

CHAPTER 12

*Industrial Slaughter****Kathryn Gillespie****Postdoctoral Fellow in Animal Studies**Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT*

Industrial slaughter, along with its relationship to the production and consumption of animal bodies, is highly gendered as it shapes human and nonhuman animal lives. Gender permeates human social relations, and the process of gendering renders some bodies (e.g., women and gender-nonconforming individuals) disproportionately vulnerable to violence. The impacts of gendered social relations extend beyond just human interactions and shape humans' treatment of nonhuman animals in the food industry through entangled modes of violence and commodification. A feminist attention to slaughter practices (and animal agriculture more generally) sheds light on the uneven power relations and distinct modes of inequality related to these industries.

Ecofeminist scholars and feminist critical animal studies scholars work to theorize the animal welfare and ethical implications of raising animals for food, particularly in industrialized spaces. Attention to the lived experience and bodily effects of commodity production in breeding, raising, and slaughtering animals for food reveals the suffering, bodily appropriation, and gendered violence to which animals are subjected. Lax legal frameworks, paired with an increasingly industrialized and high-speed production process, create conditions whereby animals are routinely subjected to painful procedures that modify their bodies and end their lives.

A feminist attention to the body has also long analyzed the ways in which labor is gendered; for instance, care work is done disproportionately by women and people of color, and this work is often underpaid or uncompensated (Folbre 2001; McDowell 2004; Milligan 2001; Tronto 2015). Slaughterhouse work is done primarily by men, but for both men and women involved in this form of labor, there are significant physical and psychological impacts (Pachirat 2011; Striffler 2005; Vialles 1994).

Slaughterhouse waste is an issue for surrounding communities and the broader ecosystem. For instance, slaughterhouses and spaces of intensified animal farming pollute waterways with runoff and waste. Indeed, pollution and environmental contamination from these spaces disproportionately harm communities of color and communities with low income, which are overwhelmingly located in close proximity to these polluted areas (Imhoff 2010; Kirby 2010; Wing, Cole, and Grant 2000). In addition to posing a human health risk, slaughterhouses harm ecosystem health, affecting water, air, and soil vitality through the disposal and runoff of liquid waste from the slaughter process and from temporarily confining animals as they await slaughter. Because of the intertwined consequences for

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humans, animals, and the environment of industrial slaughter practices, slaughter is an important issue for feminists concerned with both human and nonhuman life.

This chapter begins by providing historical context for the industrialization of slaughter and animal agriculture and covers how the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom created the catalyst for the widespread industrialization of raising and killing animals for food that was implemented in the United States and later spread to other parts of the world. Next, the chapter reviews the legal landscape in which industrial slaughter occurs and how laws in different jurisdictions (e.g., countries, US states) govern practices of slaughter. Following this framing is an explanation of the actual methods and practices of industrialized slaughter. This process is gendered, and the next two sections cover first how slaughter transforms the animal body in gender-specific ways and next how human labor has a gendered dimension in terms of who does the work of slaughter. This discussion of human labor is extended in the following section with an examination of how the work of slaughter can proliferate relationships of violence inside and outside the slaughterhouse. Shifting to a different context of industrialized animal killing, the chapter turns to the often-overlooked topic of industrialized fishing. Finally, the environmental effects of industrial slaughter are discussed.

This chapter is largely centered on industrial slaughter in the United States. Although technologies and ideologies about industrial production emerged during the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom, the application of these to food systems (and especially the slaughter of animals for food) has been primarily a US innovation. But these technologies and practices have traveled globally and have been employed and expanded on elsewhere; thus, the chapter indicates how these processes travel and have been applied outside the United States.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

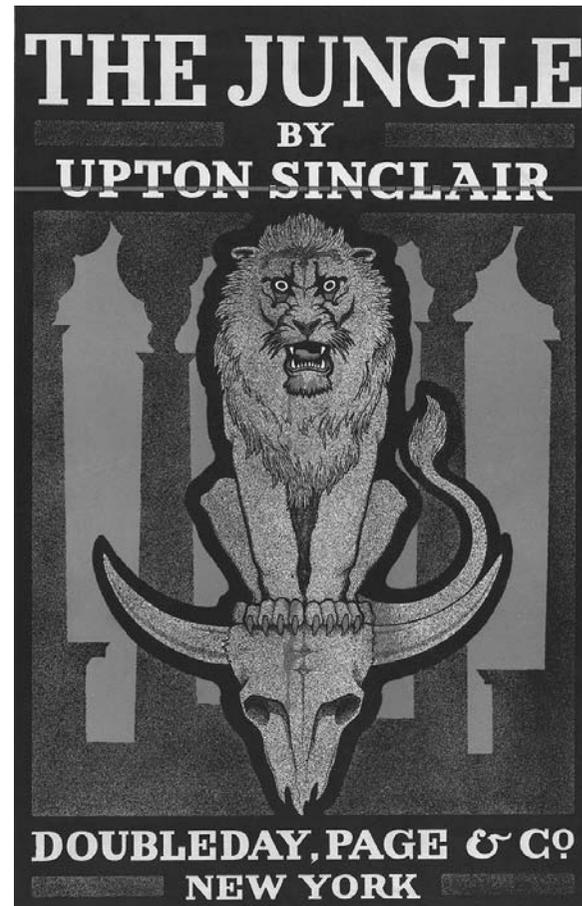
Animal slaughter dates back more than 10,000 years, but it was only in more recent history that slaughter became an industrialized, large-scale global phenomenon that transformed animals into meat in mechanized modes of production. In the United States, the reality of the industrial meatpacking industry was famously immortalized in US American fiction writer Upton Sinclair's (1878–1968) novel *The Jungle* (1906), which tells the story of Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant working in Chicago's meatpacking industry. More than a century later, this text remains a reminder of the harsh labor conditions of slaughterhouse work—the wear on the laboring body, the precariousness of slaughterhouse workers' socio-economic and legal conditions, and the violence against the animal—that persist today in slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants.

But practices of industrial slaughter were in place before the twentieth century. Industrial slaughter was born with the spread of the Industrial Revolution (beginning in the United Kingdom and spanning roughly from 1760 to 1840) with its shift toward mechanized modes of production paired with increased consumption caused by rising incomes and wider availability of mass-produced goods. The influence of industrialization was particularly poignant in the growth of the US West and the spread of railroads, stockyards, and urban development, as environmental historian William Cronon's (1954–) *Nature's Metropolis* (1991) documents. Commodity markets for meat, timber, and grain were central to the transformation of these western landscapes.

INDUSTRIALIZING FOOD SYSTEMS

The industrialization of slaughter occurred within a more general move to industrial food production and an effort to make food simultaneously more efficient to produce and less expensive to buy. These practices involved shifts to large-scale production of crops and the increased prevalence of monocropping, a practice where only one crop is planted across large swaths of land. A large portion of monocropped land is dedicated to corn and soy, which have become staples in animal feed, used as filler to help animals gain significant amounts of weight quickly in order to make meat production more efficient and profitable. *King Corn* (2007) is a documentary that traces the important role of corn in the landscape of industrial food production, with a particular emphasis on the shift toward feeding farmed animals corn. US American food writer and journalist Michael Pollan's (1955–) *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), too, describes the history of corn as a commodity enrolled in other forms of food production. The role of corn, and of industrialized food production more broadly, is intimately linked to the production of animal-based foods: corn as a food source brings animals to slaughter weight more quickly, and technologies of industrial food production permeate industrial slaughter.

More broadly, the industrialization of US and global food systems has been the subject of critical scholarship and journalistic investigations. US American investigative journalist Eric Schlosser's (1959–) *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001) famously exposed the relationships between the growth of the fast-food industry and industrial food production. Documentaries such as *Food, Inc.* (2008) tackle a similar project of exposing the implications of industrialization in the food system, emphasizing the powerful influence of corporations in shaping how farming is done and promoting the benefits of localized, small-scale agriculture as an alternative. The 2005 film *Our Daily Bread* offers a powerful commentary on global industrial food production; with no narration, the film moves between spaces of farming, breeding, slaughter, and other forms of food production (e.g., salt mining, plantings in hothouses), emphasizing the mechanization and monotony of these industrial practices. Both the corporate consolidation and global industrialization of agriculture are central to understanding the broader context in which farmed animals are slaughtered in industrialized plants. Industrial slaughter is but one site in the global industrialized food system where scales of production, increased mechanization, and consolidation of



Poster advertising *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair. Sinclair's 1906 novel tells the story of a Lithuanian immigrant working in Chicago's meatpacking industry. More than a century later, this text remains a classic for its revealing depiction of slaughterhouse work—the wear on the laboring body, the precarity of slaughterhouse workers' socioeconomic status, and the violence against the animal. EVERETT HISTORICAL/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.

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ownership of the means of food production have transformed the way animal- and plant-based food commodities are produced.

INDUSTRIALIZATION OF FARMED ANIMALS

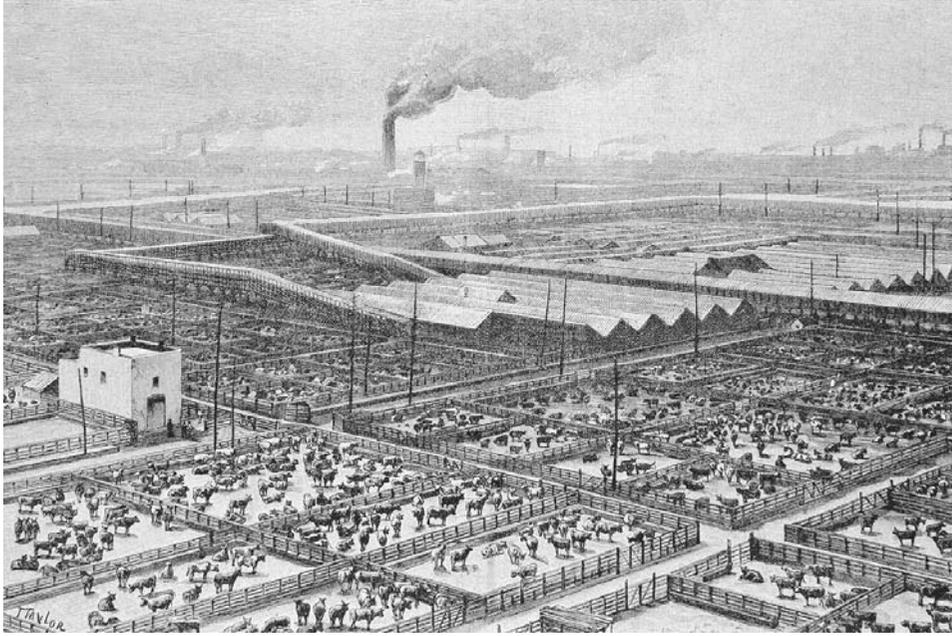
Over the course of the twentieth century, it became commonplace to feed animals large amounts of grain and selectively breed animals that were more prolific producers of meat, milk, and eggs and who could be raised in conditions of extreme confinement. Indeed, industrial slaughter developed alongside the move toward industrial scales of *raising* animals for food. The popularity of the two practices grew in tandem. In his book *Eating Animals* (2009), US American novelist and nonfiction writer Jonathan Safran Foer (1977–) tells the story of how the practice of raising animals in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), also known as factory farms, originated in 1923 when Celia Steele (a Delaware housewife) received 500 chicks instead of the 50 she had ordered to replenish her backyard flock of laying hens. Experimenting, she raised the chickens indoors through the winter, found that they survived, and continued to experiment with raising chickens in confined indoor spaces, increasing the number she raised to tens of thousands of chickens and then to a hundred thousand. These trials developed into more widespread practices of raising chickens and other birds, pigs, and cows in indoor spaces of confinement.

Matching this trend of raising animals for food in ever-greater numbers, slaughter practices shifted over the course of the twentieth century away from small-scale localized slaughter toward larger-scale, centralized, highly mechanized slaughter facilities. The disassembly-line model that emerged in the design of industrial slaughterhouses is believed to have been the inspiration for the development of the assembly-line production process by US American industrialist Henry Ford (1863–1947), the founder of Ford Motor Company (Pachirat 2011). As food production became more highly mechanized and more efficiently executed, the price of meat declined and the availability of meat spread wider and wider, encouraging consumers to eat animals in ever-increasing quantities.

GLOBAL SPREAD OF INDUSTRIALIZED MEAT PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Indeed, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, even as meat consumption has waned slightly or its growth has slowed in some industrialized nations, such as the United States, meat consumption around the globe has skyrocketed as meat has become more widely available and affordable in the Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. CAFOs have grown in popularity globally, creating more efficient, low-cost methods of raising animals for food in greater numbers. And China, for instance, has further innovated even more industrialized modes of animal farming: a news story in the summer of 2015 discussed plans for the construction in China of the world's largest dairy farm, with 100,000 cows producing milk year-round for export to Russia (*Northern Advocate* 2015).

This increasing consumption, in turn, created demand for and drove the innovation of new technologies for raising and killing animals for food. Today, the slaughter industry has become greatly consolidated. Smaller slaughter plants have closed as larger, more centralized slaughterhouses have taken over the meatpacking landscape. This consolidation trend means that animals have to be transported longer distances to slaughter. Transport poses a serious welfare issue, as transport is a highly stressful experience for farmed animals, and many animals die en route to the slaughterhouse, exposed as they are to extreme heat and cold and cramped tightly into transport trailers.



Central slaughterhouse in Chicago. Engraving by Maynard from picture by painter Taylor. Published in magazine Niva, A. F. Marx, St. Petersburg, Russia, 1893. Most animal slaughter in the United States is done in large industrial slaughter facilities, and US models have been adopted and further industrialized in other parts of the world. OLEG GOLOVNEV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.

Large slaughterhouses also routinely set minimum numbers for slaughter, meaning that smaller-scale farmers who may bring only a small number of animals to slaughter at a time are restricted from having their animals slaughtered in these facilities. This has led to a niche market of small-scale slaughter practices as alternatives, including mobile slaughter units (slaughter facilities in the converted trailers of trucks) that travel to the farm (Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network 2016). Still, in the United States most animal slaughter is done in industrial slaughter facilities, and the industrial models have traveled and been adopted and further industrialized in other parts of the world, such as in hog and dairy production in China, dairy and leather production in India, chicken and guinea pig production in Peru, and cattle farming in Brazil, to name a few.

LEGAL LANDSCAPE

Globally, laws protecting the welfare of animals differ, but there is a general absence of strict laws protecting the well-being of animals raised industrially for food. In the United Kingdom, the Animal Welfare Act of 2006 provides standards of care for domesticated animals, citing strict penalties for violating these laws; concern remains, however, over the welfare of animals raised for food, especially in industrialized farming contexts and in relation to slaughter specifically. Thus, proposals have been made to install surveillance cameras, viewable by the public, in all slaughter facilities as a means to improve welfare. Animal welfare laws or cultural norms do not guarantee the ethical treatment or good care of animals, as the

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detailed review, later in this chapter, of the practices of slaughter compared with legal guidelines shows; this is true in industrialized spaces of animal slaughter around the world. Urban geographer and critical animal studies scholar Yamini Narayanan (2016) has performed extensive ethnographic fieldwork on discourses and laws related to animal protectionism in India and how these regulations are followed (or not) in India. She analyzes the way notions of the *sacred cow* in Hinduism operate to render cattle slaughter illegal in most Indian states; yet, the contradiction of India as one of the world's largest dairy-producing countries (and dairy production necessitating the slaughter of cattle) means that cattle slaughter is happening often in black market, illegal (and thus unregulated) spaces.

In the United States, legal protections governing the lives and deaths of farmed animals are notoriously weak, and those protections that do exist are insufficiently enforced. The US Animal Welfare Act of 1966 is a federal law protecting certain species of animals in certain realms of animal use. Farmed animals used for food or fiber, however, are excluded from the legal protections of this act. In fact, the only federal law protecting animals in the food system is the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act, passed in 1958 and then revised in 1978. This law sets standards for what is considered “humane” during the slaughter process, and it includes standards for transport to slaughter. The primary directive is that animals must be rendered insensible to pain prior to slaughter, except in cases of religious slaughter, such as kosher and halal practices, where it is acceptable to use a blade to cut the carotid artery while the animal is conscious.

Importantly, certainly species are excluded entirely from the protections under this law, including birds, rabbits, and fish. Chickens and fish are slaughtered in the highest numbers of any species, making this omission particularly concerning. For instance, there are approximately 9 billion chickens slaughtered for meat each year in the United States alone, all without any protections during the slaughter process. For those species it does cover, the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act has been found by the US General Accounting Office (2004; now the Government Accountability Office) to be routinely violated in day-to-day industry practice.

Anticruelty laws at the state level are designed to provide an added layer of protection from cruel treatment for animals. In many states, however, exemptions exclude farmed animals from these protections. Termed “common” or “customary farming exemptions” by attorneys in animal law David J. Wolfson and Mariann Sullivan (2004), these exemptions state that so long as a practice or form of treatment is deemed “customary” within the industry, then it cannot be categorized as cruelty. This essentially means that the food industry is allowed to determine what is or is not an acceptable way to treat animals, so long as enough farmers in the industry employ that practice.

PROBLEMS WITH LAW AS A PROTECTIVE MECHANISM

While there is certainly much room for improvement in legal protections for all animals (and especially farmed animals), feminist legal scholars have pointed out that law is a flawed institution in its ability to protect other-than-human interests. Legal scholar and professor Maneesha Deckha, for instance, argues in a 2013 article that law is a fundamentally anthropocentric (or human-centered) institution in that it either treats animals as objects or prioritizes human or corporate interests over those of animals; this raises questions about whether existing legal frameworks will ever be able to represent nonhuman interests in any significant way. The lax legal protections for farmed animals are an excellent example of a site where human interests (economic, cultural, personal lifestyle)

in reproducing the institution of farming animals subordinate the most basic interests of animals in living a life free from violent bodily harm.

These insufficient legal protections for farmed animals are compounded by the growing prevalence of anti-whistle-blower laws, commonly called “ag-gag laws.” These are laws at the state level that prevent the documentation (via video or photography) of conditions inside agricultural spaces. These laws have been passed primarily in response to undercover investigations performed by animal rights activists concerned with documenting the cruel treatment of animals in food production. Videos and photographs taken under these circumstances are often the only visual access consumers have to agricultural spaces. Thus, this criminalization of documenting agricultural activities limits consumer access to information, while also making it more difficult for whistle-blowers in the industry to document routine and repeated welfare violations.

US American investigative journalist Will Potter, in his book *Green Is the New Red* (2011), explores the broader political climate under which such laws have been passed—with particular attention to their relationship to the federal passage of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2006 and the sweeping USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. These federal laws, along with the aforementioned ag-gag laws at the state level, pair with lax and nonexistent legal protections for farmed animals to create a climate in which it is difficult both to obtain information about how animals are raised and slaughtered and to file cruelty charges on an animal’s behalf.

INDUSTRIAL SLAUGHTER PRACTICES

Slaughter practices in the United States vary somewhat depending on species and the particular practices of each slaughterhouse. Animals covered by the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act, such as cows, pigs, sheep, and goats, must be rendered insensible to pain prior to being slaughtered. As mentioned above, the exceptions to this rule include ritual slaughter governed by Jewish and Islamic religious tenets (which allow for the animal’s throat to be cut while still conscious) and slaughter performed on certain nonprotected species (fish, birds, and rabbits).

Approved methods of rendering an animal insensible to pain include gunshot, a blow to the head, electric shock, or chemical exposure. Cows, for instance, are routinely rendered unconscious by a captive-bolt stunner, a device usually powered by an air compressor that drives a steel bolt into the skull of the animal (Pachirat 2011). In an ideal situation, the animal is rendered entirely unconscious before one of their back legs is shackled and they are hoisted upside down to hang from a conveyor belt, where their throat is cut, their blood is drained, and they are moved along the line through the disassembly process (the hide and tail removed, feet cut off, and so on). However, the US General Accounting Office (2004) found in inspections that animals routinely move through the slaughter process while still conscious. This is partly a result of the high speed of the line and the unwillingness on the part of workers and managers to halt the line to stun an animal who was not properly stunned the first time because of a fear of getting fired or reprimanded for holding up production (Pachirat 2011).

Chicken slaughter is even more highly mechanized than the slaughter of other species (such as cows and pigs). Chickens are shackled by their feet, upside down, on a conveyor belt and passed through an electrified water bath that immobilizes them (although welfare concerns for chickens often focus on the fact that many are not rendered unconscious during

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this process, and so they move through the next steps alert and conscious). Next, they move along to a point on the line where an automated blade cuts their throats, they bleed out, and they are then immediately dunked into a scalding tank to remove their feathers.

TEMPLE GRANDIN'S WORK IN SLAUGHTER INDUSTRIES

US American animal science professor and meat industry consultant Temple Grandin (1947–) has been lauded as a visionary for her work in redesigning cattle slaughterhouses to reduce the stress experienced by animals in the moments leading up to slaughter. She claims that her experience as a high-functioning autistic person gives her a window into how animals experience the world, and so she has made changes to slaughterhouse design to reduce obstacles that cause animals fear and to enable their efficient movement through the slaughterhouse (Grandin 2013).

With regard to the way slaughter is performed, there is much room for improvement in terms of meeting even the most basic legal guidelines for slaughter. Increasingly, though, animal welfare advocates argue for much more stringent legislation that further regulates how slaughter is done and inspected, as well as expanded legislation to include all species that humans raise for food.

THE GENDERED ANIMAL BODY

Animals in the food system are raised both for reproductive commodities, in the form of eggs, milk, and new offspring, and as commodities themselves when their bodies are no longer reproductively viable and they are slaughtered for meat. How and when animals are slaughtered is largely dependent on a number of factors: their designated sex at birth, their age, which industry they were born into, which commodity they were bred to produce, and how long they are deemed productive. Attention to these gendered dimensions of animals' reproductive lives and deaths sheds light on the unique ways in which a binary of sex, gender, and the body are important factors in how industrial and nonindustrial slaughter is conceptualized and performed. This chapter does not intend to reinforce a binary of sex in its analysis by talking about "male" and "female" animals; rather, it reports how animal agriculture industries impose this binary way of viewing animals' sex at birth onto practices of commodity production.

THE GENDERED "MEAT" ANIMAL

Animals commodified for their reproductive traits include such animal species as dairy-breed cows raised for milk; beef-breed cows, meat-breed hens, and sows raised to produce offspring for meat (beef, chicken, and pork, respectively); and hens raised for egg laying. Feminist scholars have noted the ways in which female animal bodies are disproportionately exploited for their reproductive capabilities in spaces of food production. For instance, animal rights activist Karen Davis (1944–) has noted the ways in which hens' bodies are appropriated in violent, gendered capacities for egg production (Davis 1995). Feminist philosopher and animal ethicist Lori Gruen theorizes about the intertwined gendered logics that operate to expose women and female animals to acts of bodily violence (Gruen 1993). Feminist geographer and critical animal studies scholar Kathryn Gillespie's research shows how cows in the dairy industry are subjected to sexualized violence and gendered commodification in the production of milk (Gillespie 2014). Technologies of confinement, too, disproportionately enact violence on animal bodies—the gestation crate used to immobilize breeding sows or the battery cage packed full with egg-laying hens. Indeed, the female body is thoroughly appropriated for commodity food production—artificially inseminated, tightly controlled—and the decline of reproductive capacity determines when these animals are sent

to slaughter. The female body is so worn out at the point of slaughter that it can be transformed only into low-quality and processed meat products: the cow used for dairy into ground beef or the hen raised for egg laying into chicken nuggets, for instance.

But the male body, too, is subject to its own kind of gendered commodification in food production. Male animals populate the beef, pork, and poultry industries, their bodies transformed as efficiently as possible into meat. A selection of male animals is kept on breeding farms to produce semen for use in the artificial insemination of female animals, and these males are slaughtered when their virility declines. Male chicks in the egg industry are of little use, because males do not produce eggs, and chickens raised for meat and eggs are distinct breeds. Thus, in the egg industry, male chicks are culled immediately upon hatching through asphyxiation, via cervical dislocation, or by being ground up (and then often used as an ingredient in fertilizer). Similarly, male calves born into the dairy industry are of little use and are most commonly raised for four to six months for veal because they are not able to produce milk. A small percentage are kept as breeders, and those who are not raised for veal or breeding are either raised as steers for beef or are killed soon after birth and composted or rendered into new commodity goods.

GENDERED REPRODUCTIVE PROCESSES LEADING TO SLAUGHTER

Industrial agriculture involves the intensive management of animals' sexuality and reproductive lives. Breeding practices, especially in raising animals for food, reproduce the animal body in distinctly gendered ways. Females are routinely artificially inseminated, and the artificial insemination process is highly sexualized, as political scientist Claire E. Rasmussen has illustrated in her work on pig reproductive practices (2013) and as Gillespie has explored in the case of dairy production (2014). Animals' reproductive lives are tightly controlled, as cows and sows, for instance, are repeatedly impregnated—their young removed quickly after birth, and they are then impregnated again. Cows used for dairy are milked intensively two or three times a day, their bodies exploited for mammary excretions as a food commodity. Male bodies are exploited for semen production for use in the artificial insemination process. Breeding practices have focused on making animal bodies more productive, more docile, and less resistant—all to aid in the increasingly intensifying process of commodification.

In this way, a feminist attention to the animal body also shows how industrial processes have shaped animal bodies to make them more uniform and thus more conducive to the mechanization of the slaughter process. Latin American studies and anthropology professor Steve Striffler's book *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (2005) articulates how chickens, for instance, are bred for uniformity and large quantities of flesh for meat. This uniformity has made the shift to highly mechanized slaughter possible, removing human labor and shifting to a higher-speed, conveyor-belt slaughter line. More than any other sector of the meat industry, chicken processing has become so highly industrialized that it is now being used as a model for industrialized food production globally.

In Peru, for example, industrialized chicken production has gained popularity, and these logics of industrialized efficiency are now being applied to transform guinea pig production into an industrial-scale operation, as anthropologist and indigenous studies scholar María Elena García's research explores (2010). García's work examines the ways in which the logics of industrial chicken farming and the techniques of efficiency are applied to raising guinea pigs for food. New technologies are also genetically engineering "super guinea pigs" that are much larger than standard guinea pigs and thus provide more meat. In fact, the way guinea pigs are raised and slaughtered has the potential to become highly industrialized—even more so, perhaps, than the way chickens are raised and slaughtered—because they can be raised in tiny,

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enclosed spaces, and their reproductive cycle is so rapid and their gestation period so short. The economic logics tied to these biological processes reveal the gendered dimensions of animal production and the relevance of breeding and slaughter practices for feminist scholarship.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE LABOR

Human labor in the slaughterhouse is also a gendered process. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), only 25.7 percent of workers employed in the meatpacking industry in 2015 were women. Thus, the slaughter industry is predominantly populated by male employees. This is at least partially a result of the physically demanding nature of the work; for instance, meatpacking labor requires that workers be able to lift and move large pieces of meat repetitively for full work shifts. Women in meatpacking plants are usually employed in jobs cutting or trimming smaller pieces of meat, or they are employed in positions such as quality assurance or inspection where the physical elements of the job are not as demanding.

Work in slaughterhouses is notoriously dangerous. Injuries are common in the industry; for instance, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in a study on injuries in various labor industries in the United States in 2008, found that the injury incident rate for animal slaughter and processing was 7.5 cases for every 100 full-time workers (Bhushan 2011). These numbers document recorded injuries, but many injuries go unreported because workers may not want to risk being seen as causing trouble or risk losing work. Routine effects on the bodies of slaughterhouse laborers include repetitive stress injuries from the way the labor is divided into menial, repetitive tasks. Because of the difficult physical conditions of the work, annual employee turnover is extremely high in the slaughter industry—sometimes as high as 100 percent in some facilities.

Slaughterhouse labor is also racialized—about 65.8 percent of people employed in meatpacking industries in 2015 identify as black or African American, Asian, or Hispanic or Latinx, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). A significant portion of slaughterhouse workers are also undocumented immigrants, a status that makes them particularly vulnerable when advocating for better working conditions and wages. In spite of the dangers associated with work in slaughter industries, these jobs are often highly sought after by vulnerable populations (such as undocumented immigrants). Unlike migrant farmwork, for instance, which is seasonal and temporary, slaughterhouse work is year-round and can provide more consistent and stable employment. For this reason, there are always new employees waiting to take the place of those who leave voluntarily or are fired. Political scientist and ethnographer Timothy Pachirat, in *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011), details how this knowledge (that there is always someone to take an open position) helps to discourage employees from lodging complaints about dangerous working conditions or labor violations for fear that it will mean losing their jobs.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF A SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Pachirat's (2011) ethnographic study of slaughterhouse labor meticulously details the ways in which the slaughterhouse can illuminate how violent processes are out of view and how society's vulnerable bodies are relegated to doing violent, exploitative work. This politics of sight, as he calls it, enables society at large to shift the responsibility for violent practices to a subset of the population. In addition, the structure and segmentation of the slaughterhouse enables this shifting of responsibility for the violence onto the person whose job it is to do the actual killing. An undercurrent in this work is the psychological disconnection and numbing that has to occur

in order to forget how society is implicated in routine forms of violence, such as the many layers of violence occurring in the slaughterhouse against both workers and animals.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Pachirat's work, though, is the extent to which he documents the sheer boredom experienced doing repetitive industrial slaughterhouse work. As a liver hanger, for instance, he spends eight hours a day moving livers from a conveyor belt of hooks to hooks on a cart. The repetitive motion, the monotony of the task repeated over and over, and the cold from working in a cooler all contribute to numbing him to what is going on around him. This level of monotony is its own kind of violence and a striking dimension of slaughterhouse labor not often documented in such rich detail.

VIOLENCE WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

There are many examples of cruelty to animals within the slaughterhouse, and US American author and critic of slaughter practices Gail Eisnitz, in her book *Slaughterhouse* ([1997] 2007), documents testimonies from workers and former workers who treated animals with cruelty. One story, for instance, was told by a man who was so frustrated by his circumstances that he cut off the snout of a living pig with a knife and then rubbed salt in the wound. While these instances of cruelty do not happen all the time in slaughterhouses, they happen regularly enough to be noteworthy in discussing the complex effects of violent slaughterhouse work.

The violence enacted during slaughter can also lead to violence outside the walls of the slaughterhouse. Eisnitz details the dangerous and exploitative working conditions for human laborers in the slaughterhouse in an important effort to not villainize those who work in these facilities. Instead, her work shows that workers, too, are caught up in a violent system of both enacting and being on the receiving end of violence. Eisnitz's interviews with workers also revealed the ways in which the psychological outcomes of slaughterhouse labor can translate into violence against other humans. One way this occurs, for instance, is through the frequently gendered dimension of domestic violence.

Of course, not all slaughterhouse workers become violent inside the home, nor are all slaughterhouse workers involved in the act of killing. As Pachirat's (2011) ethnography of slaughterhouse labor illustrates, the tasks in the slaughterhouse are highly segmented, and most of the workers do not see the live animal or enact violence on the living animal body. Pachirat documents, for instance, the way that many slaughterhouse workers view the job of "the knocker" (the person responsible for rendering the animal unconscious) as the single position responsible for the act of killing (even though the death of the animal actually happens farther down the line). And Pachirat's coworkers expressed that doing the job of the knocker would cause psychological damage and was to be avoided at all costs.

Further research is needed on the psychological and emotional impacts of slaughterhouse labor. What is known is that the systematized and routine nature of doing the work of killing has an effect on the human psyche and that this can translate to violence against other humans. More extensive work could be done on the lasting psychological trauma of slaughterhouse labor and the extent and nature of violence outside the slaughterhouse, with this information possibly leading to new views on interspecies social relations.

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FISH AND OTHER SEA CREATURES

A feminist attention to different forms of embodiment and ways of being in the world also leads to a consideration of species difference. Species difference and how humans view certain species—particularly what humans perceive to be animals’ intellectual and emotional capacities, along with their capacity to feel pain—play an important role in how animals are treated during slaughter. For a long time, for instance, it was believed that fish and many other marine creatures do not feel pain, reinforcing the idea that the welfare of fish killed for food was not an issue with which humans needed to concern themselves. Of course, now there is a growing body of compelling research—such as fisheries and biology professor Victoria Braithwaite’s *Do Fish Feel Pain?* (2010)—revealing that fish and other marine creatures have the capacity to feel pain and should be included in questions of ethical consideration and welfare.

Indeed, the persistent notion that fish and marine creatures are categorically different from humans and other mammals, along with the incorrect belief that they do not experience pain in any significant way, has justified the widespread exploitation and lack of consideration of their welfare that dictates their lives and deaths. Fish, for instance, are not actually slaughtered; instead, the majority of fish die long, drawn-out deaths through suffocating on the decks of boats, being crushed or torn apart in nets, or, in the case of some large fish, being bled to death from gaffing (a practice where they are stabbed in the face, side, or back with a large hook on a pole used to pull them out of the water). Ethical concerns about the ways in which humans kill and eat sea creatures are illustrated in detail in US American writer and English professor David Foster Wallace’s (1962–2008) essay “Consider the Lobster” (2004), which offers an astute reflection on the way lobsters are killed, how they experience death, and how humans’ (mis)understandings of their embodied experience drive these experiences.

The language used to talk about fish, too, reinforces a lack of consideration for their welfare. For instance, global fishing numbers are measured in tons of fish, not in individual lives. Quantifying fish killed by weight adds a layer of abstraction to global fishing practices, making it more difficult to remember that so many individual animals are being killed in significantly inhumane ways to produce “seafood.” Furthermore, even the word *fish* abstracts from individual animals by using the singular as plural. The term *fishes*—though grammatically incorrect—draws attention to the multiple lives and experiences of marine creatures.

Global fishing practices are decimating the world’s oceans and marine ecosystems. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ *Review of the State of World Marine Fishery Resources* (2011), 87.3 percent of global fish populations were either fully exploited or overexploited as of 2009. Documentaries such as *The End of the Line* (2009) and the Public Broadcasting Service’s (PBS) *Empty Oceans, Empty Nets* (2002) investigate the global marine fisheries crisis and plummeting marine life populations. The extraordinary proportion of other sea creatures killed as “bycatch” in the global fishing industry is another major concern and has been outlined as a major sustainability issue in works such as Foer’s *Eating Animals* (2009). Additionally, industrial fishing practices such as trawling destroy marine ecosystems, especially the ocean floor, as the nets tear across the fragile seabed, uprooting the creatures and vegetation of the deep sea. One response to the global fisheries crisis has been the development of aquaculture (fish farming) as a way to meet the global demands for fish-based foods. But these aquaculture efforts have significant environmental effects and have generated concern for public health and disease from concentrated populations of fish, as is discussed in such documentaries as PBS’s *Farming the Seas* (2004).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The increasing industrialization of slaughter, paired with the industrialization of raising animals for food, has had significant environmental effects around the world in more ways than just the depletion of ocean ecosystems through overfishing. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, titled *Livestock's Long Shadow* (Steinfeld et al. 2006), details the environmental destruction wrought by global animal agriculture, stating that animal agriculture is the leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (above even global transportation). In addition to high concentrations of greenhouse gases, animal agriculture also creates significant water quality issues, contaminating streams, lakes, and other waterways and creating ocean dead zones from runoff. Soil and air pollution is also a significant problem, transforming natural ecosystems and affecting populations of wildlife in lasting ways.

These environmental impacts are felt not only by ecosystems and wildlife but also by surrounding human communities as well. The environmental justice movement—informed by antiracist, feminist, and anti-oppressive theory and praxis more generally—attends to the environmental racism related to the slaughter and animal agriculture industries. Concentrated animal feeding operations and slaughterhouses are disproportionately located in communities of color and communities with high concentrations of poverty. North Carolina's hog farming industry, for instance, has received much attention for the severely negative health outcomes experienced by the surrounding communities—including groundwater contamination threatening safe drinking water and air pollution causing severe respiratory problems and other health issues (Wing, Cole, and Grant 2000).

RENDERING

Rendering is advertised as a process that recycles and reuses waste and refuse from the slaughter industry, rendering it down into other usable components: for instance, tallow for soap or bonemeal for fertilizer or animal feed. Because of the scale and breadth of industrial slaughter, rendering is an absolutely essential industry. Indeed, without rendering the world would quickly be overrun with bodily remains (all the parts of animal bodies that are not suitable for consumption) from slaughterhouses. In her book *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009), Canadian cultural studies and English professor Nicole Shukin documents the details of rendering and the extraction of capital from animal bodies, providing an important contribution to the feminist literature on the subject. But rendering also aids in the concealment of the broader impacts of slaughter practices and the resulting waste.

Summary

Industrial slaughter practices are relevant to feminist scholarship for a number of reasons. Practices of slaughter reveal uneven hierarchies of power and exploitation that are borne out in human violence against animals in the slaughterhouse and in the way animals are bred, raised, and commodified in their lives leading up to slaughter. This is visible in the gendered use of their bodies for commodity production—in the case of milk, semen, and eggs. And it is also the case in how these bodies are transformed into meat—at what age, in what condition, what kind of meat, and in what ways they die. Lax legal frameworks enable this gendered appropriation of the animal body leading up to, and during, slaughter.

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Slaughterhouse labor is also gendered, as the work is predominantly performed by men, and labor in these spaces reveals uneven hierarchies of exploiting people of color and the economically marginalized in these dangerous workplaces. Thus, industrial slaughter is also a highly racialized process, disproportionately employing members of communities of color in the work of slaughter and degrading the environment surrounding the slaughterhouse (places that are predominantly where low-income people live, in communities of color). Slaughterhouse work is hard on the body and mind, and the lasting physical and psychological consequences of this kind of labor are wrought on the laborers' bodies, through psychological and emotional trauma, and sometimes—in the way the violence in the slaughterhouse travels beyond—into the home, such as in the form of domestic violence. Industrial slaughter prompts feminist concerns about power, inequality, and violence, particularly in the way the violence of slaughter plays out on the bodies of humans and animals, as well as in the effects on surrounding environmental ecosystems.

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