

Fragile Boundaries and the Butchered Body in Janice Galloway's 'The meat'

Abstract

Janice Galloway represents women's experiences of gendered violence in her 1991 short story 'The meat', in which the body of a murdered woman appears as meat in a butcher's shop. 'Meat' is a term used to express the dehumanisation, objectification, and consumption of women and their bodies, and Galloway literalises this metaphoric treatment. This article provides a close textual analysis of Galloway's story to explore how vulnerability to butchery reveals the instability of a range of conceptual boundaries.

Carol J. Adams's concept of the 'absent referent' enables a comparison between the treatment of animals and women under patriarchy, with particular regard to domestic violence. The slippage of butchery from the commercial sphere upon animal bodies, into the domestic sphere upon the human body, demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining conceptual boundaries. Applying Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection further reveals how the polluting properties of the meat-body actively broach spatial boundaries and posits the meat-body as an ambiguous object which threatens order.

The meat-body represents the breakdown of cultural understandings of species difference and normative food categorisation. The collapse of the distinction between species witnessed in 'The meat', wherein both animals and humans may be butchered, introduces the potential for cannibalism which threatens further the distinction between Self and Other. Galloway's meat threatens a breakdown of meaning and exposes the fragility of the symbolic order, revealing boundaries of the body and culture to be unstable. This article asserts that the meat-body, as the macabre result of a violent patriarchy, exposes the dysfunction and fragility of social systems and invites the deconstruction and interrogation of the patriarchal cultural order. Adams's concept of the 'absent referent' enables a comparison between the treatment of animals and women under patriarchy, with particular regard to domestic violence. The slippage of butchery from the commercial sphere upon animal bodies into the domestic sphere upon the human body demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining conceptual boundaries. Applying Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection further reveals how the polluting properties of the meat-body actively broach spatial boundaries and posits the meat-body as an ambiguous object which threatens order.

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Keywords: body, meat, fiction, abjection, gender

Introduction

This article is concerned with the symbolic function of meat in Janice Galloway's 'The meat', from her 1991 collection of short stories entitled *Blood*. A short text of fewer than four hundred words, 'The meat' depicts a hunk of meat hung above a butcher's counter that makes the shop's customers uncomfortable. As it begins to decompose and its stench becomes unignorable, the butcher throws the meat to stray animals in the alley to be eaten before taking a remaining scrap of hair and ribbon as a reminder to be stowed 'beneath the marital bed' (Galloway 1991, p.109). With this reference to the marital in the story's final lines, the reader realises that the meat was the body of the shopkeeper's deceased wife, murdered and displayed in her husband's shop. This article hereafter refers to the woman's exhibited remains as the 'meat-body', to emphasise its dual status as both human corpse and edible butchered carcass. This term additionally stresses the potential for any human body to become 'meat' through butchery, highlighting the conceptual closeness of these two terms.

With a wealth of symbolic connections to masculine strength, violence, and dominion over animals, meat is simultaneously a prestigious food item for Western diners and one which is strictly policed (Fiddes 1991, p.18). Considering meat as a food item, Jorge Sacido-Romero comments that of all different food types, 'meat is the one that provokes the most ambiguous reactions in humans' (Sacido-Romero 2019, p.138). Of animal origin, yet considered in de-animalised terms, connoting both power and vulnerability, and regarded as both appetising and repugnant, meat's multiplicity of meaning indicates issues with conceptual organisation and offers challenges to a range of conceptual boundaries. This article demonstrates how Galloway's 'The meat' employs these symbolic functions and this sense of ambiguity to explore and critique the violence of patriarchal control through a parallel with animal slaughter and butchery.

Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection explores the experience of horror when the distinction between Self and Other is lost; within this article, Kristeva's abject facilitates an examination of the crisis of boundaries inspired by the meat-body. Carol J. Adams's concept of the absent referent then supports an interrogation of parallels between violence against animals and violence against women, demonstrating how patriarchal violence is culturally hidden in ways that replicate practices of meat production and consumption. The continuing threat of violence represented by the meat-body is considered in terms of pollution, and this article offers an examination of how easily this threat is sublimated through the destruction of the meat-body. The article establishes that the body's treatment as meat collapses the species boundary and exposes the mechanisms of patriarchy that conceal violence against women.

Meat and the Abject

An analysis of 'The meat' utilising Julia Kristeva's interpretation of the abject begins to reveal how the horror of the text is achieved. '[T]he jettisoned object', the abject refers to that which is rejected, cast off, or discarded as waste material (Kristeva 1982, p.2). The abject causes a crisis of conceptual ordering through the loss of distinction, while to be confronted by the abject is to experience abjection, a feeling of horror at this breakdown of meaning. In Kristeva's words, 'it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out' (1982, p.2). The meat-body's transgressive ambiguity, then, in Galloway's 'The meat' is an encounter with the horror of the abject.

For Kristeva, the corpse represents the ultimate waste product, writing that the 'corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life' (Kristeva 1982, p.4). Where the dead body exists as an extreme example of abjection, the meat-body offers the image of a corpse that has been further defiled. Physically fragmented through butchery, the meat-body exposes that the body is susceptible to the violation of dehumanising violence and presents a waste product that is unexpectedly presented as edible.

Within the butcher's shop, the dead animal bodies are not granted the status of corpses and are instead framed in terms of their edibility, and the butcher's wife is treated similarly. Her body is transformed from corpse into a fragmented edible 'carcass' by butchery and by its context within the butcher's shop (Galloway 1991, p.108). Where the abject defies categorisation, the meat-body exists as both corpse and food, both animal and human.

The meat-body is nearly indistinguishable from other meat within the shop, raising issues with notions of human exceptionalism. The importance of meat consumption for Kristeva lies in its function as a means of separating the human from the animal in Western culture; humans in this culture do not eat kin, therefore animals are not kin. This distancing from the animal world moves humans away from so-called 'animal' actions such as murder, yet the 'abject confronts us [...] with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal' (Kristeva 1982, p.12). When a human is capable of the 'animal' behaviour of murder, as evidenced by the meat-body, the distinction between animals and humans is eroded.

The potential edibility of the meat-body further threatens to initiate the customers in the 'animal' act of cannibalism. For Todd Chambers, cannibalism pushes deeper into Kristeva's animal territories, indicating 'that humans have become monsters or animals' as it requires considering the human body 'as simply another form of meat and, in doing so, denies humans their radical species break from animals' (2016, p.86; p.86). The violence of Galloway's butcher challenges a range of conceptual boundaries, as Lorna Piatti-Farnell's *Consuming Gothic* notes that the slaughter of a human 'makes the differentiation between alive and dead, human and non-human, food and consumer, very difficult to discern' (2017, p.143). Ingesting human meat would breach the boundaries of the consumer's body, wherein the 'Other' would be taken into the 'Self', complicating the distinction to the point that 'meaning collapses' (Kristeva 1982, p.2). The meat-body is at no point consumed by humans; the line of cannibalism is never crossed. Nevertheless, when the human body is treated as an animal carcass, the threatening potential for anthropophagy disrupts conceptual boundaries of the animal and the human, and tabooed and normative foods. Russell West demonstrates that cannibalism is a practice contiguous with several key 'domains of abjection-disgust', such as food, waste products, and the human corpse; the meat-body, simultaneously representing these domains and suggesting the potential for customers to engage in cannibalism (and therefore animal behaviours), powerfully evokes the abject (West 2007, p.236). The existence of the meat-body proposes that there is no significant difference between species, as human bodies are also vulnerable to the violence and consumption typically enacted upon animals in the production of meat.

The meat-body is consumed by 'small animals and strays' when it is discarded into the butcher's alley (Galloway 1991, p.109). Conceptions of human dominion over animals are disrupted as animals can now consume a human body, thus challenging the idea that humans are separate and exempt from the animal world. The animals who consume the wife's body are considered of 'lowly' status, being small scavengers rather than apex predators, indicating that humans are not only part of the natural world, but that they do not occupy an unassailable position within it. Perceived hierarchies of consumption are overturned and shown to be fallible, as Galloway's meat collapses the species boundary and queries concepts of human exceptionalism. The abject is 'what disturbs identity, system, order', and the meat-body disrupts concepts of animal and human difference through the inhuman behaviour of the butcher, the presentation of the human corpse as edible, and the violation of consumption hierarchies (Kristeva 1982, p.4).

Hidden in Plain Sight

As it is specifically a woman made indistinguishable from meat, exploring gender in the text is necessary. The butcher of the story is indicated only by the pronouns 'he' and 'him', which

codes him as a man. With the butcher figured as male, those butchered are opposingly figured as female, and the gendering of these roles is exposed. Rosemary Deller asserts that ‘meat’ is a slippery term when connected with the body and may be used in oppositional gendered ways. Meat can function in a ‘masculine’ sense, as ‘a metaphor for bodies that are solid, muscly and substantial’, yet also as ‘a metonym for bodies that have been figuratively objectified, fragmented and rendered consumable (typically viewed as a feminised position)’ (2015, p.11; p.11). Galloway’s meat-body fully embodies Deller’s feminised meaning of meat, made edible through its physical fragmentation and objectification. Carol J. Adams similarly comments on the multiplicity of meat’s gendered meanings, demonstrating that “[m]eat’ becomes a term to express women’s oppression, used equally by patriarchy and feminists, who say that women are ‘pieces of meat’” (2010, p.59). Here, Adams asserts that ‘meat’ symbolically conveys both the metaphoric fragmentation and consumption of women under patriarchy, and women’s experiences of being dehumanised, animalised, and objectified. ‘The meat’ explicitly engages with this metaphor, making literal the metaphoric treatment of women and their bodies in the hands of a patriarchal system. The butcher’s wife is physically transformed into meat, representing the extremes of gendered violence.

Sara Martín Alegre writes that ‘The meat’ is an ‘incisive criticism of a patriarchy so dominant that we don’t see women’s ill-treated bodies, not even when their sad remains are fully displayed’ (2009, p.462). Though the reader ‘sees’ the meat-body, a full understanding of its origins and a recognition of its meaning is not achieved until the closing of the story, when the body has been reduced to waste residue. Therefore, the presence of the murdered woman is invisible to the reader despite being the focus of the narrative. However, the butcher’s customers may well ‘see’ the woman’s body. Sacido-Romero adds that this indictment of patriarchal violence is all the more cutting considering the customers recognise the meat, directing attention to the fact that the hanging meat was ‘*familiar enough* in its way’ (2019, p.137, emphasis in original). The hair and tartan ribbon of the carcass offer some indication of the meat-body’s origin, and the text asserts that ‘[f]olk seemed embarrassed to even be caught keeking in its direction’ (Galloway 1991, p.108). Customers recognise the meat’s origins, and their embarrassment stems from their refusal to acknowledge their recognition of the butcher’s wife and engage with the true significance of the meat-body. For Sacido-Romero, ‘[t]he community of unnamed/ungendered shoppers, thus, tolerate homicidal domestic violence’ (2019, p.137). In Galloway’s text, those who experience domestic violence are hidden in plain sight, where the unwillingness of community members to acknowledge the violence, even in fatal instances, ensures the perpetuation of these abuses.

Adams discusses at length the connection she sees between meat and women who experience domestic violence, referencing an Amnesty International advertisement that ‘protested domestic violence by showing women wrapped in cellophane and sold as meat’ (2010, p.336). Images like these in the cultural imagination show a conflation of the treatment of women by domestic abusers to farmed animals by butchers, suggesting similar mechanics of oppression. Adams & Josephine Donovan demonstrate that ‘the ideological justification for women’s alleged inferiority has been made by appropriating them to animals’ (1995, p.1). In a culture where women are animalised in this way, and animals are objectified, fragmented, and consumed as meat, distinctions in their treatment dissolve, and women too may become ‘meat’. The breakdown of this boundary invites the reader to draw parallels between cultural attitudes towards women and animals and acknowledge the intersections of violence that encompass gender and species.

Adams’s concept of the absent referent helps further connect women’s treatment with that of animals consumed as meat. The referent for Adams is the animal life lost in the

production of meat, which is made 'absent' by butchery that fragments and disguises the animal body to be less recognisable, and by the use of language that rebrands body parts as meat, flank, or chuck (2010, p.51). This absence allows consumers to partake in the consumption of animal bodies without confronting the animal origins of the meat. In the butchery and presentation of the woman's body in 'The meat', the same processes are undergone to deny the origins of the meat-body; she is renamed and objectified. Despite these processes, the meat-body is still familiar to the customers and retains its hair and ribbon that mark it as something other than the butcher's usual products. That the butcher's living wife is now absent and replaced by the hanging meat, ensures customers make a connection between meat and its origins, no matter how disguised these may be. However, even when made visible, presented above the counter, her body is intentionally ignored by the public who are unwilling to interrogate their culture's role in her death and face the truth of her fate. Adams theorises that 'absent referents link violence against women and animals', citing numerous instances of violence against animals being used as a metaphor for violence against women, particularly sexual violence (2010, p.53). The butcher's wife embodies Adams's absent referent, hidden in plain sight and wilfully ignored, allowing Galloway to call into question societal acceptance of violence against both women and animals.

Melanie Joy's concept of carnism, the dominant belief system that supports the consumption of specific animals, similarly explores how dominant ideologies are largely hidden from sight. Joy explains that '[w]hen an ideology is entrenched, it is essentially invisible' (2010, p.31). As carnism suggests the killing and consumption of animals is naturalised and thus invisible in Western cultures, so too is the oppression of women in patriarchy. Galloway disguises this violence within the butcher's shop and uses the story's conclusion to reveal the unseen mechanisms of patriarchy that conceal the realities of violence against women.

The obfuscation of the woman's body is present even in the title of the story. Sacido-Romero suggests that Galloway's decision to name this text 'The meat', 'instead of "The carcass" or "The butcher"' stresses the abject status of meat and misleads the reader, contributing to a sense of 'surprise when the truth of a horrid parricidal act is revealed' (2019, p.138). The choice of title emphasises the edibility of the body and conceals the humanity of the butcher's wife. As a cow is absented by being renamed 'beef', so too is the wife made absent by 'language that renames dead bodies before consumers participate in eating them' (Adams 2010, p.66).

Notions of the body as hidden within the text are further demonstrated by the lack of urgency in the scene. Despite the brevity of the piece, the meat-body has hung for nine days before the story begins. The narrative voice is a disembodied third person, and the story has no direct speech, removing any effect of mimesis in the text. No clear interiority is offered for the perspectives of the butcher or his customers, and the choices of focus suggest an emotional removal from the scene. The narrative avoids visual confrontation with the body and attention skirts around the nearby items in the store, listing items that have been purchased: 'wafers of beef, pale veal, ham from the slicer, joints, fillets, mutton chops' (Galloway 1991, p.108). This meandering approach renders the woman's body nearly invisible and mimics the diverted eyes of the shop's customers. Val Plumwood asserts that meat 'totally erases the speaking position: there is no possibility of encountering it as expressive, narrative subject' (Plumwood 1999, cited in Deller 2015, p.143). Those who have been transformed into meat via butchery are unable to voice their own stories, and even in the realm of fiction, this voicelessness is evident. The butcher's wife is rendered incapable of contributing to the narrative, silenced both literally in death, and metaphorically by a culture that neither looks nor listens to those who experience domestic abuse. The choice of narrative voice in Galloway's 'The meat' further denies this woman's voice, echoing systemic violence that silences those who experience gendered violence.

The narrative voice suggests the location of this scene through the use of Scots vernacular. The requests for ‘potted head’ rather than head cheese, the ‘wee minding’ of the ribbon (notably, a *tartan* ribbon), and that the customers avoid ‘keeking’ locate this butcher’s shop in Scotland (Galloway 1991, p.108; p.108; p.109). The language provides a sense of locality and proximity for Scottish readers, suggesting domestic violence resides in the nation and its high streets. A Scots dialect indicates Scottish customers and passers-by are complicit in violence against women in their refusal to look and their refusal to question, discomfoting Scottish readers and encouraging them to grapple with their own complicity in violence against women.

However, a local dialect in the narrative voice may arguably emphasise the universality of this patriarchal violence; in a 2018 interview with Jorge Sacido-Romero, Galloway suggests that her writing tackles ‘the eventual absurdity of the world in general’ and regards Scotland ‘as being a part of the universal, like Spain or Bangladesh or Sweden are. Like everyone is’ (Sacido-Romero 2018). Galloway comments: ‘Out of the particular comes the universal — no?’ (Sacido-Romero 2018). Instead of reinforcing a national boundary, this perspective on the particularity of Scots vernacular implies the potential for this scene to be replicated elsewhere. All figures in the story are unnamed with no descriptions of physical appearance, producing a sense of indistinctness that suggests the events of the story may occur anywhere. Employing regional vernacular may indicate that all localities with their own dialects similarly hold the potential to house such acts of violence.

Contagion and Containment

The description of the meat-body focuses on its decay; its edges have ‘congested and turned brown’, its ‘surface has turned leathery and translucent’, and the ribs have become ‘sticky’ (Galloway 1991, p.108; p.108; p.109). Despite the flies and the appearance of the meat-body as it decomposes, it is the smell that begins to ‘repulse’ the butcher, ‘clogging the air’ of the shop (Galloway 1991, p.109; p.109). Galloway’s selection of the words ‘congested’ and ‘clogging’ suggest symptoms of illness, and that the meat-body threatens to cause physical sickness in those who encounter it. Meat is considered an especially polluting food item, with Adams pointing to the threat of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, *E. coli* contamination, listeria, campylobacter, and salmonella poisoning that can be present in meat (2010, p.18). Galloway’s meat-body reflects similar anxieties around contagion and is ultimately discarded into the back close near the shop at nightfall. Vermin and stray animals consume the jettisoned remains, again contributing symbolically to ideas of disease and decay as these animals survive on waste and are associated with the spread of illness. The meat-body exemplifies a sense of pollution, as demonstrated by the sausages in its shadow remaining unpurchased until they are moved away. As customers refuse to buy the products positioned close to the body, the narrative asserts that ‘[s]omething about the meat was infecting’ (Galloway 1991, p.108).

This smell cannot be contained within the butcher’s shop, as it ‘seep[s] under the door to his living room’ (Galloway 1991, p.109). The meat-body breaches the spatial boundaries of the shop, as its odour spreads throughout the building. The abject can no longer be confined within the butcher’s shop and living space, and at this point, the meat-body is fully ejected from the shop. Nick Fiddes directs attention to Mary Douglas’s work which asserts that ‘pollution and contagion represent far more than the presence of mere toxins; they signify an ideological threat to *order*’ (1991, p.187, emphasis in original). The imprecise ‘something’ about the meat-body that infects suggests more than the spreading smell of a rotten food product; the violence it represents has also spread beyond the acceptable limits of the shop. A sense of movement is confirmed as the meat-body hangs ‘restless, twisting on its spike’ (Galloway 1991, p.108). The meat-body’s scent bleeds into domestic spaces from the workspace, reflecting how acts of butchery similarly refused

containment within the workspace; in the wife's murder, it is apparent that the violence of butchery is not confined to animal bodies within the butcher's shop. Butchery refuses to stay confined within a finite space, as the spatial boundaries of the home are crossed, collapsing notions of the workspace and the domestic space as discrete and separate. The violence 'infects' a human body within the home, illustrating the translatable and contagious potential of violence against animal bodies, as Galloway utilises cultural anxieties around meat's ability to pollute to demonstrate the spread of unimpeded violence. The very word 'butcher' has been used to describe 'abhorrent figures such as brutal murderers and torturers because of the similar violence and bloodiness that accompany the butcher's job', suggesting the ease of transference from animal body to human body (Holm 2017, p.157). Where women are animalised, and animals are killed for consumption, the distinction between their bodies is negligible for the butcher.

This notion of violence as capable of spreading between bodies reframes customer responses to the meat-body. The customers of Galloway's short story are ungendered, as Sacido-Romero identifies, and they do not question the meat-body. However, Jeffery Sobal's work on masculinity and meat states that most often, women are relied upon for the purchase and preparation of food, including meat, suggesting that women may be the most common customers here (2005, p.144). Their averted gazes may be out of fear regarding their own fates in a culture that devalues and dehumanises women. Being hung above the butcher's counter is not only a cruel indignity for the murdered woman; the presentation of the body offers a warning to other wives of the consequences of failing to conform and submit to the demands of patriarchy. Kristeva states that any crime is abject in its demonstration of the fragility of law, and particularly those 'immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady' transgressions (1982, p.4). Where murderous violence is enacted within a marriage, the terms of the union are violently breached. Without consequence for the murder, the law's fallibility is seen, as it upholds and facilitates domestic violence. The murder, butchery, and hanging of one body reveals the potential for all (women's) bodies to be treated similarly, and this threat of further slippage silences other potential victims. Violence is contagious with this reading. Butchery has overstepped the boundaries of which bodies are acceptable victims and does not limit itself to one human victim, but rather threatens to spread further, refusing containment. In this interpretation, the customers' silence may be a form of self-protection, rather than the protection of a murderer. The meat-body suggests a collapse of the distinction between the self and others, where all women may suffer similar fates; this woman could be anyone.

Reinterrogating Breached Boundaries

'The meat' calls attention to power structures that have enabled the murder of the butcher's wife when she is made visible to the reader in its final lines. Galloway's text consistently challenges arbitrary norms of behaviour, even in the refusal to capitalise 'meat' in the story's title, as is customary. Conventions, such as mechanics of English writing, socially acceptable behaviour, and normative foods, are shown to be vulnerable to breaches. Galloway's short story calls for an interrogation of normalcy and draws attention to the strangeness of cultural norms; for norms that oppress, this attention may well permit them to be reassessed.

That the meat-body necessarily indicates a social breakdown and destruction of order is arguable here. While customers experience an abject confrontation with human potential for inhuman brutality, theoretically, the murder is an extension of practices already accepted and perpetuated culturally; both violence against women and meat consumption are normalised and widespread. Rather than suggesting that the meat-body represents a collapse of social order, Galloway's text proposes that the butcher's actions are simply practices of patriarchy and

carnism exaggerated to the extreme. Galloway offers the reader an image of the macabre results of a violent patriarchal social system, calling attention to the dysfunction integral to its value systems and exposing cultural reluctance to perceive or acknowledge this dysfunction. For Galloway, even when the human casualties of this system are on full display, 'dropped overhead from a claw hook, flayed and split down the spinal column', they are rendered invisible until the evidence of their existence can be hidden, consumed by strays, and stored under the bed (Galloway 1991, p.108).

That the woman's body can so easily be made to disappear, leaving only hair and ribbon to be 'salvaged and sealed' away, suggests issues with how the crisis of the meat-body is managed (Galloway 1991, p.109). The horror of the butchered human body presented among animal meat products does not disrupt the status quo within the text. Meat is not reinterrogated by the customers, since they continue to buy meat products while simply avoiding the items in physical proximity to the threatening meat-body; Adams's absent referent is made briefly visible, then absented once more. No argument is raised against violence towards women, and the butcher seemingly evades any social consequences for his actions. Easily, Galloway's scene can return to a semblance of 'normality' with no resolution other than the destruction of the offending meat-body. The story's conclusion refuses any progress or change. When the body is destroyed, the source of abjection is nullified, and the crisis it represented is subsumed and neutralised once more. The horror of the text stems not only from the breakdown of organisation but from how effortlessly this violence is accepted.

Similarly, Kristeva comments that the reader's confrontation with the abject may not require further interrogation after the close of the text. Kristeva associates the aesthetic experience of the abject through literature with a sense of poetic catharsis, wherein the reader experiences 'an impure process that protects from the abject only by dint of being immersed in it' (Kristeva 1982, p.29). From Kristeva's perspective, Galloway's text provides the reader with catharsis from fears of patriarchal violence, where the encounter with the abject may provide relief from anxieties of patriarchal violence, rather than encouraging engagement with the violence the text critiques.

At the close of the story, the 'minding' of the wife's ribbon is placed beneath the marital bed, suggesting that the space she once occupied in the bed is now vacant and available for a future partner. Whether these tokens are kept as a reminder of her in life or of her death is never explained. The events of 'The meat' may well be repeated in the future, beyond the scope of the story. While the conceptual boundaries of body and species may be shown to be fragile, a concerted effort is made by customers to ignore the meat and its transgressions, and the wandering narrative attention replicates the tendency towards ignorance for the reader. In these ways, Galloway's text offers a vision of how gendered violence is accepted into culture and perpetuated.

Conclusions

The wealth of cultural associations that meat holds, including gendered violence, contagion, and consumption, allows Galloway to express a multitude of ideas in a very short piece of fiction. Galloway's short story utilises the abject ambiguity of meat to expose the fragility of social order, species boundaries, and bodily boundaries.

As rotting meat infects and refuses containment, so too does the violence that created the meat. By connecting the body of a murdered woman and animals butchered for meat in one ambiguous 'carcass', Galloway demonstrates the fragility of cultural conceptions of species boundaries (Galloway 1991, p. 108). The abject pollutes until its source may be destroyed.

In presenting the human body as inherently edible and vulnerable to consumption

by others, conceptual divisions between the human body and meat are eroded. The meat-body challenges the notion of humanity as exceptional or beyond the natural world, positioning the species as just another animal. Deller explains that when a human subject is made consumable, meat-eating is no longer a stable way to secure human domination as ‘one recognises the thin, at times barely perceptible, line between human corpse and animal carcass’ (2015, p.20). The perceived hierarchy of consumption founded on ideas of human dominion is shown to be unstable, and questions of order and distinction arise.

Galloway’s short story demonstrates how the mechanisms that mystify and obscure animal bodies in carnist systems are replicated in instances of domestic violence, illustrating overlapping tactics of oppression. The conceptual alignment of women with animals breaks down distinctions between them, eroding the species boundary through their shared treatment and enabling similar fragmentary and objectifying violence to be enacted upon women.

Galloway’s text plays with the seen and the unseen, making visible the invisible violence against women. Through the disruption of conceptual boundaries, this text demonstrates how thoroughly naturalised misogyny and the consumption of animals have become and exposes connections between these culturally entrenched ideas.

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