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Joaquín les gusta: On Gut-Level Love for a Lamb of the House

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ABSTRACT
Joaquín les gusta is the Spanish phrase that animates this article. It forms our entrance into human-animal relations in a small village in Galicia, in the north of Spain. Here, we explore a particular kind of love for animals that is condensed in the Spanish word *gustar*. The gut-level love implied stretches all the way from the attentive care for a beloved animal, to its slaughtering, its dedicated cooking, and the savouring of its meat during a festive meal. We did not borrow the term *gustar* from scholarly literature to take to our fieldsite, but worked the other way around and *distilled* it from our fieldwork. Our hope is that this term might help other scholars to ask if, in the sites and situations with which they are confronted, some form of *gustar* might also flow between animals and humans.

KEYWORDS Love; human–non-human relations; eating; language; analytical tools

In *Love and Justice as Competences*, Boltanski (2012) argues that in a situation of *justice* both parties in a dispute acknowledge that their adversaries are their equals who, even though they are wrong still have reasonable justifications for their standpoints. This makes *justice* stand in contradistinction to *violence*, where each party tries to impose their own will on the other by force. However, this mutual respect does not turn situations of *justice* into states of peace; there are still disputes. Dispute is absent from situations where a particular course of action has become routinised and consolidated in infrastructural things—from door-closers and sewage systems to traffic lights.[1] Likewise, there is no dispute in situations where humans relate through *love*. In their attempts to break away from theology, Boltanski proposes, social scientists pay scant attention to *love* as a feature of public life.[2] He suggests that we remedy this and study *love* as a societal reality, in its diverse configurations. But how to go about this?

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Boltanski holds that engaging in an anthropological inquiry into one's own society depends upon a technical vocabulary that affords analytic distance. To differentiate between different kinds of *love*, he draws on ancient Greek sources. From these, he imports a distinction between *philia* (the reciprocal love between friends that has personal, as well as political, salience), *eros* (desire based on a lack, which therefore slips into idealisation), and (the love that Boltanski explores in detail) *agape*. In situations of *agape*, a person gives without being invested in equality, reciprocity, or any other form of calculation. There is no reckoning with either the past or the future. Firmly anchored in the present, *agape* is an overflowing kind of dedication. But while *agape* overflows without the expectation of a return gift, there is an acute sensitivity inherent in it. This means that when *agape* is misrecognised, the hurt is likely to go deep. Boltanski demonstrates this by presenting a detailed analysis of contemporary French court cases regarding heated labour conflicts. These appear often to centre around a person who has done her work in a state of *agape*—given it all—while her superiors respond as if holding a job is a mere contractual relation.

Boltanski's analysis of *agape* is both insightful and moving. It resonates with various ongoing academic quests, most obviously, with the feminist insistence that *care* deserves to be studied as not just a personal affect and effort, but also a societally relevant engagement. Having worked on *care* in the past, we here take Bolstanski's call as an inspiration to unravel a further kind of *love*.[3] It is not philia, not eros, not agape, but something different yet again. The technical term that we propose for this love is *gustar*. We do not borrow this term from scholarly sources and then take it to our fieldsite. Instead, we resolutely work the other way around and *distill* it from fieldwork conducted in a particular household in a particular village in Galicia, Spain.[4] Accordingly, we present the analytic strengths of *gustar* along with the materials that allowed us to notice those strengths. For one, the variant of *gustar* we aim to present in this text expands from humans to involve other animals. Secondly, those who would be *objects* of love in English, are *subjects* of *gustar*.[5] For example—and this is the example that we flesh out below ethnographically—in *Joaquín les gusta*, Joaquín—who happens to be a lamb—is the subject of the sentence. This is not to say that Joaquín accomplishes the *gustar* all alone. *Joaquín* ***les*** *gusta*—he does the *gustar* **to them**, the people to whom he is loveable. These people, then, while not the grammatical subjects, find themselves in the dative position: they go along with the action. This means that *gustar* does not isolate actors: it requires collaboration.

A further finding makes *gustar* particularly intriguing. Here it is: that *Joaquín les gusta* means, in our case, that the humans involved greatly enjoy both the living lamb and its juicy meat, with no friction between these two pleasures. In *gustar* the guts are involved as seats of sentiments and seekers of satisfaction, both. We do not make this an occasion to be scandalised that *they*, the people, eat an animal they love. Instead, we wonder about the conditions under which it is possible for people to love the animals they eat. Taking our cues from the specifics of our case, we suggest that a lot of dedicated labour may have something to do with it—let's call this *labor of love*. It is this labour that turned an anonymous lamb into Joaquín, *un*

animal de la casa—an animal of the house. Joaquín was lovingly watered, fed, and provided with bedding. He was slaughtered patiently, skilfully, and in accordance with local traditions, despite this being forbidden by recent laws. Subsequently, he was carefully cooked with herbs from bushes on which he, too, had nibbled. The house—*la casa* —that forms the focal point of our analysis is not isolated from its surroundings. Nor is it friction-free. But it allowed Joaquín to *gustar* to *them*—the humans who, like him, are of the house.[6] From stories we are about to relate, one might conclude that the conditions of possibility for *gustar* are fading, along with other characteristics of the rural fringes of a modernising, market-oriented Europe. Maybe they are. But then again, maybe the term *gustar* still deserves to be distilled from these situations and transported, as an analytic tool that allows for analysis and critique of, as well as inspiration for, other sites.[7]

Feeding and Walking

We—that is to say, the first author—conducted fieldwork in a small village in Galicia in northern Spain that we call Morban. Over the years, Rebeca has visited this village regularly, often for a few weeks at a time. The household we focus upon in this text is that of a spirited elderly couple, Damián and Apolonia.[8] One fine morning in late spring, R takes a muddy path uphill from the house where she is staying to that of Damián and Apolonia. Upon her arrival, Damián greets her with a wide smile. He has been up for a while, postponing his morning rituals so that R, for whom it is early, would not have to rise even earlier. Once he has put on blue coveralls, they walk to the shed. There, Damián, who is sturdy and small, has to reach high for his working shoes, waiting for him on a shelf. 'If I leave my shoes on the floor, the dogs will get them and play with them,' he says, smiling again. Damián is fond of his animals. '*Me gustan mucho los animales,'* he says, shifting for R's sake from his usual Galician into the Spanish they share.[9] Put into English, with our pivotal term left untranslated: animals *gustan* me a lot—*gustan* being the 3rd person plural form of *gustar*—the evoking of love that *animals* do to *me*—Damián. The particular love at stake here—it soon appears—does not just engage Damián's soul. It also involves a lot of hard, physical labour.

Feeding the animals of the household is the first thing Damián does in the morning, after drinking a cup of consommé to warm up. He begins with the cats, providing them commercial cat food, dished up on a very old plate. '*La pequeña manda*,' he recounts. '*Primero come ella y cuando se cansa, come la otra*.' 'The small one is in charge. She eats first and when she has enough, the other one eats.' Having earlier called upon the general category of 'animals,' all loveable to him, Damián now differentiates between them. He clusters together the cats, jointly providing them with cat food, and then singles out 'the little one' as being more commanding than 'the other.' Next, it is Julieta's turn. Julieta is the name that Damián's grandson has given to this year's pig.[10] She lives in a three-by-three-meter sty, situated in the back of the stable, which is adjacent to the main house. Damián says that by the time Julieta is fully grown, she will occupy almost the entire length of her sty. R, impressed by the

animal's size, does not want to stick her head into the sty. But Damián encourages her to not be afraid: *está domesticada*, he says: she is domesticated. In this word resonates the Latin *domus*: house. Julieta is not a wild animal, but a pig adapted to living with humans. She belongs to the house.[11]

Damián demonstrates the pig's good manners by scratching her on her back and Julieta visibly relishes this tactile attention. Damián states that pigs on large farms have rollers like the ones in automatic car washes, so that they can rub their own backs. At this point, another variant on *gustar* enters the conversation. He says: *les da mucho gusto*: it gives them a lot of pleasure. Beyond scratching Julieta for her enjoyment, Damián also feeds the pig and he prepares her food himself. 'She gets corn and barley, that I grind here, in this grinder. I also give her apples that are green, or that fell from the tree, potato peelings or boiled potatoes, and cabbage leaves.' Every year, Damián buys a new young pig. In the weeks before these pigs join the household, they have only eaten industrial feed. The transition takes effort.[12] It is important, says Damián, to '*acostumbrar al cerdo a la comida de casa*'—to allow the pig to become accustomed to the food of the house. He also provides food of the house to the rabbits, which live in a cage in another corner of the stable. Damián gives them his own mixture of flour and herbs. He collects and dries the herbs, making sure not to give green herbs to the rabbits because '*les hace mal en la tripa*': it hurts them in the gut (Figures 1 and 2).

Finally, there is Joaquín. Joaquín occupies a relatively large space close to the pigsty. Damián explains that it is better to buy not just one, but two animals every spring, and put them together. 'They like company,' he says. Julieta and Joaquín are expected to bond, but they receive different forms of care. Because a lamb does not thrive on a floor that is hard or damp, Damián keeps Joaquín's floor soft with a bed of dry grass and straw. This is quite a lot of work, if only because Galicia is a rainy and damp region, misty throughout the year. Even in high summer, mist gathers in the mountains and moves towards the sea, blanketing the village. Damián therefore changes Joaquín's bedding frequently and for this he hoards a sizeable store of dry grass and straw. Joaquín also receives special food: a mix of corn, oats, and soy, which Damián supplements with hay, cabbage leaves, and such treats as the peel from the apples that the people of the house eat for dessert. *La alimentación del cordero es importantísisma para que el cordero sea un cordero de casa.* 'What the

Figure 1. Damián scratching Julieta on her back.

Figure 2. Joaquín.

lamb gets to eat is extremely important for the lamb to be a home lamb.' Fodder of the house may be homegrown, but it does not have to be. 'Before, I had a small field to grow cereals for the animals, but I stopped planting them because wild pigs destroyed the crops,' Damián says. 'Of the house' is first and foremost a particular style.[13] Food for the animals may come from the local land, but it may also be bought or arrive as a gift—and mixed and distributed in accordance with inherited traditions and each animal's singular specificities.

They find a gift later in the morning, in the form of two plastic bags waiting on the doorstep leading to the house. This is after Damián has taken R to the dark winery his grandfather built on a sloping terrain. It contains century-old oak barrels and has a remarkable smell. Damián shows the crucial implements and explains the wine-making techniques that allow him to turn the grapes of the adjacent slope into wine. When they walk back to check on Joaquín, the two plastic bags are there. Damián picks them up and looks inside. One contains sweet green beans; the other is filled with small red apples. Damián puts the bag with the beans on the kitchen table and takes the bag with the apples to the stables. 'Joaquín is still too small to eat apples, even cut into pieces, but Julieta is going to love them,' he says. R asks who left the bags at the doorstep. 'No idea. Maybe Mina, as she has a lot of apples and these are a bit old. So probably she thought that they might be good for my animals. But I don't know.' He does not seem particularly interested. Food is shared within the village this way all the time. Vegetables and fruits have to be processed quickly when harvests are bountiful, faster than any single family can manage, and wasting is to be avoided.[14] Thus, while animals are raised as animals of the house, food travels between households—with nobody keeping accounts.

Once back in the shed, Damián proposes doing what he does every morning and every afternoon and takes the lamb out for a walk. He puts Joaquín on a leash so he

may stroll about, eat fresh grass, breath fresh air, and drink fresh water from the stream at the edge of the garden. Under Damián's supervision, Joaquín does not just clear weeds from the garden, but is allowed to enjoy herbs that the family uses to garnish their own meals as well. Damián strokes Joaquín while explaining to R that the herbs the lamb eats will improve his flavour. There it is: the taste of Joaquín's meat. Damián cares for Joaquín by preparing food for him, watering him, providing him with bedding, stroking him. He takes Joaquín on walks and shares the family's herbs with him. All this dedicated labour is not a necessary evil, compensated for by money earned or balanced against leisure time. Instead, it is what one does. It is life. Lest this sound romantic, it is not. It may be chilly, wet, and unpleasant to rise in the early morning. Buckets, pots, and bags are heavy. Milling grain is hard work. But this *labor of love* is why Damián wakes up; it is where his skills and his pride are. On the horizon is a festive meal. That the lamb will be eaten is clear from the start.[15] However, once again, this is not a reward for Damián's labour; rather it gives that labour direction. Direction in terms of time, in that a yearly cycle begins in spring with buying a lamb and ends in autumn with eating it. Direction also in terms of content, in that a lovely lamb is lovingly fostered and will continue to *gustar* to the humans of the house when eaten: it will have a rich *gusto.* A rich flavour.

Killing and Cutting

Early September. Is it possible for R to witness the slaughtering of a lamb? Maybe not. For while it is permitted to raise a lamb for household consumption, *A Xunta de Galicia* (The Autonomous Government of Galicia) wants everyone to register their animals and bring them to a slaughterhouse for slaughter. If the *Xunta* discovered that this or that family slaughters at home, it would not just fine them, but also make impossible the continuation of the practice in subsequent years. Hence, Estefanía, the daughter, tells R upon her arrival that they are hesitant about letting her observe the slaughter. R replies that, of course, if they do not feel comfortable with her presence, she will leave. But she also explains once again that, in accordance with the ethics of ethnographic fieldwork, she will rigorously anonymize everyone in all her writing. She will even anonymize the village. They will not be recognisable. She is, she says, not seeking to criticise, but to learn. [16]After some further deliberation, the family agrees. They trust her. R can join them. She is then introduced to Jorge, Estefanía's husband, who will do the slaughtering, and Pablo, her brother, who will assist him. In front of the stable, they have arranged a setup: an old wooden bench, a bucket with fresh water to rinse the knives, a collection of freshly sharpened knives, and a flax rope. Damián is not around. He is fine with eating the animals he has cared for, but he does not like to witness their killing.

'How did you learn to kill a lamb?' R asks. 'By looking and doing,' Jorge replies. 'It is not something you can learn by listening or reading. It is something you only learn by doing. First you help your father, your uncles, your friends and then gradually you may take over.' R continues to ask questions and Jorge seems happy to have an audience. 'We hardly ever get credit for these skills,' he says. 'Instead, people insult us, calling

us savages, cavemen, enemies of civilization.' He adds that his pride does not diminish with the insults; it only increases. Then Jorge and Pablo jointly pick up Joaquín and put him on the bench. Pablo ties the animal's four legs together with the rope. Joaquín is calm. 'He expects we will sheer him,' Pablo suggests. But no. With a sure, fast movement, aided by a large, sharp knife, Jorge cuts the animal's throat. With a loud splash, blood starts to pour into the plastic bucket meant to catch it. Even though she came to observe, R can hardly watch. Instead, she looks through her camera lens and takes pictures relentlessly. This helps her in staying technical, observant, for even if done with love, killing is still killing. This is a significant transition: a living lam is turned into meat. Her interlocutors start talking appreciatively about the flavour of the meat, its *gusto*. This, they say, is unique and particular to the house. While Damián aligned a lamb's flavour to the herbs it eats, dry bedding, fresh water, and fresh air, the younger men highlight the relevance of how a lamb is slaughtered. They talk down meat from the butcher, which they consider too strong. It is too *bravío,* wild, pungent, and not nearly as delicate as their lamb of the house will be.[17]

That Joaquín will have a softer, more delicate flavour than lambs killed in slaughterhouses and sold by a butcher is not an intrinsic quality of the animals concerned. It is an accomplishment, a result of dedicated labour.[18] Avoiding frightening the animal is important as is killing it quickly, separating its various parts, and cutting the meat properly. More on the cutting shortly. For now, Joaquín's corpse lies limp on the improvised bench. Pablo and Jorge skin his legs. As no one around has any use for it, the skin will be wasted. Then comes the step which is especially difficult and delicate: removing the organs. To achieve this, the animal has to hang on a hook. Pablo therefore makes an incision in both ankles, behind the Achilles tendons. Through the openings thus created, Pablo passes the flax rope and he ties the ends together around a beam. Once the body is hanging upside down, the two men remove the rest of the skin. Then they extract the organs. It is important not to break the bag of fascia that contains them lest they spill out and fall on the ground. Were they to rupture, things would become truly messy. Hence, Jorge knots a cord around the esophagus and pulls it out carefully. Step by step the intestines and the other abdominal organs follow. This takes time. One and a half hours after the lamb was made to hang, his organs have all been carefully placed in a bucket.

Joaquín's body is now covered in an old clean sheet to protect him from insects. Jorge carries the body to a dark, ventilated room, where the meat must mature for at least a full day. The next day, it is time to cut the lamb into pieces that may be cooked. For this, various members of the extended family, plus the ethnographer, gather together again. The butchering occurs outdoors on another improvised table. Crates and upended buckets serve as chairs. There is a large bucket for the pieces of meat, with a clean sheet to cover it. On a side table lie several sharp knives and a whetstone. Jorge, once again the strongest man around, carries Joaquín's body out of the room where it has matured and lays it on the table. Then, he takes the largest knife, the butcher's knife, and cuts off the legs. Four cutters each receive one leg. Once again, the flavour of the lamb of the house, *el gusto del cordero de casa*, emerges as a topic of conversation. R learns that the animal's muscles are covered in a dark

yellow, almost brown, fat. This fat, called *sebo*, gives meat a *bravío* flavour. Patiently removing the *sebo* is therefore among the tasks of the day. This is difficult to do, all the more since *sebo* should not be confused with good fat, that is white. White fat enriches the meat's flavour and keeps it juicy. Jorge scolds the others when they make mistakes. He explains: 'Obviously butchers don't go to all this trouble. This is one of the reasons why their lambs don't taste as good as ours.' Meanwhile, Apolonia has arrived on the scene. She gives instructions, detailing how big she wants the pieces of meat to be and criticising the men when they cut them the wrong size. Adjustments, amendments, silences. Family interactions, some tense, some friendly, come and go. All in all, it takes more than three hours to transform the twenty-four kilos of animal into a bucket filled with cuts of meat (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Joaquín's body covered in an old clean sheet.

Figure 4. Patiently removing the *sebo*.

What to make of all this labour? Once again, it is unpaid. Money is neither expected nor missed. For Jorge, who has a good job elsewhere, slaughtering the lamb is a way of contributing, and thereby belonging, to the household. He takes pleasure in putting hard-won skills into practice, and uses the occasion to teach these skills to the younger men, demonstrating what should be done, handing out tasks, scolding them when they make mistakes. Jointly, the slaughterers take pride in the fact that their lamb will taste better than anything they might hope to buy, thanks to their labour. Once again, this is *labor of love* that comes without calculation but includes affection. Rather than distancing themselves from the animal, the men doing the slaughtering intimately engage with its situationally salient characteristics.[19] They stroke and talk to the animal while binding its legs and lifting it onto the table. They attentively single out the spot along the carotid artery for the killing cut. The leave the fascia around the organs intact, even if this causes it to take over two hours to separate the organs from the rest of the suspended carcass. They cut away brown *sebo*, carefully sparing fat that is white and tasty. They attune themselves to the animal *itself*—a self that in this particular situation is a collection of arteries, fascia, organs, muscles, and fat. The family could afford to buy meat for any festive meal they might want to share. But their additional efforts allow them to enjoy an animal of the house. An animal with a name, that this year is Joaquín—a beloved animal—able to *gustar* them.

Cooking and Eating

Once the bucket is filled with cuts of meat, the young men have a drink and care for the meat shifts to Apolonia. With the help of her husband, Apolonia carries the bucket to the kitchen. It is an outdoor kitchen that Jorge built for her on the patio. It has a stove, a sink, a refrigerator, and utensils, and is covered with a precarious roof. On one side, Jorge built a wall to shelter the stove from the wind and the rain. In this special space, Apolonia transfers the cuts of meat into an immense clay pot, to which she adds a homemade mixture of olive oil, garlic, and bay leaves. She covers the pot with a towel and places it in the refrigerator, where the meat is left to marinate for at least a day. The next day, R climbs the path again and Apolonia welcomes her warmly. Together, they walk to the outdoor kitchen. Apolonia removes the large pot from the refrigerator. She puts a very old frying pan on a high flame. One by one, she takes all the pieces of meat from the pot and fries them until they turn golden. After this, they rest yet another day, in small clay pots this time. Then, the great day finally arrives. It is a festival, a celebration in the honour of the Virgin Mary. There is a mass. There are traditional dances in the square in front of the church. There is excitement and cheer all around. Households gather, with the family members and friends who *belong* joining from wherever they currently live. This day is more important to the villagers than Christmas, or so they explain to R. In the morning, before the celebrations begin, Apolonia places the cuts of meat into a big stew pot. She adds some onions and garlic, nothing more. Then she slow

Figure 5. Cuts of meat.

cooks the meat for hours in her ancient iron wood stove, as she has been doing for decades, each autumn again.[20] (Figure 5)

After the dances, all the extended families, friends included, walk to the houses where they will eat. Apolonia and Estefania left the festivities early and wonderful smells waft from the house when R arrives along with the rest of the family. In the main room, a living room that includes the indoor kitchen, two tables have been set: a large one for the adults and a small one for the children plus the parents tasked with supervising them. Trays of crayfish and plates of shrimp await the guests. There is bread, too. Everyone eats with their hands, leaving big piles of shells on their plates. Once these are cleared away, Apolonia comes in with a stew of clams from the bay in a sauce of onions, tomatoes, and bell pepper. It is delicious. The family eats, chatting loudly, while Damián keeps filling everyone's glasses with white wine. After about forty minutes, it is time for the main course. Damián looks proud and happy. Joaquín—cared for, killed, and cooked as this year's lamb of the house—is about to be served. Apolonia carries the pot to one of the tables and, with a big smile on her face, starts serving. The smell is mouth-watering.[21] Plates are filled. On this festive day, R does not just ask questions and observe, she participates completely. Thus, she discovers for herself that the meat is soft and tender. She soaks her bread in the sauce, chews on another piece of meat. It is delicious. Her plate empty, R seeks to underscore her gratitude with a compliment to the cook. Turning to Apolonia, she says: '*Me ha gustado mucho la comida, gracias.*' 'I enjoyed the food very much (the food *gustar-ed* to me very much), thank you.' Apolonia frowns. She does not appreciate the compliment one bit. *A mi no me des las gracias. ¡Da las gracias a Joaquín! ¡Que corderito más bueno!* Translated into English: Don't thank me! Thank Joaquín! Such a wonderful lamb!

At this point, the conversation turns to Joaquín. While the meat is soft and tasty, it is apparently also still Joaquín, the lamb that R met earlier that year and for which Damián cared with so much devotion. Here is Apolonia: 'He was such a nice lamb, so good and affectionate. Really, we have never had such a nice lamb.' She adds: 'He would even give kisses to the pig.' At this point, Apolonia mimics how Joaquín would approach the mouth of the pig Julieta, and lick it. When she would offer the lamb her hand, she adds, he would lick that, too. 'Such a sweetie!' Damián nods and

adds: 'And he so enjoyed being stroked by the children! The children are always happy to see a lamb in the house. But this one was special. Such a nice lamb!' The children, at the next table, are eating from the same pot as the adults. They seem happy. Apparently, they, too, still love Joaquín now that he has transformed from a pet into stew. They somehow feel safe, confident that nobody – as bad witches and hungry giants do in stories – will eat them. [22] At the adult table, meanwhile, the conversation moves on. All around, everyone eats with pleasure, sipping wine between mouthfuls: *Joaquín les gusta*.

On this autumn day, set aside for the yearly celebration of the Virgin Mary's generosity, the family gathers together to eat. What they eat is not just a tasty dish, or meat, or even lamb. It is a specific animal, with its own, idiosyncratic characteristics. It is a lamb with a name, Joaquín, remembered fondly for being special, sociable, and altogether *nice*. It is a lamb that, thanks to how it was cared for, killed, and butchered, and thanks to how, over several days, it was marinated and cooked, belongs to the house. For the humans around belonging to the house involves labour: rising early even when it is cold, sharpening knives and putting them to good use, spending hours mixing olive oil with bay leaves, chopped onions, crushed garlic, cutting and frying meat. For a lamb, it means first pampering and then slaughter and consumption. There is no *justice* to any of this. There is no equality. There are no accounts and no rights. There is no escape. Instead, the situation is defined by a particular village conviviality, marked by seasons that come and go. The people involved cultivate plants and share out of harvests, pass on skills, or acquire skills, while performing tasks collectively. Bickering slides over into festive celebrations. Taste is highly relevant to the gut-level variant of love—*gustar*—that we distil from this situation. But then again, it is only a small part of it.

Gustar as an Analytical Tool

Is it possible to love an animal while it lives and to continue doing so while eating its meat? Others before us have proposed that, indeed, it is. 'A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and*, and not by a *but*' (Berger 1980: 7). [23] However, it is also widely taken for granted that such extended *gustar* is unthinkable. For example: 'Meat eating is a morally problematic issue, and even the most hardened meat lover probably does not want to think about a cow while eating a steak.' (Loughnan *et al.* 2012: 16) These authors have studied the ways in which meat eaters solve the moral conundrum they 'inevitably' face when eating meat. Unlike vegetarians, they report, the omnivores in their study dream up differences between creatures to justify their eating habits. They deny pigs and cows the mental and emotional capability that they grant not just to humans, but also to animals they would not eat, such as dogs and cats.[24] Moreover, they find ways of 'forgetting' about the suffering of animals slaughtered to become their food. Eating, the authors conclude, depends upon objectifying. This may well be the case among the participants in their study, but that does not mean

that objectifying the creatures that one eats is universal.[25] In Morban, it is not what happens.

In the sentence, '*Joaquín les gusta*,' Joaquín is not the object, but the subject: he *does* the *gustar*. He generates the loving. But that does not mean he is similar to humans, or, for that matter, pigs, cats, or rabbits. In Morban, similarity—and, likewise, equality—do not figure as local ideals. Instead, everyone possesses their own specific traits.[26] Lambs, for one, like the company of another animal and they need dry bedding. They enjoy fresh water and herbs, which make them happy in the present and tasty later on. Humans, in their turn, engage in labour; that is what they do. They combine their skills and collaborate, but they differ among themselves as well. They all have their own specific roles. Damián, as an old man, takes time to walk a lamb. Jorge, Pablo, and the other young men, using their strength, do the slaughtering. Apolonia, the matriarch, instructs the men how she wants the meat to be cut and then cooks it, helped, when need be, by Estefania, her daughter. We do not seek to idealise this constellation. To be personal about it: Apolonia spends hours in the kitchen and we happen to be grateful that the second feminist wave has made it possible for us to lead quite different lives from hers. Urban lives with chosen families; intellectual lives, during which we, in our turn, spent hours at our computers, writing this text.[27] What is—and is not—ideal for a lamb we are no position to guess. The overall contribution we hope to make is not an alternative, generalised kind of ethics. Instead, we hope to enrich the stock of intellectual tools that allow for situated analysis.

The particular intellectual tool we have on offer here is a term for a variant of what, in English, might be glossed as *love*. To the terms for love which Boltanski (2012) retrieved from ancient Greek sources—*philia, eros* and *agape*—we seek to add a form of love that, rather than flowing from the soul, is anchored in the gut. To learn about gut-level love, we did not distance ourselves from 'our society' and delve into philosophical treatises. Instead, we approached a hospitable household in Morban, a village in Galicia. A lot of things happen in this village. We could have investigated how it is marked by globalisation, industrialisation, or modernisation. We could have asked how it contributes to, and is affected by, the loss of regional biodiversity. The possible topics are all but endless: generational rifts, the local impact of European laws, the encroachment of Spanish language on Galician. However, we bracketed such concerns—and many others—to distil from our field a single phenomenon and the word that is locally used for it: *gustar*. The technique of distilling hinges on ethnographically specifying a single term and its crucial entanglements, without taking on board everything that is going on in one's fieldsite.[28] To hold on to the specificities of the term distilled, we did not translate, but rather imported it into English from the Spanish—if not the Galician.

Distilled from our field, we do not present *gustar* to you as simply a feature of our fieldsite. Instead, we suggest that it may serve as an analytic tool. You may want to take it with you when investigating other sites and situations where animals are loveable to humans—or never have a chance to be. This term, which specifies a quite particular kind of gut-level love, might help you in asking if, in the site or situation

where you find yourself, some form of *gustar* also flows between animals and humans – or not. Do the humans in your field grant a subject position to the animals they eat? Do they engage in hard, skilled labour, while caring for, killing, and cooking these animals? Do they foster and name them and then gratefully remember their endearing traits during the meals when they eat them? Insofar as this is not the case, you might mobilise our analytic term to critique feeding relations that exclude *gustar*. Alternatively, our analysis might inspire attempts to create, elsewhere, adapting to what occurs locally, a way of living and of engaging in the *labor of love* that is, or so we suggest, among the crucial conditions of possibility for *gustar* to occur.

There is no general answer to the question as to which elements from the entangled situation sketched above may be disentangled from the rest and which are essential the emergence of *gustar*. Nor would we want to argue that if only *gustar* is orchestrated into being there are no problems with eating meat. The ecological ramifications of farming animals remain dire and, one way or another, sustaining life on the planet requires radical metabolic adaptations. The question this article addresses is not 'Should you or I eat meat?' Instead, we propose that good relations do not hinge on similarity; they may also come from a recognition of specificity. Beyond, or before, the equality that marks situations of justice, there may be the love—the appreciation, the gratefulness—that marks situations of *gustar*.[29] We presented a single example of such love: one in which Joaquin, a named lamb, was able to *gustar* to the humans who cared for him, killed him, cooked him, and ate him, gratefully remembering how special he was, all along. Further fieldwork may yield yet more forms of *love*—to keep that English term as a mediator among the words on offer in other languages, words that are spoken in, and bespeak, other social and material arrangements.

This, then, points to a final way in which we hope this text might inspire. Having presented you with Joaquín's ability to *gustar* to the humans of his household, we have simultaneously provided you with another example of how an analytical tool may be distilled from an ethnographic field.[30] Here, we did this by disentangling the activity and the term *gustar* from the practices of a single, composite, household in Morban. We did not dwell on *gustar* for so long to firmly pin down the practices in which it figures. Rather than forcing this term to stay put, we suggest it may be carried around. Scholarly English, well-equipped to discuss situations of *justice* and the ideal of *equality,* deserves to be enriched with terms facilitating conversations about *love*. Indeed, some of these may be imported from the writings of ancient Greek philosophers. There is still a lot of *philia, eros* and *agape* left to explore. But if anthropology is to foster wide-reaching intellectual conversations, it might do well also to import words that come from present-day societies—whether 'we' classify these as 'ours' or 'theirs.' Words such as *gustar,* which evokes shared activity and gut-level love. Even if, or especially when, we care for equivocations, it may be wise—insightful, enriching, fun—to play with the affordances of a diversity of tongues.[31] Here is a question to end with: could you, maybe, provide the rest of *us* with yet another, hard to digest, challenging but rewarding, variant of *love*?

Notes

1. Here, Boltanski points to Latour's (1990) presentation of things as the *missing masses* all too easily disregarded by social sciences, even if they are crucial to the consolidation of social relations and practices.
2. Earlier, in a dispute with Chomsky, Foucault (2011) had strongly critiqued the use of 'justice' as an overarching societal ideal. His argument was that 'justice' is central to the juridical system of modern societies and hence does not offer true analytical, let alone critical, distance. Boltanski rather situates 'justice' – it may be salient in some settings, marked by a dispute between equals, but not everywhere. Other analytical terms deserve to be explored, notably different versions of 'love'. Here we side with, and build on that.
3. This work on care builds on that of others, who suggest that attending to 'care', too, might complement the overinvestment in 'justice,' notably Tronto (1993). For an example of another text that took inspiration from Boltanski's call to attend to love, see Latour (1996).
4. 'Distilling' a term from the field is a method that, rather than going by dictionary definitions, disentangles the meaning of words from situated practices; in which they used; that they help to in/form; and/or that may shift their meaning. It befits material-semiotic ways of working. See also Mann *et al* (2011).
5. This subject/object shift forms a classic example of what linguists call a difference in 'verb argument structure.' Clifton Pye presents in his anthropology of language acquisition, contrasting '*me gusta la canción*' with 'I like the song': 'Children acquiring Spanish will have to learn to associate 'song' with the subject of the verb **gustar** while children acquiring English must learn to associate it with the object of the verb **like**' (1988: 132–133).
6. In their introduction to an interesting special issue of *Ethnos* on meat eating, Staples and Klein (2017) write: 'The killing of non-human animals for human consumption is inherently problematic.' (p 206). Our ethnographic take is that noting is *inherently* one thing or the other, be it problematic or trouble-free. Only in this way does it become possible to appreciate that *Joaquin les gusta*, might, in a *specific*, inspiring, site and situation, span from endearing lamb to tasty dish.
7. This moves us away from the firm 'concept' that, coined in a master language, might be 'universally' used, and towards a multi-vocal, multi-centred anthropology. For related examples of terms drawn – aka distilled – from the field, and then offered up as analytical tools that, fluidly adapted to their new sites, might be of interest elsewhere, see Mann and Mol (2019). on the term from Vorarlberg dialect 'schmecka', an appreciative way of relating to food; Magalhães (2020) on the Brazilian Portuguese 'saudade' as a word that calls up the missing that accompanies migrating; and Chernysheva and Sezneva (2020) on 'obshcheye', evoking a range of Russian modes of sharing.
8. To protect our our interlocutors, we changed the name of the village, fused observations performed in different households and invented the names of our interlocutors. This is an ethnographic commonplace, especially pertinent here as a Morban is a small village where everyone knows everyone else and people relate through long lasting friendships and/or family ties. Rebeca continues to do fieldwork in Morban, but the scenes described here mainly occurred in 2013 and 2014.
9. Translation did not start at the moment we began to talk about writing this text in English. There was plenty of translation in the field. Damián interspersed his Spanish with Galician words, which Rebeca mostly, but not always, understood. In Galician, Damián would not say *gustar* but *ghostar*. Here, we leave out this added complexity.
10. On the Dutch farm of the 1950s described by Hans Harbers (2010), the family only gave names to 'proximate' animals it did not eat, such as dogs and horses, while the pigs and the chickens did not receive names. However, they, too, were appreciated while they were alive as much as when served up as tasty dishes.
11. There are a lot of good anthropological studies on domestication. For a recent collection, see Swanson *et al.* (2020).

12. This transition marks two other things as well: Damián and Apolonia do not labour for the market. This means, for one, that their labour does not add monetary value, but it also means that they do not have to attune their efforts to the tastes of elusive 'consumers.' Their 'animals of the house' are eaten by the humans of the house. At the same time, 'the house' is linked to a broader landscape of industrial farming, from which it imports young animals. All of this makes for a relevant difference from small farmers trying to breed and raise beasts to sell their meat. For that predicament, see, for example, Grasseni (2014).
13. In Galician anthropology, 'the house' is presented as an organising principle of social relations —historically relevant to both the family and broader Galician society. See Tolosana (1979 (2004)).
14. For concerns that regulations meant to counter the spread of infections are squeezing out the old tradition of feeding animals household leftovers, see Law and Mol (2008).
15. For an interesting analysis of the relation/s implied by eating, see Bertoni (2013). Bertoni stretches relations out to the soil—on soils, see Puig de la Bellacasa (2019).
16. While slaughtering at home is not legal, it is widely practiced in the region. And our eagerness to learn meant that we bracketed both legal and moral judgements, so as to gain a sense of the local performance of love – or rather *gustar*.
17. The taste of this lamb is marked as being specific to the *house*—not the *terroir*, in which the *locale* evoked is regional—and that in the US has been 'reverse engineered' as analyzed in Paxson (2010) or given shape by crafting neo-traditional agricultural practices (Weiss 2011).
18. While there was significant investment in the meat's taste, other meat realities, for instance, that meat is a source of protein, may harbour disease, or contain unhealthy (amounts of) fat, were strikingly absent from the conversation. For the layered reality of meat, see Yates-Doerr and Mol, (2012) and for concern (or lack thereof) with the fat involved in cooking, Ibáñez Martín (2018).
19. That slaughtering, however brutal it is to kill a living creature, coincide with love—and include deep knowledge and appreciation of animals—is not only true for the domestic setting of a rural backyard. It may even happen in slaughterhouses, as per the detailed descriptions provided in Blanchette (2020).
20. That festival meals form important occasions for community building and memory building—in forms that may be fading—is remarked upon and detailed elsewhere. See, for instance, Sutton (2001).
21. On the pleasures of smelling and tasting food in good company, and the limits of translation these, in the case of the Vorarlberg dialect word *schmecka,* see Mann and Mol (2019).
22. The question how children may acquire the ability to love both animals and meat, or how, under different conditions, they become astute vegetarians, is a topic in its own right – that asks for more research.
23. Thanks for Clemens Driessen for indicating that quote to us. While here we propose the term *gustar* as an analytic tool, loving animals does not hinge on the Spanish language. For loving relations (not named in those terms) from a sheep farm where people speak English, see Rebanks (2016). For this reference, we thank Oskar Verkaaik.
24. On the question of how to establish differences and similarities between humans and other animals and the argument that assessing *fish sentience* and fish farming systems are related, see Law and Lien (2016).
25. For the argument that, rather than crafting generalised ethics, it would be more efficacious to attend to the specifics of farming practices, see Greenhough and Roe (2010).
26. See also the argument that involving animals in politics should not depend upon granting them human characteristics, but instead might entail respecting their specificities (Driessen 2014).
27. Which is not to say that women in Morban are 'oppressed' or that they lead the same lives as their grandmothers did. See also Ibáñez Martín (2015).
28. For this technique, see Mol (2008), which distils 'care' from ethnographic inquiries into messy and caring, as well as non-caring, hospital practices.

29. What is left open here in which situations similarity is to be foregrounded and in which others differences are; and, if the latter, then which differences. This has been an ongoing issue in feminism (Aerts, 1991); and in relation to further potential differences/similarities and their interferences (Moser, 2006). The literatures at hand illustrate that performing difference and/or similarity includes complex and historically shifting practices. For how this affects eating, see also Mol 2021.
30. The dream of *etic* analytic categories as different and distant from the *emic* parlance encountered in the field lives on stubbornly in anthropology, even though the promotion of field terms into analytic terms has a rich and complex history. For a recent collection of attempts to do the latter, see the contributions to Mol and Law (2020).
31. While Viveiros de Castro (2004) famously encouraged the rest of us to take equivocations seriously and not seek to erase, but attentively *control* them, Yates-Doerr (2019) proposes that, as control is elusive, we might also want to *care* for them.

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