

# Exposed Animal Bodies: The Photographic Observation of the Body-Space of the Anthropocene

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Using Stacy Alaimo's theoretical concept of trans-corporeality, the paper analyzes photographs of five award-winning photojournalists, capturing various sites of exposure of animal bodies in the Anthropocene. It is not only the exposed animal bodies (i.e. confined, depleted, or genetically modified animal bodies, impacted by the industrial agricultural system, climate crisis and ecological destruction) that are of interest but also the environments in which these bodies are photographed. These environments do not merely serve as backdrops but also affect animal bodies and reveal their interconnectedness with global economic, industrial, and environmental systems.

▪ **Keywords:** Anthropocene, animal body, transcorporeality, new materialism, photography

V prispevku so s teoretskim konceptom čeztelesnosti Stacy Alaimo analizirane fotografije petih nagrajenih fotoreporter\_k\_jev, ki prikazujejo različna mesta izpostavljenosti živalskih teles v antropocenu. Pozornost je usmerjena tako na izpostavljena živalska telesa (tj. telesa, ki jih ogrožajo industrijski agrikulturni sistem, podnebna kriza in ekološko uničenje; ujeta, izčrpana ali gensko spremenjena živalska telesa) kakor tudi okolje, v katerem so bile fotografije posnete. Okolje ni zgolj ozadje, ampak učinkuje na živalska telesa ter razkriva njihovo povezanost z globalnimi ekonomskimi, industrijskimi in okoljskimi sistemi.

▪ **Ključne besede:** antropocen, živalsko telo, čeztelesnost, novi materializem, fotografija

## Introduction

In this paper, I analyze photographs capturing the devastation wrought by industrial and agricultural systems and environmental destruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analysis opens up a space for introducing what Stacy Alaimo has called the “ethics of exposure” (Alaimo, 2016: 77), i.e. the new ethics of living in the Anthropocene. In the paper, I adopt this sense of exposure not as a state of complete unprotectedness but as “openness to the material world” (ibid.: 91), i.e. radical openness of animal bodies to their environments.

The main research focus will be placed upon the relationship between animal bodies and agricultural environments or ruined ecosystems as depicted through the lenses of the five award-winning photojournalists. To address the conceptualization of the issue, Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of visual communication (1996, 2001) will be used. Aspects of composition such as placement of images, salience of depicted elements, and the framing of elements will be considered. The relationship between the viewer

and the depicted animals that is constructed in the photographs will be analyzed through the modes of camera distance, camera angle, and the gaze of the depicted animals. It is not only the exposed animal bodies (confined, depleted, or genetically modified animal bodies, impacted by the industrial agricultural system, climate crisis and ecological destruction) that are of interest but also the environments in which these bodies are photographed. These environments do not merely serve as backdrops but also affect animal bodies, whose vulnerability, when exposed, is demonstrated through an exploration of the various sites of exposure in the analyzed photographs. The photographs demonstrate the material interconnections between specific bodies and specific places – places that could be called, according to Rob Shields, “liminal zones of Otherness” (Shields, 1991: 6), bringing attention to animals’ corporeal connection to the global economic, industrial, and environmental systems. Exposure in this sense “signifies the need for environmental protection, justice, or peace” (Alaimo, 2016: 68).

I aim to illustrate how speciesism can materialize across bodies and places. The analysis focuses on actual animal bodies as they are transformed by their encounters with places, substances, and forces. I explain the relations between animal bodies and their environments using Stacy Alaimo’s theoretical concept of transcorporeality (Alaimo, 2010, 2016), i.e. “a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments” (Alaimo, 2016: 112).

For the purposes of the paper, I have selected five photographs that depict various sites of exposure of animal bodies, i.e. animal bodies’ experience of climate change, environmental pollution, and the animal-industrial complex. All of the analyzed photographs manifest, according to Susan Sontag, “[t]he dual powers of photography – to generate documents and to create works of visual art” (Sontag, 2003: 68). Four of them are included in the book *HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene* (McArthur, Wilson, 2020), a photojournalism book that documents exploitative human-animal relations across the planet, as depicted through the lenses of 40 award-winning photojournalists.

The analyzed photographs can be placed within the genre of photojournalism, which has built up a sense of the photograph’s role as bearing witness, or recording, of reality. In this case, the photograph carries what Julianne Newton has called “the burden of visual truth” (Newton, 1998). Susan Sontag places conflict photography among “the realm of photographs that cannot possibly be posed” (Sontag, 2003: 51–52). She focuses on our ability to consider, reflect upon and rationalize images of mass suffering, i.e. “regarding the pain of others” (Sontag, 2003). When the other is the animal, the photojournalist Jo-Anne McArthur talks of a special subgenre, which she calls animal photojournalism. Since the human condition is the central focus of photojournalism, animal photojournalism means shifting the focus to animals and their lived experiences (McArthur, 2023). McArthur, who claims her work was inspired by conflict

photography, compares animal journalism with conflict photography in that both aim to show “both context and those caught within it” to enable “to see the individuals, to connect with their grief” (McArthur, 2020: 93). She defines animal photojournalism as an emergent genre of photography that “exposes and memorializes the experiences of animals who live amongst us but who we fail to see”. These are, she continues, “particularly those animals that are historically underrepresented, but with whom we have very close contact, named by their product” (McArthur, 2023). As with conflict photographers, animal photojournalists put themselves at physical and psychological risk to document a practice or an event (ibid.). Because animals used by humans are often caged and concealed, animal photojournalists may need to gain access to a place of animal exploitation undercover.

Animal photojournalists employ photography most potently as a form of evidence. Photography has become a tool for them to become involved in the fight for animal rights. McArthur considers her work as a “bold and urgent statement” (McArthur, 2020: 93), and Lozinski describes the role of an animal photojournalist as follows: “When I take photos, I try to think of images as open wounds that can’t be ignored. They should communicate pain” (Lozinski, 2020: 31).

### **The exposure of bodies in the Anthropocene**

One of the most important aspects of the Anthropocene is, as David Farrier (2019: 6) states, humankind’s radical interference with deep time, which has become a striking and paradoxical element of our everyday. Our present is accompanied by deep pasts and deep futures: our dependence on fossil fuels, rare earth minerals and plastics puts us in touch with the distant past; the pre-human Earth shapes our present both in terms of geological layers and evolutionary biodiversity, as well as in terms of the textures, means and processes that express our experience of modernity. At the same time, the various disruptions that have shaped these dependencies, such as changes in the chemical composition of the atmosphere, soils and oceans and the decline of biodiversity, illuminate our relationship with the deep future. In the context of the deep time of the Earth’s history, recognition is growing that in the Anthropocene, human activities have become a geomorphological and geological force (Grinevald et al., 2019: 5) that is “pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*” (Steffen et al., 2011: 614).

The understanding that human activities have changed the planet in terms of geological and biospheric processes has challenged the assumption that the world exists as a background for human subjects, and this has placed the trajectories of Anthropocene theories in dialogue with new materialisms, materialist feminisms, and materialist ecocriticisms. The materialist assumption that the human is always intertwined with the more-than-human world underlines the inseparable connection of human bodies with

“the environment” (Alaimo, 2010: 2). “Nature”, according to Stacy Alaimo, “is always as close as one’s own skin – perhaps even closer” (ibid.). New materialisms insist on material agency, i.e. they refuse the notion of matter as passive or inert, and emphasize “the interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures” (ibid.). A strong model of material agency was developed by Karen Barad in their seminal work *Meeting the Universe Half-Way* (Barad, 2007), where agency “is cut loose from its traditional humanist orbit” (ibid.: 177). Barad explains that agency is not an attribute, but it is “‘doing’/‘being’ in its intra-activity” (ibid.: 178). Barad’s conception of intra-action is based on quantum physics and extends beyond the term interaction, which suggests a reciprocal influence between separate entities. The term intra-action refers to a fundamental entanglement whereby agency is not understood as an inherent property of an individual entity but as a dynamic of forces (ibid.: 141), where things constantly shift and are exchanged, influencing and acting on each other. Individual entities therefore do not previously exist as such but are realized in intra-action, i.e. in their co-creative relations with other entities.

The understanding that human corporeality is interconnected with the more-than-human world marks a turning point in the conception of subjectivity and opens up space for thinking about subjectivity within the framework of posthumanist theories. In their work *Bodily Natures* (2010), Stacy Alaimo develops the concept of transcorporeality by drawing upon new materialist theories of non-human agency, especially Karen Barad’s notion of intra-action (Barad, 2007). Agency is, therefore, not conceived as the property of a concrete, isolated entity but is distributed and moves across the networks into which these entities are embedded. Alaimo argues for a conception of transcorporeality that traces the material interchanges across human and animal bodies and the wider material world. While transcorporeality as an anthology begins with the human, it does not exclude any living being in order to undermine the Western tradition of human exceptionalism (Alaimo, 2018: 435). It should be emphasized that the effects of the Anthropocene on different groups of human and non-human entities are connected to geopolitical processes and global injustices that already exist in the capitalist socio-economic system. The transcorporeal subject is therefore generated through the intertwining of “biological, technological, economic, social, political and other systems, processes, and events” (ibid.: 436). Transcorporeality suggests a new figuration “of the human after the Human”, which is not founded on dichotomies and hierarchies and which does not remove the human from the world they survey (ibid.). The prefix *trans-* in the derived word transcorporeality contains the meaning of multiple horizontal crossings, transitions and transformations. The transcorporeal subject does not exist as an isolated entity (Alaimo, 2010: 146) since the subject, if we proceed from the theory of new materialism, cannot be separated from networks of intra-active material agencies (Barad, 2007); human and non-human bodies imperceptibly transmit biopolitical modulation, genetically modified organisms, carbon dioxide, everyday

chemicals and other substances (Alaimo, 2016). Transcorporeality denies that human and animal bodies are a stable entity, discrete in time and space; rather, as Alaimo argues, they are “caught up in and transformed by myriad, often unpredictable material agencies” (Alaimo, 2010: 146). The concept of transcorporeality, therefore, suggests that bodies are intertwined with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them and is transformed by them.

The concept of the transcorporeal subject is further developed by Alaimo’s work *Exposed* (2016) utilizing the assumption of new materialism that subjectivities are a priori intertwined with non-human substances and forces as a starting point for elucidating an “ethics of exposure” (Alaimo, 2016: 77). This ethic foregrounds the material susceptibility and vulnerability of the exposed subject and thereby directs attention to the variety of lived experiences within the Anthropocene. Alaimo articulates the uneven distribution of power within this sphere:

Vulnerability is paradoxical in the Anthropocene, as it is these very bodies, soft or not, participating in larger technological and economic systems that weaken the glaciers, and yet the enormity of collective human agency is countered by the sense of powerlessness that looms large here, as it does within nearly any other climate change scene. (Alaimo, 2016: 80)

Here, Alaimo draws attention to the significant paradox that human bodies are simultaneously capable and incapable of enacting geological changes (Christie, 2018). The paradoxical (lack of) strength of “dwelling in the dissolve” (Alaimo, 2016: 2) that characterizes Stacy Alaimo’s ethics of exposure enables an understanding that exposure is an inherent part of the Anthropocene.

## **Photographic art of exposure**

### ***Animal bodies and agricultural environments***

In this section, I explore transcorporeal materialities in the work of the photographers Jo-Anne McArthur and Andrzej Skowron, who capture the intersection of animal bodies and industrial farms. Their art suggests that animal bodies and animal health are interconnected with the material, often toxic flows of industrialized agricultural environments. The material interrelations between animals and industrial farms call our attention to systemic violence towards animals. As Sanbonmatsu states, animals “born into the industrialized agriculture system spend their whole lives in entirely artificial environments where their bodies, behaviours, and minds are forced to conform utterly to the needs of the administered world of capital” (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 2). The bodily substance of animals is vitally connected to the broader agricultural

environment and its supportive networks of the global corporate system, “an exploitative, repressive, and unsustainable juggernaut that treats all living beings as resources within a swollen production and marketing regime, as disposable commodities far removed from any moral status” (Boggs, 2007). The very emergence of corporate industry, followed by the creation of mass consumer markets, made possible the extraordinary expansion of animal products. Although exploitative human-animal relations were also characteristic of earlier epochs, capitalism “removed the last of the cultural and technical barriers to nonhuman animal exploitation which in previous epochs had set at least some limits to the scale and intensity of speciesist exploitation” (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 25).

McArthur’s and Skowron’s photos illustrate Alaimo’s conception of transcorporeal space, in that the animal body is never disentangled from the material world. McArthur’s photograph (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup> captures the collecting of eggs from caged hens at an industrial farm. It depicts intensively confined egg-laying chickens in battery cages – small, barren wire enclosures, stacked several tiers high and extending down long rows in a windowless shed. As many birds as possible are crammed into these tiny cages, one on top of the other – with the faeces of the birds on top falling on those below. However, it is not the individual bodies that are of interest here but rather the environment. In this photograph, McArthur depicts an environment in which animals blend into their living spaces, underscoring that farmed animals’ spaces are never merely a background, i.e. their bodies are inseparable from their surroundings. The most salient figure in the photograph, which occupies a central place in the composition, is the worker collecting the eggs. While she is wearing a face covering to avoid inhaling the toxic dust and ammonia in the air, the birds are left exposed to inhale all these substances, which plays a crucial role in increased disease susceptibility.

We cannot see microbes within the birds, but McArthur’s photograph discloses the transcorporeality, as it intermeshes animal bodies and environment, and therefore helps us to envision the invisible movement of substances across animal bodies and their surroundings. The environment runs right through animal bodies, i.e. water, air, feed, microbes and toxins enter their bodies through their digestive tract, respiratory system, skin and conjunctiva. Microbes that spread through animal bodies act as material agents, which affect animal health. These animal bodies are also vulnerable, or open to ostensibly benign utilitarian objects, such as shoes or equipment, which are no longer inert but interact with them. For example, they may transmit bacteria belonging to the genus *Salmonella*, which may cause salmonella infection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Photographs 1, 2, 3, and 5 are published on We Animals Media under an open non-commercial use licence.

<sup>2</sup> The most common bacterial diseases in hens exploited for their eggs include (in addition to salmonella infections) colibacillosis, fowl cholera, infectious coryza, mycoplasma infection, to name a few (Yaman, Yapicier, 2019). Bacterial diseases account for approximately half of the non-outbreak-related mortality in hens used in the egg industry and broiler chickens (Thøfner, Christensen, 2021).



Figure 1: Collecting eggs from caged hens at an industrial farm. Photo: Jo-Anne McArthur. Source: We Animals Media.



Figure 2: A broiler chicken sits with splayed legs on the floor of a broiler chicken farm. Photo: Andrzej Skowron. Source: We Animals Media.

Compared to McArthur's photograph, Skowron's image depicts an individualized chicken (Figure 2). The individualization of the chicken is realized through its salience in the image, with the other chickens remaining out of focus. The frontal perspective reveals the existential suffering of the chicken, and the horizontal angle brings the viewer into alignment with the issue. The photograph portrays a broiler chicken who at just six weeks old has already put on too much weight to be able to stand. He/she sits with splayed legs on the floor of a broiler chicken farm. Skowron's portrayal of the chicken's body as profoundly altered by the industrialized agricultural systems introduces a conception of the animal body "that is not genetically determined, nor firmly bounded" (Alaimo, 2010: 63) but rather a body in which social power and economic forces intra-act. The photograph demonstrates an example of transcorporeal space, where the capitalist system generates environments that infiltrate animal bodies and render them disabled. Animal bodies at a broiler chicken farm are biologically engineered for profitable exploitation. Chickens are treated "not as conscious, feeling beings but as matter to be shaped according to the needs of the capitalist system" (Sanbonmatsu, 2017: 2). The metabolic demands of intensive production, such as accelerated growth rates, coupled with the physiological stress associated with both confinement and the various physical modifications, leave animals extremely prone to disease. Chickens with rapid growth are at risk of increased immune dysfunction, disease morbidity, and disease mortality (Greger, 2007: 253–254).

### *The enmeshment of animal flesh with place*

In this section, I examine how the model of transcorporeality is emerging in photographic art, focusing on the exposure of vulnerable animal flesh at a wet market. The photograph by photojournalist Luis Tato (Figure 3) captures the bloody aftermath of a duck slaughter for the market. The photograph suggests violence, executed in duck flesh. The actual fleshy creatures that were killed are absent from the photograph but we can read the photograph through indexical signs. Duck feathers falling to the floor, and grains of corn index the presence of the ducks while the large blood-soaked surface indexes their slaughter. The image of this blood points to a corporeality that is violently exposed.

Wet markets as unique social spaces, shaped by the context of modernization and advanced urbanism (Mele et al., 2015: 105), "operate in the transformation of animals raised in a regime of confinement into various 'essential protein' commodities (aka meat)" (Segata et al., 2021: 98). Before being transported and caged at wet markets, animals are most commonly raised in intensive, captive production farms under poor sanitary conditions. Tato's photograph was taken in Spain but we can find this type of market all over the world. Since wet markets are essentially places where animals can be slaughtered at the time of purchase, they are also places where human bodies collide with animal flesh and blood. Both human and animal bodies are therefore "vulnerable,





Figure 3: The bloody aftermath of ducks slaughtered for market. Photo: Luis Tato. Source: We Animals Media.

fleshy, or interconnected with material processes” (Alaimo, 2016: 32).<sup>3</sup> The interchange of animal flesh and non-human materialities (bacteria and other microscopic life forms) builds the right environment for diseases to evolve (Segata et al., 2021: 98).<sup>4</sup> Bearing in mind that in our speciesist society ducks are considered food, and their flesh thus enters human bodies, the relation between the wet market, animal bodies and human bodies provides a clear example of transcorporeal transit.

Although the fleshy creatures are absent and we do not see their faces, the photograph evokes concern and empathy and suggests “posthumanist vulnerability that denies the possibility of any living creature existing in a state of separation from its environs” (Alaimo, 2016: 167). Portraying circumstances under which animals are traded and consumed, Tato’s work simultaneously manifests conceptions of animal justice, environmental justice, food justice, and broader social justice and suggests that not only animal bodies but also injustice towards animals is inseparable from physical environments.

### *Waters as transcorporeal space*

In this section, I examine photographs portraying locations where the animals’ embodiment meets water. As Neimanis argues, “[w]ater’ constitutes one of the so-called

<sup>3</sup> The wet market as a site of the collision of animal flesh and human bodies is also portrayed in a sequence from the dystopian fiction *Contagion* (2011), depicting the stages of a highly contagious zoonotic disease.

<sup>4</sup> Recognition of entanglement in the market system has, as Segata et al. argue (2021: 107), “repositioned health and disease as complex interactive processes between humans, animals, microbes, and environments.”

Anthropocene's most urgent, visceral and ethically fraught sites of political praxis and theoretical inquiry" (Neimanis, 2019: 25). Our reshaping of this planet is occurring not least through the rematerialization of its waters: dams, canals, and diversions threaten many vital waterways, large-scale extraction pollutes huge quantities of water, oceans are acidifying, and the composition of life they sustain is changing at an incredible rate (ibid.). Alaimo dissolves the persistent cultural conception of the ocean as impervious to anthropogenic harms, trying to raise awareness that dispersing substances or forces across the breadth and depth of the seas – as in the contemporary global practices of dumping garbage, microplastic pollution, sewage, weapons, toxic chemicals and radioactive waste – will not make them disappear (Alaimo, 2016: 221). They further examine aquatic materialism, i.e. to what extent transcorporeality can extend to the seas, and argue for the importance of new materialism to capture the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic, and human habitats (ibid.: 113).

Water is not, as Neimanis emphasizes, "simply something 'out there' – environment, resource, commodity, backdrop" – it is also the stuff of human and non-human bodies, and never separate from their materiality (Neimanis, 2019: 27). Anthropocene waters therefore dam other aspects of the water imaginary: water's transcorporeality. Alaimo pushes "the idea of exposure, or radical openness to one's environment, to the extreme in an imaginary psychedelic dissolve – a figuration of Anthropocene seas and their scenes of extinction" (Alaimo, 2016: 13). This idea incorporates the various ways in which humans are interconnected with ocean ecology, i.e., in terms of the consumption of sea foods, which connects humans in a transcorporeal manner to the health of the seas,<sup>5</sup> as well as in terms of the human use of the banal, ostensibly benign objects intended for momentary human use (such as plastic bottles, bags, wrappers etc.) that affect ocean and marine animals as they float in the sea (ibid.: 130).<sup>6</sup> Marine habitats are riddled with radioactive waste, toxic chemicals, plastics, and microplastics, all of which become part of the marine animals "that lack the means to discern danger, and the impermeability that would exclude it" (ibid.: 167).

The photograph of an oil-soaked pelican (Figure 4)<sup>7</sup> is a particularly vivid example of transcorporeal space. The fact that the oil spill affects the pelican's body highlights the substantial interconnections between the pelican and the environment; the pelican's vulnerable body is not separable from the ocean but is radically open to it. The pelican's body is not static but is in constant interchange with the ocean, i.e. it is vulnerable to

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<sup>5</sup> Those who eat marine animals suffer from high levels of dangerous heavy metals in their bodies since the oceans are riddled with mercury and organochlorides, resulting from coal-burning power plants, pesticides, and flame retardants which threaten marine life (Alaimo, 2016: 129).

<sup>6</sup> Beside abandoned fishing nets that trap certain marine animals, plastic bags that block the digestive tracts of turtles, and the various (plastic) objects that seabirds mistake for food, toxin-laden microplastics pose another risk to marine life, as many creatures such as benthic worms, sea cucumbers, krill, and birds "will ingest tiny plastic particles" (Kaiser, 2010: 1506).

<sup>7</sup> The photo is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.



Figure 4: An oiled brown pelican. Photo: Courtesy of Governor Bobby Jindal's office. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

its substances and flows. Specifically, the photograph presents what Alaimo calls “a transcorporeal landscape” (Alaimo, 2016), as it suggests the movement of oil through the ocean to the body of the pelican.

The photograph was shot after the crude oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico, the largest marine oil spill in history, caused by an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in 2010. Oil and natural gas continuously and uncontrollably burst into the ocean for nearly three months. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in all, 134 million gallons of oil was released (NOAA). Exposure to oil resulted in the death of countless marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, fishes and invertebrates and areas of the seabed covered by bacterial byproducts essentially became dead zones (Pallardy, 2024). Several animals are still experiencing previously unreported health consequences (Farrell, 2023). Beside the many diseases detected in the animals in the affected area, it has also been established that many dolphins suffered from lung and adrenal disorders known to be linked to oil exposure, and the larvae of several fish species, including tuna, “likely developed heart defects after exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from the oil” (Pallardy, 2024). Many species “experienced increased mortality, developmental defects and reproductive declines due to exposure to the oil” (Farrell, 2023). Birds were particularly vulnerable to the oil’s effects, and the brown pelican was one of the most affected species.<sup>8</sup> Many birds died from “ingesting oil as they tried to clean themselves or because the substance

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<sup>8</sup> Coastal Louisiana is home to about a third of all brown pelicans in the eastern US but the oil spill has devastated this community – between 100,000 and one million birds died straight away (Farrell, 2023). It is estimated that 12% of brown pelicans died in the area affected by the spill (Pallardy, 2024).

interfered with their ability to regulate their body temperatures” (Pallardy, 2024). Oil-soaked feathers have a particularly devastating effect on birds, as feathers help them maintain a healthy and stable body temperature when the outside temperature changes (Farrell, 2023).<sup>9</sup> The photograph portrays how severe forms of environmental pollution can profoundly alter an animal’s life. It focuses on the pelican’s body, as it is altered by its encounters with oil, depicting the gravity of the pelican’s condition. The chemical byproducts of oil – as invisible material agencies – penetrate the tissue of birds: their blood, livers, and feathers (Farrell, 2023), which may trigger serious health conditions. The photograph suggests that the body of the pelican, the ocean and the oil are simultaneously material and social; the oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico cannot be separated from the social and economic relations of power that enable industrialisation. This work helps us illuminate how socio-political forces generate marine landscapes that infiltrate animal bodies. The very existence of the body of the oil-soaked pelican serves as a site for interconnections among various movements, such as ocean health, marine animal health, animal rights, environmental justice, and anti-globalization. The non-frontal perspective signals that we are, in a sense, observers. However, the pelican looks directly at the camera with his/her left eye, impacting upon the viewer. The pelican’s gaze brings us into alignment with the issue, and the recognizable contextual features makes this alignment seem like a responsibility.

Considering “the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crises that our planet currently faces – from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination” (Neimanis, 2019: 3), the issue of speciesism is inseparable from the global climate crisis. A photograph by Kelly Guerin (Figure 5) captures surviving pigs wading through flood waters along a stretch of highway after escaping a factory farm. The photograph was shot in September of 2018 after Hurricane Florence began its approach along the coast of North Carolina. North Carolina farms raise more than nine million pigs each year, making it the second largest producer of pigs in the USA. Although the flood zones are well known and recurrent, hundreds of buildings designed to house animals were constructed there. Animals are kept in long, rectangular barns known as CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), which house hundreds of pigs in a single facility (Guerin, 2018). The massive farming systems that keep them inside make them particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods and fires. For thousands of pigs trapped inside the barns, “there would be no evacuation, no supplies left behind, no official rescue to come” (ibid.).<sup>10</sup>

According to Alaimo, “all creatures of the Anthropocene dwell at the crossroads of body and place, where nothing is natural or safe or contained” (Alaimo, 2016: 167).

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<sup>9</sup> The oil intrusion even has cascading effects on how birds’ DNA functions. Researchers have found that the birds have lower nesting success due to exposure of their bodies to the oil (Farrell, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Among millions of animal deaths, 5,500 pigs died in the floods (Guerin, 2018).



Figure 5: Pigs who survived the hurricane and escaped their farm swim through flood waters in North Carolina. Photo: Kelly Guerin. Source: We Animals Media.

Guerin’s photograph presents two animal bodies that are among the most vulnerable to climate disturbances.<sup>11</sup> They have no means to protect themselves from such harm. And, ironically, the photograph suggests that their escape may well be life threatening, that there might be no person to save them, that no place is safe for them, since in speciesist categorization they are labelled as “farm animals”. The photograph therefore inevitably evokes the question of the power relations that are at stake in the various water crises that our planet currently faces.

### Conclusion

In the paper I have analyzed five photographs from the genre of animal photojournalism that capture, contest, and reconfigure the relations between animal bodies and specific places of exposure, i.e. animal bodies’ experience of climate change, environmental pollution, and the animal-industrial complex. Recognizing how the animal bodies intra-act with their environments – with the flow of water, toxicants, chemical byproducts

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<sup>11</sup> Given the speciesist categorization, animals of certain species are disproportionately affected by environmental risks. As Guerin, who as a photojournalist documented the aftermath for animals of Hurricane Florence, notes, while families with homes in high-risk areas evacuated their “pets” before the hurricane, millions of farmed animals were left locked in the barns (Guerin, 2018).

of oil, and other substances – fosters an ethical stance that we are accountable for our practices in a material world “that is never merely an external place but always the very substance of ourselves and others” (Alaimo, 2010: 158). Adopting a transcorporeal consciousness can therefore engender ethical responsivity and a political orientation towards questions of animal rights, climate change, and environmental justice. Thinking in terms of interdependencies and interrelationships, we do not only “recognize our own implications in the climatic conditions around us” (Neimanis, Loewen Walker, 2014: 573), but we also manage to destabilize anthropocentrism, raising consciousness that climate change and environmental racism do not concern humans alone. Due to economic policies and corporate interests, various groups of living creatures are being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous substances and natural disasters based upon race and species. To paraphrase the poet Stevie Smith’s poem title “Not Waving but Drowning”: *Which bodies are waving, and which bodies are drowning?*

### Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), research core funding No. P6-0215 (Slovene Language – Basic, Contrastive, and Applied Studies).

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### **Izpostavljena živalska telesa: fotografsko opazovanje telesa-prostora v antropocenu**

V prispevku je s teoretičnim konceptom čeztelesnosti Stacy Alaimo analizirana izpostavljenost živalskih teles v antropocenu, kakor je predstavljena v fotografski umetnosti. Analiza odpira prostor za vpeljavo nove etike življenja v antropocenu; Stacy Alaimo jo je poimenoval\_a »etika izpostavljenosti«. Izpostavljenost ni pojmovana kot stanje popolne nezaščitenosti, temveč kot »odprtost materialnemu svetu«, tj. kot radikalna odprtost živalskih teles okolju. Prispevek se osredinja na razmerje med živalskimi telesi in uničenimi ekosistemi oz. agrikulturnim okoljem; prikazano je skozi objektivne nagrajenih fotoreporter\_k\_jev Jo-Anne McArthur in Kelly Guerin, Andrzeja Skowrona, Luisa Tatoja in Wina McNameeja. Pozornost je usmerjena tako na izpostavljena živalska telesa (tj. telesa, ki jih ogrožata podnebna kriza in ekološko uničenje; ujeta, izčrpana ali gensko spremenjena živalska telesa) kakor tudi okolje, v katerem so bile posnete fotografije. Okolje ni zgolj ozadje, temveč učinkuje na živalska telesa ter razkriva njihovo povezanost z globalnimi ekonomskimi, industrijskimi in okoljskimi sistemi.

Fotografije živalskih teles na industrijskih farmah opozarjajo, da so živalska telesa in zdravje živali medsebojno povezana s širšim agrikulturnim okoljem in podpornimi mrežami globalnega korporativnega kapitalizma. Fotografije predstavljajo koncept čeztelesnega prostora Stacy Alaimo, po katerem živalsko telo ni nikoli ločeno od materialnega sveta. Fotografska umetnost, ki prikazuje okoliščine uživanja živali in trgovanja z njimi, povezuje koncepte živalske,



okoljske, prehranske in širše družbene pravičnosti ter predpostavlja, da s fizičnim okoljem niso neločljivo povezana le telesa živali, temveč tudi nepravilnost do njih.

Fotografije o čeztelesnosti voda pomagajo osvetliti, kako družbeno-politične moči ustvarjajo morske krajine, ki prodirajo v živalska telesa. Če upoštevamo različne antropogene in medsebojno povezane vodne krize, s katerimi se trenutno spoprijema naš planet, se vprašanje speciesizma kaže kot neločljivo povezano z globalno podnebno krizo. Živalska telesa so med najboljčutljivejšimi telesi za naravne nesreče, kot so poplave in požari, saj živali nimajo sredstev, da bi se zaščitile pred njimi.