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Stories from Prisons and Farms

Would you feel differently about a product knowing it was manufactured by prison labor? Perhaps you would rather something made by “free” hands, or maybe the idea that prisoners are being put to work would bring you peace of mind. Whatever the case, you would likely have *some* feeling about the matter. And shouldn’t that feeling affect your decision about whether to buy the product or not? You might reflect on that unknown prisoner whose hands once touched the product in your hands now. In a chapter titled “Shame” from Jonathan Safran Foer’s book, *Eating Animals*, Foer remarks that “For Kafka, shame is a response and a responsibility before invisible others—before ‘unknown family,’ to use a phrase from *The Trial*” (36). This

When Kafka—and Foer, for that matter—talk about invisible others, I do not think they are limiting their discussion to animals. The lives and livelihoods of many would benefit if we collectively attempted to think of their existences. Yet for some reason, the political trend in our country is to ignore, or even resent, those others. Erica Meiners, in “Building an Abolition Democracy; or, The Fight against Public Fears, Private Benefits, and Prison Expansion,” very skeptically looks at how politicians aspire to make the public happy by appealing to its needs. A smaller government might suggest a lighter tax load for those working to keep afloat or for those businesses looking to find a start, but “for others these same claims amount to a useful lie, a persuasive bait and switch” (20). While governments make drastic efforts to cut spending for most social programs, there has been an equally drastic increase in spending on prisons to meet the increase in incarceration.

“For example,” Mieners tells us, “the Pew Center on the State’s Public Safety Performance Project documents that at the start of 2008, American Prisons or jails held 2,419,258 adults, accounting for one prisoner for every 99.1 men and women. This unprecedented ratio of incarceration indicates that the government is not downsizing; rather, it is increasingly regulating the lives of poor men and women, especially those of color” (25). It would seem, therefore, that our ability to think of invisible others is strained not only by an unwillingness to support social welfare, but also by nature of the fact that increasingly those others are obscured by more concrete and iron bars.

In her thorough book, *The Golden Gulag*, Gilmore shows that in order to understand the objectification of incarcerated citizens as sites for surplus labor, we must also understand how that came to pass for the land itself. Small farms could not compete with industrial agribusiness and in turn the landscape originally inhabited by many individual farmers transformed into the possession of fewer, more powerful businesses. As she writes, “under federal, state, and railroad land ownership schemes and public and private irrigation projects, the geography had already been reworked by rural wage laborers into a region increasingly characterized by extensive holdings” (133). Large areas of land now fell under the surveillance of fewer and fewer businesses. This of course parallels the increased surveillance and policing of people by a select few in the politico-economic sphere. The suggestion here is that the fundamental ideology underpinning the rise of the prison industrial complex also alters our perceptions (and use) of the land, and that real reform of this new police state cannot not simply end at challenging the racism or classism at play in the increased criminalization of America.

As I hope to show, this parallel between how prisoners and the land “became so massively available as carceral objects” (Gilmore, 130) also exists for the way we treat domesticated animals. With 99% of all farmed animals coming out of factory farms, their fate might even provide us with a grotesque glimpse into the future, should neoliberal politics and economics continue to affect our sense of ethics and our lives as consumers. I hope, in this paper, to map the parallel histories and lived experiences between prisoners and factory-farmed animals as others have written them; later, I wish to point out some of the divergences between these two sets of lives, because I believe that sustaining ethical differences between animals and humans is complicit in perpetuating the racial and class divides that have come to bolster the neoliberal paradigm of decreasing social welfare while increasing the carceral system.

By evoking Kafka, Foer challenges his readers to remember that meat is not simply a pink geometric shape wrapped in plastic and purchased at the supermarket. There is history behind both the farming of animals as well as a life experienced by an animal. We forget this fact, but shame helps us remember. “Shame is the work of memory against forgetting. Shame is what we feel when we almost entirely—yet not entirely—forget social expectations and our obligations to others in favor of our immediate gratification” (Foer; 37). For this reason, I think shame might prove to be invaluable to the way we define economics—if we are still to recognize the *oikos*- (Greek for “home”) of *eco*-nomy as a place inhabited by more than just the self. As a force that helps us remember invisible others just before self-gratification completely blots them from our memory, shame has the potential to challenge neoliberalism’s influence upon our collective psyche.

In general, individuals (American consumers, voters, and readers) can feel shame at knowing that their cheap products were manufactured at the expense of underpaid prison laborers, but corporations somehow seem impervious to that shame. When the company Unibase was able to enter into a contract with Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to have prison laborers perform data entry tasks through a program called the Ohio Offshore Industries Project, it enabled Unibase to close an office in Kentucky employing non-criminal laborers. "A number of other companies have voiced their interest in the prospect of exploiting Ohio's prison labor force" (110), writes Danny Cahill in "The Global Economy Behind Ohio Prison Walls." For a corporation, decisions made entirely through the lens of cost-benefit analysis completely usurp the "ethical" questions of exploiting prison labor. With legal access to cheaper labor, Unibase and other companies can continue to increase profit; the corporation is intrinsically indifferent to shame. On the other hand, as an editor's note points out, the "Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections media contact Joe Andrews stated that the Ohio Offshore Industries Project had been terminated due to '*public outcry*'" (my emphasis; 111). Response from the public, it seems, reveals that individuals can—and do—feel shame about the barefaced capitalization of cheap prison labor.

Naturally! Corporations are not the same as the human organism, which is prone to feel emotions and be swayed by affective states. As citizens, we uphold certain values of citizenship based on the historical memory of being exploited by colonial powers, and the moral obligation to feel shame about such exploitative practices is part of what it means to defend constitutional rights. But individual humans are not the only citizens of the United States. Thanks to the (unfortunate) evaluation of the Supreme Court ruling on *Santa Clara*

County v. Southern Pacific Railroad by the Court Reporter Bancroft Davis, the constitutional rights of citizens stated in the Fourteenth Amendment have more or less been extended to corporations—with or without the ability to feel shame. So their exploitation of prison labor helps to define what it means to be a U.S. citizen. Additionally, state governments and correctional institutes are not without investment in exploitative prison labor. Without their avarice, the leasing of prison labor would not be possible.

But to clarify, my point is that shame might come to play a productive role in the legislating of prison labor. In what I have said so far, I put myself at risk of suggesting that all corporations are shameless and (perhaps a more insidious error) that all individuals are capable of feeling shame. So I want to specify that my remarks mean to reflect upon the seemingly partisan relationship between shame and money over the topic of prison labor. Money may try to avoid the topic, but shame allows us to consider those “invisible others.”

Parallelisms: Comparable Histories and Economies

As I have stated, my argument is predicated on the idea that many industries in our country are systematically being reconfigured in neoliberal terms, and to better contextualize these factory-farm and prison histories, it would help to understand how they resonate with the historical development of neoliberalism. I refer to David Harvey’s oft-cited definition of neoliberalism in order to clarify that to which the term refers. Neoliberalism is a “theory of political economic practices” that insist on capitalist values (free markets, free trade, etc...) in the spirit of increasing—allegedly—the general happiness of all. However, it is Harvey’s further observations that are of particular use to

this study. “The role of the state,” he continues, “is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (2).

At this point, we must consider why something that is “appropriate to such practices” would need to have institutional frameworks created—and preserved!—for it. If these frameworks were actually appropriate, would they not form on their own and sustain themselves? What Harvey then shows is that these frameworks reveal their inherent incompatibility with how “human well-being can best be advanced.” The state must, we are told, “set up those military, defense, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets” (2). The idea being that markets are too complicated for the biases of governing bodies to intervene, so we are left with a truly “free” system—or at least as free as a heavily policed system can get. At the end of the day, the system is designed to protect the market under the assumption that the market will increase the happiness of all, so the state’s obligation to the social wellbeing of those bodies making up that market were trumped.

It needed to be trumped, because, as Steven Spitzer argues, in order to truly blossom into a capitalist system of surplus extraction our social lives needed to be monitored and regularized. In order for capitalist markets to be successful, there needed to be profit, and since profit was made off of surplus value, some amount of social control was needed to maintain “productive efficiency.” Spitzer tells us that efficiency came not just with the division of labor but with “two additional innovations: first, by taking into account and gaining control over the social environment within which production takes place (e.g., eliminating riots and other disruptions to business), and, second, by taking into account and gaining control over human labor (i.e., treating laborers more and more as

‘instruments of production’)” (325). The resulting burden on powers seeking to control labor populations was enormous and anticipates Meiners’ observation that the increase in neoliberal politics has led to additional governmental regulation and policing. This is the beginning of the beautiful friendship between the state and private capital.

The state’s relationship with private capital begins in the nineteenth century and it frames the way in which neoliberalism would come to see bodies as exploitable objects. In “At Hard Labor: Penal Confinement and Production in Nineteenth-Century America,” Rosalind Petchesky paints a clear picture of this relationship. “What is usually the more obvious side of this symbiotic relationship is the dependence of private capital on the state—in this case, the use of the state’s coercive instrumentalities and traditional jurisdiction over *captive or dependent subpopulations* as a means of *mobilizing cheap labor for private entrepreneurs*” (my emphasis). But the state was equally dependent on this private revenue, which it could collect using the labor of these “subpopulations.” “Among the limited sources of revenue at the state’s disposal were *dependent and deviant human beings*, who could be traded, conscripted, and put to work. The broad context for this exercise of state power was, of course, the growth of a market in labor, *which put value on persons and populations as economic resources*” (my emphasis; 342). Petchesky’s words reveal the growing relationship between the state and private capital, but they also tell a story of a growing relationship between *sub-human* populations and their value as a resource.

The history of animals serving as resources is as old as civilization itself (perhaps this cliché is more revealing than intended). One well-accepted version is that animals coevolved with us as domesticated creatures. Foer calls this the “post-Darwinian version of

the ancient *myth of animal consent*.” The history bears a striking resemblance to the policing state.

Basically, humans struck a deal with the animals we have named chickens, cows, pigs, and so forth: we’ll protect you, arrange food for you, etc., and, in turn, your labor will be harnessed, your milk and eggs taken, and, at times, you will be killed and eaten. Life in the wild isn’t a party, the logic goes—nature is cruel—so this is a good deal. And the animals, in their own way, have consented to it. (99)

The ironic tone here is meant to emphasize the myths we tell ourselves about what animals need. The story always ends up with their domesticators sounding like heroes helping the poor helpless creatures against the wild. Here is one articulation of this scenario made by David Fraser, in “Caring for Farm Animals” (pay attention to the sensible, almost scientific, rhetoric underlying the industrialization of animals lives in factory farms):

Confinement systems have sometimes made disease transmission more problematic because of the large number of animals housed together, but they have sometimes helped to prevent disease because pathogens can often be excluded from enclosed herds and flocks. Indoor environments often increase the stress caused by hot, humid weather because of inadequate ventilation, but they tend to reduce the stress caused by cold, wet weather because they provide better shelter. Animals confined in indoor pens may have difficulty escaping from aggressive pen-mates, but they are protected from predators. In short, the move to confinement housing created or exacerbated certain animal welfare problems, but helped to solve others. (551-552)

Just as animals need protection from the outdoors, the state hypothetically functions in the same way for the people it governs. At the same time, the government gains the power to

determine what populations are deviant. If, for instance, slavery is abolished, “Black Codes” can take its place; then a population of black Americans can once again consent “in their own way” to be used for cheap labor.¹

To clarify, these histories are not meant to be incontrovertible accounts, but articulations of the lives of certain individuals, which are all passed through the sieve of a slowly brewing neoliberal ideology. They are stories, but compelling, and deeply intimate ones. Most importantly, as stories, I hope to show that they perform the work of shame by inspiring the consideration of invisible others.

We say humans are locked up “like animals,” or that certain treatment might be “inhuman.” In order to paint a picture of animals as exploitable objects, however, Foer performs an interesting reversal with his metaphors. He ironically shows how we justify “castration, exhausting labor, draining blood or cutting flesh from living animals, branding, removing young animals from their mothers” all in the spirit of “good business.” But then he frames it with a penal metaphor: “The animals were ensured police protection in exchange for being sacrificed to those policemen: protect and serve” (103). We are used to animals metaphors in order to explain human conditions, but human incarceration as a metaphor for animal farming is different. By linking the history of these two groups, Foer renders visible a connection that seems so obvious, but that has the power to upset us all the same. Just as J. M. Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello’s attempt to state the obvious (that the Nazi’s modeled extermination camps after abattoirs) stirs the indignation of everyone she meets, there is something unsettling about Foer’s attempt to show the connection between different bodies that share the same fate as exploitable resources.

¹ See Angela Davis, “From the Convict Lease System to the Super Max Prison,” *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention, and Prisons*. Ed. Joy James. New York: St. Martin’s P, 2000. 60-74.

The shared history of how their bodies have come to be used as exploitable objects also reflects in the same way people theorize their fate as living objects. There is a social—almost philosophical—mark put upon these bodies by the society in which they live, which renders them doomed to parallel lived experiences. In his book, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben identifies this marking as what occurs at the very moment we identify ourselves as human. He calls it the “anthropogenic machine”—or, the creation of man as something different from other animals—and sees it as one significant cause for some of the most extreme forms of ethical violations. “Perhaps not only theology and philosophy,” he writes, “but also politics, ethics, and jurisprudence are drawn and suspended in the difference between man and animal.” In defining something as different, one has, more or less, excused oneself from treating that thing differently. Without that difference, one would not have the ethical justification to exploit that person. For Agamben, who tends to use extreme examples, this could explain something as monstrous as genocide. “Perhaps,” he again surmises, “even concentration and extermination camps are also an experiment of this sort, an extreme and monstrous attempt to decide between the human and the inhuman” (22).

So animals and criminals (by class and race) share a parallel fate, marked by what distinguishes them from others. This mark has the power to frame their lives with captivity and death. Consider the way W. E. B. DuBois reflects on the cultural context that condemns the lives of black Americans in *The Souls of Black Folk*. He writes, “In the back woods of the Gulf States, for miles and miles, he [the black American] may not leave the plantation of his birth; in well-nigh the whole rural South the black farmers are peons, bound by law and custom to an economic slavery, from which the only escape is death or the penitentiary”

(34). For DuBois, this is an unforgivable hypocrisy, seeing as the Fifteenth Amendment recognizes its black population as voting citizens. The power of “law and custom” upon the minds of the exploiter explains why black bodies would not necessarily “leave the plantation of his birth” and why “death or the penitentiary” would constitute their only escape.

Not surprisingly, domesticated animals born and raised for processing in factory farms (“Globally, roughly 450 billion land animals are now factory farmed every year” [Foer, 34]) live lives *entirely* characterized by the penitentiary and death. My first encounter with the lived experiences of these animals came when I first read Peter Singer’s now 35-year old book, *Animal Liberation*. For the lives of Broiler chickens, he describes how they “are killed when they are seven weeks old (the natural lifespan of a chicken is about seven years). At the end of this brief period, the birds weigh between four and five pounds; yet they still may have as little as half a square foot of space per chicken—or less than the area of a sheet of standard typing paper” (99). And here is his description of pigs: “Pigs in modern factory farms have nothing to do but eat, sleep, stand up, and lie down. Usually they have no straw or other bedding material, because this complicates the task of cleaning” (120). The lives of cows (veal in particular) brings its own set of nightmares, but in each description we see an extreme form of what DuBois describes: lives defined by prison and death.

We must even consider the way the law seems to fail both DuBois and Foer. For DuBois, even the constitutional recognition that black Americans are free (Thirteenth Amendment) and can vote and participate in determining the United States (Fifteenth Amendment), there still existed ways in which communities could put blacks into captivity.

Jim Crow laws provided ways for people to perpetuate racist legislation in the face of this constitutional reform. So while there was the appearance of equality, the law continued to allow for certain kinds of discrimination. Similarly, as Foer observes, Common Farming Exemptions, or CFE's, perform the same kind of service to the animal processing industry in the face of animal welfare reform. He tells us,

Common Farming Exemptions make legal any method of raising farmed animals so long as it is commonly practiced within the industry. In other words, farmers—*corporations* is the right word—have the power to define cruelty. If the industry adopts a practice—hacking off unwanted appendages with no painkillers, for example, but you can let your imagination run with this—it automatically becomes legal. (50-51)

In both instances, legislation is predicated on difference, whether by race or species, and it allows for practices that counteract any preceding ethical reform.

Divergences: Telos, or Value as a Resource

Karl Marx, in "Theories of Surplus Value," observes that just as many professions produce commodities or ideas that society can consume, the criminal also produces something that is, to Marx, tantamount to the formation of "a world market" and "nations themselves": crime. Without the criminal's crime, there would be not be criminal law, which in the market is a product purchasable on the market in the form of, say, a book (such as the one from which I am about to quote.) "Further," Marx writes, "the criminal produces the whole apparatus of the police and criminal justice, detectives, judges, executioners, juries, etc., and all these different professions, which constitute so many

categories of the social division of labour, develop diverse abilities of the human spirit, create needs and new ways of satisfying them” (52-53). Crime, he posits, is a master source of surplus value bolstering the entire market economy. It is a force of destabilization—a force that threatens the integrity of any other product produced within the market—whose value rests in its ability to drive the development of all other products. “The criminal interrupts the monotony and security of bourgeois life. Thus he protects it from stagnation and brings forth that restless tension, that mobility of spirit without which the stimulus of competition would itself become blunted” (53). No price tag can ever be put on this “mobility of spirit,” making crime’s value to the market invaluable.

In this respect, as their parallel histories attest, animals and criminals share a fate of providing an invaluable amount of surplus value to a market predisposed toward the accumulation of profit—even if that profit is not monetary. While not directly benefiting the increase of capital (in fact, their direct efforts are meant to decrease capital in others), their very existence has generated a whole carceral system, which, once created and plugged into a capitalist context, will aim to participate in the market.

By appropriating the labor of its incarcerated criminals, the carceral system actually profits in two major ways. First, it benefits by perpetuating a class/racial divide by associating delinquency with certain peoples and justice with others.² The separation of classes, in turn, constitutes the field in which certain entrepreneurs can further benefit from the surplus value of the poor (i.e. their cheaper labor). Second, it produces political power by addressing problems of governmental concern. Economically, it creates the illusion of lower unemployment statistics. Men and women put in jail make the job market

² See Travis L. Dixon, “Teaching You to Love Fear: Television News and Racial Stereotypes in a Punishing Democracy.”

look more secure, or as Marx puts it, “Crime takes off the labour market a portion of the excess population, diminishes competition among workers, while the war against crime absorbs another part of the same population” (53). In the social sphere, the idea of criminals working while doing time reassures a nation’s inhabitants with the illusion that their tax-dollars will see some kind of reimbursement. That reimbursement may be an illusion, but the impact of the illusion draws significant political capital for those deciding to spend more money on the penal system.

Up close, this kind of exploitation seems nauseating: to invest in a carceral system that cultivates class division, racism, separation of wealth, and political capital for a select few seems at its best... criminal. But that nausea does not compare with what Jean Baudrillard sees in the lives of factory animals. In “Animals Sick of Surplus Value,” a piece written for *Utopie*, domesticated (or factory farmed) animals are, in the eyes of the professionals monitoring them, demonstrating an unhealthy response to existence. Like the neoliberal prison system that profits from the surplus value of certain peoples in a population, the factory farm seeks to reap the largest possible surplus value of its animal inhabitants. Their existence is framed entirely by a capitalist mentality. Baudrillard’s essay captures this:

European veterinarians, at a meeting in Lyons, were troubled by the illnesses and psychological problems that develop in industrial breeding.

“To ameliorate the ‘quality of life’ for veal, pigs, poultry, and even laboratory mice might, in the end, *prove profitable*.”

... The problems have become severe enough to *get in the way of the profitability of the enterprise*. (my emphases; 215)

As with prisons, their imprisonment is already justified (since both the criminal and the animal are not fit for normal society), yet their continued existence must also prove itself valuable to the larger capitalist enterprise. Ultimately, the veterinarians are able to conclude, “These economic conditions (decreasing production) might drive the producers to give the animals more normal living conditions,” to which Baudrillard writes, “There has never been a better statement of how ‘humanism,’ ‘normality,’ and ‘quality of life’ are only elements of profitability.

Baudrillard is simply trying to make the point that these animal bodies are recent victims of increased technologization and of what Spitzer called the “the progressive rationalization of productive and social relationships” (325).³ Why else would a group of veterinarians sit around discussing “whether such animals suffer *psychologically*” (Baudrillard, 216)? The way in which this victimization parallels that of the modern carceral system has been the point of this paper up until now, but as Baudrillard points out, there is a dramatic divergence at this point that is worth a lengthy citation and our consideration.

Everything that has just been described corresponds point by point to what has happened to man as a result of industrial concentration, of the scientific organization of labor, of Taylorism, of this lacerating revision by capitalist “breeders” and by contemporary innovations in “quality of life,” “working conditions,” and “the enrichment of tasks.” The cited text is only interesting because inevitable death makes the animal still more stunning than that of men on the assembly line. Against

³ For Spitzer, this and “the revolutionizing of administrative practices and principles under the capitalist state” constitute the break when feudal economies shifted to become capitalist.

this industrial organization of death, animals have no other resource than collective or individual suicide. (217)

Baudrillard is not interested in scandalizing his readers into vegetarianism with this scenario—at least not overtly. Rather the parallel between a neoliberal state and a factory farm, both which attempt to psychologically diagnose its “labor force” in order to keep them calm, calls into question the bafflingly precarious role the law-enforcer/care-taker finds himself in. “The prisoner needs freedom, sex, normality to endure prison, just as animals about to be slaughtered need a certain quality of life to have a normal death” (218). If we can agree that the carceral system reveals itself to be an extension of neoliberal principles that result in the exploitation of subpopulations surplus value in the form of labor and political capital, the grotesque consequence of being one rung lower down on the ladder frames it in an even more ethically questionable light. The more we continue to feel comfortable with one the more the other seems endurable.

All social life begins to feel more comfortable with the prison context, such that prison walls become synonymous with freedom (“liberality”). Baudrillard is wonderfully to the point here. “This is no longer forced incarceration; it is no longer forced labor that counts.... And it is because all of society is today in the image of prison and the factory that it can disappear as such. *They have done nothing, liberalizing these things, but spread them as models across all social space and time*” (my emphasis; 220). What we learn from the parallels of factory farms and prisons is that neoliberalism can effectively keep the wealth and the power in the hands of the few and at the expense of subpopulations. What we learn from the divergence between the factory farms and prisons is that the picture does not get any brighter.

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From the standpoint of business, questions about the use of prison labor come down to profitability. The corporation is not interested in debating the implications of using prison labor unless there are negative impacts on revenue. For instance, there have been historical moments when companies have protested the exploitation of prison-labor, but even in these instances, the question is not over what it means to exploit labor, but over unfair competition. As Dan Pens writes in “Microsoft ‘Outcells’ Competition,” “In the 1870’s competitors of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company charged that convict labor gave that company an unfair competitive advantage” (116). Miners revolted, freeing prisoners, and the system was modified. But this was only because money was at stake. Otherwise, when the state and the corporation are able to profit, the discussion remains muted.

Take, for instance, Washington’s Department of Corrections (DOC). As Pens points out, they are eager to increase “private prison industries,” actually legislating the creation of new prison jobs. But the lawmakers are simultaneously aware of the implications of prison labor, including language “stating that the industries shall ‘provide Washington state manufacturers or business with products or services currently produced by out-of-state or foreign suppliers.’” Pens continues, “The law requires the DOC to conduct an analysis of the potential impact of prison industry jobs on the local labor market. But *the law is silent* about what that analysis might show, or whether the DOC should be prevented in creating prison industry jobs that displace outside workers” (my emphasis; 119-120). In this case, it is monetary impulses that are keeping the state and its affiliated companies “silent” in the face of questions raised by prison labor. A corporation might seem to be ashamed of prison

labor, but its reasons, we can surmise, stem from the concern in how it will affect their business. For example:

Redwood Outdoors is a garment manufacturer, employing about twenty prisoners. Prison workers at Redwood say they make clothing for Eddie Bauer, Kelly-Hanson, Planet Hollywood and Brooks, among others. Most Redwood workers are reluctant to talk about their jobs, especially about whose labels they sew into the garments they make. “Eddie Bauer doesn’t want anybody to know they use prison labor,” said one in a hushed tone. (119)

The silence Eddie Bauer wishes to maintain does reveal their shame, but more so, it reveals how profit can hush such shame.

Like money, shame is embarrassed of prison labor, but its reasons are different. From Shame’s perspective, prison labor is an extension of other exploitative practices, such as slavery. (In “Slaves of the State,” Paul Wright remarks, “The effect of the Thirteenth Amendment was not to abolish slavery but to limit it to those who had been convicted of a crime.” After the Civil War, the practice of slavery more or less continued in the conviction of large numbers of blacks and the leasing of their labor to private contractors. “All that has changed since then,” Wright says, “is that the state is less honest about its slaveholding practices” [102].) The leasing of very cheap criminal labor threatens the jobs of everyone outside of the prison—and inside as well (assuming that everyone in prison will return to the outside workforce). And shame plays an equally important role in the lives of animals that endure existences completely monitored by technology and productive efficiency. They cannot even be called slaves because slaves are more profitable alive. Knowing that

an animal's surplus value is in its confinement and slaughter means that shame has reminded us of the impact productive efficiency has on our "unseen family."

Taking into consideration those "invisible others," shame cringes at the idea that finance might prefer to have people in jail than in employed positions. Phil Wilayto from the "A Job Is A Right" campaign is aware of these invisible others, even though he normally represents non-criminal laborers. In response to the 1996 Oak Park Heights Prisoner Work Strike, he would say, "The use of prisoners as contract labor is a growing and dangerous phenomenon which is a threat to unions and the jobs of all non-prison workers... And it's a gross exploitation of prisoners, who are some of the most oppressed workers in society. To force these workers to take the jobs they were denied on the outside for a fraction of the wages is to return to a system of institutionalized slave labor" (130). Shame reminds us that those invisible others laboring in prisons are part of a larger network that threatens laborers everywhere.

When appealing to our moral selves, our government mimics the shame of its citizens by "condemning the export of prison-made goods from China"; when appealing to our corporate selves, it loses all sense of shame, allowing "[p]rison-made goods from California and Oregon... [to be] exported for retail sales" (Wright; 104). If we are appalled by our government's desire to "compet[e] against the sweatshops of Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Thailand," than perhaps our sense of shame is the most effective weapon in changing public policy. Shame must come to have greater economic value than money or currency. Just as shame played a role in altering the diet of Kafka (he would eventually become a vegetarian), it can effectively play a role in the way we define the U.S. citizen's moral appetite.