film takes place. In fact, the time period seems rather intentionally obfuscated. From the DVD commentary, we learn that when producer Jordan Kerner brought the project to Paramount for funding, the studio's one requirement of the film was that, in the spirit of White's book, it should be "timeless."[198] In the first scene in the Arable's barn, on the walls appear what look to be vintage farm implements – a wooden saw (a blade between two rough wooden handles), a wooden bellows (used for fanning a flame or coals), a rusted oil drum on a bench. No modern or power tools are seen, and the only hint of electricity is from the overhead lights. The feeling here is that of a well-worn and rustic barn that would have looked aged and entirely appropriate if the year was 1930. Likewise, the school that Fern attends uses old-style slant-top desks that seem appropriate for somewhere between 1930 and 1952 (when the book was written) and the bus that takes her away from Wilbur and to the school looks to be a 1960s era Ford school bus. Homer and Mr. Arable both drive 1960s era Chevrolet pickup trucks (Homer's seems to be a slightly worn out 1965 model), but Homer also uses a horse-drawn cart to move hay bales around his farm, which surely is more work than hitching a trailer to the pickup truck (not to mention easier on the horse). In crowd scenes, the vehicles look to be 1970s models with some early 1980s cars mixed in as well. No cell phones are depicted, and the phones on the wall and the veterinarian's desk are 1970s style rotary dial. All of this adds up to a very confused diegetic time frame – but only under close scrutiny. The presentation of the film normalizes these anachronisms into a

[198] Winick, *Charlotte's Web*, DVD commentary by Jordan Kerner.

charming and easy flowing tale that creates a discursive formation that the world in which Wilbur is introduced could be in the past or in the present – an "anytime" sort of happening. Paramount's directive is well met, but the repercussions in the discourse reverberate throughout the film, especially in regard to the treatment of the animals.

The presentation of animal agriculture is paradoxical. Uncle Homer's barn in *CW* is consistent in what might be found on a small hobby farm (in the 1930s), though it appears farming is his full-time profession. It is invested with a vintage feel – very little metal, no power tools, or even lights. The barn is filled with various animals. In large-scale modern agriculture operations, animals are housed in separate buildings according to species and usually on wholly different farms since specialization is one of the keys to modern agriculture. Uncle Homer's farm is a small one, so combining the animals into one barn is not unheard of; however, we soon find out that not only do they share space in the barn, they seem to have free access in and out of it and with each other inside a surrounding fence around the barn. The menagerie here consists of five sheep, two cows, one horse and two ducks. Strangely, no chickens, cats, or dogs are kept on this farm. Speaking purely anecdotally, I have never heard of such a lack in any small farm setting. They are the mainstays of small farms and often serve very specific purposes for the sake of the humans (and some of the other animals). Eggs from chickens are an easily obtained food source, and chickens can help keep bug populations down in the barnyard. Cats are invaluable in keeping rodent populations in check (as can be seen by the nearly free reign that Templeton has in the barn – also an unrealistic setting in that we only see one rat: firsthand experience by this author vouches for where there is one rat, there are many more and their nests are not nearly as "quaint" as Templeton's lair). And dogs often serve

as protection against the intrusion of “wild” animals that might threaten young pigs, sheep, or ducks. In the book, the Zuckerman farm more realistically consists of each of these species, though they do not play a significant role in the story. As in many literary adaptations, the setting and characters are simplified in this Hollywood film. These additional animals would simply crowd the Zuckerman menagerie and are dropped entirely since they are not part of the narrative that drives the story. These sorts of directorial choices contribute to the unrealistic feel of the film, the staged-for-the-camera setting that may work for audiences at the surface level but ultimately detract from the authenticity of the film.

Fern’s school bus shows up after she sets Wilbur in his pen, and it is a little odd that the animals would still be penned at that hour of the morning and generally rare that, on a small farm like this, cows would be penned at all except for the actual time of the milking process. Physically, in the barn, the animals all have their own areas – the cows are in milking stalls, the horse has a larger stall that allows him to turn around, the sheep have a pen but are always seen in a line with their heads hanging over the low fence, and the geese have a raised perch in the sheep pen. But they also all seem to have free reign to move out of their pens and stalls, as they do when Wilbur breaks through the fence. All the animals run to the fenced in area outside the barn to cheer him on. They also occasionally gather in the center of the barn, such as when Charlotte calls them together to come up with a plan to save Wilbur. But on other occasions, we see the cows with chains to keep them in their narrow milking stalls, and we can see the fence that surrounds the sheep pen, though it is far too low a fence to realistically contain them. In fact, located throughout Uncle Homer’s farm are fences that are all unpainted wood

(though they get painted by the end of the film, apparently because of the growing celebrity of Wilbur) and rustically assembled, offering a quaint, nostalgic feel to the farm, just as we saw in the Arable barn, but fencing that would be inappropriate on anything but a movie-set farm. The cross rails on nearly all these fences are too wide apart to contain a pig or sheep, and, though we glimpse some wire added to certain fences to close the gaps between rails, these wired fences are not spatially located to actually contain the animals. Pigs, especially, require fairly heavy fencing because of their powerful, low-to-the-ground bulk. As mentioned before, it is also strange that the animals, as far as we can tell, are always kept in the barn or in the small fenced area just outside the barn doors. Cows and sheep are grazers who, on a small farm such as this, would normally spend most of their time in grassy fields.

These discrepancies can be read as merely Hollywood simplifications of family-farm life, but they contribute to the specific discourse surrounding Wilbur and the animals he befriends. The discursive formation of the setting is that Homer's barn is almost like a warm, wooden, student dormitory in which all the friends live together – or, if you prefer, a friendly New York apartment building where your best friends live across the hallway from you – a sort of "anywhere" tale of community. This is convenient for the plot and for the on-screen blocking, but it seriously affects the discourse surrounding animal life that is presented. *Charlotte's Web* is a family film and, even for those unfamiliar with the plot from the book or the previous film adaptation, there is probably very little doubt that Wilbur will be saved. But by placing the story in a slightly nostalgic, vaguely contemporary setting, the film really frames Wilbur's story as, if you will, an "everypig" sort of tale. And while Wilbur is generally pig-like in his day-to-day actions,

as described in detail in Chapter 3, his story is easily extrapolated to the struggles of any youthful character, regardless of species, trying to make his or her way in the world. The idea that in the contemporary world – where people make their livings on their own land; where they have trucks that they drive but use horses to cart their hay bales around; where they keep ducks, cows, and sheep all together in one barn but do not eat any of them – that an extraordinary animal can make friends of everyone and even win over the humans who threaten to eat him, creates a heart-warming, easy-to-accept plot without directly confronting the contradictions that are briefly presented in the beginning and then left for the main part of the story as a vague threat that would be an early end to Wilbur's life.

The Time and the Place of *Babe*

The time period is less directly obfuscated in *Babe*, but the human characters are depicted as determinedly choosing to live in another era, and the location where they live is obscured. The Hoggetts are a couple who seem to prefer to live in an old-fashioned way. Their barn is made of stone with a thatched roof and a mostly wood interior without prominent metal or power tools. Farmer Hoggett has a very old 1940s flatbed truck that he takes to the field, but he also uses a horse to pull a cart when he heads out to shear sheep, which he does with non-powered scissor shears. The Hoggetts do have a color television set that looks to be a 1970s era model.

But the time period of the film is actually contemporaneous to when the film was made, 1995. The van that the Hoggetts' daughter and her family drive looks to be an early 1990s model. The Hoggetts' son-in-law chides them when he looks over the ledger

books that Farmer Hoggett keeps his financial records in and points out just how old-fashioned their lives are. For Christmas, he gives his in-laws a FAX machine. The Hoggetts seems skeptical about the usefulness of the machine, but it later plays an important role in helping Farmer Hoggett enter Babe into the sheepherding trials. Thus, within the diegesis of the film, the out-of-the-ordinary lifestyle of the Hoggetts is noted and discussed. They are a quaint old couple, so Farmer Hoggett's idea of training a pig to herd sheep fits in with his eccentric circumstances.

The setting of the film is a different matter. Here, the film seems to be intentionally obfuscating. Generally, the accents of the humans are American, though a few of them seem to have a distinctive lilt. This could be taken as a regional dialect, but in actuality, it is more likely the lilt of Australian actors deliberately performing with an American accent. Several of the leads are Australian (Hugo Weaving, who performs the voice of Rex the dog; Magda Szubanski, who plays Mrs. Hoggett), and many of the supporting cast are as well. A few reviews (noted *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Roger Ebert included) mistakenly identified it as set in Australia. Kennedy-Miller Productions is an Australian film production company and Aussie producer/director George Miller made his name with the distinctly Australian Mad Max trilogy. *Babe* was shot in New South Wales, Australia, and there is an undeniable but hard to pin down distinctive Australian look to the film, which Miller attributes in part to a certain quality in the light in Australia that is different from anywhere else.[199] But everything within the diegesis of the film indicates that it is set in the U.S., though without pinpointing any specific locale – for an American audience, this serves as an "anywhere" staging.

[199] Noonan, *Babe*, DVD commentary.

Summary of Time/Place and Absences in *Charlotte's Web* and *Babe*

The discursive formation of the "anywhere" of *Babe* contributes to the film's emerging critique of eating pigs, whereas the "anytime" of *CW* detracts from its less focused discourse on eating pigs. As discussed in Chapter 5, the difference between how most pigs were raised in 1930 or even 1950 and 1990 is night and day . . . or more literally, the difference between daylight and artificial light. However, increasingly the difference between how pigs are raised in Australia or Britain or anywhere in the U.S. is negligible. Consequently, when a piglet is depicted being removed from a factory farm at the beginning of *Babe*, the film diegetically circulates the discourse of modern pig farming, despite the fact that the pig ends up on a farm where the farmer deliberately chooses to employ antiquated animal farming methods. On the other hand, by obscuring the time period, and even deliberately confusing it – with paradoxical farming methods and a mish-mash of dated technology – *CW* removes any critique of, and even participates in denying, modern animal farming methods with the structured absence of modern farming techniques. The nostalgic desire for a clichéd "simpler life" of the past for humans also translates to a time when animals were treated more humanely, thus encompassing perhaps less human discomfort with or guilt for the contemporary cruel factory farming methods.

The larger narrative that is obfuscated throughout *CW* is that the presence of a single pig with a litter of piglets in a wooden barn next to a farmhouse is far from a common occurrence in the vaguely contemporary setting that we find in this film. As mentioned above, of the over 100,000,000 pigs who are born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States each year, only about 5% are raised outside a CAFO factory farm

setting.[200] Pigs raised on a farm where there is only one litter of pigs (like the Arable's) or even a single pig (like the Zuckerman's) are even rarer. Wilbur lives in a very exceptional setting. In comparison, of the 808 films released in 2006,[201] only this one film had a pig as a main character (one other animated film, *Barnyard*, had a pig as a secondary, sidekick character who lived on the farm of a "vegan farmer" with a couple other pigs). The circumstances of actual pigs were poorly represented that year. Even in the year 1995, when there were two feature films with lead pig characters (*Babe* and *Gordy*) and one of those films even did show a pig being born in a factory farm, the pig quickly was removed from such dire circumstances. In sum, no films representing pigs have accurately portrayed the complete life cycle that most pigs experience.

The showing of exceptional circumstances of an "other" who is privileged beyond most of his or her fellow "others" is a common trope in hegemonic representations. Hollywood filmmaking does not have a reputation for accurate portrayals of subordinate classes. For instance, it may be that some enslaved people in the United States in the 19th century enjoyed their enslavement, loved their owner/masters, and would choose enslavement over freedom, as many popular film representations of slavery from the early 20th century suggest.[202] However, the overwhelming historical evidence, including narratives written by formerly enslaved people, indicates that such was not the case for the majority of them and in fact, all firsthand accounts of slavery written by formerly enslaved people indicate that the institution was appallingly cruel. Films that represent such situations otherwise are, in the very least, doing a disservice to the historical

[200] See the footnotes referring to Erik Marcus above.
[201] Nash, "The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation," http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/index2006.php.
[202] See *The Littlest Rebel* (1932) featuring Shirley Temple and Stepen Fetchit and even *Gone with the Wind* (1939).

memory of such brutal institutions. More likely, such depictions are deliberate attempts to white wash, if you will, the brutality of an economically and historically significant American institution, often in the spirit of what Yale historian David Blight calls "reunionist imagery." The newly re-united American states were brought together, politically and culturally, by a re-visioning of the Civil War conflict at the expense of the historical facts of slavery, the significance of the institution of slavery to the war, and the plight of black Americans.[203]

This comparison to depictions of race in motion pictures can be carried into the era of the "problem films" of the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s that began to explore the social inequities of race in the United States. These films took on race issues but often hedged the socio-political aspects by presenting the films from a white perspective or by muting the portrayals of the black characters. An example was the film *Pinky* (1949), which explored the issue of blacks "passing" for white and miscegenation but which featured white actress Jeanne Crain in the lead role, making her kiss with a white character less controversial. In *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), Sidney Poitier plays a black doctor who is in love with a white woman and comes to dinner to meet her parents and ask their permission for her hand in marriage. In the film, his character has done everything but win a Nobel Prize – he works with poor children as a doctor with the United Nations and has a spotless reputation. Poitier's roles were often idealistically upright individuals who fought against blatantly racist institutions. An exemplary character, thus, was less challenging to white audiences not entirely comfortable or familiar with black culture. Upstanding though these black characters were, they were

[203] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-4.

often still hamstrung by Hollywood conventions and usually not allowed to display a full range of realistic character depth. For instance, Poitier's characters were rarely given romantic connections. In *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, while the film was about his romance, he was never shown kissing his white fiancé. The lead characters in *CW* and *Babe* are likewise exceptional individuals with extra-ordinary talents (the charm to bring others together or to herd sheep effectively) that help define them. They are not depicted as average farmed animals. They are also similarly constrained in their range of character depth. For instance, they are not depicted with any romantic connections either. Another example of a related hedging in *CW* is portrayed in the exception to the benevolence in the barn which extends to all the creatures except the flies and other "pests" that Charlotte eats. The circle of compassion in *CW* extends to pigs, rats, and even spiders, but it seems that everyone can agree that flies are not deserving of respect.

Explorations of limitations on the accurate portrayals of "others" and subordinating institutions have parallels in feminist critiques as well. For instance, a gentler version of prostitution is depicted in the film *Pretty Woman* (1990) than likely exists anywhere in the actual world – for example, one in which a woman so employed is allowed to enact rules like "no kissing on the lips." The fairytale progression of the narrative – rich man steps in to rescue a woman in perilous circumstances – and the fairly light treatment of a harsh institution that traditionally oppresses women construct a representation of women as both victims and in need of male *power-knowledge* to redefine them. The correlations between this and the representation and construction of nonhuman animal characters in the films in this study – man, who owns land and

animals, steps in to save an animal destined to be slaughtered – are strong, though the gender complexities at some level differentiate from the trans-species intricacies.

Hollywood continually misrepresents farm animals and their circumstances. With the singular exception of two and a half minutes in *Babe*, these depictions do not show anything like the circumstance through which billions of animals pass each year in the U.S. If viewers accept these images as akin to reality, then they misunderstand the life of actual pigs, for these media are representing these lives poorly.

Constraints and Calls for Further Study

As this study grew in detail, it shrank in the number of texts I would have time and space to study. Thus, the primary constraint on this study is that I chiefly focus on two motion pictures. The detail of the analysis of these two works I hope overshadows this limitation, but in my own future work or in other studies, such detailed analyses can be performed on other depictions of so-called *food* animals. Likewise, though early on I chose to focus on pigs, there are ample examples of motion pictures that feature chickens (*Chicken Run* (2000) would be fascinating![204]) and cows (*Home on the Range* (2004), *City Slickers* (1991), *The Wild* (2006)). Likewise, in limiting my scope, I focused on live-action depictions, but a thorough study of animated pigs could add new insight into the discourse on pigness as well, especially if the study was broadened to encompass international depictions (see Appendix A for a listing of a myriad of incidental depictions of pigs).

[204] In a brief review of *Chicken Run* at the start of my study, I thought it interesting to note that the chicken factory in which it takes place seems to primarily resemble a prison camp more than a factory farm – especially in the obvious homage to *The Great Escape* (1963).

Likewise, my theoretical framework and methodology led me to focus on texts themselves; however, the work I have done could be augmented and expanded to include audience reception studies of both adults and children for these same films. There are also other perspectives that I think would be interesting to explore. The various explorations of *animality* and how humans use their supposed differences from animals to define themselves and to define what it is to be human could offer future studies added insight into the nature of these depictions.

I plan on honing this work further as I prepare it for publication, and I will be presenting it at various conferences in the hope of stimulating further critical discussion on the representation of animals in motion pictures and on the intersection of the emerging field of Human-Animal Studies with film and media studies.

My Story

I came to this study because of my growing interest in film depictions of individuals and groups who do not share as much of the hegemonic power in our culture as others. I grew up in a meat and potatoes family. My father was a career army officer, so every few years we packed up the station wagon and my mother, two brothers, sister, and our family dog – Bruno, a beagle mix, who was my same age and who died when we were 12, and then Kong, a monstrous husky-German Shepherd-Labrador mix who had a heart of gold – to move back and forth across the United States. Being the youngest, I witnessed my siblings moving away one at a time, and I was left with only my parents and Kong at home. Kong became, cliché that it is, my best friend. Every day when I came

home from school, he would wait for me in the backyard – he would know just which direction I would come from and he would lie in wait for me. When I came into the yard, he would pounce and we would wrestle – we were pretty evenly matched in weight through my middle teen years. He did have the tooth advantage on me, and whenever he got a little too rough with his friendly biting, I would say clearly "Not so hard!" and he would meekly gum me after that (which finally gave me an advantage). He was very sweet and very intelligent and sometime in those years I became, in my head at least, an animal activist. I would frame arguments why animals should be treated more fairly and why, perhaps, we should not eat them. Intellectually, I saw the connection between my friend Kong and the meat on my plate, but I did not see it practically. It never even crossed my mind to change my own eating habits. I was never very fond of vegetables, and I just ate whatever my mother and, then, in retirement, my father cooked for dinner.

When I moved off to college, I continued my same eating habits. Dorm food was passable, but I did notice that in Hashinger Hall Residence Center for the Creative Arts where I lived, there were regularly vegetarian options. I experimented with a week of vegetarian food but did not feel strongly about it. While I was off in college, Kong died, peacefully under a shady bush in our backyard, and I felt bad for leaving him. Slowly, it was dawning on me that there was an inconsistency between how I felt and how I ate. I flirted with not eating meat a few times but did not commit. Finally, one day while watching a film, one that had nothing to do with animals directly, it hit me. The film was *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989). Late in the film, while Morgan Freeman's Hoke character waited at the car and Miss Daisy was at a lecture, I heard the words of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. just as they did. The recording of King was an actual speech of his,

probably recorded at a rally in Ohio, though it was a theme he repeated often. King was speaking about how it was not the hatred of the bad people that allowed racism and prejudice to continue but the indifference of the good people. Indifference and the decision *not* to act on their principles. Apathy, not antipathy. And I realized that I was being indifferent about things that mattered very much to me. Kong had taught me so much about the charisma, sensitivity, and intelligence of nonhuman animals, and finally I knew how to honor him and our friendship. Since then, I made a pledge to live a vegetarian lifestyle.

A few years later, I became more active with a local animal advocacy organization, and I learned the realities of egg and dairy production. Then I helped rescue Howie the pig, the experience of which I describe below. Shortly thereafter, I visited Wilderness Ranch, a farm animal sanctuary in Colorado. There I met more farm animals and heard the variety of stories about the conditions in which they were raised and abuses to which they were subjected. Especially enlightening were the stories of milk cows (who, contrary to what I thought before, do not *have* to be milked their whole lives, they give milk when they have calves and they generally end up being turned into hamburger when they stop producing the amount of milk necessary to make them economically worthwhile to keep) and egg-laying chickens (who live the worst lives of any animal in the industry, crammed together in tiny cages all their lives). I made the choice at that point to adopt a vegan lifestyle. For me, the choice was obvious. My animal activist work varied, but what I came to realize after a few protests, vigils at slaughterhouses, and many tablings was that I was not interested in getting in the face of people who did not see the suffering of animals the way I did. I was much more interested in leading by example and

helping to educate people who minds were open to exploring the way we treat and exploit animals. As I had worked professionally in television and film production, I realized that I should use my filmmaking skills to persuade.

In 2000, a couple of animal advocacy friends of mine were visiting animal shelters in the Kansas City area, looking for a dog to adopt. At the Kansas City Humane Society, they came across a piglet being kept in a cage. The shelter workers were not sure what to do with him. He was a "farm pig," not a companion animal pot-belly pig breed. My friends were told that a few pigs had "fallen off a truck" headed to a slaughterhouse and this was the only pig who was later found and picked up by animal control. My friends knew that I lived in the country and had a large fenced-in garden and that I was sympathetic to the plight of animals. They called me up and convinced me that together, at least on a temporary basis, we could take care of this pig and get him out of the shelter where he clearly did not belong. They took "Howie" (named after Howard Lyman, the "Mad Cowboy," former cattle rancher who was now an animal activist who we had met the previous year) home to their suburban home and a few days later, brought him out to my place. Howie stayed with me for about a month before we found him a better home with a bigger yard and other pigs with whom to frolic.

A few months later, I was inspired by an R.E.M. song, a popular modern or alternative rock band, to make a video about Howie's life. I was working at a television station in Kansas City at the time, and I had shot some video of Howie when he lived with me and of him in his new home. I shot some additional footage and edited this together with some undercover factory farm footage that had circulated around animal rights circles for years that was informally called the "Diner" footage (perhaps as a

challenge to diners of meat to watch this footage). I used just a little of this footage in a couple short segments that I set in a boxed frame and desaturated it (made it black and white), in order to texture it differently than the bright color "happy" images of Howie in my yard and in his new home (with one of his pig companions, a full grown pot-bellied pig who was about the same size as young Howie when he first got to the sanctuary).

The harsh "Diner" images became, in my video, what Howie had escaped by "jumping" from the truck (my friends and I invested Howie, in our minds at least, with the agency to purposefully leap to freedom). The footage was similar in content and image quality to the "Belcross Pig Farm Investigation" video of workers beating pigs. I had found a particularly harsh shot of a worker dragging a smaller pig by its ear. I slowed this footage down and made it black and white as well. The original footage I shot included some imagery that struck me as symbolic of the sad and lonely life that these pigs go through, lonely in that they are ripped away from their mothers and never get to experience the natural settings in which they would have flourished so well when given the chance (as Howie did): a bushy plant growing in a crack in the cement median of a major highway, blowing in the wind; a small plastic bag buffeted by the wind and cars speeding by in the same highway, twirling around but never quite coming to rest.[205] While shooting along the highway, I also videotaped some Kansas sunflowers growing at the side of the road. On one of these, I found a monarch butterfly clinging tightly to the flowers that were blowing vigorously in the wind. This image stuck in my mind as a parallel to the way cruelly treated pigs cling to life, harsh and painful that it is for them. I edited this footage to the song "Everybody Hurts," a song presumably about human

[205] This was conceived of and shot before I had seen a similar image used in the film *American Beauty,* where it was put to a slightly different symbolic use.

suffering and empathetic feelings among people, perhaps an appeal to prevent someone from committing suicide.[206]

A discourse analysis of this film, now years after I produced it, offers me new insights it and into my choices in the production. What I think this work offers is a link between the harsh undercover footage of anonymous pigs that is found in the sorts of videos mentioned above, and a named and personable character – a pig named Howie. This is not a pig "playing a pig" in a fictive feature film; this video offers "documentary footage" of an actual pig, who was named Howie by the humans who helped find him his home. While the undercover footage does not depict *this* pig, it is digitally affected in a way to present it as, if you will, generic memory of what pigs like this go might go through. The video includes a shot of what is actually an empty pig transportation truck. I see these all the time in the Midwest, but that day with the camera,

Figure 25. Howie and Thurber the puppy sniff each other playfully in my film "Everybody Hurts: The Story of Howie the Pig."

[206] I knew that R.E.M.'s lead singer, Michael Stipe, had performed songs for a PETA album in the past and had sympathetic feelings for animals as well. I had heard an interview where he discussed this very song, one that has become special for very many people, and he described how this song really belonged to everyone. I interpreted that a bit literally and used the song without ever obtaining any sort of legal permission for its use. Thus, though I have screened it in two small video festivals, I restricted myself to ones that were both free to enter and that were free to attend – The 2001 Culture Under Fire Film Festival organized by the Coalition Against Censorship in Kansas City and the 2001 Harvest of Arts Film Festival (one that I created and produced) in Lawrence, Kansas. No money ever exchanged hands for a copy of this video or to see this video. Someday I hope to get a copy of it in the hands of the band members and perhaps I will be granted official rights for its use. It was in this line of thinking that I posted it on YouTube (a site that allows open access to viewing user-generated content at no charge), in July 2006. It was removed from YouTube site in 2009 for containing copyrighted material after receiving 10,771 views. It is now available for free viewing on my own website, www.BluePlanetRevolutions.org.

I could only find an empty one. A handheld shot that holds steady on a CU of the truck, then swish PANS back and forth and down toward the road, likely extra footage not intended for use (it was years ago, I do not remember), serves in the video as a kind of re-creation point-of-view shot of Howie falling (Jumping? Escaping?) from the truck. This shot is followed by the happy footage of Howie in my yard, sniffing at and being sniffed by puppies (seven 4-month old puppies were living with me at the time), laying in mud, and sniffing his new yard-mate, a pot-bellied pig, in the new home we found for him.

This video attempts (it is for others to judge its success) to bridge that gap between the crude undercover footage of abused pigs and the happy, smiling pigs of lovable family movie fame. The "happy" footage of Howie is brightly colored (oversaturated by enhanced chroma colorization) and even slightly filtered (with a "Black Pro Mist" camera filter, such as television promotions producers occasionally use to soften the features of television anchor men and women), all of which give Howie a fuzzy, warm look.[207] These techniques further separate Howie from the anonymous pigs of the undercover footage. However, editing these scenes together into this film linked them visually, and they are linked aurally by the song (the only sound in the film – no natural sounds are heard) that accompanies the entire film. The narrative of the film follows Howie's imagined life in a factory farm, metaphoric and iconic images symbolizing loneliness, persistence and tenacity, Howie's "escape," and the happy ending of him finding a home where he can live out his life without fear of being slaughtered for meat. The production elements of this film correspond to a loosely-

[207] I was a promotions producer at KCTV5 in Kansas City for eight years and it was there that I learned such tricks of the trade and from there where I borrowed the camera.

defined sub-genre convention of "narrative music videos," in the genre of "Music Videos," which would fall under what film theorist Edward Small categorizes as the Major Genre of *Experimental Films*, in contrast to the conventions of the Major Genre of *Fictive Features* such as *CW* or *Babe* and to *Non-Fiction Films*, in which the other motion pictures discussed belong.[208] The images themselves connect them to both these other Major Genres, and specifically, to the work from which they draw – the very depictions previously analyzed in this study.

The "Diner" footage I used shocks some people, framed as it is within the genre of Music Videos, but I have had many people tell me how moving they found the video (I credit the great song, of course, with a sizable portion of this). Two people have told me that, after viewing this video, they have chosen to follow a vegetarian lifestyle. Gene Baur, previously mentioned author and founder of Farm Sanctuary, watched it at a dinner where I met him and remarked on the effective repurposing of the "Diner" footage. I mentioned these occurrences, not to congratulate myself, but as anecdotal evidence that perhaps the film achieves some level of success bridging between the non-fiction undercover "scary videos" of the investigation videos and "happy pig" motion pictures.

I started with the Howie film and went on to make an experimental film "317.1." Inspired by J. J. Murphy's minimalist-structuralist film *Print Generation*, this film added a polemical component to a structuralist film. The numbered title refers to the number of animals killed every second in the U.S. for food. This film features even more and harsher undercover images of slaughter and abuse than the Howie film. My third animal film was a short documentary film entitled "Ahimsa," which incorporated footage of the

[208] Edward S. Small, *Direct Theory: Experimental Film/Video as Major Genre* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 17, 81.

animals at Wilderness Ranch and interviews with people whose lives were changed by their encounters there. It was, finally, my "happy animal" film that I could show to young and old alike without a warning about the harsh images: chickens strutting through their yard together, turkeys showing off their multi-colored snoots, sheep nuzzling humans for an ear scratch, and pigs, sweet pigs, rooting in the soil and plopping down for a sunny nap against each other.

As I began my scholarly work in Film and Media Studies, the thrust of my early work was focused on African-American images in film and narratological studies. After writing a paper on the depiction of slavery in film, I noticed a connection between the misleading portrayals of enslaved people and the depictions of animals in films. I saw parallels between slave auctions and the scene in *Babe* where Fly and Rex's puppies are sold off one at a time. Once the idea of animal slavery was broached in my mind, I began thinking more about the depictions of animals throughout that film and others. Finally, the disjunction between how we portray certain animals as lovable, intelligent characters and how society actually treats them became inescapable. Upon re-viewing *Babe,* I was also struck that by the fact that I had totally forgotten the opening scene where Babe is "rescued" from a factory farm. Why had I forgotten about that? That seemed to be a groundbreaking moment in talking animal films that actually breeched the disjunction. I had never intended to combine my animal advocacy with my scholarly film studies, but I had spent many years educating myself about the treatment of farm animals and it seemed to be a natural progression that these two important elements in my life coalesce into my dissertation.

The Desire for Community/Utopia

CW presents a pig who lives in a pig pen and behaves fairly like a pig with a few noted exceptions that I pointed out – like when he does back flips, when he occasionally refuses to eat, and when Fern, the human, treats him like a human baby. And he is surrounded by a discourse of pigs as meat, which is bisected by a discourse of pigs as friends. Wilbur is an exceptional friend – literally identified as terrific, radiant, and humble. The intervention on his behalf involves three other parties – Fern, the human child who stays his immediate execution; Charlotte, the spider who highlights his specialness; and Homer Zuckerman, the human male who threatens him in the first place but is eventually charmed by the pig and the spider's writings. This film repeatedly approaches the disjunction of the lovable pig character who is meat in the various moments that I have highlighted as category e disjunctions but never quite confronts it. The category e disjunctions only serve to highlight this approach to the disjunction, without facing it fully. The discourse, instead, swirls past this issue, complex and troubling that it is, and re-forms around Wilbur – specifically this pig, not pigs in general – and offers discursive formations on friendship and fidelity and the miracle of nature itself, whether it is manifested in a terrific pig who inspires a miracle web to spell out words or the life cycle of nature that cycles past death and into the rebirth of the spirit of Charlotte in her children.

This work does offer fairly accurate portrayal of actual pigs – intelligent, charming, and potential multi-species, even omni-species, friends. The naturalized

messages about pigs and human-animal relations are positive and speak to the potential for a bonding between these species that can benefit both species. Pigs have charming qualities that are treasured by humans – among themselves or inter-species, such as those traits that many people treasure in their companion animal dogs and cats. However, the film constructs Wilbur as a person primarily in relation to Fern and her desires, and then to Homer Zuckerman and his acceptance of the miracle of nature. Wilbur is always at the mercy of their charity and only through extreme extenuating circumstances, mostly out of his control (a web-writing spider), is his existence extended. Ultimately, this is because the work does not invite spectators to truly take up a nonhuman perspective. A glimmer of this perspective appears in the first scene, framed in Fern's defense of newborn Wilbur against her father's ax. However, after that, Wilbur is saved only because the humans believe the promotional work of Charlotte, and they lump the whole miracle of life together with his continued existence, while the story of Charlotte dying and her offspring coming after also gets consolidated with the miracle of life (and seemingly death) as well. The humans eating Wilbur could be interpreted just as much a part of the "miracle of life" as saving him. Charlotte, after all, consumes "lesser" creatures, pests to animals and humans alike, as part of her cycle of life. The film's approach to, but ultimate avoidance of, the disjunction between pigs as lovable characters and pigs as meat undercuts its invitation to take up nonhuman perspectives. What the film does offer is an option for the viewer to explore an oppositional reading of it. *Charlotte's Web* is not so much a film cracking apart at the seams, as Comolli and Narboni suggest for the category e films, as perhaps a film wherein a few seams allow a glimmer of light to shine

between them that astute viewers/theorists in the mind to search for discourses beyond friendship and miracles might find.

Babe on the other hand, is a category e film. It faces this disjunction head on – from the pictures on the wall in the very first shot of the film and into the setting of Babe's birth in the factory farm. It invites viewers to contemplate this contradiction. Babe is destined for meat but is repeatedly saved from that fate, by his own hand . . . or foot, cloven that it is. The category e disjunctions in this film, the moments where this contradiction is confronted, are approached and then reconsidered and repeated in the discourse surrounding pigs as meat. When Babe does not recognize the seriousness of the situation he faces, the audience is presented with it clearly and is reminded of it by the other, more knowing animals, like Maa the sheep, Fly, and Ferdinand. The narrative drives home the repeated threats to Babe and his potential demise, but within the discourse itself – from the very moment that we meet Babe, staring off toward his mother as she leaves him for the slaughterhouse, through his immediate connection to Farmer Hoggett at the fair – circulates the very idea that "pigs as meat" is problematic. The discourse within the film encompasses this contradiction and presents it unblinkingly to the audience.

Babe, too, is portrayed as an actual pig but a pig who is born into a situation that around 95% of the 100,000,000 pigs born each year in the U.S. face. His birth is common, the norm. The filmmakers, breaking from the book, place him within this authentic context. And though he shows that he can learn to do tasks that are not normal to actual pigs, short of talking to the other animals and asking them (politely) to follow his instructions, the things he learns to do are not so far removed from what pigs are

capable of – as is displayed in the film itself, which consists of the performance of highly trained pigs. *Babe* also offers a touching and authentic portrayal of the connection between a human and nonhuman animal. I have experienced such a connection both with a pig and with dogs and cats. The discursive formation of the human-animal relations in this film reifies the potential that species have to connect with each other across species boundaries. Babe, innocent and trusting as he is, is a rounded character – he mourns the loss of his family when it is made clear what their fate really was. He pursues his own desires as well as appeases the desires and needs of those around him in helping to alert everyone to the sheep rustlers and in driving off the feral dogs. By continually confronting the disjunction of pigs as meat, this film truly invites spectators to take up the perspective of what it is to be considered meat – one loses one's family, potentially one's friends (as is evidenced in Ferdinand's ongoing struggle to save himself), and, ultimately, one's own life. What it does not offer in the discourse is the extrapolation of this conversion of Babe, from meat to companion – which takes place for the humans and his fellow nonhuman animals when they allow him to live an accept his as a being worthy of life beyond that of being a "food animal" – to the lives of these characters beyond the issue of Babe's existence. Nor does *CW* offer this. That is, the pigs are saved and valued among all the characters, freed from the path toward meat by the those who exemplify the components of the SCHWAMP framework, but are cases of Babe and Wilbur the exceptions or the new rules? Straight, Christian, human, white, able-bodied, male owner of land and pigs Homer Zuckerman pronounces the world a better place with Wilbur in it and lets him live. However, besides now having to feed a pig who offers no eggs nor wool nor milk to his farm, how have the Zuckermans' or the Arables' lives changed? Just

what main dish *is* on Homer's table at Christmas dinner? Will the Hoggetts ever serve "roast pork" for dinner again, or will Babe becoming a part of their treasured family of animals simply increase the threat to Ferdinand the duck?

Conclusion

In 21st century Western Culture, humans rarely have to worry about ourselves or our family being threatened with ending up as food for someone else. That is truly the perspective that only a "food animal" can offer, and *Babe* effectively creates circumstances of a lovable friend who might end up as meat and then repeatedly thrusts it into its audience members' faces. What the discourse in these films does not do is broaden this perspective to help humans more fully understand the implications of their actions on the global society of animals. This limitation manifests itself in what can be seen in both *CW* and *Babe* as a succumbing to Frederic Jameson's idea of reification of Utopia in mass culture – the "ineradicable drive towards collectivity that can be detected" in this work. The "underlying impulse . . . our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought to be lived."[209] The conventions of the genre of family films and the audience and studio expectations inevitably lead these films toward happy endings where everyone becomes good friends – the "collectivity" or community that humans crave. While Jameson frames this in a neo-Marxist position, Daniel Quinn, author of *Ishmael* and *The Story of B,* calls this urge toward collectivity a *tribal impulse*.[210] One of Quinn's themes is the concept that the

[209] Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* No. 1, no. Winter (1979): 147.
[210] Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B* (New York: Bantam Books, 1996).

world does not belong to humans; humans belong to the world. He points to the advent of what he calls totalitarian agriculture, which corresponds to Ian Bowler's *first agricultural revolution* 10,000 years ago, when humans began to cultivate more food than they needed and locked up the food they now cultivated in great quantities, allowing those in control to dispense it as they saw fit. This paradigmatic shift that eventually encompassed most of humankind was away from the tribal culture ("leaver" culture, as Quinn calls it) which worked well for our species for at least three million years. The new "taker" culture developed a new relationship with nonhuman animals, plants, and the earth itself, which eventually manifested itself in Bowler's third agricultural revolution –mechanization, chemical farming, and food manufacturing of the 20th century – that has resulted in the compartmentalization of animals into warehouses and under artificial lights and away from the sight of society almost entirely.

This is a useful model to incorporate the discourse of the undercover investigation videos and the industry depictions into this discussion. The discourse that circulates through the Belcross and the Seaboard investigation videos, through *Death on a Factory Farm*, and through many of the animal rights videos involves outrage and even incredulousness at the inhumane treatment of "food animals." "How can anyone treat living, breathing animals in the manners that are depicted?" they ask. These works focus on bringing to the forefront the discourse on animals as meat and the resulting inherent cruelty involved. While this discourse within them is easily accessed, the emotional connection to the viewer is hyperbolic – extreme and abrupt – and there is a disconnect between who these pigs or humans are and the viewer; they are nameless victims or perpetrators. They offer an anti-thesis to utopia or a view of community – in fact, they

offer a vision of dystopia: in these cases, the failure of our society to both humanely "produce" food and the failure of these individual humans to maintain civility. These works often scare away viewers before they even watch them, and they are not readily available in mainstream media outlets. Thus, they generally fail to reach many viewers. These problems are intrinsic to the sub-genre of undercover animal investigations and offer an antonym to fictive features like *CW* and *Babe.*

The pig industry videos try to present a discourse that reinforces the reification of utopia in some sense. However, as an educated viewer, I do not believe that the Ohio Pork Queen genuinely relishes her job "taking care" of the pigs at her father's farm, nor that Jackie Roughton, a worker featured in the Ohio Pork Tour videos, truly wishes she could spend 24 hours a day with "her girls" under artificial lights and on cement floors, but I believe the element in the discourse that implies that pig industry owners are doing what they feel they need to do to make a good living in this industry. I disagree with their choices, but I recognize the frustrations that push the producers of these videos to feel so strongly that they need to present such wholesome and friendly (though easily interpreted as disingenuous) videos to support their businesses. And if they really kept their factory farms as clean and friendly as they depict them in the videos and took as good care of the pigs as they show, the lives of these pigs would be better than most who are kept in factory farms. The vision of utopia that they offer is a forced and artificial and is clearly part of a sales campaign that ultimately results in their own profit, thus calling into question the integrity of the depiction.

Unfortunately, the alternative non-fiction depiction to the undercover videos and the industry depictions is "Pig Bomb." In this show, the producers resort to tabloid

techniques to make a presentation, which barely falls into the category of "non-fiction," accessible on mainstream television. By making it so accessible through sensationalism, they fail to convey the air of authenticity to a problem that has some basis in reality. Instead, the show presents only the elements of the feral pig problem that can be presented dramatically and be scored with percussive music. The absence of other non-fiction representations of pigs and farm animals in general is likely due to market pressures by commercial sponsors. Although the cruel treatment of pigs by the industry are included in "Common Farming Exemptions,"[211] the multi-national corporations that encompass modern agribusiness are in no rush to have cameras and lights shined on such practices that are common in the industry. No specific proof of such pressures, however, is available, just as the known, but seldom discussed, proof of sponsor pressure on Hollywood to not alienate Southern audiences in the first half of the 20th century by highlighting the cruelty of the institution of slavery or the detrimental effects of segregation on minority populations led to misrepresentations by Hollywood in depictions of slavery and African Americans in general.

Ultimately, it may simply be a limitation of the corresponding genres that prevents these motion pictures from both authentically presenting "food animals" – offering a discourse that truly encompasses the complex relationships between humans and animals raised as food – and connects these concerns with the broader implications of animal agriculture to the welfare of the earth. And maybe that is too much to ask of any specific motion picture. Exploring the various representations throughout this study, what I have come to understand is that, collectively, these representations actually do bring together various important aspects of authentic pigness to the discourse that circulates

[211] See Erik Marcus' reference and my discussion of CFEs in Chapter 2.

around them in our culture. Fictive features like *Babe* and *Charlotte's Web* have valuable perspectives to contribute – the charming and heart-warming side that consumers often never get to see in pigs – just as the undercover investigations and the industry promotional videos round out the overall perspective of the complex societal discourse that surrounds animals who are raised as food and are sentient, conscious beings. In the end, I believe the fictive representations are actually more effective in furthering the welfare of pigs, especially in depictions that do no shy away from the reality of pigs as meat versus pigs as charming creatures as is featured in *Babe.* The emotional connection which these fictive depictions generate in the discourse surrounding motion picture pigs is accessible and relatable, and, as this study has shown, often consists of elements of authentic pigness that can engender understanding and compassion on the part of humans who have not had the privilege to encounter pigs in their own actual lives.

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Appendix A: Cine-Pigs (Pigs in Film!)

Pig characters have often been featured in films and television. What follows is a brief summary of some of the notable pigs in film, along with a listing of all the pigs in motion pictures that I could put together.

The inimitable Miss Piggy started out as a minor character in *The Muppet Show* but soon stole the stage and took a lead role, alongside her beloved Kermit the Frog, in the Muppet movies. The bacon puns were always a thorn in her side. She was also featured as the queen of a tribe of "natives" that were all (puppet) pigs on a remote island in *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996). A. A. Milne's Piglet, not really a pig at all but a stuffed animal come to life, is hardly piglike, except in name, but nevertheless, he showcases the humble sweetness of pigs in books and in various television and feature film adaptations of Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*.

Porky Pig became the straight "man" character to which Depression Era audiences could relate in Warner Brothers' Looney Tunes cartoons, first appearing in 1935. He was often the counter to the wackiness of Daffy Duck, from whom he never got respect. Porky has distinct piglike traits – intelligence and sweetness, though his trademark stuttering has no correlation to re- . . . re- . . . re- . . . actuality. The first animated pigs in film were in Disney's Silly Symphony presentation "Three Little Pigs" from 1933, which is generally considered to be the most successful short animation of all time based on "anecdotal accounts of wildly positive audience responses to the film, its

extensive run in the cinemas, its promotion often above the feature film of the day, its widespread cross-promotional success (sheet music sales, dolls of the pigs and wolf, etc), and its extensive international distribution."[212] These pigs were not very pig-like at all and were fairly clear allegories for human characteristics (sloth and frivolity by Fifer Pig and Fiddler pig, industriousness by Practical Pig, the brick builder). They wore clothes and built houses (of straw, sticks, and bricks) and were threatened by the Big Bad Wolf, who presumably wanted to eat them. Inside the brick house of the third pig, we find a picture on the wall of labeled "Mother" – a female pig with seven piglets suckling at her teats. Next to it is a picture labeled "Father" – a string of link sausages. Thus, even in this first animated depiction, the inescapable link between meat and pigs surfaced.

A more contemporary animated pig is Pumbaa, the African warthog in the Disney film *The Lion King* (1994). The quintessential comic sidekick character, Pumbaa's name is a Swahili word that means to be "foolish, silly, weak-minded, negligent."[213] His name is in contrast to his character, though. He is depicted as a ferocious fighter but a caring and devoted friend (if a bit flatulent). There is also a pig sidekick in Steve Oedekerk's *Barnyard* (2006). His name is Pig the Pig, and he usually just takes a side role in Otis the Cow's out-of-control-teenager-like antics. Interestingly, the farmer who "owns" the barnyard is a vegan farmer. That is the film's explanation for why the animals get to relax and have fun without worrying about being slaughtered for food, though it does not stop the animals from teasing the farmer when he falls asleep in his yard chair. This is similar to the farm in 2004's *Home on the Range,* where the animals note that the woman who

[212] Adrian Danks, "Huffing and Puffing about *Three Little Pigs*," *Senses of Cinema*, (http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/03/29/3_little_pigs.html).
[213] Madan, A.C., *Swahili Language – Dictionaries English*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), (http://www.archive.org/stream/swahilienglishdi00madarich/swahilienglishdi00madarich_djvu.txt).

owns Patch of Heaven Dairy Farm is “friendly” – that is, none of the animals are ever slaughtered (just milked, seemingly). And in 2007, there was the pig, popularly referred to as “Spider-Pig” to whom Homer Simpson in *The Simpsons Movie* becomes strangely attached (his given human name may also be Harry Plopper, depending on the mood of Homer). Krusty the Clown is done with the pig after shooting a commercial and orders the crew to slaughter him. The pig runs to Homer, who adopts the pig into his family, to the dismay of his children and wife. Homer plays with the pig around the house in a way that he has never done with his children. The pig is not especially piglike, though when Homer holds him up to the ceiling, he does perhaps walk on the ceiling in the way a spider-pig might (if there were such a thing).

Listing of Cine-Pigs

(Chronological list compiled through various internet sources including IMDB.com)

Fifer Pig, Fiddler Pig, and Practical Pig – Walt Disney’s Silly Symphonies characters in “The Three Little Pigs” (1933)

Peter Pig – in Disney shorts *The Wise Little Hen* (1934) with Donald Duck and *The Band Concert* (1935)

Paddy Pig – tuba playing pig in Disney’s short *The Band Concert* (1935)

Porky Pig – Warner Brothers’ *Looney Tunes* (1935)

Petunia Pig – Porky Pig's girlfriend in Warner Brothers’ *Looney Tunes* (1937)

Piggy – *Merrie Melodies* (1940s?)

Old Major, Napoleon, Snowball, Squealer, et al – pigs depicted in an animated retelling of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, a classic allegory of Stalinist Russia, produced

by Halas and Batchelor Cartoon Films (1954, also depicted in a TNT/Hallmark live-action TV remake in 1999)

Piglet – *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* and other Disney animated featurettes and feature films involving Winnie the Pooh (actually a stuffed animal come to life) (1966, also on TV)

Wilbur – protagonist pig in *Charlotte's Web* (1973 animated musical, 2006 live-action)

Habeus Corpus – the companion of Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett "Monk" Mayfair, one of Doc's "Fabulous Five" in *Doc Savage: Man of Bronze* (1975)

Miss Piggy – muppet pig in *The Muppet Movie* (1979) and other muppet features. In *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996) there is an island full of "natives" who are all pigs, Miss Piggy plays the roll of "Boom Shakalaka," their leader

(The killer pig) – a wild boar that terrorizes Australians in *Razorback* (1984)

Hen Wen – Disney's *The Black Cauldron* (1985)

Porco Rosso – the title character from Hayao Miyazaki's anime film *Porco Rosso* (1992) who is a pilot who has chosen to take on pig-like facial features because of what he considers his shameful acts in World War I

Pumbaa – the warthog in the Disney's *The Lion King* (1994)

Babe – title character and protagonist of *Babe* (1995) and *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998)

Gordy – title character of *Gordy* (1995), a work originally conceived as a vehicle for noted television pig character Arnold Ziffel of *Green Acres*

Hamm – piggy bank character in *Toy Story* (1995) (actually a piggy bank come to life)

Okkoto – leader of the boars in *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and

Nago – the boar killed by Ashitaka at the start of *Princess Mononoke* (1997)

George – a human boy changed into a pig by a magic spell in *My Brother the Pig*, which starred a young Scarlett Johanssen and Judge Reinhold (1999)

McDull – Hong Kong pig character from comics and starred in the film *My Life as McDull* (2001), also has a pig friend named McDug

Runt of the Litter – *Chicken Little* (2005)

Pig the Pig – *Barnyard* (2006), sidekick to Otis the Cow

Spider Pig/Harry Plopper – *The Simpsons Movie* (2007)

Albert – Disney's *College Road Trip* (2008)

(Pet pig) – *The Spy Next Door* (2010)

Listing of Television Pigs

Arnold Ziffel – the adopted son of neighbors on CBS's *Green Acres* (1965)

Pinky and Perky – (puppet pigs) created by Czech immigrants Jan and Vlasta Dalibor in *Pinky and Perky* (BBC television, from 1968, and in animated version in 2008)

Miss Piggy – *The Muppet Show* (1976)

Capt. Link Hogthrob – "Pigs in Space" skit in *The Muppet Show*

Professor Strangepork – *The Muppet Show*

The Peking Homunculus – a vicious robot from the future in the *Doctor Who* story "The Talons of Weng-Chiang" (Though humanoid, the Homunculus contained the cerebral cortex of a pig, and was driven by its "swinish instincts"), BBC (1977)

Pigsy – a pig monster consumed with lust and gluttony in the Japanese Series *Monkey* (1978)

Doris – a beer drinking pig from the Australian series *A Country Practice* (1981)

The Two Proud Pigs – eponymous heroes of a fictional film accidentally shown in lieu of *12 Angry Men* during one of *Sesame Street's* "Monsterpiece Theater" sketches, PBS (1982)

Treat Heart Pig – a Care Bears cousin on *The Care Bears* (1985)

Noel – Suzanne's pig in *Designing Women,* CBS (1986)

Scruffy – a companion animal pig on *Full House,* ABC (1987)

Flying Pig – a character on the Canadian sketch comedy show *The Kids in the Hall*, played by Bruce McCulloch (1988)

Oolong – a shape-shifting pig who uses his abilities for his own greedy desires in *Dragon Ball Z* (1989)

Huxley Pig – A daydreaming pig in the UK's *Huxley Pig* (1989)

Vile Vincent – the vampire pig-butler who appears in some of Huxley Pig's daydreams in *Huxley Pig* (1989)

Sir Oinksalot – the mascot of Springfield A&M in Fox's *The Simpsons* (1989)

Mr. Porky – *The Simpsons,* Fox (1989)

Hamton J. Pig – Tiny Toon Adventures (Warner Brothers, 1990)

Purk – a baby piglet who everyone takes care of on *Sesamstraat* the Dutch television version of *Sesame Street* (1992)

Little Cory – a pig in the sitcom *Boy Meets World* (1993)

Abner – *Hey Arnold!* (1996) on Nickelodeon

Fluffy – Cartman's pot-bellied pig in the *South Park* episode "An Elephant Makes Love to a Pig," Comedy Central (1997)

Mayor Pig and Dumpling – the animated show *101 Dalmatians: The Series* (1997)

Peppa Pig and family – the British children's program of the same name (2002)

Tonton –In anime TV series *Naruto*, Tonton is Tsunade's companion pig who wears a red jumper and a pearl necklace, displays occasional jutsu moves, and is adept at tracking with her keen sense of smell (2002)

Grunty – a pig on *.hack//Sign*, a Japanese anime series (2002)

Piggley Winks – the title character in the TV series *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks*, PBS (2003), which also features his pig family and grandfather pig who tells stories of olden times

Spanky Ham – a sarcastic pig in *Drawn Together*, an animated spoof of reality TV shows, Comedy Central (2004)

Mr. Wu's pigs – the Showtime series *Deadwood*, used mainly for disposing of dead bodies (2004)

Chuck – *Camp Lazlo* on the Cartoon Network (2005)

A cybernetically augmented pig – featured in the *Doctor Who* episode "Aliens of London," BBC (2005)

Manbearpig – a multi-species mythological monster in Comedy Central's *South Park* episode entitled "Manbearpig," who only Al Gore thinks is real and is causing environmental disasters (2006)

Little Pig/AlphaPig – *The Reading Adventures of Super Why!* which airs on PBS Kids (2007)

Pigby – Olive Snook's pet pig in *Pushing Daisies* (2007)

Pig slaves – the Daleks' genetically modified henchmen in the *Doctor Who* episodes "Daleks in Manhattan" and "Evolution of the Daleks," BBC (2007)

Hamhock – a pig monster from *Power Rangers: Jungle Fury* (2008)

Pigsquatch – large rumored pig who is caught and accidentally killed in "Stole an RV" episode of *My Name is Earl* (2008)

Petal – pig whose catchphrase is "piglet power" on BBC series *Big Barn Farm* (2009)

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Appendix B: Humane Slaughter Act

(accessed at http://www.animallaw.info/statutes/stusfd7usca1901.htm)

United States of America

United States Code Annotated Currentness. Title 7. Agriculture. Chapter 48. Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter

Citation: 7 USC 1901 - 1907

Citation: 7 U.S.C.A. § 1901 - 1907

Summary: These statutory sections comprise what is commonly termed the Humane Slaughter Act. Included in these sections are Congress' statement that livestock must be slaughtered in a humane manner to prevent needless suffering, research methods on humane methods of slaughter, the nonapplicability of these statutes to religious or ritual slaughter, and the investigation into the care of nonambulatory livestock.

Statute in Full:

7 U.S.C.A. § 1901 Findings and Declaration of Policy

The Congress finds that the use of humane methods in the slaughter of livestock prevents needless suffering; results in safer and better working conditions for persons engaged in the slaughtering industry; brings about improvement of products and economies in slaughtering operations; and produces other benefits for producers, processors, and consumers which tend to expedite an orderly flow of livestock and livestock products in interstate and foreign commerce. It is therefore declared to be the policy of the United States that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods.

CREDIT(S)

(Pub.L. 85-765, § 1, Aug. 27, 1958, 72 Stat. 862.)

7 U.S.C.A. § 1902. Humane methods

No method of slaughtering or handling in connection with slaughtering shall be deemed to comply with the public policy of the United States unless it is humane. Either of the following two methods of slaughtering and handling are hereby found to be humane:

(a) in the case of cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, swine, and other livestock, all animals are rendered insensible to pain by a single blow or gunshot or an electrical, chemical or other means that is rapid and effective, before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut; or

(b) by slaughtering in accordance with the ritual requirements of the Jewish faith or any other religious faith that prescribes a method of slaughter whereby the animal suffers loss of consciousness by anemia of the brain caused by the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument and handling in connection with such slaughtering.

CREDIT(S)

(Pub.L. 85-765, § 2, Aug. 27, 1958, 72 Stat. 862; Pub.L. 95-445, § 5(a), Oct. 10, 1978, 92 Stat. 1069.)

§ 1903. Repealed. Pub.L. 95-445, § 5(b), Oct. 10, 1978, 92 Stat. 1069

7 U.S.C.A. § 1904. Methods research; designation of methods

In furtherance of the policy expressed herein the Secretary is authorized and directed--

(a) to conduct, assist, and foster research, investigation, and experimentation to develop and determine methods of slaughter and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter which are practicable with reference to the speed and scope of slaughtering operations and humane with reference to other existing methods and then current scientific knowledge; and

(b) on or before March 1, 1959, and at such times thereafter as he deems advisable, to designate methods of slaughter and of handling in connection with slaughter which, with respect to each species of livestock, conform to the policy stated in this chapter. If he deems it more effective, the Secretary may make any such designation by designating methods which are not in conformity with such policy. Designations by the Secretary subsequent to March 1, 1959, shall become effective 180 days after their publication in the Federal Register.

CREDIT(S)

(Pub.L. 85-765, § 4, Aug. 27, 1958, 72 Stat. 863; Pub.L. 95-445, § 5(b)-(e), Oct. 10, 1978, 92 Stat. 1069.)

§ 1905. Repealed. Pub.L. 95-445, § 5(b), Oct. 10, 1978, 92 Stat. 1069

7 U.S.C.A. § 1906. Exemption of ritual slaughter

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit, abridge, or in any way hinder the religious freedom of any person or group. Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, in order to protect freedom of religion, ritual slaughter and the handling or other preparation of livestock for ritual slaughter are exempted from the terms of this chapter. For the purposes of this section the term "ritual slaughter" means slaughter in accordance with section 1902(b) of this title.

CREDIT(S)

(Pub.L. 85-765, § 6, Aug. 27, 1958, 72 Stat. 864.)

7 U.S.C.A. § 1907. Practices involving nonambulatory livestock

(a) Report

The Secretary of Agriculture shall investigate and submit to Congress a report on--

(1) the scope of nonambulatory livestock;

(2) the causes that render livestock nonambulatory;

(3) the humane treatment of nonambulatory livestock; and

(4) the extent to which nonambulatory livestock may present handling and disposition problems for stockyards, market agencies, and dealers.

(b) Authority

Based on the findings of the report, if the Secretary determines it necessary, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations to provide for the humane treatment, handling, and disposition of nonambulatory livestock by stockyards, market agencies, and dealers.

(c) Administration and enforcement

For the purpose of administering and enforcing any regulations promulgated under subsection (b) of this section, the authorities provided under sections 8313 and 8314 of this title shall apply to the regulations in a similar manner as those sections apply to the Animal Health Protection Act. Any person that violates regulations promulgated under subsection (b) of this section shall be subject to penalties provided in section 8313 of this

title.

CREDIT(S)

(Pub.L. 107-171, Title X, § 10815, May 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 532.)

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