**Adapted text from the original: *Narrating Human and Animal Oppression: Strategic Empathy and Intersectionalism in Alice Walker’s “Am I Blue?”***

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the conceptual and material entanglements between human and animal oppression. Perhaps most importantly, it has become evident that the ideologies underlying both these kinds of oppression have an analogous logical structure. If humans feel justified in oppressing and exploiting non-human animals, this is because they think that creatures belonging to a different species do not deserve as much moral consideration as do humans, or any at all. By the same token, if humans belonging to certain social groups feel justified in oppressing and exploiting humans belonging to other social groups, this is because they think that members of those latter groups do not deserve as much moral consideration as humans belonging to certain other groups, or at all. Moreover, it has been shown that ideologies underlying human and animal oppression share not only a logical structure, but also key premises. If humans belonging to a certain social group feel humans belonging to a different social group to be less worthy of moral consideration, ceteris paribus, this is very often not merely because they see the latter as different, but rather because they see that difference as making those people sub-human or animal-like or as making them animals indeed. This is particularly prevalent when the people in question are of a different race or gender. As ecofeminist scholarship has shown, Western intellectual tradition historically has devalued “whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things that are associated with men, reason, humans, culture, and the mind”. To sum up, all ideologies justifying oppression, whether it is the oppression of non-humans or certain groups of human beings, seem to be conceptually interconnected through their roots in anthropocentrism (= believing human beings are the most important entity in the universe).

This ideological interconnectedness has important consequences for how the oppression of humans and the oppression of animals intersect in social practice. Consider that it is precisely because people from underprivileged groups are considered less worthy of moral consideration by dominating groups that today’s societies typically assign to the former the most dangerous and poorly paid jobs related to animal exploitation. For instance, with nearly thirty-six injuries or illnesses for every hundred workers, meat packing is the most dangerous and most psychologically damaging industry in the United States (source: Sinclair; Eisnitz; Genoways). Yet, this industry has been shown to rely for decades on the cheap labor of members of underprivileged groups such as illegal immigrants, many of them people of color. This is but one of the many examples of how human and animal oppression coalesce on the level of material social practice.

Given the problematic nature of the conceptual and material entanglements between human and animal oppression, it is no wonder that intersections of species, gender, class, race, and ethnicity have been the subject of significant scholarly interest across academia. And since the way these intersections are understood and approached by the public depends to a significant extent on how they are represented in film, literature, visual arts, and other media, it is no wonder that such representations have been the subject of scholarly interest as well.

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