YATES, KRISTIN J., M.A. Language, Belief, Domestication: Constructing Paradise in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family* (2017)
Directed by Dr. Karen Kilcup. 72 pp.

"Language, Belief, Domestication: Constructing Paradise in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family*" reads both E. B. White's and Randall Jarrell's novels as creation stories to better understand how language constructs Edenic realities. I specifically examine how human characters define White's Wilbur as meat and object, and Jarrell's bear and lynx as children or pets, to domesticate and dominate them into their inferior roles in paradise. However, the animals reject their domestication and attain agency either by appropriating human language and disseminating new narratives, as in *Charlotte's Web*, or by preserving their animality and bringing home a human boy to halt their domestication, as in *The Animal Family*.

YATES, KRISTIN J., M.A. Electronic *Kairos*: Creating the Opportune Moment in Contemporary Advertising (2017)
Directed by Dr. Stephen Yarbrough. 56 pp.

In "Electronic *Kairos*: Creating the Opportune Moment in Contemporary Advertising," I study how rhetors seize the classical concept of *kairos*, the opportune or right moment, in electronic mediums. An examination of fast food commercials from Burger King, Chick-Fil-A, and McDonald's demonstrates how advertisers utilize multimodality to their advantage. By blurring the line between entertainment and persuasion, advertisers use primary (i.e., entertainment and narrative transportation) and secondary (i.e., intersections of ethos, logos, and pathos that "prove" a product's value) appeals to produce kairotic conditions and mentalities that then allow viewers to seize advertisers' intended opportune moment.

# LANGUAGE, BELIEF, DOMESTICATION: CONSTRUCTING PARADISE IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* AND *THE ANIMAL FAMILY* AND ELECTRONIC *KAIROS*: CREATING THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT IN CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING

by

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*For every animal who has taught me to question speciesism,*

*including my cat, Sweet Pea, who remained patient while I wrote*

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis, written by Kristin J. Yates, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Thank you to my advisers, Karen Kilcup and Stephen Yarbrough, whose guidance supported my ideas, encouraged me to say precisely what I mean, taught me that sometimes less is more, and always provided clarity.

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# INTRODUCTION

In "Language, Belief, Domestication: Constructing Paradise in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family*," I analyze how speciesism informs various types of rhetorical domestication, or domestication enacted through objectifying and anthropomorphizing language, in E. B. White's and Randall Jarrell's books. Instead of foregrounding human characters, or animal characters as allegorical symbols, this essay reads each novel's animal characters *as animals*.

I first offer theoretical background in "Dominion's Paradise: Constructing Animals," which respectively outlines Judeo-Christian dominion over animals and how words design reality through social constructionism.

Section two foregrounds *Charlotte's Web*, elucidating why White writes his novel and how he responds to the 1950s animal welfare moment, condemning certain speciesist behavior. My close reading establishes how human language classifies Wilbur as "meat" and an "object," and examines how the animals respond to his objectification by appropriating human language, constructing an alternative paradise that offers new narratives and perceptions.

My third section analyzes *The Animal Family* to illuminate Jarrell's authorial intentions and outline how he replies to the 1960s animal welfare movement, like White denouncing particular acts of speciesism. After showing how Jarrell's mermaid becomes a domesticator, I then interpret how his hunter and mermaid domesticate the bear and

lynx by anthropomorphizing them into "children" and "pets." I demonstrate that these adoptive siblings resist domestication and conserve their animality by bringing home the boy to complete the family, thus constructing their alternate idea of paradise.

My last section, "Children's Literature as Activism," considers why White and Jarrell use children's literature to advocate for animal welfare and why they use differing literary methods, from White's anthropomorphism of the animals' communication to Jarrell's preservation of the animals' natural voices. I conclude by arguing that, while we should value both books for being radical during their time, we should resist romanticizing them because they perpetuate speciesism and anthropocentrism. Despite this finding, I suggest that the novels present pedagogical opportunities to explore such attitudes.

In "Electronic *Kairos*: Creating the Opportune Moment in Contemporary Advertising," I explore how advertisers utilize their electronic mediums to produce kairotic conditions and seize the opportune, or best, moment. My first section, entitled "*Kairos*: From Orality to Electricity," reviews Gorgias's understanding of the concept, followed by my notion of how fast food advertisers utilize electronic *kairos*.

For the remainder of the essay I examine commercials from Burger King, Chick-Fil-A, and McDonald's, organizing each based on what it promotes—either a product (i.e., new, old, or returning) or brand. Each commercial's analysis addresses the primary appeal (entertainment and narrative transportation) followed by its secondary appeal (a product's or brand's "proof" demonstrated through intersections of ethos, logos, and pathos).

My last section, “From Gorgias to Behind the Screen and Beyond,” summarizes Poulakos’s interpretation of how, even in antiquity, this sophist composed kairotic conditions in written texts to accommodate not seeing his audience, a method contemporary advertisers also follow but further develop by manipulating multimodality. Lastly, I outline why advertisers’ appeals effectively persuade viewers by giving them an experience they seek to recreate by consuming products and supporting brands.

# LANGUAGE, BELIEF, DOMESTICATION: CONSTRUCTING PARADISE IN *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* AND *THE ANIMAL FAMILY*

Many contemporary readers have likely read or at least heard of E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* and Randall Jarrell's *The Animal Family* either in our personal lives or academic careers. Both titles enjoy classic status because of how they portray nature and challenge anthropocentric thought. While many scholars discuss *Charlotte's Web* as a seminal work in children's and ecocritical literature, few include *The Animal Family* in the conversation. When interpreting both novels, scholars often project anthropocentric ideologies onto the texts by construing animal characters as allegorical symbols or completely omitting them from their analysis. However, as I demonstrate, both White and Jarrell intended that readers perceive their animal characters *as animals*. These authors used children's literature to advocate for animal welfare by addressing the animal-human dichotomy resulting from speciesism. As coined by Richard Ryder in 1970, *speciesism* is "the widespread discrimination that is practiced by [humanity] against other species…based upon appearances—if the other individual looks different then he [or she] is rated as being beyond the moral pale" (quoted in Waldau 28). White and Jarrell published their novels before Ryder defined the concept and before the animal rights movement as we know it today had begun, but discrimination against animals

nevertheless existed; writers began discussing animal suffering caused by humanity as early as the eighteenth century (Guither 1).[1]

Given how White and Jarrell portray animals and their communication practices, both clearly understood how language and storytelling construct them to fulfill speciesist agendas. This essay studies how speciesism informs various types of rhetorical domestication, or domestication enacted through objectifying and anthropomorphizing discourse, in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family*.[2] I first offer theoretical background in "Dominion's Paradise: Constructing Animals," which respectively outlines Judeo-Christian dominion over animals and how words design reality through social constructionism. Section two foregrounds *Charlotte's Web*, elucidating why White writes his novel and how he responds to the 1950s animal welfare moment, condemning certain speciesist behavior. My close reading establishes how human language classifies Wilbur as "meat" and an "object," and examines how the animals respond to his objectification by appropriating human language, constructing an alternative paradise that offers new narratives and perceptions.[3]

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[1] The animal rights movement did not begin until the 1970s in the United States (Guither 1). However, national and state animal welfare societies, such as The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

[2] I do not define rhetorical domestication the same as literary anthropomorphism. While *authors* anthropomorphize animals to humanize them, *fictional characters* domesticate animals through dominating discourse—in this case, objectifying or anthropomorphizing language. However, both concepts serve an author's rhetorical purpose, which is why I discuss how White's and Jarrell's animal representations aid their advocacy.

[3] The scare quotes around meat and object, and children and pets below, insinuate that Wilbur is *supposedly* meat and an object, or that the bear and lynx are the hunter's and mermaid's *ostensible* children and pets. Though I drop the quotes for convenience, each succeeding reference retains the same meaning to avoid objectifying or infantilizing these characters. I follow this practice for other words throughout this essay to indicate their putative meaning.

My third section analyzes *The Animal Family* to illuminate Jarrell's authorial intentions and outline how he replies to the 1960s animal welfare movement, like White denouncing particular acts of speciesism. After showing how Jarrell's mermaid becomes a domesticator, I then interpret how his hunter and mermaid domesticate the bear and lynx by anthropomorphizing them into "children" and "pets." I demonstrate that these adoptive siblings resist domestication and conserve their animality by bringing home the boy to complete the family, thus constructing their alternate idea of paradise. My last section, "Children's Literature as Activism," considers why White and Jarrell use children's literature to advocate for animal welfare and why they use differing literary methods, from White's anthropomorphism of the animals' communication to Jarrell's preservation of the animals' natural voices. I conclude by arguing that, while we should value both books for being radical during their time, we should resist romanticizing them because they perpetuate speciesism and anthropocentrism. Despite this finding, I suggest that the novels present pedagogical opportunities to explore such attitudes.

To date only June Swanson and Amy Ratelle have studied White's text ecocritically. Swanson reads Wilbur as a Thoreau figure living in the barn's "simplicity" like Thoreau in *Walden*, but this interpretation disregards that, while Thoreau voluntarily embarked upon simplicity, Wilbur has no choice but to remain on the farm. Ratelle, in her essay grounded in animality studies, is the only one who discusses *Charlotte Web*'s, and by extension White's, treatment of animals. While she introduces us to how animal characters appropriate human language to prove their subjectivity, White's language deserves more analysis to understand how the animals linguistically and rhetorically

reverse speciesist narratives and reconstruct reality. Jarrell scholarship is also limited. Though his works as a whole have received substantial attention, few scholars study *The Animal Family,* and when they do, they largely omit the bear and the lynx from their readings, instead prioritizing the family's human and animal-human members. Thus far, no ecocritical readings assess the animal-human dichotomy and animal-human relationships in the animal family. Even Richard Flynn, who examines how the hunter's masculine language merges with the mermaid's feminine language to form an ideal "semifeminine" discourse, overlooks the mermaid's animality and how it affects the hunter's actions toward her. With the exception of Ratelle's essay, current readings of both *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family* deny animal characters agency as actual animals and ignore how human doctrines portray them and their actions' significance. Instead of foregrounding human characters, or animal characters as human, this essay demonstrates how language spoken, written, and performed corporeally from human, animal-human, and animal characters constructs our beliefs about animals. Social constructionism theory and animal studies help illuminate how language creates the nature-culture dichotomy that domesticates animals and what it means to anthropomorphize, as opposed to preserve, animals' communication practices. Words work variously in each novel to create a paradise, an Edenic reality dependent on animal domestication in both language and content. In *Charlotte's Web*, humans construct a speciesist perception of "farm" animals by using the objectifying "it" pronoun, the names of meat, and Judeo-Christian narratives. But the animals, especially Charlotte, do what human characters deem supernatural. They adopt human language to rework speciesist

stories. Templeton scavenges words from "paradise" (i.e., the dump and the fair), Charlotte authors with her web, and Wilbur speaks corporally, both becoming an advertisement and performing to prove his value. In *The Animal Family*, however, the hunter domesticates and Others the animal members (i.e., the mermaid, bear, and lynx). To tame the mermaid, the hunter appropriates her language and teaches her words that signify her Otherness. Together, the hunter and mermaid erase the bear's and lynx's animality by anthropomorphizing, Othering, and housetraining them. Despite their attempted erasure, or perhaps in spite of it, these brothers retain their animality by communicating mostly corporeally, never speaking through anthropomorphized words. As important, both the bear and lynx train their domesticators and, by bringing the boy home, complete the family and create a household where they may still be animals.

I am not the first to suggest that these novels create paradise or Edenic realities. Though Sonia Landes and Lucien L. Agosta recognize certain Edenic elements in *Charlotte's Web*, neither study extensively how these conditions affect Wilbur and the other animals. Similarly, when reflecting on *The Animal Family*, scholars such as Peter F. Neumeyer and Jerome Griswold reduce its paradisiacal foundation to a page or less. They, too, disregard how the animals fit into paradise but emphasize how the hunter and mermaid resemble Adam and Eve figures. Though Gretchen Katrina Shilts's *The World Lost and Found* foregrounds the Eden myth in Jarrell's works, including *The Animal Family*, it does not study the animals' role. However, neglecting the role that language plays to construct paradise in White's and Jarrell's texts shortchanges our understanding of how their realities establish power structures and determine the animal-human

dichotomy. Ignoring the animals' roles and representations in these human-made, and oftentimes animal-subverted, Edens also hinders our understanding of the novels' messages about animality and our treatment of animals. As creation stories, these novels demonstrate how language creates paradise for humans through various forms of speciesism and domestication based on animal erasure (lack of agency) or animal presence (agency), and almost always at animals' expense. But, as I will show, the animals resist distinctively. *Charlotte's Web*'s and *The Animal Family*'s language gives readers insight into how animals utilize discourse to resist or subvert these human-made realities that seek to domesticate and marginalize them on the farm or in the family. White's and Jarrell's varying approaches to animal communication, where White anthropomorphizes animals but Jarrell preserves their animality, present contradictory ways in which animal-human and animal characters reconstruct the concept of paradise by making their animality *present* and their value as animals clear. Finally, White's and Jarrell's presentations of animals' language suggest two different methods of literary animal activism, which urges us to consider why they use children's literature as a vehicle for their advocacy.

## Dominion's Paradise: Constructing Animals

In Judeo-Christian scripture, the dominion of nature may be understood as either dominance or stewardship, but many misinterpret the idea as dominance. Michael W. Fox explains that some scholars, like Rene Dubos, believe that the Bible's message regarding how humanity should "dress [the Garden of Eden] and keep it" in Genesis 2:15 advises

humanity to conserve, not dominate, the environment (193). Nancy M. Tischler reiterates this idea by arguing how Genesis designates humanity as "both masters and stewards of the earth, responsible for its replenishment as well as its fruitfulness" (41). Fox references biblical passages, such as Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, to suggest that "all life is sacred" and connected:

> For the fee of the sons of men and the fate of the beasts is the same: as one dies, so the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beast; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the Beast goes down to earth? (*The Bible: Authorized King James Version*).

However, since Judeo-Christianity's inception, some believers have interpreted the Bible anthropocentrically. They misunderstand humanity as the dominator of all nature, where dominion functions, in Alastair Minnis's words, as "the power of reason to command" that forces animals into subservience (95). Due to animals' perceived inferiority, humanity measures their value based on their alleged purpose, or on how biblical misconceptions claim they should serve humanity (Minnis 93). This domination myth ultimately appears "natural" because many believe it to be God's literal word; hence, exploiting nature becomes "God's will."

To follow His word, some Christians have attempted to create Edenic realities. As Tischler states, "dreamers repeatedly design their own earthly paradises" because they cannot accept that Eden, a representation of "perfect harmony" (coexistence amongst humans, animals, and plants), is lost (21, 23). Though this kinship implies that dominion occurred after the Fall, Christians have ultimately understood paradise as a place that

necessitates dominion over animals. Essentially, Christian thought separated animals from humanity by claiming them as purely instinctual while considering humans as rational and therefore superior (Tischler 41).[4] Animals' perceived irrationality has meant that people have portrayed them as "amoral" creatures, further dividing them from humanity, because of their ostensible inability to distinguish between good and evil (Minnis 92). As a result of scripture's speciesism, early Christians interpreted dominion as dominance and created the animal-human dichotomy which, in codifying animals' inferiority and maintaining humanity's supremacy, established a preferred animal-human relationship (Minnis 18). Humanity then began dominating animals by naming, controlling, and using them for food, clothing, labor, and even sacrifice (Tischler 40, 42).

In *Reinventing Eden*, Carolyn Merchant details how humanity has sought to recreate paradise since the New World's discovery. She defines this phenomenon as a Recovery Narrative, which seeks to recuperate the Genesis Eden by constructing an "earthly Eden" (39-40). Merchant's explanation of how humanity appropriates the Genesis narrative is worth quoting at length:

> [Early] colonists, planters, and westward pioneers often explicitly cited the Genesis mandate in order to justify expansion. In Western culture, the Genesis 1 and 2 accounts have usually been conflated. In the mainstream Recovery project, humanity has turned the entire earth into a vast garden by mastering nature. The Genesis 1:28 ethic of dominion has provided the rationale for the Recovery of the garden lost in Genesis 2 and 3, submerging the stewardship ethic of Genesis 2:15 (25).

[4] Common beliefs surrounding immorality also determine animals' separation from humanity and resulting treatment. Many, such as John Wyclif, saw animals as disposable because of their perceived immorality. In fact, many believed that humans would not need animals for food or comfort in paradise or when resurrected because we would have "greater" means of pleasure (Minnis 150-1).

Merchant demonstrates that capitalism gardened, tamed, and subdued "wilderness" into civilization to create an Edenic reality. Thus, what she terms as "The Recovery of Eden Narrative" became the dominant reality that socialized Westerners in the late seventeenth century (68, 77). The Cartesian worldview, which supports Christian domination, helped shape our paradisiacal reality because it emphasized controlling nature (Merchant 77). After Rene Descartes's philosophy, society viewed animals as machines, objectifying them as unconscious and insentient to validate their slaughter and other exploitations (Donovan 356, 364). Josephine Donovan relates how animals "were erased (at best) or manipulated (at worst) to behave in accordance with paradigms imposed by the rationalist lords" (366).[5] Because of Christian and Cartesian narratives, The Recovery Narrative ultimately resulted to fulfill colonialist and capitalist needs (Merchant 77). But creating paradise on earth was not enough; individuals began restoring Eden through literature or other artistic mediums to accommodate their idea of paradise (Tischler 2, 14). Both narratives promoted animal domestication and reinforced domination under the animal-human dichotomy, making it easier for humanity to treat animals, both fictional and real, as if they were objects. These narratives continue to rule contemporary Westerners, as their dissemination further constructs animals' inferiority and sustains their exploitation.

Social constructionism theory indicates that words and their resulting narratives disseminate knowledge but do not denote objective reality. In fact, within the social

[5] Donovan also mentions that Cartesianism erased women alongside animals. To better understand the connection between animals' and women's exploitation, see Donovan's essay entitled "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory." Also see Carol J. Adam's *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*

constructionist framework objective fact does not exist (Burr 7).[6] Rather, words reflect subjective reality, or our perceptions (Burr 4). As Vivien Burr remarks, "We think of language as a bag of labels which we can choose from in trying to describe our internal states such as thoughts and feelings" (53). With each interaction, whether verbal or performative, we construct knowledge daily (Burr 4, 11). To do so, we use words to describe and categorize, which forms the illusion of fact and allows us to act upon such "facts" (Burr 65). When speaking or telling stories, we do not need to reiterate a word's meaning each time we utter it because, as Tom Andrews notes, we understand words' embedded meaning because of our shared culture. As they form narratives, often the prevailing ones, the words we use become reality, albeit subjective, making it redundant to redefine them with each utterance (Andrews 4).

What makes social constructionism so important to issues like speciesism is how our discourse affects animals. As Burr emphasizes, "What people say and write is not divorced from the things they do…or from the way that society is organized and run" (75). Because they help determine reality, words matter. Language births narratives, those narratives shape perceptions that dictate actions, those actions then create new or reinforce old narratives, and the cycle continues with each utterance. Intrinsically, we cannot separate language from action. Our discourse, on an interactional and institutional

[6] While constructionists believe we create rather than find knowledge, they also acknowledge that reality exists (Andrews 3). To illustrate the difference between realism and constructionism, Andrews uses our perception of diseases. Realists believe disease exists in reality, whereas social constructionists emphasize how we name diseases and construct perceptions of them (Andrews 5). Essentially, realism and constructionism embody the difference between objective and subjective existence. Andrews emphasizes that "being a realist is not inconsistent with being a constructionist" because both offer different but important perspectives (Andrews 3). However, because speciesism is a social construct, we must foreground a constructionist approach to ethically interpret *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family.*

level, "sustains and reinforces existing, unequal power relations" (Burr 67). The repertoires that categorize animals as meat and objects in *Charlotte's Web*, or children and pets in *The Animal Family*, rely on power systems that Other animals while constructing perceptions that normalize speciesism and its ensuing anthropocentric mentality. As Burr suggests, language attempts to legitimize behavior because it produces subjective knowledge that constructs differing versions of reality (69). Knowledge, therefore, favors those in power (Burr 7). Even so, it is important to note that individuals do not create narratives. Instead, discourse is what Burr calls a "social resource" available to all who speak the same language and culture (70). We may not know or mean words' connotations, but they nevertheless have consequences, as they perpetuate speciesist narratives. For this reason, it is imperative that we discuss both speciesism and anthropocentrism, even in novels like *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family* that appear to bypass such attitudes. These texts invite us to learn how words construct animals rhetorically and literally either to objectify or humanize them. After becoming aware of words' implications, we may begin to counter speciesist language with alternative narratives. The animals in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family*, and by association their authors, are certainly aware of the narratives used to domesticate and dominate nonhuman creatures and, accordingly, rewrite them. As I discuss below, the authors' animals use language to alter their roles and reshape the idea of paradise.

## *Charlotte's Web*: A Farmer's Literary "Sanctuary"

Though the animal rights movement had not yet begun in 1952 when White published *Charlotte's Web*, after World War II ended American citizens had more time to spend in nature, which fostered environmental concerns that would cultivate animal rights in the coming decades (Beers 151, 3). Because of the late 1940s and early 1950s Red Scare, postwar activists attempted what Beers calls "feasible goals," seeking animal welfarism rather than animal rights, to avoid being ostracized as too radical (155). From the 1950s through the 1970s, advocates challenged human superiority, despite such a stance being considered radical. When White published his novel, animal advocates primarily campaigned against the meat industry to prevent its cruelty (Beers 181).[7] Following World War II, the growing consumer economy and baby boom increased demand for meat (Beers 159), but the growth of factory farms, which replaced rural farms, helped fulfill consumers' requests. As Matthew Scully indicates, between 1920 and 1950, and again between 1950 and 1965, agricultural production doubled because of the growing population's appetite for meat and other animal "products" (29).

Though White depicts a family farm in *Charlotte's Web*, he also speaks to the larger issue of increased animal agriculture. Because the Red Scare discouraged activism, no animal welfare reforms were enacted in the 1950s until 1954, two years after White's novel, which makes it even more necessary.[8] Even in 1957, American society still

[7] During this period, activists also advocated against laboratory research and hunting (Beers 181).
[8] The Humane Society of the United States began in 1964 but unfortunately "caved in to the conservative pressures surrounding it" (Beers 154, 156). After slaughterhouse conditions became public in 1954 at the AHA National Convention's documentary, a Minnesota senator, Hubery Humphrey, passed a bill in April of 1955 demanding humane slaughter. The bill, however, encountered criticism from the USDA, which

considered meat as a patriotic staple, or as Beers explains, "the cornerstone of a great American diet" (161).[9] Groups supporting meat consumption worried that federal laws determining how animals should be slaughtered would harm the family farm, although potential legislation addressed only factory farms (Beers 161). Based on Beers's study of the tense political environment and the resulting few welfare regulations, we can gather that conditions for activists and animals were no better when White published *Charlotte's Web*. Accordingly, because of his interest in the animals on his farm, White challenges the farm's speciesist structure that delineates pigs as meat. In his essay "Pigs and Spiders," published in 1953, White recognizes that "a farm is a particular problem for a man who likes animals" (White, "Appendix D" 237). After grappling with his guilt from slaughtering pigs, heightened by watching one die on his farm, White redefines Wilbur, separating him from others considered meat, because he "needed a way to save a pig's life" (White, "Appendix D" 218).[10] Hence, White composes what he believes to be a literary sanctuary for Wilbur.

My analysis below separates human and animal language to illustrate how each species uses words to construct their version of paradise. To understand how the animal characters' language works as an alternative to human language, I first examine how humans employ words to construct Wilbur as "meat" and an "object." Then, I explain

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claimed that the government should decide how they slaughter animals (Beers 160). The Humane Slaughter Act passed in 1958, just a few years after White published *Charlotte's Web*.

[9] According to Heinz's and Lee's "Getting Down to the Meat," one of meat's social meanings still includes patriotism, among others such as religion, masculinity, health, and meat as supposed product, food, and meal (90).

[10] See White's "Death of a Pig," first published in 1948. A reprinted edition of this essay may be found in "Appendix D" of Neumeyer's annotated *Charlotte's Web*.

how Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton adopt human language, from the written to the performed or corporeal word, to rename Wilbur as each word or phrase in Charlotte's web, making him a pig who cannot be slaughtered.[11]

## Zuckerman's Farm: The Dominant Narrative

The words we use to discuss animals determine our perception and thus behavior toward them as products. According to Carol J. Adams, when we brand animals as types of meat, or body parts, we detach the animal from the product made from their body. These butchered fragments of animals (i.e., bacon, ham, pork chop, hot dog, sausage, and even meat), erase the animal from the product through the process of the absent referent. In doing so, "animals in name and body are made absent *as animals* for meat to exist" (Adams 40, original emphasis). Animals disappear through their literal death (the first butchering) and the definition that renames (and further butchers) their body into types of meat (Adams 40). Consequently, we no longer see the live animal; we only see meat, the object, that we consume. As Star Madzerian Vanguri reminds us, names serve rhetorical purposes. Despite our constant participation in the act of naming, which normalizes the practice, we forget its power (Vanguri 1).[12] Everyday rituals hierarchize referents, determining our social role and enabling or disabling us as individuals (Vanguri 1, 3).

[11] Though proper grammar requires "that" and "which" when referencing animals, I reject this practice because it objectifies them. Instead, I reference animals as "who" and "whom" to counter their object status and grant them the right to a subject's language that illustrates their personhood.

[12] According to Vanguri, names appear neutral because we normalize them with each utterance. Since we equate normalcy to neutrality, this repetition creates the illusion that both a name and its embedded cultural narratives are objective (Vanguri 5). However, as Vanguri clarifies, names are never neutral because they either favor the dominant or inferior perception (2-3).

Typically, these rituals result in roles of inequity, since those who govern them hold positions of power and belong to the dominant group (Vanguri 4). In turn, names shape the identities of both the namer and the named as they reiterate the values of the dominant group and perpetuate hegemony (Vanguri 5).

We see names' rhetorical effects in *Charlotte's Web* when human characters erase Wilbur, and in turn create a paradise that hierarchizes humanity's superiority and animals' inferiority, with the names they call him. White waits until more than halfway through the novel to define Wilbur as "ham" or "bacon." It is not until Zuckerman takes Wilbur to the County Fair that Mr. Arable exclaims that Zuckerman will "get some extra good ham and bacon…when it comes time to kill *that* pig" (White 126, original emphasis).[13] When Mr. Arable calls Wilbur ham and bacon, we witness Adams's theory of the absent referent. Wilbur, as a pig, becomes invisible. Mr. Arable's reference establishes a farmer-farmed dichotomy, which objectifies and places Wilbur underneath humanity as he becomes meat. Though humans call Wilbur bacon and ham only once, they also objectify him with other names such as "Zuckerman's Famous Pig" (White 94, 124). While such a label seemingly challenges the absent referent, as it contains the word "pig," the possessive again denotes the farmer-farmed dichotomy; Zuckerman "owns" Wilbur. This phrase erases Wilbur's agency and value as a pig. Due to Zuckerman's perceived ownership, Wilbur's only value lies in the fame and profit he brings the farmer at the County Fair and beyond. Even Fern's naming Wilbur demonstrates inequality. Fern

[13] For the entirety of this essay, all references to *Charlotte's Web* come from Neumeyer's annotated version, "Chapters I-XXII, Annotated."

plays with him like a doll, anthropomorphizing him through dress, while defining him as a toy—some*thing* with which to play. Fern also infantilizes Wilbur by verbally classifying him an infant. Some may argue that attaching Wilbur to a human infant elevates him, but Fern's maternalism simultaneously insinuates that Wilbur lacks the basic instinct to fend for himself. This maternalism erases Wilbur's animal instinct, which humanity accepts as animal intelligence, and therefore his agency. Though not intentionally speciesist since she has good intentions, Fern nevertheless preserves her human authority when setting up this mother-helpless infant dichotomy.

Serving rhetorical purposes similar to names, pronouns characterize individuals, and in doing so, they also reference one's identity, social status, and ability to claim rights that go with both (Malone 43-4). In particular, when we use third person pronouns, we exclude the addressee from the conversation. As Martin J. Malone explains, third person pronouns talk *about*, rather than with, someone, and thus serve to construe the individual in a particular manner (Malone 72). As they describe, pronouns Other individuals by categorizing and defining them based on who the speaker is *not* (Malone 73). Third person pronouns such as "you" and "they" set up an-us-versus them dichotomy. Whereas "you" describes "people like us" and connects the speaker to the referent, "they" describes people "different from us" and creates distance from referents (Malone 72-4). As a result, pronouns "are powerful metaphors for 'other'" (Malone 73). We see how the generic "it" pronoun similarly Others animals. When we reference them as meat, or object, we distance ourselves from them. We define ourselves as the opposite of the Cartesian animal; in naming animals as some*thing* we elevate ourselves as

some*one*. The rationalization behind using the generic "it" pronoun for animals but not people is that, if animals are Other, or meat, then humans are not. "It," in the us-versus-them dichotomy it creates, codifies our detachment from animals *as animals*, and sustains animal consumption.[14]

Fern and her mother demonstrate their detachment from animals when they reference Wilbur as "it," despite knowing his sex as a male piglet:

> "Well," said her mother, "one of the pigs is a runt. It's very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it."
>
> "Do *away* with it?" shrieked Fern. "You mean kill it? Just because it's smaller than the others?" (White 1, original emphasis).

Of course, the immediate issue at hand for Fern is Wilbur's possible slaughter, as demonstrated by her emphasis on "*away*," but her statement also reveals how we legitimize animal slaughter through objectification. Both Mrs. Arable and Fern label Wilbur as an "it," perhaps because referencing him as an object makes it easier to deal with his possible slaughter. When we label an animal an "it"—a *thing*—we erase and objectify him or her, just as we do when we call an animal meat (Adams 64). Since objects lack sentience and higher intelligence, this pronoun allows us to distance ourselves from animals, which then allows us to view them as expendable. As Joan Dunayer pointedly illuminates, "An 'it' doesn't need or desire freedom, but imprisoning

[14] Malone points out how we reference an organization as "they," instead of "it," to avoid objectifying their members (74). Because we break grammar's rules to personify humanity but do not extend the same courtesy to animals, we demonstrate our inherent speciesism. Referring to animals as "it," even when discussing a collective species, Others animals and benefits humanity as it reinforces human supremacy.

an innocent 'he' or 'she' diminishes some*one's* well-being and violates their rights" (152, emphasis added). Had Fern noticed her and her mother's objectification of Wilbur, she perhaps would have placed emphasis elsewhere to challenge his object status. After all, as Vicki Hearne points out, "even many animal lovers conventionally use the pronoun 'it' rather than 'he' or 'she' to refer to an animal" (169). When Fern calls Wilbur "it," she likely only repeats the language she hears at home. Nonetheless, her prejudiced language objectifies Wilbur linguistically. Although Fern does not perceive Wilbur as an object, her words have the same rhetorical effect as her mother's, as they further construct the farm's paradise that prioritizes humanity.

Just as names and pronouns designate status, Judeo-Christian narratives also rhetorically classify animals and determine their role. Though agriculture originated as a way for technology to bypass hunting, Christian notions of dominion, accomplished through New World civilization, encouraged farming's inception (Merchant 83). To perpetuate The Recovery Narrative, settlers began domesticating animals and crops (Merchant 40). Colonialists believed, as some Christians still do, that Genesis's portrayal of nature proves humanity's superiority and encourages us to exploit animals. Take Genesis 1:26, for example: "*26*: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepth upon the earth." Because Christianity considers animals amoral and irrational, as mentioned earlier, contemporary consumers often misinterpret this "dominion" as domination, rather than stewardship, and cite it to legitimize animal consumption. They rationalize that,

since God ordered humanity to reign over nature, we seemingly possess more intellectual capacity and must subdue animals' "wildness." Correspondingly, Genesis 2:19 states "*19*: And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." Some believers also misunderstand this passage. Because God tasked Adam with naming animals, many believe He did so because of their so-called lack of morality and intellect, which again reinforces conquering them. After all, as Vanguri's and Burr's studies evidence, whoever holds the most social power determines the names that become the dominant "knowledge." When we name, we author, and when we author, we shape perceptions that enable us to dominate, or abuse, nonhuman creatures.

To fulfill our perceived role as dominators, we name animals as meat and consume them. Consumers place the most emphasis on Genesis 1:29 to 1:30:

> *29:* And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. *30:* And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

Many read this passage's reference to meat as describing animals when, in reality, it refers to fruit and herbs made for all creatures. Minnis asserts that humans were vegetarian in Eden (17). We only began consuming animals after the Fall, when God punished us by making humans and animals enemies (Tischner 41). Regardless, such believers often misunderstand and appropriate the passages above to codify speciesism

that further Others animals. When animal consumption becomes God's will, any kind of treatment becomes justifiable.

In White's novel, Zuckerman misreads animals' role in paradise, believing them to be meat, just as contemporary consumers mistake the Genesis narrative. By virtue of the farm, Zuckerman dominates Wilbur and the others while creating his own Edenic reality. He and the town's minister adopt Christianity's speciesist portrayal of animals as irrational and amoral, which leads them to consider Wilbur incapable of human-level intelligence. After Charlotte weaves "SOME PIG!" into her web, the minster addresses the "miracle" at Church. We learn that "[the minister] said that the words on the spider's web proved that human beings must always be on the watch for the coming of wonders" (White 85). Upon seeing Charlotte's phrase, Zuckerman dismisses its occurrence as supernatural but then, like the minister, accepts it as a miracle. Neither the minister nor Zuckerman believe that Wilbur, and certainly not Charlotte, possess the intelligence to understand human language, much less manipulate it to communicate with "superior" humans. Instead, these characters insinuate that both animals, but especially Wilbur, only possess basic animal instinct, which preserves his inferior status in paradise. Since the minister and Zuckerman, and by extension everyone who knows Wilbur, believe "his" (Charlotte's) authorship to be a miracle, they value him only because they perceive him as a divine messenger; these characters interpret the phrase as God's essence rather than Wilbur's talent. Wilbur's value then relies on God, and neither the minister nor

Zuckerman appreciate Wilbur's intrinsic value but rather his role as a pig through whom God supposedly speaks.[15]

## It Takes a Community: Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton Reweave Speciesism

Undeterred by what Vanguri expresses as names' "false sense of permanence" (3), the animals rename Wilbur. They adopt human language to rewrite speciesist narratives and convince Zuckerman not to slaughter the pig.[16] To illustrate that challenging speciesism requires community effort, each animal plays a role in renaming Wilbur, which the old sheep instigates. He tells Wilbur that Zuckerman will slaughter and "[turn him] into smoked bacon and ham" because "almost all young pigs get murdered by the farmer as soon as the real cold weather sets in" (White 49).[17] From this point, the other animals help reconstruct Wilbur's image. The goose, gander, goslings, sheep, lamb, and of course Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton meet in the barn, where Charlotte seeks advice for new slogans. She chooses "SOME PIG!," the goose proposes "TERRIFIC,"

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[15] Judith Butler theorizes seeing and reading in "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," which also illuminates how speciesism works. She describes how one's white paranoia, or fear of losing white supremacy, originates from racism. When we see evidence of police brutality against the black community, racist schemas and stereotypes inform our interpretation; we read the black individual as always guilty, even when innocent, and legitimize police violence because it preserves white supremacy (Butler 206-8). The minister's and Zuckerman's speciesism similarly influences how they read the animals' communication. These characters' *human* paranoia, or fear of losing human supremacy, makes them perceive "Wilbur's" (Charlotte's) words and phrases as miracles because of speciesist schemas that claim animals are irrational. The human characters must "be on the watch" for the animals' cleverness, understood as God's "wonders," because of how such intelligence challenges human superiority (White 85). If the minister or Zuckerman accepted animal intelligence, then it would unravel animals' inferiority, making it more difficult to justify oppressing them.

[16] For an analysis of how Charlotte's web characterizes her instead of Wilbur, see Janice M. Alberghene's "Writing in *Charlotte's Web*."

[17] Curiously, the animals mention the words "ham" and "bacon" before the human characters reference Wilbur by either name.

and the old sheep asks Templeton to scavenge words from the dump, where he finds the last two words, "RADIANT" and "HUMBLE." Although their roles appear less significant, the goose, gander, goslings, sheep, and lambs work together to ensure that Charlotte and Templeton fit into Wilbur's crate, unnoticed, as he goes to the County Fair. This moment builds up to Wilbur's time away from the farm, where his renaming becomes most critical. The animals know that, without Charlotte and Templeton, people will no longer regard Wilbur as "some pig." While at the County Fair, Wilbur must preserve his image, and to do so, he needs Templeton's ability to scavenge and Charlotte's ability to manipulate human words. Though the animal cohort enables Wilbur's renaming, Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton play the most prominent roles in saving Wilbur and rewriting paradise.

With her web, Charlotte reworks speciesist narratives by authoring words and phrases that depict Wilbur as an animal rather than an object. She first weaves "SOME PIG!" which makes Wilbur present in name and reverses the absent referent, setting the foundation for the successive words (White 77). To disassociate Wilbur from his previous names (i.e., "ham," "bacon," "Zuckerman's Famous Pig," "it," "toy," and "infant"), Charlotte renames him as *some* pig. She argues against Wilbur's objectification by including his species, pig, instead of a type of meat. This phrase also argues against Zuckerman's "ownership" of Wilbur, reclaiming Wilbur's agency by emphasizing that no one owns him. Essentially, "SOME PIG!" animalizes Wilbur; he is no longer an object

for consumption or play but rather a *special* pig.[18] Wilbur becomes som*eone* instead of some*thing*. Charlotte suggests that, because of his perceived ability to weave words that compare to humanity's intelligence, Wilbur is not food and therefore should not be slaughtered. After this first phrase, the human characters attach each subsequent word to Wilbur. When Charlotte weaves "TERRIFIC" into her web, the Zuckermans perceive Wilbur as a terrific pig. Following suit, Charlotte writes "RADIANT" and the Zuckermans recognize Wilbur's radiance. Finally, after Charlotte transcribes "HUMBLE," the Zuckermans believe Wilbur to be deeply modest.[19]

While Charlotte's composition begins constructing an alternative narrative, Wilbur plays a key role in strengthening its reality by connecting each word and phrase to his body. To advertise his characteristics, Wilbur performs and speaks corporeally. As the Zuckermans notice "SOME PIG!" in Charlotte's web, Wilbur stands underneath the phrase to imply he authored it and ensure they know which pig the statement references. Wilbur performs similarly when Charlotte weaves "TERRIFIC" by standing under the word, but this time, he also swings his snout side to side. Wilbur respectively highlights his wonderful characteristics to showcase his identity as a *pig*, not a human or an infant. When Charlotte claims Wilbur as "RADIANT," he demonstrates his radiance: "He would turn his head slightly and blink his long eye-lashes. Then he would breathe deeply. And

[18] Here I have chosen the word "animalize," as opposed to "anthropomorphize," to legitimize Wilbur's animality as a type of personhood. Plus, Charlotte weaves "SOME PIG!" instead of "SOME PERSON!" to highlight that Zuckerman should value Wilbur for his identity as a *pig*.

[19] White's April 1940 essay, "A Shepherd's Life," articulates how naming animals connects us to them: "you find yourself growing close to sheep. You give them names not for whimsy but for convenience. And when one of them approaches her confinement [slaughter] you get almost as restless as she does" ("A Shepherds Life," 192). Above all, White demonstrates why he carefully crafts Wilbur's representation; he must incite readers' sympathy to "save" a pig through Charlotte's words and phrases.

when his audience grew bored, he would spring into the air and do a back flip with a half twist" (White 114-15). Here, Wilbur promotes his poise and beauty by modeling for his audience. His poses accentuate his snout and in turn his value as a pig. When Wilbur flips in the air, he illustrates his animal identity, which guides him through each performance, disproving Fern's conviction of him as being incapable of surviving on his own.

By the time Charlotte characterizes Wilbur as "HUMBLE" to completely rename him, he performs humility by staying in his crate. He no longer needs to engage in theatrics because Charlotte now weaves the truth. As Wilbur performs each word, he becomes more confident and embraces his new identity. Upon enacting "TERRIFIC," Wilbur begins feeling terrific; next he feels radiant, and then humble, as he modestly addresses his oppressors to hone Charlotte's portrayal of him. Though we typically reserve these characteristics for humans and companion animals because they connote intellectual and moral capacity, Wilbur's corporeal communication proves that such qualities also apply to him. As a result, he and Charlotte subvert Zuckerman's Christian-based dominance ethos, prompting the farmer to decide against slaughtering such a valuable pig. As Karen Coats indicates in her "Lacan with Runt Pigs," Wilbur's performances create a speech act as they influence Zuckerman's decision (123).[20] Each name Charlotte attributes to Wilbur personifies him and clarifies his performances. As Vanguri states, names correlate to performance because they "allow us to understand the workings of performance, space, bodies, objects, and social spheres" (2). Without

[20] For more information on animal subjectivity, see Karen Coats's "Lacan with Runt Pigs," which discusses how the human characters' language, particularly Fern's, affects Wilbur's selfhood.

Charlotte's words and phrases, Zuckerman would not have believed that Wilbur embodied each trait. Likewise, if not for Wilbur's performances, Zuckerman would not have understood the pig as the author and would not have elevated Wilbur from his meat status to tourist attraction.

Templeton's role makes the animals' language even more interesting. The rat utilizes "paradise," the dump and County Fair, and scavenges human language from newspapers and magazines to find slogans appropriate for renaming Wilbur. We can understand the significance of Templeton's discoveries, and even Charlotte's word choices and Wilbur's performances, if we acknowledge that we foster speciesism to reinvent an earthly Eden. As demonstrated in the Christian Genesis narrative, and the minister's treatment of "Wilbur's" (Charlotte's) woven messages, we reserve higher intelligence for humanity to dominate nature. Because only Fern and Dr. Dorian believe that nonhuman creatures speak to humans, the animals must go beyond language—to discourse's cultural influences in the media—to rework the narratives that exploit pigs.

Mass media's narratives construct a human-oriented paradise inspired from Genesis's supposed dominion of animals. With its vast products that reinforce human superiority, the media objectifies and erases animals, especially "livestock," as it defines them with names and pronouns. As Vicki Hearne explains, today we name animals as "an impulse to return to Adam's divine condition," or domination over animals (169-70). When we consider how the media maintains speciesism to sell animals' bodies, Templeton's scavenging becomes even more ingenious. While the animals need new slogans, which "paradise" offers, humans' speciesist culture mirrors the "tree" of

knowledge (i.e., intellect and morale comparable to humanity's) forbidden from animals. As Bettina Heinz's and Ronald Lee's study on meat's cultural elements reveals, the discourse found in newspaper journalism, magazines, and advertisements, among other contexts, all portray animals as meat. Because the dump and County Fair contain words from these media, it is therefore not a coincidence that Charlotte asks Templeton to forage in both places.[21]

As confirmed when they warn Wilbur of his fate, advocate against his slaughter, and successfully adopt human language to rename Wilbur, the animals already know the narratives used against pigs. Accordingly, they find advertisements and articles (rooted in humanity's desire to return to paradise's "dominion") that discuss both human subjects and animal objects to learn which words we value, and which words sell, so Charlotte can attach them to Wilbur. Templeton first scavenges "crunchy" and "pre-shrunk," which come from magazine advertisements. Charlotte comments on both, stating that "[the animals] must advertise Wilbur's noble qualities, not his tastiness" and "[they] want Zuckerman to think Wilbur is nicely filled out, not all shrunk up" (White 98-99). In her statements, Charlotte affirms her awareness that these words would only strengthen Zuckerman's perception of Wilbur as meat. Instead of seeming morally hollow (i.e., "shrunk up"), Wilbur must seem intrinsically valuable (i.e., "nicely filled out"), so

[21] White clearly knew these elements because of his experience in journalism and advertising. While at Cornell University, he distributed the daily newspaper and prioritized journalism (Atkins 64). Unable to find sustainable writing jobs later in life, White worked for advertising agencies, such as in the production department at Frank Seaman, Inc., to support himself (Sims 76). Working in advertising, White saw marketing strategies firsthand, which he demonstrates in his chapter added to William Strunk's *The Elements of Style*. In rule twenty-one, White discusses how advertising "profoundly influences the tongue and pens of children and adults" with its rhetorical appeals, especially pathos (i.e., emotion) and ethos (i.e., a speaker's or product's credibility) (White, "An Approach to Style" 68).

Charlotte sends Templeton to find words that better represent Wilbur (White 98-99). Templeton next finds "radiant," which passes Charlotte's judgment. Interestingly, this word comes from a box of soap flakes that promise "New Radiant Action" (White 99). By borrowing from such a source, the animals attempt to cleanse Wilbur's image by addressing how humanity's hygiene practices "prove" our civilization and thus "superiority" over pigs who bathe in mud instead of soap.

Templeton's second word, "humble," originates from a newspaper ad folded over the leftovers of a ham sandwich (White 139). Though the narrator never mentions the story from which the word came, it is not a coincidence that the last trait used to characterize Wilbur is found in a newspaper covering pig flesh. Charlotte accepts this word because its two meanings (i.e., "not proud" and "near the ground") fit Wilbur (White 140). His short legs place him near the ground and his inferiority positions him at the bottom of Christianity's hierarchy. By choosing this word's source, Charlotte thus protests how ham erases pigs and how journalism continuously normalizes such objectification with each reference that defines them as meat. Templeton, without whom this protest would be impossible, contrasts Wilbur's portrayal as meat (i.e., "crunchy" and "ham"), by clarifying his value as an animal. The rat and the other animals thus follow Audre Lorde's method to subvert Zuckerman's Edenic reality; they use their oppressors' tools, both linguistic and cultural, to dismantle speciesist narratives and halt Wilbur's slaughter.

Wilbur's "Paradise": An Unslaughterable Counternarrative

Similar to the creation stories Carolyn Merchant reviews in *Reinventing Eden*, *Charlotte's Web* reads as a counternarrative told by nature (7). To achieve their goal, the animals play an active, not passive, role. Through Charlotte's web, Wilbur's body, Templeton's words, and even the other animals' selection of words and phrases, the animals become actors—agents of change. Though Merchant attends to narratives that seek to recover Eden, the animals create a "new American Eden," one where animals begin to name themselves (Merchant 2). As I have shown, the animals master humanity in attempt to create a more inclusive paradise, one where human characters perceive Wilbur as unslaughterable. Whereas humanity's idea of paradise remains intact when the novel begins, once the animals adopt our language and influence Zuckerman and the town, they challenge the paradisiacal farm. The words and phrases that characterize Wilbur as some*one* serve as food for thought that confronts human superiority. Wilbur's final representation suggests that, if animals share human qualities—ones used to prove our sentience, intelligence, and value—we cannot justify slaughtering them. This implication consumes Zuckerman's and nearly every other human character's thoughts, because "people are not as smart as bugs," as Charlotte claims (White 67).

The animals' ability to counter speciesist narratives and create "Wilbur's" (White's) paradise relies on the power of the written word, or as Charlotte comments, how "people believe almost anything they see in print" (White 89). Zuckerman's reaction to the seeing "SOME PIG!" in Charlotte's web demonstrates this observation. Prior to Charlotte's interference, he viewed Wilbur as a runt pig meant for a puny meal. After

seeing this phrase and Wilbur's display underneath the web, Zuckerman and his neighbor, Lurvy, begin adopting Charlotte's language, as we see when they discuss Wilbur:

> "You know," he said, in an important voice, "I've thought all along that that pig of ours was an extra good one. He's a solid pig. That pig is as sold as they come. You notice how solid he is around the shoulders, Lurvy?"
>
> "Sure. Sure I do," said Lurvy. "I've always noticed that pig. He's quite a pig."
>
> "He's long, and he's smooth," said Zuckerman.
>
> "That's right," agreed Lurvy. "He's as smooth as they come. He's *some pig*" (White 81-2, emphasis added).

Significantly, Zuckerman and Lurvy, Wilbur's biggest threats because they both discuss his slaughter, change their perception. They view him more positively, and even repeat the phrase "some pig" (White 82). Despite Charlotte's efforts to portray Wilbur as some*one*, these farmers still view him as meat, only a better piece of meat. From this moment, Zuckerman and his neighbors continue incorporating each word into their conversations; they see and speak of Wilbur as each adjective until, eventually, they realize that his "miraculous" ability to weave words into webs exempts him from slaughter. Charlotte knows her work is done when the County Fair's speaker references Wilbur using all four words and phrases during the competition: "In the words of the spider's web, ladies and gentlemen, this is *some pig*" (White 156, emphasis added), "This magnificent animal…is truly *terrific*" (White 158, emphasis added), "Note the general *radiance* of this animal" (White 158, emphasis added), and "This *radiant*, this *terrific*,

this *humble* pig" (White 158, emphasis added).[22] Thanks to Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton's endeavors, the humans no longer designate Wilbur as meat. The County Fair speaker awards Wilbur a trophy, seemingly for his language capabilities (though the narrator never specifies), and Wilbur becomes accepted as a pig.

Mike Michael's "Actors, Identities and 'Natural' Nonhumans" formulates how we socially construct human-nature identities and relationships. Typically, we create reality based on Michael's Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-object (*it*) permutation, where "humans are conscious, volitional subjects whereas nature is an object or resource to be studied or exploited" (138). When the animals adopt human language to change Wilbur's image, they construct reality to reflect Michael's Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-subject (*Thou*) in which "both humans and nature are subjects/agents…viewed as cognizant, reflexive, volitional" (139). Within this configuration, humans and nature both communicate back and forth (Michael 139). The competition at the County Fair demonstrates such an interaction. When the speaker and nearly every other human character adopt the animals' discourse, the animals become *Thou*; they communicate with and even successfully persuade the human characters to see them differently.

However, not enough communication occurs to truly free Wilbur from exploitation. As Michael indicates, nonhuman agency depends on surrounding actors and constructs (136). The animals reshape Wilbur's image, transforming him from meat to

[22] As before, Zuckerman and his neighbors pretend they always saw each characteristic in Wilbur because his intelligence threatens them. Put simply, the human characters act as if they still have the advantage of higher intelligence when, in reality, Charlotte's words confront animal inequality, though not enough to grant Wilbur equality.

pig so that the human characters no longer perceive him as food, but these creatures lack the power to overwrite speciesism's entire foundation. The human characters no longer treat Wilbur as meat, which affords him special meals and clean straw, but he becomes a tourist attraction and subsequently an object. Because Zuckerman transforms him into a trophy pig, the animals change Wilbur's social status only slightly; humanity still constructs reality and the animals lack complete agency. As Tom Andrews remarks, those with the most power are those whose "version of events predominate" (8). Though the animals construct "Wilbur's" (White's) version of paradise, it is never Paradise with a capital P because Wilbur never fully claims his free will or rights. The human characters, it seems, still complete Adam's task by naming Wilbur as product that yields revenue, which restores the dominant Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-object (*it*) reality. Ultimately, in humans' preserved rendition of Paradise, they reign over the farm and the animals.

## *The Animal Family*: A Zoo Tourist's Literary "Sanctuary"

The animal rights movement had not begun when Jarrell published *The Animal Family* in 1965, but advocates persistently challenged human superiority, despite the risk of being considered radical. Because little change had been made in the 1950s, in the 1960s animal advocates continued seeking more humane conditions for animals slaughtered in the meat industry, tested for research, and hunted in nature (Beers 181). This period more openly accepted radicalism, which prompted animal advocates to intensify their demands for greater animal welfare (Beers 156). Rachel Carson's *Silent*

*Spring*, published in 1962, opened the conversation for additional radicalism. Activists began discussing wild animals while boycotting skins, furs, and cages (Beers 180). They fought against hunting, specifically drawing attention to whether it helps or hinders biodiversity and ecology, and addressed its motives such as population control and sport (Beers 182, 184). Advocates particularly opposed canned hunting, where hunters purchase and shoot "farm-raised 'wild' animals," or "tame target[s]" to ensure they return home with a kill (Beers 186). Activists retaliated by portraying hunters, especially those who kill for sport—even to the point of manipulating the "game" by reducing the number of animal predators nearby—as cruel and destructive despite their claim that the practice brought them closer to nature (Beers 184-5). The Wilderness Act of 1964 helped protect land, but not enough for animal advocates, because it preserved large areas of land instead of specific animals, which worked in hunters' favor.[23]

In 1964, activists began creating sanctuaries for birds and other wild animals to help offset hunters' destruction (Beers 182). Jarrell speaks to this conversation. Although he published *The Animal Family* to create an idyllic family and restore his childhood (Flynn, *Randall Jarrell* 3), he also creates what he perceives as a literary sanctuary—one where a hunter coexists with a few "wild" animals some would hunt as trophies.[24] Jarrell clearly clashes with animal advocates, as he constructs his story around a hunter, but he

[23] The Endangered Species Act did not pass until 1966, a year after *The Animal Family's* publication (Beers 154). Because legislators did not reform the act until 1973, it only indirectly protected animals and the environment against human depredations (Beers 189).

[24] Maurice Sendak, *The Animal Family*'s illustrator, mentions how Jarrell lived vicariously through his fictional families: "I know how desperately Randall needed a family. That's the whole message of everything he wrote" (quoted in Griswold 112). Jarrell never recovered from his parents' divorce and, as a result, felt as if he had lost his childhood (Flynn, *Randall Jarrell* 3).

advocates against killing certain wild animals or imprisoning them in zoos.[25] According to his wife Mary, Jarrell modeled the lynx from his pet cat named Kitten and the Canadian lynx in the Washington Zoo, created the bear for "comic relief" because he "had a wish fantasy about owning a bear," and then added the boy to complete the family with a sense of circular continuity (Introduction 15-6). As Stephen Burt mentions briefly, Jarrell paradoxically reinforces yet also remakes the nuclear family with adoptive children of various species (199). However, by including animals into the human family construct, Jarrell challenges so-called wild animals' role, seeking to free them from their cages in zoos and allow them space in the human family structure.

In his essay "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," where he gives insight into his drafting process for the poem "Jerome," Jarrell criticizes zoo visitors, writing that "the free beasts [human visitors] come to their imprisoned brothers and never know that they are not also free" (*A Sad Heart*, 170). Jarrell clearly recognizes that zoos hold animals captive and uses "Jerome" to expose this issue. Griswold states that *The Animal Family*'s lynx was based on the lynx in Jarrell's "Jerome," a poem from his volume *The Woman at the Washington Zoo,* because he enjoyed visiting the zoo and reading zoo stories (98). In "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," also connected to Jarrell's zoo visits, the author includes the bears by mentioning briefly that pigeons sit on their bread (*The Woman at the Washington Zoo* 2). Because both the lynx in "Jerome" and the bear in "The Woman at the Washington Zoo" play small roles, Jarrell sought to give them more active roles

[25] Jarrell's novel perhaps critiques hunting for sport, as each character hunts to survive. However, the author simultaneously reaffirms another form of dominion over animals by suggesting that the hunter, and by extension humanity, must consume animals to survive.

with *The Animal Family*, not merely for the sake of story but, like White, to change their societal representation. Because the public had already become more intimate with nature, 1960s activists "needed only to heighten that sensitivity" (Beers 186). Beers indicates that many still accepted hunting, but affection for pets helped reduce the desire to kill for sport (186). Even in scripture pets enjoy more protection than wild creatures. Moses's law protects domestic animals who live with humans against mistreatment and sexual abuse, a comfort wild animals never receive because of their lack of relationship with humanity (Tischler 42). Some early Christians even believed that companion animals' association with humanity might grant them entrance into "the future paradise," or Heaven (Minnis 90). Thus, Jarrell creates the bear and lynx as human "children" and "pets" to elevate and create sympathy for them.

To better distinguish where Jarrell draws and blurs boundaries between humanity, animal-humanity, and animality, I examine the hunter's domestication of the mermaid and her transition into humanity, then explore the hunter's and mermaid's domestication of the bear and lynx, and finally demonstrate these animals' creative agency, which they enact by bringing home the human boy, completing the family and changing their family role. Each section focuses on how an individual species constructs varying forms of paradise by either domesticating animals or maintaining animality.

## The Mermaid: From Animal-Human to Human

To understand the hunter's and mermaid's domestication of the bear and lynx, we must first understand that the hunter domesticates the mermaid to begin his family.

Though the mermaid is part animal and part human, the hunter views her as an animal he must lure in by using *her* language. Flynn's "Randall Jarrell's Mermaid: *The Animal Family* and 'Semifeminine' Poetics" discusses how the hunter adopts the mermaid's language to bait her, but Flynn does not discuss in depth how or why the hunter colonizes the mermaid. My analysis considers the hunter's colonization of the mermaid as domestication, where the hunter views the mermaid as the key to creating his Edenic family; but before he can do so, he must domesticate her into his wifely companion. After hearing the mermaid's enticing song, the hunter waits by the seal rock each night, repeating her melody in the hopes that she will swim to him as she would another sea person. The mermaid, like a wild animal, comes closer each night as the hunter continues using her language to tame her and to imply that he shares her culture. When the mermaid finally swims within speaking distance, they converse, and the hunter uses this opportunity to domesticate the mermaid by teaching her words that separate them. Whereas the mermaid teaches the hunter the word for "head," the body part that *connects* them, the hunter teaches the mermaid the word for "leg," the body part that *divides* them.

Despite proving her intellectual capacity when she repeats, remembers, and speaks the hunter's language "so much better" than he can hers, where she even learns phrases like "oh well" that he never speaks, the hunter continues domesticating the mermaid (Jarrell 16-7).[26] When she visits the beach each day, he points to the meadow and states, "in the clear divided tones of a teacher making something plain":

[26] When the hunter teaches the mermaid that the word "man" describes him but that the word "men" describes others like him, the mermaid replies, "The sea men, like me–" (Jarrell 18). But he corrects her by

> "That is my *house*."
>
> "House," hissed the mermaid. "House."
>
> "I sleep in the *house*, on a *bed*. I eat in the *house*, on a *table*."
>
> "Bed, said the mermaid. "Table." But her quick eyes looked strained and hesitant; it was plain that she had no idea what the hunter was talking about.
>
> The hunter started cheerfully, "A table's a big flat thing with legs"—the mermaid's eyes brightened: she knew what legs meant, and felt very landish for knowing—"that you eat on" (Jarrell 20-1, original emphasis).[27]

The hunter initiates this conversation not simply out of courtesy to share personal information with the mermaid and build a trusting relationship but rather to distinguish himself from her by portraying himself as more "landish" or "civilized." He hopes that introducing the mermaid to civilization will erase her animality and foreground her humanity. Again the hunter uses what separates him from the mermaid, legs, to explain a table. Even the narration evidences their differences, as the mermaid hisses the word "house" when reciting it and struggles to understand the purpose of the hunter's lifestyle, both of which highlight her animality or Otherness and in turn indicate her "need" to be domesticated. But most important is how the narrator describes the hunter's tone as "clear" and "divided" when using civilization to split his and the mermaid's species (Jarrell 20). Perhaps the hunter believes explaining his lifestyle will further entice the mermaid, as he continues to suggest his supposedly more cultured lifestyle by

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saying, "The sea *people*" (Jarrell 18, emphasis added). By grouping the mermaid alongside "people," the hunter allows her a humanlike status, ultimately showing that he considers her as more human than animal after realizing her intelligence.

[27] For the rest of this essay, unless otherwise specified, each citation referencing only Jarrell's name comes from *The Animal Family*.

highlighting his bed, table, and house. Regardless, the hunter differentiates between himself and the mermaid so she will perceive herself as Other and seek to feel more included by joining his home.

Initially, the mermaid speaks in both her and the hunter's language. She retains part of her animality, or culture from the sea people. Celebrating her nonhuman identity, she brings the hunter back "gifts" from the sea: shells, starfish, seahorses, fish they consume, trinkets from wrecked ships, and the ship's figurehead. The mermaid brings carcasses from the sea, or more animal-like presents, but she also carries more human tokens such as the figurehead and the necklace she makes for her new husband. The figurehead, which she hangs in front of the door to make the hunter's home more inclusive, especially celebrates her animality because the female centaur (part human and part deer/goat) represents her dual identity. Eventually, however, the mermaid abandons her animality and stops speaking both languages. She no longer considers the sea her home. Rather, she covers her tail with a long skirt and fully adopts the hunter's language, where she speaks, thinks, and behaves in it; she cooks and cleans for her husbandly companion while also "mothering" the bear and lynx. Yet, as she does so, the hunter continues to domesticate her, which I will discuss below. The mermaid begins as an animal, an equal, but becomes more human than animal and therefore, according to the hunter (and those who share his perspective), "better." From this point, she and the hunter domesticate their wild children together. By the end of the novel, the mermaid completes her transition from animal-human to human when she masters the hunter's language, as evidenced by her role as co-domesticator, by her nearly six-page long monologue in the

last chapter, and by finally crying. Because the mermaid assimilates and proves her sentience, distinguishing herself from the other sea people who do not cry, the hunter considers her fully human.

"Raising" The Bear and Lynx: The Hunter's and Mermaid's Dominant Narrative

Names' rhetorical influence also helps illuminate how Jarrell treats the animal family. In contrast to *Charlotte's Web*, all of *The Animal Family* characters appear only by their title, a common noun: the hunter, mermaid, bear, lynx, and boy. Vanguri differentiates between common nouns and proper names, explaining that names identify new meanings whereas nouns describe a meaning agreed upon by society (1). But based on Vanguri's assertion that names regulate one's equity or inequity, power or impotence, societal position and accompanying role, and, as a result, one's identity (1-5), the power of names is vast. Typically, parents give their children proper names, yet the hunter and mermaid never partake in this tradition, and even they have no proper names. Though each member of the animal family references one another by a common noun, likely to support the novel's status as a fairy tale and make it more generally applicable, Adams's theory of the absent referent still proves helpful because it shows how names can either erase animals or make them present.[28]

At first glance, the characters' common names seemingly showcase and value each identity (i.e., humanity, animal-humanity, or animality) by making that identity

[28] See Peter F. Neumeyer's "Randall Jarrell's *The Animal Family*: New Land and Old" for an analysis of the novel as a fairy tale, based on both its content and style.

present, which fosters equality. But because the hunter's lectures erase the mermaid's animality, and then the hunter and mermaid erase the bear's and lynx's animality by anthropomorphizing them, these names fail to avoid the domesticator-domesticated dichotomy similar to the namer-named split. In fact, these common names create such a dichotomy that they Other the animal-human and animal characters based on their species and establish their secondary familial position by reminding the hunter of their animal difference. To reiterate Vanguri's earlier claim, naming never serves neutral purposes but rather "represent[s] the entirety of the named…[based on] the values and interests of the namer" (2-3, 5). But these rhetorical devices only synecdochically depict individuals (Vanguri 5), as we see with the animals' names, serving to construct the hunter's paradise, which the mermaid follows because she believes it to be the landish norm. The domestication that anthropomorphizes and Others the mermaid, bear, and lynx also erases their animal characteristics. When the hunter colonizes the mermaid, he differentiates himself from her as more human and thus "superior," just as the couple elevates themselves above their ostensible children when they anthropomorphize and train them.

Griswold discusses how the bear, lynx, and boy represent different childhood developmental stages (102), which aids our understanding of the animal family, but the hunter and mermaid do more than simply "raise" their adopted children. These "parents" forcefully remove the bear and lynx from the wild to create a family—their Edenic reality—but doing so requires domesticating the animals, a practice rooted in New World notions of civilization. Ever since Christopher Columbus believed he found Eden upon arriving in South America in 1498, scientists began using The Recovery Narrative to

recreate paradise with gardens and zoos that tamed so-called wilderness (Merchant 57). Colonialists defined humanity in opposition to animality. They misapprehended humans and animals who lacked laws and manners as wild, while they considered individuals who had manners and possessions (i.e., houses, land, animals) as civilized (Merchant 69-70). Thus, settlers forced humans displaying putatively animal characteristics to suppress their naturalness if they desired civilization. The hunter and mermaid adopt a similar mentality. As opposed to human language in *Charlotte's Web* that domesticates and dominates Wilbur through *objectifying* agricultural practices, human language in *The Animal Family* more intimately domesticates and dominates animals by *humanizing* them. To rid them of their animality, or supposed wildness, the hunter and mermaid domesticate and Other both the bear and lynx by humanizing or "civilizing" them.

To domesticate his children, the hunter uses methods that seem contradictory. He highlights their similarities to people by using personal pronouns to present them each as some*one* rather than some*thing*. Unlike human characters in *Charlotte's Web*, the hunter never names the bear or lynx to prove his authority and construct his role in paradise. Instead, he references them both as "he" or "him," but never "it" or "anything" except to create suspense when surprising the mermaid with them. Though referencing these siblings as "he" and "him" seems to grant them rights as animals by acknowledging their sentience and thus personhood, if we further examine their context we realize they serve different rhetorical purposes: to portray the bear and lynx as more human than animal.

Malone's argument about third person pronouns, specifically how they exclude the referent from the conversation to define him or her in a particular way, explains how

the hunter employs personal pronouns (71-2). Rather than calling the bear or lynx only by their perceived sex, the hunter calls the bear a "boy": "I've a boy for us" (Jarrell 62). Likewise, he calls the lynx "another boy" upon initiating him into family (Jarrell 103). While the hunter could be acknowledging the animals' sex, the context of his bad dream informs us that he means boy as in human child. Generally, the meaning behind third-person pronouns may be determined based on their interactional context (Malone 46). Malone calls this context the "indexical or situated nature of pronouns," meaning that pronoun references depend on their "situational relevancies" or "the demands of a situation which they index" (47). Understanding the context of the hunter's statements clarifies the bear's and lynx's rights, or lack thereof, as animals to highlight how the hunter anthropomorphizes them by claiming each as "he" or "him."[29]

The mermaid figures less significantly than the hunter when domesticating the bear. Upon first meeting him, the mermaid acts more as the bear's peer—like another animal interacting with him in nature—as she overrides table manners to throw her new child meat while sitting at the table. The mermaid anthropomorphizes the bear by using the personal pronoun "he," but she does so differently than the hunter. When the bear angers bees while stealing honey, she says, "Let's teach him to run for the beach instead of his bearskin. We can tell him, 'You're a big bear now'" (Jarrell 92). Just as the hunter tells the mermaid he has a boy for them, the mermaid references the bear as a "big bear." Contrasting with the hunter, however, the mermaid acknowledges that the bear is *like* a

[29] For an extensive study on Jarrell's anthropomorphism in his poetry, prose, and children's books, see Levi Michael Manglitz's *Refiguring the Human and the Animal: Anthropomorphism & Zoomorphism in Twentieth Century American Poetry*.

child but still a bear, as she uses "big *bear*" rather than "big *boy*."

As she continues her transition from animal-humanity to humanity, the mermaid plays a larger role in domesticating the lynx. Soon after the hunter elaborates how he stole the lynx, the mermaid uses "him" to reference her second son: "But how long will it take to tame him?" (Jarrell 105).[30] This question proves how much the hunter has domesticated the mermaid, but more importantly, that domestication for the mermaid is Othering. Viewing the lynx as "him," when animals are often viewed as "its" and when the mermaid first saw him as an "it," elevates the lynx to a more human status. But as I will demonstrate below, taming an animal oftentimes erases his or her animality, and the mermaid likely thought of their domestication of the bear when asking this question. However, once she sees that the hunter has already domesticated the lynx, the mermaid continues to reference him by personal pronouns. Following her husband, she even anthropomorphizes the lynx by comparing his nobleness to "the king…in the story," one of the nursery rhymes the hunter teaches her (Jarrell 124).

Such personifying language and anthropomorphism allow the bear and lynx entrance into the family, but emphasize only the animal characteristics the hunter and mermaid accept. The hunter deprecates the bear's animality as he states, "You certainly don't have to think of anything for *him* to do after dinner," suggesting that, because the bear sleeps all the time, he possesses a lower intellectual capacity (Jarrell 77, original

[30] Despite knowing the lynx's sex from the hunter's earlier dialogue, the mermaid first calls him "it" by asking the hunter "No, what's *it* really?" and "How on earth did you get *it*?" (Jarrell 104, emphasis added). Interestingly, the mermaid applies "her" to the lynx's mother, yet continues to reference the lynx as "it" when she asks "But how did you get *it* without *her* knowing?" (Jarrell 104, emphasis added). In this instance, the mermaid allows the lynx's mother cognizance and identifies with her more than her son perhaps because, after mothering the bear, the mermaid can imagine the lynx's mother's loss.

emphasis). In this statement, the hunter insinuates that his son lacks intelligence, at least compared to human standards determined through action or productivity rather than inaction or unproductivity. He also criticizes the bear's bathing routine, claiming it makes him look worse because his "fur stick[s] out every which way" (Jarrell 76). Again, the hunter measures the bear's hygiene based on human principles, believing that his bathing routine makes him look messy, like an "animal." Despite previously valuing the land's difference from the sea, the mermaid begins perceiving reality through the hunter's speciesist anthropocentric lens and mocks the bear because of his animal identity or Otherness. She criticizes the bear for being an "inexperienced washer," implying that he cannot master his animality (Jarrell 76). Just like the hunter, the mermaid compares her child's appearance to a human's to suggest he should look more presentable or more "civilized."

To put her jeering into perspective, the mermaid also calls the bear a "walrus" to insult him for snoring (Jarrell 77). In this instance, the mermaid displays speciesism, and in turn devalues the bear's animality, by implying that being an animal is an insult, interestingly enough for an action that both humans and animals do involuntarily. The couple clearly distinguishes themselves from the bear by elevating humanity and animal-humanity over animality. They consider themselves more intelligent, cleaner, experienced, refined, and overall more civilized because they do not bathe with their tongues and partake in a more "productive" (i.e., intellectually planned) lifestyle. As such, the hunter's and mermaid's anthropomorphism of the bear Others him, just as third-person pronouns create an us-versus-them dichotomy by defining a referent in opposition

to the speaker (Malone 73). Because the bear acts like a bear, the mermaid comments "We are two" to the hunter, excluding him from the family because of his animality.

Though these domesticators allow the bear to be himself when outside, they collectively train him against his natural tendencies. The bear is only allowed to act civilized while in the house. He bathes while sitting in a chair, and he eats at the table with the hunter and mermaid, at first in a chair but then on the floor because he outgrows his seat. As the hunter tames his son by telling him "No! no!," he continues domesticating the mermaid by reminding her of civil behavior, which results in the mermaid reinforcing the hunter's domestication. When in the house, the bear refrains from shaking himself dry because both the hunter and mermaid train the behavior out of him by commanding "No, no! No, no!" Essentially, the bear only sleeps and eats in the house in part because he enjoys being lazy, but also because his supposed parents forbid nearly everything besides playing with a domestic object, the leather ball. He must suppress his animality, or become a humanlike child, to enter the family. These contrasting identities work together to erase the bear's nature and, at the same time, emphasize his presence in the family as a son, which helps establish the couple's reinvented paradise.

The hunter's and mermaid's anthropomorphism of the lynx also includes him as a family member. Whereas the bear remained a "boy," the lynx becomes "a baby lynx," a more revered son (Jarrell 104). The couple particularly admires the lynx's ability to walk on snow and jump heights, his intelligence when playing with the leather ball, and especially his active involvement in the family where he brings home meat. Because the

lynx's adoptive parents believe he possesses more agreeable qualities, they allow him more animality than the bear. They even ennoble the lynx over his brother because **"**the bear was fond of the hunter and the mermaid, but the lynx adored them," indicating that the siblings' perception of their domesticators determines their worth (Jarrell 119). Still, this animal companion is not considered the hunter's and mermaid's equal. When he shreds the handkerchief that belonged to the hunter's mother, this "fatherly" figure infantilizes the lynx by saying he cannot be blamed because "he doesn't know any better," which suggests his amorality (Jarrell 114). Essentially, the couple understands the lynx as "only" an animal and, at most, a child with no true moral sense.

Though the hunter and mermaid glorify the lynx, they permit only parts of his animality and they domesticate and Other the rest of him, just as they do with the bear. The hunter tames his second son before introducing him to his wife, and though Jarrell does not show the hunter's methods, he describes how they resulted in the lynx letting his adoptive father pet him. Even so, we see both adult figures train the lynx. At first, they praise him for being intelligent enough to catch rabbits, but after he brings three home at once, it unsettles the mermaid. The hunter urges her to "Tell him no, no!" and, the next day, the couple tells the lynx "It's *your* rabbit" (Jarrell 115-6, original emphasis). When the lynx acts like a lynx, by bringing home rabbits, squirrels, and even a fox, he is too wild, yet when he brings partridge, his domesticators accept the "gift" because they consume fowl. The lynx's kills, with the exception of the partridge, must be hidden both in and outside of the home, since *his* hunts do not exhibit domesticated behavior. The lynx hunts not merely for food but also to express friendship, which his human and

animal-human counterparts consider as uncivil. Both the hunter and mermaid legitimize and even value the lynx's animality to a certain extent, but only when it benefits them by providing companionship or meals.

As well as demanding the lynx to act more domesticated when outside, the hunter trains him to be gentler, a trait yet again determined by human notions. When the lynx mock-bites the hunter, the latter shouts "Ouch!" and "Easy! easy!" so his son never bites too hard (Jarrell 120). The hunter also disciplines the lynx during the boxing game they play together in which "each would try to touch the other without the other's touching him" where they "hit, dodged, blocked, hesitated" (Jarrell 126-7). The lynx usually retracts his claws but "occasionally he [gets] too excited to remember" and cuts the hunter's shirts, to which the hunter says, "Velvet paws! velvet paws!" (Jarrell 127). Here, the hunter's command functions similar to the phrase used to domesticate the bear, but while "No, no!" prohibits the bear's "messiness," this command softens the lynx's predatory nature. As "Velvet paws! Velvet paws!" further tames the lynx, ridding him of his defenses against the hunter and other predators, it ensures that he does not harm his putative parents. This protection, as it allows the family's coexistence, helps actualize what the domesticators understand as paradise—at least until the animals bring home the human boy.

## Retaining Identity: The Bear and Lynx Animalize the Home and "Create" A Boy

Unlike the animals in *Charlotte's Web*, the bear speaks vocally but mostly corporeally to respond to his domesticators. The first time we see the bear, he makes his

feelings obvious with his body language. After the hunter takes him from a tree, “he snapped and wriggled the whole way,” showing that he does not trust the man and does not want to leave with him (Jarrell 66). The only times we hear the bear speak, he growls at the hunter and mermaid from a corner in the house. While sleeping, the bear sometimes cries and pushes his face into the bearskin he sleeps on. Tellingly, his only comfort is in the skin of a bear killed by the hunter; the bear, likely traumatized from witnessing his mother’s death and being placed into a new, unnatural environment with strangers, clings to the bearskin.

As the hunter and mermaid domesticate the bear, he resists and retains his animality, acting like a bear rather than a human child. When the parents begin training him to drink his water at the table out of a bowl, the bear knocks the bowl off. Though he intentionally sabotages his place at the table, the hunter and mermaid understand the incident as the bear’s bad table manners and respond by placing his water bowl on the floor but still keeping his place at the table, with a bowl and chair, on which he begins to eat (Jarrell 74). When the couple plays with the bear, he engages partly because he is bored inside the home but also because he enjoys the attention. While playing, the bear catches the leather ball “in his mouth or bat[s] at it with his paws” to simulate his hunting skills restrained by domestication and to express his preference for hunting and playing in nature (Jarrell 72). He begins fishing for his domesticators but uses this opportunity to communicate with them that he prefers his animality over their civilization, namely their dinner routines. While fishing, the bear demonstrates his enthusiasm and prioritizes feeding himself with his natural hunting ability over being fed: “his muzzle would dart

out and his teeth ring shut on them with magical swiftness and certainty, so that you never would have believed how badly he ate out of his bowl" (Jarrell 75). Whereas eating from a bowl and even playing with a leather ball is unnatural for the bear, he "plays" and eats with his entire body when outdoors.

What makes the bear's resistance so remarkable is that he learns human actions, ones we never see the hunter or mermaid teach him, to train *them*. The bear communicates naturally by scratching at the front door to train the hunter when he wants to come inside. Most significant, however, is how neither supposed parent teaches the bear to walk on two feet, yet he does so gracefully:

> He sat up and begged very beautifully, and he would walk on two legs almost as well as on four; when he would walk across the room on his hind legs, reach for something on the table, and then cram it into his mouth, he looked like a little boy in a bearskin (Jarrell 73).

The bear begs and walks on his hind legs only to manipulate the hunter's and mermaid's desire to his benefit. When he stands and walks like a human, he knows the couple will give him food because they want a human boy, so he temporarily adopts human behavior to get what he wants. Though the bear enjoys fishing, he also enjoys being fed because he eats everything, both that which they provide him and that found in the meadow, forest, and beach. When the hunter and mermaid give the bear food, it allows him more leisure to sleep and be lazy, which he enjoys, though not at the expense of suppressing his natural fishing tendencies and losing the opportunity to fish. By participating in his domestication, the bear proves his intelligence *as* a bear, establishes agency as a member

of the animal family, and in turn defies his domesticators' human-oriented invented paradise. The bear repeatedly clarifies that, though he acts as a child while in their home, he is a bear and refuses to abandon all of his animal qualities.

Similar to the bear, the lynx speaks both vocally and corporeally in response to his domestication. The first time we see the lynx, he expresses his feelings clearly by hissing at the mermaid when their eyes meet. He fears the mermaid because he has yet to be domesticated, but this situation soon changes because she begins taming him. Compared to the bear, however, the lynx seems to adjust to his housetraining more easily or perhaps resists it less because of his personality. Of all of his biological siblings, the lynx travels the farthest from the cave, even when his mother insists that he stay. He is naturally inclined to adventure, and perhaps he sees his time with the hunter and mermaid as a chance for exploration away from his biological mother's worries, which makes him more pliant to these figures' domestication. As a result, the lynx becomes a more active member of the hybrid family. He allows the hunter to pet and scratch his chin, and he even purrs and kneads his paws in response, while he also lets the mermaid hand feed him and plays with her each time she throws the leather ball. The lynx ultimately returns his adoptive parents' affection by giving them "affectionate mock-bites" (Jarrell 120), rubbing against them, following them around the house, and bringing them back "gifts" from his hunts such as partridge, rabbits, squirrels, and a fox.

Notwithstanding his domestication, the lynx retains some animal characteristics, particularly his predatory nature. When playing with the leather ball, he imitates his hunting skills:

> He gave the ball two immense, instantaneous bites, batted it from one paw to the other, flung it into the air, and then began to chase it around the room…the ball came to life and the lynx was after it. When the ball stopped he would hide behind some inch-high fold in a deerskin and then with agonizing slowness…would work his invisible way up to the ball (Jarrell 108-9).

Instinctively curious, the lynx wants to determine what kind of creature the ball is, so he stalks it as if it were an animal he must chase. He jumps "in mid-air," going in for the kill with "two immense, instantaneous bites" to catch the ball as if it were his prey (Jarrell 108). When the ball ceases moving, the lynx hides to protect himself and to make sure the toy "died."

Likewise, the lynx demonstrates his animality when eating partridge. In contrast to his delicate table manners, where he eats and drinks from dishes while sitting in the bear's old chair at the table, the lynx eats partridge in a less civilized manner:

> he loved [partridge] so much that he would dab at his piece with his paw, work it out of his dish onto the table, and then with a rapt stare rub his head against it—once he got so exited that he flung it into the air, batted it to the floor, and then chased it around the room as if it were his ball (Jarrell 112-3).

When eating the "gift" he brings back for the family, the lynx consumes as he would naturally—like a predator. When he dabs, flings, bats, and chases the partridge, the lynx hunts and kills the deer a second time while at dinner. Ironically, the lynx only eats partridge in this manner because he *is* the one who hunted the deer and this knowledge brings out his animality, giving him a chance to break from his domestication if only temporarily. The lynx plays an active role in the family *as* a lynx, especially when sitting at the table, significantly countering his image as a human boy. In fact, his behavior

deconstructs the table, defining it not merely as a symbol of civilization but also an icon of his animality. Subsequently, the lynx works to unhinge the table's and, by extension, the hunter's and mermaid's domesticity.

Like the bear, the lynx also trains the hunter and mermaid. First, he bathes the hunter's hair and improves his appearance so much so that the mermaid "barely recognizes [him]" (Jarrell 121). Though the lynx's grooming could signify his affection toward the hunter, he never washes the bear, with whom he develops a stronger sense of community, because his brother never domesticates him, unlike the hunter. Upon bathing the hunter, the lynx "lie[s] beside [his so-called parents], one paw outstretched, like a lion on a monument" (Jarrell 122). The lynx's demeanor reveals his elation resulting from altering the hunter's appearance and marking him with his scent. The lynx thus domesticates this father figure according to *his,* instead of the hunter's, standards. Additionally, he trains the hunter and mermaid to wake up when he wants, likely so they will give him attention. When the couple oversleeps, or "when they [don't] wake up as early as the lynx," he awakens them (Jarrell 125). The lynx patiently waits as long as he can and then "very gently and carefully, his claws sheathed, [tries] to open the hunter's eyes," which prompts the hunter's murmurs for the lynx to stop that concurrently wake the mermaid (Jarrell 125). Rather than simply fulfilling his adoptive parents' demands, the lynx prioritizes his needs and commands the hunter and mermaid by deciding when and how they begin their day—with him. As he regulates their morning routine, the lynx ensures his agency and requires that the hunter and mermaid see, quite literally, his intervention. By retaining his animality to undomesticate the table and refusing to allow

couple's domestication to remain one-sided, the lynx clarifies that he will not completely censor his "lynxish notions" and overall identity as an animal (Jarrell 118). In doing so, the lynx, like the bear, also reworks the hunter's and mermaid's anthropocentric idea of paradise.

From how the bear and lynx resist their domestication by preserving their animality and training the hunter and mermaid, we know they are fully aware of their Othering and intend on reversing the parents' imagined Edenic vision to *their* benefit. To do so, they claim agency by partaking in the family's construction and thus in their reality. The lynx, similar to Charlotte, is the mastermind behind his and the bear's creation. After the lynx finds a boy washed on shore by the river, his mother dead in the pair's canoe, he instinctually knows that the boy needs a mother and father to survive. The lynx also knows, based the hunter's and mermaid's behavior toward him and the bear, that they truly desire a *human* boy, not a humanized male animal. If he brings home a human boy, then it will divert the hunter's and mermaid's attention away from him and the bear. The lynx observed that, after he arrived, the hunter and mermaid ignored the bear and stinted his housetraining because they were so preoccupied with the lynx's more advanced intellect, or simply his more active participation in the family. In fact, the couple gave the lynx the bear's chair at the table. Recalling this behavior, the lynx makes the most of the boy's situation and uses it to deter the hunter and mermaid from further domesticating him and, by association, the bear. Because interacting with a human boy will ease their adoptive parents' loneliness, they will no longer need to humanize the animals, which will allow the lynx and bear the space to *be* animals. As such, these

siblings work together to *complete* the family by finding the boy and bringing him home.

Upon discovering the boy, the lynx comes home to enlist the bear's help. Although it takes the bear two tries to understand the lynx's gestures, he finally follows him because "the lynx's trips almost always ended in something good to eat" (Jarrell 135).[31] The bear only follows his brother for food, but he, too, plays an equally pivotal role in the boy's arrival. Both the lynx and bear use human behavior, learned from their domestication, to construct their image when interacting with the boy, similar to how Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton manipulate human tools (i.e., spoken, written, and performed human language) to rename Wilbur. Perhaps because his mother has already taught him the difference between domesticated and wild animals (after all, the boy knows the word "kitty"), the boy feels uneasy toward the bear when he walks on all four legs, but he trusts both animal siblings when they look more human, such as when the bear and lynx stand on their hind legs to look into the boat and determine whether his mother is dead (Jarrell 136).

Eventually, the boy trusts the lynx after he rubs his face against the boy's and the bear after he walks on his hind legs, which makes him look "too good-natured for the boy to keep on being afraid of him" (Jarrell 136). Perceiving the animals' human qualities, the boy begins trusting the lynx and bear, permitting them to bring him to their home. As a

[31] From the beginning, the bear and lynx form a community, a commonality due to their animality, and in turn understand one another. When the lynx first meets the bear, he clings to and identifies with him as if he were his mother: "He had started out with one big furry thing, his mother, and the bear was bigger and furrier" (Jarrell 111). Whereas the hunter and mermaid fail to understand and value the lynx's "gifts," the bear understands the lynx, and vice versa, because his discoveries were "notions of what would interest a bear" (Jarrell 118-9). It is this very relationship that enables the lynx and bear to work together and complete the family.

result of the lynx's hunting skills, the bear's ability to walk on two legs, and their mutual understanding, the lynx finds the boy and the bear safely carries him home as he follows the lynx back to the house. Without the bear, the lynx likely would not have been able to safely transport the boy because human skin does not stretch like the back of a lynx cub's neck. The lynx had not learned to walk on his hind legs, or he had chosen not to do so, and therefore needed the bear's talent.[32]

Though one may interpret the lynx's discovery of the boy as merely reprising his domestication, it differs greatly from his other "gifts." Whereas these gifts include dead animals from his hunts, the lynx offers what the hunter and mermaid consider his best present because the boy is human. The lynx asks for the bear's assistance because he needs the boy alive to redirect their domesticators' attention. As his own paternal behavior demonstrates, the lynx cares more for the boy than the bear. As opposed to the bear, who initially makes it clear he has no interest in the boy by keeping his distance, the lynx comforts the human. When the boy begins crying, the lynx rubs his head against the orphan to ease his anxiety, and he continues to comfort the boy once home by purring. That said, the lynx exhibits more concern for the boy than the bear, likely because he, rather than his sibling, brings the boy home to achieve his goal.

Whereas we never see the lynx's behavior upon delivering his other "gifts," the narrator details the lynx's behavior with the boy to emphasize its importance. The lynx

[32] In Jarrell's 1962 essay, "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," he provides insight into his drafting process for "Jerome." The author states that, while at the Washington zoo, he fed the lynxes who responded by standing on their hind legs (*A Sad Heart* 165-6). Because the bear, rather than the lynx, masters this human behavior to train the hunter and mermaid, Jarrell may have included him for more than humorous reasons—to allow his species, alongside the lynx's, to prove their intelligence and enjoy a more elevated, humanlike familial position.

anxiously awaits the hunter's and mermaid's reaction. Like a cat with "a little mewing whine," he paces from the forest to house (Jarrell 40). When the couple finally returns home, the lynx excitedly leads them to the boy by rubbing against the hunter's legs, running back and forth from the boy to the hunter, and purring more loudly than ever. As the narrator comments, "The lynx trotted over and stood *proudly* at [the bear's] side" to show the hunter and mermaid the boy (Jarrell 140, emphasis added). Here the lynx clearly demonstrates his pride, not simply in his great find but in his feat as a *creator,* the one who makes possible the animal family's completion. Additionally, he demonstrates the bear's role as co-creator. When showing the boy to their ostensible parents, the lynx stands beside the bear, rather than in front of him, thus suggesting that they jointly brought their new sibling home and should both receive credit. Though the narrator gives little insight into the lynx's mind, this action suggests that he involved his brother, with whom he identifies most due to their animality, because he intended to stop both his and the bear's domestication.

Once the hunter sees the boy, the wild siblings accomplish their plan, changing their family roles by actualizing their domesticators' idea of paradise. The hunter "reach[s] down and touch[s] the boy the way you touch something in a dream to make sure it is real" and soon begins domesticating the boy's appearance by grooming the boy's hair to smooth it (Jarrell 141-2). Upon seeing his adoptive father's reaction, the lynx "stop[s] being proud of his find and [leaves] for the forest," showing that he considers his plan complete and may now leave for lynxish adventures in the forest rather than in the house (Jarrell 145). The bear, less invested in his brother's plan, remains by

the fireplace, watching the mermaid and boy play as he and she used to, and "occasionally his paws would twitch, but he was a big bear now" (Jarrell 145). At times he wants to play with the leather ball, evidenced by his twitching paws, but he refrains because he outgrows his domestication, at least the aspect that trained him to consider inanimate objects as play. The bear's resistance displays his acceptance of the boy, perhaps because he understands that the boy's arrival allows him more freedom to be a bear. After all, the bear already understood why the hunter and mermaid humanized him and, to capitalize on their loneliness, learned to walk on his hind legs. With this realization in mind, the bear finally invests in the lynx's mutually beneficial plan.

## The Lynx's and Bear's "Paradise": A Coexistence Counternarrative

*The Animal Family* initially seems like a human story, since the main action surrounds the hunter creating *his* family, or ideal paradise, but the animals play a larger role. Like Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton, the lynx and bear offer a counternarrative similar to Merchant's "new American Eden" stories (2). To produce their version of paradise, they also "master" their domesticators by learning that the couple humanizes them because they truly want a human boy, through whom the lynx and bear halt their own domestication. In establishing their own narratives, these brothers escape the hunter's and mermaid's objectifying relationship that mirrors Michael's Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-object (*it*) construction, in which human intervention often controls nature through science or other "technological fix[s]" but may also take "responsibility for" nature by claiming "stewardship" (138). The hunter's and mermaid's domestication

of their adopted children, in which they dominate the animals to rear them, reinforces the two interpretations of the Christian Genesis narrative: control and conservation of nature. In contrast, the lynx and bear construct a more equal animal-human relationship, emulating Michael's Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-subject (*Thou*). When both humanity and nature act as subjects, both possess agency and understand one another "as cognizant, reflexive, [and] volitional" (Michael 139). Though under unequal circumstances because of communication barriers, humans and nature communicate with each other. Michael clarifies that this communication is an "exchange," a back and forth action, which can even be non-linguistic (139). Though the animals in *Charlotte's Web* speak to humans through the written and corporeal (or performed) word, similarly aiming to construct more equal relationships between humanity and nature, the bear and lynx talk corporeally, with the exception of the lynx's meows and both animals' initial hisses. When they retain their animality and train the hunter and mermaid for food or attention, both siblings communicate with their ostensible parents and respond to their domestication. But because the couple continues training them while erasing their animality, the lynx and bear bring back the boy to prevent from being further domesticated.

By bringing home the boy, the lynx and bear create Michael's Human-as-object (*me*)/Nature-as-subject (*Thou*) configuration, which reverses the dominant Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-object (*it*) by giving nature a *divine* power (139). Nature, as an agent, controls human destiny for a reason (Michael 139). The lynx and bear determine their domesticators' destiny (correlating to their position as a man and woman expected

to raise a nuclear, or *human,* family in the 1960s) and future fulfillment by making a human boy part of the family, something neither the hunter nor the mermaid could do. The lynx and bear thus become godlike as they create, or complete, the family. In fact, the chapter entitled "The Lynx and the Bear Bring Home a Boy" begins much like the Genesis narrative. Although Jarrell's narration does not distinguish the days of creation quite like Genesis, it mentions storms and water, alluding to the first few days of God's creation of earth: "Once for a day and two nights it stormed, stormed terribly; on the morning of the second day the clouds and the wind and the rain were gone, and the washed sky was full of sunlight" (Jarrell 131). The narrator states that first storms brought water and then explains how the lynx brought the boy: "The lynx stood in the meadow and watched the hunter and the mermaid go away from him along the path that went up into the wood" (Jarrell 131). The narrative continues to the lynx's discovery of the boy. In this biblical allusion, the lynx becomes an actor, or agent of change, just as the bear does because he aids his brother. As creators, the lynx and bear are more ethical than the hunter, and thus elevated above him, because they do not the steal the boy, as the hunter stole them, or manipulate the boy into coming home with them, as the hunter did to the mermaid. Rather, they save the boy whom the lynx knows cannot survive in the wild because of his vulnerable humanness and age; his survival instincts have been domesticated out of him by civilization.[33]

[33] By having the bear and lynx acquire the boy morally instead of stealing him, as the hunter did to them, Jarrell elevates the animals' morality over the hunter's and therefore challenges his domination over them.

Important to note, however, is that the bear and lynx choose to stay with the family. Because both animals could seriously harm or kill the hunter, mermaid, or boy, the fact that neither attempts to do so speaks volumes. The wild siblings are free to roam the meadow, forest, and beach. If they wanted to escape, they could. Since they both still hunt for themselves and the family, being domesticated does not prevent them from living in nature. Rather, the bear and lynx want to remain with the family because it provides them with benefits such as food and attention. They simply do not want to be domesticated as humans, hence losing their identity as animals. As such, the bear sleeps in the corner (presumably dark like a cave) and the lynx on the lion skin (for comfort as if from his species) to attain more natural environments and identities. Just as the animals from *Charlotte's Web* wish to rework Wilbur's image and Zuckerman's paradise, the bear and especially the lynx hope to offer the hunter and mermaid an alternative, more inclusive paradise, where they can act *as animals* rather than as humanized animals. In short, the lynx and bear shape an Edenic reality that enables them to coexist with their adopted family. The couple stops domesticating their animal children as they focus on the boy who, because already human, offers easier interactions. The bear and lynx, then, become more like pets rather than sons; the bear often lies beside of the boy's bed but sleeps in the corner, while the lynx sleeps at the end of the boy's bed as he pets him.

Despite their status as creators and then completers, the boy's presence in the family negatively affects the lynx and bear. Unlike Zuckerman and his neighbors who ultimately adopt the words and phrases in Charlotte's web when discussing Wilbur, the hunter, mermaid, and boy do not embrace the wild siblings' agency when retelling the

boy's origin story. Instead of crediting his arrival to the lynx and bear, the boy uses their initiative to play a game, which depicts these brothers as false symbols, reducing the lynx to only the boy's founder and the bear to only the animal on whom the boy slept after arriving to their home. The purpose of the boy's game is to claim reality as fantasy. He pretends that his pets brought him home and that he came after them in the family because he and his adoptive parents would prefer to believe the opposite—that the boy came *first* and the lynx and bear *after*, where they played no real role in the family before or during his discovery. As the narrator explains, "because he knew it *wasn't* so," or because he wanted it to be *fictional*, "the boy enjoyed saying the lynx had found him" as if it were merely a story (Jarrell 158, emphasis added). His game gives him a sense of belonging; it implies that the boy became part of the family because the hunter and mermaid sought out to create him instead of the lynx discovering him by chance. Regardless of the boy's intentions, his game gives him more agency at the bear's and lynx's expense and, in doing so, gives him a higher familial position. The boy takes the place of creator, reinventing the dominant Human-as-subject (*I*)/Nature-as-object (*it*) reality based on a human-oriented paradise that rejects not only animality but also animal agency.

The hunter and mermaid act as co-creators to fully attain their paradise, as they legitimize and further construct the boy's lie each time they play his game. The mermaid states, "He's [the boy] so different from our *little* ones. He's better than they are—they are bad *little things*—and he's a lot more interesting. He thinks of the queerest things" (Jarrell 160, emphasis added). Here, the mermaid objectifies the bear and lynx while

suggesting they lack sentience and intelligence because they are not human, which she believes prevents her from understanding their communication. The hunter also adopts this mindset as he increasingly neglects the animal brothers in favor of the boy. Together, by considering the bear and lynx as "things," the boy and his adoptive parents objectify the animals, translating them from pets to fictional symbols. The game's story and resulting mindset essentially writes the wild siblings out of the family. The only time the human members include the bear and lynx in their conversations is when they construct the boy's position as first-born. Their game becomes reality so much so that "except for one or two confused, uneasy dreams, all the boy's memories were memories of the mermaid and the hunter; he *knew* that the hunter was his father and the mermaid his mother and had always been" (Jarrell 156-7, original emphasis). In other words, the boy's game distorts the line between fantasy and reality, illustrating how socially-constructed stories repeated verbally and mentally become truer with each telling, at least to each believer.

Because this game turns the lynx and bear into objects, they enjoy agency only briefly. However, the game simultaneously gives these siblings an opportunity to be animals. Because the hunter and mermaid ignore them, they no longer have to fulfill their role as human boys. But just like Wilbur, the bear and lynx never reach Paradise with a capital P because of how their other family members play God to recreate them as symbols. Ultimately, the brothers become accessories that the family's other members use to rebuild their own Paradise, which marginalizes and objectifies the animals, giving the hunter, mermaid, and especially the boy full control over their representation.

## Children's Literature as Activism

Why did White and Jarrell choose to write for children, and why did they anthropomorphize the animals' communication or retain their animal voice? I explore these questions by first discussing each author's philosophy on literary animal representations. Then I acknowledge the novels' limitations, specifically arguing that neither White nor Jarrell completely denounce speciesism or anthropocentrism. Finally, I provide reasons why readers and scholars should resist romanticizing their novels, but suggest that we should ultimately avoid interpreting the animal characters as allegorical symbols because of what both authors say about animals and animal welfare.

White and Jarrell chose children's literature to advocate for animals because they valued a child's worldview. Children, as White remarks, are "the most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial [human beings]…on earth" ("Appendix D" 242). Because of children's curiosity and sensitivity, they typically see animals *as animals*. They have yet to be conditioned into objectifying animals through language and behavior; they have yet to "grow up" and adopt speciesist views that require severing their connection to animals, as when Fern's interest in boys causes her to lose the ability to hear Wilbur, and as when Jarrell's boy begins hunting and constructing the bear and lynx as symbols. Though the two novelists primarily speak to children, White and Jarrell also hoped to reach adults. White saw his book's message as applicable to adult readers especially because they often rejected animals' "magic" or agency. In a letter to his agent for film rights, Jap Gude, White wrote that the *Charlotte's Web* film should not change the novel's message for adult viewers who "can't accept the miracle of

the web" (White, "Appendix D" 225). In an August 1964 letter to Harry Ford, Jarrell reveals that he considered *The Animal Family* "half-for-children, half-for-grown-ups" (*Randall Jarrell's Letters* 491). Both White and Jarrell used the influence of children's literature, which touches readers of all ages, to argue for viewing reality through a young person's perspective. To encourage children to preserve their connection to nature, and encourage adults to reclaim their childhood (not childlike) connection to nature by regaining a youthful perception, both White and Jarrell validate animality to elicit sympathy for animals.

To accomplish his activist goal, White grants Wilbur certain rights as a pig because of his anthropomorphized language that makes him too humanlike to consume. Literary animal representation commonly uses anthropomorphism, and while this practice can accomplish speciesist or anthropocentric motives, John Simons shows that it does not always aid negative purposes (116). Readers may access nonhuman experience through anthropomorphism because it connects humans and animals through shared emotional experiences (Simons 116-17). Thus, if a writer uses anthropomorphism to highlight an animal's emotional capacity, which often creates sympathy for animals and even legitimizes feeling for them, then Simons finds it appropriate (117). So long as the representation benefits readers' relationships with animals and improves animals' treatment, it is acceptable (Simons 117-8). To give readers such a lens, White anthropomorphizes Wilbur's and the other animals' language. Taken from White's notes, some of the words the author sketches for Charlotte's web include "man of distinction (pig of distinction)" (*The Annotated* 193). These notes illuminate White's plan, showing

he did not intend to demean animals by giving them human language but rather sought to make humans and animals more equal. To highlight Wilbur's uniqueness, White translates his and the other animals' voices, offering a bridge for humanity to better understand and value their nonhuman counterparts, especially pigs, for more than their bodies. As a translating practice that bridges humans and animals, anthropomorphism evidences that we share common desires with animals. Since we value animals based on how human they seem, when readers see Wilbur's desire to live and his animal community's willingness to help, they grasp how animals are like us.

White, however, only anthropomorphizes the animals' *voices*. In his letters, he reveals that he extensively avoided over-anthropomorphizing the characters to maintain their animality. He discloses how much he despised Disney's anthropomorphism because it makes animals "dance to [the company's] tune" (White, "Appendix A" 223). He "preferred to dance to *their* [animals'] tune and came up with Charlotte and Wilbur" to avoid misconstruing animals (White, "Appendix A" 223). White thus ensured that Garth Williams's illustrations did not anthropomorphize the animals, especially Charlotte, the story's mastermind. Because the illustrator first depicted Charlotte with a woman's face, White made him redraw her based on a natural history book (White, "Appendix A" 199). Williams eventually portrayed Charlotte as a spider, but a charming spider, and he did the same with Wilbur and the other animals to accentuate qualities that readers would perceive more positively (White, "Appendix A" 199). White's strictness created more realistic animals to craft more empathy that readers could then transfer to actual animals. The author ultimately avoids anthropomorphizing animals beyond their speech because,

as he states in a letter to his editor Ursula Nordstrom, Williams's initial human renderings of the animals were "horrible and would have wrecked the book" by de-animalizing his characters (White, "Appendix D" 221). He did not want Wilbur or the other animals to be visually seen as humans because that would drastically change the story's message and thus diminish his activism; if the characters' animality completely vanished, we would justifiably read the novel anthropocentrically and allegorically, even more than scholars currently do.[34] Despite his "sanctuary" existing in literature, White hoped his novel's perception and treatment of animals could be actualized in America.

Contrasting with White's animal representation, Jarrell depicts the bear and lynx more realistically. Jarrell clearly knew the effect of anthropomorphized animals who appeared in stories. Richard Flynn describes how Randall grew up reading anthropomorphized animal tales (*Randall Jarrell* 2). At twenty months old, he even recited in broken sentences "The Three Little Pigs," "Three Little Bears," "Red Riding Hood," "Jack & The Beanstalk," and "The Green Pear" (Flynn, *Randall Jarrell* 2). Even in *The Gingerbread Rabbit*, which he published just a year before *The Animal Family,* Jarrell anthropomorphizes the story's animals. He creates "happy yet improbable families that do not exist in the real world but have to be invented" in *The Gingerbread Rabbit*, as well as in *Fly by Night* and *The Bat-Poet* (Flynn, *Randall Jarrell*, 101-2). Jarrell's earlier involvement with literary anthropomorphism shows that his realism in *The Animal*

[34] White's strictness went beyond his anthropomorphism, as evidenced by his response when offered a movie deal. He demanded the right to edit the script and protection against new material in the movie such as "songs, jokes, capers, [and] episodes" to avoid "[violating] the spirit and meaning of the story" (White, "Appendix D" 220). Any small change could easily alter Wilbur's portrayal, reducing him to meat and completely dishonoring White's message.

*Family* is even more deliberate. In an October 1964 letter to Michael Di Capua, Jarrell remarks that "[*The*] *Animal Family* is *realistic* [because] the lynx and the bear never say a word" (*Randall Jarrell's Letters* 494, emphasis added). Here, he does not imply the bear and lynx are mute but rather juxtaposes this volume to his *Bat-Poet's* and *Fly by Night's* "talking-animal world" (*Randall Jarrell's Letters* 494). In *The Animal Family*, Jarrell presents the animal characters *as animals* to include them realistically in a family that, though fictional, teaches readers how to treat actual animals—as beings with whom to coexist rather than objects to cage.

*The Animal Family* is more complicated than *Charlotte's Web*. To domesticate the bear and lynx, Jarrell anthropomorphizes them through the hunter's and mermaid's language, but the couple's rhetoric also allows readers to feel sympathetic toward the animals as children or pets. Here, the author foregrounds stewardship (because the parental figures allow wild animals in their home) but also explores dominion (because these figures domesticate and attempt to erase their adoptive children's animality). Yet through the boy's origin story, Jarrell ultimately turns the bear and lynx into literary symbols. Using an animal for symbolic purposes is the most common type of literary animal representation (Simons 115). Such symbolization, and every kind of animal representation, remains speciesist because we cannot reproduce nonhuman experience as humans (Simons 87). We can only represent it through human comparisons because of communication barriers that prohibit us from truly knowing and understanding nonhuman

experience (Simons 86).[35] To critique reality, Jarrell may have ended his novel with the animals reduced to symbols, therefore suggesting that no happy ending exists because the boy becomes a hunter who disvalues animals. But given that Jarrell longed for a family, he likely indicated that neither he nor the novel needed the bear and lynx after the boy's arrival because they complete their role as agents who inversely "adopt" the hunter and mermaid after the couple has adopted them.

In "On Preparing to Read Kipling," Jarrell identifies being adopted by wild animals as a means for substituting biological parents. He writes, "when your father and mother leave you in the forest to die, the wolves that come to eat you are always Father Wolf and Mother Wolf, your real father and real mother, and you are—as not even the little wolves ever quite are—their real son" (*A Sad Heart* 137). Jarrell found solace knowing that, even if his parents abandoned him, wild animals could provide a family. In his novel, the lynx and bear care for the hunter (and Jarrell) like paternal figures by bringing home the boy, who eases their loneliness. Because the boy's human presence fills the family's supposed void, Jarrell no longer considers the wild siblings as major characters for the remainder of his novel. Jarrell offers them his idea of a safe haven, where they may act as animals, after they metaphorically adopt *him* and fix *his* loneliness while writing the book. But since how he finally represents the bear and lynx overwrites every previous portrayal that helped generate sympathy for them, including their agency,

[35] Simons acknowledges the difference between writing about an animal and physically harming one, but he claims that any literary animal representation exploits animals for human purposes, even when the author's motive is to better their treatment (87).

this representation may be the one readers remember most. Readers might then view the brothers as mere symbols.

By allowing their animal characters agency, White and Jarrell ultimately compose protest literature. The writers assert their characters' right to better treatment by excluding Wilbur from slaughter and integrating the bear and lynx into the human family structure. For their time, both novels were radical because of how they spoke to the animal welfare movement. As men advocating for animals, White and Jarrell even helped break gender boundaries. During the 1950s and 1960s, society considered women the animal welfare movement's leaders and, in turn, saw their roles as maternal, with their passions perceived as emotional hysteria (Beers 156, 158). White and Jarrell, whose maleness lent credibility to animal activism, helped legitimize animal welfare as a concern not simply for emotional women but for all of humanity.

Yet neither novel completely rejects speciesism or anthropocentrism because both authors create their own Edenic realities that romanticize alternative, seemingly more humane forms of dominion over animals. White modeled Zuckerman after himself and thus identified with him above anyone else, even Fern (Sims 93). Paralleling Zuckerman's personality, White saves Wilbur by granting him the right to escape slaughter, but the pig becomes a tourist attraction, which perpetuates another form of speciesism.[36] What makes Wilbur's survival so dangerous is that White gives readers the

[36] Not surprisingly, White models Zuckerman's farm after his own by exhibiting Wilbur instead of slaughtering him. In "The Practical Farmer," written in August 1940, White describes his farm as "not really a farm at all but merely a private zoo [because] sometimes months go by when nothing but repair goes on" (White, *One Man's Meat* 218).

impression that he enjoys life on the farm as a spectacle. This portrayal maintains the "humane" myth by suggesting that animals enjoy their oppression so long as we treat them with no extreme physical violence. White also ignores other animals exploited by the farm, as he excludes the cows, chickens, and roosters from Wilbur's community. Apart from Charlotte and Templeton, the only animals who help Wilbur, with the exception of the sheep, are conveniently ones not farmed for their meat or other corporeal products. White's omission of these animals, paired with his actual farm that he never transformed into a sanctuary, suggests that he only wanted to save a literary pig, not a real one.[37] In his August 1940 essay "The Practical Farmer," White states that "the cow is the foundation on which the "[farm's] structure is built" because this animal produces cream, milk, butter, cheese, and even helps produce eggs and pig meat since skim milk helps chickens lay eggs and pigs grow (White, *One Man's Meat* 217). Because cows bring the most profit, White excludes them from his activism. As a farmer, he could not risk including anything that would completely dismantle the farm and his livelihood. Even more telling, however, is that White saw animals as amoral, which prevented him from giving his characters more rights (White, "Appendix D" 223). White only saves Wilbur from slaughter to redefine him as an exhibit, reinforcing a less obvious type of dominion that nonetheless objectifies him. As a result, *Charlotte's Web*, despite being radical for its time, remains covertly speciesist.

[37] After reading *Charlotte's Web* several times, White's ten-year-old granddaughter, Alice, petitioned him to save a pig on his farm. She drew the "SOME PIG" illustration and placed it on the pig's pen to remind White of his own philosophy. But, according to Michael Sims, he did not save this pig (235).

Jarrell, too, preserves his ideal Edenic reality with his novel. In fact, Mary Jarrell states that *The Animal Family* is deliberately "Jarrell's Paradise" (Introduction 17). The author identifies with the hunter and, like White, modeled this key character after himself. Jarrell had a beard, hunted, wore fur, and "identified with Orion, the hunter constellation" (Mary Jarrell, Introduction 15). All of the novel's hunting relics, such as the animal skins, came directly from Mary and Randall's home (Mary Jarrell, Introduction 14). Though Jarrell blurs the animal-human dichotomy by depicting the bear and lynx as children, and even resists speciesism by allowing them moral superiority for ethically discovering (and saving) the boy, the hunter acquires the animals at their expense. The hunter's bad dream convinces him that he needs a child, specifically a boy, to become like him. But because no humans live nearby, and because he considers it unethical to steal a human child, he captures the bear and lynx. He kills the bear's mother, leaving the rest of her cubs behind, and takes the lynx because he believes his humanness better qualifies him to be the animal's caregiver. As the hunter mentions to the mermaid when elaborating how he found the lynx, "The mother has four more, and she'll never miss him—I don't think she can count up to five, anyway" (Jarrell 104).[38] Rather than critiquing the hunter's anthropocentric, often speciesist worldview, Jarrell embraces it. The animals achieve agency, but they never visit their biological families as the mermaid visits the seapeople, which reprises the hunter and Jarrell's mentality regarding the lynx's mother. Since their biological families never search for them, Jarrell

[38] Interestingly enough, the hunter steals the bravest, or "wildest," lynx who ventured further from the cave and whose mother who wanted him to stay inside. The hunter chooses this lynx perhaps to more clearly see his results as a domesticator and therefore feel more powerful.

implies that neither the bear nor the lynx are missed and, as these brothers contentedly live in isolation from their families, that those families do not miss them either. These implications suggest that animals lack emotional bonds with their kinfolk and, equally dangerous, that the family construct is strictly human.

Just as scripture granted companion animals only friendship, not citizenship or equality (Minnis 92), Jarrell's rhetorical anthropomorphism grants the bear and lynx only limited rights. Similar to Wilbur and the other animals, these siblings never enjoy complete equality. Rather, they live among the discarded skins of animals, from bears, lynxes, seals, and also deer, previously killed by the hunter. Because Jarrell never criticizes the boy's origin story, he reinforces the ethos that privileges dominion over animals and reflects his notion of humanity's place in nature. In "The Woman in the Washington Zoo," he states that man "as he was first, still must be…the animals' natural lord" (*A Sad Heart* 172). Here, Jarrell reveals that, though he opposed caging animals, he nevertheless accepts the zoo's domination and, as his novel exemplifies, domination over them in the home as well. Equally worrisome, because the hunter requires human companionship to ease his loneliness, Jarrell implies that only humans, not even humanized animals, can fill our loneliness. Like *Charlotte's Web*, *The Animal Family* covertly disseminates anthropocentric thought.

As I have shown, the authors' activism is not either-or; they do not advocate for animals without also reinforcing other speciesist or anthropocentric narratives. Something, perhaps the society in which White and Jarrell lived, their cognitive dissonance regarding their own participation in speciesism and anthropocentrism, or a

combination, held them back from producing even more radical works. Because these attitudes perpetuate myths that create oppressive animal-human relationships, contemporary readers should avoid romanticizing *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family*. As Merchant details, literature shapes our identity, morals, and behavior (3). Like the Zuckermans, we believe what we see in print and, like the hunter, mermaid, and boy, we adopt the language we hear. When readers, especially children, lose themselves in a writer's paradise, they often seek to recreate it in reality. Because of literature's impact, it is of utmost importance that we avoid speciesism and anthropocentric thought in both stories and critical responses. Words structure our perception of reality, making us believe their constructed knowledge. As White and Jarrell have their human and animal characters' communication determine reality, either by erasing animals or by representing them and their rights, both authors stress storytelling's importance.

Equally important, we should also avoid reading texts like *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family* as allegories, which trivializes the animal characters, and instead appreciate at face value what they teach us: how we understand and mark animals with language. Despite White's and Jarrell's shortcomings, their novels present two strikingly different counternarratives to speciesist and anthropocentric discourse and therefore reward further study. We may use *Charlotte's Web* and *The Animal Family* as tools to teach both children and adults how we represent animals and how to appreciate animal communication and animal agency. White's and Jarrell's representation of human language reveals words' implications and consequences, while illustrating the contradictory strategies we use to construct Edenic realities. Both authors' representation

of animal language shows us the power of voice—written, vocal, corporeal, and performed—that enable the animal characters to reconstruct or subvert human-made paradise by making their animality *present* and clarifying their value *as animals*. We may use this knowledge to avoid erasing them through objectification or anthropomorphism, following the animals' path and using words that tell alternative narratives.[39]

[39] For examples on how to rework the words we use when referencing animals, see Joan Dunayer's "Style Guidelines: Countering Speciesism" and "Thesaurus: Alternatives to Speciesist Terms" in *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation.*

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# ELECTRONIC *KAIROS*: CREATING THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT IN CONTEMPORARYADVERTISING

Rhetoric has adapted classical oratory to twenty-first century communication technology. In ancient Rome and Athens, the elite delivered speeches in the polis (Kennedy, "Rhetoric and Culture" 56). Because rhetors spoke to their homogenous audience face-to-face, they analyzed members' reactions and adjusted their argumentative approach when necessary. In contemporary society, however, mass media has redefined the stage and context of speech making. Often, argumentation occurs digitally, where rhetors lack the ability to *see* their now heterogeneous audience behind the screen and consequently cannot gauge viewers' reactions in the moment. But rhetors acclimate to digital environments by manipulating multimodality and classical rhetorical concepts to seize *kairos*, the right or opportune moment in a speech. By examining recent fast food commercials, this essay studies how advertisers attempt to seize *kairos* electronically.[40] To do so, they utilize primary and secondary appeals that blur boundaries

[40] Who are the rhetors behind advertisements? As Sally Gill demonstrates in her essay "And Now a Word About Our Sponsors: Advertising and Ethos in the Age of the Global Village," two conflicting entities exist in advertising: the rhetor and the suits (Gill's terminology). The rhetor writes the ads, while the suits (i.e., clients and account executives) market them (Gill 202). Gill emphasizes that each strives toward different goals. Whereas rhetors aim to be artists, the suits aim to be scientists (202). Though she does not use this terminology, Gill suggests that it is the rhetors who ethically employ rhetoric and the suits who sometimes distort it to fulfill their agenda. But in her time working with advertisers, Gill found that they never intend on hypnotizing their audience; they merely go beyond attempting to persuade (the "sales purpose") because viewers are now skeptical and bored by advertising (Gill 200).

between entertainment and persuasion, creating kairotic conditions and mentalities so viewers may seize advertisers' intended opportune moment.

Given the circumstances of digital environments, how do advertisers produce kairotic conditions to seize the opportune, or best, moment? I begin exploring this question in my first section entitled "*Kairos*: From Orality to Electricity," which introduces Gorgias's understanding of the concept, followed by my notion of how fast food advertisers utilize electronic *kairos*. For the remainder of the essay I examine commercials from Burger King, Chick-Fil-A, and McDonald's, organizing each based on what it promotes—either a product (i.e., new, old, or returning) or brand.[41] Each commercial's analysis addresses the primary appeal (entertainment and narrative transportation) followed by its secondary appeal (a product's or brand's "proof" demonstrated through intersections of ethos, logos, and pathos). My last section, "From Gorgias to Behind the Screen and Beyond," summarizes Poulakos's interpretation of how, even in antiquity, this sophist composed kairotic conditions in written texts to accommodate not seeing his audience, a method contemporary advertisers also follow but further develop by manipulating multimodality. Lastly, I outline why advertisers' appeals

[41] When I refer to each commercial's advertised animal products as "beef," "chicken," "burger," "meat," "product," "item," "it," or any similar phrasing, I do not intend on legitimizing animals' meat status and objectification. I merely hope to reveal how advertisers promote products made from animals' bodies as opportune for viewers, a stance I indicate by using scare quotes around the first reference of each of these words. Though I drop the quotes for convenience, each successive reference retains the same meaning and should be read similarly. To better understand why I make this choice, see Carol J. Adams's theory of the absent referent, found in *The Sexual Politics of Meat,* and Joan Dunayer's "Style Guidelines: Countering Speciesism" and "Thesaurus: Alternatives to Speciesist Terms" in *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation.*

effectively persuade viewers by giving them an experience they seek to recreate by consuming products and supporting brands.

In response to James L. Kinneavy's essay, "*Kairos*: A Neglected Concept," scholars have deepened our understanding of how classical rhetors maneuvered the opportune moment. A few scholars have even inquired how rhetors forecast or create *kairos* in written and digital composition. Hunter W. Stephenson's *Forecasting Opportunity:* Kairos*, Production, and Writing* traces how rhetors predict kairotic conditions to invent opportune moments. Stephenson's theory explains how journalists consider uncontrollable elements, such as domain-specific knowledge, previously published material, publication times, audiences, and current events, alongside controllable elements, such as their composition's style, to evoke a sense of urgency or importance. In *Exploiting* Kairos *in Electronic Literature: A Rhetorical Analysis,* Cheri Crenshaw reviews how fiction authors exploit electronic mediums with hypertext and interactivity to make texts timely. More recently, Aaron Hess's "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and the Process of Rhetoric" defines contemporary *kairos* by combining Gorgias's and Aristotle's philosophies on the concept. Hess proposes that, by using youth culture to fit into environments, an advocacy group called DanceSafe produces *kairos*. Similarly, Thomas Erickson's "Creating *Kairos*" argues how an online blog, PepysDiary, constructs the opportune moment by posting daily entries catered to its audience.

While these works introduce us to how rhetors craft *kairos* variously, they neglect how the concept operates in advertising, a field that receives less rhetorical attention.

Marketing scholars emphasize time's importance in ads, but none approach *kairos* rhetorically. Advertising, however, is one of the most frequently experienced forms of contemporary rhetoric and necessitates in-depth consideration. I thus offer another interpretation to illustrate that, although *kairos* originated as a tool for orality, it is also a tool for contemporary rhetors. To better appreciate electronic *kairos*, this essay examines how a commercial's digital and multimodal platform contributes to the creation and seizing of the opportune moment. While rhetors in all mediums generally compose kairotic conditions based on audience and other timely contexts, advertising considers both with its entertainment, rhetorical proofs, and multimodality. Though other classical rhetoricians embraced *kairos* and the three rhetorical appeals, I rely on the Sophistic and Aristotelian philosophy because they more accurately comprise advertisers' strategies. Hess uses a similar concept of *kairos,* one based upon culture and the same foundational rhetoricians when addressing DanceSafe's advocacy, but I expand his theory by defining electronic *kairos* as a moment *viewers* seize after experiencing a commercial's entertaining, emotional story. Rather than rhetors solely situating themselves with respect to their audience, as Hess argues, advertisers also place audiences into controlled environments formed by their narratives.

Though various advertisements circulate daily, I foreground fast food commercials because they function differently from other ads. Commercials that promote medicine, cosmetics, hygiene products, clothing, restaurants, beer, and even other types of food, advertise more traditionally and thus rarely entertain. Rather, they exclusively use ethos, logos, and pathos, or what I term as fast food's secondary appeal, and in turn

actualize less kairotic opportunities. Other aspects of advertising affect electronic *kairos,* such as the programs during which commercials air, the ads viewers see before and after each commercial, and of course other types of commercials, but I only examine how fast food rhetors create timeliness as an entrance into marketing's tactics. With my discussion on commercials' primary and secondary appeals, I seek to broaden our understanding of how entertainment functions as persuasion and how ethos, logos, and pathos intersect. When we realize how advertisers produce *kairos*, we better understand and appreciate how rhetors' techniques have advanced with communication media. Ultimately, we gain the knowledge necessary to make more informed choices as consumers of both products and entertainment culture, often within the same realm.

## *Kairos*: From Orality to Electricity

Ancient rhetoricians defined *kairos* as the right time, as opposed to *chronos* (linear time) and *akairos* (time without opportunity) (Sipiora 2). *Kairos* predominantly influenced rhetoric during the First Sophistic Movement with Gorgias (Sipiora 3), who believed speech must be timely to situations because its space is temporary (Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic" 39).[42] Ideas depend on contexts and lose effectiveness if rhetors neglect voicing them in the right, or opportune, moment. When spoken at the right time, rhetors convey their situation's urgency and importance (Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic"

[42] Pythagoras, another Sophistic rhetorician, also influenced classical *kairos.* For him, the concept served as an educational tool to advise the public how to live (Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 65). See Kinneavy's "*Kairos* in Classical and Modern Rhetorical Theory" for more information on Pythagoras's influence.

40). As John Poulakos demonstrates, timeliness cannot be taught, but it can be felt by considering the following factors when writing:

> the cultural norms in which he [or she] participates, his [or her] reading of the situation he [or she] wishes to address, his [or her] image of [the] audience, and his [or her] prediction of the potential effects of his [or her] words on his [or her] listeners ("Toward a Sophistic" 42).

In other words, rhetors must anticipate their audience's response to accommodate potential listeners' needs (Sipiora 11). A speech also requires *to prepon* (a discussion's appropriateness), another classical concept achieved by tailoring rhetorical strategies to an audience and occasion (Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic" 41). When rhetors adapt a speech to listeners, it engages them, increasing their likelihood of being persuaded (Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic" 41). *Kairos* closely relates to *to prepon* and, in fact, the two concepts cannot be separated because a speech's suitability relies on rhetors' seizing of the opportune moment. If rhetors give speeches relevant to their audience but in an untimely manner, the speech will fail, and vice versa (Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic" 42). As Poulakos states, "the right thing must be said at the right time; inversely, the right time becomes apparent precisely because the right thing has been spoken" ("Toward a Sophistic" 42). In short, *kairos* is the combination of appropriate rhetorical strategies ultimately at the opportune time.

Stephen McKenna suggests that a speech's right moment ceased with mass media's expansion because the "defining situation of rhetoric is [now] an antisituation, 'the context of no context'" (104). Here, McKenna alludes to *akairos* and insinuates that

*kairos* no longer exists. However, fast food advertisers can, and often do, utilize the opportune moment with strategies that embody and extend classical notions such as Gorgias's *kairos* and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals. Essentially, *kairos* becomes a tool for both composition and delivery for contemporary rhetors.[43] With advertisers' primary and secondary appeals, both of which invoke various values and beliefs, they ultimately create *multiple* kairotic opportunities to reach new media's vast audience members. As advertisers entertain viewers, they make a narrative timelier by creating the right mindset, while the intersection of ethos, logos, and pathos simultaneously makes a product more punctual by "proving" its value. Both appeals help actualize kairotic conditions and mentalities that allow viewers to then seize advertisers' intended opportune moment—the combination of their narrative's ESP (emotional selling proposition) and product display. Seizing *kairos* thus no longer relies on face-to-face response or even solely on rhetors. Instead, the audience plays a more active role; viewers seize advertisers' intended opportune moment and bridge rhetor and audience separated by the screen.

## Entertainment as Persuasion

Because commercials interrupt a show's or film's narrative transportation, viewers often perceive them unfavorably (Carpenter and Green 178). Accordingly, fast food advertisers strive for entertainment, a less obvious form of persuasion, to transport viewers and avoid disturbing their absorption in other programs. Rhetors consider their

[43] Of course, not all fast food commercials incorporate both primary and secondary appeals, but enough do that it warrants an in-depth study to better understand how both appeals create kairotic conditions and seize the opportune moment.

audience, situation, and story (i.e., dramatic plot, relatable characters, and emotional components) because a story's "*timeliness* and *relevance* to universal feelings or issues" enables narrative transportation (Carpenter and Green 171, 184, emphasis added). Here, Carpenter and Green emphasize that a narrative must be kairotic, or timely and appropriate, to transport an audience. Because advertisers cannot see their viewers to gauge their responses, creating kairotic conditions requires a few adjustments: first, they must, as Poulakos suggests, learn their anonymous audience by researching their interests (i.e., hobbies and habits), values (i.e., passions), and beliefs (i.e., cultural norms). Advertisers weave viewers' investments into commercials, which provide entertainment based on consumers' values, beliefs, and accompanying emotions, to appropriately join products and potential buyers. This primary appeal envelops viewers in a story's imaginative universe through narrative transportation theory, which provides them the chance to leave reality and lose "awareness of the outside world" (Carpenter and Green 170, 182-83). These components create *kairos* because, when entertained, viewers enter a kairotic, or more receptive, mentality that makes a narrative more appropriate to its designated audience.

Entertainment media's imagery, often demonstrated through multimodality, increases viewers' involvement by giving them imaginative situations to enjoy on-screen (Carpenter and Green 172). But a narrative transports viewers only if they remain attentive, willingly suspend disbelief of the story's reality, and respond emotionally (Carpenter and Green 172, 171). Equally important, a story, whether fiction or nonfiction, only immerses viewers so long as it "'rings true'" and viewers relate to it (Carpenter and

Green 179). Fast food advertisers therefore transport viewers by engaging viewer participation (i.e., making sense and meaning) while simultaneously appealing to their values and beliefs. Viewers accept the narrative's reality, and their resulting emotions rouse them to imagine themselves using a particular product and identifying with its brand. According to Kenneth Burke's theory of identification, individuals identify with others when they feel as if they belong to a community that shares principles, or "common sensations, concepts, images, idea[s], [and] attitudes" (20-21, 28). Rhetors must use their audience's language to encourage such a connection: "You can persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (Burke 54, original emphasis). In other words, rhetors foster identification through commonalities exemplified either by appropriating their audience's beliefs or by demonstrating an already existing bond resulting from their genuine adherence to such beliefs (Burke 56). To nurture viewers' identification, fast food advertisers thus make their products more fitting by writing consumers' values and beliefs, ones their brand often embraces, into commercials' narratives.

Because of narrative transportation's emotional and cognitive involvement, it often alters viewers' attitudes and beliefs through three means: "affective, cognitive, and imagery processes" (Carpenter and Green 169, 173). In affective responses, a story's emotional events inspire attachments to characters, which makes viewers react more emotionally to the entire narrative and, subsequently, the product and brand (Carpenter and Green 173-4). Cognitive responses occur because narratives foreground the imagined

story, making viewers less likely to respond negatively with counterarguments (174). As Carpenter and Green explain, "Transportation is a pleasurable state, and transported individuals are typically not motivated to interrupt this experience" (174). A narrative's mental imagery also alters behavior, as it invokes the audience's viewpoints. Emotional imagery in particular makes viewers more resistant to counterpersuasion and it even helps them better recall a story's themes and messages after their transportation (Carpenter and Green 175). Additionally, when repeatedly exposed to a narrative, its themes better persuade viewers and seem realer (Carpenter and Green 176). Narrative transportation ultimately gains its influence from how viewers react to a story's events as if they were real, which in turn heightens their emotional response (Carpenter and Green 174). After being transported, viewers watching fast food commercials undergo any or all of these responses that change their opinion of the product and brand. Entertainment, then, becomes persuasion; narratives transport viewers into kairotic mentalities that prime them for the commercial's ESP and product display.

Since advertisers' goal is to sell, they do not merely seek narrative transportation but escapism that promotes products. Fast food commercials, because of their entertaining elements, now operate much like product placements, which occur when advertisers integrate products into a film's or tv show's narrative to merge entertainment and persuasion. Product placements vary in subtlety, ranging from indirect appearances (i.e., a branded item on a table) to more direct presences (i.e., a discussion on a product) (Cowley 39). Because of their elusiveness, viewers often overlook product placements and their persuasive motive, giving these types of advertisements an advantage over more

traditional ones (Cowley 45). When viewers notice an ulterior motive, however, they become apathetic and passive, and they may even distrust and discredit the brand (Cowley 45). Thus, fast food commercials mimic product placements, functioning as abbreviated films or shows. Viewers experience a smoother transition between programs and these commercials because they also lose themselves in their cinematic narratives. Fast food stories imply a disassociation from their entertaining narrative and advertised products; viewers feel as if the narrative is separate from the advertisement until the ESP and product display at the end—once already hooked, entertained, and affected by its reality.[44] Viewers know, simply by virtue of commercials airing during a program's break, that they advertise products, but because their narratives transport viewers and seem like product placements, this marketing strategy makes viewers more receptive to a company's message.

As fast food commercials simulate product placements, they affect viewers through temporal co-occurrence.[45] In this process, a narrative makes viewers feel good by "creat[ing] new, or reinforce[ing] old, brand associations" that positively transform their attitudes toward a product and its brand (Cowley 39). Temporal co-occurrence shapes viewers' attitudes much like psychological conditioning, as viewers experience the "repeated pairing" of products and ensuing feelings (Cowley 40). The fast food

[44] Some commercials, such as the one from McDonald's that I review shortly, integrate products into their narratives, but because they entertain, viewers likely overlook the integration, making these commercials function like product placements.

[45] Other theories, such as the exposure effect and evaluative conditioning, explain product placements' influence. The exposure effect impacts viewers by simply exposing them to the item, logo, or brand, while evaluative conditioning works by discretely including the product in the narrative (Cowley 39). However, temporal co-occurrence most accurately clarifies how fast food commercials modify viewers' perceptions.

commercials discussed below, which resemble product placements, demonstrate this process. While viewers become more cognizant of the advertisement after hearing the ESP and seeing the product display, they transfer their still-fresh emotions (resulting from their transportation) to the product and brand. Viewers often "finish" a commercial by "imagin[ing] themselves using the product," which helps them decide if the item fits (Carpenter and Green 178). From this point, viewers associate such feelings with the product and brand, and consider a commercial's narrative appropriate. They seize the opportune moment, subsequently begin consuming the product and supporting its brand, and advertisers fully achieve *kairos* both in their narrative and in reality.

Product "Proofs"

Advertisers cannot sufficiently transport every viewer to alter their perception, so they also "prove" their product's and brand's worth through intersections of ethos, logos, and pathos. As I will clarify with each commercial's secondary appeal, ethos, logos, and pathos still exist but intersect with one another to legitimize and sell narratives, products, companies, beliefs, and lifestyles—often ones with which viewers may identify. Ethos is now part of logos, logos is now part of pathos, and pathos is now part of ethos, and so on because each appeal assists one another enthymematically.

The enthymeme is often characterized as a truncated syllogism, meaning that it comprises a premise and conclusion but no middle premise. Both the premise and conclusion, however, imply an argument. Based on this implication, an audience fills in the missing premise by making an inference, a connection, between the two premises

provided by rhetors (Conley 169). To conclude an enthymeme, audiences rely on commonplace values and attitudes. As Lloyd L. Bitzer indicates, "the speaker does not *lay down* his [or her] premises but lets his [or her] audience supply them out of its stock of opinion and knowledge" (407, original emphasis). An audience already knows the missing part; they need only access the necessary knowledge either through what the speaker, or the speaker's opponent, previously confers (Conley 175). Both rhetor and audience play equally important roles; the rhetor supplies a suggestion and the audience completes the enthymeme by concluding the suggestion (Bitzer 408). Both the speaker's and the audience's role are crucial to the enthymeme's success because, as Bitzer highlights, "enthymemes occur only when speaker and audience jointly produce them" (408).

Antoine C. Braet argues that Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals "prove" enthymematically and can even "co-occur in one enthymeme" (311).[46] Though rhetoricians prioritize logos's enthymematic nature, they often ignore how ethos and pathos function as enthymemes.[47] Braet, however, believes Aristotle's *Rhetoric* acknowledged ethos's enthymematic components because, when speakers claim someone as praiseworthy or blameworthy, these assertions can be proven or disproven. Speakers prove or disprove their credibility based on how accurately they depict individuals, which "implies [a speaker's] goodwill toward [an] audience can be argued" (Braet 311).

[46] For an analysis of the three rhetorical proofs as arguments, see Wayne Brockriede's and Douglas Ehninger's "Toulmin on Argument: An Interpretation and Application" in which they review substantive (logical) arguments, authoritative (ethical) arguments, and motivational (pathetic) arguments.
[47] Braet distinguishes between the three rhetorical appeals, as enthymemes, by stating that Aristotle correlated ethos to the speaker, pathos to the audience, and logos to the subject (309). Logos, the appeal typically considered an enthymeme, uses logical premises, or specific topoi, to prove a point (309-10).

Essentially, ethos can be used to "deny or to mitigate a prejudice" against speakers because, as they defend themselves, the appeal operates enthymematically (Braet 312). Braet points out that ethos aids logos by "proving" a speaker's credibility, which makes an audience more likely to "accept the proof relative to the issue," or logos (Braet 312). In other words, logical proofs suggest a speaker's ethos indexically (Braet 313). Such indexicality takes precedence because suggestions, rather than subjective proofs that instill doubt, better evidence one's credibility (Braet 312). Braet illustrates how indexical ethos works enthymematically: "I perceive index x; if I perceive index x, then I can come to the conclusion y (*ethos*); therefore y is present" (312, original emphasis). He clarifies that "only the 'ethical' ideas can function as premises," meaning that these ideas must be present in arrangement, style, or delivery to index ethos (Braet 312).

Braet also understands pathos as an enthymeme because it suggests emotions logical to a situation and thus evidences why such emotions should be felt. To explain how pathos works as enthymematically, Braet offers its structure: "A speaker begins with a premise and then offers a conclusion, while the audience infers the "appearance of intended pathos" (315). Because of an audience's emotional involvement in the enthymeme, they infer which emotion, such as anger, to feel based on the situation (315). As rhetors then provide reasons behind feeling or not feeling particular emotions, they convince their audience to react passionately (Braet 315). As Braet reminds us, this is Aristotle's "rational form of psychology" (315). Pathos also suggests a speaker's ethos and in turn heightens both the ethical and pathetic appeal (Braet 315). This suggestive

ethos can also combine with pathos to argue why an audience should experience or not experience an emotion (Braet 315).

Braet does not address multimodality in his interpretation, but his findings nonetheless apply to new media. He believes that ethos and pathos cannot become logos, only supplement one another to help the audience better accept both proofs, but in contemporary advertising all three appeals aid one other. Advertisers utilize a commercial's multimodality (i.e., layered text, images, verbal narrations, music, etc.) that allows ethos, logos, and pathos to intersect with and assist one another, ultimately "proving" a product's merit and further stimulating viewers. Visuals, perceived as logical proof, complement ethos understood through a narrative's characters and values, and vice versa. Pathos and ethos relate to the product and brand, which makes both appeals relative to the central issue, unlike ethos and pathos in Braet's rendering of Aristotle's philosophy. Meanwhile, the pathetic proof, found everywhere in a narrative, intensifies both logical and ethical proofs, and vice versa. Because the rhetorical appeals circle one another, logical and ethical proofs legitimize emotions felt based upon a product's "truth" and brand's credibility. Put differently, ethos, logos, and pathos function indexically, suggesting and aiding one another, to prove why viewers should support a product and its brand. As a result, the appeals intersect, where each becomes ethical, "logical," and emotional through enthymematic suggestions.

This secondary appeal acts as a failsafe that creates additional kairotic conditions. If a commercial's narrative fails to persuade by entertaining, then it persuades by demonstrating "proof," or ethos, logos, and pathos, to substantiate why viewers should

purchase products. These enthymematic suggestions make products and brands more appropriate and timely by placing viewers into a kairotic mentality, like narrative transportation, simply through a more traditional method. As the enthymeme necessitates participation, it offers viewers an alternative experience in which they become collaborators by inferring and concluding suggestions. Because the enthymeme compels contribution from both rhetor and audience, it reiterates Jamieson's claim that advertisers "[make] the audience an accomplice" to foster meaning-making and identification with a commercial (184-5). When viewers experience a product's worth by completing enthymemes, a process that entails temporarily adopting advertisers' mentality to understand their argument, viewers' perceive the item more meaningfully, hence increasing their likelihood of relating to it and its brand. As Bitzer notes, "since rhetorical arguments, or enthymemes, are formed out of premises supplied by the audience, they have the virtue of being self-persuasive" (408). Jeffrey Walker extends Bitzer's claim, stating that the enthymeme's inferential nature, which requires audience participation, encourages an audience to identify with a rhetor's stance (Walker 59). Persuading themselves by identifying with a commercial's argument enables viewers to seize advertisers' intended opportune moment, their ESP and product display. Viewers then undergo the same process that results from narrative transportation, temporal co-occurrence, and associate the advertised product with its "proofs." Just as advertisers' primary appeal, their secondary appeal connects companies and consumers. To more clearly demonstrate both strategies, I spend the rest of this essay discussing fast food

commercials, beginning with Burger King's narrative that advertises a returning product as if it were new.

## Burger King: A Returning, Yet Still "New," Product

### Primary Appeal: A Chicken Pregnant with Chicken Fries

To create the opportune moment, advertisers compose pathos-driven narratives that entertain viewers by using cultural values and beliefs. Such an appeal, often but not always accompanied by absurd humor, primes viewers, making them more receptive to products because of a narrative's plot and resulting emotions. A variety of fast food commercials exemplify this method. Burger King, for example, broadcasts multiple narratives—from adolescent hens taking selfies before going on dates to multicultural roosters fighting over who gets the last pack of chicken fries—to sell chicken fries.[48] One particular commercial begins with a chicken sitting on a couch with her parents, a brown hen and rooster. A pack of fries lies beside of the chicken, as she reluctantly tells her parents "French fries and I are pregnant, and we're having chicken fries" ("Burger King"). Her mother frantically flaps her wings, while her father tells everyone to calm down. Pillows fly onto the floor, disturbing the perfectly knit living room furnished with drapes. In the background a smaller hen, the chicken's sibling, asks "Again?" to insinuate this is not her first pregnancy ("Burger King"). The scene ends with a picture of chicken

[48] For a brief analysis of how Burger King sexualizes their chicken fries, see Margo DeMello's "The Sexual Politics of Burger King Chicken Fries."

fries on a kitchen table, as the narrator claims "there's just no stopping true love" and that "chicken fries are back" ("Burger King").

In only fifteen seconds, Burger King appeals predominantly to customers who previously consumed chicken fries since they state "chicken fries are back" ("Burger King"). To remind viewers of their importance and urgency, the foundation upon which rhetors seize *kairos*, Burger King promotes chicken fries as a returning yet "new" product, which conveys their previous, now refreshed, popularity. Viewers begin recalling the product's importance. They understand that, because chicken fries successfully sold once, consumers enjoyed them and will likely enjoy them again. As viewers discern that the franchise formerly stopped selling this product, they assume the company may do so again, which portrays chicken fries almost as if they were a limited time "item." This recognition creates a sense of urgency, making viewers worry about missing their opportunity to enjoy chicken fries again, or try them for the first time, which prompts viewers to quickly consume the product before removed from Burger King's menu.

As this commercial's timeliness helps grasp viewers' attention, its narrative incongruity makes it more alluring. Almost immediately, Burger King captivates viewers with the ridiculousness of a chicken and pack of fries falling in love and mating, but this humor is not ordinary; it is absurd. Elliott Oring remarks that "every joke is in some sense absurd in that it rests upon a violation of logic, sense, reality, or practicable action" (14). Both ordinary and absurd humor utilize incongruities, but absurd humor is "nonsensical," meaning that the joke never resolves its incompatibilities and often

requires an audience to "accept the impossible" (Oring 13-15).[49] Despite seeming impractical, absurd humor's nonsensicality must be appropriate so listeners can understand its connection to the topic or situation (Oring 16). The absurdity of Burger King's interspecies relationship, especially one between a chicken and an inanimate object, adds a humorous element that transports viewers into the commercial's reality, one where anything occurs. Though chickens and fries cannot mate, they can in this narrative's world (although we never learn how). This logic clashes with reality, but because it fits the narrative's world, viewers humor what ifs and are in turn amused by their suspension of disbelief.[50]

Once hooked and entertained by the chicken and fries' pregnancy, viewers begin making sense out of the narrative, which prompts them to identify with its values and further transports them into its reality. Burger King uses their ESP (emotional selling proposition), "there's just no stopping true love," to seize the opportune moment in which viewers are most likely to crave chicken fries. This statement heightens viewers' emotions by associating the product with companionship, a desire all of humanity shares, and appears at the commercial's end so viewers make the connection on their own. According to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, advertisers often "[make] the audience an

[49] Oring clarifies the difference between humor and complete nonsense: "With utter nonsense, no conceptual frame is grasped that lends the necessary appropriateness to the absurdity. The result is not amusement but puzzlement" (20).

[50] Carpenter and Green stress that, if a narrative strays from its reality or seems too unrealistic, it may decrease a viewer's engagement (174). In commercials such as Burger King's, however, advertisers atone for their illogical reality by highlighting its absurdity. Because the narrative makes viewers laugh, they do not care to challenge its realism or lack thereof. Plus, viewers clearly know when a narrative clashes with reality, but imagination is the very element that gives consumers a chance to escape and achieve what seems impossible in their reality.

accomplice," a role that requires viewers to make meaning out of ads, because it increases the chance that they will identify with the positive experience [felt during the commercial]" (184-5). Advertisers invite meaning-making by juxtaposing images, asking rhetorical questions, and speaking in a strange grammatical construction, among other methods (Jamieson 185-7). Burger King visually juxtaposes the chicken and the pack of fries to help viewers understand their pregnancy (i.e., that the chicken and the pack of fries consummated to make chicken fries), which encourages viewers to identify with the "true love" simulated on screen. As Burke states, rhetors commonly appeal to love and enmity to boost audience identification (20). When the chicken discloses her motherhood, viewers ponder love because of how closely society attaches it to pregnancy, a cultural norm that utilizes one of Poulakos's suggestions for seizing *kairos.* Society values both true love and pregnancy, but values pregnancy as a result of true love even more. After experiencing the narrative's absurd love, viewers feel contented and perhaps even hopeful; they rationalize that, if a chicken and a pack of fries can fall in love, then so can they. Because this commercial situates viewers into a kairotic mentality, where they now equate chicken fries to true love, this association makes Burger King's ESP and product display both timely and appropriate, allowing viewers to seize the franchise's intended opportune moment.

This commercial encourages alternative interpretations to create multiple kairotic opportunities. Though Burger King mainly addresses meat eaters, the franchise considers yet another of Poulakos's suggestions: their audience's image, specifically their lifestyle. To predict opposing reactions, Burger King appeals to a larger audience, one who may

not buy their products otherwise, by tailoring their narrative to those concerned with meat's ethics.[51] The ESP, "there's just no stopping true love," not only correlates chicken fries to true love but also to the "humane" slaughter myth many consumers cite to justify animal consumption. Instead of promoting meat production's violence, which would elicit negative emotions toward chicken fries, Burger King renders meat a result of pregnancy—a family value that gives rather than takes life.

Contrasting the previous reading, this interpretation transports viewers through ethics. The chicken and pack of fries' pregnancy urges viewers to make meaning out of the narrative. Since the chicken carries her child to term for Burger King's viewers, it seems as if she *gives* chicken fries to customers, making animal consumption appear more "humane." She even excitedly advertises her child's "meat" to viewers, which reinforces the myth that chickens consent to their, or their children's, slaughter. While nonsensical in reality, since chickens oppose their consumption, the narrative implies that her "sacrifice" is realistic. Incidentally, the chicken is a broiler chicken, a common type bred for the US meat industry beginning in the early 1900s (Leeson and Summers 3). Burger King includes this ostensible meat *chicken*, rather than a *hen*, to ascribe her "selflessness" to the product and illustrate chicken fries as morally justifiable. While some viewers may read the broiler chicken's ironic inclusion as absurdly or even ordinarily humorous, the intended audience likely finds it calming because it gives them a

[51] Advertisers frequently gain viewers' support by exploiting social movements (Jamieson 226). Because of newfound concerns about the planet and its inhabitants that arose in the 1990s, advertisers began presenting their products as "environmentally responsible" (Jamieson 176). Fast food commercials, such as Burger King's and Chick-Fil-A's (discussed next), follow suit and appeal to the "humane" meat myth.

friendlier slaughterhouse image with which to identify as they consume chicken fries. As Burke articulates, moral growth depends on ethical principles, reputation, and love (24). Because Burger King establishes a moral explanation for chicken fries, they suggest that consuming the product remains loyal to viewers' principles and fosters their integrity. The franchise thus transports viewers into a reality that matches their idea of animal consumption—one they believe prevents chicken abuse. Since these viewers care about animal welfare, Burger King's "humane" portrayal of chicken fries inspires positive emotions, or yet another kairotic mentality, that eases concerns about meat. As a result, the ESP and product display remain timely and appropriate for these viewers, which allows them to seize Burger King's intended opportune moment.

Regardless of which interpretation viewers find relatable, the commercial's pathetic reality exemplifies Aristotle's theory of how narration "[puts] the judge into a given frame of mind" (180). To shape an intended temperament, rhetors must calm, rather than anger, their audience (Aristotle 217). Aristotle states that

> the frame of mind that makes people calm…is plainly the opposite to that which makes them angry, as when they are amusing themselves or laughing or feasting; when they are feeling prosperous or successful or satisfied; when, in fine, they are enjoying freedom from pain, or inoffensive pleasure, or justifiable hope (217).

Given Aristotle's definition, this "frame of mind"—the positive associations that incite calmness—fosters a kairotic mentality by opening viewers to the narrative's persuasion. Fittingly, Burger King not only sells chicken fries but also positive emotions. As the narrative transports viewers, it allows them to escape and live vicariously through its

reality, finally attaining “true love,” “humane” meat, or simply a laugh. Through the process of temporal co-occurrence, viewers transfer their feelings onto the product, which makes them more malleable and increases their likelihood of consuming chicken fries. Jamieson comments that these positive emotions and associations generate positive encounters, which suggests that viewers seek an item because of its “desirable [experience]” (184). Though Burger King targets returning customers, they interest most viewers, both old and new, by promoting the above values and beliefs alongside their product. However, in case their narrative fails to transport viewers and create kairotic opportunities, the franchise supplements their intended opportune moment with a secondary appeal, as discussed below.

Secondary Appeal: Interspecies Love, “Humane” Meat, and Winking Chickens

As advertisers engage viewers’ senses through layered visuals, sounds, songs, and simulations of smells and tastes, they seek to reach consumers by offering an experience of “proofs” in which they must participate. A narrative’s multimodality enables ethos, logos, and pathos to intersect, giving each qualities of the other. This strategy enthymematically demonstrates a product’s value and connects both product and brand to viewers’ identity, which creates additional kairotic conditions and permits viewers to still seize advertisers’ intended opportune moment, their ESP and product display. These viewers also undergo temporal co-occurrence and in turn transfer their perception of the product to reality. Though ethos, logos, and pathos cannot be entirely divorced because of

their intersections, I discuss each separately to more clearly illustrate how all three appeals function as the others.

Burger King's predominant appeal to ethos is their recurring chicken characters who sell their own flesh or, more accurately in this particular narrative, the chicken selling her unborn child's flesh.[52] Because viewers have seen similar characters in the franchise's commercials, they are more likely to trust the pregnant chicken. Additionally, viewers trust chicken fries' "true love" value because of the chicken's anthropomorphism. She and her family speak like humans, live in a house furnished with human belongings, and idolize human customs such as pregnancy from a loving relationship or marriage. Because of how society elevates humanity over animality, the chicken's anthropomorphism, which emphasizes her human traits, lends her credibility by making viewers believe her sentience and capacity to love. Such an ethical appeal also functions "logically" and emotionally because the commercial's layered narration (i.e., verbal, visual, and written claims) presents opportunities for viewers to draw additional conclusions. Viewers hear the ESP, "there's just no stopping true love," followed by the product display and the chicken fries hashtag that reinforce the product's name and associated values ("Burger King"). As viewers attach "true love" to the chicken fries, they understand the chicken's anthropomorphism as "logical" because her actions seem human. Since we prioritize human principles and actions over those of animals, the

[52] Though proper grammar requires "that" and "which" when referencing animals, I reject this practice because it objectifies them. Instead, I reference animals as "who" and "whom" to counter their object status and grant them the right to a subject's language that illustrates their personhood.

chicken's anthropomorphism becomes emotional; it appeals to viewers as humans who can identify with the chicken's pregnancy or her family's dramatic response.

This narrative's alternative interpretation establishes ethos differently and, in doing so, encourages viewers' cognitive dissonance. Burger King employs a talking chicken who announces her pregnancy and advertises her child's flesh to authorize consuming chicken fries. As the chicken endorses her child's slaughter, which implies that eating meat is consensual, the franchise seeks to legitimize the chicken fries' ethics by portraying them as "humane." Like the previous reading's appeal to "true love," this premise also becomes "logical" as viewers perceive the chicken's credibility. Her anthropomorphized message becomes "evidence" to consume chicken fries, as it suggests seemingly rational reasons for consuming her unborn child. Upon seeing the product display that accentuates the chicken's endorsement, or her pregnancy and wink, viewers may rationalize that we should eat chickens. Instead of humanity taking animals' lives from them, the chicken's wink suggests that she "gives" us her child's flesh, which designates consuming chicken fries as moral. Such a thought incites viewers' emotions by alluding to the chicken's supposed consent and the resulting morality of the product, both heated debates in the animal welfare and animal rights movement regardless of one's stance.

Burger King uses their product display to provide logos. Though narration, songs, and written captions help convey messages, commercials rely on visual argumentation. Anthony J. Blair defines a visual argument as one simply presented pictorially to illustrate a "reason for accepting or believing some proposition, for taking some other

attitude or for performing some action" (49). Essentially, visuals function as enthymemes whose images make suggestions inferred by viewers (Blair 50). Burger King uses chicken fries' image for various purposes. First, this product display "proves" the item's taste by making chicken fries look appetizing on screen, increasing the likelihood that viewers will purchase them. To make the product more appealing, Burger King anthropomorphizes the pack of chicken fries by painting a winking face on the paper container. Like the commercial's narrative, this wink fosters multiple interpretations that again utilize the narrative's "true love" and "humane" meat values. Viewers observe the wink either as an act of rebellion to suggest the chicken chooses true love over her family's disapproval, or as reinforcement for the chicken's "sacrifice" in which she freely "gives" her child's flesh.[53] Regardless of viewers' perception, the wink operates as "proof" to reinforce such values' "truth."

Logos, too, becomes ethical from the chicken's wink that Burger King uses to authorize chicken fries. Depending on viewers' understanding of the wink, the franchise either strengthens or resists traditional notions of race and sexuality. Because the chicken's pregnancy results from heterosexuality, it appeals to tradition's "authority," but, as the chicken mates with fries, a vegetable and entirely different "species," her pregnancy supposedly represents interracial relationships. By choosing such a controversial couple, Burger King seeks to extend the chicken's credibility as upholding traditional conception while also adhering to contemporary dating practices. The product

[53] In this first interpretation, the chicken's wink signifies a flirtatious gesture that sexualizes the chicken fries and insinuates that consumers eat the result of a rebellious yet sexy relationship.

display also develops the chicken fries' credibility because images always seem as if they reveal the truth. As Blair describes, visuals' realism grants them power (51). Illustrations make viewers believe they have "direct access to what is visually portrayed in a way that print does not," which empowers viewers; they "see for themselves" rather than listen to a report that only gives them "second-hand access" to events (Blair 51). Visuals, then, give a "façade of rationality" (Blair 57). When viewers see the pack of chicken fries wink, they recall the narrative's values and believe the gesture to be genuine.

As with any food product, chicken fries' image is emotional because of the feelings it stirs: hunger, cravings, and even relief due to the chicken's endorsement. Because all possible motives behind the chicken's wink are controversial, the "evidence" becomes even more emotional as viewers infer her intention. In the first interpretation, Burger King speaks primarily to heterosexual viewers, which excludes those in the LGBTQ+ community. Viewers belonging to marginalized races may find the chicken and fries' interspecies relationship offensive because it appropriates prejudice and compares them to a chicken and pack of fries, which further objectifies these consumers because of how speciesist attitudes deem animal comparisons as offensive.[54] For viewers conscientious of meat's production, the wink's second interpretation affects them emotionally. During the product display and beyond, Burger King's visuals lend their argument more permanence because, as Blair points out, images create a more "vivid and immediate" experience viewers see for themselves (52). Subsequently, the chicken's

[54] In 1970, Richard Ryder coined speciesism as "the widespread discrimination that is practiced by [humanity] against other species…based upon appearances—if the other individual looks different then he [or she] is rated as being beyond the moral pale" (quoted in Waldau 28).

wink, paired with the chicken fries' product display, elicit an even more emotional response from viewers, and one they better trust, because they see the "evidence" with their own eyes.

Though I have already discussed Burger King's appeal to pathos, or adoption of viewers' values (i.e., "true love" and "humane" meat), this commercial depends on the feelings these principles incite. The narrative's emotional impact enables its principles to become "logical" and ethical, ultimately designing conditions that facilitate the blending of each appeal since each circles back to the narrative's values. Finally, Burger King generates kairotic conditions to ensure that most viewers seize the commercial's ESP and product display. After experiencing each "proof," viewers undergo temporal co-occurrence; they consider chicken fries as loving and "humane" because of the narrative's enthymematic suggestions. For those not entertained and fully transported into Burger King's reality, this perception cultivates identification, making the product timelier and increasing the likelihood that viewers will purchase chicken fries. Though all companies promote brands while advertising their products, in the next section I examine how Chick-Fil-A uses these primary and secondary appeals to more directly authenticate their name and its accompanying motto.

## Chick-Fil-A: The Name

### Primary Appeal: Sassy, Self-Preserving Cows

Burger King is not the only franchise that creates *kairos* by entertaining viewers with narratives rooted in consumers' values and accompanying emotions. In fact, Chick-

Fil-A's trade character, the "Eat Mor Chikin" cow, has followed such a strategy ever since 1995 ("The Cow Campaign").[55] The "Eat Mor Chikin" cows challenge meat eaters, usually as they eat a "burger" sold by a competing company, to eat more "chicken" instead of "beef" products. As Chick-Fil-A articulates, these "fearless cows [act] in enlightened self-interest, [realizing] that when people eat chicken, they don't eat them" ("The Cow Campaign").

These cows continue their activism in a recent Chick-Fil-A catering commercial. An airplane drops a cellphone in a pasture, prompting two cows to begin texting beef eaters. The first recipient, a woman jogging, receives a text saying "BEEF SLOWZ U DOWN" accompanied by a frowning emoticon ("Chick-Fil-A"). The cows then text a selfie, with the caption "BEEF IZ DISTURBING," to a man in a business meeting who reacts by scanning the room in terror ("Chick-Fil-A"). A teenage girl receives a text while eating a burger, which she later puts down in disgust after opening a selfie from a cow who orders her to "DROP THA BURGER MISSEE" ("Chick-Fil-A"). The cows' last recipient, an astronaut, opens an email saying "EAT MOR CHIKIN ROGER" ("Chick-Fil-A"). The narrative returns to the cow who instigated the messages as he or she wears a straw hat and poker face, but both stare into the camera to confront viewers. When the commercial cuts to a table full of fresh fruit, chicken tenders, chocolate chip

[55] According to Chick-Fil-A's timeline devoted to the "Eat Mor Chikin" cows, this marketing tactic first began on a billboard in 1995. In 1997, the cows became famous on tv. Since, the cows have continued protesting and accumulated over 500,000 Facebook fans on their website, eatmorchikin.com, created in 2009 ("The Cow Campaign"). The cows' "activism" remains so popular that Chick-Fil-A sells cow calendars and other merchandise. The franchise even poses as the cows to interact with fans on Facebook and Twitter. Chick-Fil-A's extensive, clearly successful characterization of these cows likely inspired Burger King's anthropomorphized chickens.

cookies, and Coke Zero, viewers see the franchise's catering options. Finally, the narrator urges viewers to "give [their] gathering something to gather around" and to "try catering at Chick-Fil-A" ("Chick-Fil-A").

Similar to Burger King, Chick-Fil-A also entertains viewers with a world in which everything happens without explanation. A phone falls out of the sky, curiously landing in front of cows who begin texting their audience. Chick-Fil-A offers no explanation for how the cows accessed their audience's phone numbers, how they learned arguments humanity uses against meat consumption, how they appropriated human language, or how they knew exactly the right place and time to reach each member of their audience. Since none of these events normally transpire in reality, each catches viewers' attention. Some may find the cows' anthropomorphism absurdly humorous because of their perceived intellectual capacity, while others may interpret the entire narrative as funny because of its absurdity. Regardless, the narrative transports viewers, allowing them to escape into its alternative reality that insinuates that Chick-Fil-A grants cows equality; their characters speak and act like humanity and in turn enjoy the right not to be eaten at the franchise. Because the commercial remains loyal to the reality Chick-Fil-A has constructed with their "Eat Mor Chikin" cows, viewers accept the narrative's nonsensicality.

Like most fast food advertisements, Chick-Fil-A's narrator verbalizes the ESP (emotional selling proposition), "give your gathering something to gather around," after the cows' mischief to stimulate viewers' involvement and identification ("Chick-Fil-A"). Because the plot is relatively obvious, it requires less participation from viewers.

Nevertheless, Chick-Fil-A employs emotional tactics that inspire viewers to make sense and meaning out of the events. When the commercial begins and viewers see the airplane dropping the cellphone, the plot thus far makes little sense. Once viewers observe the first text message, however, they connect the phone to the cows and realize their authorship. After interacting with the narrative, viewers become more engaged in the story and more emotionally receptive, which initiates a kairotic mentality, making the cows' messages more timely, digestible, and appropriate to the audience.

Chick-Fil-A continues their emotional appeal to augment their narrative's kairotic conditions by advertising healthy and "humane" lifestyles, both of which further transport viewers as they identify with each recipient's reaction to the cows' argument. The first text sent to the woman jogging, "BEEF SLOWZ U DOWN" ("Chick-Fil-A"), appeals to health-conscious viewers, especially those who prioritize proper exercise and nutritious diets, by implying beef's health risks. Though most commercials glorify products by connecting them to positive concepts, the cows' message associates competitors' products with a *negative* quality (i.e., poor health slowing one's fitness goals) to slander beef products' image. By making beef appear unhealthy, the cows enhances chicken products' image as seemingly more wholesome and appropriate for health-conscious customers, which prompts these viewers to identify with the cows, agree with their message, and prioritize a diet they perceive as healthy. The message sent to the businessman, which reads "BEEF IZ DISTURBING," compels viewers to acknowledge the reality of cow slaughter ("Chick-Fil-A"). Though this statement could allude to beef's unhealthiness, which the cows' first message already addressed, the cows define chicken

as more "humane" than beef to reach more viewers: those unsure about consuming cows or those already against such a lifestyle. Because these viewers value animal welfare, they then adopt the cows' beliefs and foreground Chick-Fil-A's more "respectable" products. Like the preceding message, this one also elevates the franchise's items as morally superior by demonizing competing products. These viewers also identify with the cows, which prevents viewers from morally consuming beef because of the similarities between them and the animals. The cows' commands, "DROP THA BURGER MISSEE" and "EAT MOR CHIKIN ROGER," become more appropriate after viewers identify with one or both of the cows' previous messages. Upon seeing these demands, viewers recall the cows' first two arguments that give viewers reason to drop *their* burger and eat more chicken products.

Within thirty seconds, the cows' messages cause viewers to feel guilty for consuming their species. Chick-Fil-A magnifies these characters' messages by following Aristotle's advice of how "men become calm when they have spent their anger on somebody else" (217). Whether knowingly or not, the franchise also employs Aristotle's understanding of pathos as a kairotic strategy. For Aristotle, the emotional appeal's success depends upon three elements: the emotion, the individual who roused the audience, and the *occasion* (*kairos*) that inspired such feeling (Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 70).[56] When crafting calmness and anger, the two most juxtaposed emotions, Aristotle notes how rhetors must understand "the disposition of those who are angry, with

[56] Kinneavy reads Aristotle's sixteen references of "poia" as *kairos,* since it means "reasons or occasions," and he indicates how Aristotle uses "poia" when discussing each emotion: love, benevolence, pity, and fear (Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 71).

whom they are angry, and for what *reasons* [poia]" (qtd in Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 71, original emphasis). Rhetors must also "determine the state of mind which makes men [and women] mild, toward whom they become mild, and the *reasons* [poia] which make them so" (qtd in Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 71, original emphasis). By foregrounding beef products' negative consequences, or the *reasons* why consuming this type of meat makes consumers angry, Chick-Fil-A essentially diverts viewers' attention to beef. This distraction helps viewers better identify with Chick-Fil-A, the franchise that portrays their products and overall name as ostensibly more healthy and moral. As Burke indicates, prejudices can help individuals identify because some deem "warped motives" soothing (27, 37). As Chick-Fil-A portrays their company more favorably than that of competitors', the franchise appeals to a speciesist attitude that values cows over chickens (for reasons I will discuss when explaining the commercial's secondary appeal). Because of the cows' arguments for opposing their slaughter and consumption, viewers identify with the animals and Chick-Fil-A.

As a result of the associations formed by these cows' messages, viewers undergo temporal co-occurrence. They determine beef products to be unhealthy and inhumane, and they resent competing companies like Burger King and McDonalds that sell beef. Viewers then feel more positively toward chicken products, praising them as healthier and more "humane" than beef because, as Gunnar Andrén asserts in "The Rhetoric of Advertising," all positive characteristics insinuate no negative ones (76). Viewers' emotional identification with the cows culminates the ESP, which urges viewers to "give [their] gathering something to gather around" because of chicken products' perceived

health and moral "superiority." As viewers regard Chick-Fil-A positively, they seize the franchise's intended opportune moment, their ESP and product display. Rather than advertising a particular product or even their catering options, Chick-Fil-A ultimately legitimizes their name and motto so viewers maintain cows' and their own health, both timely issues that in turn create a sense of urgency and importance. In doing so, Chick-Fil-A hopes to attract new customers, but the franchise also seeks to strengthen their bond with already loyal customers who, after seeing Chick-Fil-A's "ethics," will likely spend even more money for their catering business.

Interestingly, this commercial exemplifies how rhetors create kairotic conditions to seize electronic *kairos,* although the cows use slightly different methods to achieve their goal. Instead of relying on only positive or negative associations, Chick-Fil-A also correlates the cows' emotionally loaded texts to the actions in which the recipients partake while receiving the messages. The cellphone notes the time as 7:27, which serves as the opportune moment for the cows to emotionally affect and reach each character. The best time to appeal to the jogger's health is when she is indeed jogging. When addressing the business man, who perhaps cares about animal welfare since the cows send him a text suggesting beef production's violence, proves most effective when bored and likely thinking of eating while in a business meeting. The cows best reach the teenager while she eats a burger.[57] The commercial never reveals the astronaut's actions before receiving his email, however. Despite this shortcoming, the occasions during

[57] Since advertisers seldom catch their audience while eating a burger, as the cows do, Chick-Fil-A includes this scene to simulate how they hope viewers will react—replacing beef products with chicken.

which the human characters receive the cows' messages increases their likelihood of feeling guilty because the animals catch these humans in their most emotionally, and often physically, appropriate mentality.[58] Because only the teenager changes her actions by halting her beef consumption, this method does not affect all. Chick-Fil-A acknowledges this drawback by complementing their primary appeal with intersecting "proofs" to provide additional reasons why viewers should replace beef with chicken products, which I demonstrate next.

## Secondary Appeal: Omniscient, Texting Cows on a Speciesist Mission to Save Their Lives

Chick-Fil-A uses ethical, logical, and pathetic enthymemes to "prove" their company's name and products' value. The narrative's foremost appeal to ethos is the cows' omniscience—first as cows slaughtered for their flesh. Because of these characters' identity as cows, they can accurately expose beef production's immorality; they know how the industry treats them and they can speak for their species to clarify that they want to live. Additionally, the cows' omniscience grants them their audience's

[58] This commercial exemplifies classical *kairos,* although the cows communicate via cellphone*,* because it mirrors ancient orators' craft that benefited from their live audience's reaction. More specifically, Chick-Fil-A places viewers into the classical rhetor's role as they interpret the characters' body language to understand the narrative. The commercial never shows the first woman's reaction to the message, but the message the cow sends to the business man prompts paranoia; he does not know who sent the message or how its author knew of his guilt. The following two recipients, the teenage girl and astronaut, both react similarly by scanning the room to determine who sent the message and how its author knew how and when to reach them. Because Chick-Fil-A neglects to explain the cows' omniscience, viewers must gauge the recipients' body language, especially their worrisome expressions, to conclude their emotions. While viewers do not use this information to seize *kairos* with their target audience, they nevertheless use it to make sense and meaning out of the narrative, which results in their seizing of Chick-Fil-A's intended opportune moment.

names, phone numbers, moral weakness (i.e., fear, guilt, or passion), and, more importantly, daily schedule and opportune moment. Though the average person lacks access to such information unless we stalk someone, the cows automatically know all. As godlike figures, the cows' awareness allows them to transcend their meat status and authorizes them to speak above humanity.

While the cows' omniscience primarily implies their authority, it also evokes an emotional response. Because Chick-Fil-A's cows embody such knowledge and enjoy a superior status, their image clashes with popular beliefs that mark cows as insentient and unintelligent objects. As these characters' omniscience verifies their cognizance, it challenges how society perceives cows and thus provokes viewers' emotions, whether anger (from opposing this portrayal), happiness (from supporting this portrayal), or remorse (from feeling guilty about their diet or lifestyle). Since seeing connotes believing, the cows' knowledge, evidenced by their messages, provides visual "proof" for their intelligence that distinguishes them from other animals farmed for their bodies. The cows stipulate reasons for why we should *not* consume them, which viewers must accept as logical because these characters' omniscience disproves the arguments we use to justify their slaughter. Because society values intelligence (measured by human standards) and God (or anyone godlike), viewers likely foreground the cows' similarities to humanity and change their perception of and perhaps even behavior toward the animals, at least while eating at Chick-Fil-A.

To create logos, Chick-Fil-A illuminates that the cows indeed send the messages to potential customers by including visual "proof," or selfie videos and pictures of each

cow, in the second and third texts. The narrative even alternates between showing these characters in the pasture, as they send their messages, and then ends with the cows' mischievous expressions so no doubt exists that they composed each text. After understanding the cows as the authors, viewers infer that they send the messages to protect themselves. But what makes viewers suspend their disbelief and accept the cows' authorship is each message's misspelled words: "BEEF *SLOWZ* U DOWN," BEEF *IZ* DISTURBING," "DROP *THA* BURGER *MISSEE*," "EAT *MOR CHIKIN* ROGER" ("Chick-Fil-A," emphasis added). These errors also serve ethical and emotional purposes, again suggested enthymematically. Visuals, according to Blair, establish a sense of ethos when they indicate authority, as when white lab coats signify physicians and scientists (54). When viewers see the cows' misspellings, they might reason that the characters learned human language by listening to us speak, as each misspelling *sounds* correct; the cows express their point clearly, just with grammatical errors. These inaccuracies extend the cows' credibility, making their behavior and agency believable to viewers who otherwise may not trust texting cows, since these animals do not use cell phones to communicate in reality.

Similarly, a visual's symbolism "evoke[s] involuntary reactions" (Blair 54). Knowing the cows reason and compose arguments like humanity heightens viewers' emotions because these animals' omniscience and communication diverge from common speciesist attitudes that designate cows as intellectually "inferior." The cows' messages, as they adopt human language, disprove this perception by showing they are in fact like us. These commonalities incite sympathy for the animals as they bridge cows and

viewers, but because the cows' language resembles a human child's rather than an adult's, Chick-Fil-A maintains the belief that animals cannot attain an adult human level of intelligence, only a human child's at most. Because the cows misspell nearly half of their messages, the franchise diminishes the animals' intelligence and preserves speciesist notions. In doing so, the cows' inferior status (resulting from their elementary misspellings) contrasts their superiority (gained from their godlike omniscience) to trigger emotional reactions. Depending on viewers' position on the animal welfare or animal rights movement, they either accept or reject the cows' demonstration and correlate their stance to support or oppose consuming cows. While the cows' language sustains some viewers' speciesist attitudes, others may view the characters more sympathetically. After all, human adults typically display more compassion to those considered smaller and more vulnerable, both in physicality and perceived intelligence, such as human children and animals.

If not already obvious, Chick-Fil-A's dominant appeal to pathos is their speciesist motto. The cows do not merely oppose their objectification but they *support* eating other animals, especially chickens. Rather than seeking to dismantle speciesism's foundation, the cows only address issues that directly affect them; they highlight *their* predicament's imminence, while simultaneously diminishing the importance of chickens' treatment in agriculture, by writing to their recipients in all capital letters. Capitalization in electronic situations (i.e., text, email, and social media speak) typically conveys excitement, anger, or emphasis, but given the cows' situation we know they follow this practice to emphasize their words' urgency and importance. Their capitalization conveys

that, if viewers do not eat chicken instead of cows, then *these* cows—the ones with whom viewers have become attached—will be slaughtered for consumption. After understanding this message, viewers realize that the cows act in self-defense of animal agriculture. The cows' desire to survive petitions all viewers, regardless of their beliefs on animal welfare or animal rights, because we prioritize and understand the desire to live, even if we cannot relate to animal agriculture's cruelty. As viewers imagine how they might feel as a cow in the industry, they become empathetic to the animals' experiences and resulting emotions.[59]

The cows' advocacy also contributes credibility and realism to their messages, as its speciesism further suggests similarities between humans and these animals. To accompany their anthropomorphized language (i.e., texting and emailing) and behavior (i.e., wearing human hats), the cows act more human by adopting human prejudice. Because these characters speak as cows to portray beef, not chicken products, as disturbing, viewers who support meat consumption likely find this amusing, similarly to how some laugh at racist jokes when told by an individual of the same race the joke uses as its punch line. Here, the cows' betrayal of chickens increases their credibility because the cows become even more human. Their messages' content also serves logic to viewers by offering various reasons not to eat beef, which disseminates a speciesist and fallacious

[59] Continuous exposure to the "Eat Mor Chikin" cows also inflates viewers' emotions and the cows' credibility. As the cows star in every Chick-Fil-A commercial, they form a long-term relationship to viewers. Such an emotional bond, in which viewers regard the characters similarly to pets, makes them more sympathetic toward the cows and their messages. While the cows develop their relationship with viewers, they become familiar and thus trusted representatives. Viewers, as a result of their attachment to the cows whom they trust, more willingly listen to their messages and subsequently support Chick-Fil-A and their products.

argument that suggests viewers must eat chickens to stop cows' slaughter. These characters' appearance, as real rather than animated cows, grounds viewers in a sense of reality and thus reasoning. Because viewers see the cows as they would in reality, they believe the animals' message is *real*—that these cows represent actual cows, not merely Chick-Fil-A's fictional ones. When paired with their messages, the cows' image exacerbates viewers' guilt; if they consume beef, viewers eat animals like these humanlike cows.

Like Burger King, Chick-Fil-A's enthymematic "proofs" make their company name and products more kairotic for viewers not transported by their commercial's reality. The cows' human qualities motivate viewers to protect them, unfortunately at chickens' expense. These viewers ultimately undergo temporal co-occurrence, which leads them to elevate consuming chickens over cows because they believe such a choice helps save the latter and helps sustain their own health. Such an outlook permits viewers to seize Chick-Fil-A's ESP and product display, thus increasing their likelihood of identifying with the franchise and hiring them for catering. The following commercial by McDonald's follows suit, but instead of utilizing primary and secondary appeals to advertise their name, the franchise revitalizes an old product by recontextualizing it with new narratives.

## McDonald's: An Old Product New

### Primary Appeal: Super Bowl Snacks and Adrenaline, But Only For a Limited Time

In addition to Burger King and Chick-Fil-A, McDonald's also creates kairotic conditions with their narratives. A commercial, which aired during the 2017 Super Bowl, begins with men playing an informal football game. Music begins playing as we see a young black man, with a full marching band behind him, rapping to various situations: "Woo! Called your old number, are you bringing the thunder?" ("McDonald's"). As the football team becomes competitive, the marching band continues playing and we see a Big Mac sitting atop one of the drums. The background singers shout, "There's a Big Mac for that!" ("McDonald's"). Next, the rapper addresses a group of men watching the Super Bowl. "On the edge of your seat," the camera shows three men jumping and screaming in excitement, as the rapper continues, "Your team can't be beat" ("McDonald's"). Before the background singers repeat, "There's a Big Mac for that," the commercial shows one of the men eating the product ("McDonald's"). Finally, the rapper walks through a house with the men from the previous scene. He raps, "Only in it for the half-time show?" while we see that only one man is excited for this event ("McDonald's"). The rapper continues, "It's okay, we know!" followed by the background singers' "There's a Big Mac for that" ("McDonald's"). The narrative quickly switches back and forth between all three situations, while the rapper ends his song by stating, "Got into formation, pumped up the nation, got your own celebration. Ow" ("McDonald's"). The informal football game's winner begins eating a Big Mac as the rapper articulates the ESP (emotional selling proposition): "Juicy, cheesy, iconic—"

("McDonald's"). Midway through this statement, the screen simultaneously shows the product's three sizes as the rapper states "Big Mac" ("McDonald's"). The rapper finishes the ESP, "Now in three sizes, but *only* for a limited time" ("McDonald's," original emphasis). The narrative revisits all three situations, showing each "limited time," and finally ends with the rapper stating "Man, I'm lovin' it. Ba-da-ba-ba-ba," as the screen displays the McDonald's and Super Bowl logos ("McDonald's").

Like the aforementioned commercials, this one belongs to a series. McDonald's presents four other narratives in which the same rapper advertises the Big Mac to multiple audiences, from students and businesspeople to athletes and celebrities. In their Super Bowl commercial, however, McDonald's better refines their audience to the game's fans. In thirty seconds, the narrative foregrounds three situations to create different kairotic moments, again following Poulakos's recommendations, by appealing to American values: football, the Super Bowl, and the half-time show. Rather than using animals or a fantastical setting, McDonald's uses human characters and realism to advertise feelings viewers can experience with the Big Mac when the Super Bowl airs.[60] Because of the narrative's realism, McDonald's rarely incorporates absurd humor. The commercial's absurdity ceases at the rapper's and marching band's theatrics and the Big Mac set atop their drums. Regardless, with each situation's values, the franchise

[60] The Super Bowl is known and loved for its entertaining commercials. As Bernice Kanner describes, it is the "Super Bowl of advertising" because viewers widely anticipate the game for its ads (1, 3). Hence, viewers watching the Super Bowl already expect advertisements to entertain them, which McDonald's clearly knows because they deliver a commercial kairotic to both its context and audience.

transports viewers by offering them a sense of community and belonging with which they can identify.

To establish a communal bond between viewers, McDonald's utilizes Aristotle's pathos that calms an audience. Aristotle mentions that "we feel calm towards those who humble themselves before us and do not gainsay us" and "we also feel calm towards those who are serious when we are serious, because then we feel that we are treated seriously and not contemptuously" (216). In these statements, Aristotle reveals how to ease an audience simply by respecting and accepting them. McDonald's similarly comforts their target audience, men, by including them in their narrative's conversation and portraying these viewers as equal to the franchise. This equality follows Aristotle's guidelines for creating love, which he believed depended on circumstances that convey a speaker as "more generous and worthy of love" (Kinneavy, "*Kairos* in Classical" 70). Though love differs from acceptance, it elicits comparable emotions to make viewers regard McDonald's more positively. By positioning their franchise as equal to their viewers, McDonald's characterizes themselves as more deserving of viewers' time, money, and support.

The commercial's first situation, a football game between friends and family, builds sports fanatics' excitement for the Super Bowl and transports them into the narrative's reality. This scene's quick movement mirrors that of a football game, while the men's aggressive expressions imitate players' emotions. As viewers recall past adrenaline rushes they experienced while playing football, they identify with the men on screen and become more competitive for the Super Bowl, which makes them more

receptive when the rapper challenges them by asking, “Called your old number, are you bringin’ the thunder?” (“McDonald’s”). Here the rapper speaks *to* viewers. As James W. Pennebaker articulates, rhetors seem considerate of others when they refer to their audience as “you” (Pennebaker 71). Speaking directly to viewers makes this scene more personal and provides an opportunity for them to revive their football experiences. Because this question evokes viewers’ already-relatable memories and forms a more intimate relationship between consumers and McDonald’s, viewers more personally react to and identify with the narrative. To connect viewers’ experiences to the product, the rapper invites viewers to recollect the hunger they felt after playing a game, prompting them to agree that a Big Mac, popularly considered a “comfort” food, is an appropriate solution. Because this situation uses viewers’ physical and emotional memory, they perceive the product more positively, perhaps as even more energizing and fulfilling than before they saw the commercial.

The second situation, which shows how fans anticipate and react to their favorite team winning, functions similarly to transport viewers. The three men anxiously yet excitedly watch the Super Bowl. One holds his hands together, almost as if he were praying, while the other man tightly grips a football in his hands. The man in between them sits with his eyes and mouth open in shock. As the rapper claims their “team can’t be beat,” all three stand up and scream with jazz hands. This behavior exemplifies anxiety felt during the game and pride felt when one’s preferred team wins, both of which viewers identify because they have likely reacted similarly when watching a game. Since this commercial first aired during the Super Bowl, viewers imagine themselves in this

situation and think of *their* favorite team winning. When viewers see one of the men eat a Big Mac to celebrate his team's victory, the product becomes more timely and appropriate. In fact, this gesture urges viewers to consume the burger, which explains why the team's win comes *before* the half-time show situation—so viewers can visit McDonald's during the half-time show, return home before the game resumes, and celebrate with a Big Mac when their team wins. That said, this scene acts as the most situational, or most kairotic, because it allows viewers the chance to actualize the narrative's reality by eating a Big Mac during what McDonald's terms the most opportune moment.

The third situation transports viewers indifferent to sports by illustrating the half-time show. In this kairotic opportunity, three men watch the event but only one, the man shimmying on the couch, seems interested. Just as the informal football game prepped viewers by allowing them to re-experience the sport's emotions, this man's dances rouse viewers' half-time hype. Because only one man anticipates watching the Super Bowl for its half-time show, McDonald's acknowledges these viewers' minority status. Despite their typical exclusion from Super Bowl conversations, the rapper speaks to and even *joins* these viewers with his rap that consoles them: "It's okay, *we* know" ("McDonald's," emphasis added). This phrase shows McDonald's acceptance of these viewers, which makes them feel as if they belong, an inclusiveness sports fans may not grant them. Since "we" creates a "group identity" that embraces two or more people (Pennebaker 41), a greater intimacy results between the franchise and consumers, increasing viewers' emotions and likelihood of identifying with the Big Mac. Because of

this situation's hype and sense of community, viewers feel both entertained and included, making the product more personal and appropriate.

As viewers escape into the narrative's reality by revisiting their experiences, McDonald's rap makes them participants, which furthers their transportation and encourages them to perceive the product more meaningfully. Carpenter and Green articulate how rhyme and music increase an audience's attention while also defamiliarizing them from reality to lure them into their world (172). The rap's repetition fosters viewers' participation in the narrative's construction ("McDonald's"). As Burke indicates, an audience collaborates with a rhetor by learning a speech's patterns and using that knowledge to complete it as they listen (59). Recognizing and completing the narrative's recurring statement (i.e., "there's a Big Mac for that") makes viewers more pliant to the franchise's message. This participation increases viewers' possibility of identifying with the claim, Big Mac, and McDonald's because, as Burke comments, an audience identifies more with rhetors when involved in their speech (57-8).

After viewers' transportation, participation, and identification, they undergo the process of temporal co-occurrence.[61] Viewers group their football memories with the narrative's experience: adrenaline, hunger, anticipation, pride, entertainment, and community. Viewers then associate each positive emotion felt with McDonald's and agree that there is a Big Mac for "that"—their preferred aspect of the game. Meanwhile,

[61] McDonald's attempts to reach multiple viewers with their situations, but some may identify with more than one. If so, each situation prepares viewers for the next; the first scene prompts them to elevate the Big Mac as a necessity, while the next urges them to consume the product during the half-time show, and finally viewers may enjoy the remainder of the game like the man in the commercial's last scene.

by attaching the Big Mac to the Super Bowl, McDonald's makes an old product seem new. The three sizes (i.e., Mac Jr., Big Mac, and Grand Mac) regenerate McDonald's signature product, while the ESP's key phrases, "iconic" and "*only* for a limited time," places viewers in a kairotic mentality; they believe the Big Mac's importance (i.e., that they consume a "legendary" product) and urgency (that they must hurry because the three sizes are a limited time offer) ("McDonald's"). Such a mentality ultimately allows viewers to seize McDonald's intended opportune moment—their ESP, "Juicy, cheesy, iconic Big Mac. Now in three sizes, but *only* for a limited time," and product display ("McDonald's," original emphasis).

Each situation's connection to the Super Bowl makes the Big Mac timely as the commercial airs during the game, but once viewers see the narrative afterward it may not be as effective.[62] Viewers no longer anticipate the game's results or half-time show, and those whose team lost may no longer feel prideful, which would cause these viewers to perceive McDonald's narrative and Big Mac negatively because neither directly pertain to them.[63] Alternatively, the commercial may more successfully affect viewers who enjoyed the game because their team won, making McDonald's narrative even more entertaining and relatable. Thus, unlike the first two commercials that appeal to more universal contexts, this one remains kairotic for only a limited time like the Big Mac's

[62] According to iSpot.tv, this commercial was active for at least a month after the Super Bowl ("McDonald's").
[63] Pennebaker, upon examining group identity and sports, finds that if one's team wins, he or she states "*we* won," but if one's team loses, he or she says "*they* lost," showing that sports fans only identity with winning teams (233, emphasis added).

three sizes. To offset this shortcoming, McDonald's, like other advertisers, includes secondary appeals and extends their narrative's shelf life.

Secondary Appeal: Real, "Iconic" Burgers for Men

McDonald's supports their primary appeal by incorporating ethos, logos, and pathos to "prove" the Big Mac's value. Like Burger King's and Chick-Fil-A's narratives, these rhetorical appeals intersect with one another, each functioning enthymematically to make suggestions. McDonald's most prevalent ethical appeal is their narrative's realism that defines the product and its associations as real and therefore obtainable. Each situation, with the exception of the rapper and his marching band, is realistic. Rather than requiring viewers to suspend their disbelief to identify with their characters, McDonald's illustrates men in common settings. Because viewers likely cherish memories that resemble the narrative's situations, they are more likely to trust that "there's a Big Mac for that" as the marching band repeats the claim ("McDonald's"). Viewers recollect their physical and mental state in the simulated experiences and agree that the product would enrich each activity, either by easing hunger, comforting anxiety, celebrating a team's win, or simply providing a quick dinner or half-time snack.

Because McDonald's bases each situation on viewers' personal experiences, their realism also suggests pathetic and logical appeals. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this method elicits an emotional response, as viewers better relate to each situation, making the narrative and the Big Mac more apt. Most viewers can position themselves into at least one of the situations because they have likely already enjoyed playing an informal

football game, witnessing their favorite team winning, or watching a half-time show. If not, viewers can experience at least one situation for the first time with the Super Bowl. To prolong viewers' emotional response, McDonald's implies that they can attain community by consuming the Big Mac because its creators seemingly accept all viewers.

This strategy becomes logical. Since McDonald's utilizes a more realistic escapism, where viewers do not have to change worlds or identities to obtain their desired results, this "proves" that there is a Big Mac for each situation regarding the Super Bowl. McDonald's hones this "evidence" by incorporating their product into the narrative, before the product display, to visualize the Big Mac's suitability. By the end of the commercial, viewers observe two men eating the burger at their opportune moment, after playing an informal football game and during the half-time show. Because viewers *see* these men consume the product in various circumstances, the ethos of viewers' judgment disproves potential doubts and implies that the Big Mac can fulfill consumers' needs. The marching band's premise, "there's a Big Mac for that," subsequently becomes true for viewers ("McDonald's").

To appeal to logos, McDonald's mainly uses their product display that becomes more effective because viewers have already experienced each kairotic moment and understood that the Big Mac's sizes correlate to each situation. Even so, presenting the burger at the end allows viewers to see for themselves the three different sizes, which McDonald's hopes will prove their ESP's claim that defines the Big Mac as "juicy, cheesy, [and] iconic" ("McDonald's"). Upon seeing each size, viewers likely discern the Big Mac as all of the above based on each burger's appearance and positive associations

typically attached to meat products.[64] As the product display suggests arguments about the Big Mac, it also establishes credibility and invokes emotions. When McDonald's describes the product to make it more appealing, they specifically choose the word "iconic" to indicate the Big Mac's ethos. Most of McDonald's customers or potential customers, such as those who consume fast food, know that the Big Mac is the franchise's signature item. The burger thus already holds credibility as a more "classic" and "timeless" product.[65] Yet this limited time deal, which presents three sizes to satisfy various degrees of hunger, portrays the Big Mac as even more "iconic." Instead of only being able to choose one size, viewers now have three options. They no longer have to order multiple Big Macs to get full (they can now order the Grand Mac) or, alternatively, they no longer have to overeat to finish a Big Mac (they can now order the Mac Jr.).

The adjectives used to characterize the Big Mac (i.e., "juicy, cheesy, iconic") become emotional because of the setting in which viewers hear them ("McDonald's"). Since this commercial first aired during the Super Bowl, the product display meets viewers when their emotions are already heightened by watching the game and anticipating its results. Because the game airs around dinnertime, it reaches viewers when they may be hungry. Both of these kairotic states enhance the product display's effectiveness because, when already in an emotional state, viewers become more receptive to the Big Mac, whose three images serve to increase viewers' hunger.

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[64] For an analysis of meat's social meanings, such as religion, patriotism, masculinity, health, and meat as product, food, and meal, see Heinz's and Lee's "Getting Down to the Meat" (90).

[65] Ever since 1967, the Big Mac, initially created to compete with Burger King's Whopper, has been McDonald's "signature sandwich" (Chandler para 4).

McDonald's predominant emotional appeal may be less obvious to those who quickly watch the commercial, but it nevertheless influences viewers. Despite McDonald's three sizes suggesting that there is a Big Mac for everyone (i.e., those who want a regular, large, or super-sized burger), the franchise excludes women by speaking directly to men. Only male characters appear in the narrative and, consequently, the commercial's second person pronouns only connect the franchise to male viewers. This seclusion maintains sexism, specifically masculine and feminine stereotypes. As McDonald's preserves gendered interests, they reinforce the Super Bowl as a man's entertainment and gender the Big Mac as a man's food. Such an implication seeks to empower men, especially those already sexist, and in turn raise their testosterone for the Super Bowl and burger. McDonald's exploitation of gender roles also enthymematically establishes ethos and logos. McDonald's builds the Big Mac's already "iconic" credibility by attaching it to gendered notions of sports and food, where tradition's authority elevates the product as more "old-fashioned." In turn, the franchise develops their ethos as a company that upholds "traditional" values. Lastly, just as seeing leads to believing with nearly every other commercial, when viewers realize the narrative shows only men celebrating the Super Bowl and consuming the Big Mac, this "proves" that both activities remain a man's role. Ultimately, this "evidence" sustains a sexist attitude against women who enjoy sports (i.e., the "butch" stereotype) and also men who choose a vegetarian diet or vegan lifestyle (i.e., the "sissy" stereotype).

As a result of experiencing each of these suggestions, viewers identify with these "proofs" and complete the process of temporal co-occurrence by associating the Big Mac

with its demonstrated value. Finally, they perceive the product as a real, "iconic" burger for men. This perception enables viewers to seize the commercial's ESP and product display, making the Big Mac more kairotic for viewers unable to become transported in the franchise's reality, which in turn increases their likelihood of purchasing a Big Mac. McDonald's, and by extension all advertisers', primary and secondary appeals seem groundbreaking because of how they create *kairos* in a more controlled manner than classical rhetors. But as discussed in the final section below, these strategies may not be as new we believe because Gorgias employed similar techniques in his compositions. Nevertheless, viewers' intense, imaginative experiences that result from commercials still influence them in ways they often overlook.

## From Gorgias to Behind the Screen and Beyond

As I have shown, with new communication technology comes new opportune moments and methods to profit from them. However, even Gorgias cultivated *kairos* to seize the opportune moment in his compositions. According to Poulakos's analysis of *Palamedes* and *Helen*, Gorgias gives readers an impression of timeliness, or urgency and importance ("*Kairos*" 90). In the *Palamedes,* Gorgias composes kairotic opportunities by dramatizing both the occasion and audience (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 91). Gorgias's dramatization transforms an ordinary occasion into "a unique rhetorical event" by showing the importance of "Odysseus' charges against Palamedes [that] appear sudden and preposterous" (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 92). Gorgias also makes the situation urgent by having Palamedes express that his behavior only results from his predicament's urgency

(Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 93). Then, to elevate his audience and make them more responsive to his dramatization, Gorgias portrays them as extraordinary, or of distinguished character (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 93). Gorgias's *Helen* appeals to popular beliefs, or three "undeniable propositions" regarding praise and blame, to illuminate how Helen has been blamed unjustly when she simply reacted to rhetoric's magic (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 94). To prove this, Gorgias uses reason, a unique *topos* since poets typically argue from inspiration, to "recast common belief in a new light," allowing a new, surprising argument to change the audience's current belief (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 94). Just as in the *Palamedes*, Gorgias also construes the *Helen's* audience as one that may advance from their fixed beliefs and perceive Helen's reaction differently—based on reason (Poulakos, "*Kairos*" 95).

Poulakos believes Gorgias wrote these titles as teaching manuals for rhetoric, concluding that he saw *kairos* as a tool for both orality and written composition. Since Gorgias composed conditions that allowed him to seize *kairos* with the written word, rhetors creating kairotic moments is not as contemporary as it may seem. Advertisers utilize Gorgias's techniques by dramatizing products with entertaining narratives that distinguish items as unique, important, and urgent. To place viewers into a kairotic mentality, they embed popular values and beliefs into their stories and, in doing so, create new arguments that viewers transfer to the advertised product. Advertisers even elevate their audience by attaching their product and brand to viewers' investments, which insinuates that viewers remain loyal to their principles and even become better people by using and supporting advertised products. But because of new media's multimodality,

advertising affords more kairotic opportunities and thus extends Gorgias's conception of *kairos*.

Contemporary rhetors benefit from their electronic medium because it enables them to further dramatize their narratives and transport viewers, which provides them an opportunity to escape reality as it persuades. Such an emotional experience increases viewers' likelihood of identifying with a commercial's narrative, product, and brand. Rather than simply appealing to each rhetorical appeal separately, advertisers exploit their multimodality by combining ethos, logos, and pathos to "prove" a product's and brand's importance. Because advertisers appeal to as many audiences as possible in fifteen to thirty seconds, their narratives often create kairotic conditions that allow viewers to seize *multiple* opportune moments, depending on what influences individual viewers.[66] Above all, advertisers enjoy less error when creating *kairos* because they wield and thus control new media's rhetorical tools (i.e., narrative transportation, multimodality, and the psychological effects resulting from both) that surpass rhetors' face-to-face deliveries and viewers' imaginative capacities.

But why, exactly, do these methods work so effectively in consumerism? Advertisers make their commercials as memorable as possible by revisiting themes (like Burger King's chickens who sell their flesh and McDonald's "there's a Big Mac for that" situations) and utilizing recurring characters (like Burger King's chickens, Chick-Fil-A's

[66] Commercials' images especially help produce multiple kairotic moments. According to Blair, the visual enthymeme differs from its verbal counterpart because visuals foster multiple, "equally plausible" enthymematic interpretations (50). Equally important, images more emotionally affect viewers by articulating what words often cannot (Blair 50). Because visuals pose an argument more quickly than verbal claims, they communicate with an audience more efficiently (Blair 51).

cows, and McDonald's rapper and marching band). When a commercial's narrative already feels familiar, either because it belongs to a series or routinely incorporates the same characters, viewers better remember its reality and arguments, thus increasing viewers' likelihood of consuming the advertised product. Carpenter and Green reveal that audiences recall emotional, text-based narratives much as they remember imagined scenes, but that audiences recall multimodal narratives similar to how they remember reality. Though memories created in reality remain more intense, a narrative's vivid details greatly intensify an audience's experience (Carpenter and Green 174). Hence, advertisers pair their primary and secondary appeals not merely to ensure their commercial's timeliness, but also to provide viewers with a personalized reality so they can experience its simulated narrative and "proofs" that build an appetite for products beyond their commercials.

Though seemingly neutral, experiences also function argumentatively because they "have been carefully designed to provide evidence for [a] conclusion" (Groarke 151-2). Leo Groarke reveals that an activity as impartial as a tour of Shanghai poses an argument about exploring the city (152). The fast food commercials discussed above serve similar purposes as their multimodality captivates viewers. Based on Mahoney's understanding of Marshall McLuhan's pronunciation theory, technology has reworked perception and objectivity, where contemporary rhetors' speeches now rely on a hierarchy of senses that limit sight, but not sensations such as hearing, which we lack the

ability to mute (12).[67] Touch, however, remains the most intimate because it uses all senses (Mahony 13). Because commercials' multimodality combines each sense, their narratives' multi-faceted claims, which simulate sight, sound, music, smell, taste, and so on, mimic a sense of touch. As viewers identify with a narrative's reality or "proofs," and subsequently the product and its brand, the commercial impacts them emotionally, which makes commercials *self-persuasive*. Since advertisers' primary and secondary appeals personally influence viewers by nurturing their identity, this intimacy *touches* them emotionally, thus altering their mood—the most powerful determining factor in any decision, especially consumption, because we buy with our emotions. Upon feeling a commercial's reality and "proofs," viewers ultimately strive to recreate their encounter by purchasing the advertised product and supporting its brand. That said, viewers no longer merely buy products but *experiences* that uphold their values and beliefs.

This essay illustrates the strategies advertisers use to create *kairos,* but it in no way exhausts how all advertisers or rhetors do so. The following questions thus deserve further discussion: How do other aspects of advertising, such as the programs during which commercials air and the ads viewers see before and after each commercial, affect viewers' kairotic mentality? How do advertisers create *kairos* with picture ads, product labels, and even a product's placement in a store—perhaps the timeliest moment to sell because the audience is already near the product? How does a product's label strengthen customers' loyalty to a brand by "proving" its worth during consumption to capture a

[67] Patrick Mahony indicates that McLuhan's theory on classical pronunciation, enacted when rhetors orally delivered speeches, depended on their voice and gesture (12).

*future* opportune moment? How do advertisers create *kairos* and sell products by objectifying animals through speciesist appeals, and how do their accompanying animal characters contrast and reinforce such prejudice? Equally important, how do advertisers target viewers with other intolerances (i.e., sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, Xenophobia, etc.) that also objectify marginalized communities, and why are these biases used to sell fast food products? Finally, how do rhetors in other digital settings create kairotic conditions and opportunities so they, and their audience, may seize *kairos*?

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