

Imagining Sanctuary:
Politics of Storytelling, Care, and Refusal at Farm Animal Sanctuaries

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Anthropology

Ana Salazar Ramirez

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INTRODUCTION

MOKA'S STORY

Moka is a chocolate-colored calf that arrived at VINE, a farm sanctuary in Springfield, Vermont, in July of 2021 after being born at a small dairy farm nearby. Farm sanctuaries are spaces that rescue and care for farm animals who previously lived in agricultural settings or homes of abuse and neglect. I met Moka when he was around two weeks old, a few days after VINE had rescued him from the dairy farm and brought him to the sanctuary. He was still being kept in a little pen within VINE's central barn when I first spent time with him, adjacent to another pen where the three baby sheep slept- Tuaca, Prosecco, and Lemoncello. Moka was still too young, shaken up, and unadjusted to be let into the social commotion of the sanctuary, which is why he had spent most of the past three days sleeping and resting within the pen. Despite not roaming about the sanctuary, however, Moka rarely went without company from other residents or human staff members.

Every resident has a different story of how they arrive at a sanctuary. Though there are a few recurring paths, where sanctuaries are located influences the most common series of events for how animals are rescued or where they come from. VINE, for example, is located in between dozens of small Vermont dairy farms, where the majority of their cow residents come from, rather than hog slaughterhouses or chicken CAFOs that other sanctuaries are surrounded by. Nonetheless, residents at VINE have hundreds of other distinct stories regarding their journeys to the sanctuary. Many were indeed rescued from small farms, but others came from industrial agriculture settings, were given up by their former owners or seized by the state, or came from different sanctuaries that were shut down.

Those I talked to at VINE noted how a strong network of sanctuaries and vegan activists provides a mutual web of knowledge and updates on which animals need rescuing, what sanctuaries are popping up or shutting down, and other pieces of information that may result in bringing an animal to a sanctuary. Moka's rescue, for example, was a result of coincidences and luck. A dairy farmer nearby posted an ad on Craig's list, which stated that if no one picked up this new-born male calf, he would go "on the beef truck" (VINE Sanctuary, N.D.).¹ Many people are shocked when they realize male calves born in the dairy industry become veal. Because they do not produce milk, dairy farmers have no use to keep males alive. They only have use for the females, who are kept continually pregnant or lactating until they are "spent," and afterward they too are slaughtered. Moka was one of the million male calves born in dairy farms that became by-products of milk production.

In posting the ad, the farmer was not targeting a sanctuary intentionally, but by chance, someone who belongs to Vegans of Vermont saw the ad and notified VINE, and from there the rescue began. A group of people spent the next few days, with tremendous effort, rescuing Moka and getting him to the sanctuary. Unfortunately, VINE could not rescue Moka's mother, despite pleading and trying, and there is little hope of getting her out of the dairy industry until she is "spent." While scrolling through Craig's List and rescuing someone is not a regular occurrence, it does highlight the network of activists that exist, which are at the core of the majority of

¹It remains unclear to both me and those I interviewed at VINE why the farmer posted the ad on Craig's List instead of selling the calf, because in doing so he did a service of sorts to the sanctuary. While I am not sure how common it is for farmers to give up animals, there are residents at VINE, besides only Moka, who were "given up" by their former owners. Animals "given up" are usually those who come from individuals (i.e. not agricultural settings) who either come to own too many animals or who can no longer take care of the animals themselves but do not want to send them to be killed.

rescues for sanctuaries, as well as the reality that there is “no systematic way to get these animals. They just come to the sanctuaries” (Leshko 2019, 15).

Once Moka arrived at the sanctuary, the aftermath of the bittersweet rescue entailed growing pains and days of adjustment. Only being a few days old and already having beaten the odds of still being alive, Moka was terrified and shaken without his mother and in an unfamiliar place. It took time for him to adapt to a regular eating schedule and restore his energy to roam around the sanctuary with all the other community members. During the first few weeks after his arrival at the sanctuary, staff members would feed him at least every three hours, often even going out at night.

During the process of adjustment and getting Moka as healthy as he could be, one of the biggest priorities among the staff was to spend time with him. After having all his basic needs met, conducting medical checkups, and supplementing the lack of his mother’s milk, sanctuary workers dedicated hours upon hours to simply being with him. The sanctuary intern I spoke with, Sophia, described Moka as visibly sad and distressed in those first days at VINE. She said, “cows are often so maternal and have such strong family bonds and social bonds, and part of that is licking and nuzzling...[but] he didn’t have anyone.” When I interviewed Sophia, she had bruises along her arm from Moka licking her so intensely, as if her arm had a secret source of milk somewhere. She described how she would spend hours a day dedicated to sitting next to Moka in his little pen when he first arrived, often stroking him with a brush she dipped in water, which she said mimicked a tongue, presumably his mother’s, and that seemed to give him comfort. She even said, “when he was sleeping, sometimes I would go lay on top of him, so that he could be warm and so that he could feel a warm body and love.”

Reflecting with Sophia while sitting next to Moka on the day I met him, we discussed how sad it was that Moka had been sentenced to a very particular fate- a way to live and a way to die- because he was a male calf. There was nothing he could have done differently that would have changed the outcome he would have faced had he not been taken to a sanctuary. For almost all the other male calves born in the agricultural industry, they do go onto the “beef truck.” This idea was especially sad to us as we looked around the barn, knowing that here, Moka will live a life full of relationships, community, and comfort. When he first arrived at the sanctuary, the other two young cows, Mooten and Splash, would be hostile towards him, but now they play all day long. In Sophia’s words, Autumn, an older female cow who came from a dairy farm, “probably more so than anyone, participated in Moka’s care. As soon as he was able to get out of his pen, she totally adopted him. When you go out there [to the barn and the pasture], Moka’s hair looks like it’s been gelled in crazy ways, because she’s just licking him, and if he wanders off too far, she starts yelling for him.” Those at VINE describe the visible and material change that occurred in the community with Moka’s arrival, whose personality and presence are felt by everyone there. None of that will ever exist or be experienced by the male calves who do not get to sanctuary and instead live within settings and operations that reduce them to commodities and resources. These potential lives and relationships are not even conceptualized or imagined, because they are so rarely given the chance to be lived out.

Moka’s story is only one of the hundreds from the residents at VINE, a single sanctuary among dozens in the US. His story reflects many things. The politics of death in the dairy industry. The astonishingly young age at which farm animals are slaughtered. What is lost when the rest of their lives go unlived. The care poured into them when they are at a sanctuary. The potential for a life in a multispecies community after they arrive. The stories I write about

throughout this thesis are about events like this. They allow scholars such as myself to ask what it means to be cared for and to create a community in farm sanctuaries, as well as what the different value systems sanctuary workers and residents inhabit and practice within. They perhaps preview what it might mean to live in ways that refuse capitalist ideas of what farm animals' lives can offer the world.

In working through the paradoxes and tensions that exist in these spaces, this thesis will demonstrate that sanctuaries can help us see the potential of creating new stories about how we live and work alongside nonhuman animals, as an intervention into an under-questioned world underpinned by exploitation and killability. The stories that emerge from the events at sanctuaries allow us to see what day-to-day lives and relationships can be when we refuse systems of capitalist production and industrial animal agriculture. Sanctuaries' existence right now, as spaces of transition and temporary oasis, is crucial, as are the unique stories within them, because they prove that different ways of living are not simply aspirational but entirely possible. They break through the astonishingly difficult task of imagining an existence not grounded in capitalist production, and in redefining our relationship with nonhuman animals, sanctuaries also have the potential to teach us how to live and care differently with each other, our environment, and our food.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The current way industrial animal agriculture mass produces animals for food and other animal-derived products is massively unsustainable for our environment. Studies and reports over the last few decades have left little doubt that industrial animal agriculture and animal-product consumption, on the whole, is one of the greatest contributors to climate change and

environmental destruction. Industrial animal agriculture produces roughly 18% of total greenhouse gas emissions globally (Bristow 2011, 206). In 2001, it was estimated that 660 billion pounds of manure were produced every year from farm animals. With a lack of methods or infrastructure to dispose of this waste, over 173,000 miles of waterways in the country are contaminated, and dead zones continue to emerge in more and more locations (Halden N.D., 5, 9). A study by the Environmental Working Group reported that over 200 million Americans' water sources are contaminated with dangerously high levels of nitrates from fertilizer pollution, and the pollution is most concentrated in communities of color (Loria 2020). Any waste-management efforts that are carried out by industrial facilities often release additional toxins harmful to environments, such as ammonia, methane, or other volatile organic compounds. Moreover, 55% of soil erosion, 37% of pesticide usage, and 80% of antibiotic usage are attributed to animal farming. Combining swine, poultry, and cattle production, over 24.5 million pounds of antibiotics are used for growth promotion and feed-efficiency maximization. Animal farming also emits large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus into soils and waterways, which harms ecosystems and leads to eutrophication in waterways. Monocultures used to produce the feed for calves have also been linked to severe degradation in soil quality and massive deforestation, further contributing to increased greenhouse gas emissions (Halden N.D., 16, 22, 24).

In addition to the environmental detriments of animal production, those employed in these operations suffer from widespread health consequences and labor violations. Working in close quarters in slaughterhouses or CAFOs, employees are exposed to highly concentrated levels of noxious gases including ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and particulate matter, which can all lead to respiratory diseases and other harmful health effects (Animal Legal Defense Fund

2020, Food Is Power 2022). Workers are also exposed to viruses such as the bird flu and swine flu, bacteria such as salmonella, *E. coli*, and staph, as well as drug-resistance bacteria resulting from the copious amounts of antibiotics used in production. Moreover, the type of work in these factories consists of highly dangerous and repetitive motions. The risk of injury is more than three times greater than in other industries, and there is an average of two amputations weekly and eight deaths yearly, as well as an elevated risk of severe injury over time (Animal Defense Fund 2020, Human Rights Watch 2019). The presence of large machinery knives, saws, scissors, and other tools in the factory creates another source of traumatic injuries. A report from the Human Rights Watch also details how, in an industry driven entirely by profit maximization and efficiency, workers are often “pushed to work past their physical and mental limits,” and there is difficulty in accessing health care and basic needs throughout their shifts, including restroom breaks (Human Rights Watch 2019).

The industry is also increasingly difficult to regulate. Tyson Foods, Cargill Meat Solutions, JBS USA, and National Beef together control 80% of the market. It is challenging to enforce federal worker safety and health regulations, partly because of the power these companies hold and the lack of federal personnel to establish and monitor health and safety standards (Human Rights Watch 2019). Furthermore, a large portion of animal agriculture workers are people of color, many undocumented, and these populations are less likely to complain about safety violations or low wages (Food Is Power 2022). On the whole, industrial animal production has been proven to be unsustainable for the well-being of our environments, and it is underpinned by labor violations and a disregard for human and animal life at the expense of profit.

ANTHROPOLOGY THAT IMAGINES POSITIVE FUTURES

This ethnography of farm sanctuaries aims to imagine positive futures. Despite the previous section detailing why these systems are so exploitative and detrimental, this project hopes to focus primarily on what new forms of living as humans and members of multispecies communities are possible, rather than emphasizing the harms of the dominant ways in which we exist now in relation to farm animals. Despite the reality that farm sanctuaries are formed in response to, and still exist within, structures of capitalism, industrial animal production, and human exceptionalism, this ethnography attempts to not center these issues or nail down new forms of critique. Instead, this project is rooted in expanding the positive ways of living that are already being carried out in refusal of these systems. With refusal of capitalist production, space is created to imagine and live out all that is obliterated when capitalist production becomes the end goal, including different lifeways, forms of kinship, and modes of “work.”

My belief is that anthropology could be useful for the sanctuary project. I believe that new narratives and theories on what is happening in these sites might help them gain cultural significance and perhaps even be taken seriously as models for realizing radical alternative futures. In their article “Diverse economies: performative practices for other worlds,” scholars J.K. Gibson-Graham push for academics to recognize the potential for their work to create political change. They are not implying that writing about diverse economies is more important than actually engaging in those activities, but they do argue that it can help the efforts in real and significant ways. Writing can become an ethical project of solidarity. When discussing forms of economic activity that are non-capitalist, Gibson-Graham write that “to make them the focus of our research and teaching [is done] to make them more ‘real,’ more credible, more viable as objects of policy and activism, more present as everyday realities that touch all our lives and

dynamically shape our futures” (Gibson-Graham 2008, 618). I choose to study sanctuaries in order to focus on *alternatives* to industrial animal agriculture, in an attempt to make them more possible and known.

In pushing for theory on positive futures, I also think alongside anthropologist Anand Pandian. In “A Possible Anthropology,” Pandian details how anthropology has transformative potential. He writes that it is “by attending to the concrete elements of life, attuning oneself to the critical value of thinking with them, that anthropology opens the horizons of a possible humanity...this is what sustains the field’s cosmographic ambition, the aim of reinventing the whole through a shift in perspective, the idea that the world itself can change with the assumption of another point of view” (Pandian 2019, 119-120). My desire to study farm sanctuaries began with a similar sentiment. As someone who practices veganism but felt disheartened by the possibilities of the movement to generate change, I saw farm sanctuaries as an entirely different way to engage in social transformation. The stories I read about farm sanctuaries when I started my research were focused on altering how we relate to farm animals as the basis for creating new ways of living with these species. They emphasized the life and the joy that can emanate from relations to farm animals, instead of only highlighting the cruelty of systems of animal agriculture in order to instigate change.

My approach to studying farm animals is rooted in expanding the potential for alternative visions, rather than being a critical study of the movement. Anthropology is about understanding the different ways of being in the world, but in addition to that, the discipline can also *expand* these lifeways and make new forms possible. As such, I engage with anthropology as “a different idea of critique, one that involves the nurturing of openings and possibilities already present in the world and its experience” (Pandian 2019, 117). In reorienting anthropology to nurture ways

of living, instead of only reflecting or critiquing them, the discipline can become a catalyst that makes aspirations for alternative lifeways more viable and possible, such as those at sanctuaries.

However, it is worth taking a moment to note that I am not criticizing critical approaches in anthropology, but instead building off of them. Alex Blanchette's *Porkopolis* is an ethnography of industrial pig slaughterhouses that examines how these operations work. Blanchette's analysis, very much a critique of these systems, is what inspired my own research and provided an understanding of animal agriculture entirely necessary for this study of farm sanctuaries, which I will outline in the following paragraphs. *Porkopolis* makes clear that industrial animal agriculture would not exist without the production of meat in specific, but that does not mean the system is *about* meat. It is not- it is instead about propagating a world in which society is organized around maximizing the economic value of absolutely everything and increasingly exploiting human labor. Industrial animal agriculture is not an exception, or the one unique part of our society that fuels unprecedented cruelty towards animals, humans, and the environment. Instead, the factory farm is the norm. It is the manifestation of the industrial capitalism that much of our world operates on.

With this understanding of the totality that emanates from industrial animal agriculture, *Porkopolis* does not end with a checklist on what to do in order to dismantle these oppressive systems. As Blanchette writes in the last chapter, "it has become radical to advocate merely leaving something unworked. But I do think this, ultimately, is what we need to demand- the right to be 'un-efficient' creatures...we are, as both humans and non-human beings, more than simply economic creatures" (Blanchette 2020, 236). Just as hogs are slaughtered to such an extent that all the pig is used, humans are moving closer and closer to a reality in which every single thing we do is mediated through the capital value we produce. That is why industrial

animality is so totalizing. We become industrial beings even if we are not slaughterhouse workers or doing the killing ourselves. The factory farm makes it so that we simply exist in mundane ways that reproduce these ways of living, with an inability to fathom a world where capitalism is not the norm and where we can genuinely prioritize things not based on their economic worth or productivity.

My project is in part a response to *Porkopolis* and other critical ethnographies about the catastrophic realities of industrial animal agriculture, because I believe that positive stories amongst dark systems are crucial in “unsettling disquiet; in the face of intractable forms of injustice and neglect” (Pandian 2019, 120-121). There is no checklist at the end of *Porkopolis*, but perhaps telling and receiving the stories from farm sanctuaries can be the start for understanding what steps and perspectives are necessary to begin to generate change. Stories at sanctuaries can unsettle the systems that make them necessary in the first place, because by highlighting these positive stories, we crack holes in the seemingly indestructible forces of capitalism and industrial production. The stories reveal that there are humans, places, and animals that are *already* existing in ways that every day refuse these systems and who are determined to live differently. Nurturing the possibilities of life that sanctuaries enable makes possible a different kind of world with farm animals. This is an ethnography of farm sanctuaries that aims to expand positive futures for what it means to live in the more-than-human world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Storytelling

This ethnography and the three chapters within it are grounded in the frameworks of storytelling and refusal. Storytelling is utilized to generate action and illuminate different value

systems that exist besides ones based on capitalism and industrial production. In crafting new kinds of narratives about farm animals, such as how these beings live in sanctuaries versus industrial production facilities, a new kind of relationship can emerge between humans and the more-than-human world. Put simply, as environmental historian William Cronon says in his piece “A Place for Stories,” a good story makes us care (Cronon 1992, 1374).

Advocating for the importance of storytelling in activism surrounding animal rights and anti-capitalist movements assumes that constant new streams of numbers and statistics do little to draw people into relations, empathy, and recognizing what is at stake with the events and happenings embedded in numbers. In his book *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*, environmental philosopher and anthropologist Thom van Dooren argues that new forms of storytelling are needed to represent nonhuman species- narratives that implicate humans and create realizations of responsibilities, while simultaneously exposing the inherent right these species have to live and thrive (van Dooren 2014, 4). In his book, van Dooren tells intimate stories of albatrosses, vultures, penguins, cranes, and crows in an attempt to show all that is at stake with the extinction of these species- all the generational efforts, entangled lifeways, and senses of place that are implicated in the ongoing survival of unique species. This theoretical framework of storytelling is also based on the assumption that stories are real. By this I mean that stories are not only reflections *of* the world, but they play an active, concrete role in shaping and re-making the world that we live through. As van Dooren writes, quoting Donna Haraway,

“‘World’ is a verb,” and so stories are “*of* the world, not *in* the world. Worlds are not containers, they’re patternings, risky co-makings, speculative fabulations.” Even a story that aims to be purely mimetic can never simply be a passive mirror held up in “reality.”

Stories are a part of the world, and so they participate in its becoming. As a result, telling stories has consequences: one of which is that we will inevitably be drawn into new connections, and with them new accountabilities and obligations (van Dooren 2014, 10).

A story is different from a list of facts or a chronology of events, because it is a narrative that portrays these events with context, including the relationships and connections embedded in the unfolding of events. As a result, stories give meaning to life's happenings (van Dooren 2014, 147; Cronon 1992, 1369).

James Scott's analysis of maps is helpful in understanding this notion of stories. Maps take part in creating the worlds and landscapes they purport to only reflect. In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott argues that the rise of the state in part resulted from mapping, from simplifications of on-the-ground realities that made societies more "legible" and in turn manageable to state powers (Scott 1998, 2). Scott writes that these maps "did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to...they were, moreover, not just maps. Rather, they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade" (Scott 1998, 3). The imposition of systems of land tenure, agricultural production, taxation, and more resulted from these simplifications of the lives of diverse communities, which in turn allowed for state powers to come to control these societies and truly develop the state. Reality is always more complex than what a map is capable of depicting. To map is inherently to select what to show, and similarly to story is to select what to tell and how to do so. There are hundreds of ways to map the same place, or story the same event, and the world reacts to those representations.

The theoretical framework of storytelling brings in the central term, coined by Anna Tsing, of human exceptionalism. According to the ideas of human exceptionalism, humans stand separate from all other species, and all other species are defined fundamentally by being *not human*. In other words, humans see themselves as *uniquely* unique, and the most telling attribute of other species is precisely that they are not human. Human exceptionalism is also an ideology that purports that humans are in control of all nature, and we are able to determine our lives and futures entirely independent from other species and environments (Tsing 2012, 144). As Tsing writes in her article “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species,” humans come to see themselves as “autonomously self-maintaining” (Tsing 2012, 144). In turn, human exceptionalism prevents us from seeing the multispecies relationships that we exist in and how we are constantly being remade by other animals, plants, environments, and the more-than-human world.

We often understand farm animals as beings whose place in this world is one of commodities and components of capitalist production chains. These conceptualizations are grounded in human exceptionalism because they assume these beings exist to fulfill human desires, or that they are slaughtered and exploited at such scales *because* they are not human. The way we represent and story animals and our environments play an ever-pressing role in cementing human exceptionalism. This thesis aims to be a contribution to new ways of storying farm animals that relates to them as co-members of communities rather than as commodities. This is done in an attempt to use narratives, writing, and scholarship to make more real alternative ideologies for conceptualizing the role of both humans and farm animals in the more-than-human world.

Refusal

The second theoretical framework I engage with is refusal. Taking a step back from farm sanctuaries, this idea is taken from Audra Simpson's ethnography of Mohawk's refusal to settler colonialism. As she writes in her book *Mohawk Interruptus*, "political recognition is, in its simplest terms, to be seen by another *as one wants to be seen*" (Simpson 2014, 23). Mohawks, in rejecting US or Canadian forms of citizenship and asserting to be seen as *Mohawk* citizens, are refusing the ongoing colonial logic of these two settler states that prescribe arbitrary borders, passports, and ways of governance on these Indigenous communities that do not map onto how they see themselves. Settler states are attempting to enclose Mohawks in a definition of who they are that is not fair, valid, or accurate. Refusal emerges as a way to resist this sort of membership, and Simpson defines refusal as "a political and ethical stance that stands in stark contrast to the desire to have one's distinctiveness as a culture, as people, recognized. Refusal comes with the requirement of having one's *political* sovereignty acknowledged and upheld" (Simpson 2014, 11). This is a refusal to be controlled, to be dominated, to exist within a colonial system, and to be recognized based on settler-state criteria rather than one Mohawks choose. In other words, it is a refusal to live through the systems that have been normalized and deemed those of "society" when in reality they are Western structures that are *chosen*, and there are innumerable other structures people can live by.

Sanctuaries, though in a different kind of context, engage in similar principles of refusal. In the Mohawk setting, rejecting the colonial narratives and forms of existence that the US and Canadian states ascribe to maintains open the possibility for Mohawks to continue to exist as their own nation, even if that is under and between settler states. In the sanctuary context, refusing capitalist notions of farm animals and industrial animal agriculture creates space to

imagine and begin enacting different ways of relating to animals, each other, and our food.

Sanctuaries may not be engaging in outright resistance against the systems and places they seek to dismantle, in that their activism is not rooted in protests, sit-ins, or other similar strategies.

Instead, sanctuaries engage in daily practices of refusal by not working these farm animals- by caring for them even though they are not producing anything of capitalist worth. When we reject animals in our food system, or when we reject to see them at least as only commodities and as beings existing for human-centered desires, we catalyze imaginative worlds for different types of multispecies communities.

Sanctuaries are not pushing for *one way to live*, nor are they claiming to live outside of capitalism. As will be discussed through the many paradoxes that exist within sanctuaries, these are far from ideal spaces. Nonetheless, they are proving and making real the possibilities for different “ideal worlds” that exist and that can be pursued; in refusing to live only based on the fixed notions of what capitalism and human exceptionalism allow, other ways of living can emerge. Striving these imaginations is a worthwhile end goal in itself, even if these alternative worlds are not fully created, because it does not fall into the trap of asserting that there is only one alternative world or a single correct way to live not rooted in capitalist value structures. In enacting refusal, we open ourselves up to multiple possibilities without limiting ourselves to the lives that we are currently capable of imagining.

METHODOLOGY

This project was conducted during the pandemic, which limited the level of in-person fieldwork and made virtual interviews the primary form of research. The two sanctuaries I did conduct fieldwork at were Unity Farms in Sherborn, Massachusetts, and VINE in Springfield, Vermont. Unity Farms is made up of thirteen core staff members, including those on the board of

directors, and there is a volunteer program where every day people come in to assist with maintenance, care, or to spend time with the residents. Unity Farms offers tours of the sanctuary multiple times a week, and they acquire most of their funding through tour tickets and donations (Unity Farms Sanctuary N.D.).

VINE, which stands for Veganism Is the Next Evolution as well as Veganism Is Never Enough, is composed of a smaller number of staff, and while they do not offer general tours for the public, they do give personal tours for academics and scholars, and additionally have two humane education programs aimed at children. Additionally, they have an extensive website with multiple pages of information and resources about their mission, the residents, the animal rights movement, veganism, and the animal agriculture industry. VINE receives funding from major donors and grants, as well as smaller personal donations (VINE Sanctuary N.D.). While much of the actual care and work at these two sanctuaries are carried out by trained staff members and paid vets, volunteers are an important part of the work and the community, as well as a primary method of spreading the visions of the sanctuary movement to those who do not necessarily dedicate their lives to it.

Even though I only spent a few days at each of these sanctuaries, they provided pages of field notes from which I draw on throughout this thesis. At Unity Farms, I was a volunteer for a few weeks, and at VINE, I spent a few days visiting as a researcher while helping with maintenance tasks. My ethnographic data is from the time I spent at the two specific sanctuaries, both of which are in New England and are large enough to care for a couple of hundred animals each. This fieldwork data is supported by the stories and anecdotes from my interviews, described below. It is important to note that I am not making a claim on all sanctuaries, but

instead this thesis is grounded in the specific places and people mentioned, as all ethnographies are.

In addition to site visits, I conducted twenty interviews over Zoom with sanctuary staff members, the majority of whom are from different sanctuaries, though I did interview a few people from the same location, namely VINE, Pasado's Safe Haven, and Farm Sanctuary. My interviewees included volunteers, unpaid and paid interns, sanctuary founders, board members, and veterinarians. The interviews consisted primarily of understanding the overarching goals of sanctuary workers- what their missions, methods, aspirations, and visions are- as well as understanding their biggest struggles within the movement. The interviews were intentionally open-ended, because this project did not start with one particular aspect of farm sanctuaries as the basis of a "research question." After enough conversations, however, the activist visions and modes of care at sanctuaries emerged as a fitting place to anchor my project, and I narrowed down the focus to understanding what made sanctuaries important spaces for not only the farm animals living within them but for broader anti-capitalist notions of animal-human relations, care, and productivity.

My interviews and time at sanctuaries are windows into sanctuary's ideal form and what these spaces want to be. It is perhaps fair to say that I engage with sanctuaries as philosophical ideas, more so than analyzing all the lived-out moments at sanctuaries. My thesis also builds off of Elan Abrell's book *Saving Animals*, the primary ethnography of animal sanctuaries. Abrell argues that sanctuaries are non-standardized alternatives that seek to live out radical ideological modes of being. As he puts it, sanctuaries "provide an opportunity for examining shifting practices of relating to or caring for other species in the contemporary United States as well as for examining how sanctuary as simultaneously spatial and ideological modes of being can

counteract a range of different oppressive political projects aimed at humans as well as animals” (Abrell 2021, 4-5). Sanctuaries are spaces of rescue and care for each resident within them, but they are also extensive experimental projects for how to live out a different philosophical and ideological world.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

Chapter 1, *Sanctuaries as Stories*, focuses on why sanctuaries in particular are an important place to understand the power of storytelling. Sanctuaries’ activism is based largely on stories, specifically the stories of the residents and the opportunity humans have to hear them during tours. Tours typically involve a sanctuary staff member walking around the property with a group of visitors, explaining the history and goals of the sanctuary and telling stories of the residents they come across. The majority of the information given on tours, including the stories, is also usually written down on the sanctuary’s website or social media. These stories are the foundation for how sanctuaries hope to shift perspectives on farm sanctuaries and foster different ways to relate to these species. Chapter 2, *Sanctuaries as Care*, deals with the role of care in sanctuaries. How care is carried out, how care is redefined when you refuse productivity, and what it means to care for elderly or injured farm animals. Finally, Chapter 3, *Sanctuaries as Models*, centers around how sanctuaries engage in refusal to systems of capitalist production and human exceptionalism, in turn serving as models for what alternative forms of work and community with farm animals may look like.

Though veganism is an inherent part of sanctuaries, there is no chapter dedicated to it. Instead, veganism is a background theme that runs throughout this thesis. One of the goals of this ethnography is to reframe how veganism is understood- not only as a dietary label but instead as

a practice and way to live ethically. As with the visions that guide sanctuaries, veganism is a practice based on the aspiration to minimize harm on all forms of life. All of these chapters are based on veganism without having to center it.

The mission of sanctuaries, to stop exploiting farm animals for human needs and to coexist with them in multispecies communities, inherently means an end to breeding and killing them for human consumption. The main goal of sanctuaries' education missions is often to get others to go vegan, or as vegan as is possible for them, as a way to forge new relationships with farm animals and redefine their role in our society not as food items but as equal and worthy-of-life companions. At sanctuaries more broadly, though, the goal is not for veganism to be a niche diet or alternative way of living. The goal is to not ever need to identify this way of living as an alternative to the norm, but for it to be the norm. The sanctuary movement's approach to making this become a reality is to redefine how we *relate* to animals. As Kathryn Gillespie writes in her book *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*, “in a society so dedicated to teaching us that animals are here to be eaten, worn, experimented on, and kept as pets and entertainers, the sanctuary embodies an alternative conceptualization of how animals fit into multispecies social worlds” (Gillespie 2018, 143). The point is not to focus on “veganism,” but instead on the practices veganism engages with, of preventing unnecessary harm.

Veganism, as defined by most sanctuary workers and vegan advocates, is not the same veganism spread through wellness magazines or single-issue advocacy messages. It is not a diet or a consumption boycott that is achieved when you remove the visible animal products from your plate. Veganism is something one continually aspires to, because fully achieving it is almost impossible. For the same reason, it is important to shift the focus from only consumerism and instead understand veganism as embedded in relationships, language, and ideologies. These are

principles of do no harm, of anti-exploitation, of decentering human needs in the world, and they often do manifest in food choices and in refusing to consume animal products, but it does not end there.

As VINE's name reflects, *Veganism Is the Next Evolution*, but *Veganism Is Never Enough*. VINE argues that it is a necessary step to go vegan- to truly engage in practices that work towards minimizing the harm you cause, to consider all lives equally, and to care for others and the planet. At the same time, because it is impossible to actually be “vegan” in our society, given how industrial animality is so profoundly embedded in our everyday life, it is not enough to just claim you are vegan. We need to continually be working towards something *beyond* that- to create a world where veganism is possible and where systems that cause unnecessary harm are abolished. As Abrell writes in his book, “It is important not to lose sight of the sanctuary project as only a provisional step on the path to achieving the abolition of structures of inequality that impose bare life on all animals, including humans. After all, saving animals is a project that can only truly be complete when we can save ourselves as well” (Abrell 2021, 196-197). Veganism can emerge as a tool of anti-capitalist and liberation efforts, which encompasses humans and animals, as well as teach us how to live better on this planet in multispecies communities.

This project is rooted in the lives of farm animals that reside in sanctuaries, but it simultaneously hopes to be about more than only them. It *is* a thesis about animals; it is about fighting for the recognition of these beings, who have suffered arguably some of the worst harms of capitalism, as worthy of a life outside of these systems that impose human exceptionalism and profit maximization at all costs. But more than that, in highlighting the possibilities of life, community, and ways to understand “value” that exist when we refuse capitalist systems of production, this project is also about opening up the potential to create lives based on completely

alternative value systems. Of completely different ways of relating to each other, to work, to food, and to our environment. The stories that emerge from sanctuaries, of the care and the hope for a better world, illuminate important forms of activism and radical ways to think deeply about abolishing systems of production and current animal-human relations to make space for multispecies communities and more expansive lives for farm animals.

CHAPTER 1: SANCTUARIES AS STORIES

EBONY'S STORY

At VINE, there is a central area composed of a large barn that, during the day, has both its gates wide open. The barn sits on the left side of a little hill you drive up when arriving at the sanctuary, with an old house on the other side, parallel to the barn. Around these two landmarks are a small pond, a beat-up trailer, an outhouse, a pen for rescued pigeons, and coops for residents that prefer these spaces to the barn. Straight down the back, if you keep driving past the hill where the barn sits, there is a fence and behind that a large forested area. Around the central barn, before the woods, live twelve cows, who interact with humans and other residents on a regular basis. In the back pasture, however, there are twenty-three cows, which for the most part have been rewilded. Living in their completely wooded area, they are left almost entirely by themselves. Staff members go in once a day to look around and see if they can notice anyone missing, sick, or injured, but they rarely interact directly with these individuals.

A quick interruption from the story is warranted to explain the notion of rewilding. Cows were domesticated from wild ox 10,500 years ago, meaning that the cows we live alongside now were never fully wild (University College London 2012). Rewilding is traditionally understood as a return of animals and landscapes to their state prior to human intervention. At sanctuaries, however, this is not the exact goal, since the cows in these spaces cannot fully return to an existence without the effects of human intervention. Rewilding instead is a process and an aspiration, rather than a finished state, that prioritizes wildness and freedom for currently domesticated animals. It is based on the notion that even if the animals cannot “return” to a “wild” existence, left to their own devices, their lives can be remarkably different. Rewilding can

perhaps be a set of utopian ideas, or a project for seeing what the lives of animals can become when not as forcefully dictated by human intervention.

One of the cows up in the back pasture of VINE is Ebony, whose story was recounted to me by the same intern who told me about Moka's rescue. Ebony originally came from a dairy farm. Those at VINE think that somehow, though they are unsure of the specifics, Ebony escaped her dairy farm with her mate while she was pregnant. They lived together in the woods for a few months, and then Ebony had a baby, now named Ivory. The story goes that during their time in the woods, Ebony, Ivory, and Ebony's partner were living close to a woman's property in Vermont. This woman grew to care for the trio after having observed them for a few months, but Ebony and her partner would never let the woman near them. One day, a group of hunters was out in those woods, and they shot and killed Ebony's partner. Ebony and Ivory, shocked and startled, ran towards the woman's property, and the woman opened her gates for them. They stayed on her property until the woman called VINE, who took in Ebony and Ivory a month later. They came to the sanctuary and since then have lived in the back pasture. One day, a staff member was doing a headcount and realized that there was an extra cow, which revealed that Ebony had given birth; she had gotten pregnant again before her partner had died. The newborn was named Cora, who is now a year old and has spent her whole life at the sanctuary.

The three of them still live in the back pasture, and while Sophia told me the story, she said that Ivory and Ebony seem to hate interacting with humans, which no one at the sanctuary blames them for. She said, "He's [Ivory] a good example of someone who has decided that they don't really want to be a part of what humans have to offer and is able to do that, to a certain extent, where we clean their barn and he has water there." She also concluded the story by saying, "Ebony raised a baby, was pregnant, and had another baby *living out in the woods*. She's

the coolest lady in the world.” Her ability to make it on her own in an unfamiliar place, to protect her child, to survive and give birth to another baby, makes her story a remarkably brave and eventful one.

WHY STORIES?

Sanctuaries exist to create refuge and a safe life for formerly farmed animals, almost all of whom have arrived after existing in abusive, exploitative, or futureless situations. Creating these spaces, where farm animals are reconceptualized and able to carry out lives unimaginable in agricultural settings, has an impact beyond the confined spaces of the sanctuary itself, as the stories created and shared in sanctuaries extend and travel through the world. Many of the people I interviewed identified storytelling as one of the main ways they see the sanctuary movement as distinct from other forms of animal activism or vegan messaging, which often conceptualize farm animals as abstract numbers rather than as individuals.

The world and all the lives, ecosystems, and entanglements within it are constantly remade by the stories we tell and hear. Nothing is ever static, including the very ways in which we approach and understand the world. Alongside the world that exists, there are the multiple stories humans tell of it (Cronon 1992, 1367). Understanding human relationships to farm animals and their place in our food, labor, and industrial systems has become a cultural event. We learn through the stories we create, but given the always competing narratives and conflicting points of view, it is critical to continually examine where the stories come from (Cronon 1992, 1367). This chapter will aim to understand, expose, and pull apart, in both critical and imaginative ways, how multiple types of stories about farm animals have come to be, what they rest on, and what they have the potential to accomplish.

Sanctuaries utilize stories to scale their efforts to relate to farm animals in novel ways and create multispecies communities not based on capitalist productivity. Sanctuaries are immensely small given the enormity of industrial animal production. The handful of sanctuaries that exist in the US are only able to rescue and care for a few hundred animals at a time. In contrast, 9.76 billion land animals were killed in the US last year for agricultural purposes (Animal Kill Clock 2022). The relationships sanctuary staff and residents live out within the physical limits of the sanctuary are important but impossible to realize with every farm animal that exists. Stories, however, have a unique capacity to scale the efforts of sanctuaries. In their book *Scale: Discourse and Dimensions of Social Life*, which details how different scaling-projects shape our understanding of our social worlds, E. Summerson Carr and Michael Lempert write that “*to scale* is not simply to assume or assert ‘bigness’ or ‘smallness’ by way of ready-made calculus. Rather...people use language to scale the world around them” (Carr 2016, 3). To scale does not only mean to make something physically or numerically larger, like adding more sanctuaries or expanding their capacity to rescue more animals. Scaling is about relationality and comparison, which is why stories can take part in scaling the sanctuary project. They take the lives lived at sanctuaries and make them known.

Stories are passed on, stored, and shared among the world, allowing the events that take place somewhere, such as at a sanctuary, to take flight into minds and worlds where they may not have a physical presence. As van Dooren writes on stories of albatrosses, a species close to extinction in part due to enormous amounts of human-caused pollution, “we need stories that can travel far and fast- like an albatross riding the wind in search of food. At the very least, we need stories that can travel as well as plastics and other pollutants” (van Dooren 2014, 23).

Sanctuaries can only rescue so many animals, but the stories of those events *can* be scaled. They

can be passed on within sanctuaries, as well as among those who visit them or hear their stories in some other capacity. Doing so makes the relationships and ideologies of sanctuaries “bigger” than their physical limits.

Storytelling within sanctuaries is one of the major pathways these spaces use to generate activism and reflexivity among the people who come across them. Stories, unlike numbers, make apparent and in turn allow us to appreciate all that is at stake in the lives of farm animals – all the relationships, connections, systems, decisions, and ways of life implicated in their being (van Dooren 2014, 73). At sanctuaries, stories are used to illustrate how residents are persons with communities, aspirations, dreams, and emotions, unlike the commodified and depersonalized portrayals they are seen through in industrial animal agriculture. Sanctuaries create stories as much as they are storied, as they come to reflect both the lives that go on within them as well as those of industrial animal agriculture and exploitation implicated in the residents’ lives. By shaping themselves and their representations on these narratives, sanctuaries further reveal humans’ dependence on storytelling to generate notions of care and value in different aspects and beings of life, as well as illustrate how stories have the power not only to reflect the way we relate to other beings but continually and concretely remake these very relations.

STORIES OF CRISIS

The manner in which we take in information and absorb the happenings of the world has a stark implication in the way we understand and process that knowledge. The 24-7 news feeds of stories and facts about the perilous state of our planet, instead of generating real senses of urgency or triggering direct actions, normalize a sense of crisis and allows these issues to become part of everyday life. The level of catastrophe and its inevitability generates a sense of

paralysis, as there is nothing tangible or visible that seems to be possible, given the magnitude of the issues. Joseph Masco details this “Crisis in Crisis” in his article titled so, which argues that the way issues and “crises” are portrayed and communicated within our society has deep implications for how they are acted upon, namely in creating “counterrevolutionary” responses to crises. As he writes, “crisis today seeks to stabilize an institution, practice, or reality rather than interrogate the historical conditions of possibility for that endangerment to occur” (Masco 2017, 73). Masco goes into detail that, because these systemic issues such as climate change are represented as crises, the reactions are often emergency responses rather than fundamental societal changes (Masco 2017, 73). In turn, the solution becomes how we work around the systems, “fixing” the problems without fixing the systems. This is why the notion of crisis has become counterrevolutionary and goes as far as stabilizing the most oppressive systems in our society.

These same kinds of critical-yet-unchangeable narratives extend to those within industrial animal agriculture. The effects of the industry have become undeniable and devastating, yet the role of farm animals as food and as production inputs is as pervasive and normalized in our culture as ever. It becomes daunting to even think of how to dismantle entire ways of existing with these species. As Masco writes, “The crisis in crisis today is the inability to both witness the accumulating damage of this system and imagine other politics” (Masco 2017, 75). There is a lack of imagination of what different food systems and relationships to farm animals can look like, where both the rights of laborers, animals, and the environment are cared for equally to the food preferences and desires for capital accumulation of a select portion of the population.

The plethora of statistics and numbers contribute to stabilizing notions of crisis, because they are often so unfathomably large that they simply cement the idea that the issues are too big

to deal with. In the US, an estimated 40 million cattle, 120 million pigs, and 9 billion chickens are slaughtered every year (Animal Kill Clock 2022). At a certain point, the numbers and statistics, while intended to represent the scope of the problem and the desperate need for action, do not generate mobilization. As Matt, the founder of Farm Animal Refuge, said in our interview, “70 billion land animals a year are killed for food and products, which is crazy. The bit that I like to tell people is that a million seconds is 11 days, but a billion seconds is 11 years....because I think once you’re over a million, it’s just kind of a large number; you don’t realize the scope of how much that is.”²

What is the difference between one million and one billion farm animals killed a year? How can numbers, statistics, or similar kinds of reporting convey the magnitude of the issues of animal agriculture or the reasons why activists so desperately want to change the system? These kinds of numbers that expose the reality of what happens in animal agriculture are important in making concrete the effects of this industry. However, when numbers start to fall flat or become simply numbers, it becomes impossible to use them to generate activism, because they will not develop care or a genuine understanding of what is occurring. They will be normalized into any news about the industry, something people expect to see but that does not solidify the exact impacts of the issue. The distinction between a million and a billion will not trigger thoughts of the additional nine hundred and ninety-nine *million* animals who are dying in between those statistics, in between the years and the meals and the products. Instead of contributing to action,

² This is a global number, calculated with an estimate that 200 million land animals are slaughtered every day, adding up to roughly 72 billion a year (The Humane League 2021). The 200 million number comes from calculations by adding up the number of animals slaughtered from each species (cows, chickens, turkeys, geese, pigs, rabbits, sheep), which can be found on Sentient Media (*see bibliography for Hussain 2021*).

they will fuel an ongoing sense of stable crisis, which is why new narratives and forms of activism are crucial to conveying what is at stake with these institutions and systems.

Numbers have a limited capacity to reflect what is lost when an animal dies. Species are achievements. They are embedded in relationships, places, and histories (van Dooren 2014, 8-9). It is not just one less individual of a species existing, but an entire *way* of existing and of being in the world. Stories, unlike numbers, hold open the space to conceptualize these forms of life, these multiple entanglements of what it means for animals, and humans, to live a life and to die.

FARM ANIMALS AS STORIED IN AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

Industrial animal agriculture in part operates through commodifying animals- making them objects and inputs of production, which allows for certain humans to justify their ongoing exploitation and the hierarchical view between humans and nonhuman animals. The narratives crafted around food take great effort to hide the exploitation necessitated to provide animal products. Through erasing the presence of animals in meat (“pork” instead of “pig,” “steak” instead of “cow,” “veal” instead of “calf”), the lives of these animals are often removed from our food, which simultaneously erases our connection to the beings, environments, and labor that go into feeding us.

The way farm animals are represented is devoid of any personhood or imagination of what these beings’ lives can be outside of these systems. In turn, humans come to relate to them only when they have been exploited and in their final “product,” with little importance given to the actual *lives* of these animals. The very act of including something in a story gives it a certain power, while hiding other things erases and devalues whatever is not storied. Cronon writes, “in the act of separating story from non-story, we wield the most powerful yet dangerous tool of the

narrative form” (Cronon 1992, 1349). The choice of what to highlight, what to give more meaning to, and what to center, takes part in defining and shaping the actors, events, and traits that the story is about. Focusing on only the *products* that farm animals can give, which parts of their bodies contribute to which commodities, how to most “efficiently” raise them, the fastest ways to kill them, how to fit more and more animals into smaller and smaller spaces, all cement the idea that these beings only have worth in the capitalist value they hold.

On Value and Capital

All societies, or all cultures, orient themselves around the mutual pursuit of a certain value. As David Graeber argues in his article “It is Value That Brings Universes Into Being,” value is defined by what cultures orient themselves around- what they constantly remake and reshape themselves to acquire. Even though cultures may consist of individual beings with distinct aspirations, they all are collectively working and orienting their lives around a certain value (Graeber 2013, 220). In a capitalist society, labor produces value, or as Graeber writes, “we speak of *value* where labor is commoditized” (Graeber 2013, 224). As such, capital is a process that continually seeks to extract more labor from more spheres of life.

Capitalism is a system of reduction; it reduces humans to labor and animals to vessels for labor. Capital is accumulated through the control of simple homogenous labor (Marx 1990, 129). Capitalists, those who own labor, continually attempt to own *more* labor. This means controlling all aspects of production chains (the knowledge, skills, steps, and so on), in order to reduce human workers into inputs in a production chain that they can hire and fire at their will. Capital, in this sense, sees humans, and animals, as only a means to an end. Moreover, capital is accumulated through surplus (i.e. exploitation) (Marx 1990, 129-131). Capitalists need to gain

more money than what they are paying workers in order to get a profit. As such, part of the process in capital is constantly finding ways to make labor cheaper as a means to increase surplus. The entire way in which we understand our society is centered around valuing things only based on how they can be worked, with a profound inability to live without constantly seeking to inject more work and productivity into every ounce of our existence (Blanchette 2020, 6, 210). These capitalist frameworks shape how we relate to farm animals and the understanding we have for them in our society. We come to see their worth only based on how they are a means for extracting more labor.

However, I see farm sanctuaries as orienting themselves around a different understanding of value, distinct from capital value. Sanctuaries base their lives and events around the pursuit of care and minimizing harm on all forms of life in the more-than-human world. They are working for animals, rather than on them. In other words, they do not see farm animals as only a means to extract more labor; instead, they treat them as ends in themselves. Their lives are worth caring for, and they do not see a need to defend that claim or give a reason as to why they are worth caring for. As Graeber writes, thinking with Terence Turner, “this is what politics is always ultimately about: not just to accumulate value, but to define what value is, and how different values (forms of ‘honor,’ ‘capital,’ etc.) dominate, encompass, or otherwise relate to one another” (Graeber 2013, 228). In refusing to center their lives on the pursuit of capital value, sanctuaries strive to make possible and realistic a community and way of life that revolves around other forms of value, or values.

In his article on value, Graeber also points out how anthropologists have historically used the term “value” interchangeably for the “virtues of a commodity for sale on the market (the ‘value’ of a haircut or a curtain rod) and our ideas about what is ultimately important in life

(‘values’ such as truth, beauty, justice)” (Graeber 2013, 224). Graeber goes on to say that the interchangeable use of the word may reveal how on some level, these two forms of “value” may ultimately be referring to the same thing. However, farm sanctuaries work to distance these two definitions, to see what is important in the world as that which goes beyond what has commodity value. It is tempting to say that sanctuaries see the “inherent value” in farm animals, but it is impossible for value to be inherent if it is implicitly a social construct. It may be more reflective to say that sanctuaries work for the value in farm animals to be in the achievement of their existence, rather in the commodity value they are capable of producing.

FARM ANIMALS AS STORIED IN SANCTUARIES

Most sanctuaries offer tours, where visitors can come meet the residents at the same time as they hear their stories, receive information about the animal agriculture industry, and learn how to support the movement. In my interviews, I asked those at sanctuaries what strategies they see as important for achieving the goals of the sanctuary movement, and the vast majority mentioned storytelling in some way or another. These are a few of their responses:

A lot of what we do is storytelling and holding their [residents’] stories and their past experiences before they came here to the farm and centralizing it and not shying away from the truth and their treatment and what we are promising them as they come here, which is hopefully to ensure the best and highest quality of life possible. So we do that, and we centralize storytelling, which in my opinion is the most effective (Isabella, Farm Sanctuary).

We give [animals] a name. We tell their story. We let people know that they had a family and a mom that loved them and nurtured them and birthed them. They had connections. They can make connections with not only their own species, but they can make connections with humans and with other species of animals. They're just like dogs and cats and everybody that we love, who we invite into our homes and our bed and we treat as family, sometimes even better than family. We just...show their personality and the life that they already have. And I think it definitely relates to people; it kind of clicks, especially when you get into the bigger picture of agricultural animals and the vast numbers of them dying. [These] things can get really construed and jumbled, and you just lump it all into something in your brain, and you use that to kind of justify everything. We try to make clear that they are individuals.... it's not just this group of animals that died. It's these individual animals that died to make up that group (Matt, Farm Animal Refuge).

In everything we do, whether it gets called social justice or environmental justice or animal liberation, what we're hoping to do is reorient the relationships of humans to each other, to other animals, to the larger-than-human world.... For humans, we think in stories, so much so that when our brains are doing processing while we sleep, we turn those things into narratives and insist on making them into narratives, even when they make no sense whatsoever....The storytelling that arises out of sanctuaries, even if it's fairly simple stories that just help people to be less disrespectful of other animals, I think is very helpful (patrice, VINE).

Stories are utilized as a means of communicating all the potential for life each farm animal has, when able to live outside of factory farms or slaughterhouses. They often focus on the role of residents in the community, to emphasize how all farm animals experience their own life in deeply meaningful ways. For example, in their article “Animal Agency in Community,” Charlotte Blattner, Sue Donaldson, and Ryan Wilcox carry out an ethnography of VINE Sanctuary and outline several distinct roles residents there take on, including guardian, teacher, learner, friend, and parent (Blattner 2020, 9-12). Moreover, in Isa Leshko’s book *Allowed to Grow Old*, she creates photographic portraits of elderly farm animals at sanctuaries, which aim to reveal how these residents “are individuals with knowledge and memories... They’ve seen friends and sometimes their own children die and be taken away. They remember friends- as we know from watching joyous reunions of animals and people who have been apart for years” (Leshko 2019, xi). Residents at sanctuaries are more than only bodies or numbers that makeup statistics for how many animals sanctuaries have rescued. They are distinct lives, each bringing their own experience and selves to a community. In van Dooren’s words, they are forms of life, rather than life forms, and this is what stories try to capture.

Stories as Media & Experiences

In addition to the actual content contained within them, stories are also defined by how they are told and heard. Stories are placed-based, both in the sense of where the narrative of a story takes place, as well as where it is shared and received. As such, there is a difference between reading about stories from residents at farm sanctuaries, for example on a sanctuary’s websites or social media, and hearing them from the voice of someone who works at a sanctuary, while standing in dirt or grass, far from a city and surrounded by the smell of hay and the sound

of animals. Stories told at sanctuaries have more potential to be received as the teller intends them to be, because they have more control over what senses the listener is experiencing, such as the sound of their voice, their intonation, the view of the sanctuary, and the presence of the residents.

When I first started my research, I went on a tour at Unity Farms. It was a rainy day, and I drove an hour from my house in Somerville, Massachusetts. When I was arriving at the sanctuary, I drove up a hill and parked in a small lot, next to a little green house and a large open grassy area, surrounded by the actual places where the residents lived. As we started the tour, my white sneakers were covered in mud almost the instant we began walking. As I looked down to see my shoes and avoid the puddles, a duck waddled past, less than a foot away, navigating through the group of people to reach their own destination. Walking past the chicken coops a few minutes later, dozens of them were wandering along the main path, strolling throughout the sanctuary grounds, clearly feeling at home. Others were sleeping under the shade of a tree in front of the alpaca's area. The person giving the tour, Kathy, would stop every few feet to introduce us to the residents and tell us their stories, or at least to talk about them if that particular individual had chosen not to greet the visitors that day. I remember being shocked at how Kathy referred to everyone by name, even goats or chickens that looked identical to me. Interspersed with the stories of the residents was the founding of the sanctuary, anecdotes from previous tours and rescues, brief explanations of the role of volunteers and staff members, and time to more intimately greet the residents that had decided to approach the humans.

The first time I visited VINE in Vermont, I did not go on an official tour, since this sanctuary does not offer them to the public, but I did walk around with sanctuary staff to get an introduction to the space and the residents. This visit was also early on in my research, and it was

the first time I heard farm animals referred to as people. As I was chatting with a staff member upon my arrival, they were taking me through the area, pointing around, when she said, “there are people everywhere.” The only humans around were the two of us, but it took me a few seconds to realize she was talking about the residents. She had said this as a way to explain how at VINE, there are hardly any fences within the sanctuary itself. There are a few distinct areas, such as a central barn, some coops and sheds, and so on, but there is remarkably little “forced” separation between species (aside from those injured, newborns, or with disabilities, who are kept in private or protected areas). As a result, all kinds of animals are roaming around everywhere. Cows, chickens, goats, alpacas, pigs, pigeons, sheep, and more wander in the same spaces.

Being physically at these sanctuaries, I was able to hear the stories of the residents while standing directly in front of them. I got to see their mannerisms, the way they lounged in the sun or searched for a friend or approached me. Simultaneously, I would listen to the voice of someone who cared deeply about them, as they told me their story before and after they arrived at the sanctuary. I learned about their life while witnessing their day and the mundane, simple moments that constitute their existence at a sanctuary. I also witnessed what a community that genuinely relates to farm animals as people feels like; not only what these communities describe themselves as, but what it actually means to be there and understand how those relationships transpire.

The kinds of stories you take in at sanctuary are embedded in the way those at sanctuary relate to each other. The way residents are referred to as people, the manner in which humans interact with the residents, and the seclusion from other parts of society, to the point where the sanctuary truly feels like its own community. Being in the presence of the residents, moreover,

solidifies the reality that they are not abstractions and cannot be absorbed into statistics or numbers. They each have a life, which they live out every day in unique ways. All their existences are filled with different moments, events, and relationships that make their lives their own. Being *at* sanctuaries embodies their stories in ways that make those hearing or receiving the stories all the more aware of all that is at stake in the lives of these animals, or all that could have been lost had they not arrived at a sanctuary.

Despite the power of being physically at sanctuaries, their stories remain important even when read or listened to them outside of sanctuaries, such as from a friend, on the news or sanctuary's websites, through social media, or in a podcast. Many sanctuaries do not give tours, such as VINE, but they still make it a point to story the lives of their residents and make that a strong component of their activism as a sanctuary. The events are still made known, the lives of individual's made concrete in the face of abstract numbers, and in doing so the very existence of spaces as radical as sanctuaries is made more present in the world.

Events

In slaughterhouses and factory farms, narratives of the lives of farm animals are often eventless. Things are obviously happening all the time in these settings- animals are raised, fed, medicated, slaughtered, and processed, but, in the words of Chloe Ahmann, these things “never [add] up to happenings” (Ahmann 2018, 149). In her article, Ahmann recounts activist work in Curtis Bay, a community long affected by slow violence emanating from a nearby incinerator. Because Curtis Bay's suffering is different from the spectacle and immediate events often associated with violence, it is hard to point to a specific moment in time to prove the environmental injustice occurring in the community. As the activists say, “it is exhausting to

create an event out of nothing” (Ahmann 2018, 143). When violence is so all-encompassing, gradually accumulating in a community or so deeply embedded in every part of a system, it can seem as if nothing is actually *happening* that causes violence. The violence simply is. Making events, however, and crafting stories about those living in these violent environments, as activists in Curtis Bay did, can expose the reality of slow violence and how it affects those who live through it.

In his book *Every Twelve Seconds*, Timothy Pachirat details his time as a slaughterhouse employee, where he rotated through various positions, including roles that directly involved killing the animals. Pachirat argues that even to those closest to the acts of killing in these facilities, there is incredible distance and obscurity surrounding the “event” itself. Work at slaughterhouses is overwhelmingly monotonous, where for ten hours a day, workers repeatedly perform the same exact movements with almost no interruptions (Pachirat 2011, 136). There are continuous attempts by those who run the facilities to homogenize the animals, the workers, and the events that transpire, to make everything a repetitive, constant streamline of production. Pachirat describes how even the workers all look the same, wearing identical uniforms, “giving the appearance of a solid mass of interchangeable units” (Pachirat 2011, 40-41). Describing the animals, who arrive at the slaughterhouse with “varied shapes and sizes, each distinct, each unique,” he writes how the kill floor erases any “uniqueness” or “irregularity,” and the focus is on “eras[ing] individuality and produc[ing] in its place a raw material input” (Pachirat 2011, 40). The goal of the slaughterhouse, in an effort to maintain production timescales, is to obscure everything that identifies workers, animals, or moments as individual and distinct.

This homogenization of both bodies and time makes it so that, despite the hundreds of individual tasks and actions that transpire at a slaughterhouse every day, even every minute,

there is a prevailing effort to ensure no events out of the ordinary take place. Never taking a moment away from the production process contributes to obscuring the cruelty all around a slaughterhouse and the prioritization of efficiency above life. A Pachirat writes,

At the rate of one cow, steer, heifer slaughtered every twelve seconds per nine-hour working day, the reality that the work of the slaughterhouse centers around *killing* evaporates into a routinized, almost hallucinatory, blur. By the end of the day, by liver number 2,394 or foot number 9,576, it hardly matters *what* is being cut, shorn, sliced, shredded, hung, or washed: all that matters is that the day is once again, finally, coming to a close, offering a brief respite from the roaring, vibrating totality that has come to encompass not only the knives, hooks, and machines that kill, rip, and tear apart the cattle but also the human arms, legs, and hands that operate these devices. This, too, becomes killing at a distance, laboring day after day hanging freshly gutted body parts from animals one never saw or heard or smelled or touched in life (Pachirat 2011, 138-139).

Slaughterhouse facilities such as the ones Pachirat describes are based on efforts to profoundly depersonalize the lives of all workers and animals within them, and in doing so strip their lives of any events besides those necessary to ensure the work is carried out at the designated speed. Pachirat even mentions how the human workers do anything to try to create small events, even brief moments of horseplay, to stay sane and remind themselves that there is still life outside the “terror of monotony” (Pachirat 2011, 137, 139). Without events, there is nothing about these lives that those in charge of slaughterhouses see as worthwhile or important. There is no mourning for animals’ lives, because their deaths (or as slaughterhouses call killing,

“harvesting”) are seen only as part of the production process, rather than the loss of an individual life (Pachirat 2011, 40). There is no respect or consideration for the quality of life of the slaughterhouse workers, because they too are conceptualized as nothing but components necessary for the production chain, easy to replace.

Contrastingly, sanctuaries are places of *story-making*. More important than the stories told about sanctuaries are the ruptures in the norm that come to be storied- the lives that animals lead when they are not part of these homogenous, massive production processes. As Ahmann defines rupture, these moments are “explosions of temporal intensity that are more than the sum of their parts; they reframe and often eclipse the gradual changes that precede them” (Ahmann 2018, 159). In industrial settings, the animals’ lives are a means to an end, where billions of farm animals’ lives and deaths are consumed and erased by capitalist productivity. Residents’ lives at sanctuaries, however, are about their rescues, their recoveries, their deaths, and the moments they are able to realize only because they are at sanctuaries. Each of these moments are acknowledged, many of them remembered and storied later on. Sanctuaries are not places of production in a capitalist sense. They are not producing commodities that are embedded forms of human labor. Instead, they produce events. They collectively organize their life around creating these moments.

Individuality and personhood

One of the big questions that arise in the animal rights movement and debates centered around eating or consuming animals is whether or not these beings are persons and individuals, two distinct notions. Stories from sanctuaries are based on an assumption that farm animals are both. Residents have unique relationships with the human and nonhuman animals in their

communities, relating to each other as persons, and staff members will attest to the individual personalities of all of them.³ They see the effort and time necessary in saving each animal's life as worthwhile, even if that represents only a minute fraction of all animals in agricultural facilities.

Taking from Barbara Smuts in her chapter in J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, the term "personhood" signifies the connection two actors have with each other that includes a sort of "personal relationship" (Coetzee 1999, 110). Rather than being a reflection of the "humanness" of a being, personhood reflects the ability to have a connection, emotional attachment, and degree of intimacy with others. Personhood, for Smuts, is something humans and other species do; recognizing another being as possible of interaction and response, therefore, becomes a relationship, rather than an inherent quality a being possesses in the world (Coetzee 1999, 118). Personhood can be granted, revoked, or denied.

Visiting VINE, the majority of residents I came across were described to me based on their personalities. Oftentimes, the staff member showing me around would tell me the background of each resident - where they came from and how they were rescued. For example, Autumn and Rose came from a small dairy farm nearby, Nigel the sheep from a slaughterhouse, Whisper the sheep from a local woman's house where she kept dozens of farm animals, and several of the broiler chickens from slaughterhouses in New York. Beyond that, however, they described their role in the social community, their preferences, and their habits. Autumn, for example, is known to be extremely maternal, "adopting" all the younger cows who arrive at the

³ During my visits to VINE, for example, a staff member described to me different kinds of birthday cakes they had made for residents based on their preferences, including a kiwi and pineapple cake. They also explained to me which residents were best friends, who preferred to eat with a certain group of people, the distinct locations everyone preferred to rest at, and more.

sanctuary, including Splash and Moka. Val the pig does her best to avoid the sun, and she spends most of her time nestled in her coop, surrounded by her goat friends.

For the most part, residents have unique relationships with all staff members and other farm animals. Several of them form what can only be described as familial bonds, many become inseparable best friends, others assume a caregiving figure, and there are a select few known as the troublemakers of the sanctuary. Personhood is not something sanctuaries give to their residents, of course. Instead, it reflects the relationship they exist in with them, those relationships that make up their multispecies communities. In their relationships, both actors interact in ways that are aware of the person's individuality, the individuality that exists whether those in relationships regard the other as persons or not. Both in relating to residents as persons and honoring their individuality, humans break down the hierarchy that often exists between humans and farm animals, where the latter is not viewed to have a subjective experience, with emotions or awareness. In focusing on the uniqueness of all residents, sanctuaries emphasize how they are not only rescuing an abstract number of farm animals, but instead rescuing and caring for distinct lives and people.

In attempts to showcase the individuality of all residents, sanctuaries use stories that not only highlight how terrible the residents' pasts were, how full of cruelty and abuse they were, but instead how rich, beautiful, and fulfilling their lives can be if given other opportunities to live. Cameron described his project on photographing farm sanctuary residents in our interview as follows:

They [animal residents] have their own world that I'm trying to give just a glimpse of. A lot of people don't even think to take the time to observe...this is the reality of why this

particular individual is alive and in a safe place that will respect him or her. This is where they came from, whether it's a slaughterhouse or some human left them and moved on- whatever their story may be, I don't want that to be their defining thing. This chicken, for example, isn't defined by the fact that she came from a slaughterhouse, was meant to be an eggling. That is a part of her story, but it isn't who she is only. It's just one layer of her individuality.

These types of stories hope to step away from the narratives of crisis and depersonalized portrayals of the issues in industrial animal agriculture, instead highlighting how change is possible, how animals can be given refuge and care, and what results from these actions and decisions to refuse capitalist uses of these species.

Self-actualization

Meeting the basic needs and ensuring the safety of every resident is what sanctuary staff dedicate much of their time to. However, beyond meeting these needs, the sanctuary is also a space where farm animals are able to achieve joyful and more fulfilling lives. While usually a term reserved for humans, sanctuaries extend the possibility of self-actualization to nonhuman animals, which only becomes possible through recognizing and relating to residents as persons. Self-actualization essentially refers to the ability of an individual to reach their full potential, to truly realize themselves. When describing the goals of VINE sanctuary, co-founder patrice stated, "You get your basic needs met and then you have your needs for relationships and then at the highest level is sort of becoming yourself, like being able to pursue your projects and become whoever it's possible for you to be." In purposefully working for the ability of farm animals to

achieve self-actualization, sanctuaries open the space for them to live and exist in the world in ways entirely unimaginable in animal agriculture. Self-actualization is an aspirational project to see what lives farm animals are able to realize when they are not defined by their ability to be worked.

In her book *The Problem With Work*, Kathi Weeks argues for a post-work politics, largely founded on the demands for basic income and shorter working hours. In making her argument, she describes how the goal should not be to make work *better*, but instead strive for “a life” entirely beyond work, or as she writes, “life against work” (Weeks 2011, 230). A life against work includes seeing *life* and reproduction, rather than production, as what should be maximized. A basic income should not be “a reward for our productivity,” but instead “necessary to sustain social worlds” (Weeks 2011, 230). In other words, society should not orient itself around continually producing new commodities or creating more forms of labor. Instead, as Weeks’ notion of a life acknowledges, there is so much human beings- and farm animals- are capable of beyond only production or work. The push is not for a better life within work, but for a life defined by attributes and events entirely outside of work. Self-actualization is similarly about fulfilling this life, about creating the space to explore what it may mean to get a life.

What self-actualization actually looks like is not outlined or static, and sanctuaries have the responsibility to not dictate the lives of residents based on staff’s assumptions or judgements. As Weeks’ states about a life, “rather than burdening life with a fixed content- that is, with too many assumptions about what might count as a life beyond work- the possibility of the provocation to get a life lies in its capacity to pose a political project that does not stipulate and to open a post-work speculative horizon that it cannot fix in advance” (Weeks 2011, 233). The “a” in a life is intentional, because it is not *the* life that everyone should strive for, but simply *a*

life, where the indefinite “a” does not imply a strictly defined and already detailed one (Weeks 2011, 232). In our interview, pattrice from VINE said that sanctuaries aim to “create a circumstance in which they [residents] can become themselves, in which they can do the things that are most important to them for themselves. With cows, that's going to be relationships with other cows, but also other beings because they're very interested in all sorts of relationships, and it's going to be sleeping under the stars and hiking in the forest and doing the things that their bodies want to do.”

Sanctuaries ask what farm animals’ lives could become if they exist in a new setting; what kinds of communities, joys, and events can take place. An important part of sanctuaries is allowing residents to exist in ways that defy notions of how humans expect these animals to carry out their lives. In the US, 98.66% of farm animals live in factory farms; they live in one type of world. In many of these spaces, such as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) for broiler chickens, individuals live in settings of extreme overcrowding and may never even go *outside* throughout their life span (Zampa 2019). Both figuratively and physically, there is no space to realize moments outside the industrial production chain they are a part of. But maybe chickens love sleeping in tractors or goats prefer to be near ponds instead of barns or ducks find companionship in pigs.⁴ The point is that sanctuaries insist that we might not know what will make farm animals flourish, what lives they are capable of getting. These are experimental systems for finding all the potential lives, and small moments, that these species can live.

Stories show what different forms of self-actualization look like for different residents. How distinct and unique each animal can become when allowed to live more freely and while

⁴At VINE, there are in fact *many* chickens who fall asleep (and sometimes lay eggs) in the tractors.

refusing capitalist production. These stories in turn become methods to expand our imagination regarding what roles farm animals can have in our communities and the lives they can lead alongside, or separate, from humans. Sanctuaries, while still tied up in notions of property and often resembling traditional farms, aspire to allow the animals themselves to dictate the life they lead, the things they love, and the way they accept care and companionship.

WHAT IS THE POINT? THE UTILITARIAN ARGUMENT AGAINST SANCTUARIES

During one of my interviews with Isabella, an intern at Farm Sanctuary, she said to me, regarding the transformative potential of sanctuaries, “we can’t rescue our way out of this.” There is an immense amount of care, effort, and space given to each resident, which limits how many animals sanctuaries can actually take in while maintaining good standards of life and as much freedom as possible for those who already live there. As mentioned, sanctuaries can appear seemingly futile as a form of activism against industrial animal agriculture because these spaces will only ever save a very minute fraction of animals. A utilitarian perspective would relegate the efforts of sanctuaries as useless or unworthy, because they are not saving the maximum number of animals possible. Sophia from VINE said to me, “VINE has 700 residents out of the billions and billions of animals each year that are caught up and killed by the agricultural industry. That’s really fucking depressing, but at the same time it makes a literal lifetime of a difference for the residents that are there, which I think is something that should not be glossed over at all.” Even if only the smallest portion of animals ever arrive at a sanctuary, for the ones that do, it is literally everything to them. It is their whole life, that would otherwise have gone completely un-lived.

In response to a question on why the work at sanctuaries is still important, even if seemingly unnoticeable in the massive scale of industrial animal agriculture, Melissa from Peace Ridge Sanctuary told me the following story:

The starfish story is a story about this person walking along the beach, and there are all of these starfish washed along the shore. They're drying out, and this person starts throwing back individual starfish, and someone says, 'You're not going to be able to save them all. There are so many of them. Why are you doing that? It doesn't really matter.' Then this person picks up another one, throws the starfish in and says, 'It matters to that one.'

When you think of it as outside of the problem rather than as people or individuals who are actually experiencing the problem, [instead of] numerically and in this abstract way, when you're thinking of these specific individuals and seeing and thinking of so many different cows and the cows we know and the opportunities that they have throughout their lives together, that's important. That matters, and it goes beyond these abstract numbers, which again is one of the core differences between the farm sanctuary movement and the vegan movement. There can be this tendency to think of farmed animals in more of this abstract way rather than as individuals, and if you're coming from a counter-oppressive perspective, you're recognizing the desires and the experiences of the individual, not just thinking of them in terms of numbers. Just thinking of them in terms of numbers can be a dangerous replication of modes of viewing.

Continually recognizing farm animals as persons and pushing for the idea that "it matters to that one" does the work of shifting the relationship we have with farm animals. The utilitarian

argument against sanctuaries fails to recognize how every life matters; how for every resident at a sanctuary, being there makes a lifetime of a difference. A focus on preserving species as numbers, as van Dooren writes about, ignores how these beings all experience their life in personal ways. Not recognizing this risks ensuring their survival at the cost of their way of life (van Dooren 2014, 108). Utilizing a similar framework, there is a Palestinian rights campaign called “We Are Not Numbers,” and in describing their name and mission, they write,

When the world talks about Palestinians living under occupation and in refugee camps, it is usually in terms of politics and numbers – specifically, how many killed, injured, homeless and/or dependent on aid. But numbers are impersonal, and often numbing. What they don’t convey are the daily personal struggles and triumphs, the tears and the laughter, the aspirations that are so universal that if it weren’t for the context, they would immediately resonate with virtually everyone (We Are Not Numbers N.D).

Focusing only on numbers erases all that is embedded within *each* of those numbers, or each of those lives. Moving away from relating to these species as numbers, a perspective that only realizes the percentage of animals saved at sanctuaries as too minute to matter and which fails to grasp all that is at stake with the lives of these animals, shifts the role of farm animals as not only abstractions but as unique and distinct lives that others can conceptualize and resonate with.

THE PARADOX IN STORIES

Through these stories and the tours sanctuaries give, residents come to be portrayed as ambassadors, which can appear as a paradox to treating them as unique persons. Because it is

widely accepted in the sanctuary movement that it is impossible to save every farm animal or bring them all to sanctuaries, staff hope that in their tours and educational programs, the stories from the farm animals that *are* at sanctuaries will “stand-in” for all the other ones. There emerges a tension, therefore, between allowing residents to exist only as themselves versus requiring them to generate change in humans or have the ability to reflect all the others of their species yet to be saved. The latter amasses them with millions of other beings at once, seemingly defeating the importance of recognizing their individuality.

Sanctuaries in part counteract the individual-ambassadorship paradox by still grounding the value of all residents in the unique stories of each of them. In this way, their “ambassadorship” is more than just being a cow or a sheep or a chicken or any other animal. The purpose is still to listen to their story and make evident that there are a million more distinct stories that exist. Although residents are technically representing millions of animals that are not at sanctuaries, the fact that the ambassadorship is grounded in their unique stories rather than a generalized existence of their species allows for their individuality and their own life to still be emphasized.

There is an additional paradox embedded in the stories from sanctuaries, which is that these narratives go against the very problem that they represent- that animals need humans to recognize them as worthy of their lives. These farm animals, both those at sanctuaries and those not, always have unique lives, personalities, and the ability for relationships. These narratives try to make real that these species are worth saving regardless of their utility to humans, but at the same time, only when humans recognize this can the animals *actually* be “saved.” Stories attempt to counteract these paradoxes by decentralizing human needs in animals’ lives and

refusing to give an explanation as to why farm animals deserve to live, rather than based upon their ability to provide something for humans.

CONCLUSION

New ways of narrating our multispecies entanglements are urgently needed to create notions of care and responsibility for our shared world. Statistics and numbers and hopeless situations do little to draw people into relations, empathy, and an understanding of what is at stake when we lose or exploit these species. Stories, on the other hand, hold space for more perspectives; “we use them to explain our actions, the stories we tell change the way we act in the world” (Cronon 1992, 1376). They include the personalities and the lives of self-actualization that previously-abstract farm animals are capable of. We need stories that implicate us, that compel us to act and drive us to change. To struggle with and for other ways of life. Stories center the idea that residents at sanctuaries’ existence is worthy for no reason other than that it is. That their survival is an accomplishment. That a life in which they thrive is meaningful. It matters what stories we use to tell other stories (Haraway 2016, 12). It matters how we choose to represent farm animals, because that implicates how we come to engage with them, what we come to see as valuable in them, and how we come to fight for them.

CHAPTER 2: SANCTUARIES AS CARE

WHY CARE?

Genetic Damage & Age of Slaughter

In attempts to maximize production and efficiency in farm animals, agricultural operations and breeding methods have led to a wide array of health and genetic issues among these species. Broiler chickens are selected for rapid growth and weight gain, and in turn, most of their health issues arise from growing too fast and not being able to support their weight with their legs. This leads to lameness, breast blisters from having their body hit the ground repeatedly, and heart failure (Damerow 2017). Selection for rapid growth among cows and sheep also causes double muscling (a type of muscle hypertrophy, which decreases fertility), and pigs suffer from increased rates of metabolic diseases, including porcine stress syndrome, mulberry heart disease, and large muscle blocks (van Marle-Koster 2021).

For dairy cows and pigs, the use of artificial insemination (AI) has led to several genetic issues. These include complex vertebral malformation syndrome (associated with elevated rates of fetal mortality in Holstein cows), bovine leukocyte adhesion deficiency (associated with common bacterial infections, stunted growth, market neutrophilia, and delayed wound healing in Holstein cows), malignant hypothermia, and more (Agerholm 2007; Nagahata 2004; van Marle-Koster 2021). Selecting for increased fertility among these animals also leads to *impaired* fertility, given the genetic correlation of the two. AI has further led to increase rates of inbreeding in industrial facilities, which similarly reduces overall fertility and leads to some of the genetic issues just mentioned, in addition to deficiency of uridine monophosphate synthase,

complex vertebral malformation, and increased rates of deleterious alleles (alleles that increase the chances of diseases or disorders) (National Cancer Institute N.D., van Marle-Koster 2021).

In addition to all the genetic issues that result from modern farming technology and breeding methods, farm animals are killed at remarkably young ages, which makes care for elderly farm animals more complicated because of the lack of knowledge on how to treat health conditions at that age. Broiler chickens are often slaughtered at 47 days of life, hens at 2 years, pigs at 6 months, calves at 18-20 weeks, beef cows at 2-3 years, sheep at 6-8 months, and goats at 3-5 months (Barth 2016; Humane Society 2018; Loria 2018; The Humane League 2020; USDA N.D.). In contrast, chicken's natural life expectancy is 10-20 years, pigs' is 12-18 years, cows' is 20 years, sheeps' is 10-12 years, and goats' is 15-18 years (De Vries 2020, Egg Truth 2022., Garman 2020, Good Heart Animal Sanctuaries N.D.). Because these animals rarely live to old age or live with these health issues from breeding for several years, there is a profound lack of information on how to treat these conditions, especially in a compassionate way that centers the well-being of the animal.⁵

Sanctuaries as Spaces of Care

Besides rescuing animals and implementing educational and advocacy programming, sanctuary staff dedicate their time to caring for their residents. Care is what defines day to day life at sanctuaries, and it is what constitutes the mundane and maintaining events that occur in these spaces. There are many types of care that take place. There is daily and routine care, such

⁵Among those I interviewed, Ruthie from Farm Sanctuary, Matt from Farm Animal Refuge, Kathryn Gillespie, Amber from the Open Sanctuary Project, and Stephanie from Peace Ridge Sanctuary all mentioned how lack of veterinary knowledge was one of the biggest struggles for the sanctuary movement.

as feeding, cleaning, and ensuring things around the sanctuary are carrying out as they should. Emotional and communal care is also central to sanctuaries, in terms of creating a space that allows for self-actualization, community building, and forming relationships. In carrying out these forms of care, sanctuaries imagine and create completely new ways for these species to exist in our society, while simultaneously developing an alternative politics of value. The way residents, often older, disabled, or traumatized animals, are cared for redefines capitalist notions of who has value and what kind of “work” is worthwhile. The acts of care in these spaces pause capitalist productivity and introduce the now-radical idea of being worthy for reasons outside of efficiency, the ability to work, and profit accumulation.

Care is ubiquitous in our society; it is present in every relationship and necessary for the continuation of our shared world. As Joan Tronto and Bernice Fischer define care, it is “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair ‘our world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web” (Tronto 1993, 103). Care is often understood as maintenance work, or what is necessary to ensure the continuation of all aspects of life. Human exceptionalism and capitalist ideologies try to continually narrow the definition of “our world,” to include only humans or capitalist priorities. Sanctuaries, on the other hand, continually fight to expand the definition of “our,” as well as who and what is worthy of care.

Care means to be in relation with other beings, oftentimes in modes of interdependency, which is why care is an important framework from which to understand dominant values underpinning human-animal relations (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70). For farm animals, human care is necessary, given the history of breeding and agriculture, therefore it matters *how* humans care for them. In their article *His Name Was Lucio*, Marisol de la Cadena and Santiago Martinez-

Medina describe the life of a bull, Lucio, who lived on a small farm outside of Bogotá, Colombia. When the time came to send Lucio to slaughter, Daniela, the owner of the farm, could not get herself to send him to a slaughterhouse. Instead, she called on her friend Norberto to help her kill Lucio at the farm. His death was slow, and Daniela and Norberto provided Lucio with ample emotional and physical care throughout the process. The relations that Lucio had made throughout his life remained intact, even after his death; his meat was not sold but instead distributed to those in the community (de la Cadena 2021). The authors write, “the slaughterhouse dispossesses humans and cattle of their relations that make their social lives beyond it. Unlike Lucio, on entering the slaughterhouse, animals shed relations that made their lives except for those that made them a commodity.... when the bull that Norberto killed died, someone, named Lucio, died. Slowly performed, his death was an important matter of care and an event in Daniela’s farm” (de la Cadena 2021). Making animals’ deaths eventless strips their life of any meaning, because the implication of not acknowledging their death means that nothing worthwhile is being lost. Even though not at a sanctuary, in making Lucio’s death an event, he was recognized as an individual worthy of being cared for and mourned. These moments of care expose the relationships embedded in these more-than-human communities and how they engage in broader politics of care in refusal of capitalist values.

CARE AS ANTI-PRODUCTIVE WORK

In settings of industrial production, care often becomes something eventless. Returning to Pachirat’s *Every Twelve Seconds*, he writes, “concerns with the humane treatment of the animals and the regimes of documentation and observation created to attend to those concerns meld seamlessly with a production-centered view that maximizes the steady flow of raw materials

onto the kill floor, one in which the animals are already beef even before they have been shot or bled” (Pachirat 2011, 230). Acts of “care,” as Pachirat describes, become absorbed into the homogenized activities and motions of a slaughterhouse, done in an attempt “manage” animals in order to keep up with production timescales. They are not done to maximize the life of an animal, but rather to maximize its ability to be worked.

Care for farm animals is often measured, deemed worthy or unworthy, successful or unsuccessful, based on whether or not it increases the productivity of an animal. The “purpose” or the relationships deemed as necessary with farm animals are only those enclosed in production (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 186). Because of this, finding access to vets or even information on how to care for animals is one of sanctuaries’ biggest challenges. The majority of vets trained in care for farm animals are agricultural vets, who often conceptualize farm animals through their role in production chains. Often, there must always be an explanation or reason behind caring for animals in these situations, because animals themselves are not perceived as worthy enough on their own to warrant care. For these reasons, sanctuaries continuously find themselves having to create new guidelines for care- compassionate care.

Care Through Refusal

Refusal to base care on capitalist value systems allows sanctuaries to foster alternative ways of living in community with farm animals and of developing a new ethics of care. Beyond that, these acts of refusal remind us that it *is* possible to refuse. There are other alternatives, if only we try to see them through. In addition to her concept of a life, in *The Problem With Work*, Weeks also engages heavily with the concept of refusal, and she writes,

The political priority for the refusal of work- a priority recorded in the call not for liberation *of* work but a liberation *from* work. The refusal to work is at once a model of resistance, both to the modes of work that are currently imposed on us and to their ethical defense, and a struggle for a different relationship to work born from the collective autonomy that a post-work ethics and more nonwork time could help us secure (Weeks 2011, 26).

The care sanctuary staff engage with can be seen as “anti-productive work.” They are not making the animals more “productive,” and their labor is not resulting in the production of capital. The reason they care for residents is simply so that they can be cared for. Our society has become scared of the idea of nonproductive time, because capitalism has infiltrated our ethics and our moralizations so deeply that it is hard to see how anything matters if it does not contribute to the accumulation of capital (Weeks 2011, 11, 170). Describing VINE’s efforts to counteract this perspective, patrice said in our interview,

Maybe it doesn't mean anything at all, but to each of those birds [rescued and brought to sanctuary], it means literally everything for them. For each of them, it's the whole world. To have their life saved and be able to have a life, however long that life might be. And so, even though of course we have other end goals, I always want to make sure that I talk about those and stress those on to as an antidote to the idea, very much a capitalist idea that unless you are producing something or...that care itself is not a worthy thing all by itself, like it has to come with something else or it's worthless. I don't believe that. I think, even if we were just doing that, that would be worthwhile and worthy to do.

Capitalist understandings of care leave no possibility for the “potential social productivity of nonwork,” or everything that can be added to the world that is important but deemed “useless” with capitalist ethics, such as the rescue of these birds (Weeks 2011, 169). Sanctuary staff engage in relationships and forms of “work” that are oriented around a different form of value (i.e. not capital), and by deeming these forms of care as meaningful, they dismantle hierarchical thinking of who deserves care and what makes care worthwhile, striving towards an anticapitalistic work ethic and understanding of care.

The focus of Chapter 1, on storytelling, was on articulating novel ways of why farm animals matter and why these species should be storied in ways that see their worth in non-capitalist values. But perhaps beyond that, there is also the struggle to make the care and life of these animals not need to be defended at all. Just as there is the desire to argue for the “inherent value” of farm animals, or for the perspective that they are ends in themselves, there is also an effort to see care as an end in itself. Doing so will refuse capitalist logics that sees *all* living entities and landscapes on this earth as only means to an end. Redefining the way we relate to other species on our shared planet has the power to refuse ideologies that insist that everything be worked, and in this refusal emerge spaces and ways of living that are centered around values of community and compassion rather than capital and “productive” work. As the saying goes, it is often harder to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Sanctuaries by no means exist in a non-capitalist world, but they have nonetheless managed to engage daily in lives that are defined otherwise.

CARING FOR RESIDENTS WITH INJURIES OR DISABILITIES

Many animals at sanctuaries arrive because their owners could not take care of them due to a particular disability or injury the animal had, which often arises due to complications from breeding practices. A large proportion of residents also come from cases of neglect and abuse that caused them particular health issues. At sanctuaries, humans make decisions regarding surgeries, procedures, and other medical treatments that would often be seen as irrational or unnecessary in traditional farm settings. These forms of treatments (for example amputating an injured leg off of a chicken or creating a specific wheelchair for a goat) serve the sole purpose of increasing the quality of life of these animals. There is no “end goal” or future profit from these treatments, such as allowing the animals to continue producing some kind of commodity. For example, Chicken Lou is a chicken who arrived at VINE sanctuary and seemingly had every joint in her legs backward. Sophia, an intern there, described it as a profound disability, to the point where she could hardly be with other chickens because walking was so difficult. Eventually, she was taken to one of the staff members’ homes and became a house chicken. Once Chicken Lou was in their home, this person dedicated weeks to designing, workshopping, and building a wheelchair specifically made for her body and condition. This is one of many stories that exemplify how the type of care carried out in these situations is not justified for any reason other than it will aid the residents in living a longer and more comfortable life in their bodies.

The type of care that treats residents at sanctuaries for injuries and disabilities attests to sanctuaries’ focus on allowing farm animals to exist to live, not to die. This is a type of care often reserved for only human bodies (generalizing to a species level)- care that is centered around a kind of appreciation for an individual’s life. One way of thinking of this care is how

Leshko puts it, regarding the survival of farm animals to old age. She writes, “all of them survived to old age because someone understood that these creatures love their lives as we love our own” (Leshko 2019, xi). Farm animals are cared for because there is a recognition that there is the intuitive desire to keep on living. In reinventing the type of care farm animals are seen as worthy of receiving, sanctuaries also reimagine relationships with these beings that would not be possible if they still existed solely for human capitalist goals. As such, even though care is often understood as maintaining (i.e. maintaining the ability to live as we currently do), in sanctuary settings, care is also creating something new- new possibilities for lives and belonging for farm animals.

The vision to care for all nonhuman lives as humans are cared for, however, lives in tension with the reality that not even all human lives are treated the same. The claim above ignores the discrimination and violent lack of care afforded to certain human bodies in many societies. In this sense, sanctuaries perhaps operate on an aspiration for a better life for farm animals, humans, and environments. They push to normalize the actions that consider all lives worthy of care to extend longevity while maximizing quality of life, regardless of species, identity, disability, or one’s contribution to labor.

CARING FOR ELDERLY RESIDENTS

Almost all animals in agriculture, especially industrial settings, are slaughtered at a remarkably young age, which makes knowing how to care for these species when they are older a challenge at sanctuaries. As Leshko writes in her book, “Roughly fifty billion land animals are factory farmed globally each year. It is nothing short of a miracle to be in the presence of a farm animal who has managed to reach old age” (Leshko 2019, 13). Moreover, as farm animals age,

they often develop an array of medical issues because they were not bred to live past the age of slaughter. Stephanie from Pasado's Safe Haven described the issue as such:

They all deserve to be loved, to know love, to be safe, to have shelter and nourishment. It's not always easy with farmed animals because that medicine isn't there, that knowledge isn't there because, for a pig, they only generally are allowed to live to 6 months old before they are slaughtered for food. So when we're looking for care for a senior pig, for a pig that's eight years old, ten years old, because they're arthritic, it's often times very hard to attain this because the universal mindset is 'well, what difference does it make, they're bacon.' And they're certainly not bacon to us. They are individuals.

The acts of care at sanctuaries and in relation to elderly animals is a process of continually unmaking human-animal relationships based on commodification, property, and exploitation (Abrell 2021, 15). Since sanctuaries do not see elderly farm animals as any less worthy of care than younger ones, who can theoretically be "worked" for more profit, they remove the necessity for farm animals to be valuable only in so far as they provide something for humans or something "useful" in capitalist logic. One way to describe the relationships that emerge from this form of care is featured in Abrell's book, where he writes that "human caregivers transform the sanctuary space into an interspecies community in which both animals and humans operate as citizens...form[ing] a posthuman citizenry" (Abrell 2021, 124).

In a sense, caring for elderly animals is a defense of the "useless," or what capitalism deems as useless. In refusing to work these animals as resources for labor extraction and in refusing to center care around capital value, sanctuaries engage in "alternative conceptualizations

of how animals fit into multispecies social worlds” (Gillespie 2018, 143). Sanctuaries push for the idea that in our shared world, it is important to ensure the well-being of things that are not oriented towards human wants, and giving these species spaces dedicated solely to their care is a “fundamentally anti-capitalist” challenge in itself (Abrell 2021, 194). The lack of “utility” in sanctuaries is an active political statement that makes space in the world for activity, people, and spaces that go unworked, and they illuminate the possibility of finding value in alternative places.

MORE-THAN-PHYSICAL CARE

Care at sanctuaries extends beyond medical and physical care. There is also enormous effort put into the emotional well-being of residents and in creating moments that bring joy to their life. For example, at VINE sanctuary, there is an elderly sheep named Whisper who one staff member in particular cares deeply for. Twice a week, a local grocery store donates surplus food to the sanctuary. As Sophia recounted to me, she would sort through the food and hand it out to the residents every time it arrived. Since Whisper is elderly, it would be difficult for her to hold her ground against some of the younger and larger residents when the food was distributed. To mitigate this, every week when the food arrived, the staff member with a close relationship to Whisper would give Sophia a list of all of Whisper’s favorite foods, which she would then set aside. With this special stash of food in hand, the staff member would feed it to Whisper in the middle of the night, to ensure she was able to get all the foods that she loved.

Although this act of care is a small moment, this staff member’s relationship with Whisper illustrates the great sensitivity that is given to the needs and desires of individuals at the sanctuary. Residents are treated with respect and cared for with the end goal of not only meeting

their physical needs but also creating events that bring kindness and community. Similarly, Sophia described to me the effort and detail paid to cushioning the small barn where broiler chickens live. Because it can become difficult for them to hold up their weight, they end up falling or sitting on the ground quite often. In our interview, Sophia said, “they had their own space, and I put a lot of bedding for them every day, just to cushion them. And there are things where everybody has different needs, and just as much as you can with a limited staff and a limited time in the day, we try to pay attention to everyone’s unique needs.” Just as with Whisper’s favorite foods, these acts of care do serve to improve the physical health of the residents, through nourishment or protection from injury, but they also reflect the intent to bring comfort and joy to these animals and to treat them as people deserving of unique care.

CARE BETWEEN RESIDENTS

In the same way that focusing only on stories about the suffering experienced by farm animals can offer a limited view of these species’ lives, only highlighting the care delivered by humans to residents or that only focuses on mitigating pain is also a restricted perspective of animal life. At sanctuaries, there is a great deal of care that occurs between the residents themselves which demonstrates the kinship, community, and self-actualization these individuals carry out in these spaces. Kathryn Gillespie, an animal studies scholar with extensive experience working with sanctuaries, touched on the value of witnessing and acknowledging this mode of care in our interview, when she stated,

I think a focus solely on suffering and these experiences of pain and alienation and separation from these animals’ kinship networks...offers a really impoverished understanding of who

animals are. Witnessing animals in sanctuary, there are certainly moments of trauma and pain and suffering, that's inevitable, but there's also these moments of joy and kinship relationships that are formed and sustained. Seeing all of those moments of care...the way that animals care for themselves and each other in sanctuaries...One of the important parts of sanctuary work is to create the conditions where that can happen, and it is not just this human-caregiving relationship. Witnessing those things gives a fuller picture and understanding of who animals are, and when we understand that we can see what is lost and what is denied to animals in a much fuller way, if animals aren't just rendered into these suffering subjects.

An example of this type of more than human-to-resident care includes that between Ebony and Ivory, from Chapter 1, who protected each other in the woods, comforted each other when Ebony's partner died, and created a new home together at the sanctuary and with Cora.

Returning to the Introduction, the relationship between Autumn and Moka is another insight into how important these caregiving relationships are between residents. These two were only able to develop a mother-son bond because of the conditions at the sanctuary, which are impossible in dairy farms where mothers are constantly separated from their children.

Mourning among residents in sanctuaries is yet another form of this type of care, which although centered on the death of an animal is also representative of the bonds residents have at sanctuaries. Many sanctuaries have memorial services, gravestones, and obituaries for residents who pass away (Leshko 2019, 7). As van Dooren writes in his article on mourning a species of snails on the edge of extinction, "mourning as care is a work of learning to acknowledge, to tell, and ultimately to dwell in these multi-faceted and ongoing processes of loss" (van Dooren 2021).

At VINE sanctuary, the story of Coco the Holstein cow reflects some of the forms of care that occur surrounding events of death at sanctuaries.

As recounted to me by Sophia, Holstein cows are particularly susceptible to eye cancer because of the way they are bred, which is what happened to Coco. Over time, his cancer worsened, to the point where he was emaciated and the flesh around his eye was dying and therefore at risk for maggots. A vet had been seeing Coco, but due to past medical issues and experiences with humans and doctors, including injections as treatment for pneumonia, Coco was extremely fearful of doctors. Going through the treatment for eye cancer would cause him immense amounts of anxiety and most likely only extend his life for a few months. The humans at VINE made the decision to not go forward with treatment and instead euthanize Coco. As Sophia said while telling me the story, “I think that, as difficult and heartbreaking and honestly pretty disturbing as the whole situation was, I think that it was definitely an act of care.” As with the story of Whisper the sheep and her favorite food, care at the sanctuary is delivered on an individual basis, with decisions being made with as much awareness as possible to who is receiving the care and what particular forms of care will maximize *their* quality of life.

Coco’s story is relevant to the topic of mourning because when the day came to euthanize him, several of the residents were a very present part of the process. Domino, a multi-colored alpaca, stayed by Coco’s side from the time the vet arrived until his body was moved. A sheep called Shadow was similarly present, sniffing all those around Coco as well as Coco himself. They were “intensely a part of it,” Sophia said. When it the time came for Coco to die, she also noted how “he was around his community...he was still with his community and with people who loved him and could, to the extent that anyone can, ascertain that he was ready to go...He never would have lived past seven months in a factory farm, but just the idea of being at

sanctuary and ideally [having] this community that cares about you and does not take these decisions lightly and does not kill for killing's sake. And if you do have to make a decision to kill, then it is an act of care.”

To mourn is to acknowledge all that will be lost when individuals, and species, no longer exist in the world, making a statement that what is gone mattered. Mourning is a process of grieving not only an individual's life but also a particular form of being in the world *together*; it is mourning the relationships and ways of life entangled in the being that died (van Dooren 2014, 137). Coco's death was a devastating event in the community at VINE, but in the way it transpired, filled with mourning and the presence of friends and family, it was also an act of care that highlights the power and potential for farm animals to build community when given the chance to.

WITNESSING CARE

Witnessing these relationships, actually being present alongside these animals and their kinship bonds, forces humans to recognize the cruelty of our current systems of agriculture and capitalist production, as it shows what an impoverished and diminished existence we allow these animals to have. The intimate connection and understanding provided by witnessing animals as they carry out these lives of community and care are what leads to the sense of responsibility, because in that moment of being present with another animal, both beings are made *real*, and it becomes more apparent how they are each implicated in the others' lives (Dave 2014, 441).

The suffering of farm animals is material and consequential, just as are the lives they lead in sanctuaries, which are more often full of joy and fulfillment. In her article “Witness: Humans, Animals, and the Politics of Becoming,” Naisargi N. Dave describes how witnessing violence

against animals has the power to shape relationships between humans and animals, as well as understandings of “human” and “animal.” In these moments of witnessing, the point is not to see the humanism behind all animals’ actions (Dave 2014, 445). Instead, the point is to see beyond the human, to witness how emotions of love, companionship, mourning, and care are possible in nonhuman ways, and these ways are equally as important and worthy of being lived out.

Moreover, in these moments of “being-with” other animals, humans perhaps “become something other than the safely encased human self,” instead recognizing more sharply our entanglement with other species and the nonhuman ways of perceiving and understanding the world (Dave 2014, 448). Witnessing the care that occurs among residents at sanctuaries is part of the fundamental process of reframing how we relate to farm animals and the way we come to see their lives that refuse capitalist production as meaningful and worthy of being defended and cared for.

THE PARADOX OF CARE

Human-Determined Care

With the topic of care at sanctuaries, there is a paradox with humans being caregivers and responsible for the well-being and survival of farm animals. For true autonomy and a life free of human constraints, residents need to be able to co-determine how they are cared for, but often times humans are tasked with deciding what is needed or what is the “safest.” Cameron, who works on photographing and documenting the stories of residents at multiple sanctuaries, said, “at the end of the day, the fact that they’re here [at the sanctuary] infringes on their autonomy. To keep them safe because they have been domesticated and cannot be rewilded, you’d have to...there is an element of control to achieve keeping them safe.” The paradox in care lies in the

fact that safety for farm animals, even in these spaces of refuge, requires an element of human control.

This paradox emerges due to histories of domestication and breeding, which make farm animals' very existence entangled with human dependence. As Sophia put it regarding her role at VINE, "I was there [as a caretaker at the sanctuary] because, in the world that we have now, they couldn't operate by themselves, and that is very far from the perfect." Even attempts at rewilding are imperfect because they are still structured and determined by humans. At VINE, for example, there *is* still fencing around the area where rewilded cows live, even if the wooded space is large and the fence barely visible.

The care necessary to keep farm animals safe in sanctuaries can, to some capacity, be thought of as violent-care, as van Dooren describes. In writing about care for whooping cranes, a species on the edge of extinction and of which individuals are bred and kept in captivity, he writes,

In this time of extinctions, perhaps we might best understand caring for others as a task of "gardening in the ruins" (Tsing, forthcoming)- that is, a practice of care that aims to nourish and sustain species and their living participants in far-from-ideal conditions, where the most desirable options simply are not available....the care that is practiced at the dull edge of extinction is often intimately and inextricably entangled with various forms of violence. In short, it is violent-care (van Dooren 2014, 116).

Care can often be a practice that is entangled with both oppressive and liberatory actions, even if the intent is to nurture and protect. The reality that the "ideal" or only possible way for

sanctuaries to exist is to impose this form of control and restrained autonomy on residents is further evidence that these spaces are modes of transition, models for an alternative future, rather than the final solution.

As previously mentioned, care implies a relationship, often of obligation and interdependency. This dynamic, however, is not inherently restrictive or negative. In *Matters of Care*, a book that explores the politics and ethics of care in more-than-human worlds, María Puig de la Bellacasa writes that “care *obliges* in ways embedded in everyday doings and agencies; it obliges because it is inherent to relations of interdependency” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 120). The fact that farm animals are dependent on human care in our current society- to survive and to be safe- creates a sense of obligation on the part of humans. However, simply because the relationship is asymmetrical does not mean it necessarily needs to be “less vibrant with ethicality” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 157). Recognizing the uneven and potentially constraining relationships of care that exist between humans and farm animals can in fact be a way to understand care for more-than-human worlds as a responsibility for humans. To be in relations of care, whether as a receiver or a giver, is to somehow belong to others, through “the care that has attached us” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 167). Moreover, with this understanding of an obligating relationship may also come an awareness of the asymmetrical ways in which we are dependent and reliant on more-than-human worlds. Care is a web of relationships that is not even or mirrored, but all those involved are equally indebted and reliant on others to protect and promote an as-well-as-possible universe.

Sanctuaries try every day to find the balance between creating a space that is just safe enough for animals and allowing them to live with as much freedom and autonomy as possible to achieve self-actualization. The paradox of care is a reflection of how farm sanctuaries do not

exist outside or separate from the systems they are trying to dismantle. Instead, they are deeply embedded into them. They must impose measures, such as fencing and fundraising, that limit the autonomy of residents but are necessary to create a community that is safe for these farm animals. Patrice described to me the decision-making process they hold with residents of the VINE in their barn. Even if in these “meetings” farm animals cannot discuss or speak with human caregivers, their presence is a reminder to them that they are not abstractions. They are all individuals with a stake in the decisions human caregivers make. In refusing to relate to animals as commodities, and instead creating a community of co-citizens, sanctuaries create the possibility to imagine what different forms of consent, care, and mutual co-determining can look like for multispecies communities. They expand the definition of “our” world, to include the more-than-human members of it as much as the human ones. As Abrell writes of care in his book, “While human caregivers ultimately determine what compromises must be made and who must make them, the outcomes of sanctuary care are not exclusively determined by humans... sanctuary care is a multispecies collaborative process” (Abrell 2021, 3). The care that is necessary from humans is part of why sanctuaries are obsolete and are only ever creating “safe enough” spaces for farm animals.

Tensions of Extinction

With caring for farm animals, another paradox emerges of trying to extend the lives of species while simultaneously striving to breed less of them. We are living through a period of mass extinction, and it perhaps feels counterintuitive to work toward having fewer and fewer farm animals exist on this planet when there are so many other species that we are trying to preserve (van Dooren 2014, 5). In Juno Salazar Parreñas’ book *Decolonizing Extinction*, her

ethnography of an orangutan rehabilitation center in Lundu, Malaysia asks, “what if we experienced this present era of extinction without violent domination and colonization over others, particularly nonhuman beings? Can we instead embrace the vulnerability of sharing our lives together, however fleeting those moments might be? Can we abandon an impression of safety that depends on cruelty?” (Parreñas 2018, 3). At the current moment, farm animals are incredibly far from being endangered or extinct, but sanctuaries still operate with the distant vision that they will one day no longer be here. The sanctuary project, therefore, asks how we can live alongside these species, caring for them with as little violence as possible, as we try to have less of them. Moreover, they ask how we can acknowledge that, ideally, the presence of sanctuaries is only temporary, “fleeting” in Parreñas’ words, while also recognizing that they are important, and that every event at sanctuaries, no matter how brief, should be cared for.

These efforts to extend the lives of individuals as much as possible are embedded in the larger project of shortening the existence of these species as a whole. Extinction is inevitable, but how it transpires, and the kind of care or violence embedded into it, is not. Parreñas does not argue that decolonizing extinction means stopping extinction. In her words, “the challenge of decolonizing extinction...is not to end extinction, but to consider how else might it unfold for those who will perish and for those who will survive” (Parreñas 2018, 9). Sanctuaries are neither trying to accelerate the death of farm animals, with their aspiration of their eventual abolition, nor trying to prevent the death of all farm animals, with their rescues from slaughterhouses and settings of production. All these animals will die, at some point, but ultimately sanctuaries are working towards changing *how* it is that these individuals die. How they are killed, mourned for, and cared for before and after death.

Caring for these animals is part of recognizing a responsibility we have for them. Human actions have made a life completely free of captivity or human dependence impossible for farm animals and species on the edge of extinction, such as orangutans whose only chance for extended survival is in rehabilitation centers. In his article on mourning a species of snails with few individuals left, van Dooren writes,

To bear witness is an act of faithfulness to individuals and species whose worlds we, collectively, have destroyed. But it is also an act of faithfulness to all those who must now live out their lives in plastic containers and to the larger forms of species that they carry with them towards the edge of extinction. In this context, doing the work of holding on to species for as long as we can- provided that they are living flourishing lives- might be understood as an effort to cultivate (van Dooren 2021).

Sanctuaries are experiments for how to form relationships and communities with the more-than-human world that are based on cultivating the lives of farm animals that they rescue and that have the potential to be rescued. They *are* working towards the ultimate abolishment of these species, but only because the life of most of these beings is filled with overwhelming violence, and their existence inherently requires human control. They are working towards this “extinction” but with a type of care that aims to cultivate a life as good as possible. As Parreñas writes, “I suggest that decolonization is to be oriented towards process and experimentation and not toward a forgone conclusion, except for the need to care enough about others, including and in particular nonhuman others. Decolonizing extinction requires a serious reconsideration of the current norms and practices around how we share this planet” (Parreñas 2018, 8).

Even though it seems paradoxical that sanctuaries dedicate all their time and energy towards protecting and rescuing a species while their actions simultaneously strive to make them extinct, sanctuaries are focused on creating relationships with the more-than-human world that prioritizes care over violence, and cultivates rather than destroys. Despite the paradoxes, our society would lack the imagination and possible alternatives to life between humans and farm animals without sanctuaries. As Abrell writes,

The world would be a worse place without sanctuaries, both because of the animals that could not be rescued and because of the poverty of visions for other possible worlds their absence would deepen. But beyond their symbolic value for inspiring struggle towards better futures, they are also doing the important and necessary task of working through the difficulties and contradictions of realizing those futures- the pragmatic labor that must be done before any sort of liberation is possible. Human-animal relations cannot be radically transformed without a reciprocal radical transformation in a wide array of other social relations, not the least of which is a political-economic system that requires serious sacrifice from any of its subjects (Abrell 2021, 188).

Sanctuaries are far from perfect spaces, and much of this thesis' argument is based on the aspirational form that sanctuaries have the potential to take. Sanctuaries struggle with paradoxes and ongoing tensions between the world they want to be in and the systems they are forced to engage with to build that future, including property laws, captivity, castration or spaying, and more. Even as I think alongside everyone that I interviewed and spent time with at sanctuaries, any critiques hope to be constructive, not critical. I engage with them and support them, but I

also believe that looking at sanctuaries through their imperfections allows us to see realistically what barriers exist and need to be addressed. Doing so is part of taking steps to realize the alternative life sanctuaries hope to make more possible and realistic. Without engaging with all the ways in which the sanctuary movement is flawed, it would remain a utopian and unrealistic dream that we think about more than we practically live out.

CONCLUSION

The unique forms of care that exist at sanctuaries emerge from the paradox of wanting to protect farm animals so deeply while knowing that there is no way for them to exist in the world entirely freely. Sanctuaries reckon with this tension by recognizing that despite the movement's end goal, the everyday life and experiences of residents in the spaces of sanctuary are overwhelmingly important. Care at sanctuaries is about making the lives of residents matter. It is about making their joy matter, their suffering matter, their deaths matter, and their relationships matter. It is about making events out of the everyday of farm animals, contesting to the fact that their everyday is worthwhile in it itself. In doing so, "paying attention to practices of care can be a way of getting involved with glimpses of alternative livable relationalities, with other possible worlds in the making, 'alterontologies' at the heart of dominant configurations" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 170). Care can be about creating community, about improving the kind of maintenance we aim towards, and expanding the definitions of who deserves to be thought of, worked for, and mourned for. Through their refusal, their stories, and their events, sanctuaries work towards new ethics of care and an alternative future that we have yet to even conceptualize but that they already engage in building every day.

CHAPTER 3: SANCTUARIES AS MODELS

WHY MODELS?

Sanctuaries cannot rescue their way out of the issues and systems that they strive to end, into a world without animal exploitation or industrial animal agriculture. Because of that reality, sanctuaries are not focused solely on rescuing as many animals as possible. Instead, their activism is also rooted in the idea that by existing in our society, they enact an alternative life alongside farm animals that inspires new imaginaries. Without any alternatives, it becomes easy to forget that there are other possibilities for structuring our world at all, and we have “few incentives to reflect on why”- why we work the way we do, why we care the way we do, and why we relate to the more-than-human world the way we do (Weeks 2011, 47). As Gibson-Graham point out in their article, there already exist multiple types of economies that are not purely capitalist, that are centered around pursuing something other than value in the form of labor. Seeing these possibilities and recognizing how they are being practiced “opens up opportunities for elaborating a radically heterogeneous economy” (Gibson-Graham 2008, 618). Sanctuaries similarly exist as catalysts that imagine new ways of being in the world, that are not just premised on altering our current systems of animal agriculture and labor but instead on creating new ones.

Sanctuaries’ mindsets are rooted in frameworks of hope – hope for improvement and for rupture. Sanctuaries demand that our current ways of living alongside farm animals have met their limits, but they engage in these refusals in ways premised on the hope of new possibilities. In her article “Theorizing Refusal,” Carole McGranahan describes refusal as generative, as social and affiliative, as distinct from resistance, and as hopeful. She says, “refusal is hopeful, refusal is willful. Refusal is insistence on the possible over the probable, and thus...is aligned with hope”

(McGranahan 2016, 323). Sanctuaries enact refusal *because* they believe that what comes next is worthwhile and that creating a shared world of humans and farm animals that is radically different from what we have now is possible. As Kathryn Gillespie said in our interview, “what I appreciate so much about sanctuaries is the alternative lives and the lived experiences of animals that can unfold at sanctuaries,” as well as “the conceptual differences in how farmed animals are understood and valued and allowed to flourish.”

Sanctuaries, in addition to being places of rescue for farm animals, are also models for how to refuse current systems of living with nonhuman animals and of capitalist production. As seen with notions of care, in enacting these refusals, sanctuaries create space to imagine how to live alternatively- as spaces where humans are not centered, where animals can achieve self-actualization, where all beings are valued and live for reasons outside of capitalist notions of work, and where multiple species can live as safely as possible together. Sanctuaries prove that these ways of being in the world exist right now, even though realistically they are incompatible with greater society. In turn, sanctuaries exist as points of transition and as catalysts to allow humans to at least start imagining these different ways of relating to nonhumans, and ultimately, it is the stories at sanctuaries that allows humans not at sanctuary to actually visualize, more realistically, what it looks like to enact these different futures.

REFUSAL FOR CREATING MODELS

Outside of only sanctuaries, communities all over the world enact refusal to the idea that capitalism is the only possible way to structure our lives. In assuming this system as the only one through which to exist, we close up the possibility of millions of other ways to be. Beings, human and other, have an inherent right to imagine another kind of work not based on the

fundamentally oppressive and unjust priorities of market politics, efficiency, and capital accumulation. Assuming there is no other way to live is ultimately a reduction or removal of the agency beings have, and an ignorant forgetfulness that capitalism is a system we choose, not one that is inscribed into our worlds.

In refusing to prioritize capital value, sanctuaries spark imaginations for what kind of alternative lives are possible. In her ethnography on the US-Colombian war on drugs, Kristina Lyons details how rural farmers in *la selva* engage with life processes that emphasize decomposition and decay, rather than productivity and growth. In doing so, they actively create ways of life that do not ascribe to the priorities of capitalist production systems. While describing the life of these farmers, Lyons emphasizes how capitalism engages in a way of seeing people and ecologies that essentially produces a war against all forms of life in defense of ongoing capital growth (Lyons 2015, 63). However, Lyons describes the acts of finding life amidst death from farmers in *la selva* as

potentiality to open up ways of thinking about how alternative life processes- always at risk of disappearing and with no guarantees- come to shake loose, to whatever degree possible, from dominant definitions or to set something else in motion, not in the sense of denouncing the world in the name of an ideal world, or in the rush to push aside one set of object and subject positionalities to replace it with another, but rather in the ways that bodies, dreams, and socioecological relations of all kinds strive to pick up density and textures without necessarily being rooted in fixed conditions of possibility (Lyons 2015, 65).

Sanctuaries are proving and making real that possibilities for different “ideal worlds” can exist and be pursued, even if they do not define precisely what those ideal worlds will look like. Striking these imaginations and these open pockets of possibility is a worthwhile end goal in itself, because it does not fall into the trap of assuming there is only a single alternative to a capitalist system. As Weeks writes, “there are advantages, I claim, to more-partial visions of alternatives, fragments or glimpses of something different that do not presume to add up to a blueprint of an already named future with a preconceived content” (Weeks 2011, 30). We may not yet be able to even imagine all the different life forms that exist beyond these systems. Thinking with Gibson-Graham, this might be understood as weak theory, which “involves refusing to extend explanation too widely or deeply, refusing to know too much” (Gibson-Graham 2008, 619). Weak theory, which does not define and detail everything that it is, has the potential to allow theory to “see openings, to provide a space of freedom and possibility” (Gibson-Graham 2008, 619). The stories and models from sanctuaries that may be described as a form of weak theory open up these possibilities without limiting us to lives that we are currently capable of imagining.

DIFFERENT POSSIBILITIES OF LIVING

With the idea of sanctuaries as models, these spaces are not only trying to reform or modify systems of animal agriculture and human-animal relationships. They instead truly believe that another world is possible, working towards a future based on fundamental transformation. The following section details some of the specific ways in which sanctuaries model alternative ways of existing.

Spaces Where Human Needs are Not Prioritized

Sanctuaries are arguably one of the few places designed by humans entirely for nonhuman animals. Ideally, sanctuaries are created just to allow farm animals to flourish, to have community, and to find refuge from the outside world. The anti-productive work, care, and events that take place are centered around ensuring the quality of life of the resident, with no further end goal besides to help these individuals and their species. In very few other spaces on earth that humans have created is the well-being of nonhumans prioritized entirely for themselves (i.e. not for an end goal that will then benefit humans). As Melissa from Peace Ridge Sanctuary told me, “it’s this space where it’s the animal’s home first. We have a sign when people come that says like welcome, welcome, this is the animal’s home...it’s their home. It’s about them.” These kinds of spaces are critical for building a world not grounded in human exceptionalism or a perspective from humans that everything must be done around the needs and wants of our species. Creating a world that is equally *for* all life is an essential component of modelling a world that fosters multispecies communities and reciprocity among species.

Spaces of No [Capitalist] Production & a Slower Life

Sanctuaries are spaces oriented around achieving a value besides capital, as the animals are not being worked and nothing is being produced that has capital value. This idea is touched on in the previous chapters, but sanctuaries conceptualize beings and life based on things besides efficiency, productivity, or commodities. Matthilde, an intern at Farm Sanctuary, said in our interview, “I think it becomes so much more about the individual, or about the animals themselves, because you bond with them, and you want to help them,” and it is that sense of “yeah, I’m going to make thirty sandwiches and it’s going to take a really long time, but I’m

doing this because they [the residents] need their meds” and other daily needs. The justification or reasoning for work, for human energy and time, becomes something fundamentally different than producing capital at the fastest rate possible. The motivation instead is care, empathy, and the relationships between all those at sanctuaries. In making her anti-work argument, Weeks insists that

It is also possible to be creative outside the boundaries of work. It is to suggest that there might be a variety of ways to experience the pleasure that we may now find in work, as well as other pleasures that we may wish to discover, cultivate, and enjoy. And it is to remind us that the willingness to live for and through work renders subjects supremely functional for capitalist purposes (Weeks 2011, 12).

Sanctuaries attest to this belief that there is joy, satisfaction, and worthwhile meaning in a life centered on the refusal of capitalist production. The understanding of *what time is for*, or what is worth spending your days doing, is radically different than if capitalist production was taking place in these spaces. Sanctuaries allow for humans and nonhumans to discover what may come about in moments not directed by work, when energy and efforts can be spent pursuing something besides capitalist production, because they acknowledge that there is “productivity” in moments of nonwork (Weeks 2011, 169).

The appreciation for time that perhaps seems to accomplish nothing is additionally a form of care; they are moments that nurture the lives in these places. Matthilde also mentioned how she would spend a few hours every day simply *being* with the residents, without ticking off anything from a to-list or working towards some other task. Instead, she would simply spend

time alongside them. Even when I was getting trained to be a volunteer at Unity Farms, Kathy, the director of the sanctuary, insisted that even if I came for my volunteer slot and spent half of the time playing with the animals instead of cleaning up or doing another task, that was a valuable and important use of time. For all of these reasons, as spaces that refuse capitalist production, sanctuaries become models for how to understand and “prioritize” our everyday. They offer alternative ways to structure our “work” and more importantly our work ethic- why we work, why we live, and whom we live with.

At sanctuaries, residents are being rescued and cared for, and that does take an enormous amount of work, but it is a production of events, rather than of commodities or capital. By refusing capital production, sanctuaries also refuse the need to orient or understand time based on production timescales and the never-ending pursuit to “improve” production (i.e. maximize profit accumulation). In this way, they are models for seeing how life does in fact have value even when it is not worked. The in-between moments at sanctuaries are some of the most important, where nobody is being worked (resident or human) and when life is simply being lived through, instead of being worked through.

Multispecies Communities

One of the most important components of sanctuaries is the multispecies community it creates, as it builds a model for how to live alongside farm animals in ways that consider all species as equals and creates safe enough environments for all those that inhabit it. Sanctuaries are spaces where nonhuman animals can coexist in ways unimaginable in industrial agriculture settings, in terms of the social lives, old age, friendships, and bonds between humans and farm animals that take place. In an ideal sanctuary setting, there is no separation of species or rigid

determinations of what role certain species need to fulfill. As Abrell writes in an article, central to sanctuaries as models is the “centrality of community-building. Sanctuaries organize space and social relations around practices of care that form mutual affective bonds across categories of difference. Sanctuaries are, in essence, projects of creating new communities that can reject the social divisions that buttress contemporary inequalities” (Abrell 2019, 2). Sanctuaries are models for how relationships and multispecies communities have the potential to dismantle systems of exploitation and oppression, projecting alternative ways of organizing community and co-habitation across species. Reflecting on the sentiments of living in these types of multispecies communities, Sophia from VINE said the two following statements:

It really felt like life as it’s supposed to be, which means that there were really, really difficult days and really upsetting days, but even through those...I feel like in some ways it was life as it’s supposed to be- people living together and working together and operating together in all of these beautiful ways, and when there are new residents or babies, that is something that really affects the whole community, and when there are deaths that also affects the whole community.

This [VINE] sort of felt like...a community that was truly multi-species. I didn’t live there but there are humans who do, and just being there day to day, you have the opportunity to live in a multi-species environment that felt so incredibly natural- that’s a loaded word because it can mean so many different things- but it felt so correct, almost.

Sanctuary for Humans

Both the ideas of a slow, “non-productive” life and a multispecies community are part of how sanctuaries craft a unique way of living, not only for rescued residents but also for the humans that inhabit these spaces. In being an intentional community based on the principles of do no harm, farm sanctuaries can be sanctuaries in multiple meanings of the word. Humans here spend their days alongside farm animals and engage daily in activities and events deemed useless by the outside world. It is a sanctuary for humans who want the ability to be in community with farm animals and form relationships with them, and for those who would rather live by the ideologies of the sanctuary than that of other parts of societies, engaging in “anti-productive work” instead of work only deemed useful by capitalist standards.

These spaces are inherently sanctuaries from the outside world, giving them the potential to be important for minorities and those who feel otherwise less accepted in greater society. VINE, for example, is an entirely LGBTQ-led sanctuary, and the majority of trained staff members have some type of disability. VINE is a sanctuary for them, an intentional community that center the lives and identities of those there. Sanctuaries are also often located in rural areas, where surrounding communities may be hostile or unwelcoming to people of color or other minorities. In an interview with Ruthie, a person of color who worked at Farm Sanctuary located in rural New York, she told me how she would drive an hour to and from the sanctuary every day and in that time see dozens of Confederate flags and sundown stickers. She said, “the sanctuary was really like a sanctuary for people as well, [and] when you left, you felt the jarring outside world slap you in the face.”

While illuminating how sanctuaries are a refuge for humans, this anecdote from Ruthie can be seen in another light as well. There is a privilege associated with the sanctuary movement,

including having the ability to acquire property to start and fund sanctuary, to live safely in rural spaces, and expend time and energy on activities that do not provide ample monetary compensation. In the same interview, Ruthie described how it was “traumatizing to go to work and to leave every day,” and speaking about Farm Sanctuary, she said “it’s all white. All white. The people of color don’t live on-site, they don’t work on the grounds of the sanctuary, and I can only assume it’s because of a safety issue.” Describing the lack of diversity in the movement, Isabella, also an intern at Farm Sanctuary, said, “it seems almost like a taboo topic sometimes, because the majority of staff are white. So it’s almost like they feel like it’s not something they can talk about, or it’s like okay, we’re taking care of the animals, we don’t necessarily need to centralize this part of the movement in our day-to-day lives.” The vast majority of the people I interviewed and interacted with from the sanctuary movement throughout my research were white, which offers a restricted perspective on the visions of social transformation among the sanctuary movement. Once again, it is critical to note that sanctuaries are aspirational projects. They operate with an ideal vision of what they can be, but in practice they are flawed. They have the potential to be important places of refuge for human lives, but there exists a barrier of inclusivity and intersectionality that must be addressed to get there.

SANCTUARIES AS CATALYSTS

Sanctuaries are not the end goal of the activism that they carry out, but instead catalysts for making the kinds of lives that transpire within them more imaginable and scalable. The ultimate goal for sanctuaries is to have a world where they are not needed- where the relationships, the values, and the ethics that sanctuaries exist by are not only found in secluded, sectioned off parts of society but are instead normalized and widespread. Returning to my

interview with Sophia from VINE, she said, “I feel like a big thing about sanctuaries, and they recognize this and live by it, is that they’re not perfect, because sanctuaries inherently are not perfect because they operate in a world that necessitates sanctuaries, so, therefore, they can never be perfect. It would be perfect if the world didn’t need sanctuaries of any type.” The goal is for sanctuaries to be obsolete, because as long as they are necessary, the structures and ideologies that necessitate sanctuaries will inherently still exist.

Stories are critical in allowing sanctuaries to be catalysts at all. They create the narratives of the events from sanctuaries that prove how these lives are actually being carried out, rather than simply being thought out. They materialize the day-to-day lives in these radical spaces that from the outside may seem abstract or idealistic, filling in the gaps of what to imagine when you refuse current ways of living. They help to answer the question of where do we go from here, if we refuse what we currently have? They perhaps do not give a concrete answer, but they demonstrate that unique and radical realities do in fact have the potential to emerge.

Many movements, including the vegan and sanctuary movement, use the slogan that “another world is possible,” but actually visualizing and grasping another world is remarkably difficult. In response to this slogan, patrice from VINE said that sanctuaries “reflect the kind of world we’d hope to live in and give people a glimpse of another world and of *being* in the world... I think even as a spark of imagining, that in it of itself can be valuable.” This spark, this ability to catalyze imaginings and a sense of possibility, is a large part of the “how” for sanctuaries- how they exist, even while rescuing a minute fraction of farm animals- and still generate significant social transformation.

THE PARADOX IN MODELS

When thinking about sanctuaries and their purpose, it might seem paradoxical to work so hard towards a movement that hopes to be obsolete. Improvement for sanctuaries is to constantly be less radical, to be less “unrealistic,” and to be less needed. Currently, sanctuaries are still radical spaces, but thinking of what progress means for the movement may not be to simply having more sanctuaries. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, sanctuary workers cannot ever make enough sanctuaries to “replace” every factory farm or animal agriculture as a whole. If the movement only moved forward in the sense that more sanctuaries popped up and nothing else changed, they would still be equally necessary, because the systems they constantly try to dismantle and refuse are still being upheld.

Ultimately, the paradox with sanctuaries as models is that the sanctuary itself, its very existence, is a sign that work is still needed to achieve the end goal of the sanctuary. It is inherently trying to move away from its existence. Therefore, as long as the sanctuary exists, the project is aspirational. It is forever working towards another goal, another imagination, another type of future. The next step, after anti-productive labor, is perhaps one where no kind of labor is necessary at all.

The aspirational side of sanctuaries also explains the constant paradoxes and tensions in these spaces, because they are continually working towards an ideal that is impossible. It is impossible to live and exist fully as sanctuaries wish, entirely with their politics of value, work, and community, in the society we have now. For this reason, sanctuaries are perpetually entangled in property relations with residents, questions of reproduction and confinement of farm animals, power dynamics between human caregivers and the animals dependent on them, and the need to “sell” something (perhaps even the stories, individuality, or personality of residents) in

order to sustain themselves in some capacity.⁶ The paradoxes reflect how sanctuaries struggle to carry out their way of life alongside farm animals while existing in a world wholly incompatible with their ideal future.

All the chapters in this thesis are, to an extent, an aspiration towards improvement. How to story better. How to care better. How to create change and engage in activism better. All these themes and practices are previews of what sanctuaries aspire to be. Capital's sense of improvement is to amass more capital, often by reducing paid labor time in order to increase surplus labor extraction and efficiency. But what does improvement mean for sanctuaries? What does improvement mean for a movement that is trying to become obsolete? There are many possibilities. Not needing to justify farm animals as valuable when they are not being worked. Having the possibility for farm animals to grow old without that being radical. Creating the knowledge on how to care for disabled, elderly, or otherwise "useless" animals in compassionate ways. Relating to farm animals as other than resources or production inputs, and instead as co-members of society and equal in a shared world. Having a society open to experimentation and to new ways of living alongside farm animals that look radically different from our current systems of animal agriculture, because "wanting a different future and making it may not hinge on knowing what it might be" (Weeks 2011, 197).

Improvement, hope, and tensions of abolishment are what mobilize sanctuaries as models. The constant stride towards a world that sanctuaries see as ultimately *better* is what guides the manner in which they operate and how they exist in the world we have now. One of the tenants of improvement is ultimately that of abolishment, as described in Chapter 2.

⁶ As Abrell says, "the mission of most animal sanctuaries- to provide permanent homes to animal rescued from situations of exploitation and mistreatment- is arguably utopian in a society that largely treats animals as a source of both use and exchange value" (Abrell 2017, 3).

Sanctuaries are faced every day with the idea that true liberation for farm animals means that they will not exist, because they are domesticated animals bred by humans for the purposes of production, so when that production is refused and when that system is dismantled, we may live alongside farm animals for a time, but these species will perhaps ultimately disappear. In other words, “successfully” living alongside them might mean that one day they are not there. Our society is incredibly far from fully dismantling animal agriculture, which allows sanctuaries to see that type of progress as indefinitely aspirational and distant, but, paradoxically, those are the kinds of tensions sanctuaries should only hope to one day deal with.

CONCLUSION

Sanctuaries are aspirational, but they are always rooted in reality. Any type of sanctuary attests to the fact that they exist in a world they wish did not necessitate them. This is true for animal sanctuaries, but it is also true for sanctuary states for immigrants, political sanctuaries, church sanctuaries, and more. The purpose of sanctuaries is to give refuge now from a society that does not center itself around its values or ethics, but in providing that protection they also move towards a world where they are not as needed, by showing that their way of life is in fact possible. Even in the world we live in now, little pockets of alternative life are carried out every single day that attest to how the dominant systems are not the only possible ones.

All sanctuaries serve a dual purpose, of existing now for residents, while simultaneously making statements and engaging in refusal that assert that a different world can be built. Because sanctuaries are catalysts and not solutions, they do not need to be entirely realistic or compatible with the society we currently have. Being realistic and being possible are entirely different premises. As Weeks writes, “the point is that they should be concrete rather than abstract”

(Weeks 2011, 221). Sanctuaries are models that exist right now that prove, concretely, that their alternative vision of the world is possible to enact, even if they perhaps are not practical right now. Moreover, despite not defining what an alternative future precisely looks like, without sanctuaries there would be a lack of imagination as to what they can look like and the scope of possibilities that exists. In this sense, refusal is a positive framework as well as a creative practice, because it creates as much as it negates (Weeks 2011, 99; Simpson 2007, 78; Blanchette 2021, 77). As McGranahan writes, “the ending of one thing is often the generation of something new” (McGranahan 2016, 322). As stories from sanctuaries have shown, in refusing to work animals, these spaces engage with radical new ways of living alongside them, creating new relationships and communities that previously would have been impossible.

CONCLUSION

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The argument and foundation for this thesis emerged entirely from the few days I spent at sanctuaries and the many conversations I had with people who have dedicated their time, and even their entire lives, to the movement. As mentioned in Chapter 1, stories are more than only the content contained within them. How a story is heard, delivered, and remembered is a fundamental part of how these narratives have the power to scale the sanctuary movement. With that in mind, if I were to continue this project, my priority would be to spend more time at sanctuaries, with the residents and humans who inhabit these spaces. I think there is a great deal of importance in being in their presence, witnessing the in-between and mundane moments of all the events that transpire there, and being a part of both the big rescues and the daily practices of care.

This project has been grounded in the aspirational side of sanctuaries, reflecting both on everything sanctuaries want and have the potential to be, as well as how difficult it is to actually realize those visions. Spending more time physically at sanctuaries would add to this project the dimensions of what it is like to actually carry out these aspirations on a practical level. What emotions, dreams, barriers, and realities emerge when actually fighting to create the future sanctuaries hope to manifest. Those who work at sanctuaries hold with them the stories of all the residents they have interacted with, and working alongside them at sanctuaries is a much more realistic way to learn of these stories and archive them, rather than through individual interviews, where it is not always apparent what questions to ask to reveal some of these stories.

Lastly, if I were to carry on with this project, I would expand on the concept of how farm sanctuaries have the potential to be multiple types of sanctuaries, or if the way they operate and the visions they aspire to can perhaps be transferred to other spaces of refuge and care. Related to this idea, I would further explore the potential of farm sanctuaries in being a concrete model for a life beyond work, in addition to a model for alternative animal-human relations. As discussed in the previous chapters, especially with Weeks' notion of a life, by engaging in anti-productive work, sanctuaries can be part of a revolution not only against specific types of work under capitalism but the overall principle that our lives should be entirely oriented around capital work at all. Exploring this side of sanctuaries will open space to see more profoundly what type of sanctuary these places can be for human lives and what kind of communities can emerge when striving to get a life beyond work for farm animals, humans, and the places sanctuaries inhabit.

STORIES OF REFUSAL AND OF THE USELESS

The aspects of sanctuaries discussed here may seem inconsequential in the grand scheme of things- the stories and events, the care and practices, and the models and hope. Sanctuaries can be dismissed as too small in comparison to what they aim to defeat, or as useless spaces in the absence of any production that emerges from them. In their mundane lives, however, everyone at sanctuaries is an example of what individuals are *doing*, rather than what is being done to them, in relation to systems of exploitation and domination. Sanctuaries are important sites to understand the desire and the ability to persevere despite the reality that the vision one is working towards seems impossibly far away. They utilize time and space in the present to build a model for an alternative world that they do not yet know the details of (Weeks 2011, 203). They

are rooted in aspiration and in a fundamental hope that there *are* alternative worlds, waiting to be built.

These chapters have been grounded in the frameworks of stories, care, value, and refusal, which aim to come together to help understand why sanctuaries are ultimately important; why they are worth studying and storying. Countless historians, environmentalists, abolitionists, and scholars have pushed for the notion that we need to tell new stories.⁷ This thesis is a response to that call; it aims to contribute to a movement for animals, for workers, for the environment, and for our mutual well-being based on abolition and on hope, rather than on suffering and reform. Sanctuaries strive towards a type of revolution that struggles for different ways of relating, valuing, and organizing society. They aim to create communities that center around unworking people, beings, and everyday lives. They generate events, and their stories are able to share these moments and magnify the idea that these lives are in fact possible and already transpiring. Stories show that it is important to pay attention to what type of care, ethics, and hope flows through these spaces every day, in the mundane moments that on the surface appear unimportant.

A defense of the useless is part of learning how to build a world premised on the abolition of work, production, and value as we currently conceptualize these terms- useless farm animals, useless human time and energy, and useless expenditure of money and resources. By refusing current systems, sanctuaries are grounded in a willingness to “become otherwise,” in exploring what other values life can center itself around, besides labor and capital (Weeks 2011, 203). In paying attention to moments that are seemingly sideline events, we refuse the notion that the only kind of life worth recognizing is one rooted in working everything possible- on working

⁷ Here I am referring to Thom van Dooren in *Flight Ways*, J.K. Gibson-Graham in their article on “Diverse Economies,” Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble*, Rob Nixon in *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, and I am sure countless others.

every farm animal, every human body, every form of care, and every moment of the day. Storying the “useless” supports the idea that the “useless” is productive in entirely radical ways—productive in the community it builds, the relationships it fosters, and the possibility for new futures it nurtures. Storying the useless at sanctuaries also attests to the possibility that building entire lives, not just moments, that exist wholly outside capitalist production are possible and worthwhile.

THE HOPE IN SANCTUARIES

Sanctuaries live with the tense reality that they are working endlessly to ultimately abolish themselves. More than that, they essentially seek to abolish farm animals, the species they care so deeply about. However, amidst this tension, the sanctuary project shows that abolition is not only about negation, removal and erasure. Rather, they work towards a form of abolition that is rooted in the expansion of their ontologies and value systems to the point where they *will* be eliminated, but because they will have succeeded in transforming the rest of society to not be so radically different. As Abrell writes, “the ultimate goal of the sanctuary movement is.... the extension of its boundaries to the point that it becomes totalizing and paradoxically no longer exists as a space of exception because it has become all places for all people of every species” (Abrell 2021, 192). With the space and imagination generated in refusal, and eventual abolition, entire new communities of care can flourish, and entire new ways to live well in a shared world will emerge all over.

We should write about the other worlds we want to see. Stories, scholarship, and theory are important and valuable tools in pushing to see what other worlds are possible and must be created. Every day we engage in practices and ways of being that are not capitalist, that are not

rooted in the pursuit and creation of money or wealth. By writing these ways of being, we do more than only describe. We nurture these existences. The way we write, the way we story, and the way we theorize and represent phenomena has a powerful implication in how these things come to exist in reality. We can write otherwise. We can write of the hope and the places and pockets that are already being created that fight for a world that is better, in terms of how we relate to ourselves, our environment, and the more-than-human world.

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