

Those Who Lay Eggs: Institutional Sexual Violence and Carnism in *Chicken Run*

Reuben Dylan Fong

School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland

Abstract: Vegetarian ecofeminism posits that all forms of oppression (both human and nonhuman) are linguistically and ideologically interlinked. In her book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams argued that both consumption and depictions of meat literalize and feminize the metaphor for sexual violence against women, as well as patriarchal conceptualizations of women and intersectional with institutional oppression of animals. The mutually constructive conceptualizations between the oppression of women and the oppression of meat-purposed animals are exemplified in Peter Lord and Nick Park's 2000 film, *Chicken Run*. In the film, this dyad of oppressions is primarily depicted in three forms: The regulations of egg-laying as feminine gender capital to achieve the institutional compliance and passivity of women, trading eggs for tools with masculine rats as a patriarchal bargain, and the chickens' eventual freedom from their oppressors, restoring their reproductive rights through the reclamation of their eggs as childbearing systems.

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, Carnism, Children's Films, Sexual Violence

Humans continue to eat meat, despite evidence that doing so contradicts medical, economic, and environmental wellbeing: Eating meat can present several health risks (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, and bowel cancer), nonmeat food products are readily commercially available to consumers, and there is an increasing amount of media coverage around the ethical and environmental issues of farming and slaughtering millions of nonhuman animals per year in order to sustain industries connected to animal produce (meat, dairy, leather, etc.) (Lennon, n.d.; Qian et al., 2020). However, even in the face of such downsides, only a small percentage of the world's population self-identify as vegetarian or vegan, which suggests that the vast majority of the population consumes some amount of food products made partially or fully of animal flesh (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2014). To identify the discourse of meat-eating as ideological rather than dietary, social psychologist Melanie Joy (2010) originated the term *carnism*. Joy's

(2010) explanation for the necessity of the term is to distance the phenomenon from its entrenched philosophies which have dominated modern society. Just as the label "vegetarian" often refers to an ethical orientation rather than merely "plant-eating," the label "carnism" does not refer simply to "meat-eating," but also to the rationales and justifications which sustain the animal industrial complex (Joy, 2010, p. 29).

The central thesis of the ideology of carnism is that humans eating nonhuman animals (as well as making items out of nonhuman animal products such as leather or fur) is often presented as a normal, natural, and necessary phenomenon – or the "Three Ns of Justification" (Joy, 2010, p. 96). Carnism theory also considers the speciesist framework of selecting certain kinds of animals to be eaten by humans as part of a larger system of species oppression. For example, the Western variation of carnism supports the use of cows as meat, while in India, the consumption of beef can be a source of controversy (Sathyamala, 2019). In China, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, the consumption of dog meat has until recently been legal (BBC, 2017), while in contrast, the social norms of Western cultures characterize dogs as companion or service animals, and traditionally hold strong taboos against dog meat. Joy (2010) noted that this system of oppression and rationalization is the basis for a *carnistic schema* (p. 131). A carnistic schema is a means of cataloging knowledge around nonhuman animal farming and exploitation and informing the actions an individual can take based on this knowledge. Joy (2010) asserted that carnism is an ideology inherently premised on violence, as it is organized around, and reliant upon, humans treating and killing nonhuman animals violently in order to perpetuate the social norms of its ideological underpinning (p. 20). At the same time, carnistic schemas encourage people to deny the harm of meat production to animals and the environment through elaborate myths of self-deception, psychic numbing, and *carnistic defense* – attempting to hide the effects of carnistic violence (Monteiro et al., 2017, p. 52).

There are several forms of carnistic defense. These include beliefs that nonhuman animals enjoy being on farms and that their slaughter is tangential to their farm lifestyles; that nonhuman animals

have ambitions to be eaten in order to fulfill their purpose (or at the very least, lack the cognitive capacity to understand their eventual fate); and that there is some essential biological desire in all non-herbivorous animals that is only satiated by eating meat and that cannot be rationalized or reasoned with.

Predating the term “carnism,” Carol J. Adams’s (2000) book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, explored meat-eating in Western society through the discourse of vegetarian ecofeminism. Adams (2000) posited that all systems of oppression are symbolically interconnected and further asserted that human suffering and nonhuman suffering are not polarized but interrelated issues with implicit structural overlap in public discourse. The core discussion of Adams’s (2000) book considered two interconnected systems of oppression: the ubiquitous cultural synchronization between patriarchal and misogynistic culture with meat culture: “What, or more precisely *who*, we eat is determined by the patriarchal politics of our culture,” Adams (2000, p. 16) wrote, further stating that:

The way gender politics is structure into our world is related to how we view animals, especially animals who are consumed. Patriarchy is a gender system that is implicit in human/animal relationships. Moreover, gender construction includes instruction about appropriate foods. (Adams, 2000, p. 16)

Adams (2000) argued that images of food (as well as the act of consuming food) are heavily loaded with gender norms, most of which are underlined with ideological positions around normative masculinity and misogynistic sexual violence.

The gender politics of meat culture dichotomize meat-eating and vegetarian diets as masculine and feminine, respectively. Consuming meat (itself an absent referent for nonhuman slaughter) is intrinsically tied to cultural ideas of masculinity and male virility and dominance while vegetarianism is seen as feminine behavior (Adams, 2000, p. 17). Furthermore, meat-eating is also symbolic of sexual violence against women. For example, women who are objectified often describe feeling like “a piece of meat,” but they cannot be speaking literally (for meat is deprived of feeling when an animal is slaughtered). Adams (2000) attributed the phraseology of the expression to be indicative of the metaphoric system of language that describes interlinked forms of oppression and suffering. Another example of nonhuman animals being thematically tied to masculinity and related sexual violence against women can be found in the sexual objectification of waitresses who work at the popular restaurant chain, Hooters. Hooters is culturally interconnected with the slaughter of nonhuman animals for the meat-heavy menu and whose clientele are viewed as typically masculine (Adams, 2000). The interlocking of nonhuman imagery and the intense sexualization of

the waitresses symbolically amalgamates the oppression of nonhuman animals and human women. In reference to Gary Heidnik, a serial killer who raped, murdered, and butchered his female victims into several pieces before cooking and refrigerating their body parts, Adams (2000) described his actions as “an overlap of cultural images of sexual violence against women and the fragmentation and dismemberment of nature and the body in Western culture” (p. 65). Adams (2000) argued that the intersecting ideological referents between carnism and symbolic sexual violence are universally geared toward misogynistic violence against women. The nature of carnism’s gendered violence is assaultive specifically to women; men may be possessive of their own flesh/meat when viewed through this paradigm while women are often butchered and objectified through the lens of meat-eating.

CHICKEN RUN

Oppression Through Egg-Laying

I would posit that anthropomorphized animals on film can often depict the literal visualization of this intersecting conceptualization between carnism and institutional sexual violence. *Chicken Run* (Lord & Park, 2000) takes place in a Yorkshire egg farm in the 1950s and is largely told through the perspective of the anthropomorphized chickens. It is a prime demonstration of how Adams’s (2000) deconstruction of carnism literalized and feminized the symbolic sexual violence against women. Having the story told from the perspective of anthropomorphized chickens on an egg farm confronts traditional carnistic defenses related to the animal industrial complex by removing filmic suppositions of animals enjoying (or at the very least, not suffering from) their captivity and exploitation while also confronting the invisibility of nonhuman animal suffering by making such animals the key players of the story. The egg farm is characterized (in both imagery and narrative) as a concentration camp for the chickens: There are tall wire fences imprisoning them, cramped sleeping conditions in the dormitory-like henhouses, roll calls carried out by the human farmers, Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy, and executions for noncompliant inmates (chickens that stop laying eggs are slaughtered and eaten by the Tweedys). The chickens are all portrayed as women (except for one elderly male rooster named Fowler who seems to be exempt from egg-laying duties) and are largely passive in their confinement. The films’ use of concentration camp iconography clearly presents a dichotomy between the humans and farm dogs – as the wicked guards and tormentors – against the chickens who are blameless victims. The iconography of the chicken farm as a concentration camp also lays out an inescapable paradigm of unjust misogynistic control and violence. As these characters are imprisoned without charges and are almost all female, the film conveys the farm as an environment where

the conventional female characters are marginalized and exploited by the humans.

Another significant aspect of the Tweedys' egg farm paralleling a concentration camp is the chickens' general unhappiness with their role as egg-layers. One of the key generic conventions of most children's films is that "when physical labour is depicted, [it is] pleasant, enjoyable, and highly rewarding as an activity in its own right" (Booker, 2010, p. 2). Quite contrary to the farm animals seen in *Babe* (Noonan, 1995) or *Home on the Range* (Finn & Sanford, 2004), the chickens do not have any devotion to their farm, and in fact, find their farmers contemptible and do not value egg-laying as particularly rewarding outside of its use in dissuading the Tweedys to kill and eat them. I would posit that one of the reasons *Chicken Run* does not depict the chickens as enjoying egg-laying in its own right is that within this film, egg-laying is not physical labor, but sexual labor. The chickens as symbolic women draw upon stereotypes of sexual labor as something which is to be passively endured rather than actively participated.

The central underlying power dynamic of carnism in the film's initial status quo is the use of chicken eggs as feminine gender capital. Carol J. Adams (2000) noted that nonhuman reproductive matter collected by humans for human consumption (e.g., milk and eggs) is a specific carnist subset of nonhuman protein (what Adams referred to as *feminized protein*). This feminized protein still has the dual connotations of species oppression and sexual violence, but it also has two additional associations: the oppression of specifically female animals and the exploitation of their offspring. Adams (2000) considered these two additional underlying connotations of feminized protein to be doubly oppressive as it exploits both nonhuman mothers and nonhuman children before slaughtering and butchering them. Just as carnist ideologies abstract meat from being viewed as animal flesh, feminized protein like chicken eggs is abstracted from denoting ideas of reproduction or motherhood in order to fit within the schema of carnism.

The egg-laying in *Chicken Run* acts as a means of conducting passivity and obedience from the chickens, suggesting the literal and psychological trappings of characters' ties to feminized protein. The chickens produce feminized protein (eggs) as biological proof of their compliance, passivity, and femininity within their imprisonment. The Tweedys' egg farm depends upon these chickens for purpose and profit, but the institution of the farm is also predicated upon the carnistic violence of appropriating the eggs without compensation. When these chickens can no longer produce proof of their femininity as their egg-laying abilities cease, they can no longer validate their gender identity as feminine. This invalidation of their feminine gender identity in this misogynistic environment results in their beheading and consumption by the Tweedys as punishment for not fulfilling

their gender role. As well as being executed, being eaten by the Tweedys illustrates how the chickens' failure to enact their allotted gender role nourishes the Tweedys, and thereby helps to perpetuate this institution of misogynistic violence and control of the chickens. The use of eggs as feminine gender capital on an egg farm also initially naturalizes the notion that women's value can be measured through their capacity as female organisms, using the biological function of egg-laying (rather than any kind of skill or personality trait) as the means of quantifying what these women are contributing to their community.

In contrast to the chickens who are portrayed as performing in conventional gender roles, the Tweedys are characterized by certain gender-atypical traits. In many ways, Mrs. Tweedy acts as Freud's phallic woman by behaving in contrast to the female chickens: She is assertive (to the point of being domineering), ambitious, proactive, and vicious. She also emasculates Mr. Tweedy and his farm dogs (who can be interpreted as an extension of his masculinity) by insulting and demeaning them. Mrs. Tweedy also has an affinity for skin-tight latex gloves (stereotypical attire for a dominatrix) and blades – her introduction in the film begins with her choosing a chicken named Edwina from the ranks, slipping on her latex gloves, and using an axe to slaughter the chicken for her supper. Later in the film, she wields a large saw that is part of the chicken pie machine. Mrs. Tweedy's carnistic intention to slaughter the chickens acts as a means of reaffirming her patriarchal potency and this affinity for blades acts as a visual representation of the castration anxiety which the phallic woman poses. By having Mrs. Tweedy act as the phallic woman while also posing as a carnistic threat to the chickens, the film embodies the sexual violence against the chickens not only through a strictly patriarchal system, but also through a figure that is far more sinister and controlling than a conventional patriarch. Physically tall and thin, Mrs. Tweedy also has an implicit masculinity that is often evidenced in her total contempt for the entire egg-laying operation and its indentured servants (whether it be chickens or Mr. Tweedy).

Similar to Mrs. Tweedy, Mr. Tweedy is also somewhat distorted from stereotypical ideals of his gender. Although he is not a biological chicken, Mr. Tweedy is a metaphorical chicken through his dedication to the farm's egg production (as were all his patrilineal ancestors). In this sense, he is committed to the status quo of producing feminine gender capital in order to prove his value, just as the chickens must. In a second sense, he also demonstrates a chicken-like passivity toward both the egg-laying gender economy and the emasculating bullying from his domineering wife. The Tweedys' gender-atypicality forms part of their role as villains. Child audiences may already be predisposed to read non-normative presentations of gender as villainous, as children between the ages of five and seven years have been empirically observed as sometimes interpreting gender-atypical

acts as moral transgressions or engagement in harmful behavior (Stangor & Ruble, 1987). Due to this inclination of the film's intended audience, it might be posited that the Tweedys are gendered in a non-normative fashion to underline their wickedness – a harmful message in itself.

In the introductory montage of the film, the chicken protagonist, Ginger, continually leads the chickens in ill-fated escape attempts. After Ginger witnesses one of the chickens being beheaded by Mrs. Tweedy after failing to lay eggs for five days, the chickens hold a forum in Hut 17 – an obvious reference to the prisoner-of-war film, *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953) – to discuss Ginger's next escape plan. This scene in Hut 17 explicitly articulates this connection between the chickens' egg-laying and their passive compliance to violent oppression under this misogynistic institution. When discussing Edwina, the chicken who was slaughtered after not laying the requisite number of eggs, Bunty (the chicken that lays the most eggs of all) remarks to Ginger, with many other chickens literally and figuratively behind her, that Edwina would be alive "if she'd spent more time laying, and less time [attempting to escape]." Bunty's qualification as a prodigious egg-layer and her assessment of their situation establishes a dichotomy between the chickens' roles as producers of feminized protein and their ability to reject egg-laying and escape their gender roles. The metonymic use of egg-laying for feminine gender capital and compliance with patriarchal control is demonstrated in the stylized stop-motion animation of the chickens' physiology. The chickens are portrayed with bulged hips, roughly proportional with their egg-laying proficiency: Bunty has the widest hips, while Ginger – the chicken protagonist who orchestrates escape attempts and is kept in solitary confinement as retribution, thereby settling on the other side of the egg-laying/escaping dichotomy – has the thinnest hips. Ginger's physique is comparable to the roosters to demonstrate her masculine persona, showing that her value lies in stereotypically masculine qualities such as pluck and determination. Having a visual element tied to egg-laying proficiency compounds the biological determinism of gender – and also carries over to Mr. Tweedy, who also has a round figure.

After Bunty makes this dichotomizing remark regarding egg-laying and escape attempts, the film cuts to Ginger, who is alone in the frame: "So, laying eggs all your life...and then getting plucked, stuffed, and roasted is good enough for you?" Ginger asks pointedly, continuing, "You know what the problem is? The fences aren't just round the farm. They're up here in your heads" (Lord & Park, 2000). Ginger's comment on the chickens' mentalities as egg-layers (and eventually as meat for human consumption) as an acceptable status quo belies the fact that this systematic symbolic sexual violence is not simply an external system of exploitation and confinement from their symbolic sexual oppressors, but also an ideological system reliant

upon the chickens' internal compliance in and acceptance of their persecution as natural, normal, and necessary – Joy's (2010) Three Ns of carnism justification. Ginger's visual framing as the lone individual rejecting this passive acceptance implies that the initial rejection of this system of sexual violence is an act of aberration rather than a change in the collective opinion of the persecuted.

Patriarchal Bargaining and Feminine Gender Capital

Another use of chicken eggs as compliance within a misogynistic system is reflected in the eggs as currency in a symbolic patriarchal bargain. Sociologist Lisa Wade (2011) described a patriarchal bargain as

[A] decision to accept gender rules that disadvantage women in exchange for whatever power one can wrest from the system. It is an individual strategy designed to manipulate the system to one's best advantage, but one that leaves the system itself intact. (para. 4).

In addition to laying eggs in order to satiate the demands of the egg farm and the Tweedys, when the chickens require tools and materials for their escape attempts, they use eggs as a form of bartering with a pair of anthropomorphized male rats – eggs which the rats intend to eat. It is noteworthy that the rats refuse to accept chicken feed (the food the chickens themselves eat) as a form of payment, as if what is good enough for the women's food is deemed unworthy of the men's palates. Although the eggs produced in these later exchanges are not for showing obedience to the Tweedys' slavery, they are still tokens of feminine gender capital to appease men in order to acquire valuable items. When the chickens plan their final escape attempt, Ginger meets with the rats to place an extensive order for tools (agreeing to exchange a large cache of eggs as payment). As she places the order, she hands them one egg as advanced payment, and there is a reaction shot of the rats giddy with the prospect of the eggs. In this transaction between the chickens and the rats, eggs literally function as gender capital for the chickens to obtain goods that they cannot acquire themselves (being literally trapped within a system that disadvantages them). The chickens must enact a patriarchal bargain with the rats, working with the system that depreciates and demeans them in an effort to wrest whatever power they can for themselves. The excitement of the rats receiving the eggs punctuates the nature of the patriarchal bargain being struck: The chickens are working within this misogynistic structure (pleasing men with privilege and access to gain something they cannot otherwise acquire) because without the rats' cooperation, the chickens have no means of improving their position.

The chickens' patriarchal bargain with the rats differs from their dynamic with the Tweedys' egg-farming operation through the distinction of decision. The chickens willingly part with their eggs so

that the rats will provide them with tools, whereas the Tweedys seize the chickens' eggs under threat of execution. The patriarchal bargain the chickens make in order to escape the system of misogynistic oppression through carnism suggests this system of symbolic sexual violence is a fixed phenomenon: The chickens cannot dismantle the system – they can only escape it. This suggestion of the patriarchal bargain is visualized in a montage in which the chickens are using their bartered tools to convert their chicken huts into a flying machine, with parallel editing of Mr. Tweedy using his tools to repair the chicken pie machine. The montage often features Mr. Tweedy using his tools in a particular way and then match-cutting to the chickens using similar tools for a similar function. For example, Mr. Tweedy hammering parts of the chicken pie machine together is paired with the chickens hammering nails into the wood of their flying machine; Mr. Tweedy using a wrench to tighten bolts on the chicken pie machine is match-cut with a chicken tightening bolts on the flying machine. The constant match-cutting of the montage suggests that the means by which the chickens can improve their circumstance is by working within the same system that is violent and oppressive towards them, that they should not attack the system itself, but instead use the tools of the system against their oppressors (and even then, only to eventually distance themselves from the system).

Dissatisfied by the profits of the egg farm, Mrs. Tweedy begins plans to convert the chicken farm into a chicken pie factory; in doing so, the preeminent paradigm of the farm's carnist violence shifts from feminized proteins to flesh. As the Tweedys' carnist violence shifts from oppressing the chickens to slaughtering the chickens, there is an obliteration of feminine gender capital. Traditionally, Western cultures consider overeating, as well as unrestricted or unrestrained consumption of food as antithetical to femininity and counterproductive to the ideal feminine body (Davidauskis, 2015). Although this rejection of food consumption to femininity is linked to proportions of weight gain, the act of consumption itself can also be a loaded cultural expectation as a rejection or degradation of the feminine ideal (Davidauskis, 2015). During a scene set after the Tweedys have ordered their chicken pie machine, Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy inspect the chickens in the chicken enclosure. One chicken named Babs admits that she has not laid any eggs due to her occupation with their escape attempts. Mrs. Tweedy grips a tape measure in a manner similar to a piece of bondage and measures Babs's girth, ordering Mr. Tweedy to double the chicken feed rations to fatten all the chickens up to Babs's mass. After the chicken feed trough is filled to the very brim, Ginger watches in horror as the chickens gorge themselves and she realizes the Tweedys' growing carnist intentions. The sequence where Mrs. Tweedy measures Babs is filmed and edited similarly to the one early in the film when Edwina is taken to slaughter: There are several shots of Mrs. Tweedy's boots

walking into the yard, high-angled, point-of-view shots from Mrs. Tweedy's perspective as she looks down upon her victim, and low-angled, point-of-view shots from the chicken's perspective looking up at Mrs. Tweedy's gleeful face. Both sequences are accompanied with the same ominous music. The expectation that Babs will be slaughtered like Edwina emphasizes the escalating threat of sexual violence as the chickens begin to fatten themselves by ravenously consuming food, with the strong implication that women who eat excessively (or who simply eat to the point of satiation) are unknowingly courting their own death. By fattening themselves and thereby undermining their own feminine gender capital, the chickens are dramatically increasing their vulnerability as victims of a worse form of symbolic sexual violence than when they were producers of feminized protein.

Freedom, Motherhood, and What is “Natural”

In the climax of the film, the chickens use their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm, wrecking most of the facilities (such as the chicken pie machine and the buildings) in the process. The chickens' eventual triumph over and haven from humans is noteworthy for two reasons. The first noteworthy point around the film's ending is the chickens' success in using their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm. Children's films often thematize connections between “natural,” the “authentic,” and the “real” (Booker, 2010, p. 7). For example, in *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994), the protagonist lion, Simba, attains his “real” identity by claiming his “natural” position in the animal kingdom as the head of the lion pride. In *Dumbo* (Sharpsteen et al., 1941), the eponymous elephant eventually learns that his ability to fly is “natural” and not reliant upon psychological crutches such as his lucky feather. When this trope is employed in children's films, characters often unlock their “real” or “natural” identity during the climax of the narrative, while throughout the story, other characters usually dismiss or deny such identities or abilities in order to heighten the incredulous character growth when the moment of unlocking occurs. In *Chicken Run*, the story seems to set up the trope of the chickens discovering their ability to “naturally” fly through Ginger's initial wistfulness while watching geese fly and later, the other chickens and rats finding the idea of flying ludicrous. Ginger persuades Rocky to teach the chickens how to fly, mistakenly believing that he is a flying rooster – but Rocky unsuccessfully attempts to do so. This narrative setup would seem to build toward the chickens eventually flying to freedom through their “natural” abilities as birds. However, this turns out to be a subversion of the generic trope, and the chickens use the artificial flying machine to fly to freedom. I would posit that this subversion underscores a more nuanced “natural” aspect to the chickens, framing their success not through inherent or endowed abilities like Simba or Dumbo

possessed, but instead through personality traits such as resourcefulness, courage, and teamwork.

The second point to consider about the ending of *Chicken Run* is that the film's denouement shows the chickens living in an idyllic bird sanctuary in the English countryside, away from any humans. In their sanctuary, the chickens are shown raising chicks. The inclusion of chicks in the bird sanctuary implies a realignment of eggs as objects for reproduction, away from the carnist schema of eggs as food or currency. I would posit that this alignment acts as a restoration for the chickens' gender role as women by establishing the chickens as maternal beings with offspring that are consanguineal (i.e., blood-related). This restoration also implies a mutual exclusivity between the chickens' symbolic sexual violence through their carnistic internment and their fulfillment of being motherly, one of the core stereotypical elements of being a woman (McQuillan et al., 2008). The mutual exclusivity signals the role of women as victims or mothers – women who are victims of such misogynistic oppression cannot be mothers, and conversely, mothers are free from such oppression. Although the denouement is brief, it does idealize maternity as picturesque and paradisiacal. While the film does suggest maternity is not in itself an escape from sexual oppression, maternity is shown as the endpoint from escaping oppression. This idea of maternity as an endpoint from escaping oppression reinforces stereotypes of the ideal lifestyles for women as mothers and also posits that women's freedom from oppression is axiomatic to expectations of motherhood. Such expectations of motherhood in these stereotypes is problematic, suggesting through implication that women who are not mothers must therefore be oppressed in some form.

CONCLUSION

Carol J. Adams's (2000) *The Sexual Politics of Meat* aimed to separate the ideological carnistic and sexual violence from the dietary and gustatory phenomenon of meat-eating, illuminating how the symbolic, predatory misogyny linguistically intersects with the violence of animals. *Chicken Run* is an evocative demonstration of the ways in which the lens of carnism theory deconstructs how representations of meat-eating literalize the symbolic sexual violence against women. The film has three primary avenues with which to explore the carnistic schema as symbolic sexual violence. The first avenue is the regulation of the chickens' egg-laying as evidencing compliance of women within an institution that oppresses and preys upon them. This regulation of female biology logistically and ideologically maintains the oppression of women, while failure to actualize this regulation triggers a punishment of the female body being slaughtered and consumed by the oppressors in a way that nourishes those responsible for the sexual violence.

The second avenue the film takes is the usage of eggs as feminine gender capital in a patriarchal bargain. By using their eggs as sexual currency to transact with men, the chickens are appeasing the men to negotiate power. Such appeasement is noteworthy, as it is a tacit sign of acceptance of the institutional misogyny, and the action interacts with the oppression in a way which leaves the oppression intact.

The third avenue of exploration is the eventual reclamation of egg-laying as a means of childbearing and motherhood. After escaping the Tweedys' farm, the chickens no longer need to use their eggs as commodities for human consumption and may instead use them to raise chicks. The transition of eggs from commodity to progeny signals the removal of the chickens' victimization of sexual violence through institutional misogyny and depicts maternity as the idealization of free womanhood. While there are plenty of children's films which depict the problematic nature of carnism, *Chicken Run* offers perhaps the clearest portrayal of what Adams (2000) described as "literalizing and feminizing the metaphor" (p. 72).

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. J. (2000). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory (10th ed.)*. Continuum.
- Allers, R., & Minkoff, R. (Directors). (1994). *The lion king*. Buena Vista Pictures.
- BBC. (2017, April 12). *The countries where people still eat cats and dogs for dinner*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-39577557>
- Booker, M. K. (2010). *Disney, Pixar, and the hidden messages of children's films*. Praeger.
- Davidauskis, A. (2015). 'How beautiful women eat': Feminine hunger in American popular culture. *Feminist Formations*, 27(1), 167-189.
- Finn, W., & Sanford, J. (Directors). (2004). *Home on the range*. Buena Vista Pictures.
- Friends of the Earth Europe. (2014). *Meat atlas: Facts and figures about the animals we eat*. Heinrich Böll Foundation and Friends of the Earth Europe. https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/foee_hbf_meatatlas_jan2014.pdf
- Joy, M. (2010). *Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows*. Conari Press.
- Lennon, C. (n.d). *Leather Is more than "a by-product of the meat industry"*. One Green Planet. www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/leather-is-more-than-a-by-product-of-the-meat-industry/

- Lord, P., & Park, N. (Directors). (2000). *Chicken Run* [Film]. Pathé Distribution and DreamWorks Pictures.
- McQuillan J., Greil, A. L., Shreffler, K. M. & Tichenor, V. (2008). The importance of motherhood among women in the contemporary United States. *Gender and Society*, 22(4), 477-496.
- Monteiro, C. A., Pfeiler, T. M., Patterson, M. D., & Milburn, M. A. (2017). The carnism inventory: Measuring the ideology of eating animals. *Appetite*, 113, 51-62.
- Noonan, C. (Director). (1995). *Babe* [Film]. Universal Pictures.
- Qian, F., Riddle, M. C., Wylie-Rossett, J., & Hu, F. B. (2020). Red and processed meats and health risks: How strong is the evidence? *Diabetes Care*, 43(2), 265–271.
- Sathyamala, C. (2019) Meat-eating in India: Whose food, whose politics, and whose rights? *Policy Futures in Education*, 17(7). 878-891.
- Sharpsteen, B., Ferguson, N., Jackson, W., Roberts, B., Kinney, J., & Armstrong, S. (Directors). (1947). *Dumbo* [Film]. RKO Radio Pictures.
- Stangor, C., & Ruble, D. N. (1987). Development of gender role knowledge and gender constancy. In L. S. Liben & M. L. Signorella (Eds.), *New directions for child development* (pp. 5-22). Jossey-Bass.
- Wade, L. (2011, May 22). *Serena Williams' patriarchal bargain*. The Society Pages. www.thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/05/22/women-damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-dont/
- Wilder, B. (Director). (1953). *Stalag 17* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

AUTHOR

Reuben Dylan Fong, PhD, School of Social Sciences, University of Auckland, rfon572@aucklanduni.ac.nz