

### **Section 3: Urban textualities, humans and other animals**

#### **7 The killing floor and crime narratives: Marking women and nonhuman animals**

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##### **Introduction**

The English word ‘tattoo’ is derived from the Tahitian term ‘tatau’, and denotes the corporeal practice to ‘puncture or mark [...] on skin’ (Taliaferro and Odden 2012: 4). Tattoos are just one example of body modification practices and marks made on skin. However, this type of body modification in contemporary crime fiction relates female victims to industrial treatments of nonhuman animals. This essay specifically examines the equation of women and nonhuman animals, using the tattoo and the imprinting and branding of animals for meat to provide a critique of animal studies in and via crime fiction. We argue that there is an emergent sub-genre of crime fiction—‘killing floor’ crime fiction—which uses the tropes and practices of butchery. These fictions focus on the mutilation of women, the puncturing of their skins and the equation of their bodies with meat (which symbolically feeds and sustains the male killer). The increased technology and use of factories to literally rip nonhuman animals apart mirrors the way that women’s bodies are dehumanised, fragmented and inscribed in these contemporary crime fictions.

In this essay we will be concerned with the tattoo in contemporary crime fiction and marking of the body in a broad sense, including: literal marking of the skin, as in the marking and ‘scarification’ of skin and bodies via cutting, branding, slicing, and butchering. We are also concerned with how such marking and scarification can function as a representation and reflection of the perceived value of certain beings, particularly of nonhuman beings and women,

and of their status in society; a value and status ‘inscribed by culture and counterinscribed by individuals’ (DeMello 2000: 9). Relatedly, this essay provides an analysis of the marking, both literal and metaphorical, of nonhuman beings and women via an examination of contemporary crime narratives, including Jeffery Deaver’s novel *The skin collector* (2014b) and Peter Robinson’s *Abattoir blues* (2015 [2014]). In doing so, it links the exploitation and objectification of the bodies of women and of nonhumans.

### **Marking and consumption: women and crime narratives**

Representations of food, cooking and consumption in crime fiction have a long history and have been documented in recent fiction and criticism.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the genre of crime fiction and its sub genres can be viewed as a recipe—or recipes—made up of particular conventions and ‘ingredients’. Crime and detective narratives often reflect the dominant viewpoint of a particular culture, unmasking a society’s hierarchical structures and ideologies. In particular, the language used in such narratives can sometimes be found to reflect cultural norms relating to the hierarchal status of humans and nonhumans. Interestingly, there are strong analogies between the use of nonhuman beings in modern-day practices (such as factory farming and animal experimentation) and the position of women in contemporary crime fiction who are repeatedly ‘bound, gagged, strung up or tied down, raped, sliced, burned, blinded, beaten, staved, suffocated, stabbed, boiled or buried alive’ (Mann 2009: n.p.).

The imagery of butchering is often used to describe acts of sexual violence against women; though usually women in such narratives (unlike nonhuman beings in reality) are not literally reduced to pieces of meat, but are only metaphorically reduced to meat.<sup>2</sup> As Gill Plain has noted, ‘flesh becomes meat and sex mutates into butchery’ in twentieth-century crime

narratives (Plain 2001: 232). We say ‘usually’ for cannibalism is not unknown in such narratives, and is famously evinced by Thomas Harris’s cannibalistic serial killer, Dr Hannibal Lecter (who made his first novelistic appearance in *Red dragon* (1981)). Discussing Harris’s sequel, *The silence of the lambs* (1988), Plain discusses ‘[t]he ‘meatification’ of [Clarice] Starling’ (Plain 2001: 235), commenting how ‘[i]n the red-blooded machismo of the FBI, Starling is nothing more than ‘poultry’—a cheap, expendable alternative to ‘real’ meat’ (*ibid.*: 233). Time and time again, women are connected to meat, crime and sex. Understanding the metaphor of butchering depends on the reader’s awareness that many animals are literally butchered (see Adams 2010: 86)—made into pieces of meat—and also depends on the ways in which they are actually treated (especially at the slaughterhouse) and the methods by which their bodies are literally fragmented.

Significantly, the animals themselves are often absent from such images of butchering, and this absence is a disturbing reflection of ‘the dominant reality that renders real animals invisible and masks violence’ (Adams 2010: 93). Helene Tursten’s *The torso* [*Tatuerad torso*] (1999) takes steps in this direction, reading the necrosadistic murder-mutilation (of men and women) in these terms: “[t]o murder a human being and then take apart the body piece by piece like a ... roasted chicken. It’s damned disgusting!” (Tursten [1999] 2006: 16).<sup>3</sup> It is, though, the cooked meat/consumable object that is visible in this comparison.

This reading of women, nonhumans and consumption is extended in *The skin collector*. One of the series’ figures, Amelia Sachs (who works with and is partner to NYPD detective Lincoln Rhyme), links murder and cannibalism specifically to marking and modification: ‘[c]utting throats, cannibalism, Sachs reflected. Talk about body modification’ (Deaver 2014b: 114). The novel’s front cover draws on the well-established connection between the killer as artist in crime narratives, stating that ‘Death is his art’.<sup>4</sup>

While poison administered via food is a long-standing favourite means of murder (for example, Dorothy L. Sayers's *Strong poison* (1930)), the poison trope is reworked in a postmodern fashion in Deaver's narrative, with the principle criminal—Billy Haven—tattooing his victims using poison rather than ink. He refers to such inscriptions as 'a Billy Mod' (2014b: 10) and is subsequently named 'the poison tat artist' (*ibid.*: 29). These acts and markings – which are carried out in New York's underground tunnels, and significantly in a former slaughterhouse (see section 'The invisible animal') – serve as cryptic clues and are part of Billy's larger plan, titled 'the Modification', where he would employ '[p]oison to destroy the poisoned city.' (*ibid.*: 301; 363). Billy also refers to this destruction as '[a] plague' (*ibid.*: 351), drawing on images of disease.

There are many connections made between Deaver's earlier novel, *The bone collector* (2014a [1997]); for example, Billy is inspired by his predecessor's *modus operandi*. *The skin collector* is also undeniably inspired by previous tattoo/crime narratives, and it self-referentially draws attention to Stieg Larsson's *The girl with the dragon tattoo* (2005) thriller throughout the novel. The interconnection of gender, the tattoo, textual branding, crime and nonhumans (pigs) is also apparent in Larsson's novel, where Lisbeth Salander tattoos 'I AM A SADISTIC PIG, A PERVERT, AND A RAPIST' (Larsson, 2008 [2005]: 235. Author's emphasis) on her sexual assailant. Billy's inscription of his victims (both men and women) in *The skin collector* play on the association of the sexual element and serial killing of women. Billy's first victim, Chloe, details how 'what she'd been expecting, dreading, wasn't happening. In a way, though, this was worse because *that*—ripping her clothes off and then what would follow—would at least have been understandable. It would have fallen into a known category of horror. This was different' (Deaver 2014b: 6).

The considerations detailed above support the reading that crime and detective narratives can offer a platform from which modern-day views of women and of nonhuman animals can be explored. Further, since marking and scarification of women is frequently conveyed through the metaphor of meat and butchering in such narratives, they provide a means by which the literal and metaphorical marking of the bodies of women and of animals can be analysed. To further draw out these associations, we will first set up the positioning of nonhuman animals in crime narratives.

### **Nonhuman animals and crime narratives**

Animals or animal-references in crime narratives have a long genealogy. Examples include the detective figure of ‘Mr Samuel Ferret’ in ‘The experiences of a barrister’ (1849-50, *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal*) and dog detectives.<sup>5</sup> As well as detecting figures, animal villains and/or animals that are complicit (willingly or unwillingly) in crime have appeared: consider Edgar Allan Poe’s famous orangutan in ‘The murders in the Rue Morgue’ (1841), the use of an anthill (under a beaten and stripped body) in Charles De Boos’ *Mark Brown’s wife: a tale of the goldfields* (1871), the tarantula as torture instrument in Patricia Cornwell’s *Predator* (2005), and the killings in *The bone collector*, which utilise rats and mad dogs. *The skin collector* also has a strong focus on animals.

There also are many representations of murder or mutilation of animals in crime narratives. A few examples include Errol Childress’s dog in *True detective* (Series 1, 2014), the murder of animals and women in Larsson’s *The girl with the dragon tattoo* (2005), and an old case where a dog had been shot in Cornwell’s *All that remains* (1992). In the latter text, Kay Scarpetta notes how ‘[d]uring my career I had autopsied tortured dogs, mutilated cats, a sexually

assaulted mare, and a poisoned chicken left in a judge's mailbox. People were just as cruel to animals as they were to each other.' (Cornwell 1993 [1992]: 256).<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, animal representation and attendant hierarchies apply to 'the female's place in the hierarchy of animal life' (Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero 2004 [1893]: 41). Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero in their 1893 work, *The female offender* [*La donna delinquente*], draw on the Victorian human-animal divide and natural selection. They detail the physical and psychological features that classify criminals, and discuss the nature of lesbianism and its causes—specifically prison—which causes the women 'prisoners [to] resemble animals' (Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero 2004: 177). Their gendered 'zoological scale' includes spiders, birds, worms, crustaceans, mammals, carnivores, and primates. They state that: 'among the inferior animals, female dominance in size and strength is typical. It manifests itself strongly in the zoological world and extends even to some species of birds. But little by little as one goes up the scale, the male begins to approach the female and then to become stronger, so that among the mammals without exception the male rules over the species' (*ibid.*: 44). Deaver draws on this connection between natural selection and crime in *The skin collector*, when Rhyme muses that '[n]atural selection applies to criminal activity, as well as to newts and simians' (2014: 428).<sup>7</sup> The same applies to Billy's red centipede tattoo with human eyes; when attacking Chloe—his first victim—his criminal acts, tattoo and identity become entwined: he is 'her attacker, the yellow-face insect' (*ibid.*: 8). The text describes this tattoo—and Billy's rationale—in further detail:

The creature was about eighteen inches long. Its posterior was at the middle of his biceps and the design moved in a lazy S pattern to the back of his hand, where the

insect's head rested—the head with a human face, full lips, knowing eyes, a nose, a mouth encircling fangs.

Traditionally, people tattooed themselves with animals for two reasons: to assume attributes of the creature, like courage from a lion or stealth from a panther. Or to serve as an emblem to immunize them from the dangers of a particular predator.

Billy didn't know much about psychology but knew that, between the two, it was the first reason that had made him pick the creature with which to decorate his arm (*ibid.*: 208-09).

The strong animal (and gendered experimentation) connection in *The skin collector* is accentuated by the numerous referrals to H. G. Wells's *The island Dr Moreau* (1896): this is Billy's favourite book, and a quotation from Wells's text is used as the preface to the novel. Billy explicitly compares 'the Modification' with Doctor Moreau's vivisection experiments (*ibid.*: 301).

Centipedes, while ostensibly innocuous creatures, are both predators and highly venomous. They are also usually subterranean and they move quickly; as such, they can go unnoticed and are not as easy to detect. Therefore, Billy's choice of tattoo correlates to both his criminal being and actions: the ink that he uses for his tattoos is a deadly venom, intended to poison slowly. Billy (and his symbolic centipede tattoo) seeks to torture and kill those weaker than himself. Further, just as the aforementioned zoological scale might be interpreted as a hierarchal ordering of nature, perhaps similarly the narrative we tell ourselves about nonhuman animals used in modern-day practices is a narrative which relates to the hierarchical structure of our society; a structure in which humans dominate and exploit other animals, and a culture in

which the exploitation of nonhuman animals has become normalised. We tend not to see our treatment of nonhuman animals as problematic because the idea that their domination is part of a natural ordering has been entrenched throughout history. Their treatment in experiments and in meat production is generally deemed to be acceptable, and in this way somehow established as defensible. As Carol Adams claims, '[b]ecause of the dominant discourse which approves of meat eating, we are forced to take the knowledge that we are consuming dead animals and accept it, ignore it, neutralize it, repress it' (2010: 241). For Adams, the dominant discourse is not only anthropocentric but patriarchal too:

Eating animals acts as a mirror and representation of patriarchal values. Meat eating is the re-inscription of male power at every meal. The patriarchal gaze sees not the fragmented flesh of dead animals but appetizing food. If our attitudes re-inscribe patriarchy, our actions regarding eating animals will either reify or challenge this received culture (*ibid.*: 241).

Whether or not one agrees with Adams's feminist critique of patriarchy and her view that our eating of nonhumans represents patriarchal norms, our normalised attitudes towards such beings mirror a cultural paradigm which is certainly anthropocentric, and that cultural paradigm reinforces our attitudes. In some sense parallel to Adams's views, Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel explores links between human violence against women and against animals, arguing that, with respect to sexual violence against women (and analogous to violence towards animals), such 'violence maintains male domination against women, and simultaneously articulates a binary between "man" and "women" as normative gender constructions' (2015: 9). Moreover, Wadiwel



emphatically claims (in relation to violence inflicted upon animals commercial practices) that ‘mass orchestrated violence against animals both maintains systems of human domination and... constructs epistemologically how we understand the “animals” as a discursive category that is opposed and subordinated to the “human”’ (*ibid.*: 9). In some sense then many nonhumans are already ‘marked’ or ‘inscribed’ (by a human-centred culture and by individuals) as objects, as consumables, even before they come into existence. Moreover, while many crime fiction narratives readily utilise abattoir imagery with male killers who perceive women as meat, nonhuman beings themselves are not ‘seen’ in the narratives. It is rather the women’s flesh as meat (and treated as meat, treated as poorly as animals used in modern farming), which is held in the male gaze.

### **Marking and metaphor**

Furthermore, language performs a marking function, both for women and for nonhumans. For example, Dr Jordan, in Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace* (1996) seeks to define and brand Grace via his language and evocative thoughts: ‘[m]urderess, murderess, he whispers to himself. It has an allure, a scent almost... He imagines himself breathing it as he draws Grace towards him, pressing his mouth against her. *Murderess*. He applies it to her throat like a brand’ (Atwood 1997 [1996]: 453). Here, it is the male who has the power to figuratively brand the female with his sexualised discourse and his body. Christiana Gregoriou, discussing linguistic deviance in contemporary crime fiction, has identified and examined animal metaphors in James Patterson’s Alex Cross series of novels—particularly *Along came a spider* (1993) and *Cat and mouse* (1997). These are the ‘KILLERS ARE SPIDERS metaphor’ and the ‘KILLERS ARE ANIMALS

/ INSECTS TO BE FED metaphor' (Gregoriou 2007: 80. Author's emphasis.). She elaborates further:

The overall use of such conceptual metaphors in the Patterson series establishes the criminals as a special kind of human species, one that is driven to criminality because they felt it was *necessary* for them to do so. Just like animals hunting to be fed, criminals are 'justified' as a species that cannot help but kill in order to survive. At the same time, criminal behaviour is presented as 'viewed' by an audience of common people who seek entertainment; in this sense, criminal behaviour forms part of the social structure, and is *wanted* rather than not. (*ibid.*: 82)

Such metaphorical readings correlate to *The skin collector*, especially Billy's connection to animals and his prominent centipede tattoo. David Lagercrantz's sequel to Stieg Larsson's Millennium novels, *The girl in the spider's web* (2015), again (by virtue of its title) makes these connections.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that (similarly to how we tend to view animals) the human killers (in the aforementioned metaphors and in crime narratives generally) are sometimes characterised as purely instinctive beings; indeed, they are presented as lacking control over their murderous acts. Just as animals are not held responsible for their actions for the reason that they are thought to lack moral agency, killers (often characterised as 'mad', 'inhuman', deranged or regarded as mentally ill) are deemed to lack the agency required to refrain from criminal and immoral behaviour. But nonhumans' supposed instinctiveness and lack of agency are also the very reasons we sometimes use to justify our exploitation of nonhumans and justify our un-empathic

behaviour towards them<sup>9</sup>, rather than—as in the case of the human killers in the crime narratives—reasons for evoking a certain degree of sympathy because, in the words of Gregoriou ‘they cannot help but kill in order to survive’. However, just as it is problematic to read nonhuman animals as purely instinctive beings, lacking rationality, so too is it problematic to read humans (in this case, murderers) in this way.

Further, human killers are ‘reduced’ to nonhuman animals; a reduction that assumes that humans are not animals, and that animals are somehow inferior in comparison to *Homo sapiens*. This imagery is strengthened by the species of animals which are used in the metaphors (arachnids and insects are often animals by which many people are repelled). Thus nonhuman animals again take the brunt; they become (those humans we characterise as) debased. But interestingly what both humans and animals more widely are capable of in reality is hidden in these narratives (humans as capable of morally atrocious acts, and animals as capable of more than purely instinctive ones).

### **The invisible animal: Marking nonhuman via marking women**

While animal advocates are often concerned about our use of language in relation to how we speak about nonhuman animals, particularly those animals which are systematically and routinely exploited by humans, feminists too are often concerned about how language serves to reinforce the objectification of women in a dominant patriarchal culture. This is not surprising for, as Kemmerer, notes the oppressions of women and of nonhuman animals (as well as the oppressions of other beings) are linked ‘by common ideologies, by institutional forces, and by socialisation that makes oppressions normative and invisible’ (2011a: 11). Objectification may be seen as a key feature that links these oppressions (*ibid.*: 6). In so far as

those beings which are oppressed are viewed as objects and consumables, their exploitation is considered to be permissible. Indeed, objectification reduces that which is oppressed from a living being to something to be used at (humanity's) will.

The imagery of butchering in relation to women and sexual violence against women, originates in the literal oppression of nonhuman animals (particularly, although not exclusively, of farm animals) by both men *and* women, as well as originates in the cruelties inflicted upon farm animals (and animals used for purposes other than meat production, including, most notably, animals who are farmed for their fur). Yet the animal is usually absent in such imagery. As Adams notes, '[a]nimals are the absent referent in the act of meat eating; they also become the absent referent in images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable' (2010: 13). She argues that

The absent referent is that which separates the meat eater from the animals and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our 'meat' separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal... to keep something from being seen as having been someone. Once the existence of meat is disconnected from the existence of an animal who was killed to become that 'meat', meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image, used often to reflect women's status as well as animals (*ibid.*: 13).

Yet it could be said that while animal bodies are an absent referent in meat eating, the way in which they are absent referents in images of women butchered may appear different. In the first case, we hide our knowledge of what we eat; in the second, the killer emulates the

butchering of animals, but (one might claim) he does not hide anything from himself (or from the reader). But the butchering act by the murderer may be seen to be a transformative one. Turning women into meat at the very least enables the murderer to reduce women to objects the exploitation of which is normalised (and perhaps turning women into meat may even mask the murder itself.)

With respect to crime narratives, the farm animal often appears invisible in the butchering imagery that is used, yet such imagery depends on the way we treat such animals. Whilst the bodies of farm animals are literally manipulated, modified, crushed, sliced, force-fed, starved, cut, and hacked, so too are the bodies of women in some crime and detective narratives (especially where cannibalism is involved); narratives which make use of imagery of the slaughterhouse. This is evinced in *The bone collector*. Below, the perpetrator imagines with admiration the actions of Schneider (an early twentieth-century killer):

Beneath Schneider's bed, a constable found a diary... 'Bone' – (Schneider wrote) – 'is the ultimate core of a human being... Once the façade of our intemperate ways of the flesh, the flaws of the lesser Races, and the weaker gender, are burnt or boiled away, we are - all of us – noble bone.... (2014a: 254).

While this quotation makes explicit the patriarchal hierarchy discussed above, and makes obvious reference to the ways in which the female victims are killed, the imagery used may be seen to describe the ways in which the bodies of farm animals are literally marked in the production process (burnt, boiled, stripped clean of flesh, and shockingly in some cultural practices it is not unknown for animals used in certain practices to be buried or burnt alive). In the same narrative,

when summarising the behaviour of the perpetrator and comparing it to that of Schneider, Lincoln Rhyme notes that ‘[t]he MOs were the same – fire, animals, water, boiling alive’ (*ibid.*: 395). Even the titles of crime and detective novels use such butchering imagery: consider, for example, *Abattoir blues* (2015 [2014]) by Peter Robinson and *The body farm* by Patricia Cornell, which associates bodies and farming (1995 [1994]).

Images of meat and butchery with reference to female victims are plenteous in *The bone collector*. The perpetrator appears to enjoy butchery, and even has a painting on his wall of ‘[a]n eerie, moon-faced butcher, holding a knife in one hand, a slab of meat in the other’ (2014a: 402). Places connected with slaughterhouses also feature prominently: the perpetrator’s house is located near an old tannery (*ibid.*: 385), and a stockyard is the scene for an attempted murder of one of the victims; a female victim who is significantly portrayed as a lamb led to slaughter (*ibid.*: 167). In spite of copious associations between butchering, meat, and females, the animal is (in Adams’s words) the ‘absent referent’ in all these images (which further points to its invisible exploitation).

Further, in *The skin collector* Billy’s second victim—Samantha Levine—is murdered in a nineteenth-century slaughterhouse culling area underground, which makes the connections between butchery and murderer even more explicit:

In a different century... these corridors had been used to direct cattle to two different underground abattoirs here on the West Side of Manhattan.

Healthy cows were directed to one doorway, sickly to another. Both were slaughtered for meat but the tainted ones were sold locally to the poor... The more robust cattle ended up in the kitchens of the Upper East- and Westsiders and the better restaurants in town.

Billy didn't know which of the exits was for healthy beef, which was for sickly... He wished he knew because he wanted to tattoo the young lady in the tainted beef corridor - it just seemed appropriate. But he'd decided to do this mod in the place where the livestock cull had been made: the octagon itself. (Deaver 2014b: 182-83).

This quotation plays on a range of hierarchies, and the victim is presented as not just meat but 'tainted' meat. At the crime scene, Amelia draws connections to the Bone Collector's use of a former slaughterhouse: '[s]he remembered that the perp seemed to be influenced by the Bone Collector; that the killer had used a former slaughterhouse as a place to stash one of his victims—and staked her down, bloody, so she would be devoured alive by rats' (*ibid.*: 191) .

### **Masked objectification**

However, this imposed narrative is not absent in all crime novels. *Abattoir blues* is one such text which, while using the imagery of butchering and meat, makes fairly explicit the treatment of animals at the slaughterhouse and also draws attention the ways in which animals are treated as consumables, as merely part of a production process. In this text the perpetrator is a former slaughter-man and butcher who uses a stun-gun as his murder weapon, and this leads the detective, Annie, to make enquiries at a local abattoir where she is sickened by what she witnesses:

Three monorails of dead animals slowly moved down the length of the abattoir. At each stage of the way, slaughtermen performed their specialised tasks, such as slitting the throat for bleeding, spraying with boiling water to loosen the skin, then

the actual skinning and disemboweling and careful removal of valuable organs...

The stench was awful. Annie tried to keep her eyes averted... but it was impossible.

There was something about the ugly violent death that demanded one's attention, so she looked, she watched, she saw. And heard: the discharge of the bolt guns, the buzz of the mechanical saws, and the change in pitch when they hit bone as the head was cut off and the animals split in half. It was almost unthinkable that someone had done this to Morgan Spencer (2015 [2014]: 267-68).

Here, and elsewhere in the text, the treatment of nonhuman animals is made visible. The nonhuman animal is not absent from the imagery; rather, the literal treatment of nonhuman animals is explicitly associated with the treatment of the murder victim. In this way, the connection between female victim and nonhuman victims is foregrounded and the absent referent made visible. Annie, a vegetarian, is aware of the fact that the treatment of animals at the slaughterhouse is purposely concealed from the public's view, and she strongly rejects one attempted justification for such treatment (a justification which appeals to the claim that the animals are unaware of their fate) (*ibid.*: 265). Annie refuses to make palatable or sanitise a practice which, if made visible, would be seen to be horrific and, for Annie, even murderous. She faces the situation head on, perceiving that which is normally shied away from ('the terrified animals' and 'the horrors being committed on the killing floor' (*ibid.*: 265)); that which is usually unheard and unseen.

Usually, though, our objectification of nonhuman animals as meat products renders the living beings as absent from the process of consumption and from our thoughts. This is evident in the language we use in relation to nonhuman animals generally and to the beings we eat.



While women in crime narratives are recurrently described using this objectified language, animals are referred to as objects using the pronoun 'it', suggesting that the being to whom we are referring is nothing more than a mere inanimate object. We buy 'meat' not dead animals and we eat 'lamb chops', 'beef steaks', 'pork chops', not the dead parts of once living individual sheep, cows, and pigs. The living subject, as well as his or her slaughter, blood and suffering is missing from our view, from our consciousness, and thus from our considerations. As Wadiwel claims, 'The image that one finds on some butcher shop signs, or on the side of refrigerated trucks, featuring a smiling cartoonised cow or pig slicing at their own bodies with a knife, attests to the causal way in which everyday violence is discursively hidden from view' (2015: 57). Similarly, Kirsty Dunn (in relation to an analysis of Michael Faber's *Under the skin*) discusses how language can camouflage not only sexual violence against women, but against animals too, 'hiding in plain sight' (2017: 152) the severe sufferings inflicted upon animals used in the meat industry (*ibid.*: 158). The once living being, at the end of the production process, becomes so fragmented in a literal sense that we fail to see the truth behind every piece of animal flesh.

Other uses of language serve to reduce women to sexualised parts or to objects to be eaten or consumed by men. Consider, for example, 'fresh meat', a term used to refer to a young prostitute, 'dead meat', a term used to refer to an older prostitute (Adams 2004: 11), 'piece of skirt', 'piece of ass', 'tasty chick', and 'eye-candy'. Note also that, for the most part, nonhuman animals are referred to, and the metaphor of meat eating is employed. Moreover, the expression 'he made me feel like a piece of meat' is not uncommon. This expression is used in *Abattoir blues* when Alex (the girlfriend of a witness) comments on the behaviour of the victim: '[y]ou know, it's just like, if you're a woman he makes you feel like a piece of meat' (2015 [2014]: 54). The explicit suggestion behind this expression tends to be that

women should not be treated as pieces of meat. But when this expression is used an underlying (and implausible) implication tends to be that since nonhuman animals are literally viewed as meat then treating them as such is somehow justifiable. Indeed, such a well-used expression could be seen to convey a particular societal norm, that is, that it is permissible to treat nonhuman animals as pieces of meat, as objects to be consumed, but not permissible to do the same to human beings. But such a norm ignores dominant ideologies that link the oppression of women and animals, including anthropocentric and patriarchal ideas, the latter which, for Adams, are reflected in and substantiated by the patriarchal gaze (see above).

In using exploitative and hostile language, women are reduced to those nonhuman beings who are routinely objectified, fragmented, consumed, but so too are the women themselves, as subjects of their own lives, made absent and invisible through language which reinforces the historical idea of women as sexualised objects to be viewed and consumed, and as beings which lack agency and individuality. In *The skin collector* Billy thinks about reducing Amelia to an object in this way (and an object to be marked) when he states: '[o]h, he wanted so badly to get her on her back and give her one of his special mods' (Deaver 2014b: 153).<sup>10</sup> As with the language we use in relation to meat eating, the reality of the subject is masked. Similarly to nonhuman animals, women are 'marked' as something other than they are. Indeed, the exploitative language used to describe women negates their subjectivity, thereby maintaining a distance between the subject which oppresses and the being or 'object' which is oppressed.

In *The skin collector*, the character of Pamela resists this language and, despite being forcibly tattooed by Billy with 'splitter' tattoos, she rejects his patriarchal plan for her, speaks back and leaves a literal mark/'mod' of her own:

‘You were my Lovely Girl. You’d grow up to be my woman and the mother of our children.’

‘Like I was some kind of cow, some kind of fu---’

Striking like a snake, he jabbed his fist into her cheek, bone to bone. She inhaled at the pain.

‘I won’t warn you again. I’m your man and I’m in charge. Understand?’ (*ibid.*: 380)

Her response—armed with a box cutter—is telling: ‘[t]he blade connected with Billy’s cheek and mouth. Not like the slush sound of a stabbing in movies. Only the silent cutting of flesh. Pam leapt over the coffee table and headed for the front door, calling, “Okay, there’s a mod for you, asshole.”’ (*ibid.*: 391). Pamela, here, invokes this hierarchical conflation of women as object and meat. That said, Pamela refers to the cow in a way which conveys the normality of *its* exploitation, implying that while it is unacceptable to define women as baby-making machines, defining female cows in this way is the norm. The female cow here becomes the object which lacks agency, the object whose life is not its own, and in reality it is used and exploited by both men and women alike.<sup>11</sup>

### **Identity and forced narratives**

Autonomously chosen and acquired permanent tattoos are often thought to have a meaning that goes beyond the inscription of the actual tattoo art-work. Indeed, in so far as one considers one’s identity to be constituted at least partly by bodily continuity then, for such persons, ‘tattoos are not just part of their body; they are part of themselves’, or at least part of their narrative identity

(Fruh and Thomas 2012: 88). While the tattooed person's body and psychological characteristics change and develop over time, their tattoo is an enduring mark (at least for the duration of their lifetime); a permanent reminder or individuating symbol. Admittedly, a tattoo will change as the skin changes and ages, but unless the tattoo is literally cut from the skin, then it remains part of one's body (and remains as such even if it is removed because tattoo removal results in significant scarring and skin alteration). However, while some tattoos can be associated with a person's attempt to individuate, some people acquire tattoos in an attempt to integrate themselves into a particular social group in which having a certain mark on one's skin identifies one as part of a larger group of persons. These notions of marking/tattooing and identity are played with in *The skin collector*. It transpires that Billy draws his insect tattoo in water-soluble ink (used for tattoo outlines) in order to enable him to switch between identities: Billy, the Underground Man and Seth. Here, it is the male who has this control over his marks and representation. In Deaver's novel, it is not just the criminal who is 'modded'. Tattoo artist, 'TT' says to Rhyme: "[h]ey, looks like you're one of us, dude." [...] "You're modded." [...] He pointed to Rhyme's arm, where scars were prominent, from the surgery to restore motion to his right arm and hand.' (2014: 245) So too is the other criminal, the Watchmaker. Rhyme tells him: 'you've changed - modded, if you will - again, right? Since we've run the picture.' (*ibid.*: 416). Compared to the marked victims, the other 'marked' male figures in this novel have greater freedom and power. Correspondingly, the marking or branding of nonhumans in some sense signifies that their lives are *not* their own; that *their* narrative is perceived as really *our* narrative; nonhumans are largely viewed as ours to be consumed.

This connects to the *forced* marking of the skin, and in particular, the forced marking of the skin of nonhuman beings. The skin of nonhumans, particularly those used in the practices of

farming and of animal experimentation, is often marked either with a number or by piercing an identification tag through the skin (usually through the ear). These methods of marking are used in order to identify the nonhuman animal as, for example, an animal used in a certain experiment or belonging to a particular person.<sup>12</sup> For many people, such marking is merely considered as something that is done for a particular purpose, with no hidden meaning. But that they are identified in such ways is not insignificant; the way in which a nonhuman is identified establishes something about what that being is, or more accurately, about what humans' view that being to be; the being is reduced to merely a number, or a piece of property, or a consumable object. Billy's tattooed marks on his female victims do signify a hidden meaning, but they also are associated with experimentation and 'belonging' to Billy's 'modification' plan. His tattoo modifications connect the women as a group. They are ordered to form a select group in his own mind; *his* women. The women are emphatically identified by Billy with meat through his butchery practices.

## **Conclusion**

In contemporary crime narratives we repeatedly see the trope/s of the butchered, branded, scarred and marked woman. Further, such markings extend to tattoos and to other bodily imprints, both literal and metaphorical. Language itself plays an important factor in such social and gendered inscriptions. However, such markings (seen and unseen) relate to not only women and crime fiction, but also to the lesser-known or examined connections between crime fiction, (marked/imprinted) women, and the objectification of nonhumans. As well as reflecting the dominant hierarchical power structures in society, language and crime fiction also (at least implicitly) reinforces them, and cements people's general beliefs that the oppression of

nonhuman beings (and women) is not only the norm but permissible. Being aware of such connections affords new ways of viewing such relationships and prompts further examinations into analogies between the literary and literal marking of women and nonhuman animals respectively in relation to issues of oppression and objectification.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Verdaguer (2001), Michelis (2010), Watson (2012), Do (2013), Rowland (2015), Franks (2013), and Baučeková (2015). In Patricia Cornwell's forensic detective novels, Kay Scarpetta often focuses on preparing, cooking, and eating food (including meat). For example, when Kay is cooking Marino dinner in *All that remains* (1992), he makes an analogy between eating, cutting and death, stating '[m]aybe you ought to forget cutting up dead bodies and open a restaurant.' (Cornwell 1993: 167).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that some men in crime fiction have also been treated in this manner (for example, the immanent sexual and murderous attack on Stieg Larsson's journalist, Mikael Blomkvist in *The girl with the dragon tattoo* (2005), and a man being sexually tortured with cooking utensils in Val McDermid's *The mermaids singing* (1995). For a discussion of this latter text, see Watson (2012).

<sup>3</sup> In this novel, Detective Inspector Irene Huss' husband is a chef, and there is a focus on both family meals and what Irene and her colleagues are eating throughout the novel. There is a particular emphasis on vegetarian dishes and lifestyle in the Huss household, which starkly contrast to both this quotation and the (male and female) murders that take place.

<sup>4</sup> Examples include Thomas De Quincey's famous 'On murder considered as one of the fine arts' (1827), Val McDermid's *The mermaids singing* (1995), Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994).

<sup>5</sup> See Watson (2011).

<sup>6</sup> This is reiterated later with the intentional neck breaking of Socks the kitten in *The body farm* (1994) and in *From Potter's field* (1995), when Scarpetta tells Wesley that she is 'so tired of cruelty. I'm so tired of people beating horses and killing little boys and head-injured women.' (Cornwell 1996: 71).

<sup>7</sup> Humans are explicitly couched in animal terms throughout Agatha Christie's *And then there were none* (1939): When five individuals are left, the novel states '[a]nd all of them, suddenly, looked less like human beings. They were reverting to more bestial types.' (Christie 2007: 225) Ultimately Vera Claythorne says to Blore and Lombard: '[d]on't you see? We're the Zoo... Last night we were hardly human anymore. We're the Zoo...' (Christie 2007: 265).

<sup>8</sup> See Bergman's essay in this collection for discussion David Lagercrantz's *The girl in the spider's web* (2015), a sequel to Stieg Larsson's Millennium novels.

<sup>9</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide a detailed outline of the treatment of animals in the practice of factory farming, but for a descriptive and visceral overview of the treatment of factory-farmed animals see Kemmerer ('Appendix' 2011); Singer (1995, ch.3); and Harrison (1964). For information on the treatment of animals in experiments see Singer (1995, ch.2).

<sup>10</sup> 'Mods' are short for 'modifications' in the novel.

<sup>11</sup> See Kemmerer 'Appendix' (2011).

<sup>12</sup> Here, analogies can be made with the forced branding of human prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, who were branded with a number as a method of identification. Like branded nonhuman beings, such humans were

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reduced to a mere commodities or disposable objects.