

## Things to Think About: Meat or Not

Vialles, Noëlie. *Animal to Edible*. Cambridge University Press. 1994.

How is the perspective of an anthropologist different from that of a historian?

Do the expectations of an originally Francophone academic audience seem different from those of an Anglophone academic audience?

What, if any, impact does the fact that it is based on one region of provincial France have on the general applicability of the conclusions of this study?

What are the basic cultural connotations of slaughtering? Why did Vialles choose the initial quotation from *Utopia*, Thomas More?

Why does Vialles begin with an attempt to define “meat” (3-7)? How does she define it? Is her definition satisfactory?

What is the difference between “meat” and “butcher’s meat” (13)? Why is terminology so important in her analysis throughout the book (see, for example, 22-26, 46-51, 56-57, 87-90, 129-30)?

What is the difference between butchering and slaughtering? Why is their dissociation significant?

What are the consequences of the industrialization of slaughtering? What distinguishes industrial slaughtering from craft slaughtering (from the perspective of both human and non-human participants)?

Why does Vialles suggest that craft butchering is of relatively recent (that is, eighteenth century) origin (71-72)?

How does the design of abattoirs reinforce their symbolic meaning as well as their practical function?

What does Vialles mean by “de-animalisation”? Do you agree that the slaughtering process makes butcher’s meat approach the condition of a vegetable?

Why does Vialles ask who actually does the killing (45)?

Why does Vialles inject the perspective of a visitor to an abattoir at the beginning of chapter 3?

What is the purpose of “flowering” a carcass (58ff)?

The abattoirs Vialles studied did not do halal or kosher slaughtering. Would the inclusion of abattoirs that accommodated these practices have altered her analysis?

What is the symbolic significance of blood, as opposed to meat? Why is the smell of blood so important?

Why does Vialles devote so much attention to the tools and machines involved in the slaughtering process?

How does Vialles establish the set of dichotomies that define which animals are appropriate for eating (113ff)?

On the basis of Vialles evidence, how humane is modern industrial slaughtering?

What relation does Vialles suggest between edibility and sexuality (129-132)?

### **Grandin, Temple. Selections.**

Why does Grandin liken autistic people to animals? Are you persuaded by her analogy? If not, how would you account for her insight into the responses of livestock?

Why does Grandin think that domesticated cattle and autistic people share the responses of wild animals?

Why does Grandin suggest that women are effective workers in slaughterhouses (226)? Does she think that they are also closer to animals? What about the native people of Borneo (227)?

How does Grandin explain her willingness to help in the slaughter of livestock, despite her feeling of closeness to them? Is this related to her account (and critique) of cultural attitudes about death?

Why does Grandin think that vocalization is a good measure of humane conditions in slaughterhouses? Does she equate humane conditions with efficiency? Do you?

Are the humane issues with regard to transportation the same as the humane issues with regard to slaughtering?

What does she mean by "pushing animals beyond their biological limits" (229)?

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