

Zombification, Social Death, and the Slaughterhouse: U.S. Industrial Practices of Livestock Slaughter

Stephanie Marek Muller

In an August 2016 interview with National Public Radio, Gloria Sarmiento, a representative for the labor advocacy group Nebraska Appleseed, recalled workers' comments on the horrific conditions facing employees working on "the chain" in U.S. American slaughterhouses: "The speed of the line is really fast. The supervisors are yelling all the time. . . . They are treating us like animals."¹ The article covered the hidden stories of many employees in U.S. American slaughterhouses (also called abattoirs): "most often immigrants and resettled refugees, slaughter and process hundreds of animals an hour, forced to work at high speeds in cold conditions, doing thousands of the same repetitions over and over, with few breaks."² It introduced the people behind the raw tenderloins sitting in the supermarket, those responsible for ensuring that each American can consume an unprecedented 200 pounds of meat per year. In a further effort to rehumanize the forgotten workers, Oxfam America's Oliver Gottfried remembered a striking testimonial given by one abattoir employee about agricultural executives: "If they care this much about their animals, why can't they care about their people?"³

From an animal liberationist perspective, these sets of statements could be (and very often are) considered hyperbolic at best, "speciesist"⁴ at worst. By critiquing the economic conditions of slaughterhouse employees at the expense of the slaughtered animals, these workers and their advocates in the news media seem to refuse to heed scholar Carrie Packwood Freeman's warning that "the

treatment of farmed animals and their breeding for food constitutes a social issue which the news media have an obligation to present fairly for public debate.”⁵ One *could* say that slaughterhouse employees may be overworked and underpaid, but they are not being poked and prodded by electric prongs to move faster toward the slaughter line and, subsequently, the end of their lives. One *might* argue that these workers, though systemically underprotected, are still not necessarily subject to the particularly unique mode of “reproductive tyranny”⁶ that turns hens and cows into unwilling, unwitting baby-producing machines and kills them for meat once they are “spent.” One *can* point out that annual abattoir worker death tolls do not even reach the hundreds, let alone *10 billion*, which is the number of livestock animals slaughtered per year by the U.S. American agriculture industry. After all, in 2017, approximately 8,916,097,000 chickens, 240,011,000 turkeys, 121,372,000 pigs, 32,189,000 adult cattle, 512,000 calves, 26,628,000 ducks, and 2,178,000 sheep were slaughtered for meat in the United States alone.⁷

In response to the above critiques, this article argues that the rhetorical “weighting” of such oppressions is ultimately counterproductive to the aims of intersectional, interspecies justice. Whoever has suffered “more” or “worse” or “in what capacity” is not a fruitful lens by which to study animal and/or human rights. Rather, instead of being studied in *opposition* to each other, the intersecting and often co-constituting oppressions of *Homo sapiens* and other species in the U.S. American livestock industry must be studied *in relation* to one another. It is important to note that despite the differences in *degree* in many of these instances of abuse, they are in large part similar in *kind*. That is to say, they are a part of broader spectrums of systemic inequality and state-sanctioned violence. These ideological and material inequalities, despite having different species subjects, are not distinct from one another but, rather, *mutually constitutive*.⁸

Indeed, to ignore the plight of slaughterhouse workers is to ignore a key corner of the intersectional labyrinth that is the pursuit of social justice. Eco-feminist rhetorician Richard Rogers highlights how human and animal issues are inextricably linked to broader systems of power. Scholars and activists interested in issues of animal and/or human rights must take seriously theories of intersectionality in their analyses wherein “the very categories of domination and subordination (which also include nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability) [are] mutually constitutive, pointing to an interdependence between and lack of any firm foundation for such categories.”⁹ Critical animal studies scholar Nekeisha Alexis further warns that “animal advocates overlook a crucial piece of the puzzle when they celebrate employee layoffs and criminal convictions without attending to the ways racism, sexism, capitalism, and other forms of oppression foster a culture of violence on factory farms.”¹⁰ An intersectional approach to the oppressions inherent in industrial agriculture notes how slaughterhouse employees are not merely deranged sadists torturing and killing animals for the sport of it. Many, if not the majority, of these workers are actually in highly vulnerable social positions—people of color, refugees, and

undocumented immigrants—and thrust into one of the most dangerous jobs in America, often with little to no legal protections. They too are victims of systemic violence in which they are “routinely subject to chronic and debilitating injuries and illnesses, physical exhaustion, verbal and emotional abuse by superiors, and severe restrictions on their most basic needs.”¹¹ Agricultural animal abuses are strategically hidden from view and thus rendered invisible, but so too is the hidden “psychological trauma” inflicted on workers who “experience, on a daily basis, large-scale violence and death that most of the U.S. American population will never have to encounter.”¹² Employees’ intense vulnerability can allow their rights to be violated without repercussions. Thus, although abattoir workers are not marched to their *literal* deaths like the animal inhabitants inside the slaughterhouse, they frequently experience what historical sociologist Orlando Patterson calls “social death.”¹³ In other words, these unfortunate subjects are kept in a state of zombiedom, of “death-in-life.”¹⁴ A state of “institutionalized marginality” must be understood as “the ultimate cultural outcome of the loss of natality as well as honor and power. It [is] in this too that the master’s authority rest[s].”¹⁵

In recent decades, the amount of animal products consumed by the average American has increased exponentially. Through vertical integration (a carefully coded term for monopolizing), a few large companies completely control the U.S. meat industry, such as Tyson, Cargill, National Beefpacking Co. LLC, and JBS USA. Despite the massive growth of meat production, increased profits for corporate higher-ups, and obscene amount of corpses disassembled for flesh, slaughterhouse employees have not seen the profits: “While slaughterhouse wages have historically been above the average manufacturing wage, the slaughterhouse wage fell below the manufacturing average in 1983 and was a whopping 24 percent lower than the average manufacturing wage by 2002.”¹⁶ Currently, employees earn approximately \$26,000 a year (on the high end) for full-time work despite working considerably longer hours (twelve or more hour days), doing more physically and psychologically intense labor than the average American employee.¹⁷ Instead of wage increases, employees have had to increase the speed of the line. According to one worker, “From the time you enter, you’re told that if the plant stops 10 minutes, the company will lose I don’t know how many millions of dollars. . . . It’s always ‘faster, faster.’”¹⁸ In doing so, workers face high risk of serious injury and have neither the time nor the incentive to ensure “humane” treatment of the animals being sent to slaughter. The vicious routinization of forced apathy, mandatory cruelty, and countless deaths in the name of profit is one representation of what Barbara Noske calls the “animal-industrial complex,”¹⁹ demonstrating how “capitalist biopolitics do typically operate via an assumption of human/animal hierarchy, but collectively resource humans and animals alike for capitalization often in the same places and at the same times.”²⁰

Critical animal studies scholars insist that “single-issue campaigns,” that is, advocacy focused on only one aspect of intersectional, institutionalized, sys-

temic oppressions, are detrimental to animal liberation. The study of one at the expense of the other or the emphasis of one as “more important” than the other is not an effective form of social justice communication. Within this framework, this article takes seriously the assertion that “although cruelty must not be excused, it is crucial to link the trauma factory farm employees undergo to the trauma they inflict on the animals. Without an intersectional approach, animal advocates fail to unmask the full extent of the violence.”²¹ Particularly notable literature has identified animal abuses as analogous to, connected to, and often even worse than, historical human-on-human atrocities. For example, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, by social historian and Holocaust specialist Charles Patterson, analogizes industrial agriculture to the Holocaust, explaining how agricultural practices influenced practices in concentration camps and vice versa. *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, by bioethicist Marjorie Spiegel, takes a similar approach using the transatlantic slave trade as a central thematic.²²

These works are renowned in animal liberationist circles for their careful melding of the historical abuses of ethnonationalism, racism, and speciesism, but they have met considerable criticism. They have been criticized for appropriating the histories of oppressed peoples while ignoring the particularities of ethnic histories, and ultimately recentering whiteness as the basis for social justice ethics.²³ Feminist legal theorist Maneesha Deckha notes the affective consequences of invoking direct, historical analogical comparisons between human and animal suffering due to the long legacy of using the category of “subhuman” as a cultural agent of violence: “Obviously, it can be very unsettling for vulnerable human groups to destabilize this boundary . . . especially so for vulnerable human groups whose humanity has been historically denied.”²⁴ After all, as philosopher Sylvia Wynter so famously explained in her genealogy of the colonial European construction of humanity, man’s “overrepresentation” necessarily depended on the not-manness (and thus animalness) of the colonized.²⁵ Thus, regardless of any latent speciesism involved in not wanting to “be” animal, the historical connotations of being forced into that arbitrarily constructed category and subsequently relegated to societal marginality necessitate a serious reconsideration of the propriety of invoking such comparisons. This controversy is further compounded by the risk of “appropriating” a particular cultural group’s struggles for another group’s ends.²⁶

In response to these cogent critiques, this article offers what I deem a more fruitful conceptual metaphor of the zombie. This disquisition draws on evaluations by critical-cultural communication studies and critical animal studies of the interplays between racist and speciesist practices. Odd as the assertion may be, this article argues that the “walking dead” of horror films might render greater understandings of speciesist–racist interplays in industrial agriculture. Despite the current fandom surrounding pop culture hits like *The Walking Dead*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *i-Zombie*, discussions of zombies need not be limited to fantastical representations. An understanding of the inner workings

of the U.S. American slaughterhouse is incomplete without the bloody deaths, mangled flesh, and psychoses so reminiscent of zombie slashers.²⁷ Furthermore, cultural theories of zombiedom reveal the colonial ties that weave together killers and the killable. By using zombies as metaphors for animals-to-be-slaughtered and their would-be slaughterers and by applying real-world examples of zombification in the U.S. American abattoir, this article reveals a concerning condition that I call “comorbid zombification.” The term reflects a sociocultural condition in which agricultural animals, rendered socially dead from birth, act on and are acted on by slaughterhouse workers who, through their proximity to animality, reify their own (often racially inscribed) socially dead, “sub”-human, and ultimately zombified cultural statuses. Comorbid zombification is a process by which human–livestock interactions in the slaughterhouse produce and perpetually reproduce conditions of what Achille Mbembe labels “death-in-life.”²⁸

What follows is an explication of critical cultural theories of the zombie in order to demonstrate the fantastical monster’s unarguable ties to issues of race, social positioning, and status as human. This thesis builds on theories of social death, necropolitics, and the social production of humanness. I follow with three distinct analyses of comorbid zombification as manifested in the U.S. American slaughterhouse. The first manifestation of the process of comorbid zombification is cultural. Workers and the animals at their mercy often occupy vulnerable, liminal, and purposefully invisible positions in the U.S. American social sphere, denied “rights” and even “humane treatment” within and even before they even set foot in the slaughterhouse. The next manifestation is physical, wherein human and animal bodies in the abattoir often mimic what pop culture consumers commonly imagine as an injured “zombie body.” The final manifestation is psychological, in which residents of the slaughterhouse are at times driven to psychoses often identified as criminal, deranged, or monstrous. Ultimately, the U.S. American slaughterhouse is a space that reifies the sliding scale of humanity, wherein marginalized persons are “closer” to “inferior” beings, both metaphorically and literally, ultimately rendering both parties as “less than human” and therefore disposable in the public eye.

Zombies, Zombification, and Defining the “Human”

Although zombies—like werewolves, vampires, and other monstrous human perversions—are often dismissed as inhabitants of fantastical films, they are hardly “empty signifiers.”²⁹ The zombie figure carries within it the cultural hopes and fears of those who conjure it. Indeed, as media scholar Bernadette Calafell observes, “Monsters are said to reflect the anxieties of their times.”³⁰ The history of the zombie dates back to colonial Haiti, wherein enslaved people feared that suicide might lead to a form of living death as opposed to a peaceful afterlife, thus giving slaves a reason to continue living. After the Haitian Revolution, the myth of the zombie continued via fears that malevolent *bokor* (Vodoun sorcerers) might bewitch bodies to perform free labor. In this

way, zombiedom was initially representative of immense cultural and religious anxieties surrounding unending, mindless bondage.³¹ Anthropologist Wade Davis further identifies zombies not as abstract fears but as very real possibilities of existence. “Zombification” is a “social process” through which one’s “outcast” status allows privileged members of society to enforce zombiedom—not as a “random criminal activity” by malevolent *bokor* but as a “social sanction imposed by recognized corporate groups whose responsibility included the protection and policing of that society.”³² This description explains zombification as a very real production of social relationships and serves as the basis for criticisms of the zombie.

Cultural theorists and critics have asserted that zombies, within a Western context, represent a neoliberal, white-supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative, Judeo-Christian society’s fears of cultural dissolution at the hands of “Othered” hordes. Eric Watts argues that in U.S. contexts, mediated zombie hordes reflect “postracial American apocalyptic politics” in which “the ‘zombie’ figures the apocalypse as a national collapse.”³³ Steven Pokornowski claims that popular zombie outbreak narratives mirror legal and media narratives of African American deaths at the hands of law enforcement—in other words, both zombies and black bodies are racialized, pathologized, and killable.³⁴ Jon Stratton similarly critiques that fears of zombie hordes mirror Western nations’ anxieties about increased influxes of asylum seekers, refugees, and “illegal” immigrants. No matter *who* the zombie signifies, the “men behind the monsters” represent Giorgio Agamben’s “bare life,” a liminal state of being in which a person does not truly qualify as a “person” under the law. Those resigned to bare life endure a marginalized existence in which even basic necessities of life are not guaranteed. And, “excluded from the rights and privileges of the modern state, those displaced people . . . can be treated in a way that enables them to become associated with a condition mythically exemplified in the zombie.”³⁵ The undead and those they signify can thus represent “completely realized colonial objects. Zombies cannot be recognized, accommodated, or negotiated with; once identified, they must immediately be killed.”³⁶

To understand the material and existential conditions of the politically, legally, and socially disenfranchised, one must understand cultural theories of “living death,” specifically necropolitics and social death. Postcolonial critic Achille Mbembe’s conception of necropolitics serves as a useful add-on to Foucauldian notions of the biopolitical, or how sovereigns exert control over living bodies. The necropolitical refers to the state’s potential to make certain bodies killable, such as naming enslaved bodies “chattel” to deny them of their personhood and subsequently of their legal rights to life and liberty. Sovereign powers maintain a constant “state of exception”³⁷ to ensure that violence against bodies is justifiable. The ideal necropolitical subject is, according to Mbembe, kept in an unending “*state of injury*, in a phantomlike world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity.”³⁸ I argue that the social process of zombification is better

understood as the process by which, vis-à-vis the realm of the necropolitical, one becomes socially dead physically, psychologically, and culturally.

Even if we question the analogy that industrial agricultural places animals in the role of the ideal socially dead subject (the chattel slave), the connections between animality and the question of the zombie are undeniable. The social production of zombiedom is synonymous with what Katherine McKittrick dubs the “social production of humanness,” which entails the ways in which Western ontologies “normatively conceptualize difference, cast our present hierarchical order as a truth, and site Man as a location of desire. . . . Humanness is, then, both Man made and human made, pivoting on the displacement of difference and alternative forms of life.”³⁹ In other words, colonial understandings of the world privilege a human/nonhuman binary wherein the ideal human body mimics those in control of the world—specifically, the white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, Judeo-Christian, human body.⁴⁰ Deviants from this representation of the human are therefore inferior, which is to say closer to the animal, and therefore of less inherent value.⁴¹ Animality is understood as injuring, resulting in people being unjustly “treated like animals” or compared to them in a derogatory fashion. Fashioning the connection between human and animal slaughterhouse subjects requires scholars to heed the warning that “as long as the automatic exclusion of animals from ethical standing remains intact simply because of their species, such a dehumanization via animalization will be readily available for deployment against whatever body that happens to fall outside the ethnocentric ‘we.’”⁴² Slaughterhouse subjects, human *and* animal, exist in uncomfortably close proximity to one another, thus contaminating each other with the particularities of their liminalities and further reifying a colonial sliding scale of humanity.

The connection between humanness, animality, and the creation of socially dead subjects stages a needed discussion of the industrial U.S. American slaughterhouse. After all, “the making of the Americas was/is an (often dangerously genocidal and ecocidal) interhuman and environmental project through which ‘new forms of life’ can be conceptualized.”⁴³ In identifying contemporary forms of “bare life,” critical animal studies scholar Laura Hudson argues that not only humans can be named socially dead but so too can animal subjects within an ultramechanized capitalist system that excludes certain figures from the rewards of production and instead abuses their labor. Livestock, for instance, are part of everyday social interactions in America, even if their presence is not known. Many, perhaps even most of us, eat their meat, wear their skin, or drink their milk without ever acknowledging the living body that produced them. The industrial farm serves as an ideal manifestation of a state of exception (considered a moment of “emergency” or “intense need” wherein the state overrides traditional securitization norms and regard for the humane treatment of subjects for the maintenance of an abstract public good) wherein violence is normalized and justified:

Here, animals cease to represent domesticated nature, becoming instead representatives of an industrial production process that reduces all life to bare life. After centuries of breeding and control, many of the animals raised in intensive western agriculture appear as artifacts rather than living beings.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, those persons assigned to slaughter socially dead animals are often shoved to the margins of social life. In direct violation of modern propriety, many slaughterhouse employees not only represent liminal persons (the nonwhite, the illegal immigrant, the parolee) but also engage in acts of violence deemed unsuitable for genteel middle-class life.⁴⁵

The abattoir serves as “*a zombie-hood* grounded in the tasks performed at the plant. Workers simultaneously bring home ‘the bacon’ and find themselves transformed by their environment into a slaughterhouse body.”⁴⁶ The following sections do not reject the agency of the human and animal bodies within and outside of the slaughterhouse walls. Neither do they attempt to render invisible their many acts of resistance against their conditions. Rather, they seek to elucidate the exploitative processes by which the animal-industrial complex *attempts* to strip these agencies, to castrate acts of resistance, and to ultimately reify the culturally constructed subhumanity of slaughterhouse inhabitants to further the capitalist cause. This process, dubbed, comorbid zombification, emerges in the realms of the cultural, the physical, and the psychological.

Zombiedom and the Cultural

Comorbid zombification in the slaughterhouse is, from a broad cultural standpoint, the result of purposeful invisibility, institutionalized hatred, and intense vulnerability. The U.S. American agricultural imaginary embraces nostalgia where individual, salt-of-the-earth farmers raise their cows, chickens, pigs, and sheep on healthy green pastures with love and care. Whether or not such affections ever truly existed (or ever can exist) between agriculturalists and the animals doomed to slaughter, the vision of roaming animals in open fields is now nothing but a “greenwashed”⁴⁷ myth perpetuated by the food industry, one that caters to the needs of those consumers too fragile to imagine their own complicity in agricultural exploitation. Indeed, the master narrative of pastoral animal husbandry belies the material and conditions of U.S. American industrial agriculture that relegate slaughterhouse populations to a liminal realm between peaceful nature and civilized culture.

With the above conclusions in mind, American literature scholar Gerry Canavan argues that “we live in the real world, a zombieless world, where the only zombies to be found are the ones we ourselves have made out of the excluded, the forgotten, the cast-out, and the walled-off.”⁴⁸ The abattoir epitomizes this phenomenon, for in a building dedicated to slaughter and the “inhuman,” invisibility is the name of the game. According to geographer Richard White,

These places of slaughter are private and forbidden. . . . Indeed the active exclusion of people is aggressively enforced, in the shape of explicit warning signs, electric fences, barbed wire adorning high walls, patrolled by security guards and/or surveyed by CCTV cameras. Any unauthorized person or group who does manage to gain entry does so at great personal risk.⁴⁹

And who other than investigative reporters and animal activists would even *want* to enter such an arena of blood, guts, death, and horror? As the old homage goes, “If slaughterhouses had walls, everyone would be vegetarians.” Thus, in order to keep the agriculture industry profitable and a meat-eating society complacent, the animal and human abuses that occur day by day in the abattoir are strategically hidden from public view. As psychologist and animal rights activist Melanie Joy explains, “While it is difficult, if not impossible, to question an ideology that we don’t even know exists, it’s even more difficult when that ideology actively works to keep itself hidden.”⁵⁰ What Joy dubs a “carnist” ideology not only normalizes the eating of flesh via mass slaughter but also normalizes the treatment of those relegated to the margins of society, those unfortunate souls unable to find work other than in the abusive confines of the abattoir.

From the farm to the chain, industrially farmed animals are hidden from public view. Note the geography of industrial agriculture, wherein confined animal feeding operations and slaughterhouses are disproportionately located in rural, poor communities inhabited by people of color—in other words, in those communities least likely to garner media attention for the horrific environmental and health consequences of living among sick animals.⁵¹ The facilities themselves are often windowless, preventing any prying eyes from seeing the horrific conditions of the animals awaiting their demise. By the end of the day, the animal bodies whose lives were spent behind walls are rendered even more absent through their transformation from once live flesh to abstract, inert “meat.” Per philosopher Stephen Thierman, “the living, breathing animals who ate, slept and interacted—often in atrocious conditions—literally disappear. In the slaughterhouse, their individuality is completely elided as they become inert commodities for human consumption.”⁵²

Through the strategic production of institutionalized racial division, the agricultural industry further ensures that slaughterhouse employees as “individuals” disappear so that empathic alliances, such as unions, cannot form.⁵³ Infamously, in 2000, *New York Times* journalist Charlie LeDuff reported a dismal scene at one abattoir wherein racial segregation was not only the norm but also a strategy to keep workers in line:

The few whites on the payroll tend to be mechanics or supervisors. As for the Indians, a handful are supervisors; oth-

ers tend to get clean menial jobs like warehouse work. With few exceptions, that leaves the blacks and Mexicans with the dirty jobs at the factory. . . . The locker rooms are self-segregated and so is the cafeteria. The enmity spills out into the towns. The races generally keep to themselves. . . . Language is also a divider. . . . This means different groups don't really understand one another and tend to be suspicious of what they do know.⁵⁴

Ironically, the cliquishness of the abattoir led not to racialized group solidarity but rather to depersonalization. According to one worker, "They don't kill pigs in the plant, they kill people."⁵⁵ The plant is so loud, so fast paced, so mechanical that even those of the same racial composition cannot bond: "the workers double their pace, hacking pork from shoulder bones with a driven single-mindedness. They stare blankly, like mules in wooden blinders, as the butchered slabs pass by."⁵⁶ Ultimately,

The people in this environment have a hard time seeing each other and this inability leads to distrust, segregation, and animosity. A very tangible effect of these reductions seems to have been the stifling of attempts at collective action with respect to unionization. In this carceral institution, the disciplinary partitioning and ranking of individuals along various axes causes individuals to effectively disappear.⁵⁷

Workers were, in this scenario, struggling to engage in authentic interactions, to form lively social bonds, and were instead transformed into zombified figures that merely existed side by side.

There is little doubt that farmed animals have little to no legal protections. The fact that they are consumed and enjoyed by lawmakers and their hungry constituents ensures such pitiful conditions. Indeed, the most "revolutionary" advances in U.S. American agriculture in the past few years have merely ensured more human (perhaps better described as *slightly less inhumane*) treatment of farmed animals, such as the "phasing out" of battery cages and gestation crates or the adoption of less terrifying slaughter methods, such as those suggested by Temple Grandin. They are chattel, not persons under the law, thus lacking the legal rights and privileges supposedly guaranteed to conscious beings. The possibility of "rights" for farmed animals is an impossible notion, for, as legal scholar and animal activist Gary Francione notes, in conditions where a human's pleasure versus an animal's life are placed in contestation with one another, only the party with legal personhood (and thus moral standing) will be victorious.⁵⁸ Perhaps employees might advocate on behalf of the animals in their "care," but, as Alexis cautions, "without meaningful legal protections,

employees are compelled to remain silent about these conditions and the aggression used against nonhuman animals.”⁵⁹

Even though abattoir employees are biologically human, culturally they tend not to hold the legal rights and moral standing promised to employees under U.S. American labor law. In many instances, this has to do with citizenship status. Slaughterhouses are often populated by “illegal” immigrants who risk deportation by speaking out against poor working conditions. Such brutish conditions explain the 100 percent annual turnover rate at some abattoirs.⁶⁰ So inhumane are working conditions that one Oxfam report noted that due to a disregard for legally mandated bathroom breaks, “too many workers tell stories about urinating on themselves, or witnessing coworkers urinating on themselves.”⁶¹ Humiliated workers have been known to wear diapers to work or avoid nourishing themselves entirely: “Jean, from a Tyson plant in Virginia, says that even though she’s diabetic, ‘I don’t drink any water so I won’t have to go.’”⁶² Employees often work twelve-hour days for up to seven days a week doing backbreaking work without health insurance.⁶³ If employees dare to rest, they might be fired on the spot: “Once you get hurt, they are just waiting for these people to do a mistake to fire them because they don’t want them over there . . . you sit down, you get tired, they fire you because they say you’re sleeping.”⁶⁴ And, despite “strict” U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations on abattoirs, inspectors usually care more about food purity than workers’ rights, with new policies consistently coming into place that decrease government inspections and leave safety measures to the companies themselves.⁶⁵

From a broader cultural standpoint, abattoir work is “a labor considered morally and physically repellent by the vast majority of society that is sequestered from view rather than eliminated or transformed.”⁶⁶ By making absent the human and animal bodies slated to suffer in the slaughterhouse, Americans can, if they wish, conveniently forget about the very real bodies maimed and killed in the name of meat production. As was famously depicted in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, within the mysterious slaughterhouse walls, inhabitants are less than human under the law, with animals and migrants lacking legal protections entirely and other workers strategically separated from one another to prevent justice-seeking alliances. For many of those human persons shopping for ground chuck at the grocery store, abattoir inhabitants are little more than spirits of slaughters past. Within the slaughterhouse, however, multiple bodies function—or are, at least, under constant risk of functioning—under the zombified conditions of social death “manifested through the overseer’s disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner and in the spectacle of pain inflicted.”⁶⁷

Zombiedom and the Physical

The transformation of human and animal bodies into shambling, infected, near corpses via the politics of industrial agriculture serves as the first site of comorbid zombification. As undead monsters, zombies are hardly exemplars of

beauty and health. Those confined to zombiedom have rotting, bleeding skin, bruised and beaten by those protagonists intent to slaughter them once and for all. These monsters are infected with dangerous, contagious diseases that transformed them into their disgusting physical forms in the first place. These contagions are the bane of pure society and of those healthy human bodies keen to stay that way.

Prior to arriving at the slaughterhouse, the animals have already started resembling the rotting, shambling corpses associated with popular culture zombie films. Life on a factory farm forbids bodily flourishing. At best, animals are left “languishing in appalling conditions.”⁶⁸ With the advent of genetic engineering, animals like chickens are now born so biologically warped that their immense torso mass cannot be supported by their tiny legs. They are born and raised indoors, with little to no sunlight or fresh air. To compensate for overcrowding, birds are often “de-beaked” without anesthetic. In March 2014, the animal advocacy group Mercy for Animals covertly recorded the horrific sight of farmed turkeys “stricken by open wounds, rotting eyes, and gruesome infections.”⁶⁹ Pregnant pigs languish in tiny enclosures called “gestation crates,” which are so small that the animals can barely turn around. Their immobility results in bellies swollen and rotting from time spent on the floor in their own urine and feces.⁷⁰ The piglets are ripped from their mothers and further mutilated: “tails are cut off, their teeth are often clipped in half, their ears are mutilated, and males’ testicles may be cut off—all without any pain relief.”⁷¹ Broiler hens (those female chickens who have not been sent to slaughter due to their ability to lay eggs) and dairy cows (female cows whose reproductive cycles have not yet been “spent”) endure artificial insemination, embryo transfers, forced molting, hormone injections, heat cycle monitoring, and other practices that alter the natural biological functions of these animals and leave their bodies in irreversibly damaged states by the time they are sent to slaughter.⁷² Many animals are already infected with diseases like pneumonia by the time they are sent to “the chain,” sicknesses that, like *Resident Evil*’s T-virus, easily spread to humans and turn their brains into mush, like mad cow disease. And, en route to the slaughterhouse, livestock frequently experience bodily harm during travel due to being stuffed and cramped into trucks.⁷³ Joy describes the experience of chickens: “grabbed and crammed into crates that are stacked on top of one another, they can suffer broken or dislocated wings, hips, and legs, as well as internal hemorrhages.”⁷⁴

Once they have arrived at the slaughterhouse, animals are already in a tragic state of life in death. However, some have it worse than others, as in the case of “downed animals.” Coldly called “nonambulatory livestock” in the industry, these are the animals that arrive too sick or too injured to stand and walk on their own. In 2009, President Barack Obama banned the use of downed animals for meat consumption, and more and more animal “welfare” legislation is being passed to avoid profiting off sick creatures. However, since these animals are devoid of profit, they are often left to die of neglect. Melanie Joy

reports that “still-living animals have been documented being dumped onto a ‘dead pile,’ which may contain dozens of corpses. The downed animals that are not discarded may be dragged by hooks or chains or bulldozed by a forklift.”⁷⁵

Employees are not free from the flesh-rotting, bone-breaking experiences on the slaughterhouse chain. Debbie Berkowitz, a former official for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), darkly notes that “part of the business model in this industry is to sacrifice worker safety on the altar of profits.”⁷⁶ By the end of one’s employment in an abattoir, many have incurred irreversible bodily damage. The meat industry’s already dangerously high level of injuries among workers is growing ever higher as the speed of production increases. For instance, approximately 25 percent of meatpackers take ill or are injured every year.⁷⁷ A 2014 OSHA report reveals that beef and pork processing workers were seven times more likely to have repetitive motion injuries.⁷⁸ The furious pace of slaughterhouse work results in an all-too-common array of musculoskeletal disorders in workers’ “muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerves, that cause pains, strains, and inflammation.”⁷⁹ Common injuries for meatpackers include the banal (such as tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome) and the severe (such as puncture wounds, lacerations, bone splinters, and complete loss of appendages).⁸⁰ Even normal bodily functions can be disrupted on the line. Multiple investigative reports have found that workers, even pregnant women, are often unable to use the bathroom while on the line, with some even refusing to drink water or even wearing diapers to work.⁸¹

Sometimes the brutality of the chain leads to death itself. In 1983, one worker died from inhaling poisonous fumes while cleaning a blood-collection tank. Despite the company being fined and ordered to develop new cleaning methods, a second worker died while cleaning the same tank a mere three years later. Additionally, a 2002 article for the *Los Angeles Times* reported that in Nebraska, one worker sliced open his chest with a boning knife near the end of his shift.⁸²

However, a majority of the deaths are hardly as gruesome as a horror movie. Like the beginning of any zombie apocalypse, slaughterhouse worker deaths start with infections. Eric Johnson reports an excess of deaths from cancer among slaughterhouse workers, particularly of the tongue, esophagus, lungs, skin, bone, bladder, and lymph nodes. Apparently, it is the excess contact with sick and abused animals that leads to the excess of disease: “exposure to microbial agents by the airborne route or through contact with contaminated carcasses or animals is well known in abattoirs and meat processing plants, and workers work in production lines that bring them in contact with hundreds or thousands of animals daily.”⁸³ Given the high rate of cuts and lacerations, infectious agents have “ample opportunity” to enter the bodies of unsuspecting workers. Further, workers show an increased risk for stroke.⁸⁴

The fear of contamination and contagion is preeminent in zombie horror films. In the “real world,” we might also consider the means by which slaughtered animals and slaughterhouse workers become vectors for disease among

the “pure” and “innocent” public. Seventy-three percent of emerging pathogenic diseases are zoonotic in origin.⁸⁵ Note the ever-growing fears of food-borne diseases, such as *E. coli*, salmonella, and mad cow disease, as well as the less-talked-about but deadly campylobacter. In a haunting, horror movie-esque description of the microbe’s potential for growth in overcrowded poultry operations, biosecurity experts Hinchliffe and colleagues describe the overnight transformation of chickens’ bodies into infected agents:

Thriving in conditions of intense physiological change in which immune systems are commonly compromised, *Campylobacter* is also successful in high stress environments wherein already compromised birds seem to produce the necessary physio-chemical conditions for the bacterium to spread both within the body (its uptake from the gut to muscles) and throughout the concentrated population. . . . A typical UK poultry house of 10,000-30,000 birds can, as a result, become positive for *Campylobacter* almost overnight.⁸⁶

Additionally, excess use of antibiotics on livestock animals had left many scientist concerned about antibiotic resistance, particularly the risk of a resistant superbug capable of producing a “public health crisis” (a carefully coded term for pandemic).⁸⁷

Slaughterhouse workers were not free from these contagions. Because they worked so closely with contaminated carcasses, workers were at a significant risk of contracting zoonotic diseases capable of being transmitted from human to human. For instance, the Centers for Disease Control reported that workers were at increased risk of Q fever, which at its most benign manifested as influenza but at its worst could become pneumonia or hepatitis. OSHA warned that meat processing workers might develop antibiotic-resistant staphylococcus infections, better known as MRSA, as well as brucellosis, influenza, and dermatological infections.⁸⁸

While zombies do not exist in “real life” as literal manifestations of the undead, they are certainly real as exemplars of social death when looking at the physical bodies moving within the U.S. American slaughterhouse. Human and animal bodies exist as maimed, as constantly injured beings analogous to the bleeding, festering bodies of monstrous zombiedom. And, as in the grand master narrative of a zombie apocalypse, already vulnerable slaughterhouse populations risk exposing those closest to them to contagions. Furthermore, the zoonotic diseases borne from the necropolitical pit of the slaughterhouse might just lead to a pandemic the likes of which zombie films have never seen.

Zombiedom and the Psychological

The identification of the zombie with the development of violent psychosis provides a suitable *entrée* point for a second form of comorbid zombification. One of the most commonly emphasized zombie traits in the horror industry is the zombie's desire to feed, a hunger of such ferocity that the zombie body embraces brutal sociopathy. While exploited animals are hardly empty shells devoid of agency, it is important to note how, prior to arriving at the slaughterhouse, livestock animals have figuratively "lost their minds" due to conditions of intense trauma and confinement. Furthermore, on interacting with these zombified creatures, slaughterhouse workers become prone to similar trauma-induced psychoses ranging from posttraumatic stress to sadistic behaviors inside and outside of the job. The U.S. American slaughterhouse is the arena where human and animal bodies meet, enacting psychological violence on one another and spreading that violence outside of the abattoir's bloody walls.

Life on a factory farm leads to multiple representations of psychosis in farmed animals. The animal-on-animal violence that goes on in industrial agricultural arenas is reminiscent of the gruesome carnage left in a zombie horde's wake. Given that their short lives are filled with little more than "disease, exposure to extreme temperatures, severe overcrowding, violent handling"⁸⁹ and more, that the animals might act out is hardly a shock (at least to those who are not foolish enough to still think of nonhumans as mere automata). Many are traumatized from birth. Calves are separated from their mothers much earlier than in nature, a process recognized by veterinarians as a "major psychological stressor."⁹⁰ Michael Pollan explains that "weaning is perhaps the most traumatic time on a ranch for animals and ranchers alike; cows separated from their calves will bellow for days, and the calves, stressed . . . are prone to getting sick."⁹¹ Chickens—fat, cramped, and drugged as they are—find themselves unable to carry out natural behaviors like roosting and foraging. As a result, they develop psychotic behaviors ranging from feather pecking to cannibalism. Pigs have developed neurotic behaviors, such as biting each other's tails off and chomping at the bars of their pens. Some are even known to experience a form of posttraumatic stress disorder (what the agricultural industry calls "porcine stress syndrome") as a result of their cruel treatment.⁹² In the name of "welfare," some geneticists are experimenting with livestock to see if they might make the animals incapable of experiencing suffering. In doing so, scholar Laura Hudson argued that "perhaps even this spontaneous expression of distress at their captivity will be lost and they will truly become the blind, living machines of production that they imperfectly embody today."⁹³ In other words, the crazed, violent zombie body might be replaced by a docile monster that, like any zombie, is doomed to meet its end with a shot to the head.

Life on the killing floor is not kind to the psyches of employees greeted with terrified animals with psychosis. Indeed, time spent in a slaughterhouse may as well be considered time spent being contaminated with a "killing dis-

ease”—something in the air that, if left untreated, can make one bloodthirsty and cruel. In the age of social media, more and more undercover videos “go viral” and produce social outrage and disgust over the treatment of farmed animals. For example, in 2008, the Humane Society of the United States released footage of workers at the Westland/Hallmark Meat Company beating cattle, shocking them, and using forklifts to drag downed animals to slaughter. A similar Humane Society video emerged showing workers at Bushway Packing Inc. shocking and beating baby calves that still had their umbilical cords attached and even skinning some of them alive.⁹⁴ Workers have been instructed to rip off birds’ heads and have guiltlessly played with the decapitated corpses for fun.⁹⁵ Indeed, “the nature of the slaughterhouse work may have caused psychological damage to the employees because the employees’ actions certainly rise to the level of abnormal cruelty that would cause concern among the general population.”⁹⁶

While horrifying scenes like this continue to enter the public eye, companies often attribute the abuse to a “few bad apples” in the slaughterhouse. According to Alexis, “management’s first line of defense is blaming overtaxed laborers who are compelled to follow orders in heinous working environments. Firing low level employees reassures consumers that, with the exception of a few heartless rule-breakers, all is well on the farm.”⁹⁷ However, all is most certainly *not* well, at least not when it comes to the mental health of slaughterhouse workers. The “faster, *faster!*” ethic of production ensures that workers have neither the time nor the incentive to see that the animals do not suffer. However, the impossible speeds of the chain also ensure that employees will lose their sanities as quickly as they carve up carcasses. The Georgetown University Law Center’s Jennifer Dillard hauntingly observes,

While the average American will never see the inside of a slaughterhouse and may be able to eat a hamburger without confronting the pain and terror of a cow’s final moments, thousands of slaughterhouse workers across the country face that troubling predicament every day, creating an employment situation ripe for psychological problems.⁹⁸

Perhaps those with preexisting sadistic or psychopathic tendencies would be more inclined to pursue slaughterhouse work. However, research suggests that the nature of the work tends to produce the psychosis, not the other way around. Psychologist Rachel MacNair suggests that people placed in excruciatingly traumatic environments in which *they themselves* must perform acts of violence on others can also experience a form of posttraumatic stress disorder called PITS—“perpetration-induced traumatic stress.”⁹⁹ Slaughterhouse workers embody a sector of the population at extreme risk of developing PITS. Indeed, Dillard narrated the concerns of one Virgil Butler, a veteran slaughterhouse employee having nightmares about chickens and also remembering a

fellow employee being “hailed off to the mental hospital” for similar dreams.¹⁰⁰ Another former worker reported to the *Huffington Post* his recurring dreams about the “hide puller machine,” wherein “once-living beings became identical hot carcasses . . . peeling the valuable hide from the animals’ body while operators saw at the connecting tissues. The skin is pulled off the face last as the lifeless body jolts from the industrial force.”¹⁰¹ Yet another former hog slaughterhouse worker hauntingly recalled,

If you work in that stick pit for any period of time, you develop an attitude that lets you kill things but doesn’t let you care. You may look a hog in the eye that’s walking around down in the blood pit with you and think, God, that really isn’t a bad-looking animal. You may want to pet it. Pigs down on the kill floor have come up and nuzzled me like a puppy. Two minutes later I had to kill them—beat them to death with a pipe. I can’t care.¹⁰²

One more reminisced,

Down in the blood pit they say that the smell of blood makes you aggressive. And it does. You get an attitude that if that hog kicks at me, I’m going to get even. You’re already going to kill the hog, but that’s not enough. It has to suffer.¹⁰³

The combination of performing violence and being haunted by past performances of violence has ripple effects to the workers’ outside communities as well. Communities with larger proportions of slaughterhouse employees tend to have greater crime rates, specifically domestic violence and other violent crimes, such as rape and murder.¹⁰⁴ Some courts of law have even used workers’ occupations to argue their guilt: “it is clear that the defendant’s occupation at the slaughterhouse was seen as an occupation that enhanced a person’s tendency to commit—or at least to be comfortable with—violent acts”.¹⁰⁵ The desensitization to violence and development of “pathological sadism”¹⁰⁶ caused by ending the lives of up to several hundred animals per hour ostensibly turns the formerly good and moral into mindless, sociopathic monsters. They become, according to one employee, “emotionally dead.”¹⁰⁷

Emotionally numbed, socially dead, undead: within the confines of the U.S. American industrial abattoir, it is difficult to tell the terms apart. The processes of zombification within the slaughterhouse infect the mind as well as the body, producing troubled throngs of condemned animals driven to madness from lives of torture and tormented employees driven to genocide and haunted at home. Even the zombie hordes of Hollywood struggle to kill as many subjects per day as the average slaughterhouse employee, and most do not turn on and rip each other to shreds like demented livestock. From a psychological

standpoint, the slaughterhouse often produces an even more violent, tormented zombie than anything popular culture could even imagine.

Concluding Remarks

Cultural studies and critical animal studies consistently feud over the ethics of analogizing human and animal suffering in the form of particular historical moments. In this article, the zombie is deemed a more suitable analogy that binds the sufferings of disenfranchised humans. The concept of comorbid zombification explains human and animal interactions at the industrial U.S. American slaughterhouse. Comorbid zombification reflects the process by which slaughterhouse populations interact and intra-act to reify and reproduce the ideological and material conditions designating them as inferior, unprotected, and killable beings. This process is traceable in its cultural, physical, and psychological manifestations. The slaughterhouse is a site of necropolitical praxis—a site that hides and justifies violence against vulnerable populations, *Homo sapiens* or otherwise.

American studies scholars interested in hegemony, power, and oppression must take seriously the necessity of demonstrating the interconnections between animal and human oppression. Critical animal studies scholars will find zombiedom to be beneficial to the intersectional analysis of animal liberation research. By showing how slaughterhouse labor is interconnected to speciesist and racist logics and practices, including animals *and* the undead, we can think through the intersectionality of social justice theories and praxis.

Notes

1. Peggy Lowe, "Working 'The Chain,' Slaughterhouse Workers Face Lifelong Injuries," National Public Radio, August 11, 2016. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/08/11/489468205/working-the-chain-slaughterhouse-workers-face-lifelong-injuries>.

2. Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"

3. Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"

4. "Speciesist" is the adjective form of a discriminatory ideology and set of corresponding material practices called "speciesism." This "-ism" refers to perceptions of the *Homo sapiens* species as inherently superior to all other species based on limited compelling evidence. Under speciesist rules, human beings are morally justified in exploiting nonhuman animals and conceiving of them as "things," or as means to ends. See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Random House, 1975).

5. Carrie Packwood Freeman, "This Little Piggy Went to Press: The American News Media's Construction of Animals in Agriculture," *The Communication Review* 12, no. 1 (2009): 3, https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1007&context=communication_facpub.

6. Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, "Beyond Suffering: Resisting Patriarchy and Reproductive Control," in *Anarchism and Animal Liberation: Essays on Complementary Elements of Total Liberation*, ed. Anthony Nocella II, Richard White, and Erika Cudworth (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 108–23.

7. U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Livestock Slaughter 2017 Summary April 2018," <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/LiveSlauSu/LiveSlauSu-04-18-2018.pdf>; U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Poultry Slaughter 2017 Summary February 2018," <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/PoulSlauSu/PoulSlauSu-02-26-2018.pdf>.

8. For instance, in the case of "reproductive tyranny," we could note how the spectrums of sexism, misogyny, and reproductive control are intimately related across species lines. Early and contemporary eugenics discourses, for instance, emerged in large part from "advances" in animal

agriculture and were then applied to humans, justified under social Darwinian discourses detailing which “fit” bodies should be allowed to exist. See Adele Clark, *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the Problem of Sex* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and Marouf Hasian, *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

9. Richard A. Rogers, “Beasts, Burgers, and Hummers: Meat and the Crisis of Masculinity in Contemporary Television Advertisements,” *Environmental Communication* 2, no. 3 (2008): 284.

10. Alexis, “Beyond Suffering,” 112.

11. Alexis, “Beyond Suffering,” 112.

12. Jennifer Dillard, “A Slaughterhouse Nightmare: Psychological Harm Suffered by Slaughterhouse Employees and the Possibility of Redress through Legal Reform,” *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 15 (2008): 391.

13. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

14. It is, of course, important to specify that while Patterson’s concept of “social death” has been applied to multiple arenas of contemporary society, his original conceptualization was based in historical analyses of chattel slavery, labor, and social marginality. This article does *not* claim that the conditions of slaughterhouse workers are to be taken as such. After all, these workers are not forbidden from being married, not legally defined as chattel, and so on. This article uses the concept in a similar manner as other scholars who have interrogated such systems as the prison-industrial complex through the *theoretical lens* of social death, based as it is on notions of alienation/marginalization/killability, but *not* as an attempt to make a direct historical analogy that dissolves the distinction between chattel slavery and more generalized capitalist exploitation.

15. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 46.

16. Dillard, “A Slaughterhouse Nightmare,” 392.

17. Lowe, “Working the Chain.”

18. Quoted in Dillard, “A Slaughterhouse Nightmare,” n. 10.

19. Barbara Noske, *Humans and Other Animals: Beyond the Boundaries of Anthropology* (London: Pluto Press, 1989).

20. Richard Twine, “Revealing the ‘Animal-Industrial Complex—A Concept and Method for Critical Animal Studies,” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 10, no. 1 (2012), n. 2.

21. Alexis, “Beyond Suffering,” 112.

22. Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002); Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

23. Cathryn Bailey, “We Are What We Eat: Feminist Vegetarianism and the Reproduction of Racial Identity,” *Hypatia* 22, no. 2 (2007): 39–59.

24. Maneesha Deckha, “The Subhuman as a Cultural Agent of Violence,” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 8, no. 3 (2010): 44.

25. Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

26. Trina Grillo and Stephanie M. Wildman, “Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implication of Making Comparisons between Racism and Sexism (or Other-isms),” *Duke Law Journal* 1991, no. 2 (1991): 397–412.

27. I would note, however, that outside of popular culture, the “zombie” must not be conflated with a human (or animal) body devoid of subjectivity or lacking agency.

28. Achille Mbembé, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 21.

29. Steven Pokornowski, “Vulnerable Life: Zombies, Global Biopolitics, and the Reproduction of Structural Violence,” *Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2016): 71.

30. Bernadette Marie Calafell, “Monstrous Femininity: Constructions of Women of Color in the Academy,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (2012): 112.

31. Mike Mariani, “The Tragic, Forgotten History of Zombies,” *The Atlantic*, October 28, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/10/how-america-erased-the-tragic-history-of-the-zombie/412264>.

32. Wade Davis, *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 240.

33. Eric King Watts, “The (Nearly) Apocalyptic Politics of “Postracial” America: Or ‘This Is Now the United States of Zombieland,’” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 3 (2010): 215.

34. Pokornowski, “Vulnerable Life.”

35. Jon Stratton, “Zombie Trouble: Zombie Texts, Bare Life and Displaced People,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 267.

36. Gerry Canavan, “‘We Are the Walking Dead’: Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative,” *Extrapolation* 51, no. 3 (2010): 437.

37. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

38. Mbembé, "Necropolitics," 21.
39. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 126–27.
40. I use the term "colonial" as employed by Maria Lugones: "coloniality does not just refer to racial classification. It is an encompassing phenomenon, since it is one of the axes of the system of power and as such it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/intersubjectivity and the production of knowledge from within these intersubjective relations. Or, alternatively, all control over sex, subjectivity, authority, and labor are articulated around it." See Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 191.
41. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 257–337.
42. Cary Wolfe, "Before the Law: Animals in a Biopolitical Context," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2010): 16.
43. McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 135.
44. Laura Hudson, "A Species of Thought: Bare Life and Animal Being," *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (2011): 1669.
45. While somewhat tangential to this article, those interested in the historical relationship between professions such as the U.S. American "meatpacking" profession and the social production of racial difference should reference David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in US History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
46. Stephen Thierman, "Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse," *Foucault Studies* 9 (2010): 106, emphasis added.
47. Tom Athanasiou, "The Age of Greenwashing," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 7, no. 1 (1996): 1–36.
48. Canavan, "We Are the Walking Dead," 450.
49. Richard White, "Following in the Footsteps of Élisée Reclus: Disturbing Places of Inter Species Violence That Are Hidden in Plain Sight," In *Anarchism and Animal Liberation: Essays on Complementary Elements of Total Liberation*, ed. Anthony Nocella II, Richard White, and Erika Cudworth (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 215.
50. Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (Newburyport, MA: Conari Press, 2011), 32.
51. Josephine Yurcaba, "How Factory Farms Impact the Communities Where They Are Located," *One Green Planet*, February 26, 2015, <http://www.onegreenplanet.org/environment/how-factory-farms-impact-the-communities-where-they-are-located>.
52. Thierman, "Apparatuses of Animality," 107.
53. Rick Halperin and Roger Horowitz, *Meat Packers: An Oral History of Black Packing-house Workers and Their Struggle for Racial and Economic Justice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999).
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55. Quoted in LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse."
56. LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse."
57. Thierman, "Apparatuses of Animality," 108.
58. Gary Francione, *Animals, Property & the Law* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
59. Alexis, "Beyond Suffering," 112.
60. LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse."
61. Quoted in Elizabeth Chuck, "Poultry Workers, Denied Bathroom Breaks, Wear Diapers: Oxfam Report," NBC, May 12, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/poultry-workers-denied-bathroom-breaks-wear-diapers-oxfam-report-n572806>.
62. Chuck, "Poultry Workers."
63. Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"
64. Quoted in Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"
65. Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows*; Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"
66. Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 11.
67. Mbembé, "Necropolitics," 21.
68. Alexis, "Beyond Suffering," 108.
69. Alexis, "Beyond Suffering," 110.
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72. Alexis, "Beyond Suffering."

73. Dillard, "A Slaughterhouse Nightmare."
74. Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows*, 53–54.
75. Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows*, 67.
76. Quoted in Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"
77. Dillard, "A Slaughterhouse Nightmare."
78. Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"
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81. Lowe, "Working 'The Chain.'"; Chuck, "Poultry Workers."
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93. Hudson, "A Species of Thought," 1669–70.
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107. Lebowhl, "A Call to Action."