Between the Species

Recognizing Exploitation and Rejecting Analogy: An Analysis of the Meat-Commodity

ABSTRACT

This paper is a two-part project. First, I reject the analogous relationship between the Holocaust and slaughterhouses (found in the anti-meat novel, The Lives of Animals) and cross-species analogical thinking entirely; instead, I opt for modes of analysis that can examine the specific circumstances of animals within slaughterhouses. Secondly, I assert that a socio-economic Marxist analysis is the best prism in which to recognize the suffering of pre-slaughter animals and the causation of their suffering (the ostensibly necessary circulation and production of the meat-commodity).

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Introduction

J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* is a self-referential book that was presented as a Tanner lecture at Princeton University in 1997; in the book, a novelist (in a very similar position as Coetzee himself) gives a lecture at a conference. The book largely revolves around the usage of an analogy: the ostensible relationship between meat-eating and the Holocaust. The main character and lecturer at the conference, Elizabeth Costello, claims meat-eating has caused suffering that is comparable to, if not greater than, the amount of suffering caused by the Holocaust. Costello asserts that killing animals is wrong and indistinguishable from any other killing (regardless of the animal's species). This logic is how she comes to the Holocaust-as-analog for the murder of non-human animals in slaughterhouses. She looks at her conference peers and comments that she views them as vicious, obscene, and, immoral; Elizabeth views meat-eaters as reprehensible as Nazis. Costello's indictment doesn't just include those that participate in the slaughter, but also those who are peripherally aware of it and do nothing, explicitly comparing them to the passive Germans that "lost their humanity" in the eyes of the rest of the world due to a "willed ignorance on their part" (Coetzee 2016, 20).

The crowd is repulsed by her assertion; they find the analogy unsettling and unsubstantiated. As one professor writes to her in a letter: "If Jews were treated like cattle, it does not follow that cattle are treated like Jews. The inversion insults the memory of the dead" (Coetzee 2016, 50). The speech is met with "scattered" (Coetzee 2016, 36) applause and is evidently not a popular stance. Costello changes no one's mind throughout the text, and overall, her analogy is not well-received. Coetzee (the non-fictional author) seems to be aware that the analogy is non-pragmatic, repulsive, and even untrue. He is searching for

the proper language, or the correct prism, to view the suffering of animals. This search is likely the reason Coetzee gave his lecture through a self-referential fictional account of another writer (Elizabeth Costello) giving a lecture: to distance himself from the usage of the Holocaust analogy. Coetzee isn't himself asserting the analogy, he is exploring its usage as a possible means of bringing awareness to the lives of animals.

The analogy is wrong, and animal studies scholar Donna Haraway explains why: "[Costello] practices the enlightenment method of comparative history in order to fix the awful equality of slaughter" (2013, 81). Haraway is here pushing back against employing "comparative history" to "fix" two different events, which results in the erasure of the historical-material realities of both the Holocaust and the slaughter of animals. In the animal rights community, analogy is frequently the default critical modality employed to recognize and (potentially) prevent animal suffering: analogical thinking which 'compares' humans and animals is the primary rhetorical approach of the movement. I believe, along with Haraway, that this deployment of a cross-species analogy is an ineffectual mode to recognize animal suffering in slaughterhouses since it conceals the actual material conditions and circumstances of both species and conflates them. I instead contend that to understand the suffering and pain of non-human animals, the actual conditions of animals in specific sectorial sites of exploitation (such as meat factories) must be explored. Further, I assert that Marxist theory, and specifically its fundamental claims of surplus value, exploitation, and alienation, is the best possible prism through which to conceive of the suffering of the animals that are slaughtered and transformed into the animal-meat-commodity. To properly articulate this assertion, I must first 'clear the way' by explicating the issues with the analogical approach

and locating its myopic (and anthropocentric) foundation. *The Lives of Animals*, and the analogy therein, will be used as an example of this popular approach.

Significantly, Costello is concerned almost exclusively with meat factories and slaughterhouses, which she calls, "the places of death all around us" (Coetzee 2016, 35). Slaughterhouses are crucial to Costello's analogy because of the massive scale and the efficiency of the act of killing that they facilitate. She is not looking at the interpersonal murdering of Jews by individual Germans, but rather the collective act committed by an entire state apparatus, likewise she is not criticizing the individual act of animal-murder, but the collective act committed by a coordinated network of production-consumer. To remain faithful to Costello's analogy (or at least the perimeters she sets with it) I will be examining the meat-commodity that is the product of this collective act of murder (which is issued by the slaughterhouse) rather than individuated acts of animal killing. Costello is concerned with the collective passivity and mass-acceptance of the slaughter of animals—which makes the network of consumers complicit in the meat-production apparatus—and this is a legitimate concern that must be addressed.

An animal-oriented Marxist analysis will not deploy a historical analogy to understand the suffering of animals but will instead deploy an economic analysis that examines the way surplus is extracted from both the slaughterhouse worker and the animals themselves. After countering and undermining the rhetoric of analogy, I will examine the way that an animal-oriented Marxist critique of the slaughterhouse meat-commodity reveals the pre-slaughter animal's material conditions (and their suffering in these conditions)—the manner that the meat-commodity ontologically displaces non-human animals as objects

rather than subjects. While Costello calls the attempt to distinguish between human genocide and slaughterhouses, "splitting hairs" (Coetzee 2016, 21), I think the suffering of non-human subjects can be discussed while still distinguishing between disparate historical events and the differences between human-animals and non-human animals. We can view animal suffering without appealing to analogies to human suffering; rather than making ambiguous historical comparisons, we can allow non-human animal suffering to stand on its own and look at the ways human and non-human suffering meet and how that pain operates within a specific economic system.

Analogy as Conflation: The Problematics of Analogy

Marjorie Spiegel writes in her book, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, that, "distinct social, political and economic factors … create and support the subjugation of animals" (1996, 28). Despite this statement, she still concludes that, "as divergent as the cruelties and the supporting systems of oppression may be, there are commonalities between them. They share the same basic essence; they are built around the same basic relationship—that between oppressor and oppressed" (1996, 28). While it may be true that there is a 'basic essence' that links all forms of oppression, and further, that a coalition of difference which brings together the interests of different groups is the ideal mode of political resistance, it does not follow that analogy, or comparison, is the ideal form to examine these "distinct social, political and economic factors." Analogies that attempt to uniformly collapse the suffering of human and non-human animal experiences are appeals to universalized notions that efface difference. The distinction between disparate experiences should be maintained to properly examine their particular causes and effects. There are, unde-

niably, some commonalities between human and non-human-animal suffering and oppression, but the risk of negating the explicit differences outweighs the benefit of looking at the potential implicit commonalities.

Another analogy that has been utilized throughout history is the woman-slave analogy that was deployed during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries (and this analogy is still being used against Muslim countries today). This analogy attempted to illuminate the 'basic essence' of oppression that existed between the treatment of women and those in chattel slavery (specifically the slavery of Black people in America). And, as Ana Stevenson writes in her book, *The Woman as Slave in Nineteenth-Century American Social Movements*, "[the woman-slave analogy was] productive to the extent that it illuminated parallels that would expose the nature of social control" (2020, 4). Yet, she says analogies are always "seeking to suppress what does not fit … since similarity never means exact sameness, difference always remains" (2020, 18). She concludes: "It was this very sense of sameness that preoccupied the majority of white women, severely undermining their ability to look beyond their own situation" (2020, 18).

By deploying the woman-slave analogy, white women conflated their suffering with the universal suffering of women, thereby conflating the treatment of non-enslaved women with chattel slavery, denying or rendering less visible the existence of women who were actually slaves. The position of women and those of slaves are two entirely different material-social modes of oppression. Even now, the usage of the woman-slave analogy, 200 years after chattel slavery was abolished, is still a historical conflation. As a rhetorical device analogy may have some limited utility, but as a factual statement, or a mode of ex-

amination, it has little to no actual utility, since analogy limits difference in favor of homogeneity. As feminist scholar Gerda Lerner states: "All analogies—class, minority group, caste—approximate the position of women, but fail to define it adequately. Women are a category unto themselves; an adequate analysis of their position in society demands new conceptual tools" (2005, 31). 'New conceptual tools' should be erected to discuss any distinct category of oppression (like non-human animals) or else their oppression will be inaccurately defined.

While it's important to discuss and dismantle analogies in general, it's equally important to examine the particular instances of these analogies—such as the Holocaust and animal slaughter comparison (or animal slaughter-as-Holocaust analogy). The primary issue with the deployment of this analogy is that it conflates two completely different politico-social-historical epochs with entirely different corresponding political and economic apparatuses that facilitated the deaths. The specificity that informs a historical event (or ongoing event) is extremely important since its distinctiveness is what renders it an analyzable cohesive event. Slaughterhouses and meat factories should not be called concentration camps because they aren't: Jewish people were not cooked and eaten; non-human animals are not persecuted due to their religious beliefs. Both these acts of 'slaughter' have two entirely different logics that inform them: meat-factories are anthropocentric sites that produce commodities for human consumption and surplus profit, while concentration camps were organized sites of death facilitated by social Darwinism and anti-Semitism. Further, any cross-species analogy is untenable as it is politically non-pragmatic. In the case of animal rights, most will be less sympathetic to an animal-rights movement that utilizes this rhetoric. A movement that collapses and refuses to acknowledge moral

human-animal difference will not gain much public support. Every distinct category of oppression needs to be examined with "conceptual tools" (Lerner 2005, 31) that are specific to it. Many areas of study (theology, Jewish studies, etc.) are useful when discussing the Holocaust, but near useless when discussing slaughterhouses.

For meat-factories and the reprehensible suffering that they contain to be fully illuminated, an analysis of the death-item that propels the entire market—the meat-commodity— must be initiated through a Marxist lens (since Marxism is the most comprehensive mode to critically examine a commodity and its relation to the labor that produces it). Animal studies should be concerned not with the comparative experiences of humans and animals, but rather with the way that human and animal lives confront each other and perpetuate harm for all species involved, and Marxism is the best theoretical instrument to conduct this examination. Marxism is the most effective theory to explore the sectorial site of exploitation (slaughterhouses and meat factories) and their result, the meat-commodity.

The Emergence of the Meat-Commodity: Capitalism and the Conditions of Meat

The slaughterhouse is the death-site for millions of animals each year and, as feminist scholar, Carol J. Adams, contends, the current incarnation of the slaughterhouse is the result of capitalism. Adams refers to slaughterhouses as the "fourth stage of meat eating" (2016, 42). She states that the other historical stages of meat-eating are "(1) practically no meat eating, (2) eating free animals, and (3) eating meat of domesticated animals" (2016, 42). The fourth stage of meat consumption (slaughterhouses, meat industry, and factory farming) emerges under capitalism, as animals are fundamentally altered from

sources of caloric intake to commodities. Adams names this commodity form the 'absent referent.' When animals are slaughtered and transformed into meat, they become an absent referent; they are no longer referred to as the animal that they are, but rather the protein that is consumed. The 'referent' is lost. When animal meat is produced through a slaughterhouse within capitalism, it affords a certain corporeal and conceptual distance between the human-consumer and the previously living animal. The 'absent referent' is the semantic result of this corporeal and conceptual distance. Cows become beef and pigs become pork. Non-human animals are also absent in a literal sense, "they are absent from the act of eating meat because they have been transformed into food" (Adams 2016, 21). Animals are not just rendered food (as they are in the first three stages), but also as commodities in the fourth stage of meat eating.

While Marxism can help us understand this process of becoming an "absent referent," Marx himself made a sharp distinction between animals and humans, stating, "the animal is immediately identical with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity" (1957, 76). Meaning that humans transcend their activities, while animals just consist of the acts they perform. Marx further notes that, "if the silk worm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker" (1957, 205). While this may seem, at first glance, like a simple animal-human analogy, Marx is not analogizing in the sense of conflating, instead he is employing analogy to demarcate between animal and human labor (using analogy for the inverse of conflation: distinction). Notably, this is the exact opposite way analogy is employed within the animal rights community. Here Marx is stating that animals don't use their life-activities to continue with what they 'really' want to do with their life,

the way that humans do since humans work for wages "in order to live" (1957, 204) beyond their work. The silkworm instead abides by its biological instinct and solely performs its life activity (spinning, reproducing, etc.): an animal is synonymous with the work which they engage in. Marx says that humans have, "conscious life-activity" (1957, 76) meaning humans can produce beyond necessity and create beyond need (hence the advent of art). Due to this distinction, Marx excludes animals from categories of labor and exploitation. Donna Haraway attributes Marx's dismissal of animals as a case of human exceptionalism, which is, as Derrida says, "the superiority of the human order over the animal order" (Derrida 2008, 11).

Haraway posits that Marx: "was finally unable to escape from the humanist teleology of that labor—of the making of man himself" (2013, 46). Thusly, he excluded animals from his critique due to anthropocentrism; Marx only viewed the human subject-position of capitalism. But, the foundational tenet of Marxist theory, surplus value—when the owner of production extracts more value from the labor of a worker than that laborer receives in wages—is applicable to the meat-commodity and the pre-slaughter animal. The animal is utilized (we could say that their life-as-labor is exploited) and there is surplus value extracted from it. There is already the category of lively capital, which is animals-as-capital, being circulated or used in some way to generate surplus value, and the meat-as-commodity functions similarly, except the animal in the latter case is killed to produce the commodity.

However, the meat-industry operates under an ethical guise: the guise of the necessity of the use-value of meat. Meat, as a commodity, functions to fulfill a certain 'need' in the market. As Marx observes: "[a commodity is] a thing which through its

qualities satisfies human need" (1957, 125) and "the usefulness of a thing makes its use-value" (1957, 126). Meat's use-value is the nutrients that supply human need (although, meat isn't actually necessary for humans). But, the true purpose of the meat industry, like any industry that produces commodities, is not to utilize the use-value of the thing, but rather to allow the commodity to circulate in exchange for money (the denomination used to represent exchange-value). Marx says this clearly: "all commodities are non-use-values for their owners [producers]" (1957, 179) and again, saying, "for [the producer of a commodity] it's only use-value is as a bearer of exchange-value, and consequently, a means of exchange" (1957, 179). Further, the only way that a commodity can be worth producing and later selling is if the amount of capital put into the production of the commodity and wages is less than the value made by the commodity (which is surplus value, translated into profits for the owners of production). The meat-commodity is no exception to this totalizing rule of capital.

Non-human animals are exploited for the surplus that their meat-commodity-state produces. They get nothing and actually lose their own lives, while the owners of production gain in the form of surplus profits. This inequitable monetary gain is the definition of Marxist exploitation. The point isn't that animals suffer from the exploitation-act itself (the notion of labor and wages are not applicable to animals) but rather that exploitation is the pre-condition of their suffering—they do not suffer *from* exploitation (as humans do), they suffer *due to* exploitation. There are no wages in the case of the commodified labor of animals, nor am I making the anthropocentric argument that animals should be treated in the same way as humans, by receiving wages. Yet, animals are immediately applicable to Marx's concept of exploitation since they are the source of sur-

plus for the owners—and animals being used as surplus is what engenders the meat-commodity. Exploitation of animals brings the meat-commodity into existence. Bob Torres states there is a fundamental difference between animal and human labor and explains why animals can't be considered 'working class': "the animal who is involved in production cannot meaningfully receive any wage beyond its means of subsistence" (2007, 64) and "Animals aren't workers who are able to return home at the end of the working day; instead, they are owned outright, the property of another, disposable and fungible just like any piece of inanimate property" (2007, 19). Non-human animals are not in some pseudo-proletariat class, both because they cannot conceptually grasp contractional agreements and because they are treated as sub-working-class: their exploitative mode entails, or rather, results in, a complete ontological re-configuration; non-human animals are effectively rendered non-subjects, as objects that are privately owned. This privately-owned object status marks them as distinct from the human working-class since human workers are involved in a voluntary consensual labor-contract.

Yet, again, it is not just the fact that animals are denied contracts—an animal being denied voluntary consent in another context, such as a dog being forced to walk for exercise against her will or a horse being ridden, is categorically distinct from the issue at hand. It is the fact that meat-commodity production results in the death of the animals, the absolute nullification of freedom. They are forced to expend their life-labor to produce the very thing that is the cessation of themselves: meat. This is why slaughterhouses and other meat-production facilities should not be tolerated or ethically permitted: because the death-item they spawn is produced in absence of basic freedom and results in an absolute lack of freedom. These facilities and

the meat-commodity fail to satisfy the fundamental metric of freedom as determined by capitalism (the consensual worker contract)—which, some would argue is itself a dubious metric. A consensual labor contractional agreement is not the pinnacle of 'freedom' but it is the form of 'freedom' offered by capitalism, and animals are not even given (because they cannot be given) this mode of freedom.

The obvious anthropocentric stipulation is that the 'freedom' of capitalism, and even more specifically the freedom of voluntary contractional labor, weren't established to be applicable to non-human animals. This view of freedom, like Marx's views on the distinction between non-human animals and humans, should be critically examined. Capitalism views (certain) animals as inanimate private property (instead of subjects equipped with a capacity for freedom), and this object-status of animals operates under the ethical guise of the status of the meat-commodity as a necessary item; the meat-commodity is concealed behind its 'obligatory' use-value. Yet, there is a covert ontological configuration that takes place: the animal, as a subject, is transformed into an object in order to become the meat-commodity. The use-value of the meat-commodity conceals the subject-status of the animal. So, although most animals have legal protection against injury and abuse (giving them some recognition as subjects), these laws are not applicable in the same way to pre-slaughter animals in slaughterhouses that are killed and subsequently transformed into a meat-commodity, since the death of these animals is putatively 'necessary'.

While nothing that has been discussed so far (the use-value of meat and Marxian exploitation) directly is the cause of animal suffering—animals do not suffer from a lack of contract,

nor do they suffer from the surplus being extracted from their labor—these are rather the capitalist realities which presuppose and determine that suffering. Now, we can examine the suffering that the pre-condition of exploitation subjects them to: aside from the obvious suffering inflicted by slaughter, non-human animals suffer from alienation (the result of their life-as-labor); they even cease to exist as soon as their commodity form (as meat) exists. Adams directly links the alienation of the worker to the alienation of the animal pre-slaughter: "One of the basic things that must happen on the disassembly line of the slaughterhouse is that the animal must be treated as an inert object, not as a living, breathing, being. Similarly the worker on the assembly line becomes treated as an inert, unthinking object, whose creative, bodily, emotional needs are ignored" (2016, 33). Slaughtered animals and the humans that slaughter are both exploited within the same physical site, the slaughterhouse. The workers are not only exploited in the traditional Marxist sense of exploitation (i.e., surplus value) but also, according to Torres: "Slaughterhouse work is routinely ranked among the most dangerous occupations" with the locations of slaughterhouses strategically placed in "poorer communities" (2007, 45). Slaughterhouses prey on poor communities, not just to gain a workforce willing to work for less, but also because the job is emotionally and physically unpleasant and dangerous. Not only do the animals experience pain during the slaughter but the humans themselves experience pain in the act of slaughter. Torres asserts that, "while [the slaughter act] is obviously horrific for the animals, it [is] also clearly dangerous for the humans working near several thousand pound cows thrashing about, reeling in pain from the process of slaughter" (2007, 46). The pain of human and non-human animals is inextricably bound within the slaughterhouse, their differential pain meets in the same location-place. Animals aren't an

analog for the worker or vis-versa; rather they are producing (and being produced into) the same things (commodities) under the similar conditions that capitalism imposes, albeit how they contribute to the production of the commodity is very different.

Beyond objectification, animals are estranged and severed from exhibiting their normal behaviors within the slaughterhouse as well as in their pre-slaughterhouse life. Not only is the slaughter-act an enacted form of suffering for the animal—the life that they lead pre-slaughter is alienating in a proper Marxist sense. According to animal researchers Yonela Njisane and Voster Muchenje, "environmental unsettle" is when animals are exposed to conditions drastically dissimilar to their own natural conditions or habitat—and this is something that constantly occurs during the life of a pre-slaughter animal. Njisane and Muchenje particularly isolated transportation as a process that subjects animals to stress and suffering:

> [Transportation is] the key component joining the events involved in the pre-slaughter logistics chain. This process is largely an exceptionally stressful event in the animals' life. It often involves novel and tense exposures such as crowding, noisy vehicles without access to food and water or space to rest, pre-transport management, vibrations, social regrouping, restraint, loading and unloading, transportation duration and climatic factors … inability to move and face the preferred direction during transportation caused cattle to lose balance and even fall. However, maintaining balance in a moving vehicle, which is a new experience, while standing and sometimes with little space to move may be hard to achieve. It was also reported that long transportation hours in poor condition transporta-

> tion vehicles may be unfavourable to animal welfare. (Njisane and Muchenje 2017, 758)

We see here that the space that animals are forced to occupy are themselves, in a sense, alienating—they are unable to move freely (as is their natural inclination) face the way they'd prefer, and unable to eat or drink. All animals have a partially predetermined species-specific set of behaviors, and factory farming untethers them from these behaviors. We see, yet again, the ways the meat-commodity ontologically converts the living, sentient animal into an object—and this process submits animals to alienating (and stress-inducing) circumstances. The spaces they are forced to inhabit are not aligned with their natural species-specific dispositions, rather, these spaces alienate the species from their intuitive proclivities and transport them *as if they were already a commodity devoid of subjectivity.*

To look at a particular instance of this alienating severance of natural inclinations from the pre-slaughter animal's environmental conditions, we can examine the pre-slaughter pig. Oscar Madzingira, in the edited volume, *Animal Welfare*, compares the normal functional behavior of pigs to the conditions in pre-slaughter pig facilities, noting the disparity between ideal (natural) conditions and actual conditions: "The primary requirement for acceptable pig welfare is the maintenance of good health, provision of adequate space and a conducive environment for animals to express their natural behaviour … Intensive pig production systems prevent pigs from exhibiting behaviours such as wallowing in mud and escaping from aggressors" (2017). There are other things Madzingira confronts in the conditions of pre-slaughter pigs, such as their confinement: "gestation crates for most of the 16-week gestation period" (2017) and their "restrictive feeding regimes" (2017) which

are in contention with their normal "foraging" (2017) behavior. What should be confronted here is not simply that non-human animals are subjected to domestication conditions which deviate from their normal conditions—this fact is applicable to various, relatively benign, human-animal relations—it is rather that animals are permanently severed from their natural conditions with absolutely no benefit for them. This severance occurs for their lives to end. Again, while exploitation itself does not contribute towards the suffering of pre-slaughter animals, it is the very thing which leads to their alienation which inherently entails suffering. The absence of any benefit is not perceived as a 'loss' as it would be for humans; it is instead perceived as pain with no relief. The slaughterhouse is an apparatus of implacable alienation, and the mechanisms of exploitation and the absent referent sustain this apparatus. Exploitation does this by being the material conditions that engender alienation; the absent referent performs a similar function by rendering the post-slaughter animal into 'meat': a sexless, speciesless non-animal.

Before being a meat-commodity, animals are living, and since their lives and growth are necessary contributions to the meat-commodity and the surplus extracted from it, their lives are labor. Without the formerly living animal, there is no meat-commodity. Their expended life-energy is non-human-animals' life-as-labor. Marx states: "human labour, creates value [for a commodity]" (1957, 142). So, while human labor-power is embedded into the meat-commodity and imbues it with value (in relation to other commodities that render all human labor as an abstraction) the life of the animal also contributes to the value of the meat-commodity. Animals' bodies are not just the site of the meat-commodity; an animal is not raw material that human labor-power is simply expended upon to create value. A raw material is something that exerts nothing in its own forma-

tion and is entirely inanimate, a live animal, on the other hand, must eat, drink, breathe, urinate, excrete, and generally avoid death. And while human labor is expended in order for animals not to die before they are slaughtered, the animals themselves also exert energy to sustain their own lives. The animal must live, their lives itself are part of the labor that contributes to the value of the meat-commodity. As Marx states,"[the worker] sells [their labor] to another person in order to secure the necessary means of subsistence...He works in order to live" (1957, 204). For the pre-slaughter non-human animal, this phrase is inverted: the animal is made to *live to work*, their lives are surplus value to be extracted later in their meat-commodity form. Animals don't work to receive the "necessary means of subsistence" but rather receiving the means of subsistence to live *is their work*. This process can be seen in all instances of meat: cows, pigs, and chickens all must live to become as large as possible so that the owner can extract more surplus value. Any of these animals that lives to become larger literally supplies more value in death as a meat-commodity. Even calves that are slaughtered young (for veal) with minimal movement—so not to develop muscle tissue—still exert life for a certain period of time so that a particular meat-commodity form can exist.

This concept of life-as-labor is what distinguishes the meat-commodity from other death-commodities, such as corpses in funeral homes or living plants that are sold as non-living produce. Because meat is sold quantitatively, the growth and living of the animal contributes to its value and consequently makes living a form of labor. A human corpse is not worth more or less because of its weight, human bodies are not severed and chopped up and then distributed according to weight. The growth of an individual-human does not impact the death-commodity of a corpse (and a corpse is a very different kind of

commodity). In the case of plants, although their growth does contribute to their value since they also can be sold quantitatively, the issue of sentience ultimately distinguishes the meat-commodity from plant-commodities.

Due to the specific circumstances surrounding mass meat-production, I am specifically examining the meat-commodity produced by slaughterhouses and meat factories which function differently from small-scale farms and personal, family farms; although they may all commit the same moral harm (killing an animal), they operate very differently. As I mentioned in the introduction, Coetzee's analogy is deployed against the systemic murder of animals, through slaughterhouses, rather than small-scale operations. This does not mean that small-scale meat operations somehow circumvent the ethical dilemma of meat-production. Smaller-meat-operations do not elude meat-commodity production—they are participating in post-commodity-fetishism, which is the attempt to evade the commercialization and mass production of contemporary commodity production, through a commodity. As animal studies scholar Vasile Stanescu describes, "In other words, ironically, the very product that is being sold is itself the desire to transcend the commodity fetishism of consumerist culture and return to a supposed earlier time" (2017, 213). This form of locally produced meat still necessitates circulation of the meat-commodity and is the fetishization of a particular mode of meat-commodity production.

Conclusion: Animals and the Commodity-Form

I have shown how Costello's faith in the anthropomorphic and ahistorical analogy of animal-slaughter-as-Holocaust (her ineffectual attempt to transpose the abhorrence for the Holocaust onto slaughterhouses and meat-factories) is untenable.

And I have outlined what the meat-commodity is and the purported utility of its emergence as an item of sustenance and surplus, and how this mode of analysis is in opposition to analogical thinking. Not only is their subject-status denied, but their life-as-labor is rendered invisible.

Certain laws are in place that seemingly seek to reduce the suffering of pre-slaughter animals in slaughterhouses, such as the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which was enacted in 1978. This law, enforced by the USDA, regulates the Slaughterhouse industry and assigns an inhumane status to certain kinds of treatment; the act was established "for the purpose of preventing the inhumane suffering of livestock." Specifically, the law ensures that animals are either sedated or unconscious before being killed, and it also designates the legally-approved methods of bringing about that unconsciousness. This law, among others, provides certain limitations on the treatment of animals, but this is not a true recognition of their subject-status, since it is ultimately undermined by the slaughter-act—an act that no legally recognized subject undergoes ('slaughter' being both semantically and effectively distinct from 'corporeal punishment'). As the title of the bill states, these are "Humane Methods" that lead to the act of "slaughter". Legal scholar David Cassuto writes that these 'humane' laws are not established to limit the pain of animals, but are instead instated to protect the meat-commodity-object:

> Their care and treatment acquires legal relevance only inasmuch as it impacts the marketability of their dismembered bodies. With the wellbeing of the living animal excluded from the equation, "humane standards" take on an entirely different meaning...the law

> does not recognize or protect the lives of agricultural animals. (Cassuto 2014, 236)

Cassuto notes that this is evident by the other forms of suffering that are neglected (not legally protected) for the pre-slaughter animal, such as injury or illness. 'Humane' slaughterhouse laws, albeit (falsely) coded in the rhetoric of animal welfare, are enacted to preserve the meat-commodity object—not to reduce the suffering of the living-subject. Laws like these further expose the contradictory status of non-human-animals (both legally and ontologically): it is known they are subjects, and in some ways, there is an acknowledgement of this subject-status, which is exhibited by laws that attempt to 'diminish their suffering', but in the end, animals are treated like commodity-objects (their lives are cast aside to be transformed into the meat- commodity). If they had proper recognition as subjects, they would obtain freedom from their imminent slaughter.

In *The Lives of Animals,* Costello declares that the death that occurs in slaughterhouses and meat facilities is "each day a fresh Holocaust" (2016, 35). Costello is, of course, correct that slaughtering animals is impermissible killing—a form of murder—but the analogy she is relying on is categorically incorrect. As I've argued throughout this article, a slaughterhouse is really a distinct sectorial site of oppression for non-human-animals. It is not a Holocaust precipitated by religious persecution or eugenics. The Holocaust was a specific oppressive historical event with its own defining circumstances—and the concentration camps were particular death-apparatuses established and used for the mass-murder of humans. The analogical reasoning that comparatively measures the Holocaust and slaughterhouses effectively nullifies and dismisses the specific material plight of both humans *and* animals—and the different

logic that informs these two disparate modes of mass-killing. Specificity is lost in cross-species analogical thinking.

The truth in the animal-slaughter-as-Holocaust analogy is negligible and has no real utility in understanding animal-slaughter. Although there is a "basic essence" of oppression that runs through these two events, analogical thinking is not the mode of analysis needed to truly understand animal suffering. Marxism is a necessary "conceptual tool" (Lerner 2005, 31) to understand and situate animals within the economic apparatus that oppresses them. A Marxian analysis delineates the material practices that have produced the meat-commodity: its (ostensible) use-value, exchange-value, and both human and non-human labor. The suffering of non-human animals within slaughterhouses, and the logic that informs that suffering, can only be revealed by directly examining the sectorial site of exploitation and its death-item, rather than appealing to analogs that erase the distinctiveness of their situation. This form of Marxian analysis finally enables us to view the animal-subject through a prism that is non- human-centric. And this unobstructed view of the animal-subject and the meat-commodity, facilitated by the Marxian analysis of their material conditions, can orient us towards a substantive critique of the unethical and unjust system of meat-commodity production.

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