

~~meat when they have been reinforced by personal enjoyment of meat eating.~~

Consequently, any comprehensive study of vegetarianism and feminism must consider how vegetarianism is received as well as what vegetarianism itself claims. Why has vegetarianism been considered a fad when, like feminist insights, it is a reform and idea that has recurred throughout history? Why is the vegetarian aspect to a writer or her work often ignored by literary critics? I struck upon the idea of the *texts of meat* to answer these questions.

By speaking of the *texts of meat* we situate the production of meat's meaning within a political-cultural context. None of us chooses the meanings that constitute the texts of meat, we adhere to them. Because of the personal meaning meat eating has for those who consume it, we generally fail to see the social meanings that have actually predetermined the personal meaning. Recognizing the texts of meat is the first step in identifying the sexual politics of meat.

In defining the patriarchal texts of meat, part 1 relies on an expanded notion of what constitutes a text. These include: a recognizable message; an unchangeability of the text's meaning so that through repetition the same meaning recurs; and a system of relations that reveal coherence.² So with meat: It carries a recognizable message—meat is seen as an item of food, for most meat is an essential and nutritious item of food; its meaning recurs continuously at mealtimes, in advertisements, in conversations; and it is comprised of a system of relations having to do with food production, attitudes toward animals, and, by extension, acceptable violence toward them.

The *texts of meat* which we assimilate into our lives include the expectation that people should eat animals and that meat is good for you. As a result the rendering of animals as consummable bodies is one of those presumptions that undergirds our attitudes. Rarely is this cultural text that determines the prevailing positive attitudes about consuming animals closely examined. The major reason for this is the patriarchal nature of our meat-advocating cultural discourse. Meat's recognizable message includes association with the male role; its meaning recurs within a fixed gender system; the coherence it achieves as a meaningful item of food arises from patriarchal attitudes including the idea that the end justifies the means, that the objectification of other beings is a necessary part of life, and that violence can and should be masked. These are all a part of the sexual politics of meat.

We will see in the following chapter that sex-role assignments determine the distribution of meat. When the meat supply is limited, men will receive it. Assuming meat to be food for men and consequently vegetables to be

food for women carries significant political consequences. In essence, because meat eating is a measure of a virile culture and individual, our society equates vegetarianism with emasculation or femininity.

Another aspect of the sexual politics of meat becomes visible as we examine the myth of Zeus' consumption of Metis. He, patriarch of patriarchs, desires Metis, chases her, coaxes her to a couch with "honeyed words," subdues her, rapes her, and then swallows her. But he claims that he receives her counsel from his belly, where she remains. In this myth, sexual violence and meat eating are collapsed, a point considered in chapter 2, "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women." It is also a myth about masculine consumption of female language. In discussing meat we must direct our attention to issues of patriarchal language about consumption; such a discussion is found in chapter 3.

People do not often closely scrutinize their own meat eating. This is an example of the prerogative of those in the dominant order to determine what is worthy of conversation and critique. Resultingly, earnest vegetarians become trapped by this worldview, and while they think that all that is necessary to make converts to vegetarianism is to point out the numerous problems meat eating causes—ill health, death of animals, ecological spoilage—they do not perceive that in a meat-eating culture none of this really matters. This dilemma is explored in chapter 4, "The Word Made Flesh."

Part 2, "From the Belly of Zeus," provides the beginnings of a feminist history of vegetarianism by focusing on the time period of 1790 to the present in Great Britain and the United States. It attempts to free Metis' voice from the belly of Zeus by freeing vegetarian meaning from the sexual politics of meat and by freeing women's voices from patriarchal interpretation. Rather than analyzing contemporary culture, the focus of this middle section is literary texts and their vegetarian influences. However, the literary-historical analysis found here makes use of the ideas introduced in part 1. It explores answers to the question "what characterizes texts that challenge the sexual politics of meat?" The idea of "bearing the vegetarian word" is examined in chapter 5 as one answer to this question. This idea facilitates the interpretation of the relationship between women's texts and vegetarian history.

In chapter 6 I explore the meaning of vegetarianism in *Frankenstein*, a feminist text that bears the vegetarian word. I am not attempting to compress *Frankenstein* into a didactic vegetarian tract. It is, of course, not that. But vegetarian nuances are of importance in the shaping of the story.

Part 2 also examines representative texts by women writers since World War I that posit a connection between meat eating, male dominance and war. Like *The Great War and Modern Memory* after which the title of

948
848

chapter 7 is patterned, I trace ideas that crystallized at the time of the Great War and follow their development during this century, including the idea of a Golden Age of feminism, vegetarianism, and pacifism.

Women, of course, have not been the only ones to criticize meat eating. In fact, to read standard vegetarian texts one would conclude that few women have been involved in this task. Conversely, to read many feminist writings, one might think that there is nothing controversial about meat eating. And to read standard histories, vegetarianism is faddish and nothing more. But vegetarian theory is neither unfounded nor unfocused; like feminist theory it must be seen as "comprehensive and cumulative, with each stage retaining some of the values and limitations of its predecessors."³ Among our vegetarian predecessors were numerous feminists. The basic vegetarian arguments we hear today were in place by the 1790s, except, of course, for the analysis of late twentieth-century developments in meat production. Vegetarian writings occur within a self-conscious protest tradition that contains recognizable recurring themes and images. Yet, they have not been seen either as comprehensive or cumulative, nor as a form of protest literature. But this failure of comprehension reflects the stasis of our cultural discourse on meat rather than the inadequacies of vegetarianism.

This book is extensively documented to demonstrate precisely the comprehensive and cumulative nature that has gone unrecognized. I am not creating claims for vegetarianism in literature and history. The records are there, but the tendency to trivialize vegetarianism has meant that those records are ignored. In a sense, vegetarians are no more biased than meat eaters are about their choice of food; vegetarians, however, do not benefit as do meat eaters from having their biases actually approved of by the dominant culture, as we shall see.

Because I see the oppression of women and the other animals as interdependent, I am dismayed by the failure of feminists to recognize the gender issues embedded in the eating of animals. Yet this failure is instructive as well. Where I identify feminism's participation in the sexual politics of meat, I am simultaneously identifying the mental tanglehold upon all of us of the texts of meat. Feminist discourse, thus, ironically, reproduces patriarchal thought in this area; part 3, "Eat Rice Have Faith in Women," challenges both by arguing that vegetarianism acts as a sign of autonomous female being and signals a rejection of male control and violence.

Just as feminist theory needs to be informed by vegetarian insights, animal rights theory requires an incorporation of feminist principles. Meat is a symbol for what is not seen but is always there—patriarchal control of animals.

Ultimately women, who often find themselves in muted dialogue with

the dominant culture, become the source for insights into the oppression of animals. Major figures in the feminist canon—writers such as Aphra Behn, Mary Shelley, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Alice Walker, Marge Piercy, Audre Lorde—have contributed works that challenge the sexual politics of meat.

In establishing the association between vegetarianism and women I do not want to imply that vegetarianism is only for women. On the contrary, as we will see, many individual men who endorsed women's rights adopted vegetarianism as well. To claim that women alone should stop eating animals reinforces the sexual politics of meat. I am more concerned with the fact that feminist theory logically contains a vegetarian critique that has gone unperceived, just as vegetarianism covertly challenges a patriarchal society. However, the sexism of some vegetarians, vegetarian groups, and vegetarian cultures demonstrates the necessity of adopting an overt feminist perspective.

Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May Alcott, is a telling example of how vegetarianism without feminism is incomplete. It, too, reproduces patriarchal attitudes. Alcott moved his family to a communal farm, Fruitlands, with hopes of living off of the fruit of the earth and not enslaving any animals—either to eat or use for labor. He, however, was not inclined toward performing manual labor himself and had the habit of disappearing from Fruitlands to discuss his ideas in abstract rather than live them in the flesh. At harvest time, his wife and daughters were left to perform the heavy work; thus the only "beasts of burdens" at this utopia were the women themselves. Honoring animals but not women is like separating theory from practice, the word from the flesh.

We could claim that the hidden majority of this world has been primarily vegetarian. But this vegetarianism was not a result of a viewpoint seeking just human relationships with animals. Even so, it is a very important fact that the hidden majority of the world has been primarily vegetarian. If a diet of beans and grains has been the basis for sustenance for the majority of the world until recently then meat is not essential.⁴ While knowledge of the variety of cultures that depended, by and large, on vegetarianism helps to dislodge our Western focus on meat, what is most threatening to our cultural discourse is self-determined vegetarianism in cultures where meat is plentiful.

My concern in this book is with the self-conscious omission of meat because of ethical vegetarianism, that is, vegetarianism arising from an ethical decision that regards meat eating as an unjustifiable exploitation of the other animals. This motivation for vegetarianism is not the one popularized in our culture; instead attraction to the benefits to one's health has brought about many new converts to vegetarianism. Their vegetarianism

949

does not incorporate concern for animals; indeed, many see no problem with organic meat. While I rejoice that an ethical decision resonates with improved personal health, that by becoming a vegetarian for ethical reasons one thereby reduces one's risk of heart disease and cancer, among other diseases—a point examined in “The Distortion of the Vegetarian Body”—I believe it is important to maintain a distinction. In the concluding chapter I describe a pattern of adopting ethical vegetarianism that I define as the vegetarian quest. The vegetarian quest consists of: the revelation of the nothingness of meat, naming the relationships one sees with animals, and finally, rebuking a meat eating *and* patriarchal world.

This book would not be the book it is if I had not become a vegetarian, participating in my own vegetarian quest. Holding a minority opinion in a dominant culture is very illuminating. Patterns in the responses of meat eaters to vegetarianism became quite instructive as I sought to define the intellectual resistance to discussing the eating of animals. Approaching a cultural consensus from the underside demonstrated how securely entrenched the attitudes about meat are. But this book would not be the book it is if I had not been involved in the domestic violence, antiwhite racism and antipoverty movements during those same years. To learn of and speak from the reality of women's lives deepened my understanding that we need to discuss the *texts* of meat and not one monolithic text. Meat eating is a construct, a force, an economic reality, and also a very real personal issue.

Yet being involved in the daily struggles against the oppressive forces I encountered made me minimize the importance of the task I set for myself in writing on this subject. How could I spend my time writing when so many people were illiterate? How could I discuss food choices when so many people needed any food whatsoever? How could I discuss violence against animals when women victimized by male violence needed shelter? In silencing myself I adhered to that foundational text of meat, the relative unimportance of vegetarianism. By my own silencing, I endorsed the dominant discourse that I was seeking to deconstruct.

It is past time for us to consider the sexual politics of meat for they are not separate from other pressing issues of our time.

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Originally a book on feminism and vegetarianism by me, was to appear in 1976 but though it identified the overt connections I sensed it was incomplete and I withheld it from publication. Thanks to the *Vegetarian Times*, Laurel and Gina of *Amazon Quarterly*, Jean and Ruth Mountgrove of *WomanSpirit*, and the women's collective of the *second wave: a magazine of the new feminism* for publishing my early work, and to the Boston Women's Health Book Collective for mentioning the book that never was in *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. And to Jane Adams who lived with the dramas of that time.

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A pretty young blond woman who appears to be a production assistant tells the director how sexually aroused she was by the stabbing [of a pregnant woman] finale. The attractive director asks her if she would like to go to bed with him and act out her fantasies. They start fumbling around in bed until she realizes that the crew is still filming. She protests and tries to get up. The director picks up a dagger that is lying on the bed and says, "Bitch, now you're going to get what you want." What happens next goes beyond the realm of language. He butchers her slowly, deeply, and thoroughly. The observer's gut revulsion is overwhelming at the amount of blood, chopped-up fingers, flying arms, sawed-off legs, and yet more blood oozing like a river out of her mouth before she dies. But the climax is still at hand. In a moment of undiluted evil, he cuts open her abdomen and brandishes her very insides high above his head in a scream of orgasmic conquest.⁷¹

"Snuff" movies are the apotheosis of metaphoric sexual butchering, embodying all the necessary components: the dagger as implement, the female victim, the defiling of the body and the fetishism of female parts. In the absence of an actual victim snuff exists as a reminder of what happens to animals all the time.

In constructing stories about violence against women, feminists have drawn on the same set of cultural images as their oppressors. Feminist critics perceive the violence inherent in representations that collapse sexuality and consumption and have titled this nexus "carnivorous arrogance" (Simone de Beauvoir), "gynocidal gluttrony" (Mary Daly), "sexual cannibalism" (Kate Millet), "psychic cannibalism" (Andrea Dworkin), "metaphysical cannibalism" (Ti-Grace Atkinson); racism as it intersects with sexism has been defined by bell hooks in distinctions based on meat eating: "The truth is—in sexist America, where women are objectified extensions of male ego, black women have been labeled hamburger and white women prime rib."⁷² These feminist theorists take us to the intersection of the oppression of women and the oppression of animals and then do an immediate about-face, seizing the function of the absent referent to forward women's issues and so imitating and complementing a patriarchal structure. Dealing in symbols and similes that express humiliation, objectification, and violation is an understandable attempt to impose order on a violently fragmented female sexual reality. When we use meat and butchering as metaphors for women's oppression, we express our own hog-squeal of the universe while silencing the primal hog-squeal of Ursula Hamdress herself.

When radical feminists talk as if cultural exchanges with animals are literally true in relationship to women, they exploit and co-opt what is

actually done to animals. It could be argued that the use of these metaphors is as exploitative as the posing of Ursula Hamdress: an anonymous pig somewhere was dressed, posed, and photographed. Was she sedated to keep that pose or was she, perhaps, dead? Radical feminist theory participates linguistically in exploiting and denying the absent referent by not including in their vision Ursula Hamdress's fate. They butcher the animal/woman cultural exchanges represented in the operation of the absent referent and then address themselves solely to women, thus capitulating to the absent referent, part of the same construct they wish to change.⁷³

What is absent from much feminist theory that relies on metaphors of animals' oppression for illuminating women's experience is the reality behind the metaphor. When Mary Daly suggests raiding the *Playboy's* playground to let out "the bunnies, the bitches, the beavers, the squirrels, the chicks, the pussycats, the cows, the nags, the foxy ladies, the old bats and biddies, so that they can at last begin naming themselves" we, her readers, know that she is talking about women and not about actual bunnies, bitches, beavers, and so on.⁷⁴ But, I argue, she should be. Otherwise, feminist theorists' use of language describes, reflects, and perpetuates oppression by denying the extent to which these oppressions are culturally analogous.

It is tempting to think that all that has been discussed in this chapter are words, ideas, "abstract nouns," how images work: that there is no flesh and no kitchen. But there is fragmented flesh and there are kitchens to which it is found. Animals may be an absent referent point in discourse but this need not continue. What if we heeded Marge Piercy's response to abstract nouns; let's go into the kitchen and consider not only "who they beat" but "who [we] eat"? In incorporating the fate of animals we would encounter these issues: the relationship between imperialism and meat eating in imposing a "white" diet of meat eating on the dietary folkways of people of color; the ecological implications of what I consider to be the fourth stage of meat eating—the eating of institutionalized, factory-farmed animals (after stages of (1) practically no meat eating, (2) eating meat of wild animals and (3) eating meat of domesticated animals); the meaning of our dependence on female animals for "feminized protein" such as milk and eggs; issues of racism and classism that arise as we consider the role of the industrialized countries in determining what "first class" protein is—all of which are a part of the sexual politics of meat.

There is a model for us of living, breathing connections awaiting incorporation in our theory; a logical next step in the progression of feminist thought is politicizing the ambiguity and slippage inherent in the

951

metaphors of sexual violence, as well as their social, historical, and animal origins. The next chapter begins this politicizing process by analyzing the role of language in masking violence and defining the conflict between a dominant worldview that accepts meat eating and the muted minority viewpoint of vegetarianism.

chapter 3

Masked Violence, Muted Voices

Women have had the power of *naming* stolen from us
Inadequate words have been taken as adequate.

—Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*

In the previous chapter, we were concerned with the consumption of the referent so that through metaphor it lost all meaning except by its reference to something else. In this chapter our concern is with the *objectification of consumption* through language, so that meat's true meaning is cast out. Behind every meat meal is an absence, the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. With the word "meat" the truth about this death is absent. Thus, in expressing their concern about eating animals, vegetarians cannot ignore the issue of language. In this they are not unlike feminists who find that issues of language imbricate women's oppression.

After using feminist insights to explore how language usage upholds meat eating, this chapter identifies the fusing through language of the oppressions of women and animals. It then considers the muting of vegetarian voices. Vegetarianism defines meat eating as an effort at subordinating the natural to the human. But since meat eating carries legitimate meaning in the dominant culture that encourages the eating of animals, vegetarian meaning, like nature, is subordinated by meat eating.

952

Language as Mask

We have no language that is free of the power dualisms of domination.

—Beverly Harrison
“Sexism and the Language of Christian Ethics”¹

So far feminism has accepted the dominant viewpoint regarding the oppression of animals rather than shed the illuminating light of its theory on this oppression. Not only is our language male-centered, it is human-centered as well. When we use the adjective “male,” such as in the preceding sentence, we all assume that it is referring solely to human males. Besides the human-oriented notions that accompany our use of words such as male and female, we use the word “animal” as though it did not refer to human beings, as though we too are not animals. All that is implied when the words “animal” and “beast” are used as insults maintains separation between human animals and nonhuman animals. We have structured our language to avoid the acknowledgment of our biological similarity.

Language distances us further from animals by naming them as objects, as “its.” Should we call a horse, a cow, dog or cat, or any animal “it”? “It” functions for nonhuman animals as “he” supposedly functions for human beings, as a generic term whose meaning is deduced by context. Patriarchal language insists that the male pronoun is both generic, referring to all human beings, and specific, referring only to males. Similarly, “it” refers either to non-animate things or to animate beings whose gender identity is irrelevant or unknown. But just as the generic “he” erases female presence, the generic “it” erases the living, breathing nature of the animals and reifies their object status. The absence of a non-sexist pronoun allows us to objectify the animal world by considering all animals as “its.” I recommend using [*sic*] when an animal is called “it” just as feminist critics have done when “he” is used generically. Should we even refer to a butchered part of an animal’s body as “it”? Is meat an “it”? Isn’t the choice of “it” for meat the final capitulation to the dominant reality that renders real animals invisible and masks violence? (Due to the lack of a generic pronoun, I will use “she” in this book to refer to any animal, alive or dead, whose sex is unknown.)

We also distance ourselves from animals through the use of metaphors or similes that distort the reality of other animals’ lives. Our representations of animals make them refer to human beings rather than to themselves: one is sly as a fox, hungry as a bear, pretty as a filly. When we talk

about the victimization of humans we use animal metaphors derived from animal sacrifice and animal experimentation: someone is a scapegoat or a guinea pig. Violence undergirds some of our most commonly used metaphors that cannibalize the experiences of animals: beating a dead horse, a bird in the hand, I have a bone to pick with you. (See Figure 2: Liberate Your Language.)

Figure 2
Liberate Your Language

Language is a powerful tool. The words we choose do more than name or describe things; they assign status and value. Be careful, then, how you choose words that refer to non-human animals, for you may be using expressions that maintain prejudices against them.

Referring to a non-human animal as an “it” strips *him* or *her* of dignity and perpetuates the view that other animals are objects, inferior things or property.

Referring to people who share their homes and lives with non-human animals as “owners” or “masters” connotes slavery, and we should be uncomfortable with the connotation. *Friends, companions or protectors* is preferable.

Avoid calling other animals “living things.” They are *living beings*. Refer to non-domestic animals as *free* or *free-roaming*, not “wild” or “wildlife.”

When referring to animal suffering and death caused by human action, use painfully explicit words that reveal the true facts. “Euthanize,” “put to sleep,” “sacrifice” and “destroy” are favorites of animal researchers (and some animal control people) while “cull,” “harvest,” “manage” and “thin the herd” are favorites of hunters, trappers, and their ilk. These words mean *kill*, so say *kill*.

Guilty people try to cover up their horrifying cruelties against, and backward exploitation of, non-human animals with deceptive euphemisms like the ones above. Say it like it is, and correct others when they don’t, so that people will realize the true nature and full extent of the suffering we inflict on other living beings.

Watch out, too, for expressions that convey contempt for animals. “Son-of-a-bitch,” “bird-brain,” and “hare-brain” are insults at the expense of animals. Think of alternatives to calling a person a “snake,” “turkey,” “ass,” “weasel,” “chicken,” “dog” or the like.

Liberate your language, for it’s an important step in liberating all animals!

—By Noreen Mola and
The Blacker Family

The Animals’ Agenda, 6, no. 8, October 1986, p. 18.

953

From the leather in our shoes, the soap we use to cleanse our face, the down in the comforter, the meat we eat, and the dairy products we rely on, our world as we now know it is structured around a dependence on the death of the other animals. For many this is neither disturbing nor surprising. The death of the other animals is an accepted part of life, either envisioned as being granted in Genesis 1:26 by a human-oriented God who instructs us that we may dominate the animals or conceptualized as a right because of our superior rationality. For those who hold to this dominant viewpoint in our culture the surprise is not that animals are oppressed (though this is not the term they would use to express human beings' relationship to the other animals), the surprise is that anyone would object to this. Our culture generally accepts animals' oppression and finds nothing ethically or politically disturbing about the exploitation of animals for the benefit of people. Hence our language is structured to convey this acceptance.

We live in a culture that has institutionalized the oppression of animals on at least two levels: in formal structures such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, zoos, laboratories, and circuses, and through our language. That we refer to meat eating rather than to the eating of animals is one example of how our language transmits the dominant culture's approval of this activity.

Meat carries many meanings in our culture. However, no matter what else it does, meat eating signals the primary oppression of animals. Peter Singer observes that "for most humans, especially those in modern urban and suburban communities, the most direct form of contact with non-human animals is at meal time: we eat them. This simple fact is the key to our attitudes to other animals, and also the key to what each one of us can do about changing these attitudes."² Because animals have been made absent referents it is not often while eating meat that one thinks: "I am now interacting with an animal." We do not see our meat eating as contact with animals because it has been renamed as contact with food.

On an emotional level everyone has some discomfort with the eating of animals. This discomfort is seen when people do not want to be reminded of what they are eating while eating, nor to be informed of the slaughterhouse activities that make meat eating possible; it is also revealed by the personal taboo that each person has toward some form of meat: either because of its form, such as organ meats, or because of its source, such as pig or rabbit, insects or rodents. The intellectual framework of language that enshrouds meat eating protects these emotional responses from being examined. This is nothing new; language has always aided us in sidestepping sticky problems of conceptualization by obfuscating the situation.

While self-interest arising from the enjoyment of meat eating is ob-

viously one reason for its entrenchment, and inertia another, a process of language usage engulfs discussions about meat by constructing the discourse in such a way that these issues need never be addressed. Language distances us from the reality of meat eating, thus reinforcing the symbolic meaning of meat eating—a symbolic meaning that is intrinsically patriarchal and male-oriented. Meat becomes a symbol for what is not seen but is always there—patriarchal control of animals and of language.

False Naming

Undoubtedly our own meanings are partially hidden from us and it is difficult to have access to them. We may use the English language our whole lives without ever noticing the distortions and omissions.

—Dale Spender³

Him: I can't go to Italian restaurants with you anymore because I can't order my favorite meal: veal Parmesan.

Her: Would you order it if it were called pieces of butchered, anemic baby calves?

Dale Spender refers to "the falseness of patriarchal terms."⁴ Falseness pervades language about animals whom we eat. Recently, the *British Meat Trades Journal*—concerned about the association between meat and slaughtering—proposed replacing the words "butcher" and "slaughterhouse" with "meat plant" and "meat factory."⁵ To this Emarel Freshel, an early twentieth-century vegetarian, would have retorted: "if the words which tell the truth about meat as food are unfit for our ears, the meat itself is not fit for our mouths."⁶

Through detachment, concealment, misrepresentation, and shifting the blame, the structure of the absent referent prevails: we see ourselves as eating pork chops, hamburger, sirloins, and so on, rather than 43 pigs, 3 lambs, 11 cows, 4 "veal" calves, 1,107 chickens, 45 turkeys, and 861 fishes that the average American eats in a lifetime.⁷ By speaking of meat rather than slaughtered, butchered, bleeding pigs, lambs, cows, and calves, we participate in language that masks reality. As an objector to meat eating complained in 1825, "No man says, therefore, of such an ox at pasture, Lo! how he lasheth his beefsteaks with his tail,—or he hath a fly upon his brisket."⁸ Many vegetarians protest the use of euphemisms such as speaking of white meat rather than of breasts and of dark meat rather than thighs. Dismembered bodies are called "whole," creating the

954

contradiction of purchasing a "whole bird" whose feathers, feet and head are missing. Can a dead bird really be a "fresh young chicken" as the plastic wrapping at the meat counters proclaims?

To think comfortably about meat we are told in effect to "Forget the pig [or a cow, a chicken, etc.] is an animal." Instead, call her and view her as "a machine in a factory."⁹ She becomes a food-producing unit, a protein harvester, an object, product, computerized unit in a factory environment, egg-producing machine, converting machine, a biomachine, a crop. A recent example of erasure of animals can be found in the United States Department of Agriculture's description of cows, pigs, and chickens as "grain-consuming animal units."¹⁰ These names eliminate the animals as animals; instead they become bearers of our food.

Language can make animals absent from a discussion of meat because the acts of slaughtering and butchering have already rendered the animal as absent through death and dismemberment. Through language we apply to animals' names the principles we have already enacted on their bodies. When an animal is called a "meat-bearing animal" we effect a misnomer, as though the meat is not the animal herself, as though the meat can be separated from the animal and the animal would still remain.

The desire to separate the concept of meat from thoughts about animals can be seen in the usage patterns that determine when the word "meat" is appended to the names of animals, such as we find in words like dogmeat or horsemeat. In our culture we generally append the word "meat" to an animal's name *only* when that form of meat is not consumed. As Paul Postal describes it, we form compounds with the word "meat" [such as horsemeat, dogmeat] "where the first element is the name of an animal type [such as horse, dog] only if American culture does not sanction the eating of that animal."¹¹ Thus we have *wombatmeat* but not *sheepmeat*, *dogmeat* but not *chickenmeat*, *horsemeat* but not *cowmeat*. Renaming is a constant: *sheepmeat* becomes *mutton*, *chickenmeat* drops the "meat" reference, and *cowmeat* undergoes numerous changes depending on the location from which the meat was derived (*chuck*, etc.) or the form (*hamburger*). If we retain the name of the animal to describe her as food, we drop the article "a" stripping the animal of any individuality: people eat turkey, not *a* turkey.

Josiah Royce and Mary Daly argue that "it is impossible to consider any term apart from its relations to the whole."¹² Vegetarians who challenge the fragmenting of the whole animal into edible parts wish to reunite the segmented terms with the whole. Joseph Ritson, an eighteenth-century vegetarian planned "A new Dictionary" that would have included these definitions:

Carrion. The flesh of animals, naturally dead, or, at least, not artificially murdered by man.

Lobster. A shel-fish [*sic*], which is boiled alive, by people of nice feelings & great humanity.¹³

Elsa Lanchester recalls how her mother, "Biddy" Lanchester—feminist, suffragette, socialist, pacifist, vegetarian—challenged the false naming of meat. When Elsa refers to the word "offal" she explains, "Biddy the vegetarian inspired the use of this word. That's what meat was to her."¹⁴ Vegetarians choose words that parallel the effect of feminist terms such as *manglish* and *herstory*, which Varda One calls "reality-violators and consciousness-raisers."¹⁵ To remind people that they are consuming dead animals, vegetarians create a variety of reality-violators and consciousness-raisers. Rather than call meat "complete protein," "iron-rich food," "life-giving food," "delectable," or "strength-inducing food" they refer to meat as "partly cremated portions of dead animals," or "slaughtered nonhumans," or in Bernard Shaw's words, "scorched corpses of animals." Like Benjamin Franklin, they consider fishing "unprovoked murder" or refer, like Harriet Shelley to "murdered chicken."¹⁶ (Buttons, T-shirts, posters and stickers are now available announcing "meat is murder."¹⁷)

Granted, vegetarian naming wrests meat eating from a context of acceptance; this does not invalidate its mission. One thing must be acknowledged about vegetarian naming as exemplified in the above examples: these are true words. The dissonance they produce is not due to their being false, but to their being *too* accurate. These words do not adhere to our common discourse which presumes the edibility of animals.

Just as feminists proclaimed that "rape is violence, not sex," vegetarians wish to name the violence of meat eating. Both groups challenge commonly used terms. Mary Daly calls the phrase "forcible rape" a reversal by redundancy because it implies that all rapes are not forcible.¹⁸ This example highlights the role of language in masking violence, in this case an adjective deflects attention from the violence inherent in the meaning of the noun. The adjective confers a certain benignity on the meaning. Similarly, the phrase "humane slaughter" confers a certain benignity on the term "slaughter." Daly would call this the process of "simple inversion": "the usage of terms and phrases to label . . . activities as the opposite of what they are."¹⁹ The use of adjectives in the phrases "humane slaughter" and "forcible rape" promotes a conceptual misfocusing that relativizes these acts of violence. Additionally, as we ponder how the end is achieved, "forcibly," "humanely," our attention is continuously framed so that the absent referents—women, animals—do not appear.

955

Animals + Women

Ed. Adams + Donovan

Duke U.P., 1995

Exist Words,

Speciesist Roots

Through massive and sustained exploitation, humans inflict enormous suffering on other animals. Humans generally justify their exploitation of other species by categorizing "animals" as inferior and therefore rightfully subjugated while categorizing humans as superior and naturally entitled to dominate. So inveterate and universal is the false dichotomy of animal vs. human—and so powerfully evocative—that symbolically associating women with "animal" activists in their oppression. Applying images of denigrated nonhuman species to women labels women inferior and available for abuse; attaching images of the aggrandized human species to men designates them superior and entitled to exploit. Language is a powerful agent in assigning the imagery of animal vs. human. Feminists have long objected to "animal" pejoratives for women and the pseudogenetics *man* and *mankind*. These linguistic habits are rooted in speciesism, the assumption that other animals are inferior to humans and do not warrant equal consideration and respect.

956

Nonhuman-animal pejoratives frequently target women: *cat(ly)*, *strew*, *dumb bunny*, *cow*, *hitch*, *old crow*, *queen bee*, *sow*. In *An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words*, Ruth Toussco (1973) identifies "Woman as Animal" as a major category of "patriarchal epithets" (27). What attitudes and practices have prompted these epithets?

Viewed through speciesism, a nonhuman animal acquires a negative image. When metaphor then imposes that image on women, they share its negativity. Terming a woman a "dog" carries the sexist implication that women have a special obligation to be attractive, since the label refers to physical appearance only when applied to females. And so, using *dog* against any woman indirectly insults all women. The affront to all dogs, however, is direct. Denied individual identities, they merge into Ugly. Without this disdainful view of dogs, *dog* would not offend. Similarly *social butterfly*, being female specific, assigns gender to fickleness and frivolity. The phrase would confer very different traits if the butterfly's flight from flower to flower were perceived as life-sustaining rather than trivial. Reserved for women, *dumb bunny* links femaleness to mindlessness. But the expression rests on the speciesist assumption that rabbits are stupid.

In addition to speciesist attitudes, speciesist practices underlie nonhuman-animal metaphors that disparage women. Most such metaphors, philosopher Robert Baker (1975) notes, refer to domesticated animals like the chicken, cow, and dog—those bred for service to humans.²

Comparison to chickens, linguist Alleen Pace Nilsen (1977) observes, spans a woman's life: "a young girl is a *chick*. When she gets old enough she marries and soon begins feeling *cooped up*. To relieve the boredom she goes to *hen parties* and *cackles* with her friends. Eventually she has her *brood*, begins to *henpeck* her husband, and finally turns into an *old biddy*" (29). Nilsen's analysis, however, does not delve beneath the metaphors' sexist use, to their origins in hens' exploitation. Comparing women to hens communicates scorn because hens are exploited as mere bodies—for their egg-laying capacity or flesh. In viewing the actual chick, the egg or "poultry" producer anticipates her exploitation as hen. Analogously the sexist male desires to exploit the human "chick" as a female body, for sexual pleasure. The hen's exploiter values only her physical service, dismissing her experiential world as unimportant or nonexistent. *Hen party* empties women's experiences of all substance or significance; like hens, women have no worth apart from their function within the

exploiter's world. The hen ("biddy") who offers neither desirable flesh nor continued profitable egg production is regarded as "spent"—and discarded. No longer sexually attractive or able to reproduce, the human "old biddy" too has outlived her usefulness. If hens were not held captive and treated as nothing more than bodies, their lives would not supply symbols for the lives of stifled and physically exploited women.³

Hens' current oppression far outstrips the oppression from which the metaphors arose. Over 99 percent of U.S. chickens spend their lives in crowded confinement [see Appleby, Hughes, and Elson 1992, 31-33; Bell 1992; Coats 1989, 81-82; North and Bell 1990, 456]. The laying hen is crammed, usually with three to five other birds, into a wire cage so small that she cannot spread her wings (see Appleby, Hughes, and Elson 1992, 30; Coats 1989, 90-92; Johnson 1991, 26-27, 122).⁴ "Broiler" chickens (bred for their flesh) are crowded, by the tens of thousands, onto the floor of a confinement unit. By slaughter time they barely have room to move (see Acker and Cunningham 1991, 635-36; Coats 1989, 87; North and Bell 1990, 456-58).⁵ Laying hens rarely live beyond two years, "broilers" two months [see Appleby, Hughes, and Elson 1992, 30-31; Austic and Nesheim 1990, 287-88; North and Bell 1990, 453, 475].⁶ The imprisoned hen cannot develop social bonds, raise a brood, or become an "old biddy." The hen's defaced image derives from her victimization.

As a term for a woman, *cow* is, in anthropologist John Halverson's words, "thoroughly derogatory" (1976, 515), characterizing the woman as fat and dull. Why does metaphorical reference to the cow connote these traits while reference to the bull does not? Exploitation of the cow for her milk has created a gender-specific image. Kept perpetually pregnant and/or lactating, with swollen belly or swollen udder, the "dairy cow" is seen as fat. Confined to a stall, denied the active role of nurturing and protecting a calf—so that milking becomes something done to her rather than by her—she is seen as passive and dull. The cow then becomes emblematic of these traits, which metaphor can attach to women. Like the laying hen, the dairy cow is exploited as *female body*. Since the cow's exploitation focuses on her uniquely female capacities to produce milk and "replacement" offspring, it readily evokes thoughts of femaleness more generally. Bearing with it a context of exploitation, the cow's image readily transfers to women.

Approximately eight months of each year, today's dairy cow is both pregnant and lactating. During each ten-month lactation pe-

957

ensive, Baker (1975) concludes, because they "reflect a conception of women as mindless servants" (56). But the metaphors' offending components—"mindless" and "servants"—derive from speciesist attitudes and practices. Without speciesism, domesticated animals would not be regarded as mindless; without speciesism, they would not be forced into servitude. Exploiting the hen for her eggs, the cow for her milk, and the bitch for her ability to produce litters invites demeaning female-specific metaphors.

The exploitation of domesticated animals, such as chickens, also leads to negative images of other animals—predators who threaten that exploitation, like the fox. A woman termed a "vixen" is resented, and somewhat feared, as scolding, malicious, or domineering, especially toward a man. She threatens a man's self-esteem and sense of security, intruding into his perceived domain. In the days when "poultry" were kept in coops or yards, the actual vixen was much resented, and feared, as an intruder. Being a predator, she often crossed human-drawn boundaries to kill chickens or other fowl whom humans consider their property. Quick-witted and fleet, she frequently evaded capture, repeatedly "outfoxing" the human oppressor. Having no male-specific equivalent, the pejorative vixen expresses sexist resentment toward the contentious woman, but it derives from speciesist resentment toward the predatory fox.

The vixen as prey conjures a very different image, which forms the basis for *foxy lady*. In this case the expression's origins lie in humans' exploitation and abuse of foxes themselves. Hunters and trappers view the fox as an object of pursuit—a future trophy or pelt. To the extent that the vixen eludes capture, she piques their desire to possess her and arouses their admiration. Even as she frustrates their goal, she prolongs their "sport" and proves "worthy" of pursuit. Hence, the ambivalence of *foxy lady*. A man who labels a woman "foxy" admires her as stylish and attractive yet sees her largely as a sex object worth possessing. Overwhelmingly, hunters and trappers are male (see Novak et al. 1987, 60; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1993, 36). Their skin-deep view of those they pursue easily extends beyond nonhuman animals to women. "The major connection between *predator* and *fox* is that of predator and prey," Baker (1975) reasons. "If *women* are conceived of as *foxes*, then they are conceived of as prey *that it is fun to hunt*" (53). Although Baker condemns the conception of *women as foxes* and the resulting conception of *women as prey*, he fails to emphasize the necessary link between the two—the concept of *prey as prey*. The speciesist practices of hunting and trapping

15

Speciesist Words, Specieist Roots

958

ried, machines drain her of ten times the milk her calf would suckle (see Acker and Cunningham 1991, 141; Coats 1989, 51; Mason and Singer 1990, 11). In the U.S. the largest feedlot dairy operations each hold thousands of cows, year round, in crowded dirt lots. Fed from troughs, these cows never see pasture (see Bath et al. 1985, 303; Coats 1989, 52; Herrick 1990).⁷ Free-stall systems confine cows frequently, throughout the year—to a crowded barn and adjacent dirt or concrete yard (see Bath et al. 1985, 365–66; Coats 1989, 52–53; Fox 1984, 106, 108).⁸ Tie-stall operations keep each cow chained by the neck in a narrow stall, often for months at a time (see Bath et al. 1985, 361–65; Mason and Singer 1990, 12). When a cow's milk yield permanently declines, she is slaughtered. Cow verbally abuses women by identifying them with the abused cow.⁹

In the language of dog breeders, *bitch* denotes a female dog able to produce a litter. As pejorative, the term has remained female specific. But why should calling a woman a "bitch" impute malice and selfishness? Given that most dogs are loving and eager to please, the metaphor's sharp contempt seems puzzling. Breeders, however, have always treated the female dog with contempt—as a means to a useful, profitable, or prestigious litter.

Among recommended methods for breeding bulldogs, the American Kennel Club's official magazine includes "holding the bitch in the proper position"—"by her legs" or "by straps"—and "assist[ing]" the male in "penetration" (Schor 1989, 140). Breeders subject the bulldog bitch to this ordeal because, through inbreeding, they have afflicted her breed with characteristics that preclude natural mating: a low front and high rear (see Schor 1989). Also bred to be brachycephalic (flat-faced) (see American Kennel Club 1992, 486–88),¹⁰ bulldogs suffer chronic breathing difficulty from pathologically short and twisted air passages. Often an overlong soft palate further obstructs breathing (see Fox 1965, 62). Recently a veterinary newsletter reported on a bulldog "placed on her back" for artificial insemination even though her breathing was especially labored. "Her breathing continued to be labored. When the bitch began to struggle," she was restrained (New Claims 1991, 1). Her breathing worsened. Still the forced insemination continued. Struggling to breathe, she died. Familiarity with the numerous ways in which breeders have disabled dogs through inbreeding and treated them like commodities dispels any mystery as to why *bitch* carries contempt (see Dunayer and Dunayer 1990; Wolfensohn 1981).¹¹

Comparisons between women and domesticated animals are of-

"gorillas." Often, invoking another animal as insult doesn't target any human group: *sheepish, birdbrain, crazy as a loon*. In such cases the comparison's fundamental speciesism stands alone. Whether or not a person is avaricious, labeling them a "vulture" exhibits prejudice against no group except vultures.

Although some expressions that compare humans to other animals are complimentary (*busy as a bee, eagle-eyed, brave as a lion*), the vast majority offend. Anthropologist Edmund Leach (1964) categorizes "animal" metaphors as "obscenity," along with "dirty words" (largely of "sex and excretion") and "blasphemy and profanity" (28). While Halverson (1976) rejects Leach's categorization, he agrees that "animal" metaphors are overwhelmingly negative. What's more, Halverson identifies their most universal component as "the basic distinction human v. animal" (515). This distinction is the essence of speciesism.

Linguistic practice, like other human practices, is even more deeply speciesist than sexist. Humans, after all, have a verbal monopoly. Our language necessarily reflects a human-centered viewpoint more completely than a male-centered one. Considered in relation to the plight of nonhuman animals, Adrienne Rich's words of feminist insight express a terrible absolute: "this is the oppressor's language" (1971, 16, 18).

Speciesist language has far from trivial consequences. Although nonhuman animals cannot discern the contempt in the words that disparage them, this contempt legitimates their oppression. Like sexist language, speciesist language fosters exploitation and abuse. As feminist philosopher Stephanie Ross (1981) has stated with regard to women, "oppression does not require the awareness or co-operation of its victims" (199).

Every negative image of another species helps keep that species oppressed. Most such images are gross distortions. Nonhuman animals rarely possess the character traits that pejoratives assign to them. In reality the imputed traits are negative human traits. Wolves (6) not philander like the human "wolf." Most are steadfastly monogamous (see Fox 1971, 121; Mech 1991, 89, 91). Chickens are not "chickens." Throughout the centuries, observers have reported the hen's fierceness in defending her chicks and the rooster's courage in protecting the flock (see Robbins 1987, 49; Smith and Daniel 1975, 65-66, 137, 159, 162, 212, 324). [In today's factory prisons, of course, chickens can no longer display their bravery.] Pigs do not "make pigs of themselves." Unlike many other animals (including humans),

enable the sexist equation woman ~ prey: if woman ~ fox and fox ~ prey, then woman ~ prey.

In the U.S., fur "farming" and trapping abuse more foxes than any other practices—killing hundreds of thousands each year (see Clifton 1991; Novak et al. 1987, 1018). "Farmed" foxes live confined to small wire cages and usually die from anal electrocution (see Clifton 1991; de Kok 1989). Most foxes trapped in the wild are caught in the excruciating steel-jaw leghold trap (see *Close-Up Report* 1992; Gerstell 1985, 37-40). Any woman who wears a fox coat wraps herself in the remains of some eleven to eighteen foxes who suffered intensely (see *Fur Is Dead* 1990; *The Shame of Fur* 1988). She also invites continued sexist comparisons between women and nonhuman victims. In *Rape of the Wild* (1989) (ecofeminists) Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci remark that women who wear fur unwittingly adopt the "identity of prey" and so participate in their own degradation (55, 60, 34).

Likening women to nonhuman animals undermines respect for women because nonhuman animals generally receive even less respect—far less. In most (if not all) contemporary human societies, the status of nonhuman animals is much lower than women's. In the U.S., for example, an overall absence of legal protection for nonhuman animals permits their massive institutionalized exploitation and abuse (see Francione 1994; Galvin 1985). They are bred for show, for sale, for servitude. They are imprisoned in aquariums and zoos, forced to perform in nightclubs and circuses, terrorized and injured at rodeos and fairs. Each year, by the millions they are vivisected (see Singer 1990, 36-37; U.S. Congress 1986, 49-66), killed for their fur (see Fox 1990, 116; Novak et al. 1987, 1092), murdered for "sport" (see Satchell 1990; Van Voorhees et al. 1992, 10); by the billions they go from intensive confinement to slaughter (see *Catfish Production* 1995, 8, 10; *Livestock Slaughter* 1995, 1; *Poultry Slaughter* 1995, 15-16).

While only some nonhuman-animal pejoratives denigrate women, all denigrate nonhuman animals. Numerous nonhuman-animal terms act as invective solely or largely against men and boys: *shark, skunk, lap dog, toad, weasel, snake, jackass, worm*. The male-specific *wolf* and *cur* parallel the female-specific *vixen* and *bitch*. *Cock of the walk* and *bullheaded* correspond to *mother hen* and *stupid cow*. *Dumb ox* equates to *dumb bunny*. And *old buzzard* and *goat* resemble *old biddy* and *crow*. Nonhuman-animal terms also serve as racist epithets, as when blacks are called "monkeys" or

959

they show no tendency to overeat (see Hedgepeth 1978, 71; Pond, Maner, and Harris 1991, 11). Pigs are not filthy. Whenever possible, they avoid fouling their living area (see Baxter 1984, 234-37; Hedgepeth 1978, 96). If unable to bathe in water, they will wallow in mud to cool themselves. Lacking functional sweat glands, they cannot instead "sweat like a pig" (see Baxter 1984, 35, 209; Hedgepeth 1978, 66). Rats¹² are not "rats." While ingeniously resourceful, they do not use their quick intelligence to betray their familiars. Rat societies, in which serious fighting is an anomaly, exemplify peace and cooperation (see Barnett 1975, 262; Hart 1982, 108; Hendrickson 1983, 39, 80, 93-94). Moreover, rats care for the helpless in their communities, such as the orphaned young and those too old to fend for themselves (see Calhoun 1962, 257; Hendrickson 1983, 15, 80, 93-94).¹³

Why the lies, then? Why the contempt? With contemptuous words, humans establish and maintain emotional distance from other animals.¹⁴ This distance permits abuse without commensurate guilt. Humans blame their nonhuman victims. Physically unable to fly away, having no prior experience of predators from which to learn fear, dodos were massacred by humans, who labeled them fools. Humans load mules with heavy packs, force them to carry these loads up the most precipitous slopes in the harshest weather, and exhortate them as "stubborn" because they are not always eager to oblige. Having compelled captive seals to perform demeaning and unnatural acts, humans use the sneering phrase *trained seal* for a person who demonstrates mindless obedience. Pigs, as Leach (1964) remarks, bear an especially heavy "load of abuse" (50): "we rear pigs for the sole purpose of killing and eating them, and this is rather a shameful thing, a shame which quickly attaches to the pig itself" (51). Today most U.S. pigs experience lifelong confinement (see Baker 1993; Mason and Singer 1990, 8).¹⁵ Ordinarily those kept until they reach slaughter weight are restricted to crowded wire cages, then crowded pens. Those kept longer, for breeding, remain confined to individual stalls so narrow that they cannot turn around (see Coats 1989, 36-46; *Factory Farming* 1987, 45-52; Fox 1984, 41-68; Johnson 1991, 34-35). By the time they go to slaughter, many pigs are crippled (see Coats 1989, 46; Hill 1990; Pursel et al. 1989, 1285).¹⁶ Naturally inquisitive and sociable, with a great capacity for affection and joy, pigs suffer intensely from imprisonment. Using *pig* as a pejorative lends acceptability to their massive abuse.

Expressions such as *male chauvinist pig* display the same species-

ism as *stupid cow*. Particularly amiable and sensitive, pigs possess none of the sexist's ugly character traits. Affection, cooperation, and protection of others characterize natural pig society, which is matriarchal. Boars rarely show aggression, even toward other adult males, and are especially gentle with the young. A boar mates with a sow only if she is sexually receptive—after much mutual nuzzling, rubbing, and affable grunting (see Hedgepeth 1978, 94-95, 137; Serpell 1986, 5-6). Intended to castigate men for their assumption of superiority to women, *male chauvinist pig* conveys the speaker's own assumption of superiority, to pigs. Referring to sexism, Ross (1981) notes that "many women adopt the very attitudes which are oppressing them" (199). Those attitudes include speciesism.

When a woman responds to mistreatment by protesting "I'm a human being!" or "I want to be treated with respect, not like some animal," what is she suggesting about the acceptable ways of treating other animals? Perhaps because comparisons between women and nonhuman animals so often entail sexism, many women are anxious to distance themselves from other animals. Feminists, especially, recognize that negative "animal" imagery has advanced women's oppression. However, if our treatment and view of other animals became caring, respectful, and just, nonhuman-animal metaphors would quickly lose all power to demean. Few women have confronted how closely they mirror patriarchal oppressors when they too participate in other species' denigration. Women who avoid acknowledging that they are animals closely resemble men who prefer to ignore that women are human.

When used to denote other species only, *animal* falsely removes humans from animalkind.¹⁷ In parallel, through their male imagery, the pseudogenetics *man* and *mankind* effectively exclude women from humankind. By reserving *animal* for other animals, humans deny their kinship with nonhuman animals, abjuring membership in all groups larger than species—such as primatekind, mammalkind, and animalkind (see Clark 1988). This use of *animal* reflects the speciesist belief that humans fundamentally differ from all nonhuman animals and are inherently superior. More subtly, *man* and *mankind* too reflect speciesism. Their power to lower women's status rests on the premise that those outside our species do not merit equal consideration and respect. Linguistically ousting women from humankind has force because lack of membership in the human species condemns an individual, however thinking and feeling, to inferior status. Parakeets, bats, goldfish, mice, octopi, whales, orang-

utans—these and other nonhuman animals do not lack sensitivity. They do, however, lack legal rights—because they don't happen to be human (see Daws 1983; Francione 1993; Galvin 1985; Midgley 1985). If the cutoff for perceived dignity and worth, and for the right to be free from exploitation and abuse, were not the border between human and nonhuman, the suggestion that women are somehow less human than men would have no political force. "Man's" glorification is the flip side of "animals'" denigration. The sexism of *man* and *mind* works by way of speciesism.

Throughout our language's history, men—being politically dominant—have exercised far more control than women over public discourse. Men's disproportionate influence has permitted them to largely determine "accepted" English usage (see Bodine 1975; Spender 1985, 147–51). Patriarchal men would not have linguistically appropriated humanness unless it represented superiority and privilege to their speciesist minds. "A picture of humanity as consisting of males," says feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye (1975), is inseparable from a "tendency to romanticize and aggrandize the human species and to derive from one's rosy picture of it a sense of one's individual specialness and superiority" (72). Men's appropriation of humanness, she proposes, "is at bottom a version of a self-elevating identification with Humanity" (71).¹⁸

Linguistic markers embody "man's" apotheosis. Frequent capitalization literally elevates Man above other animals, whose names remain lowercase. As *The Oxford English Dictionary* notes, singular form without a definite article further distinguishes *Man* from "other generic names of animals" (Simpson and Weiner 1989, 9:284), which are either plural or preceded by *the*. We say "giraffes, oysters, and cockatoos" or "the giraffe, the oyster, and the cockatoo"—not "Giraffe, Oyster, and Cockatoo." Functioning as a "quasi-proper name," *Man* personifies our species (Simpson and Weiner 1989, 9:284), endowing humans (male humans, at least) with some shared character, spiritual essence, or history of experience through which they become One. By implication there exists some ineffable, enduring quality Man-ness, but no Cat-ness, Swordfish-ness, or Monarch Butterfly-ness. Unique personification suggests that only humans transcend immediate, individual existence—that nonhuman animals never empathize with others, identify with a group, communicate experience, or remember the past and anticipate the future.

The word *human* is not differentiated from other animal names by the peculiarities of form that distinguish *Man*. We say "humans" or

"the human" just as we say "lobsters" or "the lobster." Humans and lobsters get parallel linguistic treatment. As "humans" we are simply one of innumerable species. Nonspeciesist in its form, *human* is semantically nonsexist as well. Singled out by its form, *Man* divides all beings into two contrasting categories: members of our species and nonmembers. At the same time, it semantically assigns men to the first category, women to the second.

Standard definitions of *man* and *mind* clearly convey the sense of species superiority on which the use of these pseudogenetics relies. In the 1992 *American Heritage Dictionary*, the entries for *man* include this self-congratulatory description:

a member of the only extant species, *Homo sapiens*, distinguished by a highly developed brain, the capacity for abstract reasoning, and the ability to communicate by means of organized speech and record information in a variety of symbolic systems. (1090)

The definition exaggerates human uniqueness. Many nonhuman animals have "a highly developed brain." Many have "the capacity for abstract reasoning." And some have "the ability to communicate by means of organized speech." In English, Alex the African gray parrot identifies and describes objects, requests toys and food, and expresses such emotions as frustration, regret, and love (see Griffin 1992, 169–74; Linden 1993; Pearce 1987, 273–75).¹⁹ Parrots do not merely "parrot." No doubt, members of numerous species would follow "organized speech" if they possessed the necessary vocal apparatus. Instead Washoe the chimpanzee, Koko the gorilla, and other nonhuman primates have learned to communicate in American Sign language (see Griffin 1992, 218–32; Kowalski 1991, 10–12).²⁰ Further, Kanzi the pygmy chimpanzee understands much spoken English and communicates by means of abstract visual symbols—demonstrating comprehension of "a variety of symbolic systems" (see Griffin 1992, 221–32; Lewin 1991; Linden 1993). Apes do not merely "ape."

Nonhuman animals like Alex, Washoe, Koko, and Kanzi have learned to use languages devised by humans. How would humans be expected to learn another species' method of communication—why that of the bottle-nosed dolphin? Even if other species did lack the capacity for some typically human type of language and reasoning, why should this capacity be the criterion for superiority? Belongs it to the one that we possess? In the same self-serving and

A member of the only extant species, *Homo presumptuous*, distinguished by a highly developed narcissism, the capacity for routine institutionalized cruelty, and the ability to communicate endless self-justification by means of organized religion and to record prejudices as if they were fact within a variety of speciesist, sexist, and otherwise oppressive systems.

Men would then shun *man* and *mankind* and eagerly substitute *humankind*—or *womankind*—for the species. Instead of monopolizing species membership, and its attendant glory, they would urge full (or exclusive) membership for women, who could then bear the blame.

Having defined *man* as "the men and women who uphold patriarchal values" (19), Collard and Contrucci (1989) identify what "man" regards as "his greatest glory: his passage from ape to human" (34). Alert to the link between speciesism and sexism, these feminists reverse the standard self-aggrandizing definition of our species, exposing humans' negative traits, connecting our history of devastation and cruelty to those with the mentality of dominance, and saying to "man": "Now, recognize the massive destruction and suffering you have caused!"

Patriarchal men have depicted themselves as "more human" than women because they have viewed *human* as signifying everything superior and deserving, everything that supposedly separates humans from "animals." "Our view of man," philosopher Mary Midgley (1978) argues in *Beast and Man*, "has been built up on a supposed contrast between man and animals" (25).²¹

Through the false opposition human vs. animal, humans maintain a fantasy world in which chimpanzees, snails, barracudas, and tree frogs are somehow more alike than chimpanzees and humans (see Clark 1988).²² The evolutionary bush on which humans occupy one of myriad branches is reduced to a single stalk, with nonhuman animals mired at its roots and humans blossoming at its tip. In reality, species do not evolve toward greater humanness but toward greater adaptiveness in their particular ecological niche. Nor is species something stable and fixed (see Clark 1988; Dawkins 1993). The human species, like all others, continues to undergo variation. In capacities and tendencies humans vary across a vast range (see Midg-

acter trait or ability shared by *all* humans but by no other animals?

Human superiority is as much a lie as male superiority. Gorillas are stronger yet gentler than humans, cheetahs swifter and more graceful, dolphins more playful and exuberant. Bees who perceive ultraviolet light and dance a message of angle and distance, fish who simultaneously see forward, above, below, and behind while swimming through endlessly varied tropical color, birds who navigate over hemispheres, sensing the earth's magnetic field and soaring in rhythm with the rest of their flock, sea turtles who, over decades, experience vast stretches of ocean—what wisdom and vision are theirs? Other animals have other ways of knowing.

Our individual worlds are only as wide as our empathy. Why identify with only one species when we can be so much larger? Animal encompasses human. When human society moves beyond speciesism—to membership in animalkind—"animal" imagery will no longer demean women or assist in their oppression, but will represent their liberation. When we finally cross the species boundary that keeps other animals oppressed, we will have crossed the boundary that circumscribes our lives.

Notes

1. The relationship between speciesism and sexism is not unidirectional. Just as speciesism contributes to women's oppression, sexism contributes to the oppression of nonhuman animals. For example, sexism permits concern for nonhuman animals to be dismissed as "effeminate" or as "female sentimentality." A number of feminists have detailed ways in which sexism and speciesism are mutually reinforcing (see, for example, Adams 1990, 1994; Collard with Contrucci 1989).

2. "I believe the sexual subjugation of women, as it is practiced in all the known civilizations of the world, was modeled after the domestication of animals," writes feminist Elizabeth Fisher in *Woman's Creation* (1979, 190). The exploitation of women for breeding and labor, she observes, followed long after enslavement of nonhuman animals (190, 197). Fisher sees an enduring "connection between dependence on animals and an inferior position for women" (194). Addressing oppression in general, social historian Keith Thomas (1983) presents strong evidence that the domestication of nonhuman animals "became the archetypal pattern for other kinds of social subordination" (46).

3. Negative images created by speciesist practices and wielded against

962