**Abstract: Utopian Protein: Eating Well in the World to Come**

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Produced by culturing animal tissue in a laboratory cell culture, in vitro meat (IVM) is drawing an increasing amount of media coverage. While it is still some way from commercial productivity, significant strides are being made towards an innovation that promises to radically alter meat’s relationship to animal liberation and environmental movements. In vitro meat’s promise is meat without suffering, with a greatly diminished ecological footprint and significant potential for addressing global food shortages. At the same time, the prospect of the widespread consumption of cultured flesh has provoked a good deal of disquiet; this is food at its most unnatural, part of a postmodern menu in which any trace of authenticity is lost in a Baudrillardian culinary simulacra. Concerns frequently involve questions of taxonomy: how, exactly, should IVM be categorised? For Neil Stephens, IVM is an ‘as yet undefined ontological object’. For the artists Oran Catts and Ionat Zurr (who have worked extensively with cultured meat) it is best characterised by the troubling neologism ‘semi-living’. Its utopian allure is also the stuff of nightmares.

Despite its novelty, IVM (or something very like it) has been present (avant la lettre) in creative literature since at least 1881, with a particular concentration of references appearing in Cold War science fiction. This paper focuses on two key research questions: 1. How does fiction imagine the substance or ‘body’ of IVM?; 2. What presuppositions about and changes to human-animal relations does the literary imagining of IVM entail? My analysis focuses on three key texts of the carnicultural imagination: Mary Bradley Lane’s novel of a feminist utopia Mizora (1881), Kurd Lasswitz’s foundational work of German sci-fi Two Planets (1897) and Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth’s disturbing representation of Chicken Little, a decades-old ‘hundred-ton lump of grey-brown rubbery flesh’ that started as a piece ‘of heart tissue’ and which forms the basis of a massive global industry in The Space Merchants (1952).