

## CHAPTER 10

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Food politics has been a central topic of debate in animal studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries across the global humanities and social sciences, especially for feminists concerned with the lives of nonhuman animals. More specifically, the ways in which animals should feature in people's diets—if at all—is a key question for feminists in animal studies. There is a strong tradition of feminist scholars who argue that veganism—that is, abstaining from eating and otherwise consuming animal products—should be a feminist imperative. They draw attention to the gendered appropriation of animal bodies that reinforces patriarchal and misogynistic norms about the body, gender, and power. The use of animals in the US food system, for instance, is gendered through industry norms that reinforce a binary of sex, and through breeding processes that forcibly impregnate animals designated as female and forcibly ejaculate animals designated as male to facilitate the artificial insemination process. Norms about the animal's reproductive body (e.g., that the purpose and value of a body designated female at birth is in its reproductive potential), as well as humans' assumed right to intervene in her reproductive life, echo norms that circulate about human women and about debates over reproductive politics in public spheres of politics and popular culture.

A vegan approach to feminist food politics remains contested within the contemporary global animal studies literature. Some feminist scholars (e.g., Rudy 2011) argue that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with consuming animals but that humans should take greater care in methods of raising and slaughtering animals for food. Other feminist animal studies scholars (e.g., Haraway 2007) have no problem with the practice of eating animals and are more concerned with other dimensions of human-animal relations, such as the relationships between humans and the animals they keep as “pets” or the impact of humans on endangered species of wildlife.

Feminist critical race theorists (e.g., Harper 2010), postcolonial studies scholars (e.g., Deckha 2012), and scholars of indigeneity (e.g., Daigle 2015; Womack 2013) contribute key insights into the contemporary role of animals as food. Postcolonial and critical race scholars highlight the ways in which white, Eurocentric eating practices can assert norms about food that are seen as new forms of colonization, erasing or dismissing the centrality of traditional, culturally appropriate diets in communities of color or in indigenous communities; as a response, they argue for decolonial (or decolonized) food practices. For example, in exploring the restoration of indigenous foodways—traditional practices related to the consumption and production of food—some scholars (e.g., Coté 2010; Daigle 2015) argue that species such as beavers, salmon, or whales are central, while others (e.g., Robinson 2010; Womack 2013) argue that food

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traditions do not have to include animals. These perspectives offer rich explorations of feminist food politics beyond white, Eurocentric feminist traditions and highlight the racialized and colonial dimensions of the decision of whether or how to eat animals.

This chapter explores these debates and ideas through responding to the following questions. What are the feminist stakes of eating animals or abstaining from eating animals? How does the gendered use of animals for food inform feminist practices of eating? How might the consumption of animals reinforce or resist histories of colonization and traditional food systems? The chapter begins by discussing foundational texts and then moves on to explore the intersection of veganism and feminism, specifically ecofeminism. The chapter then lays out the disagreement among feminists about whether or not to eat animals, including understandings of animal emotions and “humane” slaughter. The chapter ends by looking at approaches to decolonizing food practices and how veganism intersects with traditions of specific communities of color and indigenous peoples.

### THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF MEAT

In 1990, US American feminist writer and animal rights advocate Carol J. Adams (1951–) published *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, which broke new ground in feminist theory by highlighting the relationships among gender, meat eating, patriarchy, feminism, and veganism. This work has formed the basis for many subsequent debates and writings on feminist animal studies and, as such, warrants some explanation.

Around the world, meat eating has long been tied to masculinity (as well as to social class status), and Adams discusses the ways in which the gendered dimensions of meat eating reinforce patriarchal social relations. She argues that meat eating is linked to conceptions of masculinity through historical and contemporary cultural beliefs that “real men need meat” (1990, 38–39). In many cultural traditions, the consumption of meat is linked to power and privilege, and Adams shows how, in historical moments of food scarcity, such as within working-class communities in nineteenth-century Britain, women would often forgo eating meat entirely (or eat meat only once a week) so that there was meat for men to eat regularly (and even daily). Thus, meat eating can be associated with masculinist privilege and power—that is, with the history of patriarchy.

Adams illustrates the idea that meat eating is tied to, and reinforced by, patriarchy through the concept of the “absent referent” (1990). In the context of meat eating, the animal itself is the absent referent in the creation of meat. In packaged meat at the grocery store, the animal is absent—which makes it easier to psychologically separate meat from the animal it comes from. In both *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) and *The Pornography of Meat* (2003), Adams explores how animals’ being absent referents in meat-eating culture is intimately intertwined with women’s being absent referents in patriarchal social relations. For instance, in sexualized images of women, as in advertising, the actual woman is absent—she is crafted into an object of consumption only, in service to selling a product and erasing any real features of her life and personhood. Similarly, animals advertised as meat are not portrayed as having actual animal experiences but are reduced to something for human use. In Adams’s view, it is the presence of the absent referent that enables appropriation or exploitation of both animals and women.

Furthermore, advertising has routinely used the sexualized woman’s body to sell and promote the consumption of meat products, whether the human woman or female animal

body (the latter often in cartoon renderings). Such advertising deploys the idea that “sex sells.” In *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams documents many examples, such as an ad for the Hustler Club in Cleveland, Ohio, that pictures a woman’s bare buttocks accompanied by the text “We serve the best meat in town”; or an ad for Lefty’s Lobster-Chowder House in Addison, Texas, where they serve “Live Nude Lobsters.” These and other marketing efforts make use of the sexualization of women’s and animal’s bodies as things to be consumed.

Subsequent feminist scholarship has taken up, explored, and expanded on these ideas. Anthologies such as *Animals and Women* (1995), edited by Adams and US American comparative literature scholar Josephine Donovan (1941–), and *Sister Species* (2011), edited by contemporary US American philosophy and religion scholar Lisa Kemmerer, collect essays dedicated to understanding the relationship between animals and women, especially as concerns food and eating. This scholarship exploring women, animals, meat eating, and masculinity has contributed significantly to the field of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism combines feminist attention to inequality in terms of gender, race, and social class with concerns about the well-being and use of the environment. In an ecofeminist view, the impacts of degraded environments are unevenly felt by women, people of color, and economically marginalized communities. Ecofeminism emphasizes the complex power relations between animals (as part of the environment) and humans who consume meat, saying that such consumption and the associated killing for food exacerbate inequalities between both humans and animals and among humans themselves, given that meat eating is a privileged or patriarchal practice.

## VEGAN ECOFEMINISM

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Vegan ecofeminism is an approach to food politics and animal studies that understands human-animal relations within a feminist and environmentalist framework. Key scholars in this arena include Adams, Kemmerer, Donovan, US American English and women’s studies scholar-activist Greta Gaard (1960–), US American vegan ecofeminist and scholar-activist Marti Kheel (1948–2011), and US American feminist philosopher and animal ethicist Lori Gruen (1962–) (see Adams 2003; Kemmerer 2011; Adams and Donovan 1995; Gaard 1993, 2001, 2013; Kheel 2008; Gruen 2011, 2015). These scholars argue that abstaining from eating animals should be an imperative for feminists in general and particularly for feminists concerned with human-animal relations.

Vegan ecofeminists employ an intersectional approach, drawing attention to the linkages among different forms of oppression (sexism, racism, heterosexism, etc.). Vegan ecofeminists are especially concerned with speciesism—the oppression of animals based on their species membership. In particular, for vegan ecofeminists, the food system’s gendered appropriation of the animal body is a central reason to abstain from eating meat, dairy, and eggs. Animal agriculture industries reinforce a binary way of thinking about sex, designating animals male or female at birth and then exploiting their reproductive capacities based on this binary. Ecofeminist analysis sees the food system as disproportionately exploiting animals designated as female for their reproductive capacities—bodily secretions such as milk and eggs—which are co-opted for commodity (i.e., food) production.

In the process of milk production, cows are repeatedly impregnated through artificial insemination so that they continually produce. Their calves are removed shortly after birth and enter the dairy, veal, or beef industries. The cows are moved after birthing into the

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**Dairy cows stand in milking machine cells during milking at a dairy farm in Spain, June 2015.** *In the process of milk production, cows are repeatedly impregnated through artificial insemination so that they continually produce. After birthing, cows are moved into the milking herd and milked intensively for several months until they are impregnated again. This cycle is repeated annually for several years until either the cow's milk production begins to decline or she is not getting pregnant easily. At this point, she is deemed "spent" and sent to slaughter.* BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES.

milking herd and milked intensively for several months until they are impregnated again. This cycle of impregnation, birth, milking, and impregnation is repeated annually for several years until either the cow's milk production begins to decline or she is not getting pregnant easily. At this point, she is deemed "spent" and sent to slaughter for meat (usually low-quality ground beef because her body is worn out and will not produce high-quality meat). The documentary *The Ghosts in Our Machine* (2013), directed by Canadian filmmaker Liz Marshall (1969–), explores the lives and labors of cows raised for dairy products in the United States, following one cow, named Fannie, who is brought from a dairy farm to an animal rescue organization, Farm Sanctuary, in upstate New York. Fannie's story of recovery personalizes the effects of dairy production for the cow and draws attention to this form of gendered use.

In another example of such gendered use, "laying hens" are bred to have large egg-laying capacities. These hens lay, on average, around 300 eggs a year and, in industrial farms (where the majority of egg production occurs), are frequently confined to enclosures called battery cages, which limit movement—the birds cannot open their wings or move around. Animal welfare advocates such as Karen Davis (1944–) write about the lives of egg-laying hens (see Davis 1995) and point to the ill health effects caused by birds' confinement, sitting on wire caging, and living in such tightly cramped conditions. In contrast, "free range" eggs are produced by birds kept in noncaged housing. Even so, free-range conditions include birds' being contained in large warehouses (not in outdoor spaces

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as many consumers imagine). In either case, egg production exploits animals' reproductive systems and thus troubles vegan ecofeminists.

Beyond using animals themselves to produce milk and eggs, the food system routinely uses these animals as breeders to bring new generations of farmed animals into meat, dairy, and egg production. For instance, the breeding sows in the pork industry, like cows used for dairy, are regularly impregnated and confined to enclosures called gestation crates. These crates, like battery cages for hens, restrict sows' movement and are the subject of much debate among animal welfare groups and the pork industry. In many industrial pork plants, sows confined to these crates cannot turn around, the logic being that if they cannot turn around they will be less likely to accidentally crush their young while nursing (Wise 2009). Other species of farmed animals—cows, chickens, turkeys, goats, and so on—are also routinely bred (usually through artificial insemination) in order to bring new offspring into the food system. The animal body and its exploitation through forced reproduction is central to the production of meat, eggs, and dairy in a way that vegan ecofeminists find especially problematic.

Animals deemed male by the industry, too, experience a gendered appropriation of their reproductive capacities through, for instance, their forcible ejaculation for the semen industries (for use in artificial insemination) or as “studs” for breeding directly on the farm. Indeed, semen production in farmed animals is a key process in animal agriculture. And those male animals—indeed, the majority (especially male chicks in the egg industry or male calves in the dairy industry)—who are not useful for breeding are often considered mere waste products.



*A worker walks past rows of chickens in battery cages at an egg-laying poultry farm in Telangana, India, 2015. Battery cages have been a cause for much concern among animal welfare advocates because the cages restrict movement (the birds cannot open their wings) and because of the ill health effects caused by confinement, sitting on wire caging, and living with other birds in cramped conditions. BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES.*

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In the shift to artificial insemination (away from direct intercourse between two animals), male animals are increasingly kept on separate breeding farms and forcibly ejaculated to facilitate the collection of semen. This semen is then usually frozen and sold to dairy and meat producers around the world, for use in the artificial insemination of herds. Artificial insemination is seen as more efficient for food production but has also been adopted to respond to physical issues in some species: turkeys, for instance, are selectively bred for breast meat such that many are physically incapable of engaging in intercourse with another bird, making artificial insemination the only viable method of reproduction. This shift in the mechanisms of reproduction (toward artificial insemination) results in more intensive human control over animals' lives and bodies, to the extent that animals' reproductive lives are not their own. Furthermore, because of breeding practices that select for desirable commodity traits (like large breasts in turkeys), farmed animals' bodies have been transformed to serve human interests to the detriment of the animals' health, well-being, and survival of their species.

### SEXISM AND SPECIESISM

The gendered dimensions of commodifying animal bodies for food highlight how inter-species relations reinforce misogynistic and patriarchal notions about the gendered body, reproductive norms, and how violence is or is not defined. Specifically, ecofeminists concerned with animals frame species identity as a site of oppression and challenge exploitative or appropriative relations that are rooted in speciesism. Nonhuman animals, how we treat them, whether or not we eat them, and why all become central to the social justice agenda of ecofeminist scholars and activists. Thus, vegan ecofeminists aim to abstain from consuming animals on ethical and political grounds that are directly linked to their feminist commitments.

This commitment to nonviolence toward animals and an enlarged ethic of care dovetails with other feminist, philosophical, and spiritual traditions of nonviolence, nonharm, and compassion. An ethic of care is an ethical theory developed by US American ethicist and psychologist Carol Gilligan (1936–) that focuses on the interdependence and needs of people in order to engage in ethical decision making (Gilligan 1982). Russian social theorist Irina Aristarkhova (1969–), for instance, explores the synergies between feminist ethics of care and the ancient Indian religion of Jainism, which centers on a philosophy of nonharm or nonviolence to all living beings, including animals (Aristarkhova 2012). Her work illustrates the geographic, social, political, and historical scope of such commitments to nonviolence and the abstention of eating animals. Such studies reveal that ethical commitments to care are rooted in cultural traditions, religious or spiritual teachings, morality, and politics; are expressed in various geographic contexts; and bloom out of diverse contemporary and historical forms of knowledge making.

This history of scholarship defines abstention from eating animals as a feminist issue, but this approach remains in the minority. Among this minority, contemporary Canadian philosopher and women's studies scholar Chloë Taylor and US American philosopher and animal studies scholar James Stanescu, in the feminist tradition of noting that the personal and emotional are political, both write about how grieving for animals in the food system is an uncommon and alienating experience, since most people do not view farmed animals' deaths as something to be grieved or mourned (Taylor 2008; Stanescu 2012). Taylor and Stanescu both use this theorization of grief as a way to understand the precarious lives of animals and to advocate greater consideration of animals within feminist theory.

## LOVING ANIMALS AND STILL EATING THEM?

Not all feminists agree that there are fundamental ethical or political problems with eating animals. Some feminist scholars argue instead that humans should develop more caring relationships with the animals humans eat through applying more stringent welfare standards and practicing smaller-scale agriculture. These scholars (in contradiction to the vegan ecofeminist approach) assert that it is possible to enact caring relationships that involve killing and eating animals.

In this vein, US American science and technology studies scholar Donna Haraway (1944–) writes, in *When Species Meet*, that “try as we might to distance ourselves, there is no way of living that is not also a way of someone, not just something, else dying differentially” (2007, 80). For Haraway, it is less the act of killing that is ethically problematic and more the process of “making killable” (80), which involves a lack of dignity and respect for the way the being lives and dies. Factory farming, in Haraway’s view, is a process that makes animals killable and presents serious ethical problems. She acknowledges that veganism can be a powerful enactment of feminist politics but does not agree that it is a feminist imperative. She points out that eating always involves killing—even for vegans, in the case of killing plants or in the case of small animals killed in fields by mechanized harvesting equipment—and that feminists should pay more attention to the intertwined relationships of power, control, and love in which humans find ourselves with other species.

Being in relationships with animals, for Haraway (2007, 4), involves acknowledging that humans are always in ambivalent relationships of care and power with other species; that humans are not singular, isolated bodies but are composed of, and reliant on, many others; and that these relationships shape who humans and others are. These relationships with animals mean acknowledging that animals are *someone* not *something*, and this extends to practices of killing. Killing must involve acknowledgment that we are killing *someone* (106). In the practical application of this feminist view, there is nothing fundamentally unethical about eating animals; instead, attention is paid to the process of how this killing and eating is done.

### HUMAN AND ANIMAL EMOTIONS

Similar to Haraway, US American women’s studies scholar Kathy Rudy (1956–), in her book *Loving Animals* (2011), argues that the response to human-animal entanglement should be to treat other species better. She advocates building better relationships with animals through acknowledging their emotional worlds, in addition to our own. Through establishing a kind of emotional or affective connection with other animals (farmed animal species as well as pets), Rudy contends that humans can develop more caring and ethical practices of raising animals for food. She suggests viewing animals as being in relationships of exchange with humans and that humans need to do better in terms of giving animals more for what they take from them. For instance, Rudy writes that humans should give animals good lives in return for meat, milk, and eggs.

Attending to the role of emotion in human-animal relationships leads Rudy (2011) to argue that humans can love animals and still eat them. Interestingly, though, feminists often disagree about what loving animals means, and they differ in whether or how love is shown in interactions between humans and other species. Some scholars argue that claiming to love animals while eating them is not enough. Indeed, contemporary US American scholar of communications and theater studies Vasile Stanescu points out that even when farmers claim

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to love their animals, the animal is still subjected to violence that emerges from that animal's status as a commodity—as something ownable, buyable, and sellable and whose treatment is ultimately determined by the farmer caring for them. Gruen, in turn, argues in *Entangled Empathy* (2015) that it is precisely these shared connections between humans and animals—these empathetic modes of care and response—that necessitate adopting nonviolent ways of relating to animals (e.g., ideally not killing them for food). Scholars such as Rudy and Haraway, however, promote the sharing of emotional lives and an attention to these ambivalent entanglements as a way to revise how eating animals is practiced, rather than whether it is practiced at all.

### “HUMANE” SLAUGHTER

US American animal scientist Temple Grandin (1947–) is well known as an expert on the process of killing animals for food (Grandin 2010). Drawing on her experience as a person living with autism, she claims a special insight into how animals experience the world and recommends changes in human behavior to accommodate animals' emotional, physical, and behavioral needs. She has redesigned slaughterhouses with this in mind, advocating for a pragmatic and humane approach to killing animals. This includes considerations of what animals see, how chutes leading to slaughter are designed, and how humans can more efficiently move animals through slaughterhouse spaces. Like Haraway and Rudy, Grandin does not believe there is anything inherently wrong with killing animals to eat them; rather, she dedicates her work to transforming how this killing is done.

This perspective—of changing how humans raise and kill animals—also exists in wider conversations about food politics. Popular food politics figures in the United States, such as journalist Michael Pollan (1955–), farmer and author Joel Salatin (1957–), and chef and community activist Alice Waters (1944–), express particular concern about industrial farming processes (see Pollan 2006; Salatin 2011; Waters 2008). These writer-activists advocate shifting to small-scale, local forms of production, which they argue pay greater attention to the quality of the animal's life. They also often propose shifting to historical breeds of farmed animals, termed *heritage breeds*, to restore more genetic diversity to animal agriculture and to resist genetic alterations that cause problems for animals' physical experience of the world (like the turkeys bred for breast meat, who cannot reproduce on their own).

## DECOLONIAL DIETS

The alternative food movement as defined by figures like Pollan has been critiqued for its privileged approach to food and the whiteness of this form of food activism. Contemporary US American sociology and community studies scholar Julie Guthman (2007; 2011a), for instance, writes that these advocates' recommendations for what to eat, how to raise or grow food, and so on privilege white, upper- or middle-class, urban subjects against which non-white, less wealthy Others are measured and fall short. For instance, farmers' markets that offer locally produced or organic food are often located in whiter, wealthier areas; the kinds of food sold often cater to this white, upper- or middle-class demographic, while culturally diverse foods are absent; and the price of food at these markets may be out of reach for the economically marginalized. Furthermore, the alternative food movement can reproduce human social inequalities. For instance, white food-justice advocates sometimes reproduce racialized, colonial social relations when they enter communities of color and implement food practices that ignore cultural and racial histories.



Contemporary US American geographer and sustainable development scholar Rachel Slocum (2007) and US American geographer and critical race scholar Margaret Ramírez (2015) both explore the ways in which local food production can have troubling ethical and political consequences, such as alienating communities of color through the imposition of white, affluent values of food production. This can involve particular kinds of food, methods of production, or ways of engaging in community organizing. Such changes to food production can also displace communities of color through processes of gentrification that are sometimes encouraged or exacerbated through urban gardening initiatives.

Similarly, white, Eurocentric practices of veganism can erase the importance of cultural differences and traditions of eating in ways that do not take into account geographic particularities of place and access to plant-based foods. There are ethical and political questions to be explored when white, class-privileged vegans in the Global North propose veganism as an ethical imperative for the Global South, where subsistence animal agriculture might be a community's primary source of food. An erasure of the geographic, cultural, and lived dimensions of the role of animals in diets around the world can reproduce colonial histories of invasion and unequal power relations.

Indeed, many view veganism as a white, class-privileged dietary practice. In the United States, this idea is reinforced by the actual and perceived realities of vegan food being more expensive than animal-based food. Plant-based foods are often disproportionately expensive compared to highly subsidized animal products and processed foods. Subsidies make the prices of animal-based and processed foods artificially low, and so at the grocery store, broccoli can cost more than ground beef. Furthermore, fresh produce in the United States is often not geographically or economically accessible (see the films *Food, Inc.* and *A Place at the Table*; also Guthman 2011b). Lower availability of fresh produce, paired with the abundant availability of heavily subsidized (and thus cheap) processed food and animal products in economically marginalized areas, perpetuates the notion that veganism is a white, class-privileged practice.

### BLACK, LATINX, AND INDIGENOUS VEGANISMS

Other perspectives illustrate that viewing veganism as a primarily white, privileged practice in fact erases the many forms of veganism practiced globally and their role in resisting colonial dietary practices. Black veganisms, Latinx veganisms, and indigenous veganisms have been practiced long before white, Eurocentric forms. This plurality of veganisms is vital to understanding the broad landscape of feminist vegan practice.

US American critical race and food justice scholar A. Breeze Harper (1976–) explores these ideas in her edited anthology *Sistah Vegan* (2010), which looks at the black feminist vegan tradition, emphasizing practices of veganism within black communities as a way to decolonize the diet. Drawing on Afrikan (a term used to describe a Pan African identity spanning beyond the geographic borders of Africa) holistic health traditions, such as those of contemporary US American practitioner Queen Afua, Harper describes how diets heavily composed of animal products, processed foods, and sweeteners—foods especially available to those living in poverty—reproduce colonial histories and are killing economically marginalized communities of color. Harper explains how she came to veganism through her own quest for reproductive health, following Queen Afua's writings in *Sacred Woman* (2000) that promote a whole foods vegan diet as a way to heal the body from the effects of an industrialized, colonial diet of largely animal products and highly processed food. Harper and Queen Afua view a holistic, vegan diet as a way not only to decolonize the

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racialized body but also to restore fertility and bodily autonomy over women's reproductive processes through spirituality and diet.

Harper (2010) links the way animals are raised and killed with other colonizing forms of food production, such as the global production of sugarcane or coffee. Sugarcane production was historically fueled by antebellum slavery and was a central driver in the transatlantic slave trade; today, sugarcane production continues to cause human rights concerns over labor practices in the Caribbean, South and Central America, Southeast Asia, and some parts of Africa (Abbott 2010; Mintz 1985). Contemporary practices of (especially industrialized) animal agriculture recall colonial histories in the United States and in other settler-colonial territories: cattle, horses, and other domesticated animals were used to physically displace human communities and native animal species, destroy prairie ecosystems, and demarcate land as the property of settler-colonialists (Anderson 2006). The proliferation of animal agriculture by settler-colonialism continues today as ranchers and farmers continue to lay claim to land for expansion of animal-based food systems, and these effects are exacerbated by industrialized scales of production. Harper argues that consuming animal-based foods not only reproduces colonial production practices (of land dispossession, violence against native animal species, and environmental destruction) but also leads to severe health problems that are killing communities of color in North America and beyond. Harper (2010) reviews how diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and various cancers are increasingly linked to food—and processed foods, animal-based foods, and refined sugars are especially implicated in these diseases. Concerned for the health of communities of color and acknowledging the practical challenges of adopting a vegan diet, Harper advocates a shift to decolonial veganism (veganism as defined by communities' self-determination of their eating practices *and* by honoring animal life) as a path forward for decolonial feminist practice (as a practice defined by honoring and seeking justice for historically marginalized peoples).

Other efforts to decolonize the diet include a return to traditional, historical, precolonial forms of eating and food practices. Contemporary US American ethnic studies scholars and decolonial food activists Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel (2015), for instance, explore Mexican American eating traditions prior to the 1500s, emphasizing how certain foods are connected to colonial influences that carry through to contemporary food practices. Wheat, for instance, was brought by European colonizers, as was the practice of consuming animal products as a regular dietary element. As an act of resistance, and a reclamation of traditional Latinx foodways, Calvo and Esquibel advocate centering eating practices around foods like corn, beans, squash, greens, herbs, and seeds and minimizing (or eliminating) the consumption of animals.

Contemporary US American anthropologist and decolonial food activist Claudia Serrato (2010) similarly argues for a return to traditional Latinx foodways as a method of decolonizing the diet. She emphasizes this and other indigenous veganisms as modes of not only healing the physical body but also restoring connections to culture, place, and community. Serrato argues that critical animal studies needs to include a more holistic approach to healing, indigenous perspectives on decolonization, and a commitment to the health of future generations. Aligned with a feminist commitment to highlighting inequality and working for more inclusive spaces of scholarship and activism, Serrato emphasizes an attention to indigenous practices as a way for critical animal studies to be less Eurocentric in its approach and highlight multiple ways of knowing and practicing veganism.

## ANIMALS IN INDIGENOUS FOODWAYS

Decolonial dietary trends do not always involve eliminating animals as food. Some indigenous foodways rely on certain animals, and recognizing people's rights to such traditions is central to feminist decolonization of the diet. In parts of North America, traditional animal foods include salmon, beavers, deer, rabbits, seals, and whales, among other species. Feminist indigenous studies scholars articulate the centrality of these animals to restoring food traditions and reconnecting communities with ancestral eating practices. At the same time, some scholars of indigeneity advocate an ethical and political orientation that does not include the consumption of animals.

Contemporary Peruvian-American anthropologist María Elena García's (2013) work centers on the guinea pig as a traditional food for indigenous Andean communities. García traces how guinea pigs and alpacas were, until recently, viewed by urban middle and upper classes in Peruvian cities as lower-class, inferior animal-based foods. At present, a gastronomic boom is occurring in Peru whereby world-class Peruvian chefs are transforming traditional Peruvian foods into high-end gourmet cuisine (García 2013). In this context, García articulates how guinea pigs and alpacas have been appropriated by wealthy urban elites who capitalize on marketing these animals as traditional Peruvian cuisine, forgetting the earlier framing of these foods as inferior. Guinea pigs and alpacas are important traditional food sources for indigenous Andean communities and have long been used in small-scale subsistence agricultural contexts; however, since Peru's gastronomic boom, guinea pig farming for meat has seen a drastic shift toward industrialized models of farming to accommodate this new global trend. García highlights how this shift reproduces the exclusion of indigenous Andean people while appropriating aspects of their culture and food traditions in a way that benefits only the (largely white) elites in urban centers in Peru and around the world.

Considering a different geographic context, in her work on revitalizing indigenous foodways in Ontario, Canada, contemporary geographer and indigenous studies scholar Michelle Daigle (2015) discusses the importance of renewing traditional practices of hunting, fishing, and trapping. These practices, she argues, connect current communities with the land in relationships of kinship that can help heal and transform colonial traumas (such as being dispossessed of land, being removed to reservations, and children being forced into residential schools that separated them from their families and actively erased their traditions and languages). According to Daigle, such relationships are a core part of community, familial, and identity-building practices for the First Nations peoples she studies. European colonization from the 1400s onward and the continued repression of indigenous communities through laws that barred access to certain traditional hunting and trapping grounds or banned hunting and trapping practices altogether have severed relationships with, and access to, land and animals used as food. By renewing traditional food practices, in Daigle's view, First Nations engage in reknitting shared kinship with each other, with animals, and with the land itself. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are, then, in this context, central to decolonizing the diet. And teaching new generations the skills of hunting, trapping, and fishing—and the storytelling that accompanies these traditions—is critical for sustaining these practices into the future.

Similarly, contemporary American Indian studies scholar Charlotte Coté writes, in *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors* (2010), about the role of gray whales as a food source among the Makah people in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Coté advocates for the revitalization of whaling as a traditional food practice and a way of enacting greater food sovereignty for the Makah. Coté and other advocates emphasize the importance of both the cultural tradition and the health benefits of indigenous foodways. This view argues for

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revitalizing indigenous hunting and harvesting practices as a response to diet-related diseases that stem from the colonial diets forced on indigenous communities.

### CONFLICT OVER INDIGENOUS HUNTING AND FISHING PRACTICES

Struggles over indigenous hunting and fishing rights have been ongoing, as colonial systems of governance dictate how populations of animals and the land are maintained and accessed. Colonial borders (national, state, provincial, etc.) often bisect hunting and fishing grounds, cutting off access to these traditional places of Native sustenance. Federal and state legal restrictions on what species can be hunted, as well as regulated quotas, also govern and interfere with indigenous food practices.

Animal rights and environmental activists are not always on the side of such indigenous traditions. In the late 1990s, the Makahs' right to whaling off the coast of Washington State figured in a contentious public debate, pitting animal rights activists and environmentalists against indigenous communities and their supporters. There had been an international moratorium on commercial whaling of humpback and gray whales since the 1920s, owing to these species' depletion. The Makah, too, had suspended their traditional whaling practices. But when the gray whale was removed from the US Endangered Species List in 1995, the Makah renewed whale hunting and, in 1999, used a combination of harpoons and rifles to kill a gray whale.

This prompted a complex debate involving many groups representing different interests (see Kim 2015 and Coté 2010). Animal protection and environmental groups worried that the Makahs' whale hunting would encourage increased whaling more generally and would globally threaten vulnerable whale and other marine mammal populations. Critiques of the Makah became heated and at times employed racist rhetoric (e.g., one common bumper sticker read "Save a Whale, Kill a Makah"). Contemporary political scientist and Asian American studies scholar Claire Jean Kim (2015) writes of both the racism on the part of many animal rights and environmentalist groups directed at the Makah and the difficulty of engaging in dialogue across the various perspectives represented. Kim also highlights internal Makah disagreements over the decision to hunt; for instance, some Makah women elders disagreed with renewing whaling as a cultural practice, but their views were largely silenced in favor of presenting united support for whaling by the Makah in such a tense, politically charged context. The Makah case and similar conflicts bring multiple sites of oppression into view and inform an intersectional feminist food politics; it is not only issues related to gender that concern feminists but rather those of colonial oppression and racism, too.

### QUESTIONING INDIGENOUS PRACTICES OF EATING ANIMALS

Just as indigenous practices regionally or globally are highly diverse, indigenous feminist scholarship on the question of eating animals varies widely. Some indigenous studies scholars argue for the abstention from eating animal-based foods altogether. Contemporary Canadian scholar-activist Margaret Robinson (2010), for instance, couples an ecofeminist approach with indigenous studies to argue that traditional legends of the Mi'kmaq First Nations band in eastern Canada can be read as advancing a vegan ethic. Robinson acknowledges the critique of veganism as a white, class-privileged practice but argues that this denies the very real ways in which her commitments to her Mi'kmaq cultural traditions are actually in line with not eating animals. She illustrates how she enacts Mi'kmaq ethical and spiritual tenets in her practice of a vegan diet.

In a similar vein, Creek-Cherokee scholar of Native American literature Craig Womack (1960–) critiques the notion that hunting practices embody respect for the animal. Womack (2013) details his own experience hunting, focusing on a deer he shot and who did not die immediately. In the doe, he saw a struggle for life—a desperation to not die—that made him question his perspective on hunting (and, later, on eating animals altogether). Womack argues that no matter how many prayers or ceremonies are performed, meant to offer respect for an animal's death, there is no respectful way to kill an animal. Furthermore, Womack points out that even those who engage in hunting (Native hunters as well as settler-colonial hunters) still often support colonial industrial food systems through continuing to purchase additional meat or other animal products from grocery stores and that this is inconsistent with a commitment to sustainable ecological practices.

Like in ecofeminist and other feminist analyses, a common thread throughout these approaches to eating animals is that greater care needs to be given to animals' treatment. This ethical commitment to more caring relationships manifests both in revitalized traditional indigenous hunting and in indigenous veganisms, although their practices differ (namely, eating animals or not).

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## Summary

The question of whether or not it is ethically or politically acceptable to eat animals has long preoccupied feminist scholars who study human-animal relations. The common thread throughout such scholarship is a commitment to greater care and consideration for nonhuman animals' lives and experiences. What this care looks like and what it includes or excludes in terms of human treatment of animals distinguishes these feminist perspectives from one another.

Vegan ecofeminists are committed to environmentally sound, vegan ethics related to animals and advocate avoidance of killing and eating animals. This dovetails with commitments by some indigenous scholars whose attention to ecological and spiritual harmony means that they also abstain from animal consumption. For scholars concerned with colonial impacts on traditional food systems, reducing animal consumption can be an important part of decolonizing the diet.

Conversely, decolonizing the diet can also involve particular forms of killing and eating animals, as in traditional indigenous hunting practices. These practices can be part of indigenous resurgence, reclaiming prior rights to and uses of land and waterways and restoring health to Native communities. Hunting, trapping, and fishing as alternatives to industrial forms of animal agriculture can embody a greater ethic of care toward animals. Similarly, for feminist scholars who do not advocate veganism, attention to treating animals better during their lives is central to developing more just practices of feminist food politics.

Thus, the landscape of feminist food politics is varied and includes at-times competing perspectives. Implicit in all, though, is acknowledgment that animals deserve great care and consideration in terms of how humans treat them. This care is violently compromised in industrial, factory-farming models of agriculture. As a starting point, then, feminists might tackle factory farming as shared common ground from which to build a multispecies feminist food politics.

# Not For Sale

## Chapter 10: Feminist Food Politics

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