

Animal Husbandry as Sexual Slavery: Human(e) Dairy in Speculative Vegan Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Animal agriculture is rethought from the vegan margins in a number of recent speculative fictions. In these texts, literature offers a speculative space in which to make literal a number of claims proposed by vegan feminists and animal rights activists. For instance, Gary Francione's argument that the treatment of animals in factory farms would constitute torture if applied to humans, Stacy Banwell's claim that this standard of treatment meets the conditions for Crimes Against Humanity, and Carol J. Adams's view that the dairy industry relies upon the sexual assault of feminine bodies are claims literalized in fictions that replace nonhuman animal livestock with human animals and, in this way, put to the test "the human" in "humane farming."

The moral and ethical consequences of speciesism, misogyny, and patriarchy in normative farming practices are most clearly evident in the dairy industry to which forced breeding and compulsory pregnancy (sexual slavery) are instrumentally linked. In texts that propose humans as the object of industrial meat production, human milking plays a correspondingly integral role. Sian Rose's splatterpunk novel *Farm* speculatively subjects female characters to "husbandry" via practices of rape, forced pregnancy, child-theft, and brutal milking. The story "In-the-Barn" by Piers Anthony uses the sci-fi concept of "parallel worlds" to explore an economy of human dairy that exposes the bizarre normativity of dairy farming based on the human exploitation of other lactating mammals. Joseph D'Lacey's novel *Meat* invokes the figure of the evil cattle baron who controls a corrupt small town, common in Western movies and fiction, to explore the practices of animal husbandry by which sentient beings are reduced to food-producing machines. And, in Agustina Bazterrica's dystopic novel *Tender is the Flesh*, rape, forced breeding, and mutilation are exposed as the basis of the intersecting meat, hunting, vivisection, clothing, furnishings, as well as dairy industries.

Deborah Madsen is Professor of American Studies at the University of Geneva. Her research is devoted to the ways in which different expressions of narrative rhetoric respond to social and cultural crisis: American Exceptionalism, Feminism and Ecofeminism, race-based immigration, and settler colonialism in relation to Critical Indigenous Studies. She is currently Principal Investigator of the project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation entitled "Vegan Literary Studies: An American Textual History, c. 1776-1900" (www.unige.ch/vls). Most of her publications are available in full-text from UNIGE's Open Access digital repository (<https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/contributor/134908>).