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"The weak are meat, and the strong do eat"; Representations of the Slaughterhouse in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature

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“The weak are meat, and the strong do eat”: Representations of the Slaughterhouse in Twentieth
and Twenty-First Century Literature

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how literary representations of the slaughterhouse predict the trajectory of human greed that is fueled by capitalist economic practices that shape environmental policies. I argue that literature brings attention to what is generally hidden from public view: the way humans and animals are erased in the production of food, which includes the inhumane treatment of humans and other animals in the slaughterhouse. The literature in this dissertation provides an avenue through which we can investigate the entangled oppression of humans and other animals in an effort to challenge perceptions that reduce animals, and marginalized humans, to objects. Thus, my dissertation contributes to a growing scholarship that contests the dichotomous relationship between humans and nonhumans in order to expose the culture of violence often ignored in the production and consumption of meat processed in industrial slaughterhouses.

The strained relationship between humans and nonhumans in meat production is explored in this dissertation by tracking literary representations of slaughterhouses in four novels: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004). The novels invite readers into the slaughterhouse by way of four different literary genres: historical fiction, proletarian fiction, speculative fiction, and dystopian fiction. I trace the industry's development and impact as represented in these narratives by categorizing the slaughterhouse in three ways: as a physical place of violence, a psychological space of suffering, and as metaphor. Each novel

contributes to part of a larger narrative that traces the advancement of industrialized slaughter production to its grossest manifestation.

Examining the novels in the order in which they were published reveals a bleak trajectory of the industrial food complex. The development of industrial slaughterhouse production represented in Sinclair's and Olsen's novels in the early twentieth century sets the stage for various possibilities of advanced types of slaughter put forth by Atwood and Mitchell. Through the use of slaughterhouse imagery, these novels unveil the ways in which humans and other animals are reduced to capital. This exploration shows the detrimental effects that slaughter production has on the global ecosystem.

PREFACE

In spring of 2015, I read Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974) for the first time in a graduate course on twentieth century American Literature. Olsen's section on industrial slaughterhouses and the representations of abuse taking place there led me to reflect on the many ways certain humans and animals suffer at the hands of capitalist-driven industries. While reading the novel, I thought back to the time I volunteered for a Chimpanzee sanctuary in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Save the Chimps (STC), a non-profit organization established by primatologist Dr. Carole Noon, is the largest sanctuary in the world dedicated to providing a permanent home for chimpanzees rescued from laboratory research, the entertainment industry, and the pet trade. The sanctuary provides daily care to over 240 chimps on 12 islands made up of 150 acres ("Savethechimps.org"). I spent three years assisting the sanctuary with food prep, chimp play, educational outreach, and donor events. It was a blistering hot summer afternoon on the day I met Clay, the STC's "special needs" chimpanzee. This interaction was supervised and Clay and I were separated by a thick metal grated fence that connected the inside building to his outside play-yard. I quietly shuffled over to the fence and said hello to this playful looking chimp.

It is now a well-known fact that humans share about 99% of our DNA with chimps, making them our closest living relatives ("Savethechimps.org"). This fact contributed to the horror I felt upon learning about Clay's history. At only 10 hours old, he was separated from his mother, shipped to a research laboratory and, for 12 years, subjected to invasive biomedical experiments. According to his biography, he was "forced to endure frequent anesthesia with

ketamine, blood draws, liver biopsies, and injections with mysterious ‘test materials.’ In one instance, he had a “lymph node surgically removed” (“Clay: My History”). Clay was also injected with chemicals for studies that tested the “toxic effects of ibuprofen, theophylline (anti-asthma), and lovastatin (cholesterol-lowering), even though all of these drugs were already approved for use in humans before experiments begun” (“Clay: My History”). Clay spent many years in isolation and STC found him living in “solitary confinement in a small dark cell in Building 300, known as ‘the dungeon’” (“Clay: My History”). Because of abuses he endured, staff has had trouble integrating him with other rescued chimps. Surprisingly, though, he loves human interaction—something hard to believe after what he was put through by the hands of his human researchers.

Once in Clay’s building, I was hesitant to make any sudden movements lest I scare him off. Patiently, I stood in front of him and noticed his eyes gravitate towards my sneakers; the shoes were pink and grey with neon green laces. Clay was mesmerized. He carefully stepped closer to the fence, all while never lifting his eyes from my shoes. The supervisor told me that one of his favorite activities was to play chase, so I proceeded to slowly jog from one side of the fence to the next. Clay caught on quickly and in no time, took the lead. We were running from one end of his space to the other, moving faster with each lap. His excitement grew; we tired each other out after 20 minutes of continuous running. It was the first time I made a connection with an animal who was not a domesticated pet (i.e. a dog or cat). This enriching interaction along with other responsibilities I had as a volunteer at STC shaped my understanding of human-animal relations. Clay and others like him have unique personalities; Chimps experience joy, pain, and loss. They also develop meaningful relationships with those around them. Relationships I fostered with human staff and chimp residents changed my life and altered the

direction of my research, especially after meeting Clay. Volunteering at STC was also the first time I put my animal advocacy into action. Before, I merely searched for ways to advocate for nonhuman animals without knowing how or what I could do to make a difference; my presence at this place made me feel like I was a part of something bigger. Interacting with Clay, this unique individual, altered not only the direction of my research, but also my experiences with other species.

The sanctuary's mission and organizational values also drew me in, especially the first three:

1. Save the Chimps provides safety, privacy, lifetime care, freedom from exploitation, and the best captive care possible to the chimpanzees who live at the Sanctuary. The cornerstone of Save the Chimps' philosophy is that chimpanzees experience emotions such as: joy, grief, anger, sorrow, pleasure, boredom, and depression.
2. Chimpanzees are persons, not commodities, and Save the Chimps will not buy, sell, trade, loan, or conduct any commercial commerce of chimpanzees.
3. Each individual chimpanzee has equal value. ("Savethechimps.org")

According to the key statements above, a chimpanzee is granted personhood. They are recognized as sentient beings who have unique experiences and therefore deserve protection and dignity. Chimpanzees are not commodities, but individuals who have the right to live in peace and safeguarded against unnecessary torture. After interacting with Clay and others, I knew without a doubt this was true.

Six years later, my volunteer experience led me to think about other places where animals were neglected, abused, and misused by industry, particularly the slaughterhouse. The research facility and slaughterhouse have a lot in common. Both view animals as commodities for the sole purpose of human use. While chimpanzees are mostly protected in the United States because of

their endangered status, livestock, i.e. cows, chicken, turkeys, and pigs, are not. The most obvious commonality between the research facility and the slaughterhouse is the invisibility of production. It is difficult to figure out if an animal was used in the making of a product, whether a product is used for medicinal purposes or is hygiene related, unless specifically stated on the packaging. The same goes for meat we purchase. Meat is a term commonly identified as animal protein, but the connection between meat and the animal is lost because of the invisibility of production processes that transform the animal into meat.¹ Slaughterhouses, like research facilities, restrict public access, so most animal cruelty in these places go unnoticed and the lack of public knowledge about these places motivated me to research for this dissertation project. When I started grad school in 2009, I noticed certain literary works exposing these dark places. I write about animal suffering in an effort to draw attention to the ways animals suffer, much like human animals, and the consequences of ignoring it.

After meeting Clay, I knew that humans and animals were more alike than many generally acknowledge, especially in a capitalist system that abuses humans and animals in a variety of ways simply to profit off their bodies. In this endeavor, I join other scholars/activists who devote scholarship and work hands-on to educate others about the human-animal condition and the negative impact capitalism has on other species. The goal of the dissertation is to educate and encourage others to fight for animals like Clay to protect their right to live in peace, instead of the torments to which they are subjected. Clay and the other 240 chimps were fortunate to have been rescued and placed into a forever home. Others, unfortunately, are still out there and

¹ The term, meat, is also used in reference to plant-based products: think coconuts, nuts, and other “meat” alternatives, although the animal meat producing industries are currently trying to fight for exclusive rights to the term. See Sara Wyant’s article in *AgWeek Magazine*, “The battle to define ‘real’ meat food products”, Sarah Zhang’s, “The Farcical Battle Over What to Call Lab-Grown Meat” in *The Atlantic*, and “Missouri has a new law defining ‘meat’” by Jan Dutkiew from *The Washington Post* among others.

may never live to experience liberation from exploitation without meaningful intervention. This dissertation contributes to the animal advocacy movement by bringing awareness and education to the general public about the suffering of other animals.

INTRODUCTION

We are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them.

--Elizabeth Costello, *The Lives of Animals*

Industrial slaughterhouses are places filled with unimaginable suffering. They are spaces of absolute misery for animals, animals who are created for the sole purpose of being murdered, repurposed, and eaten. Being one of the largest and most pervasive industries in the world, large-scale meat production leaves a vast environmental footprint. It contributes to global warming, land consumption, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. The industry also negatively impacts the lives of slaughterhouse workers, animals bred for slaughter, and consumers. In fact, the contemporary animal industrial complex is the leading cause of a variety of health and sanitation violations. Consumer protection agencies provide access to important information regarding serious contamination issues, but it is ultimately up to the public to take a vested interest in what (or *who*) we are eating and why, because our lives literally depend on it.

Killing billions of animals each year for profit is an ethical and moral issue we can no longer ignore because environmental risks are too great. The meat industry has evolved over the last 100 years since Upton Sinclair's damning report in the early twentieth century with the publication of *The Jungle* (1906), but the slaughterhouse is no less a place of horror now than it was when he was writing about it. Sinclair's novel sparked outrage at the time, but the general public's reluctance to fully address the immense suffering that still goes on behind slaughterhouse doors normalizes the industry's abuses on humans and nonhumans. This, in turn,

allows the industry to capitalize on our complacency by inventing new and insidious ways to profit off human and nonhuman bodies without so much as a complaint from us. The ambivalence towards animals bred for slaughter prompted my investigation into literary works that specifically drew attention to slaughterhouses, slaughterhouse imagery, and animal violence in an effort to combat dominant cultural narratives that continue to rationalize the use and abuse of animals in the meat industry.

Strained relationships between humans and nonhumans in meat production is explored in this dissertation by tracking literary representations of slaughterhouses in four novels: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004). The novels invite readers into the slaughterhouse by way of four different literary genres: historical fiction, proletarian fiction, speculative fiction, and dystopian fiction. These particular works allow me to track what I recognize as the (de)evolution of industrialized slaughter revealing its possible trajectory. In order to trace the industry's development and impact as represented in these narratives, I categorize the slaughterhouse in three ways: as a physical place of violence, a psychological space of suffering, and as metaphor. Each novel contributes to part of a larger narrative that traces the advancement of industrialized slaughter production to its grossest manifestation.

In *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, cultural historian Paula Young Lee calls for scholars to provide further insight into how literary "and other forms of artistic representation shape public perception of the slaughterhouse's actual operations" (241). Continuing the work of Young Lee, I explore how literary representations of the slaughterhouse predict the trajectory of human greed that is fueled by capitalist economic practices that shape

environmental policies. Therefore, I argue that literature brings attention to what is generally hidden from public view: the way humans and other animals are erased in the production of food, which includes the inhumane treatment of humans and animals in the slaughterhouse. The literature in this dissertation provides an avenue through which we can investigate the entangled oppression of humans and other animals in an effort to challenge perceptions that reduce animals, and marginalized humans, to objects. My dissertation contributes to a growing body of scholarship that contests the dichotomous relationship between humans and other animals in order to expose the culture of violence often ignored in the production and consumption of meat processed in industrial slaughterhouses.

The study of human and animal relationships are explored in multiple disciplines across various fields of study. This dissertation not only focuses on the ways in which literature plays a role in exposing the unethical mass production practices of slaughterhouses but also comments on the ideological shift in human-animal relations. This relationship is a historically contentious one, especially in the agricultural practices of the Global North. Modern Western philosophies contributed to the development of Enlightenment thinking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries manufacturing a dichotomy that still exists between humans and nonhumans. This dichotomy prevents humans from having meaningful and caring relationships with certain animals, a divide that scholars, activists, and animal advocates continue to fight against. In his article “Human-Animal Relationships: Where We Are And Where We Are Going,” Marc Bekoff, ecologist and evolutionary biologist, claims that “appreciating and respecting other animals doesn’t lessen us...it might mean we can’t continue to mistreat them in the numerous ways we now do. We must use what we know about other animals on their behalf, to make their lives the very best they can be and to help them to live in peace and safety. We suffer the

indignities to which we subject other animals” (Bekoff). We need to engage in a mutual respect for nonhuman animals and in order to do so, an ideological shift in consciousness is necessary because how we perceive nonhuman animals rationalizes Western capitalist practices that needlessly torture both species for profit.

One way to recognize the interlocking oppression between humans and others animals is to point to the institutions that target marginalized communities of both species. In his novella, *The Lives of Animals* (1999), J.M. Coetzee uses fiction to produce two powerful lectures on animal rights and the relationship between humans and other animals. Through his fictional heroine, Elizabeth Costello, he unabashedly discusses the human-animal condition, moral vegetarianism, and pushes the limits regarding human understandings of animal suffering, all complex issues that provoke strong responses from scholars, activists, and the general public. What is most provocative about this particular book is that Coetzee craftily removes himself from the book’s controversial arguments invoking an ambiguity about the extent to which these views are his own. Instead, it is Costello who urges that those who “pioneered the industrialization of animal lives and the commodification of animal flesh should be at the forefront of trying to atone for it” (61).

Through Costello’s lectures on animals, Coetzee’s novella shows us how fiction has the power to disturb and evoke strong emotions illuminating how narrative can encapsulate *being* through language (i.e., a way to engage with experiences, knowledges, and states of being different from our own) to move us towards an ethic of compassion. Costello says it best: “...I urge you to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language; and if the poets do not move you, I urge you to walk, flank to flank, beside the beast that is prodded down the chute to his executioner” (65). Through language (or direct experience), it is possible to imagine

circumstances that push us to rethink our position in the world and, in the context of Costello's argument, re-configure the complex and often violent relationships we have with humans and other species. These violent relationships are socially, culturally, and historically entangled and Coetzee's attention to this connection in *The Lives of Animals* lays the groundwork for a deeper understanding into the institutionalization of species violence, the issue on which this dissertation focuses.

Violent relationships we have with other species are, in part, motivated by deeply held beliefs rooted in Enlightenment era philosophies. Cartesian dualism, a concept that seeks to separate subject from object (i.e., divides human reason from the material world) sets humans apart and outside of nature. To Descartes, animals are no different than machines because they cannot "think" in the human sense of the word. Hence, they lack the kind of awareness granted to humans, and so cannot possibly possess a "soul." Since humans have the capacity to reason, they are unlike other animals who, from a human perspective, are not equipped to consciously make sense of the world around them (Coetzee 61). This ideological understanding of species promotes the idea that humans are somehow separate from the rest of the animal kingdom. Humans are also animals, a truth that is hidden behind a powerful ideological divide, a division that rationalizes the exploitation and oppression of humans and nonhuman animals. This ideological division sets the foundation for a hierarchical structuring of all matter and life in modern society.

The Cartesian divide also promotes a hierarchical understanding of human worth that justifies abuses on other humans who are considered less than. To prove this point, Costello chastises the meat industry and is not ashamed to compare the worst atrocities of humankind with it. She draws on recent history to highlight the ways that humans and other animals have

been subjected to unconscionable acts of violence by comparing the treatment of Jews in Nazi concentration camps to the treatment of animals in slaughterhouses. Costello points to similarities in the language used to describe these atrocities: “They went like sheep to the slaughter,” “they died like animals,” “the Nazi butchers killed them” (20). She notes, “the denunciation of the camps reverberates so fully with the language of the stockyard and slaughterhouse that it is barely necessary for me to prepare the ground for the comparison I am about to make. The crime of the Third Reich, says the voice of accusation, was to treat people like animals” (20). The connection Costello makes here poignantly illustrates the way human lives are violated, degraded, grossly undervalued, and exterminated, ultimately “animalized.” The term, animalization, is used to target certain human populations, a way to lessen their individuality and human-ness. The term also furthers the objectification of nonhuman animals. To say that a human being is like an “animal” means that these persons (nonhumans included) are not worthy of respect, dignity or rights. The animalization of human bodies by powerful elite groups has justified past genocides of entire populations.

Costello argues that the horrors of the death camps are that the “killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victim...In other words, they closed their hearts...there are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it” (35). This ambivalence crosses over to current institutionalized methods of confinement, experimentation, and murder that continue to exist: “I return one last time to the places of death around us, the places of slaughter to which, in a huge communal effort, we close our hearts. Each day a fresh holocaust, yet, as far as I can see, our moral being is untouched. We do not feel tainted. We can do anything, it seems, and come away

clean” (35). Instead of asking what we have in common with other animals, whether animals are self-aware, can reason, or possess a soul, we should think ourselves into the place of others.

Capitalist practices that benefit from ideological hierarchies justify human on human violence and human on nonhuman violence, a connection Costello makes by linking the Holocaust to industrial farming. This philosophical dichotomy that still exists today contributes to current government policies that keep capitalist economic principles in place and continues to give free rein to corporations that mass produce food at the expense of humans, nonhumans, and the environment.

Sociologist David Nibert also engages with the connection between human and nonhuman violence in his book, *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*. In this exploration, Nibert draws comparisons between human enslavement and animal captivity linking them to capitalist endeavors. He states: “over the past ten thousand years, human lives and those of other animals have been shaped indelibly and tragically by the priorities and interests of elite groups in their societies” (2). The West’s imperialist exploits, including “invasion, conquest, extermination, displacement, repression, coerced and enslaved servitude, gender subordination and sexual exploitation, and hunger” show how the subjugation, of both humans and other animals, “is entangled with and motivated by the desire for material gain” (5). In these cases, the divide that separates humans and nonhumans becomes less defined. Once entangled oppressions between certain human populations and other animals are exposed, the divide disintegrates revealing how marginalized human communities and animal populations are terrorized in similar ways, especially in the capitalist era of mass production, troubling the social conditioning that defines “humans” from “other” animals.

Reformation of the Slaughterhouse: A Brief History

Economic and political motivations behind industrializing meat production is to drastically increase profit at the expense of those who labor. The mechanization of slaughter production is one of the main causes of our eroding relationships with other animals. Large-scale production facilities continue to endanger animal populations because modern Western societies continue to consume meat products at alarming rates.² Violence in these spaces goes on, for the most part, uninterrupted. In contemplating this transition and what it means for the global community, scholars and activists hope to educate the public on the deflection of moral concerns for human and nonhuman bodies, something that is often absent from society's view. On animal bodies, the absence is the separation of the live animal from the packaged meat sold in the supermarket. On human bodies, the absence is in the labor and deplorable working conditions of places of employment. The slaughterhouse, then, is an invisible place where workers produce meat. What happens behind closed doors is absent and often ignored by contemporary society, something Upton Sinclair brings to light in *The Jungle*: "Now and then a visitor wept to be sure; but this slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory" (41). By exposing the absence of pain and production, doors open to what is typically unseen. Literary representations, visual illustrations, memoirs, documentaries, and first-hand accounts, bring the slaughterhouse into view as it draws connections between politics, economics, culture, nature, the entangled oppression of human and animals, and, as witnessed with the publication of *The Jungle*, promotes change on a national scale.

² For meat consumption per capita refer to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) <https://data.oecd.org/agroutput/meat-consumption.htm>

The industrialization of meat production during the twentieth century in the West redefined human attitudes towards animals since, historically, meat production was (and still is) a profit-making business. The transition from agrarian to industrial systems of slaughter was accompanied by increased urbanization, technological developments, and concern about public hygiene. In order to meet demand, local butcherries sped up the slaughter process and without regulation, this process led to mistakes and cross-contamination (52). Illness and lack of food were the motivation for figuring out a safer way to slaughter animals at a faster pace (Fitzgerald, Young Lee).

Before large-scale reform in the nineteenth century, the slaughtering of animals was done in public view, unregulated, and in a haphazard fashion. Local butcherries were scattered around cities where humans and animals mingled in the same space causing all kinds of unsanitary crises. The sounds of cattle and pigs being slaughtered, blood dripping and making its way through the gutters of the streets, and the stench proved unbearable leading to public outcry and the eventual reconfiguration of where and how butcherries were placed in cities. Before technologies such as refrigeration and the construction of the supermarket, the invention of the modern slaughterhouse was taking place in cities around the world, and most notably, France, being at the forefront of this innovation (Paula Young Lee, Sydney Watts, Kyri Claflin).

Similar to other large money-making markets, slaughterhouse design, placement, and production were at the center of regulation discussions (Young Lee 12). The regulation of animal slaughter in France became a political power struggle between local butchers' guilds and governments, meaning, whoever controlled meat production and distribution had the power to monopolize the market. This monopolization generated high profits under the guise of "regulation" placating citizen complaints of unsanitary meat-killing practices. One of the

regulations forced centralized slaughterhouses to the outskirts of the city (27). This move marked the beginning of the change in the public's relationship with their food and set the stage for other countries to follow suit.

Since health and sanitation issues were of immediate concern for local governments, the motivation for eliminating private slaughter was to “impose a careful system of regulation for the ‘morally dangerous’ task of putting animals to death” (60). This removed concern for animal welfare from the public's imagination since the slaughterhouse was located in remote areas out of public view. The public no longer witnessed first-hand how their food was being prepared. This removal grew into the separation of *animal* and *meat* that still exists today and as noted by sociologist Amy Fitzgerald, “this separation of the public from the slaughter of animals they consume developed into a hyperseparated state with the industrialization of animal slaughter” (60). In most parts of the Western world this meant that livestock animals were only conceived of as meat products prepared and sold to consumers, sliced and diced, in pre-packaged containers.

Animal slaughtering became the first mass-producing industry in the United States in the 1880s, from which “Henry Ford partially adapted his conception of assembly-line production” (Fitzgerald 61). Philip Danforth Armour, American meat-packing industrialist, invented the “disassembly line” which greatly increased the productivity and profit margin of industrial meat-packing businesses. Steady demand for meat rose and the United States was well on its way to fashioning the most highly mechanized slaughter operations of the twentieth century—most notably at Chicago's Union Stockyards. Industrialized slaughter, like that in the Chicago factory, reduced workers to unskilled laborers and animals to automatons; they were both reduced to the mechanical processes of the American assembly line. Assembly-line production has been

accompanied by increased concern about the physical and mental conditions of slaughterhouse workers along with controversy over the ethical and environmental implications of slaughtering animals for meat since production operations increased at a rapid, and oftentimes, dangerous pace.

The transition from small farm production to factory farming brought about many literal and metaphorical concerns. In “Factory Farms in a Consumer Society,” Chad Lavin notes that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century rang in the industrial age and with it the transformation of agriculture to agribusiness. He argues that what was once a local, community-driven business, turned into a more cost-efficient, mass producing machine with little to no ethical concern for production operations. The term, “factory farm,” “became an increasingly popular metaphor in American culture” that referred to industrialized slaughter (Lavin 71).

Agricultural engineers used the term to emphasize the “efficiency and predictability of large and wisely managed farms,” while critics used the term “to signal a threat to the more bucolic ‘family farm’ that evoked so many images of honest work, self-reliance, and national identity” (71). Scholars point out that while some focused on the specific concerns of industrial farming, others saw the metaphor of the term becoming “pregnant with concerns about individual autonomy and national integrity that far exceeded the specific concerns of industrial farming” (71). The concern, then, is not only for moral obligations to animals, but how society conducts business, the lack of compassion involved in this business, and ultimately, how human individuals are also oppressed by this business. The rise of the industrial slaughterhouse in the United States changed, forever, the way certain animals were handled and continue to affect human relationships with animals perceived as food.

Theoretical Framework

To identify the historical, cultural, and political impact of slaughterhouse development in the literature, I engage with the field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS), a multidisciplinary approach that grew out of the modern animal rights and advocacy movement. CAS was also influenced by other social justice movements like women's suffrage and the civil rights movement. As defined by pioneering figures in the field, Anthony J. Nocella II, John Sorenson, Kim Socha, and Atsuko Matsuoka, CAS is "rooted in critical theory, anarchism, ecopedagogy, and social justice; [it] argues for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary intersectional and multi-movement approach for a total liberation field of study, encouraging specialized departments, degrees, and programs" (xxii). I employ concepts from CAS to show how bodies are objectified, classified, racialized, and gendered in the industrial slaughterhouse to critique the socio-economic and environmental injustices that come to light out of its tumultuous history. In the past, literature has provoked political and social change when challenging Western³ cycles of violence in numerous ways and the novels I analyze in this dissertation contribute greatly to that trend.⁴

The idea that justice and equitable treatment should be extended to other beings, apart from humans, is acknowledged and promoted by CAS, as it "sees the intersectionality of oppression and suggests that speciesism—the oppression of animals—constitutes a basic form of

³ In the context of this project, the West refers to The United States, Canada, and Western Europe. I also refer to the Global North which is a term that identifies developed nations of the West as well. These terms are used throughout my study for the purposes of identifying the key players in the rise of and demand for industrial slaughterhouses.

⁴ Other novels that have influenced public policy: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is believed to have furthered the abolitionist cause in the north; *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* (1914) by Robert Tressell was a book based on worker exploitation by capitalists in England, which spurred social reform at the start of the last century; *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck focuses on the Great Depression highlighting the plight of poor families searching for work, a book that was banned and burned in a number of places including Kern County, California where the novel ends; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell, a book that reflects oppressive governments and the importance of freedom of thought and speech.

oppression that provides a structure for the oppression of other humans” (Sorenson xv). John Sorenson explores this and other animal rights issues in relation to broader concepts of social justice initiatives in his edited essay collection, *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable* (2014). Sorenson gives a comprehensive overview of the field’s aims in the introduction of this collection by exposing institutions perpetuating violence against animals. He devotes much of the introduction to condemning animal exploitation industries that are “important components of a hugely destructive system, killing not only billions of animals, but also contributing to environmental destruction and extinction of species as well as threatening human survival” (xiv). By recognizing animal abuse as a systemic problem that contributes to large-scale environmental destruction, we realize harming the lives of other species is a threat not only to animals, but also to humans.

Sorenson explains that using animals in this way is “linked to matters of the most urgent concern, not just for those we victimize but also for ourselves, since the animal exploitation industries are major factors in a global environmental crisis that is pushing many species toward extinction and creating dangers for human survival, especially for the world’s poorest people” (xi). The slaughterhouse industry relies on the world’s most vulnerable populations to perform the dangerous, and at times, deadly work involved in animal slaughter and it is important to acknowledge that the industry’s largest facilities are, for the most part, located in areas where disenfranchised populations are targeted (Fitzgerald 25). CAS recognizes the intersectional oppression that exists between humans and other animals and I implement this intersectional approach to identify connections between humans, animals, and the slaughterhouse. Paying particular attention to the rise of the industrial slaughterhouse of the early twentieth century, I propose that although many literary texts reveal exploitive practices of animal slaughter in order

to explain the devaluation of human beings, this devaluation merely perpetuates the nature/culture divide. The growing trend in CAS, however, calls attention to the ways in which scholars work toward exposing *both* human and nonhuman exploitation in ways that have the potential to simultaneously liberate both species.

The field's scholars are also weary of any theoretical inquiry that does not directly engage with "real-world theory and praxis" to challenge exploitive industries that subjugate and torture nonhuman animals (xxiv). The field of CAS particularly developed to challenge two fields of theory: Animal Studies (AS) "rooted in vivisection and animal testing in the hard sciences" and Human-Animal Studies in the social sciences and humanities (HAS), which "reinforces the socially constituted human-animal binary through which detached scholars look at animals as objects without agency that exist to be theoretically studied and examined" (xxiii). Although not all AS and HAS scholars agree with this assessment, CAS activists and scholars argue that these other fields do not explicitly challenge exploitive systems in an effort to abolish animal exploitation. Instead, CAS scholars suggest that being critical means using criticism to "enact change as activists, advocates, radicals, and street-level scholars, [in other words] to be critical in the pedestrian sense of criticizing—calling out—tyrannical norms" (xxv).

Acknowledging that there is a shared oppression between humans and other animals strengthens the position of animal rights activists who want to do more than "liberate" animals from harmful industries, but instead adopts the idea that "animals have their own inherent value, that they do not exist as mere objects to be used as we desire, and that their own interests must be given careful consideration" (Sorenson xiv). According to Nocella II, Sorenson, Socha, and Matsuoka, this position is often ridiculed and undermined by other social justice organizations as they do not consider fighting for animal rights a priority: there is this idea that one has to choose.

Either fight for human rights or for animals rights; there is no room to advocate for both simultaneously (xxi). The either/or mentality, argues Sorenson, stems from a “deep conviction of human exceptionalism and a lack of understanding of how the oppression of other animals and of human groups is entangled” (Sorenson xv). Sorenson calls for a “realignment and refocusing” of animal advocacy movements with the goal towards “trans-species social justice” (xiv). Without a global shift in consciousness, ideologies that reinforce the nature/culture divide will continue to exist, furthering the suffering of human and nonhuman animals.

Modern industrial societies contribute to the violence enacted on humans, other animals, and the environment. By exploring systemic oppression at the intersections of gender, race, class, and species, scholars within the field of ecofeminism, such as Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donovan, Karen David, and Marti Kheel, point out the ways that the environment and underprivileged humans are exploited by the hands of varying Western patriarchal power structures. In *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth* (2014), Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen define ecofeminism as “addressing the various ways that sexism, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism, and ableism are informed by and support speciesism and how analyzing the ways these forces intersect can produce less violent, more just practices” (1).

Chapter Summaries

The close readings of the novels that are included in the following four chapters embrace ideas from the field of CAS to address some of the most fundamental aspects of animal exploitation in the slaughterhouse, including how the treatment of animals reinforce the subjugation of undervalued populations. In turn, the nature/culture divide becomes destabilized. Perceptions of colonized bodies blur the lines between what defines “human” and how the

dehumanization of marginalized groups become the target of slaughter production. In the novels explored in this dissertation, slaughterhouse operations are scrutinized as the authors bring these practices into public view—a view Western society has worked hard for centuries trying to erase. Representations of the slaughterhouse highlight the development of industrialized meat production and its consequences as in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. This mechanized practice comes with a psychological and emotional price as suggested by Tillie Olsen in *Yonnondio*. Speculative and dystopian fictions, such as Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* and David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* contribute to the slaughter narrative as they express the publics’ growing anxiety over global industrialization and its consequences on humans, animals, and the environment.

Chapter One, “A Butchered Existence: HumAn/imal Labor in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*,” explores representations of the slaughterhouse at the turn of the century. Sinclair paints a disturbing picture of the inner-operations of Chicago’s meatpacking plant before federal regulations were put into place. As brought to attention by Sinclair, “one could not stand and watch [the slaughtering] very long without becoming philosophical, without beginning to deal in symbols and similes, and to hear the hog-squeal of the universe” (41). It is imperative, then, to dis-assemble the ways in which the slaughterhouse is likened to various private and social spaces as well as metaphorically situated in determining how society defines and re-defines individuals, human and nonhuman, that are part of capitalist mass-producing, exploitive systems. Suffering is also exposed in connection with human labor and exploitation in the novel. Therefore, I explore how Sinclair calls into question the ethical treatment of animals at the expense of human suffering. This chapter will forefront the representations of animal suffering that exist within the pages of the novel, but this suffering is never too far removed from human suffering and so I

show the interconnections of oppression between humans and nonhumans to situate the history of the industry's detrimental impact on the lives of the marginalized.

Chapter Two, "Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio: From the Thirties*: The Shared Suffering of Women and Other Animals," shows how women and animal bodies are exploited by the industrial slaughterhouse system. In the novel, gender oppression is exposed in the slaughterhouse as care is often neglected and ignored in this space. Unlike Sinclair's novel which focuses more on human suffering to forward a socialist message, Olsen links the suffering of women with animals that develops inside the home and the slaughterhouse, giving more attention to the psychological effects slaughter work has on the lives of her characters. Within the narrative's exploration of oppressive practices, small moments of resistance materialize out of a collective female voice that is born from these struggles.

The third chapter, "Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and the Human-Animal Hybrid: Genetic Modifications of the Slaughterhouse" combines the ramifications of industrial slaughter production with the onslaught of scientific discovery. Moving into the post-industrial age of slaughter, Sinclair's and Olsen's depictions of the industrial slaughterhouse are drastically altered in this future adaptation. In Atwood's novel, slaughterhouse production is revolutionized by the technological age of genetic manipulation; Atwood takes the animals out of the slaughterhouse and into the science lab. *Oryx and Crake*'s narrative offers a possible future where genetic engineering has gone too far. In this chapter, I investigate the conversation around genetically altered foods and the implications of scientific experimentation on animal bodies in Atwood's near future. The novel presents us with a post-apocalyptic future where the food industry produces hybrid animals, and where the relentless pursuit of science and technology override ethical and humanist concerns. This chapter incorporates the various views in which

present-day conflicts merge with speculative fiction.

The fourth chapter, “Human-Food Stuff: David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and the Dystopian Transformation of the Slaughterhouse,” explores how Mitchell’s novel uses slaughterhouse imagery to paint a disturbing picture of a dystopian world that uses human bodies as the main source of consumption. In Atwood’s novel, genetically altered animal and human bodies are needed to continue living the comfortable lifestyle to which society has become accustomed. *Cloud Atlas*, however, represents both bioengineering practices and earlier industrialized versions of production to create the ultimate slaughterhouse. In this space, scientists alter the genetic code of Asian women to produce clones, an enslaved labor force known as fabricants in the novel. The genres of science fiction and fantasy bring society’s greatest fears to the forefront: the point at which the manipulation of life has reached its breaking point. When this breaking point is reached, what happens to human existence? The novel’s thematic structure leads readers to reflect upon the human practices of the past which ultimately lead to a future where all aspects of the natural world are manipulated to satisfy the needs of the ruling classes. I argue that this worldview presents dire consequences for the environment and the human race.

By exploring these literary works, the unethical practices of slaughter production are exposed and the voices of the oppressed are heard. As Sinclair’s *The Jungle* made way for national change, literature like Olsen’s *Yonnondio*, Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, and Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* have the potential to upset mainstream culture to rethink global capitalist practices and promote change in how humans conduct themselves in relation to each other and the environment.

CHAPTER ONE:
A BUTCHERED EXISTENCE: HUMAN/IMAL LABOR IN UPTON SINCLAIR'S *THE*
JUNGLE

Animal Liberation is Human Liberation too
—Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*

Introduction

In the influential novel, *The Jungle* (1906), Sinclair represents Chicago's Stockyards as a place that manufactures deaths, a toxic environment, which literally and figuratively tears human and nonhuman lives apart. The slaughter machine "swooped upon him, and had seized him by the leg. Relentless remorseless, it was; all his protests, his screams, were nothing to it—it did its cruel will with him, as if his wishes, his feelings, had simply no existence at all; it cut his throat and watched him gasp out his life" (Sinclair 75). This passage paints a disturbing picture of the inner-operations of Chicago's meatpacking district before the passage of federal food safety regulations. Sinclair describes the processing of hogs, yet likens this to the tragedy of slaughterhouse workers and the fate of his protagonist showing how humans and animals are treated in this place, hence, human workers are treated in similar ways to farmed animals in these spaces. Readers are introduced to Lithuanian immigrant, Jurgis Rudkus, his wife, Ona, and their families as they head to America to attain the "American Dream." Although Jurgis strives to "work harder," a mantra he repeats to himself and his family throughout the novel, various social, political, and economic hardships under the early industrial capitalist system beat him into

submission. The only way out is to join the socialist movement and organize to overturn capitalism and its oppressive ways.

Numerous editions of Sinclair's novel include evocative artwork associated with the struggle between species, abuses that human workers and nonhuman animals are subjected to in the slaughterhouse. The See Sharp Press (2003) edition explicitly highlights this human and nonhuman boundary-crossing. Illustrated by Clifford Harper, the cover shows a male meatpacking worker handling a steer on the production line inside of a meatpacking plant. The black outline of worker and animal contrasts against the light blue background. Black shadowing of the individuals emphasizes the battle between human and animal. The center image attracts the viewer's eye where human and animal body merge in the act of strangulation. Boundary lines between worker and animal blur here; the worker's hands are around the steer's neck and at this intersection, the worker's arm and the steer's front hoof are one form. There is no expression on the worker's face, yet the animal's suffering is clearly visible as the drawing shows the steer's mouth agape and eyes wildly fixed on the meat hook in the foreground. The worker's face is hidden in shadow due to the ambiguity of the task, meaning it does not matter who is performing the slaughter, workers are anonymous. This anonymity is exemplified in the novel by Sinclair's description of the men: "All the year round they had been serving as cogs in the great packing-machine; and now was the time for the renovating of it, and the replacing of damaged parts" (115); no one worker is valued and everyone is replaceable in capitalist production. Ultimately, this image portrays the worker and animal in unison as they share the same fate under the roof of the slaughterhouse. This cover is an effective representation of the interlocking oppression and violence between species on the production line as well as the idea that the capitalist mode of production functions as a way to create dissonance between humans and other animals.

In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*, Philip Armstrong provides an overview of the human-animal relationship over a large span of time reviewing multiple genres of literature arguing that representations of animal abuse are more than just a human projection. Armstrong contends that “throughout his novel, Sinclair shows human workers suffering fates identical to those of the animals they process” and *The Jungle* “envisages the liberation of farmed animals as a proper dimension of social justice” (140). In an extension of Armstrong’s critique, this chapter investigates representations of the slaughterhouse in *The Jungle* by invoking the human-animal relationship to show how humans and other animals endure violence and unusual cruelty from the slaughter production line. These layered forms of violence cross boundaries between the human and nonhuman world, even if Sinclair, himself, did not intend for his work to focus on this connection. The chapter also situates the novel at the beginning of a larger trajectory about the (de)evolution of industrialized slaughter production and serves as political protest challenging the insidious abuses on laboring human and animal bodies under capitalism to engage in meaningful long-term economic and environmental changes.

This chapter relies on historical context, authorial intent, and close readings of slaughterhouse scenes to examine how the mechanization of the meat industry changed society’s perceptions of animals used for food. Using critical animal studies, including sociological, philosophical, feminist, and activist viewpoints, the basis for the contentious division between humans and animals can be better understood as a byproduct of mechanization. The close readings performed of *The Jungle* in this chapter show how slaughter production negatively impacts humans and calls into question the hierarchical structure that devalues certain humans, as well as animals, including the surrounding environment while exacerbating a capitalist system that exploits these same bodies for profit.

Historical Context: Transforming Slaughter Production in Chicago

The key moment when Americans embraced industrialized food coincided with the grand opening of Chicago's Union Stockyard and Transit Company on Christmas Day, 1865. The district, operated by a group of railroad companies that acquired land and turned it into a central hub for meat processing and transporting, played a significant role in the reformation of food production. Nineteenth century reformation called for sweeping changes to one of the largest economic institutions of the time: slaughterhouses. Shifting from agrarian to industrial food production occurred because of increased urbanization, technological advancements, and public hygiene concerns. Prior to this shift, animals were slaughtered in diverse places, such as residential backyards, but with growing sanitation concerns, slaughter production was eventually centralized and the Union Stockyards represented the ideal industry modernization in America. From the end of the Civil War through the 1920s, Chicago's meatpacking district was the largest in the United States. In many ways, Chicago's Stockyards symbolized a unique relationship humans had with their food and introduced Americans to a newly modern industrialized food economy (Pacyga x).

This new economy was all at once appalling and awe-inspiring. The immensity of the Stockyards, where cows, pigs, and horses walked toward their imminent deaths, was bewildering. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the Stockyards was one of the city's "world-famous wonders, visited by princes and maharajahs and almost every tourist" (Anderson). Instead of looked upon as a place where animals were brutally slaughtered, The Yards⁵ represented a place that, as historian Paula Young Lee points out, was "neither a fearful nor

⁵ A term locals used to signify the Union Stockyards and surrounding communities where slaughterhouse workers lived at the time.

horrific site of institutionalized violence. Instead, viewers encountered a pure spectacle of commerce, one that tamed (animal) nature through technological innovation” (238).

As interest grew in innovative slaughter production in the United States, the way humans viewed and interacted with certain animals forever changed. Historical archeologist Daniel Sayers notes that the ways humans “coerce, exploit, oppress, kill, torture, and impoverish one another...are very much meaningfully connected with our individual and systemic relations we have with beings from other species” (531). Dominant ideologies, particularly the Cartesian split, justify human control over nature preventing us from “concerning ourselves about the billions of violent and brutal acts we perform on beings from other species and the conditions we impose on them” (Sayers 534). Ideologies that justify violence against marginalized beings further alienate human workers from their labor, animals from their being, and production from consumption. In *The Jungle*, the work was “stupefying, brutalizing work; it left...no time to think, no strength for anything. [The worker] was part of the machine [he/she] tended” (168). This is due to the mechanized model letting workers only see a fraction rather than the whole slaughter process from start to finish. Through the commodification process under the capitalist mode of production, “space is divided, fragmented, and assigned market and exchange values” (Sayers 534). This is how the twentieth century slaughterhouse divided, fragmented, and labeled bodies that entered its doors. In slaughterhouse spaces, human and nonhuman animals are at the mercy of technological advancements that are tied to a profit-driven economic system rendering them powerless and invisible.

The Jungle was crucial in exposing abhorrent labor conditions under a capitalist system that supported the industrialization of food production in the early twentieth century. Generally known for his politically motivated works, Sinclair’s background as a journalist and muckraker

revealed the unsanitary working and living conditions of the poorest populations in the United States and wrote *The Jungle* in response to the failed “Packingtown” strike of 1904.⁶ He traveled to Chicago during the strike to write an exposé on workers in meatpacking plants and he lived among the wage slaves of the Beef Trust for seven weeks listening to the stories of wage laborers, immigrant and native-born workers. He wandered the Stockyards observing and urged doctors, nurses, lawyers, and local politicians to investigate current food and worker safety laws in the city (Arthur 67).

Most publishers were interested in Sinclair’s story, but rejected it due to the report’s graphic nature. Sinclair’s refusal to revise the text prompted rejections by more than five publishers, but the popular socialist magazine, *Appeal to Reason* serialized Sinclair’s findings in 1905 and Doubleday published *The Jungle* as a novel the following year. Sinclair convinced Doubleday to send its own lawyers to investigate the unsanitary conditions of Chicago’s Stockyards to prove his observations were authentic and once lawyers confirmed Sinclair’s discoveries, it was not long before President Theodore Roosevelt involved the federal government in passing the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906 and the Meat Inspection Act into law (Arthur 69). These laws still exist today and are currently known as the Drug and Food Administration. Current food inspection regulations are discussed in greater details in the Conclusion chapter of this dissertation in order to evaluate the progress or lack thereof in the meat production process. *The Jungle* remains culturally and politically relevant and Sinclair’s exposé ultimately sparked a conversation in the early twentieth century that continues today.

⁶ Muckraking was a term adopted by President Theodore Roosevelt to chastise writers who focused their work solely on negative aspects of society in order to promote social reform. Roosevelt denounced this style of journalism as “hysterical,” and “sensational” (Phelps, Introduction to *The Jungle* 10).

Inside *The Jungle*: Theoretical Engagements with the Human-Animal Relationship

During his time in Chicago, Sinclair investigates numerous hardships endured by the working class in packing town as they strive for an American ideal, a dream narrative that hard work generates hope, prosperity, and success in a capitalist system, something Jurgis Rudkis aspires to, but fails to reach. Orm Overland calls *The Jungle* an “immigrant Bildungsroman” as Jurgis fights for his place within a foreign land that rejects him (21). For example, after his wife’s death, Jurgis “saw the world of civilization then more plainly than ever he had seen it before; a world in which nothing counted but brutal might, an order devised by those who possessed it for the subjugation of those who did not...he had lost in the fierce battle of greed, and so was doomed to be exterminated” (Sinclair 255). Matthew Morris contemplates the plight of the immigrant worker as “immigrants’ customs have begun to erode in America” (56). This erosion, Morris argues, is a poisonous ideology stemming from capitalism’s creed, which is a “narrow understanding of self-interest, made ever narrower by the pressures of the free-market” (57). Similarly, Jon A. Yoder adds that *The Jungle* is a startling indictment of American greed and hypocrisy” (97). Yoder points to Sinclair’s exposure of the American Dream as a sham: the “elusive immigrant dream of coming to a new land and finding the promised peace and justice for all” (97). German, Irish, and later Eastern European ethnic groups mostly made up Chicago’s meatpacking workforce and while maintaining a sense of comradeship among their own communities, the pressures of conforming to capitalism left many in an ideological crisis (Halpern 12). In Chicago’s meatpacking district, those who owned the means of production engendered widespread inequity among those who labored. Under the mechanization model, relations between family and friends deteriorated due to economic and work-related stresses. The

constant speeding up of the machines left workers ragged, unable to keep up, and at risk of being replaced. Jurgis complains: “they had worn him out, with their speeding-up and their carelessness, and now they had thrown him away” (Sinclair 157).

The Jungle not only focuses on the dreadful existence of workers in the slaughterhouse, but also considers the broader natural environment, including toxic dumping, infectious disease, pollution, and the suffering of nonhuman animals at the mercy of industrial capitalism. Agnes Kneitz argues that *The Jungle* is an “early form of environmental protest” (59). J. Michael Duvall notes that “the novel instates a slaughterhouse machine penetrated by the operations of the body, becoming a monstrous ‘ailimentary’ machine that ingests its workers, extracts and assimilates their labor, and finally excretes their spent bodies” (31). Literal and metaphorical representations of the slaughterhouse in *The Jungle* exemplify the suffering of both human and animal bodies by highlighting the embedded nature of suffering rooted in a belief that the misery of one species is no different from the misery of another. According to Christopher Phelps, as a metaphor, “jungle” “denoted the ferocity of dog-eat-dog competition, the barbarity of exploitive work, the wilderness of urban life, the savagery of poverty, the crudity of political corruption, and the primitiveness of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, which led people to the slaughter as surely as cattle” (1).

Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin maintains that materiality is also a component of human suffering. Like the animals prepped for slaughter, “the living conditions of the workers of packing town are mercilessly dissected” (252). Living conditions were hardly better than livestock pens: rainwater would seep into the cracks of houses, water mingled with packing plant waste dumped into the rivers creating water that was green, toxic, and dangerous. Animal feces and human waste blended poisoning the environment for both animal and human. In this way,

The Jungle blurs the lines between private and industrial spaces, showing how slaughterhouse conditions define and re-define humans and nonhumans in early U.S. industrial society.

Ideas posited by David Nibert link the shared suffering between species, revealing the interlocking oppression created by capitalism. In *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*, Nibert suggests that animal oppression and exploitation are deeply woven into the fabric of American life. Long-held Western beliefs about the roles animals play in the advancement of human civilization erase the suffering of those animals. The natural extension of this is that human suffering is erased as long as it is in service of the advancement of civilization. While Sinclair did not intend to focus on the exploitation and suffering of animals, analyzing this suffering reveals ways to relate human suffering and systematic oppression of the poor and working classes to capitalist ideology. According to Nibert, the process of animal domestication (which he dubs “domeseccration”) within American history and culture has *enabled* wide-spread violence (i.e. using animals as instruments of war, as forced laborers, as rations or other resources), destruction, and zoonotic disease epidemics.

Domesticating animals also *promotes* harm through environmental destruction. This includes the expropriation of land and water necessary to maintain large-scale animal holding pens and killing factories, along with wealth accumulated from buying and selling animals for profit. Nibert argues that the capture and domestication of cows, sheep, pigs, horses, and other similarly large sociable animals for human use did not advance human civilization but instead “*undermined* the development of a just and peaceful world” (2). He further suggests that the “harms that humans have done to other animals—*especially that harm generated by pastoralist and ranching practices that have culminated in contemporary factory-farming practices*—have been a precondition for and have engendered large-scale violence against and injury to devalued

humans” (author’s emphasis 2). The systemic violence that Nibert identifies from early Western agricultural practices allows us to consider equally the abuses endured by humans and other animals. One way to recognize these interlocking abuses is by how we define labor. A definition of labor is not confined to the human species. In “Animals are Part of the Working Class: A Challenge to Labor History,” Jason Hribal challenges the basic assumption that “one needs to be human to be a worker” and how animals have played a larger role in the development of capitalism during the period of mass production (436). He notes that, “not only did the book [*The Jungle*] expose the diseased conditions of the stockyards, but it vividly described the exploitive nature of the work” and this ‘work’ includes animal labor, what he calls the “*employment of millions upon millions of sheep, cattle, and pigs*” (emphasis mine 441).

Speciesism also plays a key role in the division of labor rendering workers and animals more vulnerable to the dangers of systemic violence in Chicago’s Stockyards. First appearing in a pamphlet by British psychologist Richard D. Ryder in protest of animal experimentation in the 1970s, speciesism was popularized by Australian philosopher Peter Singer in his book, *Animal Liberation* and is defined as a prejudice maintained by the dominant group, humans, that all other lifeforms are inferior. In the *New York Review of Books*, “Animal Liberation at 30,” Singer urges that:

Despite obvious differences between humans and nonhuman animals, we share with them the capacity to suffer, and this means that they, like us, have interests. If we ignore or discount their interests, simply on the grounds that they are not members of our species, the logic of our position is similar to that of the most blatant racists or sexists who think that those who belong to their race or sex have superior moral status, simply in virtue of their race or sex, and irrespective of other characteristics or qualities. (Singer)

Singer's original publication was groundbreaking and he continues to illustrate a need for public acknowledgment in the fight against disregard for nonhuman life. Singer's work motivated social and political movements transforming human attitudes toward animal life in ways similar to how *The Jungle* awakened the public to the odious functions of food production. Singer's hierarchy and explanation of speciesism explains the abuses various slaughterhouse workers and farm animals face in Sinclair's novel. Sinclair exposes the ramifications of this kind of hierarchal ideology by pointing out the greed of politicians and meatpackers, the prejudices that exist between various diverse communities, the gender biases, and animal cruelty that exist inside and outside of the yards. *The Jungle* remains a success because species intersections converge to relay a historically vivid account of the lives of early twentieth century workers striving to survive in the midst of extreme hardships.

It is important to note that while Peter Singer's notable definition of speciesism identifies a part of the problem, Bob Torres points out a fundamental flaw in the way most animal rights theorists, including Singer, individualize speciesism. In *Making a Killing*, Torres states: "when we individualize the notion of speciesism and understand it as merely an individual prejudice, we lose the notion that certain economic and legal logistics are set in place that perpetuates animal exploitation at a deeper level within the social order" (Torres 71). The structural violence which Nibert and Torres expose is the pathway to understanding systematic problems in mechanized slaughter production. If we are to achieve a more balanced and reciprocal relationship with the natural world, we must develop a deeper understanding of the economic and ideological levels of violence between humans and other animals.

If Singer's speciesism reveals a utilitarian worldview, where violence against all animals should be measured by suffering alone, Nibert and Torres complicate the issue by noting that

suffering extends beyond individual prejudices. Economic practices, particularly the capitalist mode of production, perpetuate animal exploitation in meat production and that eradication of capitalism is necessary to eliminate violence against animals. In *The Jungle*, speciesist hierarchies are critiqued through individualized human and animal interactions in conjunction with the greater economic threat posed to the working classes and animals by capitalism. For example, Sinclair laments the suffering of the individual human and animal that pass through the slaughterhouse proclaiming that “each one of these hogs was a separate creature...and each of them had an individuality of his own, a will of his own, a hope, and a heart’s desire; each was full of self-confidence, of self-importance, and a sense of dignity” (75). Jurgis’ meditation of the killing floor leaves him with one thought, “Dieve—but I’m glad I’m not a hog!” (75). This statement foreshadows Jurgis’ fate in the novel revealing the notion that he is just like a hog; in fact, there is little that separates Jurgis from this hog-like existence. Sinclair also reveals collective despair among workers as they gravitate towards a socialist vision of the future, shouting at the end of the novel: “Organize! Organize! Organize!” (362). Sinclair recounts stories of thousands of docile human and animal bodies streaming through the slaughterhouse door, one body indistinct from another, leading us to read suffering not only as an individualized moral wrong but as suffering shared between species. Reading the novel through the lens of Nibert and Singer, the only way to eliminate needless suffering between species is to destroy capitalism through an economic and political revolution.

The Slaughterhouse Spectacle

Slaughterhouse production goals were met by the perfection of the moving assembly line. Mechanized assembly line production practices began as early as 1867. In Henry Ford’s view,

who modeled his assembly line after mechanized slaughterhouse production lines, the goal of mass production was to create consumer goods at low cost. Ford saw potential in applying “direct-current to the century-old concepts of sequential production and interchangeable parts” (Beaudreau 4). Nearly every industry in the U.S., including slaughterhouses, adopted and/or adapted some version of the mechanized assembly line. In its heyday, efficiency and speed were the goals of the packers because capitalism required it. By the 1920s and 30s, industrialized slaughter was well on its way to dominating American meat production and this same assembly line mechanism would change the face of production in all facets of life, affecting job handling, the isolation of labor, and quality of life for those who were part of industrial society.

In addition to Ford’s Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan, Chicago’s meatpacking industry was one of the first to implement the electrified assembly line, better known as the “disassembly line,” paving the way for other industries to experiment with this perfected style of production. Carol J. Adams notes that because of automation, the newly mechanized production line had an unsettling effect on workers. The standardization of work separated the workers from the overall production (80). Workers were tasked with tedious repetitive jobs alienating them from the product they made (80). The fragmented nature of this work “allows the dismembered part to represent the whole” (81), until both human and animal bodies are controlled and interchangeable in nearly every part of the capitalist production process.

New technology, like the adoption of assembly-line production, exacerbated capitalism’s disastrous effects on laboring bodies. Marked as one of the most famous passages in *The Jungle* about the slaughterhouse, according to William Cronon, “One could not stand and watch very long without becoming philosophical, without beginning to deal in symbols and similes, and to hear the hog-squeal of the universe” (Sinclair 75). In Chicago, miles upon miles of pens were a

spectacle of pure industrialization—visitors from around the world came to gawk at this epitome of effective commerce (Cronon 225).⁷

Sinclair describes, in graphic detail, the “attraction” that is the Union Stockyard daily process, itself an assembly line of industrial production. Daily tours paint a deliberate picture for audiences, a facade for onlookers. Public perception is a necessary component of the industry’s effectiveness regardless of what goes on behind closed doors. In *Slaughterhouse: Chicago’s Union Stock Yard and the World it Made*, Dominic A. Pacyga points out that “place matters; in many ways, it defines the human experience” (xi). There is a cultural hierarchical structure which creates a need for speciesism as it produces a hierarchal understanding of life that keeps capitalism running. Early in the morning, visitors can see “employees of a higher sort” entering the gates (i.e. stenographers, clerks, general white-collar workers) (71). Lower classes are rarely seen; they arrive before sunrise and leave well after sunset and exist as shadows, coming and going, keeping the machine seamlessly running, or so it appears from an outsider’s point of view. Meatpackers are careful with what they allow the public to see. Jokubas whispers to Jurgis “that the visitors did not see any more than the packers wanted them to see” (74).

Readers tour the Stockyards through Jurgis’ eyes, first viewing the holding pens where animals arrive daily by train. Jurgis thinks of this scene as a “circus menagerie” (71). As the guests “cry out in wonder,” Teta Elzbieta (Ona’s stepmother) shouts: “And what will become of all these creatures?” (72). Jokubas replies: “they will all be killed and cut up; and over there on the other side of the packing-houses are more railroad tracks, where the cars come to take them away” (72). Sinclair notes, “Some eight or ten million live creatures [were] turned into food

⁷ The yards were known as the animal holding pens, a different space from the actual meatpacking plants, which were unmarked buildings located across the street. Speed and efficiency were key ingredients in how industrial production functioned between these two spaces.

every year” creating a “very river of death” (73). Nevertheless, to the casual onlooker, the sight suggested to them “no metaphors of human destiny; they thought only of the wonderful efficiency of it all” (73). Whole animals are herded into the yards just as hundreds of potential workers are herded towards meatpacking gates to wait for work; on the other side, they all come out in pieces.

Animal as “Absent Referent”

Upon closer look, the slaughterhouse represents more than speed and commercial efficiency. Within its walls, violent death happens on a regular basis and the act of butchering is significant in exposing the shared suffering that bleeds from its doors. Butchering is a term that takes on numerous meanings and denotes the reification of suffering that is brought to light in the novel. Adams demonstrates that through butchering, animals become absent referents. Meaning, “animals in name and body are made absent as animals for meat to exist” (66). Live animals cannot be meat because they are alive, but once a dead body replaces the live animal it can be consumed. Adams states that “without animals there would be no meat eating, yet they are absent from the act of eating meat because they have been transformed into food” (66). The animal undergoes symbolic and literal butchering. That is, it is rhetorically reduced from animal to meat in order to make consumption more psychologically palatable. At the same time, the animal is being reduced from animal to meat, making it physically more palatable. *The Jungle* uncovers the referent that is typically overlooked through specific detailing of the production and consumption process one gruesome step at a time, not only for the sake of the animal but for the sake of the human worker, too. Both beings are invisible within slaughterhouse walls and both become absent in the objectification and exploitation of their bodies. By publishing this novel,

Sinclair reveals what is hidden by giving readers access to the inside of Chicago's slaughterhouse.

Symbolic representations of human control over the animal world is the driving force behind capitalist exploitive mass production practices within the slaughterhouse, which continues to grow well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. To the meatpackers, the dawn of mechanized slaughter represented industrial might over nature allowing one to literally stand above and over what is below. In this view, the foundation for Adams' construction of the absent referent is built. Instead of viewing meat as coming from animals that live in close proximity to humans, humans are now separated from the process both mentally and spatially. The mental separation between animal and food takes shape as slaughterhouses move farther away from city centers where the mass killing of animals occurs in unmarked buildings.

Another technological breakthrough was the invention of refrigeration for meatpacking companies in the early twentieth century, which changed the way animals were transported and meat was produced and distributed. Instead of moving live animal bodies from one city to the next, they could slaughter, prepare and send prepackaged meat across the country furthering the public's passive ignorance of where meat was made because animal slaughter happened out of sight. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, Michael Pollan notes that meat cannot be easily traced back to its origin because "the chain grows longer and less comprehensible: The label doesn't mention that the rib-eye steak came from a steer born in South Dakota and fattened in a Kansas feedlot on grain grown in Iowa" (17). The expansion of the industrial animal complex continued because of an expanding population and their insatiable appetite for meat. With each new development, meatpackers were able to move record amounts of product at a faster pace with minimal visibility.

As technology weakened the connection between the meat-eater, animal, and product, the suffering of butchered animals slowly faded from public view. Not only did centralized locations and distance separate the public from animals made into food, but language also garnered an even bigger gap in understanding. Sinclair describes Jurgis' annoyance at the numerous commercial jingles, magazine and newspaper ads that prompted consumers to consume. From promoting Brown's "Imperial Hams and Bacon" to "Excelsior sausages," "Canned Beef," and "Potted Ham," (73), the animal is all but erased from the product the packers are trying to sell. In this sense, animals are made absent through language. Pork, bacon, sausage, and ham replace pigs, veal for calves, beef for cows, wings, breasts, thighs for chickens. Adams contends that "our culture further mystifies meat with gastronomic language, so we do not conjure dead, butchered animals, but cuisine" (66). Slaughter scenes interjected with descriptions of advertisements link animal and food product. Sinclair incorporates the advertisements into the butchering scene intentionally to reestablish the connection between animals and food. This scene disrupts the production process as a politically motivated message that forces the connection between human, animal, and food. The suffering involved in transforming a live animal into a product can no longer be ignored.

The growing gap between animal and food that Sinclair reconnects with is closely related to Karl Marx's notions of estrangement and alienation that separate the wage laborer from what he/she creates, from him/herself, and from those who own the means of production. Marx's materialist concept of alienation is a fundamental aspect of how capitalism operates and identifies why this separation occurs. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx argues that labor alienates workers from themselves and from other workers. The loss of self-hood experienced in the slaughterhouse links to capitalism because the process separates the

body from its parts and from its sense of worth. The human worker is stripped of his or her identity when employed at the slaughterhouse at the same time animals are stripped of their selfhood and divided into parts. Sinclair reports that as visitors, including young children, viewed the butchering process, shrieks and cries of protest came from the tour group in conjunction with high squeals, grunts, and wails of agony from the animals. These discordant sounds lead Sinclair to philosophize about the fate of the animal, particularly the hogs: one “could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests—and so perfectly within their rights!” (75). Sinclair continues with the fate of cows, the bludgeoning of cows in shackles, the kicking and struggling, the workers knocking the animals in the head and the “manner in which they did this was something to be seen and never forgotten” (78). Sinclair demystifies production bringing the horrors of mechanized butchering into view, reversing at least some of the alienation.

The Slaughterhouse as an Extension of Place

Interspecies suffering within slaughterhouse walls extends outward and weaves itself through the social fabric of daily life. Nibert contends that the layered violence between humans and other animals manifests itself in multiple forms. There is direct violence, that is the capture, enslavement, use, and slaying of animals, and indirect violence in the form of “structural violence.” The latter form of violence is considered systemic (11). In *The Jungle*, violent acts committed inside the slaughterhouse echo in familial spaces. For example, Sinclair describes workers cracking heads of cattle on the killing floor: “There is but scant account kept of cracked heads in the back of the yards, for men who have to crack the heads of animals all day seem to get into the habit, and to practise on their friends, and even on their families, between times”

(59). Violence breeds violence, a pattern that continues beyond slaughterhouse walls and animal abuse in the slaughterhouse mirrors domestic violence in the home, revealing the stronghold capitalist practices have on its participants.

Due to a profit-first mentality, slaughterhouse workers are expected to kill conscious animals at rapid paces, and mental and physical exhaustion causes violent re-actions. The speed of the production line leads to accidents, and the needless suffering of animals and workers. In Gail Eisnitz's book, *Slaughterhouse*, an interview with slaughterhouse worker, Ed Van Winkle reveals the psychological trauma of killing animals for profit. Van Winkle describes how people working in the "stick pit" develop an "attitude that lets you kill things but doesn't let you care" (56). In *The Jungle*, Sinclair refers to a similar attitude that develops among men as packers constantly "speed up the gang" (95). Jurgis discovers most men working in the plant "hated their work. They hated the bosses and they hated the owners; they hated the whole place, the whole neighborhood—even the whole city, with an all-inclusive hatred, bitter and fierce" (95).

Not only do slaughterhouse workers take on dangerous tasks that can potentially cause physical harm, they are also psychologically and emotionally scarred. Torres notes that "anger and alienation that follows these workers home often manifests itself as violence against families and against the communities where they live" (49). In the novel, "husbands drank and beat their children—the neighbors could hear them shrieking at night" and the fear of losing a position at the plant caused brutal fights between family members" (152). During one of Chicago's brutal winters, Stanislovas, one of Teta Elzbieta's sons came home "screaming in pain" as he attempted to walk to the yards in a heavy snow-storm—his fingers were frostbitten. With fear that the boy would lose his position at the plant, Jurgis beat the "little fellow with a stick...there could be no trifling in a case like this, it was a matter of life and death; little Stanislovas could not be

expected to realise that he might a great deal better freeze in the snow-drift than lose his job at the lard-machine” (153).

Entangled Spaces

Sinclair unearths horror in the novel, not only by blurring the lines between the physical labor of human worker and violence against animals as argued earlier in the chapter, but by the use of imagery that shows how human and animal bodies merge, absorb, and inevitably become indistinguishable. In the freezing months, workers’ hands would become so cold that they plunged their “feet and ankles in to the steaming hot carcass of the steer” to warm themselves (117). The killing beds produce so much blood from the slaughter that the “men ate as much raw blood as food at dinner-time” (137). In addition to workers using animals for warmth, language describing the treatment of workers by meatpacking bosses mirrors language that illustrates the slaughter of animals: “the people had come in hordes; and old Durham had squeezed them tighter and tighter, speeding them up and grinding them to pieces, and sending for new ones” (104). Here, language used to illustrate the dangerous and careless treatment of workers is similar to how language describes farm animals sent to slaughter: bodies are fragmented, frozen, ground, mashed, and replaced, the process through which industrial capitalism promotes.

Imagery that likens humans to other animals and other animals to humans comes from widely held beliefs within anthropocentric history. In *Animal Rights Human Rights*, Nibert contends that “if the masses are taught to discount the oppressed as ‘foreign,’ ‘alien,’ ‘uncivilized,’ ‘unclean,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘inferior,’ and so on, they become socially distanced from the devalued others, thus precluding both opportunities and tendencies for empathetic response” (197). This ideological belief system emboldens corporate entities and wealthy elites to

legitimize the oppression of marginalized beings, human and nonhuman animals—endangering the lives of both.

In a scene towards the end of the novel, before Jurgis loses one of his jobs at the plant, Jurgis confronts Ona's boss because he found out the boss raped his wife. In the moment, Jurgis' rage causes him to act like an animal: "in a flash he bent down and sunk his teeth into the man's cheek; and when he tore him away he was dripping with blood, and little ribbons of skin were hanging in his mouth" (183). Jurgis' actions are characterized as animalistic, which is attributed to how undervalued humans are animalized. This stems from a supposed hereditary defect within human nature that contributes to his regression into an animal behavioral state. This reading, however, is problematic. The portrayal of Jurgis' actions assumes that animals, because they are not human, automatically act in violent, uncontrollable ways leading humans to categorize nonhumans and marginalized humans as uncivilized and thus, less than. Instead, by exposing the human/animal divide as false means acknowledging that humans are animalistic and Jurgis' reaction is, in fact, humanistic in nature.

The ideologies that subjugate certain groups of humans and other animals in the novel are exemplified by classist, gendered, and racial slurs. Sinclair does this by likening workers participating in a packinghouse strike to cattle. As workers gather to strike, bosses yell, "you went out of here like cattle, and like cattle you'll come back?" (293). This makes Jurgis wonder how "there were not more men slaughtered than cattle" (117). The scene perpetuates beliefs that cows are mindless automatons who follow the herd. Workers who defy the bosses by walking out in protest are degraded, likening them to cows. This comparison not only devalues the human worker, but also undermines the intelligence of cows. In another example, women workers are described as "precisely the color of the 'fresh country sausage'" they are making (165). In the

Casings department, women's work is made visible by visitors who toured slaughter facilities in an effort to show off the women's speed and intensity of the work: "it was piece-work, and she [the worker] was apt to have a family to keep alive; and stern and ruthless economic laws had arranged it that she could only do this by working as she did, with all her soul upon her work, and with never an instant for a glance at the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who came to stare at her, as at some wild beast in a menagerie" (166). Women were put on display, working in places that, by law, were the only ones they were allowed to work. Women workers were bound to casings and Tillie Olsen explores this gender restrictive labor in *Yonnondio*, an issue chapter two explores in more detail.

Racially charged language is also prevalent in the novel, comparing African American workers to "chimpanzees" (134) and "human beasts" (295). In an effort to break the strike that broke out at various plants within packing town, the mayor in cahoots with meatpacking bosses, "shipped in" thousands of strike-breakers mostly from the South. Sinclair describes them as "big buck negroes" with "woolly heads," "savages...held down by a community ruled by the traditions of slavery" (295). Jurgis thinks: "now that they are free,--free to gratify every passion, free to wreck themselves...free to break a strike," that these men would bring destruction with them, "scenes such as never before had been witnessed in America" (295). These examples, but touch upon the racial tensions that existed at the time while affirming hierarchal understandings of the natural world, understandings that posit "civilized" society over certain ethnic and racial groups. This hierarchal value system upholds racist and prejudicial biases that are created, socially constructed, and perpetuated by Western white supremacist attitudes that keep the capitalist machine running at the expense of human laborers and other animals. This contributes to capitalism's stronghold on humans and other animals in production and consumption.

Ecological Damage

Sinclair explores how the industrialized farming industry wreaks havoc on the bodies of workers and farm animals, but he also exposes the ecological damage created by the industry because of toxic dumping and doctored/ “dressed” meat. These environmental dangers contribute to how slaughterhouse production affects the lives of those who consume animal products and who live within surrounding communities. The exposure of these serious health hazards led to public outcry. Sinclair writes about the infamous “Bubbly Creek,” the arm of the Chicago River that forms the southern boundary of the yards, which is used as a dumping place for all the “grease and chemicals” that came from the packing houses (130). Sinclair notes that “here and there the grease and filth have caked solid, and the creek looks like a bed of lava; chickens walk about on it, feeding and many times an unwary stranger has started to stroll across, vanishing temporarily” (130). On his reporting of slaughterhouse waste management, Cronon likewise reveals, “The stench in the Chicago River and the insidiously invisible substances that might make their way into a package of bologna appeared to be the product of companies so intent on their own profits that they were indifferent to the harm they did to the public. Obsessed with turning waste into profit whatever the economic cost, they sold what they should have thrown away—and yet did little to prevent pollution from the wastes that finally washed down their sewers” (253). Sinclair reports that packers had secret mains where they would steal “billions of gallons of the city’s water” to keep slaughterhouses operational, only to dump what was leftover into rivers that recycle back into the city’s water supply (130).

There are also scenes that describe how injured farm animals are mixed in with healthy ones while vegetables and meat are laced with chemicals, information that horrifies Jurgis’

family. One of the tragedies of the novel is that the youngest son of Teta Elzbieta mysteriously dies of food poisoning. In *Putting Meat on the American Table*, Roger Horowitz reports that the use of chemicals like boric acid and borax was “routinely part of the curing agent and also sprinkled on prior to shipping, ‘to prevent [the meat] turning slippery or moldy’” (59). Since there were no federal regulations at the time, “inclusion of these ingredients was not evident to consumers” until the publication of *The Jungle*. Controversy over the chemicals’ effects was debunked by chemists who reported that the “danger posed by cumulative ingestion of these ingredients, especially among children and the elderly, was a sufficient basis to prohibit them” (60). In 1906, government officials banned the use of these chemicals in addition to other additives that were not specifically authorized (60). Sinclair’s thorough investigation coupled with his gift for narration convinced the public and eventually governmental officials that changes to the food industry needed to take place.

The Slaughterhouse and Gender

Gender also plays a significant role in the treatment of women and animals within the slaughterhouse. For example, pregnant bodies are subjected to violence due to their inherent link to industrial production. Women, in particular Ona and her cousin Marija, are subjected to mistreatment in the slaughterhouse likening them to farm animals in the production process. Ona is eventually pressured to engage in an affair with her boss lest she and the rest of her family lose their jobs at the meatpacking plant (181). Phil Connor physically assaults her causing irreparable damage to Ona’s pregnant body. This action triggers preterm labor and in the middle of delivering her baby, Ona dies because the family does not have enough money to provide her with adequate medical care. Jurgis walks into the room after Ona had died, “she had her jacket

off, like one of the workers on the killing beds. Her hands and face smeared with blood, and blood was splashed upon her clothing and her face” (215). Both Ona and her unborn child died and Jurgis stares in horror at her dead body: “here she lay murdered, mangled, tortured to death” (217). Sinclair utilizes slaughterhouse imagery to, bring closer, the tragedy that befalls those who are subjected to the ugly realities of America’s gross negligence on those clinging to the margins of society. This unveiling also initiates concerns for women as they are treated similarly within the same patriarchal environment: pregnant women and cows are mistreated and discarded within an economic system that values wealth over empathy and care. Language describing Ona’s birthing process parallels imagery Sinclair outlines on the slaughterhouse killing floor.

This scene mirrors the deadly outcome of cows and their calves within the slaughterhouse presenting the idea that within a capitalist system pregnant female bodies (whether human or nonhuman) “labor” for production, and are discarded after their labor is no longer needed. Similar to what Duvall suggests in “Process of Elimination,” “women become a means to an end, and when the end is reached they disappear” (45). The treatment of poor Ona’s body parallels the handling of pregnant cows in the slaughterhouse. Ona’s death reflects the most insidious, and illegal, operations of the slaughterhouse. Meatpackers would butcher pregnant cows regardless of the law, clean out the entrails, “calves and all” and butchered them for meat (101). Carol J. Adams claims “meat has long been used in Western culture as a metaphor for women’s oppression” (75). She mentions that *The Jungle* disables the power of metaphor by “describing exactly how an animal dies, kicking [and] screaming” (79). Sinclair uncovers this metaphor by sacrificing Ona in a most tragic way.

Women workers are also oftentimes subjected to sexual advances and threats because of misogynist attitudes of male bosses: “here was a population of low-class and mostly foreign,

hanging always on the verge of starvation, and dependent for its opportunities of life upon the whim of men every bit as brutal and unscrupulous as the old-time slave-drivers” (141). Ona works in a plant where women are desperate to make a living, and so are inevitably pressured into prostitution outside the slaughterhouse. These women are coaxed to perform sex acts in brothels by Ona’s immediate supervisor Miss Henderson (the Madam). Miss Henderson filters women through the slaughterhouse to her brothel, where they are forced to sell their bodies and Jurgis’ family is not immune to this fate. After Ona’s death, Jurgis abandons the family and so Marija, Ona’s cousin, succumbs to prostitution to take care of Teta Elzbieta and the children. Representations of prostitution in the novel demonstrate a link between slavery and the treatment of women workers in these places, only in this exemplification of slavery “there was no difference in color between master and slave” (141).

Conclusion

The cultural significance of *The Jungle* lies in its powerful language, compelling narrative, and vivid imagery, but most of all it was the novel’s influence on the public during the twentieth century that sustains its popularity well into the twenty-first. Nibert notes that Rudyard Kipling was “horrorstruck by what he saw at a slaughterhouse in Chicago in the late 1880s and worried ‘about the effect of so mechanical a killing house on the human soul’” (112). The effect of Sinclair’s unapologetic reporting changed the way food production operated. He gave readers a glimpse inside the slaughterhouse and the horrors that lived there. Sinclair examined multiple forms of oppression and violence between human workers and farmed animals, educating the public and forced government to improve conditions within the industrial food complex. It is essential for those of us advocating for human rights to take a closer look at how the oppression

of other animals exist in unison with the oppression of human beings in order to organize and fight for change at the structural level. In a capitalist economic system that still violently and unabashedly disregards empathy, care, and equality for the marginalized, *The Jungle* remains as relevant today as it did over one hundred years ago.

CHAPTER TWO: TILLIE OLSEN'S *YONNONDIO: FROM THE THIRTIES*: THE SHARED SUFFERING OF WOMEN AND OTHER ANIMALS IN MEATPACKING

I can't bear—what? ...the women I work with? The horror of
their own lives? the Smell?

Abandon self, all ye who enter here. Become component part,
geared, meshed, timed, controlled.

—Tillie Olsen, *Yonnondio*

Introduction

While Sinclair calls out working class abuses by exposing the abysmal working conditions in the slaughterhouse and unsanitary living situations in surrounding communities of Chicago's stockyards, *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (1974) calls attention to a gender specific abuse. Olsen uses the slaughterhouse as a metaphor for the battered existence of industrial workers, but the novel also provokes readings that link animal abuse to the negligent treatment of women's bodies in industry and in the home. By illustrating the process involved in deconstructing animal bodies for food in relationship to how women's bodies are savagely treated in the slaughterhouse and at home, Olsen collapses distinctions between home and industry to illustrate the blatant sexism and violence associated with slaughterhouse work.

Similar to Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* focuses on the horrors of mechanized slaughter production in the 1920s. Olsen, though, emphasizes the sexual division of labor in meatpacking by representing women's experiences. Evocative descriptions of "hogs dangling [and] dancing along the convey" (Olsen 165) in the novel are reminiscent of *The*

Jungle's illustrations of hogs being hoisted up onto hooks in Chicago's meatpacking facilities: "they had chains which they had fastened about the leg of the nearest hog, and the other end of the chain they hooked into one of the rings upon the wheel. So, as the wheel turned, a hog was suddenly jerked off his feet and borne aloft...kicking in a frenzy—and squealing" (Sinclair 39-40). The vicious work of slaughtering hogs is explicitly detailed in both novels to bring attention to the mechanical processes that break down whole sentient beings into profitable parts. These illustrations reinforce Olsen's overall message that the "world is an oven, and you're browning in it" (Olsen 42).

Yonnondio's experimental narrative form stresses not so much a call to revolution, like Sinclair's, but captures experiences, reactions, and emotions through constructing fragmented moments and stream-of-consciousness style of writing. This narrative technique effectively conveys a story that represents the inner turmoil of those who are struggling in the midst of extreme poverty and hardship. Her unrelenting descriptions of animals being put to death in the Midwestern American meatpacking plant are some of her most "effective writing," according to Linda Ray Pratt (xii). I argue that what makes these meatpacking scenes crucial to this story is that they represent more than just a metaphor for human suffering. These scenes are a lament for all beings, human and nonhuman alike, who are oppressed and exploited by the capitalist mode of production. By investigating *Yonnondio*'s representation of the human-animal relationship in this way, the novel contributes to a broader understanding of how abuse extends beyond slaughterhouse walls into familial spaces. By pointing out the oppression of both species, I suggest that the slaughterhouse in *Yonnondio* captures the unique experiences of women being "butchered" by industrial capitalism. Bringing attention to the suffering of both fortifies the novel's commitment to exposing socio-economic and environmental injustices.

Yonnondio points to a collective suffering that is shared between women workers and other animals as it peels back the layers of abuse that both endure in the slaughterhouse and in the home. The pain and suffering animals experience by workers in the slaughterhouse reverberate outside of its walls by the way slaughterhouse workers react to family members within packinghouse communities. These violent re-actions are often attributed to being exposed to a violent type of work that involves taking the life of thousands of animals per day in order to satisfy a capitalist system that solely focuses on production and consumption, failing to value its human and nonhuman participants. In this way, *Yonnondio* also allows for an investigation into the shared suffering that exists between women and other animals under capitalism.

Tillie Olsen: Family, Activism, and Writing

It is important, first, to consider the way Olsen's background and her personal experiences shape the novel's complex themes as well as how literary critics have thought about the novel and Olsen's ability to defy traditional categories. The novel's general emphasis on the struggles of the proletariat are informed by Olsen's working class background. Her experiences broaden our understanding of what life was like for American laborers during the 1920s and 30s. Olsen's upbringing shaped her identity and informed her writing. *In Better Red: The Writing and Resistance of Tillie Olsen and Mendel Le Sueur*, Constance Coiner notes that, "the political commitment and activism of her socialist parents provided a rich dimension" to Olsen's background (143). Influenced by a variety of protest era writers, such as Upton Sinclair and Jack London, Olsen, too, contributed to a body of work that sheds light on the hardships of the working class, but her background made it more difficult to maintain a writing career and finding time to write was an obstacle she struggled with her entire life. In a *New York Times* book review

of Olsen's collection of essays, *Silences*, Margaret Atwood proclaims: "women writers, even more than their male counterparts, recognize what a heroic feat it is to have held down a job, raised four children and still somehow managed to become and to remain a writer. The exactions of this multiple identity cost Tillie Olsen years of her writing life" ("Obstacle Course"). Atwood lauds Olsen's efforts to expose the challenges women writers faced not only in publishing during a time when men dominated the field, but also in finding the time to nurture a writing career in the midst of obstacles particular to women. Though Olsen did not publish extensively, the literature she produced is highly regarded for its emphasis on the plight of women and the socio-economic hardships of the working poor.

Yonnondio, in particular, makes its mark on the literary canon through its experimentation with language and fragmented structure to portray the inner struggles of women's lives. Most scholarship on *Yonnondio* points out human, particularly women's, experiences, and how these experiences relate to capitalist modes of production, the ways that the sexual division of labor, reproductive labor, family, motherhood, selfhood, and identity embody a proletarian spirit without being overtly political. Recent scholarship on the novel highlights the ways in which issues of class, gender, and sexuality are negotiated predominantly through the experiences of female characters in relationship to capitalist modes of production, economic hardship, and familial relationships. These themes challenge traditional conceptualizations of what defines proletarian fiction, the literary genre in which the novel is commonly recognized. *Yonnondio* is a novel at once proletarian, but also feminist, defying established definitions. In "'Coming to 'Clearness': Olsen's *Yonnondio* and Johnson's *Now in November*," Jenn Williamson points to the challenges still faced by critics of Depression-era literature in examining proletarian fiction written by women concerning itself with women's

issues. According to Williamson, assumptions of proletarian fiction deem it a masculine literary form “written by men about men that takes place in settings such as heavy industry or agricultural production predominantly populated by men” (449). While Olsen condemns the capitalist mode of production in its subjugation of laboring bodies, collective efforts to organize evade the characters of *Yonnondio*. Revolution does not seem like a plausible outcome for the Holbrook family, but the fighting spirit of women’s relentless efforts are clearly acknowledged.

Novels written by women, like Olsen, include elements that often differ from “traditional definitions of revolutionary or proletarian literature because of the ways women writers critique capitalist ideologies by revealing them through “family-based experiences” (Williamson 467). In this way, women writers emphasize critical issues of the period regarding women’s suffering under capitalism, while also bringing to light women’s concerns with class struggles and their active involvement in various revolutionary projects. Barbara Cantalupo notes that “*Yonnondio* exists as a revolutionary gesture even as it refuses the constraints of the proletarian novel, a form which Olsen’s politics clearly encouraged” (128). Olsen is a working class author writing about working class experiences, but instead of promoting a blatant call to rise up against capitalism, like the clear message put forth in *The Jungle*, *Yonnondio*’s revolutionary message is more subtle due to the fragmented nature of its form.

Ultimately, *Yonnondio* is recognized as a feminist proletarian novel that solidified a unique place within the genre. It raises questions about “how to survive economically” and tackles more complex ones, such as “how to understand the connections and contradictions between women’s struggles and those struggles based on other categories and issues, or how to find a measure of emotional and sexual fulfillment in a world where egalitarian relationships are more ideal than real” (Rosenfelt 374). In Olsen’s *Yonnondio*, there is hope for an egalitarian

future expressed through women's experiences and desires. This hope, however, is muted by the relentless rise, and loud roar, of industrial capitalism.

Olsen started writing *Yonnondio* in 1932, the same year she gave birth to the first of four children. Work, domestic responsibilities, and her dedication to political and social activism delayed the completion of the novel. Although unfinished, *Yonnondio* was published in 1974, after it was discovered in old files in 1972. In "Documents of Proletarian Fiction," Corinna K. Lee argues that the novel's publication "resignifies the book's incompleteness and absent revolutionary ending as a value rather than a failure" (113). In her note on the publication, Olsen writes, "unfinished it bespeaks the consciousness and roots of that decade, if not its events" (195). Olsen arranged the fragmented stories into a novel without rewriting previous drafts. Linda Ray Pratt states that the purpose of this arrangement was to preserve the authenticity of Olsen's experiences writing at a particular moment in time as a "young woman between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four in the first creative burst of her writing life" (vi). The "older writer who arranged the manuscript in her early sixties felt she should not attempt to rewrite the story that vividly reflected another time in her imaginative life" (vi).

Economic Realities of the Great Depression

Opening with Walt Whitman's poem "Yonnondio," from which novel's title is taken, Olsen reflects on those forced to live on the margins of society. Writing the novel during a contentious time in American history, Olsen captures the essence of an era, a time of intense turmoil and loss exacerbated by industrial capitalism. She does this by creating a story that humanizes the struggles of an entire generation of American workers through one family's journey. *Yonnondio* follows the heart-wrenching path of the Holbrook family in the late 1920s as

they try to carve out a better life for themselves. From coal mining in Wyoming to tenant farming in Western Nebraska and eventually as a slaughterhouse worker in the poorest neighborhoods of Omaha, Nebraska, Jim Holbrook moves his family in search of economic stability. Mazie Holbrook, the oldest of five children, narrates her family's hope for the future: Anna Holbrook dreams of an education for her children and Jim wishes to live off the land far from the dangers of industry. Their dreams are jeopardized, however, as industrial life takes its toll on each member of the family.

In writing this story, Olsen represents the economic realities of rural America through one family's struggle to survive during a time of intense poverty. Small farmers in rural communities were being edged out by big agriculture during the Great Depression. In the novel, Jim takes up tenant farming. For a summer, the family thrives on the farm's fresh air and abundant crops, but his neighbor warns him: "tenant farming is the only thing worse than farming your own...bad or good year, the bank swallows everything up, and keeps you ownin' em. You'll see" (41). The pleasantness of summer fades, and the Holbrook's fall onto hard times. Jim cries out: "they're taking all of it, every damn thing. The whole year slaved to nothing. I owe them...Batten on us like hogs" (54). Regardless of Jim's efforts to work hard and live off the land, his family could not bring in enough income to survive. Jim's frustration with tenant farming in the novel was the reality of what many tenant farmers experienced at this particular moment in American history.

During the early years of the Great Depression, Midwestern farmers were hit particularly hard. Livestock prices fell at disastrous rates, arguably due to farmers continuing to grow World War I level supply leading to a surplus of commodities like grain and cotton. Land that was purchased on credit to expand growth could not be maintained. In 1929, the passing of the

Agricultural Marketing Act forced farmers to downsize. The federal buy-out program saved most farms from falling into bankruptcy, but extreme heat, drought, and dust storms killed off much of a farmer's hard work, provoking many to turn to tenant farming to pay the bills (Kennedy 17). As prices continued to plummet and farmers suffocated under mountains of surplus and weighted debts, many sold their farms to large corporations because they could not keep up with newly mechanized production practices that large factories were implementing. While rural America was deteriorating, large farming operations located in big cities led many European immigrants and American farmers in search of industrial work and a better life. Mechanization, however, presented a paradox. While more jobs opened up in factories due to assembly line-style of work, "machine power commodified labor and volatilized it, robbing workers of craft pride and, most important, of job security" (Kennedy 23). As illustrated in Sinclair's *The Jungle*, if workers could not keep up, they would be "flung aside, like a bit of trash" (189).

American workers suffered greatly during this time, whether by operating small farms in rural America or by working in city factories, and Olsen encapsulates their struggles by constructing a narrative that portrays the inner lives of a family trying desperately to survive. Pratt contends that Olsen's various work and activist experiences prompted the kinds of stories she wanted to tell. Olsen held many odd jobs growing up, but her time as a meat trimmer and slaughterhouse organizer provoked the motivation behind her vivid portrayal of slaughterhouse work in *Yonnondio* (Pratt vii).

Dangling Bodies: Mechanization and Identification

Bodily violence is at the heart of industrial slaughter production and in the slaughterhouse, animal bodies are butchered for meat and human workers are forced to succumb

to horrid working conditions. Olsen not only provides readers with vivid imagery of animal bodies as they are mechanically hung, swung, dropped, dismembered, and transformed into meat products, but she also describes scenes that explore how the human worker is likewise subjected to life-sucking, deplorable processes that break down bodies into fragmented parts. Olsen's representation of the meatpacking house in *Yonnonidio* shows how human and nonhuman bodies are simultaneously being "*steamed, boiled, broiled, fried, cooked*" (180).⁸ This line is repeated in the novel as workers formulaically complete their designated tasks. Olsen's attention to how human and nonhuman bodies are violently entangled in slaughter production shows how these bodies are debased and objectified at the height of mechanized food production.

The mechanization of the industry in twentieth century America changed the way bodies were perceived and valued. David Nibert affirms that once mechanized slaughter gained speed in the early half of the Twentieth Century, "sentient beings with preferences and desires, who are capable of profound social relationships, and who have inherent value apart from their exploitation by the animal-industrial complex now were essentially regarded as inanimate objects, as 'biomachines'" (189). Nibert describes the plight of farmed animals within industrial slaughter production and the industry regards them as property, inanimate, lifeless objects. In Olsen's *Yonnonidio*, humans are also seen as "biomachines;" slaughterhouse workers are merely parts of the factory, "everyone in the same motion all the hours through" (Olsen 165). Human workers are objectified and fragmented in the meat processing plant. Hands represent mechanized movements, repetitive in nature, "never ceasing their motions" (180). Olsen likens the subjugation of human labor with the processing of animal bodies; what begins as a live and

⁸ Meatpacking encompasses all the work done in the slaughterhouse. Meatpacking plants are those that handle the slaughtering, processing, packaging, and distribution of dead animals. In this vein, I will use slaughterhouse and meatpacking synonymously.

functioning body, is now processed and re-constructed into lifeless, fragmented pieces of meat, left only as carcasses, immobile, exposed and forever at the mercy of the production line.

The meatpacking industry also signifies dominance and control over marginalized bodies. Those who own the means of production treat workers like lowly creatures, perpetuating a hierarchy amongst workers and bosses. This hierarchy reinforces the nature/culture divide that pits humans against nature (animals). This division in *Yonnondio* is emboldened within the slaughterhouse. Daily operations of meatpacking work described by Olsen illustrates the careless nature of the work in the way bodies are handled. For Olsen, the slaughterhouse is a patriarchal system predominantly monitored and run by men. By exposing the oppression of human and nonhuman beings in this space, Olsen points out the dangers involved in meatpacking work, calling out institutionalized violence implemented by a system that slaughters bodies for profit and undermines the worth of individuals, especially women and other animals.

Through these descriptions, Olsen manages to draw attention to and expose the sexual division of labor in the packinghouse by focusing on the spaces where women work. Olsen's descriptions of the casings department in *Yonnondio* point to the horrible tasks assigned women in these facilities. In "'Where Men Will Not Work': Gender, Power, Space, and the Sexual Division of Labor in America's Meatpacking Industry, 1890-1990," Roger Horowitz suggests that Olsen's realistic descriptions of meatpacking scenes exemplify women's place in the slaughterhouse and why they worked in some of the most dangerous areas of the production facilities. In the slaughterhouse, women work with the foulest parts of the dead animal and were paid less than their male counterparts to complete these kind of laborious and tedious tasks. He notes that Olsen's meatpacking descriptions are "powerful and accurate" concluding her account "insightful," describing these departments as places "where men will not work" (Horowitz 187).

Horowitz also points out that women “worked in departments which had been either transformed or created in response to the growth of the mass consumer market for preserved [meat] products” (197). The offal and casings room was transformed by this high demand of new patterns of meat consumption. These rooms “prepared internal animal organs such as intestines, bladders, and hearts” (198). According to Horowitz, women often felt embarrassed to work these jobs, and in turn, their position in the structure of the packing house explains women’s subordinate relationship to male workers. Women are expected to do the tedious and gritty work of handling pieces of the leftover animal, scraps that men throw down the chute. Women workers are economically and culturally bounded to their stations in casings. In the novel, the room is referred to as hell where women are enclosed in a windowless space, heated to well over 100 degrees and expected to perform monotonous tasks (Olsen 180).

In one scene, Olsen describes casings as cramped quarters where women’s entrapment mingles with an offensive odor that seeps out into the town: “Year-round breathing with open mouth, learning to pant shallow to endure the excrement reek of offal, the smothering stench from the blood house below” (166). The women are trapped, like cramped animals, in treacherous conditions. Buildings are described as “pens, walkways, slippery stairs, overhead chutes, conveyors, steam pipes, of death” (167). The women breathe in the very essence of what the meatpacking house represents, “dismemberment and vanishing entire for harmless creatures meek and mild, frisky, wild—Hell” (167). The physical motion of “breathing in” the stench of freshly dismembered bodies connects workers to animals in a most intimate sense. The death odor left behind by the animal is now transferred into the women breathing it, suffocated by its terrible smell. In casings, as the women workers try to gulp cooler air when the freezer opens from the other room, “the fat and plucks, the bladders and kidneys and bungs and guts, gone soft

and spongy in the heat, perversely resist being trimmed, separated, deslimed” (180). The insides of the animal are displayed and handled in a way that separates the organs from the living being. Just as the animal pieces had gone “soft” and “spongy” from the heat, women’s bodies “fall and writhe in their crinkling skins, their sudden juices” expelling onto the floor (181). This image shows how the human body breaks down and mimics the nature of the “boiled, broiled, fried, cooked” procedure (180). The falling, writhing bodies, and crinkling skin also signify the link to the painfully slow process of dehumanization, a process that likens itself to the way animals are handled and debased.

Olsen spends time emphasizing the cramped spaces in which women work to point out the dangerous accidents that take place in the meatpacking plant. Over-crowding is the root cause of most accidents in these facilities. The goal of meatpacking production is profit, so speed and efficiency are above safety, which often leads to neglect and mistreatment. Even though the killing floor, where men mostly worked, is extremely hot, the casings room below “demonstrates that there is a mightier heat, a high superior heat,” a heat that seems to stimulate havoc, chaos, and carelessness, a carelessness that causes the main steam pipe to burst, suspending not only the production of labor, but life itself (181).

The steam emanating from the burst pipe leaves workers blinded and helpless, looking for a way out like the animals they handle there. This scene brings attention to the formulaic, mechanical processing of bodies. All that counts in the meatpacking plant is efficiency, timeliness, and precision that is devoid of all human qualities rendering human workers incapable of being alive, and whole. Workers attempt to maintain their job function as “arms lifted to their motion (*geared, meshed*)” yet their bodies are temporarily suspended, having nothing to do as the conveyor stops functioning (181). The breakdown of the machine reveals the

breakdown of common sense, an absence or separation of mind and body making it easier for the supervisor, Bull Young, to dissociate the human quality from the worker as he yells out: “Fined, fined for carelessness...Nobody’s gettin away with nothin. You’ll be docked for every second you aint workin. And fined for carelessness” (Olsen 181-2). The repetitive use of the word “carelessness” epitomizes the slaughterhouse. In Bull Young’s utterances, the literal carelessness of workers is noticeably obvious in his reaction to machines jamming up, but Olsen provides something much more important in the use of this word. Carelessness, in a way, signifies the negligent conditions in which the laborers work, the negligent treatment of hogs being thrown about, the negligent treatment of women who are enclosed in a windowless room to do work that men refuse to do, and ultimately, the negligent treatment of all living beings.

The smell of packinghouse is the “heart that moves in these streets; gigantic heart—pumping over the artery of viaducts the men and women who are the streets’ lifeblood, nourishing taverns and brothels and rheumy-eyed stored, bulging out the soiled and exhausted houses, and multiplying into these children...” (68). The effects of slaughter production run deep, from mistreatment of workers within, to the gut-wrenching smell of death that travels throughout the city, reminding everyone of its deathly presence and of their own desperate and sordid lives.

In between scenes that describe the vile practices of slaughter production, Olsen includes moments outside of the slaughterhouse where dominant ideologies are challenged through the way children identify with other animals—calling attention to an animal’s individual existence. In *Yonnondio*, the Holbrook children, especially those who have been brutally beaten by their parents, have a heightened awareness of other animals, a kinship with those who are also abused. The children give them names, signify their individuality, and empathize with their fate. Mazie,

especially, is tuned onto the hard fact that animals are murdered for human consumption in the meatpacking plant. This is exemplified in the scene where Mazie approaches Mr. Kryczski with the stink of meatpacking house on him. She notes: “He was all stink, all stink, he helped kill cows, cows like Brindle, and Annamae” (100). Mazie intentionally names the cows, granting them subjectivity, so that the realization of who is slaughtered in the packing house is identifiable. She identifies this murder with men who perform the act of butchering. This scene draws attention to the differentiation that human and nonhuman bodies occupy a unique place within market capitalism. Identity is stripped as subjects become objects branded for human consumption. As Carol J. Adams states in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, our culture “generally accepts animals’ oppression and finds nothing wrong ethically, or politically disturbing about the exploitation of animals for the benefit of people” (94).

Like Mazie, her younger brother, Ben, shows a sensitivity towards animals. Outside the packinghouse, Ben witnesses a stray dog being attacked by a group of men. Back on the tenant farm Ben used to care for a dog he named Shep. Since they moved from the farm, Ben has had nightmares explaining to his mother that Shep comes to him in dreams, begging him to leave packing town and come back to the farm for him (79). Ben’s sensitivity towards Shep is likely an awareness of his own health problems that make him weaker than other children. Ben has chronic lung disease, a health issue that becomes progressively worse when the family moves to Omaha. His sickness and vulnerability strengthen his connection to other animals. In one scene, Ben is walking past a group of men. He mistakenly identifies another dog as Shep. The men torture this stray animal by placing nails into a piece of meat: “One held him by the collar, and another was sticking nails all over a piece of meat” (93). One of the neighborhood men chortle, “the funniest sight you ever did see...the way a dog tries to get at the meat” (93). This scene is

traumatizing for Ben as he does not understand why others would trick and hurt a defenseless animal in this way. Ben's concern for the helpless animal reveals his own weakness both as a child who does not have the power to stop these adults and as a child with a chronic disease, making him feel less than whole. This scene also evokes the idea that meat is used as a weapon to impose power. The meat laced with nails and given to the stray dog is an act of animal cruelty, but is an action that is also tied to animal slaughter. The meat, completely devoid of its original form, functions, not only as food, but as a weapon, used to torment and torture other animals.

The inhumane treatment of domesticated animals (other than farm animals) is intertwined with violent work in the slaughterhouse. Men exert power over weaker beings, like witnessed in the scene with Shep, to maintain a semblance of control over something, since they are alienated at work and at home. Most of the male aggression in the novel materializes out of a sense of hopelessness. This is illustrated in the way Jim beats up on his family when he is in an "evil mood" (9). The whole household "walked in terror. He had nothing but heavy blows for the children, and he struck his wife Anna too often to remember" (9). In *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941*, Barbara Foley reads Jim's actions as "guilt and powerlessness," which is the catalyst for Jim's violence at home. The brutal treatment Jim receives at work reflects in the way Jim treats his family (23).

What Ben Holbrook witnesses is a complex web of violence, how a dog, hungry and dejected, is subjected to the violent actions of men who are likewise starved and desperate, a cycle of violence that is linked to slaughterhouse work and the psychological toll it takes on slaughterhouse workers. In "A Different Cut? Attitudes Toward Animals and Propensity for Aggression within Two Primary Industries—Farmers and Meatworkers," Emma Richards, Tania Signal, and Nik Taylor found evidence that linked slaughterhouse work to "higher incidences of

familial violence as well as other crimes and social problems among populations of meatworkers” (399). This is due in part by the industry’s banishment to the outskirts of cities and the mechanization of slaughterhouse work. Condemning this work to the fringes of urban and rural society facilitates its invisibility and enables negative attitudes toward slaughterhouse workers. Richards, Signal, and Taylor report that as a result, slaughterhouse workers are “both ignored and reviled, [and subject to] a liminal existence” (398). This liminality, arguably, “enables other forms of oppression to manifest for the workers” (398). In fact, studies show that increases in homelessness, crime, familial violence, and child abuse are connected to areas where (large) meat-processing firms are located (400). This report confirms that “there is sufficient evidence to support the existence of the ‘Sinclair Effect’—i.e., that the unique and violent nature of the work involved has a deleterious effect on employees and, in turn on society in general” (400). In *Yonnonidio*, Olsen effectively characterizes the dangers associated with slaughterhouse work and the effects it has on other members of the community outside of slaughterhouse facilities. The interrelated abuses humans and nonhumans are subjected to in the slaughterhouse illustrate how harm is directly linked to abuses outside of it, and Olsen explores this relationship in detail by linking slaughterhouse abuses to the domestic sphere.

Invisibility and Oppression in the Home

In *Yonnonidio*, violence associated with working in the slaughterhouse is closely linked to domestic violence in familial spaces shedding light on the conditions women face at home and the interlocking oppression of women and other animals. Both spaces, home and casings, are predominantly housed with women, and Olsen considers the oppressive effects on women and other animals in those spaces to criticize the way industrial capitalism takes its toll on an entire

family unit. Just as women are bound to casings assigned repetitive tasks in the slaughterhouse, Olsen acknowledges that women's work in the home is just as tedious, repetitious, and suffocating. Even the Holbrook house itself is described with imagery resembling the slaughterhouse: the curtains are "yellowing and browning," the "stubborn walls and floors" portray a "smoke color." The "cardboard tacked for a carpet" is described as a "graveyard for splinters—even that was damp and soggy...how the house resisted her [Anna]" (77). Olsen's morbid descriptions of the dilapidated home resemble oppressive conditions in the meatpacking plant, from the chopping and butchering to the cooked and smoked bodies handled by relentless, seemingly tireless workers.

Olsen effectively links the despicable tasks assigned to women in the slaughterhouse with the burden of unpaid domestic work. Olsen cuts back and forth between slaughterhouse scenes and scenes that take place in the Holbrook home. Anna's labor-intensive home life parallels worker conditions at the slaughterhouse. This is one connection that directly ties the negligent actions of home and industry to the oppressive conditions of the capitalist system. Williamson emphasizes this connection "as Anna works over the steam of canning peaches and worries over the children's heat-stroke symptoms, the narration cuts to the slaughterhouse where conditions are hellish and a boiler explodes, scalding workers—particularly women" (457). Williamson reads the packinghouse workers, Peg, Andra, Philomena, and Cleola as they fall and writhe in their crinkling skins from the heat in direct connection to "the 'crinkling skins' and 'sudden juices' [that] also reference the peaches Anna is canning, imparting weight, danger, and a heightened sense of desperation to her labor" (457). Olsen highlights the necessity of canning peaches to sustain a family and parallels that work to the mechanical and repetitive motions involved in a women's job at the slaughterhouse. Women's work in the slaughterhouse and

Anna's work at home are underappreciated and grossly undervalued. Even though women at the factory are paid a low wage, both forms of labor render their efforts invisible.

Pregnant bodies are another layer of complexity that Olsen engages with to further explore women's burden at work and at home. Pregnant women are not taken care of appropriately in the meatpacking plant and are expected to perform on the same level as everyone else, their bodies presenting a nuisance for bosses. During the scene where the conveyor breaks down and the casings room explodes with steam, Lena, a pregnant worker, passes out from the scalding heat, falling to the floor. Her lifeless, pregnant body is a casualty of the "*steamed boiled broiled cooked and scalded*" conditions of casings (181). Lena's pregnancy is ignored by her supervisor and she is treated the same as the other women. Other workers attend to pregnant Lena. Men and women come together to clean up the mess and Jim drags Lena out of the "scalding fog," and sees "plastered onto her swollen belly the SAFETY sign torn from the wall by the first steam gust" (182). Lena's belly is a casing, a protective covering for the human life growing inside her, however, her pregnancy is only referred to as a "swollen belly" seemingly devoid of all human-ness. The safety sign that falls on top of her belly is cruel irony of the situation.

This parallel is the impetus for the debasement of women's bodies. The safety sign is plastered on Lena's belly in stark contrast to the way individuals are treated in the meatpacking plant. Workers are not referred to as living beings, but as mere parts of the machine only noticeable when the production line breaks down. They are punished for their "carelessness" and their inability to perform like a machine. The word "safety" is a reminder to all of them that safety is a luxury that cannot be afforded in a world that disregards compassion and empathetic response. Lena passes out because of the dangerous conditions in which she is forced to work

and her pregnant body is ignored by the supervisor as he docks her pay for failing to complete her work. The violent, careless acts taking place at the meatpacking plant reverberate inside the Holbrook home as well.

At home, pregnant Anna faints and lays “peacefully as if she were drowned, in a pool of water, and Will pouring over more, and Mazie shaking her and begging, ‘Wake up, wake up’” (106). Anna is expected to continue her domestic duties regardless of her condition, the same way that Lena must perform her role in casings. While pregnant, Jim expects Anna to remain domestically able and sexually available to satisfy his desires. In one scene, he comes home drunk and rapes his wife while Mazie listens on in horror; Anna miscarries as a result. Swollen bellies get ripped and gutted in both environments and Anna’s and Lena’s bodies are no different.

Anna’s multiple pregnancies take a toll on her body and after her miscarriage, broken, she retreats into herself, an impenetrable inner remoteness, neglecting her domestic duties. The breakdown of the home is significant in its likeness to the breakdown of the conveyor in the meatpacking plant. Cantalupo identifies a woman’s role as “caretaker,” of the family and the home. Similarly, Rosenfelt acknowledges that the “struggles of [Olsen’s] central characters dramatize the ravages of capitalism on the lives of the working people—miners, small farmers, packing house workers, and their families” (389). By doing so, Olsen brings to light the troubled and often neglected familial relationships in relation to poverty and hopelessness. A woman’s place in the novel is directly related to the struggles of the working laborer because, as Olsen very well knew, a mother and caretaker of the home is a labor intensive job and a job without pay. In order to take pleasure in the spaces of the home, one must care for it. A woman’s worth is often tested in the home space by how well she takes care of the cooking, cleaning, children, and

overall sense of comfort the home should provide. In contrast, the Holbrook home is a space of chaos, disarray, and uncleanliness. Care is often perverted into carelessness as the pressures of industry deeply effect the personal lives of the Holbrooks.

There is a difference, though, between neglect and an inability to provide due to lack of monetary means. Anna is creative in providing for her family with limited resources:

“newspapers stuffed in the shoes so that new ones need not be bought, and the washing done without soap. Somehow to skimp off everything that had long been skimmed on, somehow to find more necessities the body can do easiest without” (23). Being without does not translate into carelessness here. The novel shows how people living in a world that does not support workers with proper care or concern leads to the survival tactics taken on by Anna as a way to survive. The only time that domestic work is paid in the novel is if Anna does other people’s work. Jim, while working outside the home in order to provide for the family, does not help out at home. A woman’s work is solely her responsibility as when Anna becomes ill and yells at Jim: “And who’s to cook if I’m in bed? Who? The servants? The fine servants we keep on the big wages you’re makin?” (129). In this scene, Olsen brings to light the equally oppressive nature of the home space and the spaces of outside labor. A woman’s work maintains subservient status while living in a system that does not value domestic labor and distinguishes between the value of men’s and women’s work. Jim only recognizes Anna’s domestic labor when the home space breaks down: “meals were quick, slapped together, half burned. It drove Jim crazy. The untidiness, the closeness, the inaction” (56). Similar to Lena in the packing plant, Anna’s pregnant body is regarded as a “problem” because in this state, Anna would often ignore her domestic duties: “dirty clothes gathered into a waiting pile, bacon drippings coiled greasy in the bottom of pans, beds went unmade, and the smell of diapers layered over the room” (56). Olsen

recognizes that life as a meatpacking worker and as a mother is synonymous with an erasure of self, the inability to fully function as an individual, autonomous being. The worth of a woman amounts to what she can accomplish in her prescribed role as caretaker: wife, mother, and laborer. Jim reinforces this position by making utterances towards Anna neglecting her duties.

Resistance Efforts: A Hope for the Future?

Yonnondio represents a world where undervalued humans and nonhumans are branded and wind up casualties of a capitalist system that feeds and profits off their bodies. The slaughterhouse in the novel is the force that drives Olsen's message that industrial capitalism incinerates the lives of workers and processes those bodies much like it does hogs on the killing floor. But what happens next? Does hope exist? Will the Holbrooks continue on despite the hostile forces that consume their energy? While dark themes of hopelessness, oppression, and entrapment are represented in the novel, the final moments we experience with the Holbrooks are filled with laughter and hope. Gathered in the kitchen amidst the smoldering heat of summer, the family laughs at baby Bess's joy over flinging fruit jar lids. This joy propels Anna to call out to Jim. The last sentences of the novel leave us with Anna's words: "the air's changing, Jim. I see for it to end tomorrow, at least get tolerable. Come in and get freshened up" (191).

Yonnondio's abrupt ending does not provide closure, nor does it suggest that revolution is at hand like most other proletarian novels. Olsen tells readers that "it was not to have ended here" (193) and Pratt reports that since the novel's publication in 1974, other fragments from the novel have been released and other "parts are in the archives of the New York Public Library and Stanford University," providing more information as to what might have happened next if Olsen finished the novel (iv). While these other writings suggest possibilities, we only have what is

written in the novel. While the Holbrooks do not transcend their misery, they embody a strong will to survive, to carry on in the face of impossible odds. If there is any semblance of hope, it lies in the Holbrook's will to keep going.

This will to survive is illustrated in the final section of the novel while Anna is canning fruit in the kitchen. By Anna's side, baby Bess takes lids from the jars and bangs them on the counter. Bess disrupts Anna's repetitive motions of jarring fruit breaking up the monotony of domestic duties and bringing laughter back into the home:

Bess had been fingering a fruit-jar lid—absently, heedlessly dropped it—aimlessly groping across the table, reclaimed it again. Lightening in her brain. She releases, grabs, releases, grabs. I can do. Bang!...*I achieve, I use my powers; I! I!*...Bess' toothless, triumphant crow. Heat misery, rash misery transcended. (190)

In light of the ambiguity of this scene, Bess's determination at once mirrors workers in the slaughterhouse as they are assigned repetitive monotonous tasks, but her disruptive actions resist assembly-line work. The "lightening in her brain" demonstrates recognition and power of self that transcends misery. Bess' "toothless, triumphant crow" is a tentative gesture towards a time when things might "get tolerable" (191). This show of defiance suggests that something may change; it is the spark that can motivate political and social action against systemic pressures, even if an uprising cannot be fully realized within the scope of the novel.

Olsen tunes into the mother/daughter relationship in this scene as a way to negotiate women's power. In *Tillie Olsen and a Feminist Spiritual Vision*, Elaine Neil Orr recognizes Anna Holbrook's belief in hope and possibility for change. Readers are reminded of the song Anna sang to the children earlier in the novel, "I Saw a Ship a-Sailing" and according to Orr, the song is a reminder of Anna's longing for "freedom, expression, and knowledge" (67). She notes

that “the song returns us to the power of thought. As long as Anna can imagine freedom and expansion of her realities, she may be able to hope. And yet, the hope can really be only for her children. Her life has already been written” (67). Bess’s actions are a symbolic recognition of selfhood, the realization of “*I can do, I use my powers, I! I!*” which disrupt the mechanistic, zombified work that establishes the conditions of the worker making us keenly aware of the change that is dawning; this shift is in line with her mother’s determined hope. The novel does not provide a clear-cut path to revolution, but what it does offer is awareness and possibility. Olsen brings an awareness to the exploitive production practices that stifle the lives of many, killing any semblance of hope for the future. Bess’s actions, though, bring relief to the family, even if only for a brief moment, from dismal circumstances. Olsen’s unfinished ending provides the possibility for change, how future generations might slowly shift dominant ideologies that shape our world view in order to change the core values that determine their future.

Conclusion

Tillie Olsen’s *Yonnondio* makes fundamental connections between complex issues, such as the desperation of neglected workers toiling in deplorable working conditions, the horrid production practices of meatpacking that expose the contentious relationship between humans and other animals, similarities between humans and nonhumans in how they are treated within a capitalist system that profits off their bodies, and the ways in which these production practices impact family life. *Yonnondio* provides us with an approach to advocating for justice, not just for the working class, but for other animals as well. The novel effectively brings attention to the hardships of the working class while also exposing the devastation that is caused by mass production on human workers, especially women, animals, and the environment. As Pratt puts it:

“Olsen wrote this story when she was a young woman living close to the conditions she describes” (xvi). Olsen’s personal struggles provide a complexity to the novel’s many thematic components. Her own struggle with poverty and motherhood enriches the development of her characters that desperately seek survival.

Olsen’s ability to use the slaughterhouse as a way to examine the myriad ways that capitalist production scorches the lives of those working in and outside of these spaces effectively conveys the urgency for change. *Yonnondio* remains an important part of an American literary tradition that recognizes the lives of the working poor. The novel should also be regarded as a crucial text within an activist tradition that strives to expose the many ways that human and nonhuman lives are entangled. Olsen’s portrayal of mechanized slaughter production illustrates the butchering of human workers and it also extends concern to other animals as the systematic pressures lead to their oppression and exploitation under the same socio-economic conditions that affect humans. The next chapter explores the potential future of slaughter production as technological advancements influence the meat industry in the twenty-first century. Sinclair and Olsen’s narrative framing of slaughterhouse work in the first two chapters ground our understanding in how meat is mass produced and the horrors associated with it. This knowledge makes Margaret Atwood’s speculative world in *Oryx and Crake* easier to imagine.

CHAPTER THREE: HUMAN-ANIMAL HYBRIDS AND GENETIC MODIFICATIONS OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE*

Imagination,” said Crake. “Men can imagine their own deaths, they can see them coming, and the mere thought of impending death acts like an aphrodisiac.

—Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

Today's meat industry is a technological marvel. The inside of a modern-day poultry slaughterhouse looks like a hellish version of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory.

--Christopher Leonard, *Slate*

Introduction

In a special topics edition of the *PMLA*, Margaret Atwood suggests that literature is an “uttering, or outering, of the human imagination” (517). Atwood insists that understanding the imagination is necessary since what we imagine in fiction currently has potential to become reality. Similarly, Christopher Leonard presents a jarring comparison of Roald Dahl's fantastical chocolate factory to the horrors of the slaughterhouse in *The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business*. To analogize a beloved and well-known work of fantasy fiction to an unpopular and highly criticized industry exemplifies the power of literary metaphor, something that Atwood draws attention to in the writing she calls speculative fiction.

Atwood constructs fictive worlds and situations not so different from our own, stretching narratives to their utmost possibilities. For example, Coral Ann Howells states that *Oryx and Crake* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are an “imaginative writer's response to cotemporary situations of cultural crisis as [the novels] suppose what may happen at what Atwood has called ‘definitive

moments' after which "things [are] never the same again" (Howells 161). In other words, a turn in one direction or another can alter and produce a counter reality, which is one reason Atwood prefers speculative fiction to other labels. Atwood claims, "speculative fiction can bring us that other kind of news; it can speak of what is past and passing, but especially of what's to come" (515). The prophetic qualities of Atwood's writing prevents it from existing as mere social commentary. Instead, her writing promotes a call to action. Atwood imagines cultural narratives that have potential to shape the future allowing us to think critically about choices we make, consequences of those choices, and motivation towards advocacy.

This chapter considers the fine line between fiction and reality in a rapidly advancing world. In part, Atwood's oeuvre takes into account growing anxieties over existent technologies that were once considered unimaginable. For instance, one aspect of Atwood's work, especially within the MaddAddam Trilogy, "explores the consequences of new and proposed technologies...by showing them up and running" (Atwood 515). *Oryx and Crake*, the first book in the trilogy, predicts the outcome of a technologically advanced civilization that uses science to manipulate and torture animal bodies in the name of animal welfare and public health.

Published in 2003, *Oryx and Crake* explores a near future dominated by scientific advancements that resemble current developments in genetic engineering and imagines a plausible outcome for our world illustrating the progression of unrestrained technologies and how they contribute to Earth's apocalyptic future. In "Dis/integrating Animals: Ethical Dimensions of the Genetic Engineering of Animals," Traci Warkentin states that "Oryx and Crake provides a transitional narrative space for the discussion of current biotechnological philosophies and practices in Western society and where they might lead to in the not-so-distant future" (83). In a somewhat broader view, Phillip Armstrong contends that "visions of a grand

apocalypse,” like the one in *Oryx and Crake*, derive from the “crises of mid-and late-twentieth century modernity, the various genocides and biocides that brought into disrepute the promise of endless advancement through technological innovation” (187). Human intervention in the name of modern “progress” contributes to threats of extinction and immense loss of life for nonhuman animals bred specifically for human use, a cultural narrative continuing to unravel well into the twenty-first century.

Oryx and Crake portrays a near future society run by biotech companies that reinforce the subjugation of animal bodies through extreme genetic modification. The entire life cycle of an animal occurs inside science labs in what I call post-industrial slaughterhouses. Dubbed “compounds” in the novel, the post-industrial slaughterhouse replaces traditional mechanized production facilities. Instead of butchering animal bodies along large-scale electric assembly lines, scientists confine animals inside science labs prolonging their lives to manufacture a variety of products that benefit humans. While nontraditional, the post-industrial slaughterhouse is still, without a doubt, very factory-like. In labs, for example, animals are developed in petri dishes, penned in “special buildings, heavily secured,” and hooked up to “fleshy tubes” (26, 202). The labs are housed in compounds, large enclosed communities, where company employees and their families enjoy clean working facilities and safe living environments.

Jimmy, Atwood’s protagonist, lives with his parents in the OrganInc compound where his father is a genetic engineer and his mother, a microbiologist. Jimmy’s father likens compounds to fairy tale castles and he tells Jimmy: “castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping everybody else outside” (28). Atwood creates a world that is deteriorating from environmental degradation, corporate greed, and rampant biotechnologies. In order to protect the privileged few, compound families are separated from the outside world and

monitored by the CorpSeCorp, a corporate governing agency. In contrast, the pleeblands are cities that dwell on the outskirts of compounds filled with “addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies” (27). In other words, the CorpSeCorp divides individuals into two groups: scientists and everyone else. Scientists play god with humanity while the marginalized become lab rats in the world’s grandest science experiment.

Compound science labs specialize in an assortment of innovative technologies. Some engineer animals for food to sustain a growing population and others manipulate animals to manufacture desirable commodities that extend human life. In typical Atwood fashion, even compound names are tongue-in-cheek. The playful use of language in the novel reflects the ways that words can be manipulated and modified to represent something new, just like the animals who reside in these facilities. For example, OrganInc Farms is a bioengineering facility where scientists create new species of animals and manipulate existing ones. Part of this space is dedicated to a team of scientists who genetically modify pigs “to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs” (23). Similarly, NooSkins, a subsidiary of HelthWyzer Inc. is another type of compound using animals to develop “skin-related biotechnologies.” The Watson-Crick institute, a place for especially bright young scientists, experiment on a variety of flora and fauna. Children of compound families are trained at these special institutions that groom the next generation of scientists. The institute includes divisions such as Botanical Transgenics, NeoGeologicals, BioDefences, and NeoAgriculturals or “AgriCouture” as nicknamed by the students. In NeoAgri, (the privileged spaces of students in training), scientists create and breed animal-like creatures for food. Ironically, inside these highly surveilled and regulated compounds, scientists indulge in experiments that are constrained by nothing but the profit margin. In this world, especially the speculative, genetic engineering technologies encroach upon

all forms of life, provoking those in power to exercise absolute control over nature in order to “sustain” life and promote public “health.”

In what follows, I explain how Atwood creates a post-industrial slaughterhouse that utilizes advancements in science to redefine how animal bodies are “slaughtered” and how the manipulation of those bodies redefine human-animal relationships. I argue this manipulation, like present day slaughterhouses, contributes to the overall legitimization of economic systems and institutions that value human wants and desires over other animals for profit. The difference is that this post-industrial place of exploitation and violence is hidden behind the rhetoric of “animal welfare” and “sustainability.” Mutilated and genetically modified bodies are profits for corporate entities that strictly monitor and control the rhetoric of how the outside world views the slaughterhouse. To show Atwood’s bleak vision of the future, I explore parallels between biotechnologies imagined in *Oryx and Crake* and current real world technologies. These parallels reveal the rhetorical tactics used by the biotech and agriculture industries to hide the continued suffering of other animals. Technology that manipulates animal bodies in the name of public and environmental “health” are not saving animals, but endangering them further.

Technological Advancements in Contemporary Slaughter Production

In order to imagine the post-industrial slaughterhouse in *Oryx and Crake*, an understanding of modern slaughterhouse production, its future trajectory, and its viability in a capitalist economy is necessary. Since the late twentieth century, a steady rise in meat consumption contributed to economic shifts in food production that altered animal husbandry practices. The ability to raise a larger number of livestock in close proximity to slaughterhouses was cost efficient. Restructuring the way meat was produced eventually led to a monopoly of the

industry by a few large corporations, since most small and midsize farms could not compete with the quantity of livestock that their larger competitors were raising. The ability to breed, raise, fatten, and slaughter animals in essentially one place saved money and increased profit (Fitzgerald 61-63). Instead of hauling live animals across the country, as described in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, frozen pre-packed meat is transported over large distances in refrigerated/freezer trucks from meatpacking plants to its final destinations. The corporatization of the industry also changed the configuration of meat distribution. Leonard traces the monopolization of the meat industry by corporations: "four companies make 85% of America's beef and 65% of its pork. Just three companies make almost half of all the chicken" (281). The corporate-run concept for this kind of industrial-scale farming became known as the CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operation), or more commonly, the "Factory Farm" (Fitzgerald 64). In *The Jungle* and in *Yonnonddio*, Sinclair and Olsen recognize the suffering that is shared between humans and animals by pointing out the ways that industrialized labor devalues and commodifies both workers and other animals. As the industry continues to innovate through technological advancements in the twenty-first century, such as the invention of factory farms, abuses against other animals intensify.

Factory farms increase violence against animals in monstrous ways, changing the way animals are perceived. The confinement of large sociable animals, like cows, sheep, and pigs, to small spaces lead to a variety of problems including the spread of zoonotic diseases, unsanitary living conditions, and the manipulation of the animal's genetic makeup, forcing animals to adapt to an unnatural living situation. Warkentin suggests this "treatment of animal bodies as biofactories is a clear expression of the strong reductionist trend in Western sciences in general, and biotechnologies in particular, which has resulted in a predominant view of organisms as

machines” (84). Altering animal bodies to fit the needs of mass production changes the way other species are valued. Factory farms value the animal body by its weight in flesh. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood stretches operations of the agriculture industry to its grossest manifestation by perceiving the animal body itself as a factory. Science now has the capability to engineer an animal host that can generate and regenerate body parts in order to sustain and extend human life, lessening the animal’s intrinsic value and extending the animal’s suffering.

Changes to the agriculture industry over time continue to negatively impact animals, human workers, and the environment. *Oryx and Crake* takes part in revealing the adverse effects of the animal industrial complex and the speculative nature of Atwood’s novel gives rise to questions concerning ongoing economic, cultural, and ethical implications of these innovations. I suggest that Atwood picks up where Sinclair left off. Meaning, *Oryx and Crake* taps into growing anxieties associated with current trends in industrialized food production to bring awareness to unethical practices of the industry; however, she does not stop there. Atwood creates an environment where food production is befitting for the industry’s move towards biotechnological practices that butcher the animal body until it is unrecognizable, such as Atwood’s creation of animal hybrids, Chickie Nobs, Pigoons, Wolvogs, among others.

Technological advancements that manipulate animal bodies for human use not only hide the suffering of animals, but also continue to justify capitalist narratives perpetuating violence against animals and marginalized humans. Consumer capitalism, under a scientifically advanced economic system, creates food-producing technologies under the guise of environmental sustainability. In *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, James Gustave Speth argues that instead of taking a direct approach to repairing or avoiding environmental damage, companies focus on rhetorical tactics

that put a Band-Aid on an already distressed economy (7). Predatory corporations, like those in the novel, identify shifts in consumer spending and simply rebrand products in order to profit off environmentally conscious buyers. For instance, labels such as “organic,” “cage-free,” “grass fed,” “humanely raised,” and “synthetic hormone or antibiotic free” are misleading, a rhetorical tactic Atwood playfully exploits through the novel’s almost-recognizable compound names. “Green” product labels dupe consumers into believing they are investing in companies that are improving the environment, not damaging it further.

Atwood takes this standard industry practice and through her speculative fiction, shows how these mistruths can lead to drastic changes in the environment and the fall of modern civilization. The interlocking systems of corporate power and scientific manipulation become increasingly more transparent in speculative fiction, calling out the systematic basis for the exploitation of Earth and oppression of marginalized bodies. Gerry Canavan discusses the novel’s apocalyptic qualities to argue that the end of the world and the end of capitalism are one in the same. Canavan suggests the book seeks to “open up new spaces for imagining a post-capitalist future through a satirical, science fictional staging of capitalism’s final catastrophic breakdown—and the subsequent emergence of other kinds of lives, after the end of history” (139). Canavan rightfully states that never-ending corporate power goes hand-in-hand with scientific experimentation and the “end of history.” The end of history in Atwood’s narrative is the reality in which contemporary humans fail to act responsibly. Transforming the slaughterhouse from butchering animals on assembly lines, the mechanistic and barbaric practices of the past, to creating animal-like bodies in science labs by hooking animals up to tubes and prolonging their lives in the name of scientific advancement and discovery, these changes expose just how far consumer capitalism will go to exploit animals for profit.

The Post-Animal

The post-industrial slaughterhouse represented under corporate capitalism in *Oryx and Crake* at once eradicates the suffering of farmed animals, and at the same time, introduces new predicaments that put animal bodies at risk for further manipulation and commodification. Industrialized slaughterhouses function efficiently by mass murdering billions of animals every year, and while biotechnology in agriculture is in its infancy, the field is successfully developing alternatives to large-scale farming. It is unknown, though, how animals will suffer under new, and highly technological advanced models put forth by biotech firms. *Oryx and Crake* predicts a morbid outcome if these technologies are not controlled. In the novel, animal bodies are manipulated beyond comprehension forcing us to re-conceptualize current understandings of what makes an animal “animal.” Reading the novel through the concept of the *postanimal*, a theory developing out of the field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS), helps us begin to think about these developing technologies and how animals will suffer because of them. CAS helps us re-negotiate the value of technology and its power over animal life. Postanimality is not looking beyond the animal in a way that further hides the suffering of animals, but instead generates meaningful dialogue to help us imagine a world that moves beyond the terms “animal” and “human” to uncover the ways animal bodies still suffer under new forms of “slaughter.” In 2012, Vasile Stanescu and Richard Twine developed the concept to think about the human-animal divide, which they argue, “underlies anthropocentric privilege in the first place” (4). The basic premise of postanimalism is identifying underlying ideologies that legitimize the human-animal divide and Stanescu and Twine argue that only by transcending this divide, can we begin to see beyond these distinctions.

Postanimality breaks down into three lines of inquiry: first, how current technologies support hierarchies that legitimize animal abuse, second, the negative impact of current bioengineering practices that are performed on animal bodies, and third, how postanimal theory provides a framework for unpacking animal abuse in an advanced technological age of production by bringing animals back into the conversation. In doing so, we develop an understanding into how these technologies continue to violate animal bodies for profit, furthering the suffering of animals. These three lines of inquiry are explored in the sections that follow.

Genetic Engineering

Genetically engineered specimens are at the center of Atwood's novel and shows the desperate lengths humans will go to utilize animal bodies for human wants and desires. Hybrid animals subjected to bizarre experimentation in a new type of slaughterhouse that employ's scientists, instead of blue-collar workers and who thrive off playing gods with the DNA of other animals. These "new" breeds, such as wolvogs and rakunks to name a few, represent the exploitive power humans possess over animal bodies as a biogenetic project in the post-industrial slaughterhouse. For example, wolvogs are a new breed of dog mixed with wolf DNA. They are the CorpSeCorp defense system. Wolvogs look like friendly domesticated animals, but when approached are hostile and aggressive revealing their wild nature. Human-driven advancements in animal production not only violate animal bodies in insidious ways, but also provide a platform for humans to exercise power over animal bodies in other areas of environmental management.

In addition to the creation of animal hybrids, another strategy of the post-industrial slaughterhouse entails changing the way humans, as well as animals, behave. Jonathan Clark

explores ecological biopower, an expansion of Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, to analyze power relations between humans and domesticated animals. Clark states that ecological biopower helps us understand how power is exercised over all life, not just human life, and that it is often exercised in the name of the environment (Clark 111). He notes that a "great strength of biopower as a concept is that it helps broaden our understanding of violence against animals" through environmental governance that is supposedly "representing and intervening in the lives of nonhuman animals, at both the individual and the population scales" (111-12).

The regulatory pressure to conform is not only exercised on animal bodies in the novel, but also on human scientists who work in compound labs. Vulnerable humans and nonhumans are both subject to captivity, surveillance, and punishment. For example, the CorpSeCorps are put in place to protect the economic interests of the corporations that run compound facilities and disposes of anyone who poses a threat to those interests, such as Jimmy's mother. Once a scientist, Jimmy's mother has a psychological breakdown and "retires" from her work as a microbiologist. She recognizes that the laws of nature are being violated to meet consumer demand. She tells Jimmy's father "you're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral. It's sacrilegious" (57). Jimmy's mother runs off to join the eco-religious group, the God's Gardeners, and the CorpSeCorps men flag Jimmy and his family as dissenters. Jimmy's mother is motivated to rebel because of her insider knowledge of the industry—this knowledge makes her a threat to the institution from which she is running. She is captured and executed for "treason," a deliberate act that justifies violence for the "good" of the community. Executing a scientist that is accepted by the community is conditioning humans as well as other animals. This makes their obedience complicit in a new normal of the slaughter of humans who do not fit into a projected behavior. Part of what makes biopower effective is its "justification for the violence"

(Clark 119). In other words, “violence is inflicted on one group of animals to benefit another” (Clark 119). Violence is justified in order to preserve life and Jimmy’s mother, and others like her, are sacrificed in order to maintain the cycles of violence that keep compounds running efficiently.

Interfering with the “building blocks of life,” as Jimmy’s mother calls it, is considered a necessary evil for the purpose of manufacturing cutting edge products that “sustain” human life. Although highly regulated, scientists are given the tools and freedom to experiment at will as long as the end result proves lucrative for the industry. The element of control that is exercised over human bodies is the same force that empowers privileged humans to practice science in unethical ways. Scientists at OrganInc Farms experiment with animals as an after-hours hobby. Scientists boast: “create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God” (51). They create and destroy a number of animals, such as the cane toad (mix of toad and chameleon), the rakunk (part raccoon, part skunk), and the snat (a combination of snake and rat). The gratification of possessing power over other species generates a belief that this power is an inherent right and reflects the stronghold humans have over other animals, especially in the way humans revere certain animals over others. The rakunks are well-loved “pets” while pigeons, described as vile and feared, are nothing more than organ-producing machines. Exposing animals to further manipulation and alienation within this new kind of slaughterhouse reduces the intrinsic value of other species while promoting human “health” and “vitality.” Rakunks are engineered without the pungent smell of a skunk and minus the “crabbiness” of raccoons; they are “clean, with a nice disposition. Placid” (51).

Pigeons, on the other hand, are presented as organisms especially designed to provide health benefits for humans. OrganInc brochures stress the “efficacy and comparative health

benefits of the pigoon procedure” (23). Unlike the “cute” factor that draws humans to rakunks, pigoons are feared because they are spliced with human DNA making them highly intelligent and eerily similar to humans. While genetically engineering animals is something the agriculture industry is currently doing in slaughterhouses, Atwood is calling into question an obvious continuation of gene splicing by inventing animals who produce human organs. In OrganInc Farms, pigoons are formally called “multiorganifers.” They are a species of pig genetically engineered to harvest human replacement organs. The pigs grow multiple hearts, livers, kidneys and regenerate these organs, so they do not have to be destroyed. The project is a lucrative one and a “great deal of investment money” had gone into it (23). Employees were fearful, though, of the pigoon’s intelligence and uneasy because they hoped “none of the defunct pigs ended up as bacon and sausages: no one would want to eat an animal whose cells might be identical with at least some of their own” (23-4). Staff wonder if “pigoon pie...pigoon pancakes, pigoon popcorn” could end up on the lunch menu as a way of disposing them. This anxiety is born from a fear of cannibalism. If pigs are engineered with human DNA, eating a pigoon would be like eating a human and Jimmy “did not want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself. Neither he nor they had a lot of say in what was going on” (24).

Jimmy’s recognition of pigoon identity is a reminder that these animals are much like himself because he was born into a system that values only what he can produce to benefit the corporations for which he is groomed. Likewise, pigoons are merely valued for what they can produce for the human species and this deliberate exercise of power over animal life ignores the intrinsic value of these genetically altered pigs, much like farmed pigs who are sent to slaughter. The pigoon project is dangerous because it stretches the limits of the industry’s power over humans and separates them according to skill, strengthening and expanding the pool of

marginalized humans and animals who are both subject to experimentation that pushes corporate agendas. Foucault explains that “violence is often wielded as an instrument of power” (341) and since the “exercise of biopower over animals often entails violence,” this violence is inflicted in the name of life (Clark 119). Biopower, as such, legitimizes bioengineering projects we see in the novel. Even though factory farming is an archaic tradition in *Oryx and Crake*, the “factory” mentality is still upheld in the science lab. The ideological belief that positions privileged humans above and outside of nature justifies intervening in the genetic makeup of animals for the benefit of the wealthy. In Atwood’s world, everyone is at risk of being “slaughtered.”

What we see in these examples is the progression of an industry that Atwood predicts in its most advanced and ugliest form, the expansion of bioengineering and technology within agriculture. Since the novel’s original publication over 15 years ago, there is striking similarity between Atwood’s imaginative future and what is currently underway in the field of bioengineering. The industry claims that developing gene-editing technologies are to benefit, not only the industry, but animal “welfare,” too. From virus-resistant pigs, heat-tolerant cattle, to fatter and more muscular lambs, biotechnological “fixes” to the meat industry are manifold. In 2018, an article in *The Washington Post* reports on scientists who impregnate cows with embryos that are genetically edited to “grow and look like males, regardless of their biological gender” (“Gene-Edited Farm...”). Changing an animal’s DNA to produce all-male cattle would maximize profit since males gain weight “more efficiently” than females (“Gene-Editing Farms...”). As evident in this example, technologies that track and change an animal’s biology are not for the benefit of the animal, but about controlling the reproduction of an entire species for the benefit of corporations. Changing an animal’s DNA to control its reproductive cycle is one way gene-editing technology alters animal bodies to “fit” industry needs, an aspect of

ecological biopower that “intervenes in the lives of nonhuman animals” and all of this is done in the name of animal “welfare” and environmental “sustainability” (Clark 111).

Gene-editing also interferes with the way animals develop. Editors from *The Economist* claim that DNA tweaking will lead to creating animals that produce exactly what is needed and eliminating what is not. For example, Recombinetics, a firm out of St. Paul, Minnesota, is creating a “strain of hornless Holstein cattle” (“Factory Fresh”). According to the firm, Holsteins are popular milking cows, but horns “make them dangerous to work with, so they are normally dehorned as calves, which is messy, and painful for the animal” (“Factory Fresh”). This firm also manipulates genes to produce “castration-free pigs.” This species of pig will not have to go through painful castration processes because piglets will never go through puberty making castration unnecessary (Choi).⁹ What these companies do not do is address why these procedures are necessary in the first place. Instead, the animal body is manipulated to fit the industry, an industry that does not provide adequate space or stress-free living conditions for the animals rendering painful procedures and DNA manipulation necessary.

Armed with the knowledge of trending innovative technologies in agricultural production, Atwood paints a bleak trajectory. Biotechnologies that alter animal bodies to maximize profit leads to the unethical creation of infamous hybrid animals that fill Atwood’s near future environment. In a 2016 interview on *Science Friday*, a weekly radio show dedicated to science and technology, Atwood discusses the novel’s genetically advanced world. She reminds us that “the things in the book that people may think are very weird—and they may think that I just made them up—some of them already existed when I was writing the book”

⁹ According to reports, pig castration is necessary because once the piglet goes through puberty, the meat takes on an unpleasant odor known “boar taint,” so pigs are castrated, a procedure that is commonly performed without painkillers. Altering the genetic makeup of the pig would eliminate this act, a so-called victory for animal advocates. Reported by Candice Choi from Phys.org, a leading journal in biotechnology.

(“Margaret Atwood on the Science”). While seemingly bizarre, Atwood’s fictional inventions, such as the Crakers (an advanced humanoid species developed by Jimmy’s friend Crake), pigoons, chickieNobs, wolvogs, and rakunks, etc., are inspired by real genetic wonders.¹⁰ While genetic changes may spare future farm animals from factory farming processes, these technologies legitimize new forms of “butchering.” As Stanescu and Twine rightfully argue, genetic manipulation that alter animal bodies and change relationships to satisfy an industry’s efforts to profit off them intensifies the original Cartesian dualism “inherent in the factory farm system between human-as-person and animals-as-machine” (9). The human need to manipulate animals is revealed in the genetic alteration of their bodies in the post-industrial slaughterhouse as well as the corporate control exercised over human life, all themes presented in Atwood’s far-fetched fictional world, that is now, not very far-fetched.

Lab-grown Meat

Genetically altering animal DNA to produce higher yields for corporations is one of many developing scientific inventions explored in *Oryx and Crake*. Experiments at the cellular level (lab-grown meat or in vitro meat) are also attracting attention due to the “environmental friendly” appeal to these projects. Recently scholars have incorporated the term postanimal to advance the understanding of animal abuse in lab-grown meat. In the article, “In Vitro Meat: Power, Authenticity, and Vegetarianism,” John Miller argues that lab grown meat merely perpetuates a meat-eating culture, what he calls a “carniculture” (42). Advancements in

¹⁰ Alba, the glowing bunny created by Eduardo Kac (Copeland, reporting for *The Washington Post*). Spider goats, created by Randy Lewis, produce milk with a silk protein that can be refined and spun into a fiber. A taxidermy version of a spider goat, Freckles, is on display at the Center for PostNatural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Rutherford reporting for *The Guardian*); Scientist Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte wants to use gene editing to create human-animal hybrids that we can harvest for parts; known as the Crispr gene-editing platform (Hayasaki, reporting for *Wired*).

bioengineering render factory-farming operations unnecessary, and yet, these tech-savvy practices still contribute to the human-animal divide and to the devaluation of animal bodies. Bioengineering promotes an ethical alternative to factory farming, but continues to justify the desire to manipulate animals to satisfy a meat-eating culture.

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy learns about the process of making ChickieNobs. These creatures are unlike real chickens. Jimmy describes one as a “large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing” (202). Crake confirms for Jimmy that these bulbs of flesh are indeed “chickens...chicken parts. Just the breasts, on this one. They’ve got ones that specialize in drumsticks, too, twelve to a growth unit” (202). Jimmy points out that these creatures do not have any heads, but the scientist confirms that the head is in the middle: “There’s a mouth opening at the top, they dump the nutrients in there. No eyes or beak or anything, they don’t need those” (202). The scientist also admits they have eliminated brain functions that have nothing to do with “digestion, assimilation, and growth,” so the “animal welfare freaks won’t be able to say a word, because the thing feels no pain” (203).

ChickieNobs are fascinating inventions as they raise important questions regarding the ethical treatment of animals, posing a challenge to Peter Singer’s central philosophy: Are pain and suffering the sole determinants of how animals are treated? In the context of the novel, the answer is simply, no. For instance, Carol J. Adams confirms that the “focus on suffering creates a new category, ‘humane meat,’ that helps people reduce the issue to ‘they aren’t suffering so it’s okay to eat them’” (14). Furthermore, in “ChickieNobs and Ecological Dignity,” Russell Edwards notes that, “despite the total neutralisation of pain and suffering, inflicting such an existence upon another living being seems *worse* than most horrible forms of factory farming currently

practised” (Edwards). Jimmy’s revulsion at the sight of these chicken-like creatures suggests that some line was crossed, “some boundary transgressed...how much is too much, how far is too far?” (205).

The creation of ChickieNobs calls into question Western value systems that uphold human exceptionalism and as Edwards reminds us, “humans are just one of many species making up the ecological community; we are not the masters of the community, or the masters of its members” (“ChickieNobs and Ecological Dignity”). A lack of respect for other species and the ecological community itself is the driving force behind the savage treatment of nonhuman animals. Despite the absence of eyes and beak, the use of ChickieNobs still draws a strong reaction from Jimmy and in creating ChickieNobs, Atwood’s message is clear: regardless of the desensitizing capabilities that genetic engineering provides, concern for the existence of living beings needs to move beyond sentiency to avoid the apocalyptic demise of humankind. While shrouded in “environmental friendly” rhetoric, lab-grown meat presents a major moral crisis. If we continue to regard the environment as a commodity, we run the risk of opening ourselves up to other harmful acts, including the continuation of abuses performed on other species and humans, a narrative trajectory Atwood fulfills in *Oryx and Crake*.

While ChickieNobs are extreme examples, lab-grown meat experiments have grown exponentially in the present day. Unlike plant-based imitations, lab-grown meat “start[s] with cells extracted from an animal and cultured to develop strands of muscle tissue fit for frying in a nugget or pressing into a burger patty” (Servick). Cultured meat was a technological concept popularized by Jason Matheny in the early 2000s, and unveiled as “slaughter-free meat” in 2013 by Mark Post, a professor from Maastricht University in the Netherlands. Post unveiled the first hamburger made from muscle cells grown in a lab. According to Post, technological

improvements already underway will “increase the density of muscle cells that can be grown in a reactor, [with] hopes that Mosa Meat [Post’s company]...will have hamburger mince ready for sale...in five years’ time” (“Factory Fresh”). The hefty price tag involved in manufacturing these products, however, has forced them to renegotiate this timeline if the company wants to distribute widely. Nonetheless, the popularity of lab-grown meat is increasing. Memphis Meats, a firm out of California, created a similar product with the first lab-grown meatball (“Factory Fresh”). In fact, Bill Gates and recently, the Tyson Corporation, invested in Memphis Meats in January of 2018. As foreshadowed by Atwood, technology and agriculture companies are already teaming up to profit off this new industry. Bill Gates, the billionaire tech giant, and Tyson, one of the largest chicken firms in the country, are buying into a new version of meat production that promises benefits for humans and the environment.

While the technology is advancing, there is little to no knowledge about how this “meat” will affect the human body long term. Professor of Philosophy Ben Bramble argues that lab-grown meat presents a “serious moral problem from the fact that we will likely switch over to lab-grown meat because it is cheap, or thanks to its benefits for human health or the environment...we will do it for our own sake and not for the sake of animals” (Bramble). The impact of lab-grown meat may likely reflect positively on the bioengineering industry because it found a way to eliminate the need to slaughter animals, an effort to end their suffering in the future, but if we switch over merely for the benefit of human health as Bramble contends, we risk the failure of taking action on factory farms for moral reasons, which “could leave us open to committing other atrocities, or harming ourselves in various ways” (Bramble).

Current anxieties over bioengineering legitimize concerns brought to light in the fictive world that Atwood creates. Shannon Hengen comments at the end of her essay on Atwood and

environmentalism that “Nature—physical or human—seen as a commodity always represents betrayal in Atwood’s works, and betrayal has consequences” (84). In the novel, regardless of technology that promises “environmental friendly” and “sustainable” “meat,” the industry’s questionable practices lead to a consumer culture that spirals out of control. The creation of animal-like bodies, such as ChickieNobs, not only reduce nonhuman animals to, what Warkentin describes as “biomachines,” but also normalizes the practice. Warkentin contends that “the mechanization of nature will lead to the mechanization of ourselves, our sentiments, judgements, fear, and dreams” (100). Reducing other species to inanimate objects creates an ethical void and diminishes care for the integrity of life, which is why Stanescu and Twine propose a postanimal perspective to consider ways of exposing the “ultimate capitalization of animal bodies” (6). ChickieNobs, in the novel, are sold as fast food items called ChickieNob Bucket O’Nubbins. Jimmy remarks, eating these are like “eating a large wart...but maybe he wouldn’t be able to taste the difference” (203). Jimmy, having knowledge from where this product originates, is aware of what he is eating, however, the general population does not. Without recognition of the interrelated forms of species oppression, humans become desensitized and unaware of corporate intent, not only to the unethical treatment of other animals, but also to various forms of products that wind up on their dinner plates.

Replicating real meat ultimately sustains the public’s appetite for meat and it does not analyze the anthropocentric value systems that empower a meat-eating culture. Stanescu and Twine explain that “far from a critique of factory farming, anthropocentric privilege, and human chauvinism, in reality, the fabrication of in vitro meat serves merely to hide the reality of both capitalism and speciesism, promising, although never delivering, a world in which the instrumentality of nonhuman life has become rendered ‘sustainable’” (6). Essentially, the fake

meat industry found a way to appeal to environmentally conscious buyers by rationalizing their use of animals in order to make money. In “The Artificial Meat Factory—the science of your synthetic supper” (2019), Tom Ireland states, “just one cell could, in theory, be used to grow an infinite amount of meat. When fed a nutrient-rich serum, the cells turn into muscle cells and proliferate, doubling in number roughly every few days” (“The Artificial Meat Factory”). Just as the title of his article implies, the artificial meat industry is, indeed, a factory and must operate as such in order to produce industrial-scale products. The danger, however, lies in the power of creating for creation’s sake, the points explored in the previous section that highlight Atwood’s hybrid creations and the way scientists use animal DNA for fun. Experimentation involved in combining different animals for novelty purposes is, and should be, cause for concern. As Stanescu and Twine reiterate in their 2012 publication, anthropocentric privilege and human chauvinism are at work here if animal products are created for amusement and novelty. With knowledge of recent developments in cellular agriculture, *Oryx and Crake* exists as a prescient novel leading us towards a future Atwood rightly predicts.

Gendered Violence

Atwood’s near future not only contextualizes the violent and bleak future of nonhuman animals within the post-industrial slaughterhouse, but also illustrates a similar fate for marginalized humans, particularly female. In *Oryx and Crake*, violence does not exist in a vacuum and so the questionable ethics involved in slaughterhouse operations also run rampant throughout various entertainment mediums that glorify violence and objectify women. As teenagers, Crake and Jimmy enjoyed entertainment in the form of video games and reality television such as Extinctathon, Queek Geek Show, and Nitee-nite.com. These entertainment

mediums present violence in various ways and while watching executions on hedsoff.com, Jimmy and Crake question the validity of the actions they are viewing:

Jimmy: “Do you think they’re really being executed?” He said. “A lot of them look like simulations.”

“You never know,” said Crake.

“You never know what?”

“What is *reality*?” (83)

Violent actions are sensationalized through mediums that show various forms of bodily mutilation on a continuous loop and perceptions of reality are lost in the repetitive nature of actions viewed on the screen. Under such circumstances, these violent actions take on an unrealistic quality leading to emotional dullness. Violence against bodies is normalized in a society that performs violent actions on a regular basis, and the viewer becomes desensitized to this violence. What they are watching on hedsoff.com is what they are also witnessing in the lab: the manipulation and mutilation of animal bodies.

Queek Geek show, another show Jimmy and Crake enjoy watching, features a contest where humans eat live animals and prizes of “hard-to-come-by-foods” are given out (85). “Real” products are so rare in this world that the public resorts to unthinkable violent contests just to taste some semblance of authenticity. Jimmy watches and thinks: “it was amazing what people would do for a couple of lamb chops or a chunk of genuine brie” (85). Entranced by what he sees, Jimmy flips from Queek Geek show to pornographic videos until the mutilations of bodies are synchronized:

The body parts moving around on screen in slow motion, an underwater ballet of flesh and blood under stress, hard and soft joining and separating, groans and screams, close-

ups of clenched eyes and clenched teeth, spurts of this or that. If you switched back and forth fast, it all came to look like the same event. Sometimes they'd have both things on at once, on a different screen. (86)

The imagery in this scene illustrates fragmentation, mutilation, and violence; body parts, whether human or nonhuman, are indistinguishable from each other. Screams, groans, spurts of blood signify slaughter and sex and there is no distinction between the two acts from these different internet programs. This imagery is also reminiscent of how slaughterhouse production is typically described: "flesh and blood under stress," "groans and screams," and "clenched eyes and clenched teeth." Bodies are violated, commodified and degraded for the sake of entertainment and these internet-based shows described above are readily available in Jimmy's world showing a level of brutality that commodifies these actions for the sake of desire.

As described in previous chapters, there is a correlation between slaughterhouse violence and violent acts performed on marginalized humans. In *Oryx and Crake*, pornography, in particular, demonstrates how sexual acts penetrate the female body in ways that resemble the act of butchering. In the novel's post-apocalyptic storyline, Jimmy squats in an old watchtower to avoid wild pigeons hunting him and discovers old print-outs of pornographic images that used to belong to compound guards. He describes the illustrations: "a skinny girl wearing nothing but high-heeled sandals and standing on her head; a blonde dangling from a hook in the ceiling in some kind of black-leather multiple-fracture truss, blindfolded but with her mouth sagging open in a hit-me-again drool; a big woman with huge breast implants and wet red lipstick, bending over and sticking out her pierced tongue" (271). The imagery here, similar to the videos Crake and Jimmy watched as teens, is described with focus on the female body in positions that resemble slaughterhouse practices and the industry's domination over those bodies. The print-

outs are overtly sexualized and portray female bodies in bondage. The women are compared according to physical appearance and plumpness of figure. One woman is positioned upside down hanging from a hook, the same way animals are propped up on slaughter production lines and parts of the body are constricted and pierced similar to how animal bodies are butchered. Regardless of species, undervalued bodies are consumed within a system that profits off the mutilation and objectification of those bodies. In this scene, as in many others in the novel, women are perceived as “meat for the grinder.” Animalizing women for the sake of male desire perpetuates Western philosophical views that subjugate women and animals. This stereotype promotes sexism and speciesism and as examined in Chapter Two, slaughterhouse operations function by regulating and manipulating female bodies. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood explores this connection in her representation of gendered characters.

Oryx, one of the few female characters who interrupts the predominantly male voices in the novel, is represented as closest to nature and thus connected to the environment’s ill-fated future. Oryx, named after the oryx, an African antelope, is a survivor of sex trafficking, and according to Jimmy, plays the role of wild temptress who cannot be pinned down, but is also ultimately the victim of Crake’s devious plan to destroy the world. In “Not Unmarked: From Themed Space to a Feminist Ethics of Engagement in Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” Shari Evans argues the women in the novel are represented as “mother or whore, as unattainable or sexually available” (42) in a world dominated by Western patriarchal values.

Conclusion: Reality versus Simulation: What is Real Meat?

In the novel, advancements in bioengineering that produce fake meat are met with confusion about what is real and what is not. Therefore, it allows us to create (and consume) that

which we have not thought through. Fake leads to catastrophe in an unregulated system built on capitalistic principles of profit and *Oryx and Crake* exposes the disposability of animal bodies in capitalism and the benefits involved in deliberately engineering environmental crises, such as Jimmy's account of the bonfire scene. In this scene, young Jimmy witnesses animals burning in a large pile. Standing next to his father, he remembers pigs, cows, and sheep burning, "flames shot up and out, yellow and white and red and orange, and a smell of charred flesh filled the air" (16). The smell reminded him of the way his hair smelled when he burned it. Jimmy discovers that the animals were intentionally infected by a genetic engineering company to drive up meat prices. Because the disease spread faster than anticipated, scientists were forced to destroy all the animals before the disease spread to humans. Jimmy feels anxious about the animals and asks his dad if they suffered. His dad replies: "the animals were dead. They were like steaks and sausages only they still had their skins on" (16). In this moment, Jimmy makes a connection between suffering, sentience, and food production. As a child he is confused by his father's words: "steaks didn't have heads. The heads made a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes...the lit-up, suffering animals" (18-9). Jimmy feels guilty because he cannot save the burning animals and this guilt materializes out of a gap in understanding between meat and where it comes from. To Jimmy, a cow is not steak and a pig is not sausage, yet the bonfire he witnessed as a child closes this gap and continues to haunt him into adulthood.

In another scene, Jimmy recalls a pair of rain boots he possessed as a child with pictures of ducks on them. In one scene Jimmy steps in chemicals and fearfully looks down at his boots thinking the chemicals will harm the ducks. Jimmy's father tells him that a poisonous disinfectant will not hurt the ducks because the "ducks were only like pictures, they weren't real

and had no feelings” (15). In this instance, Jimmy’s father is right; the ducks are not real, but this scene shapes the way violence is perceived throughout the novel. If animals are represented as commodities, “not real,” and are genetically manipulated so that they do not look like animals anymore, there is a lack of empathy in other areas where violence occurs leading to dissociation and desensitization. The process of desensitization starts with disassociation and Jimmy’s connection to “real” animals as a child slowly fades; his failure to decipher the difference between “real” ducks and the pictures of ducks on his rain boots infiltrates the world in which adult Jimmy lives. Life is a simulation for him—it is difficult to determine reality from fabrication.

The advancements in biotechnology that infiltrate the slaughter industry in Atwood’s speculative fiction call attention to the realities we face today. Continual abuses of land, and the unabashed extraction of the Earth’s natural resources are contributing to the acceleration of climate change, the annihilation of species, and complete environmental destruction. In order for the global economy to continue to profit off of the Earth’s destruction, industries mask the atrocities that currently face humanity by employing “greening” tactics, which furthers the manipulation of bodies and perpetuates damaging ideologies. Warkentin argues that “if we continue along the biotechnological path without questioning its ideological basis...we gamble with becoming machines ourselves” (101). Just as Atwood describes Jimmy’s experiences with simulations of violence, we, too, run the risk of becoming desensitized to the destruction of other species and of ourselves. In the next chapter, the future of these ideologies are recognized as David Mitchell poses a world where farmed animals do not exist and in their stead, human beings become the next likely bodies used to sustain life on Earth.

CHAPTER FOUR: HUMAN FOODSTUFF: DAVID MITCHELL'S *CLOUD ATLAS* AND THE DYSTOPIAN TRANSFORMATION OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

A slaughterhouse production line lay below us, manned by figures
wielding scissors, sword saws, and various tools for cutting, stripping, and
grinding...I should properly call those workers butchers: they Snipped off collars,
stripped clothes Shaved follicles, peeled skin, offcut hands and legs, sliced off
meat, spooned organs...drains hoovered the blood.

—David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

...how is it some men attain mastery over others while the vast majority live and
die as minions, as livestock?

--David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

Introduction

The epigraph from David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* (2004) describes a slaughterhouse production line on "Papa Song's Golden Ark," where Asian female bodies are (dis)assembled and repurposed. Flesh is ripped apart and divided into edible and nonedible parts; organs are spooned out and hands and feet discarded. The slaughterhouse imagery used in this scene brings attention to the ways in which human bodies are mass-produced, recycled, and consumed through slaughterhouse practices currently restricted to factory-farmed animals. Mitchell imagines a dystopian environment where industrial-scale violence is informed by animal slaughter to show how marginalized human bodies are collectively abused for profit. This narrative unveils how contemporary factory farming practices inform violent capitalist practices that exploit the body—particularly the racialized female body—in order to fulfill a service economy culture. Paying particular attention to the Sonmi-451 section of the novel, I argue that

human slaughter is a direct consequence of the way that society devalues nonhuman life under consumer capitalism.

Mitchell imagines the ultimate slaughterhouse—an extreme but familiar setting of mechanized lines, saws, drains, etc. The worst version of humanity is represented in the creation, enslavement, and slaughter of human clones. In the previous chapter, Margaret Atwood presents an alternative view of the slaughterhouse, the post-industrial slaughterhouse, where butchery takes place at a genetic level, creating hybrid animals that are no less disposable than Mitchell's clones. Although under the guise of creating an environmentally sustainable food source, Atwood's animals are victimized beyond traditional breeding and slaughter; they are exploited at their most basic genetic level for the sole benefit of their human consumers—a narrative Mitchell extends beyond the animal to the genetically altered human. The slaughterhouse, its labor force, and its victims are the casualties of a mechanized institution that dominate these various bodies. In *Cloud Atlas*, the labor force and victims are one in the same. The science that drives Atwood's manipulation of animals at the cellular level has now moved on to human specimens. Instead of a future that moves past industrial farming, Mitchell imagines a future where the current model is at the heart of the economic system.

Dystopian Fictions and Narrative Form

Cloud Atlas is situated within the dystopian literary tradition and reveals worlds that are different or near-different from our current one. *Cloud Atlas*'s near future is set in Nea So Copros, an imagined unified Korea where private corporations act as governing agents. Similar to Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, the corporate authoritarianism represented in *Cloud Atlas* allows readers to perceive a world where the grossest manifestations of consumer capitalism

materialize. Keith Booker describes dystopian literature as the “epitome of social critique” as it questions current social conditions and political systems either through a “critical examination of utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into different contexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions” (3). Whereas Atwood identifies with the term “speculative” to construct environments that, in her words, “we find ourselves enmeshed in even as we speak,” Mitchell projects an even uglier setting in *Cloud Atlas* that forwards Atwood’s trajectory (“Margaret Atwood on Science Fiction”). Nea So Copros is the epitome of a consumer capitalist environment where Mitchell shows how the capitalist system not only exploits and oppresses laboring bodies for profit, but feeds those same bodies back into the system itself in order to sustain it. This dystopic future, however, does not exist inside a vacuum. Mitchell effectively crafts a larger narrative that sets the stage for this extreme outcome. Thus, *Cloud Atlas*, as a whole, should be read as a social critique of Western imperialism, those mechanisms of power that justify colonization, terrorism, globalization, and rampant consumerism, issues analyzed in more detail in the following section of this chapter.

The novel’s dystopian attributes are woven into a collection of individual stories that span centuries, reinforcing broader themes associated with humanity’s predatory nature. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Mitchell says that “I decided to write the novel as a chain of plot-and-character studies about how individuals prey on individuals, corporations on employees, tribes on tribes, majorities on minorities, and how present generations ‘eat’ the sustenance of future generations” (“Genesis”). Casey Shoop and Dermot Ryan affirm that Mitchell’s novel is a “gigantic restaurant” where “history is a kind of metabolic system in which each discrepant episode consumes the prior in turn so that the ‘overarching theme’ of predacity is powered to

repeat itself through time” (98). The particular ordering of the novel’s individual stories encapsulates the unabashed consumption practices of the West while framing a larger narrative that reflects the rise and fall of that same civilization. *Cloud Atlas* begins with five individual stories, told in chronological order, each truncated at a critical point in the narrative. These stories are then followed by a complete post-apocalyptic chronicle before revisiting and completing the first five narratives in reverse order (envision a boomerang). The structure of the novel allows readers to see the inevitable outcomes of the first five narratives when told chronologically, but also opens the possibility for a more hopeful future when those narratives are finished in reverse order in the second half of the novel. Each story examines a different pre-apocalyptic era and explores the dynamic between marginalized characters and larger, more powerful entities who “consume” (in various ways) weaker characters. Collectively, these stories show a slow progression towards the ultimate and gruesome form of consumerism: corporations that clone a workforce of slaves then recycle those clones to create the food source that nourishes the next generation.

Cloud Atlas’s unconventional form also contributes to an understanding of how cultural systems shape human activity and the surrounding environment. In Mitchell’s world, the powerful feed on the weak and the novel’s ruthless emphasis on profit over people brings attention to the divide that exists between the privileged and oppressed. Each character’s experience is imbued with struggles of survival and problems that must be overcome in order to avoid catastrophic disasters on an individual and collective level. On this point, Astrid Bracke notes that “essentially, the novel asks the question whether the harm humanity has done can still be reversed, or whether in harming its natural environment it is effectively killing itself” (8). Each individual narrative, and thus the narrative’s main character, is linked to the next, exploring

ideas of a shared oppression while at the same time sensitive to differences of race, class, gender, and species. For example, the Sonmi-451 section explores the consequences of human “progress” in a world that subjugates racialized bodies, infuses corporate greed with ever-growing populations, environmental disasters, and the continuation of environmental degradation. In the novel, environmentally destroyed areas of Sonmi’s time are called, “deadlands” (234). Ultimately, each individual narrative reveals a larger story that foreshadows the “Fall,” much like how a Matryoshka doll reveals a smaller version of herself one piece at a time.

Concurrently, the overlapping stories challenge dominant constructions of time. *Cloud Atlas* not only shows how the past can influence the future, but also how the future can influence the past. Jo Alyson Parker attests that “Mitchell shows us the dire future that present action (or inaction) may trigger and thereby drives home a message about the global consequences of immediate gratification” (202). In fact, the arrangement of stories challenges Western perceptions of linear time. *Cloud Atlas* reveals a cyclical view of time emphasizing connection, reciprocity, and experience. Gerd Bayer suggests that this cyclical view of time presents a “humanist vision of life and interpersonal relationships that, while bordering on anthropocentric, nevertheless admits to an ecological worldview” (348). In the same vein, William Cronon explains that “natural time is cyclical time, while the time of modern humanity is linear” (10). He points out that “time’s cycle is the proof of nature’s self-healing homeostasis and equilibrium, while time’s arrow is the proof of humanity’s self-corrupting instability and disequilibrium” (10). *Cloud Atlas*, then, captures the interconnection between stories, lives, and experiences in his development of characters and their relationship to surrounding environments. The novel’s cyclical representation of time, however, can also be viewed as destructive. Mitchell’s

commentary on the various ways human civilizations fail to learn from their predecessors are doomed to repeat the past, but in more tumultuous ways.

This is examined in his tribute to Friedrich Nietzsche's doctrine on the eternal recurrence. Parker notes that the "shade of Nietzsche haunts" the novel and she suggests that there is a sense throughout that "history repeats itself" (208). For example, the inevitability of a human-cloned workforce can be traced in the novel through its previous narrations. The clones created in the Sonmi-451 section are echoed in narratives from previous times. On a train in present-day England, Timothy Cavendish remarks on passing science parks "where those Biotech Space Age cuboids now sit cloning humans for shady Koreans" (168). The foreshadowing of forced labor is also present during an earlier narrative set in the 1970s where Luisa Rey encounters sweatshop workers. Even earlier, readers witness Mitchell's representation of the colonization of the Moriori, the slaughter and enslavement of an indigenous tribe of the Chatham Islands, during the nineteenth century. The oppression and torture of marginalized beings throughout the novel's narrative histories persist because of a religious adherence to unfettered capitalism. In fact, the practice of slavery and indentured servitude is preserved by contemporary capitalist practices that exploit disenfranchised lives for profit.

Imperialism, Colonialism, and Enlightenment Thinking

Recent scholarship on the novel brings environmentalism into dialogue with postcolonialism. Jason Howard Mezey investigates how *Cloud Atlas* exposes humanity's predatory behavior on a transcontinental and transhistorical scale, "including tribal warfare, imperial conquest, corporate corruption, capitalist dystopia, and personal avarice and maliciousness occurring within a larger recursive cycle" (12). Similarly, Wendy Knepper

explores the epic qualities of the novel to show its “radical commitment to global justice” to unveil the deprivations associated with global inequality (96). Paul Ferguson invokes Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin’s discussion on the conflicting perspectives of postcolonial and ecocritical theories to argue that *Cloud Atlas* “effectively puts into practice a theoretical and implicitly political approach with a creative narrative” thereby forming what Huggan and Tiffin call the “postcolonial/ecocritical alliance” (145). Huggan and Tiffin examine the need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together as a “means of suggesting...that allegedly egalitarian terms like ‘postcolonial’ and ‘ecological’ are eminently co-optable” as a particular way of reading. In other words, the terms are not mutually exclusive, but “morally attuned to the continuing abuses of authority that operate in humanity’s name” and Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* attempts to bring the two disparate fields together (186).

Rob Nixon points out that the relationship between postcolonialism and ecocriticism “continues to be one of reciprocal indifference of mistrust” (196). According to Nixon, the contention is due to ecocritics’ slow move toward transnational issues—traditionally environmental literature and criticism have developed within a “nationalist American framework” (197). Postcolonialists, in their unwavering views, tend to shy away from environmental issues as if they were “soft, Western, bourgeois concerns” (202). The hesitation to embrace each other’s issues is called out by Gayatri Spivak: “‘the local in the South directly engages global greed’” (203). In other words, Spivak acknowledges that environmentalism is no longer, and arguably has never been, merely a Western project. Due to the proliferation of neoliberal policies, postcolonial and environmental issues are entangled and in recent years Nixon claims that environmentalism, like feminism decades earlier, is in the process of “shifting away from issues like purity and Jeffersonian-style agrarianism” to a more diversified and

international focus (203). Mitchell's novel also effectively uncovers the ways that individual lives are entangled, interrelated and, at times literally, devoured by an unfavorable social, political, and economic system.

One of the warnings the novel effectively conveys is that violence enacted on animals, especially animals used for food, ultimately results in the treatment of humans in similar ways. As such, readers are acquainted with various characters who are victimized by more powerful entities. This sentiment is echoed in *Cloud Atlas* through the line, "the weak are meat, and the strong do eat" (Mitchell 489). Mitchell critiques Western value systems that reinforce colonialist expansion in order to highlight the violence associated with industrial-scale slaughter. Knepper observes that "the savagery of the 'civilized' Western world comes into focus through its 'primitive' practice of capitalist accumulation" (105). She goes on to suggest that "cannibalism emerges as a sustained allegory for the endemic predations of capitalist accumulation, which potentially render any life precarious (nonetheless some more than others)" (106). In other words, Western philosophical epistemologies fueled by Cartesian divisions rationalize the value of some lives over others legitimizing capitalist exploits, which Knepper argues is the literal devouring of lives, cultures, and geographical spaces in the name of "progress."

Sonmi-451: She's What's For Dinner

This "progress" narrative of *Cloud Atlas* illustrates the utilization of industrialized slaughter to maintain food production in a dying world with its creation of a cloned Asian female workforce. Mitchell's clones, commonly referred to as fabricants, are not recognized as citizens by the state and so do not enjoy the privileges granted to Purebloods, dubbed "consumers" in the novel. Sonmi-451, the main character of this section, refers to her species as the "perfect organic

machinery” since fabricants like herself are created for the sole purpose of performing a particular economic service (325). The worldview to which Sonmi refers is influenced by a corporate ideological hierarchy that justifies the enslavement of “lesser” beings for profit. Sonmi warns, however, that “even same-stem fabricants cultured in the same wombtank are as singular as snowflakes” (187). That is, biotechnology has rendered the human body expendable and replicable. These specimens are cultured in labs and perceived as mere objects, an identity Sonmi defies. The wombtank from which Sonmi is born is rationalized by an institution that upholds Cartesian ideologies that perpetuate the devaluation of certain groups of humans over others, placing fabricants at the so-called lower level of “animal.” This dichotomy contributes to laws that claim ownership over fabricant lives, just like it claims control over other animal species. The inter-related violence that humans and nonhumans experience is realized in the ethical dilemmas the novel brings to the fore regarding same-stem fabricants and their indoctrination into an advanced industrialized slaughter-based system.

Sonmi agrees to a final interview recorded by an Archivist after being captured by the state, which describes her life as a Papa Song server and demystifies her rise to sentiency. She informs the Archivist of the abuses taking place in Nea So Copros. The Archivist resists her story saying, “corpocracy isn’t just another political system that will come and go—corpocracy is the natural order, in harmony with human nature” (234). In other words, corpocratic officials are conditioned to believe that corpocracy is an integral part of social, economic, and political life. Through the spread of global capitalism, and its influence, the state’s corporate authoritarian regime developed into a dominant force by devouring a capitalist system that overlooked blatant corporate predatory behaviors and in the end becomes victim to its own creation, eventually “poisoning itself to death” (Mitchell 325).

Corpocracy draws on capitalist practices, known as old world capitalism in the novel, to regulate its own people and Sonmi notes, “the past is a world both indescribably different from and yet subtly similar to Nea So Copros” (234). This kind of capitalism witnessed “dollars circulated as little sheets of paper,” which contributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and surmounting global debt along with large-scale environmental crises such as global warming, overpopulation, and pointedly unsustainable agriculture where the “only fabricants were sickly livestock” (235). Sonmi likens herself to livestock calling attention to the unethical production of clones who are bred, raised, and mass produced for food in an industrialized slaughterhouse system that mirrors an earlier time. This particular representation of production that butchers human bodies is represented as an inevitable outcome due to capitalist practices that exploit and destroy other animal species by weaving old world practices with new world advancements.

The Slaughter-ship: Emergence of the Ultimate Slaughterhouse

Mitchell explores the possibility of an economy that combines technological advancements with twentieth century slaughter production by imagining a future where biotechnology has normalized the practice of cloning humans. In Nea So Copros, labor is created inside an advanced genomic editing complex called the wombtank, where “clusters of embryo fabricants” are “suspended in uterine gel” (323). In this space, scientists alter the genetic code of Asian females to create a workforce, not unlike contemporary breeding practices used to produce livestock. The slaughterhouse system is broken up into two locations, restaurants and ships. Papa Song restaurants act as fronts for industrial slaughterhouses. What is presented as a restaurant for the consumer is at the same time the underbelly of the slaughter. Consumers enjoy this space, completely unaware of what is taking place underneath. Papa Song’s is actually a fabricant

holding pen, a place that mirrors animal feedlots typical to slaughter facilities. The restaurants are connected to ships, Papa Song's Golden Arks, which are located on the outskirts of the city and hidden from public view and these ships are where the butchering takes place; they are equipped with electrical assembly lines that function with speed and efficiency transforming retired fabricants into food.

In Mitchell's version of the slaughterhouse, biotechnology controls the process of production and yet the spatial configuration of the slaughter "house" itself is similar to earlier industrial models where workers were separated into departments, usually gender-related, and under constant surveillance by supervisors. As such, *Cloud Atlas*' slaughterhouse is comparable to those of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio*. In these novels, bodies are anesthetized, swung onto conveyor belts, and butchered in dark unmarked buildings. In *Cloud Atlas*' near future, bodies are processed in a similar way, only in this situation, human bodies are the targeted food source. This outcome is provoked by ideologies that reinforce the subjugation of animals, so the slaughter of cloned humans becomes normalized. In Nea So Copros, Asian female bodies are targeted because of their marginalized status under western imperialism.

Fabricants are controlled through the genetic manipulation of their DNA and by institutionalized conditioning through which they learn a limited lexicon appropriate for the service position they hold: "greet diners, input orders, tray food, vend drinks, upstock condiments, wipe tables, and bin garbage" (186). Servers eat the "Soap" nourishment that is provided and upon completion of the 12-year obligation they are promised exoneration (340). The Xultation promised to fabricants, however, is a false narrative used to maintain control over them. As servers walk toward exit doors supposedly leading them to ships set for Hawaii, they are actually led to slaughter chambers. Reminiscent of popular clone narratives of the past, such

as Philip K. Dick's novel, *The Penultimate Truth* (1964), the film *Parts: The Clonus Horror* (1979), *Bladerunner* (1982) or the 2005 film, *The Island*, to name but a few, Mitchell's fabricant service community is subjected to similar deaths.

Instead of boarding ships to Hawaii at the end of their service, Xulted fabricants are led to unassuming slaughter-ships. Before Sonmi-451 agrees to become the mouthpiece for the Revolution against the state, she sneaks onto a slaughter-ship and crouches in a steel hanger witnessing the events leading up to the death of her sisters. She sees some "two hundred Twelvestarred Papa Song servers, lining up in a paddock of turnstiles whose single direction was onward" (341). The production space is eerily recognizable as it resembles the narrow thruways upon which cows, sheep, and pigs await their untimely deaths.

Sonmi watches as one server is coaxed onto a steel chair with a "bulky helmet mechanism" hung above, much like how a pig is blindly coerced in the factory killing floor (342). To Sonmi's surprise, the helmet mechanism lowers onto the fabricant's head and kills her instantly. The helmet includes a long sharp object similar to a captive bolt pistol that is used on cows and pigs before they are hoisted up onto the assembly line. These instruments kill the animal with minimal damage, so the meat does not spoil. Sonmi fixates on one sister and with a "sharp clack" from the helmet, the "server's head slumps unnaturally. [She] could see her eyeballs roll back and the cabled spine connecting the helmet mechanism to the monorail stiffen" (342). To her horror, the helmet "rose, the server sat upright, then was lifted off her feet and into the air" (342). Sonmi watches as her sisters are cut, split, quartered, and mashed "as if it were not living fabricants being processed but pickled sardines" (345).

Fabricants are the ultimate corporate slave workforce—self-sustaining and disposable; they are capitalism's greatest invention. A fabricant is a mechanized human shell that is

genetically coded to serve and obey. In fact, the genomics industry created, as Sonmi suggests, “the perfect food cycle” (343). Paul Ferguson notes, “making human animals the victims of slaughter” in the novel reminds us of the “disturbing practices already carried out in the livestock industry whereby animals are routinely fed upon the waste products of their own dead” (154). Ferguson’s point regarding the similarities between current agricultural practices and fabricant lives affirms cannibalistic tendencies already in existence in the food industry making Mitchell’s world that much more convincing. In the literary imagination, the slaughterhouse shapes and re-shapes itself in many ways. The slaughterhouse does not create a new machine out of other innate mechanized parts, it “disassemble[s] a pre-existing animal, part by bloody part, until it reemerge[s] as a carcass without life, skin, or entrails” (Young Lee 4). The animals, and now human clones, go into the “house” as whole beings and come out as tenderloins, filets, and cutlets.

The close association between human clone and machine is illustrated in the novel as powerful biotechnologies have the capability to farm humans instead of animals making it possible to replace the object of slaughter. This ultimate transition from slaughtering animals in factory farms to slaughtering human clones in factory-like slaughter ships rationalizes a belief that fabricants are no more human than “six-wheeler fords” ethically, which is a necessary component to corpocracy’s survival (187). Mitchell’s novel engages with ethical and moral issues regarding technologies that have the capacity to redefine what constitutes “human” life. Within the context of the novel, clones are not considered human subjects, and so are not granted legal rights. By rising to sentiency, Sonmi problematizes the objectification of cloned humans under Nea So Copros law. She does this since she embodies inherent human qualities that nonhuman clones are forbidden to have and are feared because of these genetic modifications.

Objectification of the Cloned Asian Female Body

Mitchell's representation of industrial slaughter production in Sonmi-451's narrative also explores the consequences of corporations that claim ownership over human DNA. As the bioengineering industry becomes more sophisticated, so, too, do the capabilities for using animals and plants to form new types of drugs or crops to secure food for a growing population. In "Biopiracy: When indigenous knowledge is patented for profit," Janna Rose reports that often, in search for new bioresources, "researchers draw on local people's traditional knowledge about the properties of a particular plant, animal, or chemical compound" ("Biopiracy"). If these resources are used without permission or exploits the community from which this knowledge is drawn, it is called biopiracy. This concept can be applied to Mitchell's novel in how Asian bodies are targeted for exploitive labor. Through cloning, corpocracy patents human life and enslaves generations of Asian women. In her book, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, Vandana Shiva argues that "life forms, plants, and seeds are all evolving, self-organized, sovereign beings. They have intrinsic worth, value, and standing. Owning life by claiming it to be a corporate invention is ethically and legally wrong" (ix). She notes how, "Western powers are still driven by the colonizing impulse to discover, conquer, own, and possess everything, every society, every culture. The colonies have now been extended to the interior spaces, the 'genetic codes' of life-forms from microbes and plants to animals, including humans" (3). Shiva warns against employing more Western technologies that further environmental destruction, being as lands, forests, and oceans have already been "colonized, eroded, and polluted" (5). Doing so reveals humanity's greater capacity to carve out new colonies to manipulate and exploit: the "interior spaces of the bodies of women, plants, and

animals” (4). While biopiracy more commonly occurs between different countries, in *Cloud Atlas*, biopiracy is committed by elite groups within the same nation to enforce a gendered and racialized-specific type of control.

Fabricants are repressed by patriarchal institutions that reinforce their subjugation through gendered power dynamics. Papa Song’s restaurant is run by Papa Song, a male corporate business owner, who employs only female fabricants. This world is constructed around a male-dominated ideology where female fabricants are conditioned to identify with their male employer in the same way a child identifies with a father, responding, “Yes, Papa Song!” (197). Sonmi says, “if we obeyed, our Papa would love us forever. If we failed to obey, Papa would zero-star us year after year and we would never get to Xultation” (196). Sonmi reveals the oppressive conditions to which the Asian female fabricant is accustomed illustrating their powerlessness in a world controlled by male-dominated corporate interests.

In the novel, fabricated female bodies are not only consumed by the male gaze, but also racialized and the culture of Papa Song perpetuates this stereotype. In *The Asian Mystique* (2006), Sheridan Prasso explains that because of the long history of Orientalism in the West, distinctions between different Asian cultures are not recognized, “no matter how different in religion or tradition, they are all ‘Oriental’ or ‘Asian’” in Western eyes (27). In the context of the novel, Asian women are stereotyped as child-like, submissive, and subservient, and perceived as “obedient and demure” (323).

Fabricants are genomed to obey and act in the best interest of the diner, perpetuating the stereotype. The purpose of Papa Song’s hidden production line is to turn human bodies into nourishment for fabricants and the consumers. “Soap,” is a highly potent nutrient that deadens the curiosity of fabricants keeping them in line. Similar to an Orwellian nightmare, soap

functions as a way to keep fabricants content and unaware of their natural capacity to think for themselves. Any experiences, words, or actions fabricants witness during their contact with consumers throughout the day is erased by “soapsacs” that servers imbibe at the end of their shift (185). Because fabricants are unlike humans in their conception, absolute control over their existence is transparent. In fact, controlling female bodies is one way that male-dominated corpocracy thrives.

A fabricant is also required to keep “papa” happy. They wear identical standard uniforms and are identified by the collars around their necks. Sonmi-451 states, “until curfew at hour zero, every minute must be devoted to the service and enrichment of Papa Song” (186). As Lynda Ng puts it, contradictions underlie Western notions of “progress” and are realized through the “construction of a racial hierarchy” that justifies “the enslavement and exploitation of other human beings” (115). Sonmi proclaims, “A dinery is not a hermetic world: every prison has jailers and walls. Jailers are ducts and walls conduct” (188). In Mitchell’s slaughterhouse, Asian female bodies are indistinguishable from one another and made invisible. They perform their repetitive duties unnoticed and unappreciated. In the eyes of the consumer, fabricants are merely weaved into the restaurant’s aesthetic, playing into Orientalist perceptions of Asian female stereotypes.

Conclusion: Hope for an Egalitarian Future?

Cloud Atlas’ technologically advanced corpocratic state thrives on rampant consumerism that feeds on disenfranchised “others” (animals, women, fabricated lives). The narrative arc predicts a future in which the slavery and displacement of indigenous peoples is not eradicated. In her short and complicated life, Sonmi exposes the hidden modes of production and corporate

greed that contributes to the continued enslavement of her people. Her archive represents her “truth,” a narrative that preserves this history, but to what end? At the closing of the Sonmi-451 section of the novel, she reveals that her ascension and exposure to the state has been itself a fabrication set-up by Corpocracy to prevent a revolt against the state. The soap that is fed to the fabricants working at Papa Song’s was purposely tampered with, leading to Sonmi’s coming into consciousness. The purpose of this was to produce a fear of fabricants throughout the human community. She states that the reason the state staged this ascension was to “make every last pure blood in Nea So Copros mistrustful of every last fabricant. To manufacture downstrata consent for the Juche’s new Fabricant Xpiry Act. To discredit Abolitionism. You can see, the whole conspiracy has been a resounding success” (349). Nea So Copros manufactured Sonmi’s “adventure story” in order to instill fear into its community, to engender divisions between pureblood and fabricant and deter future abolitionist movements. Even though the inner-workings of the slaughterhouse is revealed, it does not make people feel sorry for fabricants, but more wary of them. As such, changes will happen to the fabricants, not the slaughtering process, just as easy as it was to replace Yoona-939, the first ascended fabricant, who “snapped,” and failed to escape the dinery (193). After Yoona’s death, the fabricants were simply re-indoctrinated with a new Catechism, which was to “work harder than ever to earn back the trust [of Papa]...and to be vigilant against evil every minute of every day” (196).

In targeting fabricants for industrialized slaughter, *Cloud Atlas* explores the consequences of anthropocentric philosophies that privilege certain species over others. That is to say, the Cartesian hierarchy that perpetuates the human/nonhuman divide rationalizes the subjugation and objectification of certain human communities, which makes human cloning, in this society, easier to stomach. Mitchell’s fabricants are genomed specifically for menial labor and subjugated

through social conditioning. If human clones are classified as objects owned by the state, yet derive from human biomatter, the division between Western philosophical notions that define human—a living body that possesses a rational soul, individuality, and agency—is troubled. Sonmi declares, “because you cannot discern our differences, you believe we have none” (187). As Sonmi and her sisters ascend, clones resignify what it means to be human. “Soap,” Sonmi explains, “represses...the xpression of an innate personality possessed by all fabricants” (187). Yet, they are no closer to accessing privileges granted to humans higher up on the hierarchy than cows or pigs. The animalization of clones is necessary in order to justify the brutal treatment on their bodies.

The full exposure of industrialized slaughter reveals more than the brutal truth about the production of food, it uncovers humanity’s unapologetic complacency in a capitalist system that promotes violence beyond slaughterhouse doors. Nea So Copros is a grotesque version of consumer capitalism imagined by Mitchell. The Western dominant ideologies of modernity and industrialization are the epitome of consumer capitalism, a system that eventually eats away at itself. The Nea So Copros mantra, “work, spend, work,” is eventually destroyed by the exposure of these slaughter processes with Sonmi’s final testimony (316).

While the corpocratic coup is allegedly successful with the eventual execution of Sonmi, it does not erase the ideas she propagates: “I refer to my *Declarations* Archivist. Media has flooded Nea So Copros with my Catechisms. Every schoolchild in corpocracy knows my twelve ‘blasphemies’ now. My guards tell me there is even talk of a statewide ‘Vigilance Day’ against fabricants who show signs of *Declarations*. My ideas have been produced billionfold” (349). The Archivist does not understand what Sonmi-451 is suggesting with her exposure. While the Archivist thinks that a future revolt is unlikely, Sonmi says, “No matter how many of us you kill,

you will never kill your successor” (349). The revolution may not occur in the present or even in the near future, but the “truth” will surely lead to liberation eventually, even if that means the annihilation of the modern world, as the post-apocalyptic section of the novel seems to suggest. The world that is birthed from corporate greed is blanketed with fabricated ideologies that suggest this system is more equal, just, and socially adequate—giving no thought to the fabricated individuals that society marginalizes. Fabricants are nothing more than genomed animals, however, Sonmi’s ascension subverts this ideology. Her subversion eventually leads to the destruction of the Nea So Copros institution. Through Sonmi’s execution, the possibility of hope arises. Her final statement reveals the resiliency of ideas and how the germination of those ideas mature and reverberate across space and time encouraging changes at the systemic level in an effort to create a more equitable and socially just world.

CONCLUSION

The visual and literary representations of slaughterhouses in Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Olsen's *Yonnondio*, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, and Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* raise awareness of worker and animal lives, the violent relationship between humans and other animals, and the uncertain future of industrial food production in these places. Johan Rockstrom, an earth scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, notes, "Feeding humanity is possible. It's just a question of whether we can do it in an environmentally responsible way" (*Tampa Bay Times*). If the world's current methods of producing, distributing, and consuming food are not healthy for the Earth or its inhabitants, what comes next? Do we embrace technologies furthering the manipulation of other species in order to eliminate current farming practices that contribute to global warming at accelerated rates or is there a better way? Animal agriculture, alone, is the second largest contributor to "human-made greenhouse gas emissions after fossil fuels and is the leading cause of deforestation, water, air pollution and biodiversity loss" (*Climate Nexus*). To protest the animal industrial complex just to replace it with something that continues to harm the lives of animals is not good enough; we must do better.

The desire for meat and animal related products remains strong in the West and, as this dissertation argues, is deeply tied to a capitalist economic system that profits off the oppression and exploitation of bodies. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, industrialized slaughter production changed the way we perceived animals. In *Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan reminds us that the "industrialization—and brutalization—of animals in America is a relatively new, evitable, and local phenomenon. No other country raises and slaughters its food animals

quite as intensely or as brutally as we do. No other people in history has lived at quite so great a remove from the animals they eat” (333). The reformation and regulation of slaughter production in the nineteenth century led to drastic changes that ultimately shaped the way humans interacted with certain animals. As meat production facilities moved away from cities centers, slaughter became hidden from public view, which made it easier to forget that what we were eating was once a living being. Through Upton Sinclair’s efforts in *The Jungle*, attention to the brutal treatment of workers in Chicago’s meat processing plants and the ways in which capitalist production practices directly contribute to the terrorization of the working class was nationally recognized, but did not alter the industry’s negative impacts on workers, other animals, or the environment long-term.

Slaughter production, as in other mass producing industries, in a capitalist system is about the bottom line and regulatory measures do little to prevent major contamination and workplace accidents, issues that both *The Jungle* and *Yonnonddio* explore. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates “48 million people get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases each year in the United States” (“CDC foodborne illnesses index”). In fact, meat recalls are major factors in the CDC’s statistics as briefly mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation. A startling report published in January 2019 by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group shows “meat and poultry recalls increased by two-thirds from 2013 to 2018, while food recalls overall edged up 10 percent” (U.S. PIRG.Org). Likewise, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) validate the Public Interest Research Group report by clarifying that the document shows that the “most serious meat recalls are on the rise. Among meat and poultry, the number of Class I recalls increased by 83 percent, nearly doubling since 2013” (“Food Recalls

up 10 Percent”).¹¹ Furthermore, the deputy director of regulatory affairs at the Center for Science in the Public Interest reports “numbers aside, anytime you see large amounts of contaminated meat reaching consumers, that is a problem” (“Food Recalls up 10 Percent”). These staggering statistics reveal that the industry’s problems have not changed much since the publication of *The Jungle*.

Many scientists in environmental related fields suggest dietary changes, a commitment to technological improvements, and eliminating food waste as ways to limit continuous environmental damage, however, as argued in chapters Three and Four, changing meat production in the name of environmental “sustainability” and public “health” will not prevent humans and nonhumans from being harmed in new and insidious ways. Discussions over greenhouse gas emissions, diet, health, and industry innovation regarding the future of food are highlighted in mainstream media, but the future of farm animals who are bred for human consumption is mostly ignored. As indicated in the introduction of the dissertation, over 70 billion animals are raised annually to accommodate the human population (*Climate Nexus*). One million chickens, 14,000 pigs, and 4,000 cows are slaughtered every hour in the United States. Other animals, such as 240 million turkeys, 27 million ducks, and six million rabbits are killed each year, not including animals killed on small-scale farms, as reported by the Animal Welfare Institute’s Farm Animal program director, Dena Jones (“At Slaughter”). How do we rectify the industry without doing further harm to these animal populations? Without questioning the ethical implications of our actions about *who* we are producing and *why*, ideologies that support hierarchal systems will continue to legitimize the oppression of marginalized species.

¹¹ Class I is the most serious of the recalls. It is issued when there is likelihood that the contamination will cause serious illness and/or death (“Food Recalls up 10 Percent”).

Due to decades of backlash from the general public and animal rights activists along with policy changes at the state and federal level, recent food production trends are moving in positive directions, like food transparency and regenerative agriculture. These projects attempt to re-connect the human consumer with the animals sent to slaughter. In recent years, renewed efforts to re-open slaughterhouses to the public is trending in some states to promote food transparency. For example, Jenna Blumenfeld a senior food editor for New Hope Network, an organization that reports on supply chain networks, notes: “In an industry that once proposed to criminalize filming of its actions, one Vermont-based slaughterhouse is combating such food ignorance by willingly inviting the public into its facilities” (“You can and (should) visit a slaughterhouse”). This is an important step for those who wish to still partake in eating animal protein. Re-introducing the public to the way their food is made begins to close the gap between the animal whose body was killed for its flesh and the consumer who purchases the meat wrapped in plastic from the supermarket, a re-connection I explore in the four novels of the dissertation.

Limiting meat intake and turning towards regenerative agriculture are also realistic steps in fighting the battle against large industrial farming corporations. According to Terra Genesis International, an organization dedicated to transforming agricultural landscapes that has the potential to reverse environmental degradation, regenerative agriculture is a “system of farming principles and practices that increase biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services” (regenerativeagriculture.com). The organization consults and assists farms in implementing these values to reduce our carbon footprint and reinvent farming to sustain and maintain diverse species populations.

To learn more about this growing trend in agriculture, I interviewed a former colleague who built a local farm from the ground up with her partner in North Carolina. They are currently

practicing regenerative agricultural values and principles. Sarah Beth Hopton, an assistant professor of English at Appalachian State University with a specialty in Rhetoric and Technical Communications, suggests that while the name itself tends to further the commodification process of nature, she believes that regenerative agriculture is a movement towards a set of values that directly combat unsustainable farming practices. The farm Hopton and her partner operate strives to provide a better environment for the animals she cultivates. They also spread their knowledge of the movement by offering educational classes to teach others how to create a farming system that is healthy, more sustainable, and attempts to re-imagine the human relationship with animals bred for food.

The drive behind Sarah Beth's efforts to start her own farm stemmed from the 2016 election results, which motivated her to act. She said there "had to be something very pragmatic and very practical, and very close to the land that I can do that would help people immediately around me" (Hopton Interview). She said working within the political system was not enough and felt a sense of urgency to do something that would have positive effects on the surrounding environment and community in which she lived. To that end, Sarah Beth and her partner, who has agriculture experience, began the journey of buying land and cultivating a local farm in western North Carolina.

Not only did they want to start a farm that was more sustainable, but the philosophy behind what they are doing contributes to their overall practice. Sarah Beth says that when it comes to raising animals, it all "boils down to our relationship with animals" (Hopton Interview). What kind of life are they living while they are alive and how does that life affect the farmer-animal relationship? Sarah Beth encourages a respect for the animals about to be slaughtered for food. She argues that "we need to know what it means to take a life" (Hopton Interview). And

until we learn how to re-connect with nonhuman animals in this way, emotionally, culturally, and physically, becoming vegetarian or vegan would not solve the ideological relationship we currently have with animals bred for food; we would just be going through the motions. For example, plant-based meat is made in the image of animal protein and lab-grown meat still requires violence on the animal in order to obtain the muscle cells necessary to grow an exponential amount of “meat” product. As argued in Chapter Three, these efforts do not tackle the root of the problem, which is to see animals as living, breathing, feeling beings who deserve better treatment than what we are currently giving them.

If the goal is towards a vegetarian/vegan society, we must take smaller steps to get to that point. If it is not, then we need to ask ourselves what comes next. If we stop breeding farm animals for food, they will become extinct, but if we continue on this current unsustainable path, we will destroy the planet and will suffer biodiversity loss. Sarah Beth proposes a solution, a micro-step, to tackling this issue. She believes in “re-centering” the plate. This philosophy is a cultural and ideological shift that moves animal protein to the periphery of the dish. Sarah Beth reflects on the kind of American exceptionalism that places animal protein at its center. Eating meat is a sign of prosperity and virility in Western culture, which is the underlying ideology that keeps meat at the center. Re-centering the plate, by moving animal protein to the side and putting vegetables at the center may be a realistic and positive move toward shifting dominant ideologies away from killing billions of animals each year for food.

I find regenerative agriculture a necessary avenue to explore further and I am interested in seeing the positive effects that come out of these efforts. There is another way, though, to work towards saving the lives of farm animals aside from eating less of them. Around the country, farm sanctuaries are growing in popularity. From the mid-1980s, farm sanctuaries were

built because of a growing concern for the safety and welfare of farmed animals. In the United States, alone, there are more than 88 sanctuaries, with more spread out across the globe. From Maple Farm Sanctuary in Massachusetts to Whispers Sanctuary at Double R Ranch in Southern Arizona, to the Pig Peace Sanctuary in Washington, these organizations create “safe havens for animals who have endured the victimization of factory farming” (“Farm Animal Sanctuary Directory”). These organizations will more than likely play a major role in the necessary shift away from large-scale industrial farming that will eventually materialize due to the unsustainable nature of current production practices.

This is all to say that if there is to be hope for future relationships between humans and other animals a change in consciousness and ideology must take place and industrialized slaughter must be stopped. Awareness and education through literature, art, protest, and caring alternatives can provide platforms for discussions on how to transform our society to one that values the inherent worth of all beings, human and nonhuman alike, and in the words of Michael Pollan:

Were the walls of our meat industry to become transparent, literally or even figuratively, we would not long continue to raise, kill and eat animals the way we do. Tail docking and sow crates and beak clipping would disappear overnight, and the days of slaughtering four hundred head of cattle an hour would promptly come to an end—for who could stand the sight? Yes, meat would get more expensive. We’d probably eat less of it, too, but maybe when we did eat animals we’d eat them with the consciousness, ceremony, and respect they deserve. (333)

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