

Farming and Food

Erika Cudworth

2019

Contents

Abstract	3
The Trouble with Animal Farm	4
Problematising Species Relations and the Eating of Animals	7
Anarchism and Animal Agriculture	9
Exploitation and Animal Agriculture	10
Gendered Exploitation in Animal Agriculture	12
From Veganarchy to Total Liberation and Back Again	14
Towards an Anarchist Politics of Food	16

Abstract

This chapter situates anarchist concern around human relations with non-human animals, and with the raising of animals for food, in the context of the history of anarchist thought. The openness of anarchism to considering multiple forms of domination means that it is well-suited to critique the human domination of other animals. The chapter begins with a consideration of important anarchist contributions to debates on human relations with other animals: those of Kropotkin and Bookchin, both of whom see humanity as co-constituted in ‘federations’ of life with non-humans. Particular attention is paid to Élisée Reclus’ arguments in *On Vegetarianism*, which emphasise our emotional connections to other creatures and the dominatory power and violence implied in the production and consumption of meat. The chapter proceeds to examine anarchist work which foregrounds the intersectionalised oppression of humans and other animals in the food and farming industries, looking in particular at the contributions of Bob Torres and Erika Cudworth examining the mass breeding and raising of animals for meat and other ‘animal products’ (eggs, ‘dairy’). It suggests that while intersectionality and social domination are increasingly engaged with by both anarchism and animal liberation discourse, there is a significant way to go.

This chapter situates anarchist’s concern around human relations with non-human animals, and with the raising of animals for food, in the context of the history of anarchist thought and practical political engagement. The most common relationship we have with domesticated non-human animals¹ is that we eat them, and this requires the routine breeding and raising of enormous populations. The farming of animals has long been the most significant social formation of human-animal relations and does not happen discreetly within national boundaries, but is a process that has been international in scope and is industrial in its scale of operation.

The openness of anarchism to considering multiple forms of domination means that it is well-suited to develop powerful critiques of the human domination of other animals, including the range of exploitative processes through which food is produced in modern farming systems.

The chapter begins with a consideration of important anarchist contributions to debates on human relations with other animals. These include those of Peter Kropotkin and Murray Bookchin, both of whom see humanity as co-constituted in ‘federations’ of life with non-humans. Particular attention is paid to Élisée Reclus’ arguments in *On Vegetarianism*, which emphasise our emotional connections to other creatures and the dominating power and violence implied in the production and consumption of meat. The chapter proceeds to examine anarchist work which foregrounds the intersectionalised oppression of humans and other animals in the food and farming industries, looking in particular at the contributions of Bob Torres and my own, examining the mass breeding and raising of animals for meat and other ‘animal products’ (eggs, ‘dairy’). It will suggest that while intersectionality and social domination are increasingly engaged with by both anarchism and animal liberation discourse, there is a significant way to go.

The chapter evaluates such contributions within human-animal studies as a whole, arguing that anarchism has been a dominant influence in the development of more radical approaches,

¹ The term ‘non-human animals’ is used to make clear that the author knows that humans are animals! Where the term ‘animal(s)’ is used, it should be read as ‘non-human animals’ but has been shortened for ease of reading only.

such as the sub-field of critical animal studies (CAS), and in the theorising and practical politics of animal (and ‘total’) liberation. There are tensions however within both human-animal studies and anarchism. Some see animal liberation as a tertiary concern for anarchism, while for others, it is the cutting edge of contemporary political action. In animal studies, those advocating radical futures and direct action for political change may also endorse reformist strategies relatively uncritically. Various anarchist critiques call for an end to industrial animal food production, but while some advocate a vegan future, others wish for post-industrial man to enjoy the liberation of pre-industrial or pre-agricultural ways of producing and consuming food. The chapter ends on a conciliatory note, with a discussion of the shifting position of Brian Dominic and his notion of ‘veganarchy’.

Globally, ninety-nine per cent of all domesticated animals are commodities in animal agriculture² and are caught in relations of human dominion that involve their exploitation and oppression. This chapter takes as its premise that the systemic exploitation of other creatures, land and waterways in the production of human food is something that anarchism should oppose. What is recommended is an anarchist food politics which endorses more compassionate ways of being in the world and resists the intersected forms of violence implicated in the global networks of making other creatures into food.

The Trouble with Animal Farm

With respect to the farming of non-human animals for ‘meat’, there are some who argue that we have seen some positive changes, in the UK or the European Union, for example, in terms of ‘improvements’ in farmed animal welfare and the mainstreaming of ideas about ‘happy’ and ‘humane’ farming associated with ‘free-range’ or ‘ethically’ produced animal-based food.³ However, in terms of the global spread of intensive and industrial models of animal agriculture, the situation for farmed animals was worse (regarding the numbers raised and killed) in 2002 than in 1972, and the number of animals to be killed for food is predicted to double in the next fifty years, overwhelmingly through the spread of Western intensive methods.⁴ The current scale of animal farming is both extensive and intense, and it has been growing rapidly since the 1950s. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in the populations of farmed animals. In 2003, for example, the United States became the first country to raise over one billion farmed animals in a single year, and this was more than twice the number of animals raised for food in 1980 and ten times the number raised in 1940.⁵ Since 1980, global meat production has more than doubled, but in the global south (where levels of meat and dairy consumption are rising year on year), it has tripled. Sixty billion animals are currently used each year to provide meat and dairy products. On current trends, this figure could reach 120 billion by 2050.⁶ The United Nations

² E.E. Williams and M. de Mello *Why Animals Matter: the Case for Animal Protection* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007), 14.

³ B. Bock, B., and H.J. Buller, ‘Healthy, happy and humane: evidence in farm animal welfare policy’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 53: 3 (2013), 390–411.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2002). *World agriculture: Towards 2015/2030: Summary report*. Retrieved from <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/004/y3557e/y3557e.pdf>, L. Mitchell, ‘Moral disengagement and support for non-human animal farming’, *Society and Animals*, 9: 1 (2011), 38–58.

⁵ E. Marcus, *Meat Market: Animals, Ethics and Money* (Boston: Brio Press), 5.

⁶ M. MacDonald, ‘Eat Like it Matters’, *Footprints in The Future of Food*, special issue of *Resurgence*, 259 (March/April, 2010), 32–33.

Food and Agriculture Organization predicts a dramatic rise in human population to 8.9 billion by 2050, and the rise in the food animal population is promoted partly by this increase and also by heightened demand in both richer and poorer regions of the globe.⁷

The seeds of this contemporary globalised animal food system are to be found in the centuries prior to the industrialisation of agricultural production in the nineteenth century. The process of colonisation involved the development of an internationalised food system, which co-existed with a localised model in European regions based on mixed farming and local specialism. Extensive cattle ranching and sheep grazing was the farming system introduced by European colonisation of the Americas, Australasia and Africa from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This system involved particular forms of exploitative social relations such as the use of slave labour, displaced indigenous peoples and unwanted or exploited rural peasantries.⁸ As colonised territories became increasingly independent, and many drew in burgeoning immigrant populations, the ranching system—exploitative of both land and labour—became the model for an independent national system of production. In the seventeenth century, the Spanish and Portuguese imported their native cattle into South and Central America.⁹ This model was adopted in much of the Southern United States from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries, as ranchers were seeking to increase profits by serving the expanding markets in Europe.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the breeding methods pioneered in Britain were adopted elsewhere.¹⁰ Animals were bred to gargantuan sizes, and the consumption of fat-rich beef was considered to be a quintessential sign of status. This demand, and the profits to be made from serving it, resulted in what Rifkin calls the ‘cattelisation’ of countries such as Argentina and Brazil, and the replacement of species type in the United States. The ‘Great Bovine Switch’ saw the replacement of buffalo with cattle through sponsoring the hunting of buffalo which led to their virtual and almost instantaneous elimination from the Western range lands after thousands of years of successful habitation.¹¹

The colonial model of meat production was further enabled by the development of refrigerated shipping which made it possible to ship meat to Europe from the United States, South America and Australasia.¹² In order to make best use of the potential market, the price had to be minimised by intensifying production and saving labour costs through increased mechanisation. By the 1920s, the United States was leading the way, and millions of diversified small family farms had been replaced by specialist, large, corporate enterprises.¹³ From the 1950s, one of the most important technological developments was the confinement of chickens for both eggs and meat production. Such farming maximises land use through intensive housing and minimises labour time as animals are in situ and fed automatically. In the United States, one person may

⁷ J. Giles, ‘Eating Less Meat Could Cut Climate Costs’, *New Scientist*, 10 February 2009.

⁸ A. Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures: A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity* (London: Sage, 1999) London, also D. Nibert, *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domesecration, Capitalism and Global Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁹ H. Velten, *Cow* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

¹⁰ H. Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: the English and other creatures in Victorian England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

¹¹ J. Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: the Rise and Fall of Cattle Culture* (London: Thorsons, 1994), pp. 74–76; Nibert, *Animal Oppression*, 103–107.

¹² Franklin, *Animals*, 130.

¹³ D. Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

manage up to 150,000 laying hens,¹⁴ and the time taken to fatten a bird to slaughter weight declined from sixty to thirty-nine days between 1966 and 1991, while the amount of feed needed fell from 9 lb to 7.75 lb.¹⁵ While the bodies and minds of chickens endured intensely overcrowded, barren and polluted conditions, the post-war boom in the chicken business attracted the attention and investment of large pharmaceutical companies which developed treatments for diseases and ‘unwanted’ chicken behaviour.

Following the successful intensification of chicken-meat and chicken-egg production, the 1960s saw the development of intensified and highly automated systems for growing other birds, pigs, cattle and sheep. Key to success were automated feeding and watering systems, and for indoor raised animals, the elimination of bedding and litter through development of different kinds of food conveyance systems, cages, stalls, pens, forms of restraint and slatted floors over gutters or holding pits. Intensification has been applied to animals raised outdoors, and the cattle ‘feedlot’ of the United States is the strongest example of this. Feedlots are fenced in areas with a concrete feed trough along one side and were developed in the context of depleting soil through overgrazing and surplus corn production, from the early years of the twentieth century. With nothing else to do, and stimulated by growth-promoting hormones, contemporary feedlot cattle eat corn and soya, which may be ‘enhanced’ with the addition of growth-promoting additives such as cardboard, chicken manure, industrial sewage, cement or plastic feed pellets.¹⁶ Slightly less barren and automated are the cattle ‘stations’ predominant in Australia and Central and South America.¹⁷ Increased demand for cheap meat (primarily for consumption by social elites) has also led to the establishment of indoor production systems in poorer countries. Battery systems for laying hens and the growing of chickens in broiler units are now widespread throughout the Indian sub-continent, for example.¹⁸

In the aftermath of the Second World War, European countries and the United States set out to reduce malnutrition and hunger amongst their human populations with the promotion of cheap ‘animal products’. Rising levels of ‘meat’ and ‘dairy’ consumption became associated with social progress. This was promoted internationally by the United Nations, which, in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasised the necessity of increasing animal protein production and making such food increasingly available in poor countries.¹⁹ It is difficult not to conclude that such initiatives were strongly influenced by Western governments driven by the corporate interests of the multinational corporations based in their territories. In the 1980s and much of the 1990s, the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community/European Union also encouraged intensive animal farming through systems of grants and subsidies which explicitly favoured equipment and buildings.²⁰

More recently however, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization report, *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, concluded that animal agriculture is a greater contributor to global warming than the

¹⁴ J. Mason and M. Finelli, ‘Brave New Farm?’ in P. Singer (Ed), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

¹⁵ B. Fine, M. Heasman, M. and J. Wright, *Consumption in the Age of Affluence: The World of Food* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁶ J. Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: the Rise and Fall of Cattle Culture* (London: Thorsons, 1994), 12–13.

¹⁷ D. Nibert, *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domestication, Capitalism and Global Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹⁸ MacDonald, ‘Eat’

¹⁹ Rifkin, *Beyond Beef*, 131.

²⁰ A. Johnson, *Factory Farming* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

combined effects of all forms of transportation.²¹ The deployment of Western agricultural models and the spread of Western food practices have had significant implications for the environment in terms of undermining biodiversity, localised pollution, soil damage and rainforest depletion and contributing eighteen per cent of all greenhouse gases. International organisations are apparently concerned about climate change and with incontrovertible evidence of the role of animal farming in contributing to environmental hazard, national and international policy proclivities will shift. Recently in Germany, one government ministry has taken the apparently controversial decision to ban meat and fish from the menu at official functions, for example.²² We have also seen increased public awareness across the European region about issues of farm animal welfare.

Thus the breeding and raising of non-human animals for food has been an historical development exploitative of land and of both non-human animal and human labour and has been embedded in patterns of global inequality. The exploitative treatment of non-human animals farmed for food has been a backdrop to this tale of global networks and practices. Such exploitation of non-human creatures and the natural world, alongside its relations to structural and systemic inequity has been the spur to anarchism's engagement with food politics, its radical analyses and scepticism of reformist political measures by national and international organisations. In the next section, we turn to focus on the engagement of anarchism with both the non-human lifeworld and with multiple forms of domination.

Problematizing Species Relations and the Eating of Animals

The history of anarchist thought and practical political engagement demonstrates a concern with an eclectic range of dominations; or what we might call intersectionality.²³ Multiple forms of social domination have been at least as significant in anarchism as the focus on the state and governance; for some scholars and activists, more so. As Richard White and Colin Williams note, 'anarchist thought has mobilised not only around opposition to the state and capitalism, but in opposition to all forms of external authority and thus all forms of domination'.²⁴ Anarchism has been preoccupied with a range of dominations—around race, ethnicity and nation; caste, class and wealth; formations of sex, sexuality and gender; and colonialism, imperialism and warfare. Analyses of domination have also been used to understand our relationships to other species and to the planet, but rarely in explicitly anarchist ways. This section examines some examples of engagement with the more-than-human within the anarchist tradition, while the following section considers more contemporary work connecting anarchism to the domination of the non-human world, particularly non-human animals which are farmed. In problematising our relations with non-human beings and things, such perspectives inform what we might call an anarchist food politics.

²¹ H. Steinfeld, P. Gerber, T. Wassemaer, V. Castel, M. Rosales, and C. de Haan, *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation: Rome, 2006); also Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2002) *Detrimental Impacts of Industrial Animal Agriculture*. CIWF: Godalming, Surrey.

²² P. Olterman, 'Fearing the wurst: German Ministry under fire for meat-free buffets' 25th February 2017, *The Guardian*, accessed 10 September 2017, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/25/german-mps-shocked-ministrys-decision-stop-serving-meat-vegetarian>.

²³ Nocella II, A.J. et al. (2015) 'Introduction: The intersections of Critical animal Studies and Anarchist Studies for Total Liberation', in A.J. Nocella et al. (Eds) *Anarchism and Animal Liberation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 7–20.

²⁴ R. White and C. Williams, C. 'The pervasive nature of heterodox economic spaces at a time of neoliberal crisis: towards a "postneoliberal" anarchist future'. *Antipode* 44: 5 (2012), 1625–1644.

In his most celebrated work, *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin²⁵ noted how few animal species exist by directly competing with each other compared to the numbers who practise ‘mutual aid’ and suggested that those who do are likely to experience the best evolutionary prospects. Mutual aid has been, Kropotkin argues, a feature of human existence that has widened its reach, ultimately potentially to the whole human species and beyond its boundaries.²⁶ The story of evolution in Kropotkin is not one of a path towards fixed things, but a process of relationships and linked becoming. Species is not a fixed taxonomy but about the recognition of what Darwin calls ‘differentiations’. *Mutual Aid* stressed the process of evolution as one where successful adaptation and exploitation of evolutionary niches is secured by species’ propensity for co-operation and solidarity. This order can be spontaneous and progressive. Mutual aid is an organising force across a range of species, as a ‘factor of evolution’ that enables species, including humans, to flourish.

While Kropotkin’s key insight is the notion of humans as embedded in relationships with other species, and as animals amongst many others, Reclus provides a more explicit challenge in terms of the need to confront the treatment of non-human animals as objects for human use as intrinsic to anarchist projects. In this and in countless other ways, Reclus clashed directly with the conservative and deeply speciesist moral codes of the society in which he lived.²⁷ What is particularly interesting is the way in which Reclus encourages personal, subjective and emotional (empathetic) connections to be made by his reader. In *On Vegetarianism*, for example, Reclus suggests the exploitation of non-human animals by appealing first to his reader’s emotional registers, rather than developing an argument based on Enlightenment humanism (as theories of animal rights do). The central argument is founded on personal and intimate reflections, which strike the heart of the reader far more intensely than appealing to the more abstract, mass killing of non-human animals. For example, Reclus offers this reflection:

I can see the sow belonging to some peasants, amateur butchers, and therefore all the more cruel. I remember one of them bleeding the animal slowly, so that the blood fell drop by drop; for, in order to make really good black puddings, it appears essential that the victim should have suffered proportionately. She cried without ceasing, now and then uttering groans and sounds of despair almost human; it seemed like listening to a child. And in fact the domesticated pig is for a year or so a child of the house; pampered that he may grow fat, and returning a sincere affection for all the care lavished on him, which has but one aim—so many inches of bacon. But when the affection is reciprocated by the good woman who takes care of the pig, fondling him and speaking in terms of endearment to him, is she not considered ridiculous—as if it were absurd, even degrading, to love an animal that loves us?²⁸

Undoubtedly, Reclus’ distressing childhood experiences and encounters of violent human/non-human animal encounters encourage the reader to see the violence against other creatures

²⁵ P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* (London: Freedom Press, 1998 [1902]).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁷ J.P. Clark, J. P. and C. Martin, *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004).

²⁸ E. Reclus, *On Vegetarianism* (1901) Retrieved from <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/Élisée-reclus-on-vegetarianism.pdf>, 1.

embedded in our daily lives and practices.²⁹ In *On Vegetarianism*, Reclus entreats us towards a future in which we and our surroundings ‘become beautiful’ in a world without animal abuse.

While Kropotkin’s entreaties for the embedding of all creatures in ‘federations’ of life is based on apparently dispassionate observation, Reclus draws on personal experience to engage an empathetic response from the reader. Such an understanding of our close relations with some other species and the entangled lives we live is a feature of current feminist work.³⁰ Importantly, these notions of entanglement and shared empathy—of the kind demonstrated in Reclus and often marginalised in political thought—suggest the importance of our attachments to other creatures.

Many of Kropotkin’s ideas are elaborated in the work of Murray Bookchin, who has been instrumental in linking anarchism to green social and political thought in the development of ‘social ecology’. The notion of overlapping and intersected forms of social domination which are systemic and co-constituting is clearly compatible with an intersectionalised analysis of social domination. However, although Bookchin is to be applauded for his conception of humans as in and of nature, he holds to a problematic human exclusivity when it comes to considering relations between human and other species.

A mechanism by which he does this is the distinction between ‘first’ and ‘second’ nature. For Bookchin, humans as a species have developed to an exceptional degree such that they have produced a ‘second nature’, that is, a ‘uniquely human culture, a wide variety of institutionalised human communities, an effective human technics, a richly symbolic language, and a carefully managed source of nutriment’.³¹ However, Bookchin’s narrative sits within the Enlightenment paradigm where the human subject has pre-eminence. When it comes to the human domination of ‘first nature’ however, there is a reductionist argument made that the end of intra-human domination will simply result in the demise of the exploitation and oppression of non-human beings. Despite this, Bookchin and Kropotkin provide us with a useful legacy. For example, the insight that many species have overlapping forms of ‘species life’ with humans, with certain needs, forms of sociality and ecological and cross-species dependency. Differentiations of species, in particular social, economic and ecological contexts, give rise to different kinds of human-animal relationship that socio-political animal studies have been concerned with, such as the use of certain non-human animals as labourers of various kinds, as food and resources, as ‘companions’, as human entertainment and so on. We might best understand these socially constituted categorisations as carrying relations of human power, and that power, as Reclus passionately tried to demonstrate, is very often not benign.

Anarchism and Animal Agriculture

More recently, anarchist scholarship has specifically focused on the relationship between humans and other animals, and considers species difference as a form of social domination. Of particular note is the work of Bob Torres (2007), who applies David Nibert’s³² analysis of animal

²⁹ R. White, ‘Following in the footsteps of Élisée Reclus: Disturbing spaces of inter-species violence that are hidden in plain sight’ in A.J. Nocella II et al. (Eds) *Anarchism and Animal Liberation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 212–229.

³⁰ L. Gruen, *Entangled Empathy: an alternative ethic for our relationship with animals* (New York: Lantern Books, 2015).

³¹ M. Bookchin, *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

³² Nibert, *Animal Oppression*.

oppression to the case of highly industrialised capital-intensive agriculture in the global north, in particular the large-scale industrial farming of animals for meat. In doing so, Torres explicitly links the production of meat to anarchist politics. In addition, there is the important pamphlet by Brian Dominick—*Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*—which outlined the similarities in perspective between anarchism and veganism, broadly defined in terms of living a life which is as compassionate as possible towards animals, including, of course, human beings.³³ In the sections below, we consider different issues raised by anarchist applications on the subject of animal agriculture: the critique of species oppression and exploitation and advocacy of a diet free of animal-derived foods, the relation of feminism to such approaches and the gendering of good production, critiques of domestication and differences between primitivism, ‘total liberation’ and ‘veganarchy’.

Exploitation and Animal Agriculture

Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious and short. We are born, we are given so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty ... Why do we then continue in our miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings.³⁴

David Nibert explicitly uses the concept of oppression in relation to the historical development of human relations with non-human animals.³⁵ He argues that social institutions such as those of animal agriculture are foundational for the oppression of animals. Nibert isolates three elements in his model of non-human animal oppression. First, we have economic exploitation where animals are exploited for human interests; second, power inequalities coded in law leave animals open to exploitation; and third, this is legitimated by an ideology—‘speciesism’—that naturalises the oppression of animals in its many forms. Contemporary cultural processes and institutional arenas through which animals are exploited and oppressed—such as farming and food production—are explained in terms of profit creation, corporate interest and the generation and sustaining of false commodity needs.

Bob Torres applies Nibert’s model to the case of industrialised capital-intensive agriculture in the global north. Animals are largely understood by Torres as labourers, who labour by eating and breeding in producing commodities such as milk and eggs in dull, barren and stressful conditions. Animals are also property which enables their transformation into embodied commodities such as meat and leather.³⁶ Torres allows that the oppression of animals can exist before and beyond capitalism,³⁷ but capitalism has ‘deepened, extended and worsened our domination over animals

³³ B. A. Dominick, *Animal liberation and social revolution: A vegan perspective on anarchism or an anarchist perspective on veganism* (Baltimore, MD: Firestarter Press, 1997). Retrieved from <http://zinelibrary.info/files/animalandrevolution.pdf>.

³⁴ G. Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Secker and Walberg, 1949) 11–12.

³⁵ Nibert, *Animal Oppression*, 7.

³⁶ B. Torres, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 36–58.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

and the natural world'.³⁸ While human and non-human animals are exploited under capitalism, the forms of exploitation differ. The bodies of non-human animals are not only exploited by working for us in order to produce animal food products, their bodies are *themselves* 'superexploited living commodities'.³⁹ Animal lives and bodies are a means to profit creation within capitalism. In addition, animals are property, and this means that, in the case of animal agriculture, animals are 'sensate living machines' for the production of commodities.⁴⁰ While human and non-human animals are exploited under capitalism, the forms of exploitation differ. For Torres, as for Nibert, capitalism remains the key explanatory framework, and the analysis of human relations with non-human domesticated animals is conceptually underpinned by notions of property relations and commoditisation.

Torres sees a critique of domination and a contentious politics of non-domination as key to anarchist politics.⁴¹ For Torres, the domination of the non-human animal world is an instance of highly normalised and everyday oppression in which most Western humans are much invested. It is also crucial to understand our relations with non-human animals as integrated into intra-human exploitative and oppressive structures. The analyses of linked dominations and of the politics of non-domination could have played a greater role in Torres' analysis however. While he allows that the histories of exploitative systems are different and differentiated and that the oppression of animals can exist before and beyond capitalism, his analysis of the oppression of animals, however, is focused on one systemic cause: 'If we're to be successful in fighting oppression—whether based on race, class, species or gender identity—we're going to need to fight the heart of the economic order that drives these oppressions. We're going to have to fight capitalism'.⁴² This is ultimately, a reductionist position and a more fully intersectionalised analysis requires the broader notion of multiple domination, such as is found in Bookchin.

This broader perspective comes through strongly in the pamphlet by Brian Dominick which argues that contesting domination is key to both vegan politics and to anarchism. Dominick calls for anarchists to recognise the imposition of social categories on animals. Non-human species are not 'less' than humans, rather, this hierarchy is constantly reproduced by the active dehumanisation of animals and the reinforcement of separation. This hierarchy is political, and anarchists sensitive to the naturalisation of categories of oppression (in terms of gender or race or ability and so on) should be attuned to those generated by the politics of species domination. In addition to an objection to hierarchy, anarchists are called to oppose the exploitation, violence and alienation experienced by non-human animals as well as the alienation of many human labourers in such industries, and avoid as far as possible, the consumption of products based on the exploitation and suffering of animals. The intersectionalised nature of the domination of animals means that veganism becomes part of the multi-faceted resistance to the dominant social paradigm that is anarchism: 'Only a perspective and lifestyle based on true compassion can destroy the oppressive constructs of present society ... This to me is the essence of anarchy. No one who fails to embrace all struggles against oppression as his or her own fits my definition of an anarchist.'⁴³

³⁸ Ibid., 3.

³⁹ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁴¹ Ibid., 85–87.

⁴² Ibid., 11.

⁴³ B. Dominick, 'Anarcho-veganism revisited'. In A. J. Nocella II, R. White and E. Cudworth (Eds) *Anarchism and Animal Liberation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015) p. 13.

In an afterword to the third edition of *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, Dominick softens this line and suggests that while social revolution is needed in all spheres of domination, including our relations towards non-human animals, we must see compassionate living as a process rather than an end state. It is an ideal which few if any of us will realise, but a struggle to be engaged with. Indeed, the struggles in countering multiple dominations and oppressions in daily life mean that our political choices are always compromised and complicated. Dominick wisely eschews the term ‘liberation’ for animals in favour of terms such as freedom from exploitation and violence, which he sees as essential to the anarchist project of freedom for all.

In reflecting on the publication of *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution* more than twenty years ago, Dominick contextualises his intervention in terms of the need for ‘a truly humble, empathic, animal-respecting stance [which] was conspicuously lacking in anarchism—even the “green” varieties, namely social ecology, anarcho-primitivism, and deep ecology. Despite the fact that these intellectual tendencies focus on the environment, they were fundamentally humanistic or mystic in orientation’.⁴⁴ Dominick now rejects what he sees as a fundamentalist culture that has, on many levels, sought to appropriate the term *veganarchy* over the last twenty years. He critically addresses the limits of a militant or dogmatic interpretation and makes a persuasive case for development of a more nuanced understanding of veganism and anarchism, one composed of constellations of values and principles—a more intersectionalised understanding, perhaps.

Gendered Exploitation in Animal Agriculture

My own research into the farming of animals has been particularly concerned with the ways forms of gender-based violence can be evidenced in terms of the treatment of chickens, pigs, sheep and cattle. In the egg industry, for example, laying hens, particularly in intensive conditions, are worth so little that any problems associated with laying (such as prolapsing of the uterus) are ignored and hens are simply left to die painfully and slowly from blood loss, infection or attacks from cage mates.⁴⁵ Some species are also bred for characteristics which conform to patriarchal discourses of domesticated femininity. Cattle are selected via trade exhibitions or through breed catalogues for weight gain, mothering instinct, reproductive ease and meat value, and breeders map family trees of certain herds and determine the heritability of each desirable trait. The gendered evaluation of cattle as potential meat is reflected at agricultural shows, where ‘best of breeds’ are groomed, paraded around a ring and judged on their appearance.⁴⁶

Pork is one of the cheapest meats due to the ‘efficiency’ of an industry in which reproduction is incredibly intensive and controlled. In intensive systems, breeding sows are kept in stalls in which they are unable to turn round or exercise throughout their sixteen-and-a-half-week pregnancies and often lapse into stereotyped behaviour, trying repeatedly to build a nest from nothing. They give birth in farrowing crates (with a concrete, plastic or perforated metal floor and no bedding).⁴⁷ Once piglets are born, the mother cannot see them properly, and this often re-

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2012), *The Life of Laying Hens*, September 2013, Compassion in World Farming, available from www.ciwf.org.uk.

⁴⁶ E. Cudworth, ‘Most Farmers Prefer Blondes’—Dynamics of Anthroparchy in Animals’ Becoming Meat’, *The Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 6: 1 (2008), 32–45.

⁴⁷ Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2013b), *The Life of Pigs*, May 2010, Compassion in World Farming, available from www.ciwf.org.uk.

sults in sows becoming frightened of their young or aggressive due to their biting. Piglets would properly be weaned at two months, but are taken away at two weeks, so good mothering is not an overwhelming breed requirement. When pigs are raised outdoors, the gendering of breed selection is stronger, as piglets need to be more 'durable', boars more highly sexed and gilts (young sows) docile and motherly, as unlike the factory farm, mothering on a free-range system is not fully deconstructed.⁴⁸ Gendering can further be seen in the human manipulation of female animals' fertility and reproduction, wherein animals are forced into constant reproduction. In some cases, the gendering of abuse is very clearly expressed. Reproductive violence includes forced intercourse between non-human animals (where farm workers, for example, may force boars to mount sows, insert their penises by hand) or by inserting human hands, arms or instruments of various kinds to inseminate artificially. Some feminist anarchist scholarship has understood this as the rape of animals by humans.⁴⁹

The institutions of animal agriculture are constituted through forms of violence that are regularised and for the most part, legally sanctioned. In intensive industrial systems in particular, there is much evidence of cruelty—of animals being beaten, killed (e.g. 'unviable' piglets) or mutilated (e.g. by tail docking or castration). Even in less intensive production systems, there may be periods of forced confinement, the separation of social groups and separation of mothers from young. There are also more ambiguous treatments such as the inability to express species-life behaviours, which can be understood as forms of violence.⁵⁰ All farmed animal lives are drastically foreshortened and, overwhelmingly, are barren and stressful. While there is much cruelty, this is not 'extreme' practice, rather it is inbuilt into the everyday operations of reproducing and growing animals for food.⁵¹

My own analyses of farmed animals draw feminist analysis into conversation with those such as Nibert and Torres in terms of the idea of intersectionalised oppressions.⁵² This means I would look at the abuse of farmed animals in terms of various kinds of relational systems of power in addition to capitalism, gender, 'race' and so on as well as looking at the ways social hierarchies of species which privileged human beings are sustained and reproduced over time. I use the term 'anthroparchy' to describe and explain a social system, a complex and relatively stable set of hierarchical relationships, in which the incredible diversity of non-human species are homogenised as 'animals', identified as part of 'nature' and dominated through formations of social organisation which privilege the human. I have also suggested that five sets of social institutions and their related processes network to form the social system of relations I call anthroparchy. The first set of anthroparchal relations is production, wherein the breeding and raising of animals for food can be seen in the interlinked institutions and processes of breeding and growing which operate in a complex network of local, regional and global relations. The second relational arena is domestication which has characterised human engagements with other species for millennia

⁴⁸ Cudworth, 'Most Farmers'.

⁴⁹ Ibid; N. Alexis, 'Beyond Suffering: Resisting Patriarchy and Reproductive Control', in A.J Nocella, R. While and E. Cudworth (Eds). *Anarchism and Animals: Critical Animal Studies, Intersectionality and Total Liberation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

⁵⁰ E. Cudworth, 'Killing Animals: Sociology, species relations and institutionalised violence' *The Sociological Review*, 63: 1 (2017), 1–18.

⁵¹ See, for example, Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2009a), *Factsheet: Meat Chicken*, March 2010, Compassion in World Farming, available from www.ciwf.org.uk; Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) (2013a), *The Life of Broiler Chickens*, May 2013, Compassion in World Farming, available from www.ciwf.org.uk.

⁵² E. Cudworth, *Social Lives with Other Animals: Tales of Sex, Death and Love* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

through the selective breeding of certain kinds of plants and animals. The last two centuries have seen intensification of such processes, for example, in terms of reproductive interventions in animal food production. The third arena is political. States and international organisations can act as direct or indirect agents of anthroparchy, for example, by subsidising animal farming, or contest and change forms of abuse by making certain practices unlawful (such as the use of battery cages). Fourth, we have systemic violence, which as we have seen in the previous section, is embedded in the production systems of ‘animal food’. Finally, anthroparchal social relations are characterised by cultures of exclusive humanism which may, for example, encourage certain practices such as animal food consumption.

The farming of non-human animals for food illustrates a specific site in which anthroparchal institutions, processes and practices may be evidenced. The case for the material intersections of relations of capitalism and colonialism has been well made by those such as Nibert⁵³ and Torres.⁵⁴ However, these material practices can also be understood as co-constituted through gendered relations. The breeding and growth of non-human animals for ‘meat’ reflects the complex intersections of a range of relations of social power.

From Veganarchy to Total Liberation and Back Again

There is tension as to what such a critique of domination—intersectionalised or otherwise—might mean for anarchist futures, including the politics of food and eating. For some, including controversial primitivist John Zerzan, a future free from domination is both vegetarian and primitive, that is, endorses pre-agricultural methods of food gathering. Zerzan’s *Future Primitive* (1994) asserts the superiority of hunter-gatherer lifeways, arguing that the cultural practices and technologies of modernity are carefully constructed means of enslaving people.⁵⁵ Zerzan uses anthropological studies from ‘original’ and ‘primitive’ societies as the basis for a wide-ranging critique of aspects of modern life and to suggest these are a political ideal or model, for future development, or rather, de-development and de-domestication. This critique of Western civilisation has been subjected to a range of incisive critiques from within anarchism and without, yet has some influence in contemporary anarchist developments at the intersection of anarchism, political ecogism and animal liberation, both theoretically and practically. In a recent essay, Mara Pfeffer and Sean Parson argue that enormous numbers of human animals are killed, mutilated, poisoned or abused by industrial capitalist systems, alongside countless billions of non-human animals. Thus:

there can be no total liberation: no end to colonization, genocide, or animal exploitation, without addressing the root problem of our era—industrial civilization. We argue that animal liberationists, anarchists, and all people concerned with exploitation and suffering need to reject the dreams of techno-utopias, worker-run industrial factories, and post-scarcity eco-communism. If we wish to live and see life flourish on this planet, there is only one alternative: we must envision a politics centered around

⁵³ Nibert, *Animal Oppression*.

⁵⁴ B. Torres, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ M. Zerzan, *Future Primitive* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 1994).

burning down the factories, dismantling the energy grid, and liberating all animals, human and nonhuman.⁵⁶

This resonates in some ways with the more recent intervention by Nibert who has made the case that the process of domestication is violent and abusive in and of itself; a position with which Zerzan would concur. It involves the enslavement of species via their ‘domeseccration’.⁵⁷ Comparing practices of animal exploitation for food and resources in different societies over time, Nibert focuses on nomadic pastoralism and the development of commercial ranching, a practice that has been largely controlled by elite groups and expanded with the rise of capitalism. Beginning with the pastoral societies of the Eurasian steppe and continuing through to the contemporary exportation of Western, meat-centred eating habits, Nibert connects the domeseccration of animals to the interests of powerful social elites and to mass violence, invasion, displacement and enslavement. Conquest and subjugation were the results of the need to appropriate land and water to maintain large groups of animals, and the amassing of military power has its roots in the economic benefits of the exploitation, exchange and sale of animals. Nibert argues that the domeseccration of animals was a precondition for the oppression of human populations, particularly indigenous peoples.⁵⁸ Historically, the material interests of social, political and economic elites are inextricably linked to the exploitation of animals, and this has been spread and deepened with the development of capitalism.

While such critique of the process of domestication/domeseccration might be persuasive, it does not necessarily lead us to primitivist-style conclusions. Ultimately, feral and primitivist politics is deeply contradictory when it comes to the politics of food, and an analysis of intersected domination. For anarcho-primitivism we become more authentically human in autonomous lives without the trappings of domesticity. Yet mass farming of plants would be crucial in any transition to a veg(etari)an lifestyle unless cataclysmic reductions in world human populations are envisaged! In addition, this particular story of domestication as some kind of prehistoric ‘fall’ is called into question by those whose work suggests elements of a co-evolutionary process and reciprocity in the domestication of both human beings and certain non-human animals.⁵⁹

Many critical animal studies scholars, particularly those drawn to anarchist politics, deploy the notion of ‘total liberation’ which considers that human liberation requires animal and earth liberation as well.⁶⁰ For Steven Best, ‘liberation’ in the form of one manifestation of oppression/domination, such as ‘race’, may not be secured in isolation from other varieties which co-

⁵⁶ M. Pfeffer, and S. Parson, ‘Industrial society is both the fabrication department and the kill floor: total liberation, green anarchism and the violence of industrialism’. In Anthony J. Nocella II, Richard Whi and Erika Cudworth (Eds) *Anarchism and Animal Liberation* pp. 126–140 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 126.

⁵⁷ D. Nibert, *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domeseccration, Capitalism and Global Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁵⁸ Nibert, *Animal Oppression*.

⁵⁹ D. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), also B. Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1997).

⁶⁰ S. Best (2011a) *Manifesto for Radical Liberationism: Total Liberation by Any Means Necessary*. Retrieved May 2014 from <http://drstevebest.wordpress.com/2011/07/14/manifesto-for-radical-liberationism-total-liberation-by-any-means-necessary/>; S. Best (2011b) *Total Liberation and Moral Progress: The Struggle for Human Evolution*. Retrieved May 2014 from <http://drstevebest.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/total-liberation-and-moral-progress-the-struggle-for-human-evolution-3/>; S. Colling, S. Parson and A. Arrigoni, ‘Until all are free: total liberation through revolutionary decolonization, groundless solidarity, and a relationship framework’. In Anthony J. Nocella II et al. (Eds) *Defining Critical Animal Studies* pp. 51–73 (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

constitute them. Thus humans cannot be ‘free’ while continuing to exploit the labour and bodies of non-human animals. Total liberation, because of this, requires a move away from the ideas of ‘progress’ which have been bound up with colonial and capitalist forms of development.⁶¹ It is here that Pfeffer and Parson link their critical form of primitivist politics with the notion of ‘total liberation’ means that primitivism needs to be far more critical in its analysis.⁶² The primitivism they advocate is a ‘feral politics’ of compassion and solidarity where the goal is to dismantle the social and economic systems that are killing the planet. In addition, they assert that we need a politics to create real and lasting communities, not only between humans but also between humans and the more-than-human world. This, however, does not appear to be the kind of ‘return to the woods’ and discovering our ‘inner animal’ that Zerzan and others envisage, particularly those in favour of eating animals as a way to reconnect with our human animality⁶³ and those of other creatures.⁶⁴

Recent publications in CAS contain a range of interesting contributions all of which skirt round the question of what it might mean from a green, anarchist and critical animal perspective to speak of a future for farmed animals.⁶⁵ Some suggest a politics of ‘groundless solidarity’ in which we must...struggle to help non-humans create spaces where they can flourish and develop their own organic relations and communities.⁶⁶ Colling et al. go on to explain that this means fighting against institutions that imprison, abuse and kill non-human animals (like those of farming), supporting those animals who ‘resist their human oppressors’ (such, perhaps, as those escaping from farms or slaughterhouses), and stopping the geographic marginalisation of wild animals. This does not imply a world of de-domestication and a return to gathering (and for some, hunting too). Rather, it seems closer to Dominick’s plea for veganism to be understood as part of a process of human liberation which enables us to ‘free’ animals from exploitation and oppression.

Towards an Anarchist Politics of Food

The less oppressive future is complicated for, as we have seen in this chapter, the growing of both animals for food and plants for animal feed is mired in blood, death, impoverishment and insecurity. Very little of what we consume is innocent—from coffee and tea, chocolate and sugar, meat and milk, our food is produced, traded and sold through intricate national, international and global systems which exploit. All manner of domination needs to be tackled when we think about what we might eat. Fruit, vegetable and grain production is bound up in gendered, colonial and capitalist structuring also of course, so that rising Western demand for the staple foods of others, such as quinoa, means poor Bolivians go hungry⁶⁷ and avocados become beyond the reach of

⁶¹ S. Best, *The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the twenty-first century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); D. N. Pellow, *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise of Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement*; (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁶² Pfeffer and Parson, ‘Industrial society’, 136–137.

⁶³ D. Abram, *Becoming Animal: an earthly cosmology* (Vintage: London, 2013).

⁶⁴ C. Foster, *Being a Beast* (London: Profile Books, 2016).

⁶⁵ See, for example, A. J. Nocella II et al. (Eds), *Defining Critical Animal Studies* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

⁶⁶ S. Colling, S. Parson and A. Arrigoni, ‘Until all are free’.

⁶⁷ A. Sherwin, The food fad that’s starving Bolivia retrieved from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/features/the-food-fad-thats-starving-bolivia-2248932.html> (2011) accessed 20 September 2017.

many Mexicans.⁶⁸ An anarchist food politics needs to be developed from an intersectional perspective that foregrounds the production and consumption of food as necessarily transformed in our struggles to secure a less oppressive world. In the footsteps of Reclus, contemporary anarchism has been very much focused on in terms of scholarship and activism surrounding animal agriculture as a key element in the search for a less violent and more compassionate future for all beings.

In a recent book, Steve Hobden and I have argued that radical politics need rethink the notion of liberation as 'freedom', a positive emancipation, and think more about how we develop an emancipation based on a lessening or absence of forms of domination and oppression.⁶⁹ This what Amy Allen calls 'negative emancipation' wherein our task is to critique and contest domination while finding ways to live in which we exploit less.⁷⁰ The process of domestication probably was mired in the violence and social injustices that those such as Nibert suggest. But Nibert also makes clear there is no returning to a golden age of Zerzan's hunter gatherers. Rather the task is to engage in the production of a less oppressive present through the promotion of plant-based diet and transitions away from animal agriculture, particularly in the immediate and urgent present, industrial animal farming.

⁶⁸ D. Agren, 'Mexico considers importing avocados as global demand pushes up prices' retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/aug/06/mexico-considers-importing-avocados-as-global-demand-drives-up-prices>, accessed 20 September 2017.

⁶⁹ E. Cudworth, E. and S. Hobden, *The Emancipatory Project of Posthumanism* (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁷⁰ A. Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2016).

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Erika Cudworth
Farming and Food
2019

The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism (edited by Carl Levy & Matthew S. Adams), chapter 36, pp.
641–658, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-75620-2_36.

usa.anarchistlibraries.net