

# ANTENNAE

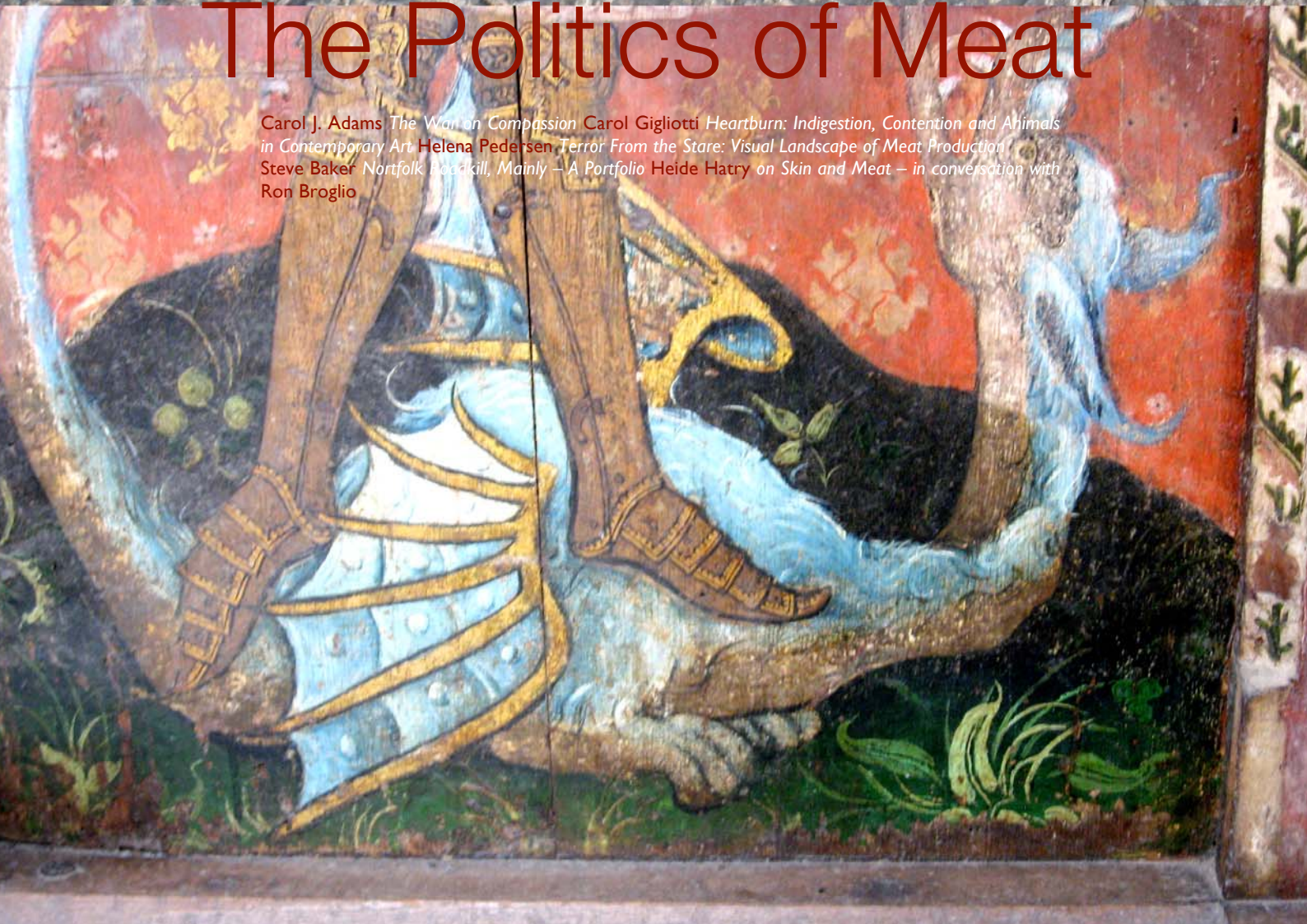
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## The Politics of Meat

Carol J. Adams *The War on Compassion* Carol Gigliotti *Heartburn: Indigestion, Contentment and Animals in Contemporary Art* Helena Pedersen *Terror From the Stare: Visual Landscape of Meat Production* Steve Baker *Norfolk Pockkill, Mainly – A Portfolio* Heide Hatry *on Skin and Meat – in conversation with Ron Broglio*





# ANTENNAE

The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture

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# EDITORIAL

ANTENNAE ISSUE 14

It may sound rather disconcerting to us today, but guided tours of Chicago's packinghouses were a regular occurrence in mid 1800s and quickly become as popular as rides on the newly invented Ferris wheel. The booming interest in the viewing of the disassembly of animals through the mechanized speed of conveyor belts generated a singular overlapping of the meat industry with the entertainment one. The reduction of animals to meat, through the development of the business of slaughterhouse touring, created therefore a new visual realm, one based on the mass killing of animals, designed for the visual as well as factual consumption by the masses. [i]

Through the slaughterhouse tours, as audiences stood on galleries, watching the fast moving spectacle of animal dismembering, the 'otherness' of the animal increased dramatically in the work of the spectacle. This is a landmark-moment in the consolidation of animal subjugation where an all-consuming human-gaze is key to extracting further commodity value from animal bodies.

Today, meat has acquired extensive symbolic values as a medium in contemporary art practice. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams describes meat as a "symbol for what is not seen but is always there – patriarchal control of animals". [ii]

During the second half of the 1940s, Francis Bacon found himself involved in a long-lasting fascination with the portrait of Pope Innocent X, a painting by Velasquez from 1650. In *Head Surrounded by Sides of Beef*, Bacon introduced hunks of raw meat to both sides of the Pope's head. Focusing on a close analysis of the subject in *The Body, the Meat, the Spirit: Becoming Animal*, Deleuze notes that: 'The scream, which issues from the Pope's mouth, [...] has meat as its object.' [iii] 'We are all meat, we are potential carcasses' said Bacon, 'whenever I am at a butcher's I always think it astonishing it's not me hanging on the hook, must be pure chance'. As Deleuze explains, 'meat is not dead flesh, it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colours of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability [...]. Meat is the common zone of man and beast, their zone of indiscernibility'. [iv]

Over this issue, and the next, Antennae will dissect the subject, presenting some of the most engaged writing and art practice. The current issue, titled *The Politics of Meat*, takes into consideration the essence of meat as an actively political medium. Its title is of course an homage to the work of Carol J. Adams who also gave us, for the occasion, a compelling exclusive interview.

The current issue also includes the voices of Carol Gigliotti and Helena Pedersen who looked at respectively, the subject of meat and animal killing in art and that of 'visual consumption of animals' in everyday life. The work of artist Heide Hatry provides a valued opportunity to discuss the complexities involved in the use of animal meat and skin as artistic media, whilst we are most proud to be able to present a portfolio of new images from Steve Baker's challenging photographic project *Norfolk Roadkill, Mainly*.

I would like to thank all members of Antennae's boards for their support, including Dr. Paula Lee for her initial help with this project and all contributors for their kind collaboration. Our second instalment, titled *Meat Animal Meat* in homage to the conference of the subject organised by Helena Pedersen in 2009, will be available in December.

**Giovanni Aloï**

Editor in Chief of Antennae Project

[i] Shukin, N. *Animal Capital – Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota/London, 2009, pp. 93-94

[ii] Adams, J. C. *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Continuum International Publishing, London, 1990, p. 27

[iii] Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1986) *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London, 1998, p.19

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*In his latest book, Terror From the Air, the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk investigates how air, as a fundamental life-sustaining element, has been given a pivotal role in post-war forms of terrorism, genocide, and chemical warfare. Here, I re-phrase Sloterdijk’s book title to address not acts of breathing, but acts of viewing. My purpose is to discuss how different modalities and manipulations of visual perception (both human and animal) are implicated in routines of physical violence toward animals — more specifically, in the process of their becoming-meat.*

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*How can anyone consent to being eaten? This was, and still is, a common question and response to the cannibalism case that took place in Germany in 2001. It was a case that took 6 years to resolve because the notion of ‘consent’ entailed, at the time, legal and moral complications.*

Text by **Nicole Anderson**

# THE WAR ON COMPASSION

*In our lifetime, what was not supposed to happen “ever again” – genocide – has instead happened again and again. As Samantha Power shows in *A Problem from Hell*, the perception of genocide is all in the framing. Governments acting against a minority want the violence to be perceived as civil war, tribal strife, as quelling unrest, restoring order, as a private matter, a concern that does not spill over into the international community. Other governments weigh their own national interests against the needs of those being killed.*

Text by **Carol J. Adams**

**A**fter watching the movie *Hotel Rwanda* and as I began reading *A Problem from Hell*, among the many disturbing questions that surfaced for me, besides the obvious one, “how could we have let this happen?” was the question, “how can we get people to care about animals when they don’t even care when people are being killed?”

But as this question came to mind, I realized I was posing the wrong question, because it accepts a hierarchy of caring that assumes that people first have to care about other people before they will care about animals and that these caring acts are hostile to each other. In fact, violence against people and animals is interdependent. Caring about both is required. .

While I could not read about genocide without thinking about the other animals and what we do to them, I am sophisticated enough to know this thought is experienced as an offence to the victims of genocide. However, I am motivated enough to want to ask more about the associations I was thinking and sensing because *human* and *animal* are definitions that exist in tandem, each draws its power from the other in a drama of circumscribing: the animal defining the human, the human defining the animal. As long as the definition exists through negation (human is this, animal is not this, human is not that, animal is that -- though what is defined as human or animal changes), the inscription of “human” upon something, or the movement to be seen as “human” (i.e., “Feminism is the radical notion that women are human”) – all of this accepts that there is something fixed about humanness which we can establish “humans” possess, and importantly, that others do not possess. Without the animals showing us otherwise, how do we know ourselves as human?

All of the efforts at demarcating the human transpire though the word animal includes we human

beings within it. We are human animals; they, those we view as not-us, are nonhuman animals.

Discrimination based on color of skin which occurs against those above the human/animal boundary is called *racism*; when it becomes unspeakably murderous, it is genocide; discrimination which occurs against those below the human/animal boundary by humans is called *speciesism*; when it becomes murderous it is called meat-eating and hunting, among other things. The latter is normalized violence. Is it possible that speciesism encloses racism and genocide within its meaning in the same way that the word animals includes humans? Is there not much to learn from the way normalized violence disowns compassion?

When the first response to animal advocacy is *how can we care about animals when humans are suffering?* we encounter a species of argument that is self-enclosing: it re-erects the species barrier and places a boundary on compassion while enforcing a conservative economy of compassion: it splits caring at the human/animal border presuming that there is not enough to go around. Ironically, it plays into the construction of the world that enables genocide by perpetuating the idea that what happens to human animals is unrelated to what happens to nonhuman animals. It also fosters a fallacy: that caring actually works this way.

Many of the arguments that separate caring into deserving/undeserving or now/later or “first those like us”/“only then those unlike us,” constitute a politics of the dismissive. Being dismissive is inattention with an alibi. It asserts “this does not require my attention,” or “this offends my sensibility,” (i.e., “we are so different from animals how can you introduce them into the discussion?”). Genocide, itself, benefits from the politics of the dismissive.

The difficulty that one faces when trying to awaken our culture to care about the suffering of a group that is not acknowledged as having a suffering that matters, is the same one that a meditation such as this faces. How do we make those whose suffering doesn't matter, matter?

## False Mass Terms

We are all fated to die, we share this fate with the animals, but for domesticated animals their finitude is determined by us, by human beings. We know when they will die, because we demand it. Their fate, to be eaten when dead, is the filter by which we experience them becoming "terminal animals."

The most efficient way to insure that humans do not care about the lives of animals is to transform nonhuman subjects into nonhuman objects. This is what I have called the structure of the absent referent (Adams 2000: 51). Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the nonhuman animal whose place the meat takes. The "absent referent" is that which separates the meat eater from the other animal and that animal from the end product. We do not see our meat eating as contact with another animal because it has been renamed as contact with *food*. Who is suffering? No one.

In our culture, "meat" operates as a mass term, (see Quine 1960: 99, Adams 1994: 27) defining entire species of nonhumans. Mass terms refer to things like water or colors; no matter how much you have of it, or what type of container it is in, it is still water. You can add a bucket of water to a pool of water without changing it at all. Objects referred to by mass terms have no individuality, no uniqueness, no specificity, no particularity. When humans turn a nonhuman into "meat," someone who has a very particular, situated life, a unique being, is converted into something that has no distinctiveness, no uniqueness, no individuality. When one adds five pounds of meatballs to a plate of meatballs, it is more of the same thing; nothing is changed. But to have a living cow and then kill that cow, and butcher that cow, and grind up her flesh, you have not added a mass term to a mass term and ended up with more of the same. You have destroyed an individual.

What is on the table in front of us is not devoid of specificity. It is the dead flesh of what was once a living, feeling being. The crucial point here is that humans make someone who is a unique being and therefore not the appropriate referent of a mass term into something that is the appropriate referent of a mass term.

False mass terms function as short hand. *They* are not like *us*. Our compassion need not go there, to their situation, their experience, or if it does, it may be diluted. Their "massification" means our release from empathy. We cannot imagine ourselves in a situation where our "I-ness" counts for nothing. One cannot imagine the Not-I of life as a mass term.

To kill large numbers of people efficiently, the

killers succeed when they have made mass terms of the people they are targeting. Philip Gourevitch, writing of the Rwanda genocide explains: "What distinguishes genocide from murder, and even from acts of political murder that claim as many victims, is the intent. The crime is wanting to make a people extinct. The idea is the crime. No wonder it's so difficult to picture. To do so you must accept the principle of the exterminator, and see not people, but a people." (Gourevitch, p. 202)

Gourevitch says the idea is the crime. They are seen as mass terms by their oppressors, *not people but a people*. When a group is seen as a people, not people, then certain conventions of thought, propaganda thought forms, stereotyping, take over. The claim is made that they can be known as a group; through racial, ethnic, or species characteristics: In Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, What Jews are like; what Jews do; in Rwanda in the 1950s and forward, What Tutsis are like; what Tutsis do. These characteristics heighten the idea of their existence as a threat to others or their existence as being dirty. Then the false characteristics become fixed through their existence as a metaphor.

The presumptions and mistakes of racial biology reiterate similar presumptions and mistakes in "species" biology. We think we can know "cows," or "birds." And then we use adjectives drawn from these assumptions: cowlike, birdbrain. Susanne Kappeler observes that "Western theories of racism attained proper 'scientific' status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the guise of medicine, psychiatry, eugenics, anthropology, demography, and so forth. They stand in direct continuity with the theories that categorize nonhuman animals in species, and living beings into humans, animals, and plants—categories modelled on the paradigms of the natural sciences. These included attempts to established classifications of 'kinds' of people based on 'typical' data – be it measurements of bodies and body parts, genetic data, or behavioral features." (Kappeler 327)

Gourevitch said, *The idea is the crime*, seeing a *people* not people. One explanation for the appalling indifference by those of us who live in the United States and Great Britain to mass killings is that we, too, may also see the targeted victims as mass terms. When people are not experienced in their individuality their deaths may feel less immediate. During the Rwanda genocide, one U.S. officer explained the calculations they were doing: "one American casualty is worth about 85,000 Rwandan dead." (Power, 381)

The "massification" of beings permits the dilution, the diminishment of our attention. It is like an hourglass. The more of a "mass term" they become, the less of concern they need provoke. The sands of our compassion drain into the bottom. And how do we flip the hourglass over, how do we revive, or awaken compassion?

Mass terms are linked to subjects being diminished. In their diminishment, as I pointed out in *The Sexual Politics Of Meat*, all that is left for them is to become metaphors for others.

According to Robert Pogue Harrison in *The Dominion of the Dead*, what we do with our dead is what supposedly demarcates us as humans. We bury them. The dead influence us through the laws they bequeathed to us, the cultural and physical institutions we inherit from them. Everywhere we turn we experience “the foundational authority of the predecessor.” (Harrison) For the moment, I will not argue with his presumption that we are *necrocratic* and that nonhumans are not. (Elephant grieving processes are elaborate.) But, after genocide, or fratricides such as the Civil War, we dig up bodies buried in mass graves at Rwanda or Gettysburg and try to reassert each one’s individuality against the annihilation of the mass term, through individual burials. One cannot undo the act of genocide, the dead are dead, but we can undo part of the idea that allows genocide, the use of mass terms, by asserting the individual. By maintaining our ties to the dead as individuals.

And this is a basic difference; meat eaters bury animals in their own bodies. When nonhuman living beings are converted conceptually into false mass terms to enable their conversion into products, we come to believe that their deaths do not matter to themselves. Animals are killed because they are false mass terms, but they die as individuals. They die as a cow, not beef, as a pig, not pork. Each suffers his or her own death, and this death matters a great deal to the one who is dying.

### “Treated like animals”

In the face of the knowledge that genocide happened in our life time, and not only once, but repeatedly, and that countries such as the United States and institutions such as the United Nations failed to respond – with Rwanda, the United States was reduced to parsing the difference between “acts of genocide” and genocide – the question arises, why didn’t we respond? Why didn’t we care?

Several forms of explanations have been offered. Samantha Power details them in her *Problem from Hell*

One important reason Power notes for peoples’ apparent indifference, especially during the Holocaust, was disbelief. People felt the stories they were hearing seemed unbelievable. “The notion of getting attacked for being (rather than for doing) was too discomfiting and too foreign to process readily,” she observes (36).

Animals are killed daily for *being* rather than *doing*; they may be killed because they are “just animals.” Humans are not supposed to be killed because they are “a people.” Moreover, with animals, humans are the ones who do the “doing to.” Human beings may be killed for doing (doing wrong, presumably but not for doing wrong to animals). When humans are killed for being rather than for doing, the “beingness” attributed to them is often animal-like.

Many favorable descriptions of human beings emphasize “doing” rather than “being.” Humans use

their intelligence, nonhumans are instinctive; humans love, nonhumans mate; humans cultivate friendships, nonhumans have “affiliative behavior;” humans are humane, cultivated, refined, nonhumans are beasts, brutal (Dunayer). When people say, they treated us like *animals*, one thing they are saying is *They treated us as though we had no feelings, as though we were not alive.*

We have created institutions that reinforce that animals are, not that animals do. Karen Davis observes that “seeing animals in industrialized settings such as factory farms encourages the view that animals are inherently passive objects whose only role in life is to serve the human enterprise.” When someone says, *I was treated like an animal.* they mean, *I was reduced to literal existence. I could not do, I was done to.*

Animals can be killed for being animals; humans are often killed for being animal-like.

How do you make a person less of a human? Two of the most predictable ways are to make a person or a group of people into (false) mass terms and to view them as animals. Acts of violence that include animalizing language create people as false mass terms, since animals already exist in that linguistic no man’s land of lacking a recognizable individuality.

When people say “they treated us like animals,” they are saying, “we were treated as though we weren’t individuals.”

Conditions for violence flourish when we structure our world hierarchically, in a false Darwinian progression that places humans at the top. A simple way of showing it:

Human beings

Subhumans

Animals

Insects

“Material” nature – Earth, “dirt”

The further down the great chain of being one is placed, the less the barriers to violence. When people say, they treated us like animals, another thing they are saying is, “They created our vulnerability to their violence by changing our place in the species ladder.” A reminder of this can be found in the epigraph to the first book of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale. I. My Father Bleeds History*. The epigraph contains this quotation from Adolph Hitler, “The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human” (see DeAngelis). Leo Kuper writes in *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*: “The animal world has been a particularly fertile source of metaphors of dehumanization.” People designated as animals, “have often been hunted down like animals.” Or exterminated like insects.

When a group is deemed not human, oppressors have several options for establishing just

who they see them as. For the hierarchy that places humans at top is more complicated than the simple one I identified above.

The ladder is more like this:

- human beings
- subhuman's
- the devil  
The devil (a human-animal being), who walks upright, with facial characteristics of a human being, but with horns, hoofs and a tail.
- primates other than humans
- mammals other than primates
- predators
- top carnivores  
The top carnivores, those who eat carnivores, i.e., eagles, hawks, tigers, and white sharks.
- carnivores
- herbivores  
(four legged, two legged)
- "vermin" rats/mice
- reptiles (snakes)
- insects "pests"
- spiders
- cockroaches
- ants
- "Material" nature – Earth, dirt

Using propaganda campaigns, the genocidal government reinforces the idea of being, rather than *doing*: "subhuman" (Hitler about the Jews), "vermin" (Hitler) or *Inyenzi*/ "cockroaches," (the Hutus in control in Rwanda about the Tutsis), the devil (the Hutus about the Tutsis).

When genocidal governments rename human beings as animals, they reinforce the ladder of human superiority by pushing some off of it. And when someone says, "they treated us like animals," that someone is standing on the human ladder looking down, further, to those who have never been on the top rung.

## The Original Oppression

Human society takes from the oppression of animals its structures and treatment of other humans. Though we often fail to see the literal origins of human institutions, as Keith Thomas and Jim Mason, among others, established decades ago: All originating forms of oppression can be traced to our treatment of animals. Domestication became the pattern for social subordination; predation the pattern for killing and extermination.

It is the nature of the burnt offering (the literal meaning of the word *Holocaust*) of animals to disappear—whether consumed by fire or by human beings. The literal has disappeared; but it became the form and function of an unequal human society's treatment toward other humans.

When Theodor Adorno states, "Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals," (quoted in Patterson, 53) he is saying, the structure of human inequality begins there. But some claim there is a difference: Domesticated/enslaved animals are here because they have been brought into existence; they have life so we can take it; whereas, people threatened by genocide already exist and the genocidal impulse is to completely eliminate them. Nonexistence for human beings is their elimination as a specific group, ethnicity or race; nonexistence for animals is that unfortunate state they would exist in if we didn't want to use them. But the genocidal impulse, when considered, helps us see that this distinction is a fallacy. It assumes that speciesism is not an aspect of genocide and that racism is not a form of speciesism.

At least one writer believes that "the breeding of animals first produced the concepts of 'race' and of 'pure blood.'" (Digard quoted in Sax, 83). Speciesism has always been a tool of colonialism: creating a hierarchy of color and characteristics. Susanne Kappeler observes that politics is zoology by another name: She writes "the very point of categorization is to create discriminating *identities*, 'types' of people allegedly sharing the same (typical) feature(s), thus to justify their social and political roles ... and invalidate their rights as individuals." (Kappeler 330)

The category "human being" is stratified:

### race/evolutionary continuum

Race continuum	"Evolutionary" continuum
White	civilized
	"beastlike"
	Peasants/farm workers
nonwhites	primitive: (pre-technological/indigenous, aboriginal)



primitive hunters and herders

primitive gatherers and farmers

The primitive is divided into those who were more advanced and those who weren't, based on their relationships with other animals and the land. Those who controlled and killed the other animals, those who used animal protein, were viewed to be more advanced than those who did not. A hierarchy descends from Western meat eaters to pretechnological hunters to gatherers.

Colonizers evaluated other humans according to their relationship with the other animals. Europeans assumed that those who controlled animals were more advanced than those who tilled the field. One of the demarcations of the evolutionary status of a culture was whether it was dependent on animal protein.

Consider how the Belgians imposed a hierarchy in Rwanda. Gourevitch tells us that whether Hutus and Tutsis were descended from different peoples, they "spoke the same language, followed the same religion, intermarried and lived intermingled, without territorial distinctions, on the same hills, sharing the same social and political culture in small chiefdoms." (Gourevitch, 47-48). But still there was a distinction: Tutsis were herdsmen and Hutus were cultivators. "This was the original inequality: cattle are a more valuable asset than produce, and although some Hutus owned cows while some Tutsis tilled the soil, the word Tutsi became synonymous with a political and economic elite." (48)

Racism recapitulates speciesism. The category "human being" was stratified by speciesism; the hierarchy imposed by colonialism, recapitulated the hierarchy of humans over nonhumans.

race continuum/species continuum

Race continuum	species continuum
Whites (civilized)	human beings/top carnivores
Primitive/aboriginal/	primates other than humans
Indigenous and	mammals: herbivores
targets of	"vermin"
genocide	reptiles
	insects

One continuum not only recapitulates the other, but draws its strength in categorization from the other. Immigrants are also seen derogatorily as animals. In an analysis of language about Latinos in newspapers, animal metaphors were found to be the predominant imagery applied to them. Researchers found metaphors of

immigrants as animals that were lured, pitted, or baited, animals that can be attacked and hunted, animals that can be eaten, immigrants as pack animals, and immigrants like rabbits, needing to be ferreted out (Santa Ana, 82-94). For example, American citizens give birth, but immigrants "drop their babies." "The ontology of IMMIGRANT AS ANIMAL can be stated concisely: Immigrants correspond to citizens as animals correspond to human." (86) Thus another hierarchy can be posed:

human/not human

member of human society/outsider or other

citizen/immigrant

Susanne Kappeler writes, "Classification is neither neutral, being put to political use only 'thereafter,' nor is it objective: it is itself an act of social and political discrimination and thus the expression of the subjectivity of power. What is said to be a quality of the object is in fact a difference construed in relation to an implicit norm constituted in the classifying subject. Racism and sexism as political practices construct another race and another sex, a race of 'others' and a sex of 'others'" (Kappeler, 338).

The concept of "other" means that there is a normative someone or someones who are not other; who are the measure by which otherness is established; to whom otherness might move closer or further way, but who do not themselves depart from the normative nature of their beingness. This "otherness" ratifies the primacy of those against whom otherness is defined.

Activist and scholar Karen Davis reminds us that from a chicken's experience, the human hand is the cruelest thing she will know. (Davis, 2005, 47). With Davis's insight in mind, consider this formative conversation in the history of genocide in the twentieth century.

When Lemkin [the man who coined the word genocide] was studying linguistics ... he raised the issue of why the people responsible with the Armenian massacre were not prosecuted for what they did. His professor told Lemkin "there was no law under which he could be arrested. 'Consider the case of a farmer who owns a flock of chickens,' he said, 'He kills them and this is his business. If you interfere, you are trespassing.'" (Power, 17)

Perhaps one reason we did not respond to the genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that we had already learned to tolerate a hierarchical world in which killing is accepted.

I recently heard from a feminist animal rights scholar who wrote: "I live 6 miles up the road from one of the largest slaughterhouses in the nation. Nobody in

this little town blinks an eye as each day semi-trailer after semi-trailer crammed full of living entities streams down Main Street carrying cows to their brutal executions. Got behind one of these horrors the other day. The stench was overpowering, but what really got me was the bumper sticker: EAT BEEF: The West Wasn't Won on Salad." The triumphalism of such contemporary declarations should remind us that when anxiety asserts itself about the place of animals in our hierarchical world, it is never asserting itself only about animals.

### **Why don't we care?**

Jacques Derrida's "The Animal That Therefore I Am." identifies the most egregious actions we as humans have taken against other animals (including subsuming them all under one name "animal"): "Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries." He assumes such a description may be "pathetic," that is, evoking sympathy. Derrida argues that for the past few centuries we have had a campaign against compassion that allows factory farms and other horrors to continue. He calls it the "war on pity." Such a campaign instantiates objectification: both the objectification of the other animals who become mass terms, and the objectification of feelings so that they fail to be heeded in making decisions about the fate of terminal animals. If genocide requires the turning of humans into animals, the pre-existing war on pity provides the institutional framework for not caring about what happens to someone labeled "animal."

Derrida says "no one can deny the *unprecedented* proportions of this subjection of the animal [...] No one can deny seriously, or for very long, that men do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves, in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence that some would compare to the worst cases of genocide (there are also animal genocides: the number of species endangered because of man takes one's breath away)." (Derrida, 394) There, even Derrida says it: What is happening to animals some "would compare to the worse cases of genocide." He adds, "One should neither abuse the figure of genocide nor consider it explained away. For it gets more complicated here: the annihilation of certain species is indeed in process, but it is occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, virtually interminable survival, in conditions that previous generations would have judged monstrous, outside of every supposed of norm of a life proper to animals that are thus exterminated by means of their continued existence of even their overpopulation." (394)

Samantha Power offers several explanations to

begin the discussion of why apathy prevails over caring: We lack the imagination needed to reckon with evil, and it is hard to even imagine evil. It is assumed people act rationally. American policymakers discovered that "rational people" can be gratuitously violent (with Derrida I might add, such a discovery was made by animal activists centuries ago). Lack of outcry is interpreted as indifference, and those who do care do not have the political strength to change policy. The killing is reinterpreted; deflecting attention from the culprits. The national interest, or so it is though, prevents intervention. Being attacked for *being* rather than *doing* seems unbelievable.

But now we can add to Power's list. The ability to objectify feelings so that they are placed outside of the political realm is another reason people have not cared. Submission to authority requires such objectification, indeed, rewards it. Not only does one learn that feelings do not matter, but even the awareness of the feeling is subsumed within the objectifying mindset. As a result, people may become afraid to care. To care requires that one have the courage to break from the normalizing ideological screen that has posited "it's okay if it's an x but not a y."

The war on compassion has resulted in a desire to move away from many feelings, especially uncomfortable ones. As a result, fear, which is an understandable response to a new experience, say, the experience of encountering a snake or a spider, becomes the justification for killing a snake or a spider. If feelings were not objectified, one might have developed the ability to interact with the fear, to respect it and the beings who are causing it, rather than to try to destroy both the feeling and the beings who are causing it. The war on compassion has caused many people to think it is futile to care. They are unable, imaginatively, to see how their caring will change anything. They experience a passivity inculcated by current political situations as well as by the media. They lack the imagination, not to believe that something terrible might be done, but rather, that the something terrible that is happening can be undone.

The war on compassion, further, has caused people to fear that beginning to care about what happens to animals will destroy them because the knowledge is so overwhelming. They prefer not to care rather than to face the fragility, at the least, or the annihilation of the caring self, at the most extreme, that they suspect arises from caring. But caring does not make someone more fragile or annihilate them. In fact, through caring, not only does the individual acquire new experiences and skills that accompany these experiences, but also discovers that they are a part of network who can sustain them even when caring evolves into grief for what is happening.

Finally, the war on compassion has caused people to protest, "we have to help humans first." As long as we treat animals as animals, as long as we accept that there is this category "animals," both the treatment and the concept will legitimize treatment of humans that

way. Derrida hypothesized that the war over pity was passing through a critical phase. It may have begun when animal activists proclaimed “if it’s not okay for a y, it’s not okay for an x” and in that proclamation began the process of overcoming the divisions that not only divided the x’es, animals, from the y’s, humans, but also the division that had separated compassion from the political realm.

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*Carol J. Adams is a feminist-vegan advocate and activist whose written work explores the cultural construction of intersectional oppressions. Through an analysis of attitudes, literary works, philosophical positions, and contemporary images culled from various media and advertising sources, Adams’ books *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990), *Neither Man Nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (1994), and *The Pornography of Meat* (2003) theorize interconnected ways in which women and animals are subjugated and sexualized. She is also the co-editor of *Animals and Women* (1995) and *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (2007) (both with Josephine Donovan), and has written extensively on vegetarianism and veganism. Her books *Living Among Meat Eaters* and *How to Eat Like A Vegetarian even if You Don’t Want to Become One* (co-authored with Patti Breitman) offer ways to embody feminist-vegan theory. She has also been an activist against domestic violence, racism, and homelessness, and for reproductive justice and fair housing practices. [www.caroljadams.com](http://www.caroljadams.com)*



# THE POLITICS OF CAROL J. ADAMS

Annie Potts, co-director of the New Zealand Centre for Human and Animal Studies at Canterbury University interviewed Carol J. Adams exclusively for Antennae  
Interview questions by Annie Potts

**A**nnie Potts: Carol, what started your passionate political interrogation of the ways in which Western culture exploits nonhuman animals? And how did this impact on your work, life, and worldview?

**Carol J. Adams:** If I could completely account for it, explain it, examine it, I could control it. And it isn't anything I actually control. Over the past thirty-five years (!) whenever I start thinking I am done writing and engaging with animal issues — the minute I begin to imagine that I am going to work on a project that is ostensibly not animal-related — inevitably I read about something, or go for a walk and see something, and my mind starts generating all these responses and analyses and I know I have to just keep at it! Jane Goodall talks about repaying “some of the debt I owe the chimpanzees.” For me, the debt to nonhuman animals is great, and I discover there are so many ways to repay the debt.

My older sister says that as a child I was the least self-conscious person she ever knew. I engaged with the world without that patina of critical or suspicious awareness that characterizes more sophisticated or critically aware individuals. I was immersed in my world, and I loved my world — that world was a small village filled with critters — dog and cats, of course, but cows and horses, too. In my life I have always talked to and with the animals.

Having ponies and horses was probably transformative in many ways, but especially as a pre-adolescent girl, at that critical time in my life, I experienced my world widening rather than constricting: riding bareback, lying on a horse's back as we both rested under a huge willow tree, playing hide and go

seek with friends on horses in woods or towns or along a creek with friends. These experiences are written so deeply in my body.

Then, eight years after this time, I returned home from my first year at Yale Divinity School, just when Jimmy, a beloved pony, died. He was either shot by hunters or died of a heart attack after hearing the nearby guns. That evening, biting into a hamburger, I suddenly thought of Jimmy's dead body and asked myself, “Why am I eating a dead cow when I wouldn't eat my dead pony?” I encountered my own hypocrisy. The fact of the hamburger became a contradiction: “How can I, a feminist committed to stopping violence and working for liberation, eat dead animals?”

Within two months of becoming a vegetarian, I realized there was a connection between feminism and vegetarianism, and ever since then, I've had my work cut out for me! Who-ever I was on the way to becoming before these experiences, well, who knows? I had to follow these ideas, and respect them, and live with them, and develop them. I recognized I had to become a vegan to be consistent with my philosophy. Then I had to learn how to write and figure out what I had to say and how to say it.

For the first fifteen years or so, (before *The Sexual Politics of Meat* was published), my ideas were often greeted with such disbelief, if not scorn, that I developed a good sense of humor. I think that has served me well.

The discovery of how our ethical framework is illegitimate because of its species-specific and species-centered nature completely and absolutely changed my life. I believe I am still being changed by it. I continually interrogate everything based on a non-violent, species-inclusive ethic.

But most importantly, through all this — my childhood experience with animals and my adult experience with theory — I learned the art of attention. That is a priceless gift.

I now understand animals have touched me so deeply, I will never be “done” writing about animals.

**Potts:** *In The Sexual Politics of Meat you outlined the basis for a feminist-vegetarian critical theory. What does this entail and why do you think it is important?*

**Adams:** For twenty years I have struggled to find “sound bites” for *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and it’s been very difficult to truncate the ideas. At “*The Sexual Politics of Meat Slide Show*,” I’ve started giving out a handout with nine feminist-vegan points, which are:

1. Meat-eating is associated with virility, masculinity. Meat eating societies gain male identification by their choice of food.
2. Animals are the absent referents in the consumption of meat. Behind every meat meal is the death of the animal whose place the “meat” takes. The function of the absent referent is to allow for the moral abandonment of a being.
3. A process of objectification/fragmentation/consumption connects women and animals in a patriarchal culture (they become overlapping absent referents). The visual “joke” that substitutes one fragmented object for another can be found throughout our culture. (Helmut Newton’s Saddle I?)
4. Feminist-vegan theory is ecofeminist, that is, environmental issues can’t be understood without a feminist perspective and feminist issues can’t be understood without an environmental perspective. I place animals into the middle of this insight. As an ecofeminist theory, it recognizes the environmental costs of animalizing protein. Meat production contributes to water pollution, climate change, habit fragmentation, and desertification of arable land. All protein is from plants; animalized protein requires that a living animal process the protein and then be killed.
5. Female animals are the absent referents in meat eating and in the consumption of dairy and eggs. There would be no meat eating if female animals weren’t constantly made pregnant. Female animals are forced to produce feminized protein, (plant protein produced through the abuse of the reproductive cycle of female animals, i.e., dairy and eggs).
6. Women are animalized and animals are sexualized and feminized.

7. Anthropomography naturalizes sexual trafficking in and use of women. (See below for a discussion of anthropomography.)
8. In its analysis, the sexual politics of meat intersects with “camophallogocentrism.” French theorist Jacques
9. Derrida coined the term in an attempt to name the primary social, linguistic, and material practices that go into becoming a subject within the West. Derrida was showing how explicit carnivorousness lies at the heart of classical notions of subjectivity, especially male subjectivity.
10. I urge resistance to the ideological construction of living objects through adopting a feminist ethics of care. Feminist ethics of care is a political ethic: it understands that ideology influences how we choose whom to care about.

**Potts:** *In the first edition of The Sexual Politics of Meat you state that butchering is the act that enables meat to be eaten; and as a paradigm, butchering provides an entry for understanding why a profusion of overlapping cultural images involving animals and women occurs. Can you explain this connection? Also, twenty years on, and now that a new edition of this book is about to be published, has the situation changed at all in your view? What progress — or lack of progress — do you feel has been made in the intervening years regarding our representation of, attitudes towards and treatment of nonhuman species?*

**Adams:** Can I explain this connection? I can only do superficially here what the book is dedicated to doing. I find the intersection of overlapping cultural images and treatment of women and animals in a variety of places in Western culture — in metaphor, graphic and artistic depictions, men’s description of their violence against women, women’s description of their experience of sexual violence, the use of and harm to animals by batterers to create control over their sexual partner, and in advertisements and other discussions of meat as food.

I explain this connection in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by suggesting that a cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption links butchering and sexual violence in our culture, and that this cycle operates both literally and metaphorically. Objectification permits an oppressor to view another being as an object. The oppressor then violates this being by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women that denies women freedom to say no, or the butchering of animals that converts animals from living breathing beings into dead objects. This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption. While the occasional man may literally eat women, we all consume visual images of women all the

time. Consumption is the fulfilment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity.

So too with language: a subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself. (I see this happening a lot in art, too.)

In terms of overlapping cultural images involving animals and women, things have gotten worse. Meat advertisements that sexualize and feminize animals have been around for more than thirty years, and during this time, they have become more widespread and more explicit. What Hustler pornographically imagined women as thirty-five years ago, Burger King, Carls' Jr, and many other dead animal purveyors recreate and suggest now. You can find Hustler's image of a woman going through a meat grinder image prettified in an ad for the HBO series *The Comeback* featuring Lisa Kudrow. Burger King takes the Hustler mentality — women as meat, as hamburger, and stylizes it for Super Bowl commercials. The 2009 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue (*Bikinis or Nothing*) includes an ad for Arby's with hands removing two hamburger buns as though they are taking off a bikini top.

Besides mainstreaming pornographic renderings of women as meat, another twenty-first century enactment of the sexual politics of meat is the resurgence of the raw as "real." With the raw, there is always more of it. A photoshoot from a reality show called *America's Top Models* in 2008, required the contestants to pose in a meat locker wearing bras and underpants made from recently killed dead animals, that is, "raw meat."

Why raw meat? Raw meat may express a more immediate sense of violation of what once was, what once existed and only recently lost their lives. With the raw, there is always more of it — more raw talent to compete in a reality show, more raw meat to be hung in lockers or worn as undergarments. Why raw meat? It is as though through the use of raw meat there's some sort of fantasy that one can experience life again as "raw, fresh, and tasty," that there remains some untouched, originary zone — connected to consuming dead flesh and naked women — that can be returned to, that dominant lives (assumed as male) that feel so constrained by trying to perform up to standards, those lives that are static can feel "fresh." Of course, the raw meat phenomenon also found a home at the Pierre Monard Gallery in the *Meat After Meat Joy* exhibit curated by Heide Hatry, where raw pieces of dead animals instead of being molded into undergarments for supermodels, were staged/shaped/cut/sculpted into "art."

You ask, "What progress — or lack of progress — do you feel has been made in the intervening years regarding our representation of, attitudes towards and treatment of nonhuman species?" With animals, I think it's headed in opposite directions simultaneously. Vegan

awareness and vegan food have grown exponentially, but so has a backlash. I think we have to understand, always, that a backlash against veganism is also the instantiation of a male-defined human subject (Derrida's carnophallogocentric subject, if you will).

Here's the problem — and I'm hoping to write a book about this for the new book series, *Critical Animal Studies* edited by Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stenescu — the question in animal advocacy has become muddled about whether the issue is suffering or whether it is the death of the animal in itself that matters. Nonhuman animals matter because of who they are — individual beings — not because of a certain quality that obtains to them (their suffering). This isn't like parliamentary procedure where there has to be a second to the first (the "second" being "animals are suffering"). The minute we start arguing about suffering (for women or animals, or any one who is nondominant), we're already ceded their difference. As Catharine MacKinnon points out in *Of Mice and Men*, white men did not have to prove they suffered for them to have rights. The focus on suffering creates a new category "humane meat" that helps people reduce the issue to "they aren't suffering, so it's okay to eat them." Of course, there is something insidious in the way the dominant culture incorporates critiques and makes them digestible (just decrease the suffering), but something else obtains here as well. We have to remember that some people get off on the suffering of others and that for others, their pleasure narcissistically outweighs any consideration of another's suffering.

Why, in the end, do we parse another's suffering and try to calibrate what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for them to experience on their way to becoming dead flesh? Why not stare what we actually are doing in the face — causing another's death for our own pleasure? Avoiding confronting this is symptomatic of one aspect of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* — it is hard to eliminate one's dependence on the instrumentality of another being.

**Potts: In *The Pornography of Meat (2003)* you coined the term 'anthropornography'. What do you mean by this?**

Adams: It was actually coined by a friend of mine, Amie Hamlin. I was showing the *Sexual Politics of Meat Slide Show* at the World Vegetarian Congress in Toronto in 2000, and remarked as I showed yet another photograph of a domesticated animal posed in a sexually inviting way so that the body wanting to be consumed was explicitly represented (probably the "turkey hooker"), I said, "This is not just an anthropomorphic image. It is a sexualized one, within a male dominant sexual economy. There needs to be a name for this." And without missing a beat, Amie called out, "anthropornography." Anthropornography means animals (usually species of animals presumed to be literally consumable) are presented as sexually consumable, in a way that upholds the sexual exploitation of women.



*Discussing Colored Pictures: Race and Representation*, Michael Harries identifies several patriarchal structures that obtain in the visual representations of the female nude: the assumption of a white male perspective as universal and an appropriation of female bodies for male prerogatives. (2003: 126). These are present in anthropomography, as well. Animals in bondage, particularly farmed animals, are shown “free,” free in the way that women are seen to be “free”— posed as sexually available as though their only desire is for the viewer to want their bodies. It makes animals’ degradation and suffering fun by making animals’ degradation sexy. Simultaneously, it makes women’s degradation fun because to be effective the advertisement requires the implicit reference to women’s sexualized status as subordinate. For women, through pornography, their degradation is always already sexy. The sexualization of animals and the sexual objectification of women thus overlap and reinforce one another. The body parts of females, at times dead females, are subjects pornography has already sexualized. In a fluid move, these conventions are used to sell dead bodies.

Meat advertisements show us how pornographers do this: take a defeated being, in this case a dead animal, and pose him or her according to a pornographic convention, say, a restaurant that sells dead lobsters claiming “Nice tail;” barbecued pigs posed as young women (all pink, signifying whiteness), hanging on the arms of men; anorexic cows; chickens in high heels. In each case: She is dead and yet she wants it. Wants what? Wants sex; wants to be sexually used; wants to be consumed. And so violence has been made into sex. Meat advertisements do this to animals because pornographers do it to women. Pornographers do it to women because it works for them sexually. As MacKinnon explains, “To be a means to the end of the sexual pleasure of one more powerful is, empirically, a degraded status and the female position” (2005: 129). Which not only explains what pornography is doing and why, but why meat advertisements would gravitate to pornographic conventions to sell their dead products. They mix death with degradation. That equation has one answer: the dead animal equals the female position. Pornographic conventions bleed into the bloodied animals that are shown wanting to be consumed, that is, wanting their own death.

As with pornography, anthropomography benefits from the way privilege is constructed. One aspect of privilege is that it disappears as privilege and appears as “what is.” Pointing out how privilege works is very threatening to those who benefit from privilege because privilege allows itself to be unreasoned, unjustified, unexamined. It exists not to be examined. (One reason vegans make meat eaters uneasy is because the meat eater is triggered by the presence of a vegan to begin examining the decision to eat dead animals.) Privilege isn’t an idea; it’s an experience. And generally, privilege grants pleasure. So, just as through pornography, as Catharine MacKinnon says, inequality is

made sexy; through meat eating, inequality is made tasty. And in examples such as the curated exhibit, *Meat after Meat Joy* inequality has been made art.

Misery made sexy. That’s anthropomography.

**Potts:** *In a keynote address you made at the Minding Animals conference last year in Newcastle, Australia, you were dismayed at the contemporary proliferation of images depicting what you call called the ‘animalization of women’ and the ‘feminization and sexualization of animals’. How do you understand these forms of representation to function in popular culture and advertising?*

**Adams:** They are working to maintain important aspects of consumer culture, to reinforce privilege by defining who is the consumer and who is the consumed, and to maintain the important fictions of essential differences between men and women and humans and nonhumans that enable power over the nondominant.

*In Staring: How We Look*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson says “In late capitalism, the predominant form of looking, the mass exercise of ocularcentricity, is what we might call consumer vision.” (2008: 29) Meat advertisements are at the heart of consumer vision, and animalizing women and feminizing animals is one of the ventricles in that heart. Garland-Thomson refers to Cohen’s suggestion that “one central task of citizenship in our era is consuming” and continues by saying “the cultural call to be consumers primarily entails looking at commodities, not people.” Animalizing women and feminizing animals helps in this process because it renders women and dead animals used as flesh as commodities.

In his discussion of *Silence of the Lambs*, Cary Wolfe proposes four categories: humanized human, animalized human, humanized animals and animalized animal (2003:101). He sees the two ends of this continuum functioning more as fictions. But I would argue that in Western culture, (and at the time of the Enlightenment and the writing of the American constitution) white property-owning men were the humanized human. The human was defined by male-identified characteristics of rationality. Even now, in terms of evolutionary depictions, the humanized human who emerges out of his primate ancestors is marked as white male. Casting individuals as animalized humans is usually influenced by race, sex, and class.

In Wolfe’s analysis the animalized human is found in the movie in the young women being murdered by the serial killer; an example of the humanized animal is Precious, the dog.

I think Wolfe is onto something but I think it is more complex than this and I’ve tinkered with the formulation recognizing how femaleness is also a marker that has a definite impact on status.

humanized human

animalized human      humanized animal

animalized woman

animalized animal

feminized animal

In *The Silence of the Lambs* the serial killer is animalizing women — after all, he is capturing them to cure their skins to make into a leather dress. And the lambs represent female victims — they are feminized animals. The feminized animal is the animal who is violable, able to be marked upon, the domesticated animals who become “meat.” In meat eating, as I argue in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, all animals become symbolically female. (And humane welfare laws often don’t apply to animals used as meat.) Conventions include fragmentation (“are you a breast man or a leg man?”), consumable females (barbecued pigs as sexy females with thrusting hips and pendulous breasts), and strip teases (animals in various stages of disrobing), rendering all domesticated animals being consumed as female. Moreover, female animals are the ones who are the most abused in the production of meat which can only exist because female animals are enslaved reproductively to produce more “meat” for consumers (and artists).

**Potts: Your examination of texts and images demonstrates how speciesism (and, in particular, the domination and killing of animals for meat) is linked not only to (hetero)sexism, but also to homophobia, racism, classism and other forms of marginalization. Can you give an example of this intersectionality in operation in visual culture in general — or in a specific ad or work of art?**

**Adams:** First, let’s acknowledge that whenever whiteness appears, it is a choice. Earlier I referred to the whiteness of the feminized pigs in the ads. That is a deliberate choice. Black women are often depicted as “wild” animals who have to be captured. Meanwhile in advertisements (and t-shirts, wall paintings, billboards, etc.) for barbecues, pigs are often depicted not just as white women, but as “slutty” white women, i.e., white trash. One part of the message is that these pigs wouldn’t even charge for sex, that’s how available they are. They are shown with large breasts, or fragmented, without a head. The white Christian man is always dominant over the imagined dead body of the (“lower-class” white) female-identified pig. (Implicitly Christian since “pork” is not tabooed for Christians.)

Lots of ads appealing to white, heterosexual man seem to be rebuilding what feminism and veganism have threatened. Heterosexual politics are also imbedded; the assumption is that woman is available as an orifice for men (and hamburgers/hot dogs). “Damelo” one Burger King ad has the woman say, “give it to me,” a slang for sex. Her mouth is wide open.

Antigay protests might refer to the killing of animals (“save the seals, club a faggot” as a t-shirt from the 1990s proclaimed), so that homophobia constituted itself in part through anthropocentrism.

A specific ad may help us recognize this. I am thinking of the Burger King parody of Helen Reddy’s “I am woman hear me roar.” In this case, it is men, uniting to the clarion call that they are men, they need to eat meat, they won’t eat chick food (quiche). The professional men pour out of restaurants and workplaces; the working class men leave their jobs on the street; all races come together, hopping out of cars, uniting to join together in a march proclaiming their need and right to eat meat. In this video, meat eating unites all classes and races of men against women and symbols of women (the soccer Mom car). It can be both facetious and directly hit the spot: men want meat and that is what they should get.

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat Slide Show*, I trace an image from Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* through Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) to “Ursula Hamdress,” from *Playboar: The Pig Farmer’s Playboy*. All depict a healthy sexual being in a similar pose. Titian placed a dog at the nude’s foot; Manet, both a black cat and an African woman servant. Manet’s painting presents a colonialist, racist viewpoint. As Michael Harris explains, “In the nineteenth century, women of color were associated with nature, uncontrolled passion, and promiscuity...Here within the privileged space of the white male gaze is a layered black subject who is at once socially inferior to a naked prostitute, for whom she is a servant, and yet a sexual signifier and a cipher; her mere presence is the equivalence of *Olympia*’s nakedness” (Harris 2003: 126). David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity* traces Titian’s and Manet’s inscribing meaning on a woman’s body painting genealogically into modernity and postmodernity (Harris considers Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*, Harvey, Rauschenberg’s postmodernist work *Persimmon*). But what Harvey recognizes is how the genealogy can be followed forward to an ad for Citizen Watch. So, too, with Ursula Hamdress. But, the way in which a pig is substituted for the woman reveals the interaction of overlapping absent referents that animalize and sexualize. Now the animalizing function has moved from margin to center: a dog at the feet of the “Venus” represented animality in Titian’s painting. Manet placed an African servant to represent animal sexuality. With Ursula, the animalizing and sexualizing functions that are separate in Titian’s and Manet’s paintings are united in one being. This time, it both presumes and maintains the normativeness of meat eating while also sexualizing the killing and consuming of the nonhuman.

If the pig weren’t white, there would be less of an anthropocentric hook not only because the genealogy of the pose is of white women, but also because African women and African-American women already bear such an association with “wild” sexuality, uncontrollable (again why they are often shown as wild animals), if a darker pig were used, it would have overwhelmed the

anthropomographic staging of the photo. Because of the race hierarchy that still is inscribed so strongly in Western culture, a white pig was needed, so that the degradation being represented could be as strongly conveyed as possible (i.e., the whiteness associated with the pig, which normally would have provided a racial elevation, is contained/overwhelmed by the female and animal associations).

One last example of intersections: in the famous Chick-fil-a advertisements that show a cow writing, the cow always misspells words. That animals can't spell inflects class associations because the unlettered class is rarely the professional, middle or upper class. Inability to control words and spellings is a marker of disempowerment. The cows in these ads have to be unlettered in terms of learning because they are not literally unlettered, that is, unmarked with letters. It is the fate of the literal animal (the absent referent) to be written upon, truly, written over through the metaphoric figuration of the literal, and in many ways to be written upon, violated. Branding, docking, cutting off their beaks, snipping their tails, castrating them, cropping their ears, piercing them, the creation of trans-genic species, all these actions write upon the animal. So, of course, in visual culture, the animal cannot be lettered, that is, a wise and educated user of letters, because the animal must bear letters.

**Potts:** *Some contemporary artists use live animals – or the carcasses of slaughtered animals — in their art. In his glass tank works ostensibly examining “the processes of life and death”, British artist Damien Hirst suspends dead and sometimes dissected animals (such as cows, sheep and sharks) in formaldehyde. Belgian artist Wim Delvoye has an “Artfarm” in China where live pigs are tattooed, their skins remaining ‘art works’ after they are slaughtered. Turkish-born US-based Pinar Yolacan uses the heads, skins and feet of chickens as textiles and frills for garments worn by elderly women models in her “Perishable Art” exhibition. What is it about Western culture that applauds object art involving the bodies of dead animals? And why do you think they receive acclaim from the contemporary art world?*

**Adams:** Whatever else it is, art is the transmission of energy. Art that destroys someone else's energy to exist is bankrupt, derivative, and at some profound level, untrue. It's a sacrificial, substitutionary positioning of animal as victim who becomes “art.” In experiencing “art,” I don't mind being disturbed, upset, dismayed, or depressed, but I don't want to be the second hand beneficiary of violence, engaging in an act of viewing that can only exist because someone's death was willed, because someone's energy was the means to another's ends. There is another name for that which destroys — eliminating someone else's energy — and that name is murder.

It was said of the Chicago pork producers of the nineteenth century that they used everything of the pig's but the “oink.” With art such as you mention, we

experience the artist's oink. It is not an act of ventriloquizing (like the Chinese storyteller I read about who could make the twelve different sounds of a pig being killed). It is the gaining of “voice” as an artist through the silencing of another's voice. Energy arising through the killing of animals makes the artist a butcher.

The act of killing animals (like the act of eating meat) is part of the project of constructing the carnophallogocentric subject. It is an act of self-definition as a privileged (male-identified) human, and it allows all other humans the access to that self-definition, too, as voyeurs and consumers. These artists can get away with murder because the law does not recognize animals as the subjects of their own lives; instead they are property. Artists, like butchers, are granted the right to take animate property and make it inanimate property.

The choices of these specific artists — whether it is suspending a dead animal in a vat, tattooing animals, or designing clothing around placentas — remind me of all the ways animals are treated as the literal, available as raw material for the consumption and use of humans. These are simply recent iterations of this. And I don't trust what they claim they are doing; because they use their language to lift their art into the metaphoric realm; so it is a double denial of the animals. For instance, Delvoye shows the human power over the literal not only by writing upon the pigs, but by making them absent referents, that is, extinguishing their literal existence. Yolacan, one of the artists in the *Meat after Meat Joy* exhibit, exclaimed to the *New York Times* back in 2004 when she was first discovered by them, “I've always been interested in the impermanence of things.” (Horyn) What things could that be?

Like Hirst and Delvoye, Yolacan actually creates, facilitates, and necessitates the impermanence of beings by their consuming of animals' bodies for their art. (Ignoring for the time her choice to use older women's bodies as vehicles for rotting flesh.)

In the catalog that accompanied *Meat after Meat Joy*, one of the prefatory articles introduced the idea that *Meat is the No Body* (Goodeve). Goodeve, exhibiting a slight anxiety about the entire venture, feels it is necessary to disassociate the artists from killing. She writes: “let us be clear — not one of the artists in this exhibition killed an animal in order to make his or her art. Meat is already dead. This does not mean it is not upsetting or offensive to see an art exhibition whose theme and source material is meat. But if killing is the question it has already been done.” (10) Good god! To have to rationalize that “the animals were already dead anyway” — the typical answer from many meat eaters is such an embarrassing and superficial way of exploring the legitimacy of using meat as a medium for artistic creation. (Goodeve, incomprehensively, then goes on to say that this is why Victor Frankenstein got his material for the monster from graves instead of slaughterhouses. Sorry, Goodeve, Frankenstein also went to slaughterhouses. That the Monster actually refuses to eat meat does tell us something that *Meat After Meat Joy* seems to want to avoid — maybe there isn't any



meat joy whatsoever? Maybe one cannot resist objectification through using objectification.)

Simultaneously, Goodeve shows us two things: an inadequate response to the question of killing animals for the creation of art and yet also the obvious necessity to assert an answer. Goodeve's answer suggests that something similar to what Timothy Bewes observes in *Reification or The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* is going on when it comes to using dead animals' bodies as the medium for "art." Bewes says that "troubling feelings — in particular, the sense of anxiety toward reification — have become virtually universal in advanced capitalist societies." (xii) Later he says, "Anxiety is the consciousness of reification; reification is the anxiety towards reification." (247) Anxiety comes with the territory of reification. Since meat eating is one aspect of the instantiation of reification (the creation of the absent referent), anxiety is one aspect of the meat eater's relationship to his/her activity. It will also be one aspect — even if it is well cloaked or hidden — in the relationship of the artist to his or her (dead) medium. The difference between reification in Bewes's sense and meat eating is that the anxiety against reification contains within it the possibility of reversing reification, but an animal once dead cannot be restored to life. Thus art intercedes to make of this disaster (the death of the animal) something "redemptive" for humans — the ones who feel this anxiety (acknowledged or unacknowledged) about the animals' death, especially when they are the ones who caused the disaster that must be redeemed through their acts.

Many artists have shown us ways to explore violation without representing the act of violation or motivating the act of violation. (I recently saw the remarkable film of Beckett's dramatic monologue *Not I* at the MOCA in Denver and it is absolutely riveting in representing the effects of violation without showing it.) I wonder if their works carry less markers of anxiety?

It would be naïve of me to argue this, but for the moment, grant me naivete: If we are to acknowledge the artist's power of imagination and this imagination is ostensibly so inviolable that we can't dictate the limits to which the artist can go in exploring his imagination (or hers), then why can't we credit everybody with imagination and that imagination allows us to feel empathy and to imagine what violability feels like? In her book, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*, Annette Gordon-Reed says "History is to a great degree an imaginative enterprise; when writing it or reading it, we try to see the subject in time and space." Gordon-Reed acknowledges that both the writer and reader of history need imagination. All of us have to use our imagination all the time! It just turns out we're not supposed to use that imagination when it comes to animals' deaths; we're not supposed to place animals as subjects in time and space who, just before being killed and made permanently dead, would have chosen to continue living. I might say, "I imagine animals don't like to be killed. They don't like to be tattooed; they don't like to be represented as though they

themselves aren't somebody." I'd like to claim that that imaginative response can stand along side and have as much weight and claim to being a legitimate way of constructing the world and evaluating what's done in the world as any other perspective including the artists' own oink! The problem for me is that my viewpoint isn't the hegemonic one.

But, building on Bewes, let me suggest something else. If there is anxiety about our "thingly" quality (are we suspended between life and death by this?), perhaps such anxiety is allayed, in part, or at times, by reaffirming our power to make other beings into things (the impermanence of things). Of course, the resurgence of the raw fits in here, too — the newly-made thing that once was alive. The fetishistic attachment to the dead animal in art will always create or motivate the creating of that object (the dead animal) but that motivating act will cause anxiety and that anxiety will leak out one way or another in connection with the art. No matter what the artist claims, a stuffed goat is never only a stuffed goat.

I'm reading *The Writing of the Disaster* at the moment, and Hirst seems to acknowledge implicitly Blanchot's idea that we can't address ultimately our own death. But current laws allow artists to manipulate and kill someone else if that someone else is a nonhuman. But isn't Hirst ultimately caught within Blanchot's contradictions too? I think Blanchot raises an issue I want to wrench from his context: How does one write about what doesn't exist (knowledge of your own death when [and after] you die)? Can one write about one's own death? ("the experience that none experiences, the experience of death.") Does death not obliterate the difference between human and nonhuman animals? Or does death, by depriving humans of something uniquely human — the ability to write about it — highlight the difference? Is this where the unlettered status of animals leads us — the never-to-be-accomplished writing of the disaster? For if our death cannot be known, then we are like nonhuman animals.

You ask, what is it about Western culture that applauds abject art involving the bodies of dead animals? The short answer is people are afraid to be seen as against "art" for they will be accused of not being good consumers of art or of not getting it; they don't want to be illiterate consumers (unlettered) of the art; they want to be included, not excluded. To offer what will be viewed as a non-artistic critique renders one outside. Think of all the negatives words for critics who address the medium the artist chooses (the dead animal). We are not supposed to join the conversation there. We are trying to say something a priori about the selected "medium" and there is no place for us to lodge our concerns aesthetically, and so we are expelled from the Eden of art (consumed or created). Because ours is labeled an "unlettered" critique, the labelling is meant to precipitate a different anxiety — not the one that knowledge of the dead animal causes, but the one that being unlettered in a world of letters, uncultured in a world of culture causes: Lord, don't let that be me,

situated outside the pale, unregenerate, unable to be “cultured.” PETA’s criticism of *Meat after Meat Joy* is critiqued in the catalog by John Wronoski of the Pierre Menard Gallery which hosted the exhibition. Wronoski doubts that “such responses bespeak thought occasioned by artwork,” i.e., by not participating in relationship to the art itself, but criticizing the medium (the use of dead animals), PETA’s criticism is somehow not valid.

I’m always concerned when there is some zone privileged and separate from everything else, that can’t be judged like everything else, that the fiction about this untouched, originary zone — connected to art — can be returned to through the act of creation, that dominant lives (assumed as male) that feel so constrained by trying to perform up to standards. Those lives that are static can feel “fresh” by experiencing the products of those who are able to (re) enter this (fictive) zone.

The zone of artistic privilege — why does it resemble the zone of privilege invoked by pornographers for free speech? The inviolability of the artistic work, the inviolability of the product of pornography is greater than the inviolability of the animal or the woman? (It could be argued that this is, because in fact, animals and women are not yet ceded to be inviolable as I discuss in *The Pornography of Meat*.) How that zone came into existence, and what the conditions were that allowed such a zone to come into existence, is really the question. Again, thinking about *The Hemingses of Monticello*, Gordon-Reid says what the law protected then, it continues to protect, now, even after the end of American slavery.

People in history who, like John Wayles [the father of several children with an enslaved woman] were under the law’s protection during life tend to remain under the law’s protection — statutes, rules, presumptions, privileges, legal fictions, and all. People outside of the law’s protection, like Elizabeth Hemings [the enslaved woman], generally remain outside, particularly when aspects of their lives do not comport with the law’s strictures and fictions (84).

She’s showing that some sort of continuity of privilege obtains through the structures that were created to protect that privilege, that these structures create longevity or a conceptual world (of dominance) without end. Even if the world of slavery ended, the conceptual world that co-existed with slavery and allowed slavery to exist, lives on. If that’s the case, not surprisingly, then privilege protects itself, provides a way in perpetuity to keep itself ... privileged. A species-specific privilege creates the space in which art that uses the abject bodies of dead animals exists and can be protected. When something — something specific like killing —

has an ethics that stops at the species line, I want to know why, and the arguments “because they are animals” and “because they are artists” are insufficient as answers.

Let’s also state another obvious point: the ability to be ironic about nonhuman animals (an acknowledged characteristic of postmodern art) is possible because one is not nonhuman. Irony arises from a position of power (at the minimum, human power) and has within it the power to critique all non-ironic responses to it for their lack of “getting it.” The literal exists to be moved away from, to be ironized, even if the literal in some form is what is being encountered aesthetically.

Attention to the literal as literally of primary importance (the dead animal) is seen as a non-aesthetic response. It reminds me of a famous distinction feminists made between therapy and activism for battered women. Therapy said, “you have a foot on your neck, how do you feel about it?” Activism said, “let’s take that foot off your neck.” In this culturally-privileging world, the artist’s foot is hard to move.

Yet, Wronoski (again of *Meat after Meat Joy*) smugly says that though PETA’s criticism was not occasioned by artwork “perhaps they do mean that art can still manage to stimulate the ordinarily insensate.” Hmm. So we are back to energy, but this time, it is not “meat,” i.e., dead animals that are the insensate, when in fact they are truly insensate. They are, in fact the literal meaning of being a piece of meat — without feeling. Yet, in this triad of three subjects — the artists and gallery owners, the critics, and the (formerly living) material — the only ones who are credited with not being ordinarily insensate are the artists and their colleagues. How convenient! Those with their feet on the necks of the animals, those whose artistic oink sounds in the galleries of the Western world, are seen as the ones who are not unfeeling, i.e., insensate.

**Potts:** *And why do you think they receive acclaim from the contemporary art world?*

**Adams:** It’s propaganda for speciesism. It is for human superiority what Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* was for Nazism. It may be exquisitely rendered, hypnotic even, but it’s propaganda and it exists because humans view animals as property. Or as Marian Scholtmeijer says in *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction*, “we have a liking for the effect of animals upon our thoughts, as long as they do not challenge their instrumentality as mediators of culture.”

Art that reinscribes the denial of the animal through actively denying/depriving them of life — it’s working at many levels. It simultaneously reassures our self-definitions as humans while also affirming human superiority. We not only get to watch what is happening to live and dead animals (and know this wouldn’t happen to us), but the gaze, the act of experiencing art is something that we see as uniquely human. So by participating through spectating onto “art,” we know we are human. We also can’t disown the voyeuristic nature

of it. I believe people know at a deep level that they are connected to animals, that animals prefer to live rather than die, but we cover this through socialization and rationalization and a protected notion of humanness as constituting itself through the denial of the animals. But whenever I try to point it out, there's a pre-existing hegemonic interpretative framework that means my pointing it out is called "strident" but the hegemonic interpretative framework is called acceptable, considered normative, considered even, artistically, avant-garde. The hegemonic is human-centered (and the human is defined by male qualities). It reassures and re-establishes human (male-identified) primacy at several levels simultaneously and because some of those levels are hidden or unacknowledged, it never has to expose itself for what it is. Art that is revolutionary but not revolutionary enough upholds the status quo.

**Potts:** *Animal activist organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) also employ images of naked or scantily clad women in their campaigns against meat-eating and animal abuse. In The Pornography of Meat (2003) you show several examples of meat advertisements that have been appropriated by PETA for the purposes of animal activism: one such image is that of the "Cattle Queen" (which also appears as the cover image of The Sexual Politics of Meat, and was originally used at a 1968 feminist protest against the Miss America pageant and its portrayal of women's bodies as 'meat'). The "Cattle Queen" picture shows a naked woman sitting with her back to the viewer, her body divided into sections labeled 'rib', 'rump', 'loin', 'chuck' and so on. PETA modifies this image in its anti-meat eating poster entitled "All Animals Have the Same Parts": again a naked woman's body is segmented and named according to different meat cuts. What is your perspective on the use of such imagery in animal activism?*

**Adams:** First, it shows the functioning and strength of the structure of the absent referent. PETA admits visually through these and other examples that animals can't represent their own need to be liberated from human domination, otherwise they would be the ones shown in all their visual campaigns. Their absence tells us how powerfully the conceptual absencing of animals is. PETA seems to acknowledge that for many people the referent, animals, is gone. And they are trying to work with what is there, cultural consumption, by manipulating cultural images/issues. They are trying to get people to talk about veganism without having to address what has disappeared. It doesn't matter who they piss off. In fact the more the better. Tastelessness is newsworthy; nonhuman farmed animals aren't.

Secondly, one of the implicit, if not explicit messages of such advertisements is, "Yes, you can become aware of animals' lives, but you don't have to give up your pornography." Thus, rather than challenge the inherent inequality of a culture structured around dominance and subordination, the ad instead tries to

leverage sexual inequality on behalf of the other animals. It is an appeal to the carnophallogocentric subject, saying "really, you can still have objects in your life, you just can't have animals as objects." It naively believes that the "carno" can be taken out of the carnophallogocentric subject. It really doesn't understand how the human male subject is being constructed in Western culture. As I argue in *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals*, maleness and humanness are co-constructed, co-informing each other; the qualities most valued in humans are qualities associated with upperclass Western men.

In fact, every time PETA uses a naked or nearly-naked woman to advertise animals' concerns it not only benefits from sexual inequality, it also unwittingly demonstrates the intransigence of species inequality. In this context, while some argue that PETA's ads using naked or nearly-naked women are liberating, not only for animals but, in transgressive ways, for women too, such practices in fact only substitute one absent referent for another. The challenge for the animal movement is how to restore the absent referent to a dominant culture that refuses to acknowledge it. What must be borne in mind, however, is that the absent referent is a crucial point of intersection both for sexual inequality and species inequality. Logically, there can be no politically liberatory "substitution" of woman for animal, because what is being replaced carries its own marker of inequality. What appears superficially as substitution is actually the layering of one oppressive system on top of another.

Not only is this wrong as it maintains the objectification of women, but as I argue in *The Pornography of Meat*, it is inappropriate activism because animals are marked by gender, as well as species. As I have tried to show, one common way that sexual inequality is imposed on farmed animals is through advertisements that sexualize meat. Replacing animals with women is therefore not substitution or potentially liberating, because the original victim's fate is still there, present through reference.

What we in fact see is merely one debased subject being referenced within and by the other: the lowered status of the first (animal) is applied to the other (woman), who however already carries her own low status — marked as "female" in a world of sexual inequality. If animals are burdened by gender, by gendered associations, by the oppression that is gender, then clearly they can't be liberated through representations that demean women. PETA wants to lift the animalized and feminized animals up and out of their status as consumed and thinks this can be done while bypassing and actually using women's animalized status.

**Potts:** *What are your thoughts on the employment of graphic imagery in campaigns against factory farming, meat-eating, and animal experimentation?*

**Adams:** Do you mean the 'bleeding Jesus' pictures, as



one Catholic friend calls them, of damaged, injured animals? In these campaigns, the assumption seems to be “if we expose the structure of the absent referent in the destruction of a being (someone becoming something) we will get people to change, we will get people to care.” I do know that people have been changed by watching videos like PETA’s *Meet Your Meat* and I know that some of these videos are so shocking that they do awaken an alarm or an awareness in some viewers. They are also helpful in legislative campaigns. But (and of course there is a but!)...

Whose duty is it to watch these? I get emails all the time saying, “it is your duty to take three minutes and watch this graphic video.” No it isn’t my duty. My retinas do not need those images sketched on their insides. The burden is often placed on women to reinfect what I have called “traumatic knowledge.” If we already know and have acted on this knowledge, it’s okay not to watch. It is okay to set boundaries about what we take in visually and what we don’t.

Moreover, a specific group of people exists who are voyeuristic and enjoy watching others suffer. I knew a film-maker in New York City who used to show animal advocacy films on Sunday nights on the upper West Side. He told me he noticed that he was attracting a different clientele when he showed really graphic (i.e., more gory) films. He eventually stopped showing those kinds of films because he said he was creeped out by the men who came to watch.

I believe there is a place in campaigns for imagination. When I spoke at the University of Minneapolis, I went to The Frederick R. Weiseman Art Museum. They had on loan an immense canvas (12’ by 18’) by Douglas Argue, “Untitled.” It’s a painting of chickens in cages in a factory farm. Because of the way the vanishing point extends way down the aisle of cages, it is as though we are standing in the midst of these captive chickens and their captivity goes on forever. As Derrida says in *The Animal that therefore I am* (more to follow) “Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries.” The painting isn’t truly realistic in that the chickens themselves aren’t bloodied or injured or as crowded as they are in true industrialized farming situations and yet the painting shows us another way to encounter what is happening to animals.

I’d also argue that graphic imagery isn’t needed at all. Though Coetzee asserts we change because we got to know an animal, not because we read books, I would challenge him on this account. He says,

We (participants in this dialogue) are where we are today not because once upon a time we read a book that convinced us that there was a flaw in the thinking underlying the way that we, collectively, treat nonhuman

animals, but because in each of us there took place something like a conversion experience...Our conversion experience as often as not centered on some other mute appeal of the kind that Levinas calls the look, in which the existential autonomy of the Other became irrefutable — irrefutable by any means, including rational argument. (in Cavalieri, p. 90)

Now I don’t disagree with Coetzee that many people experience consciousness changing as a result of a relationship with an animal or animals (that is one aspect of the feminist care tradition in animal ethics that Josephine Donovan and I discuss in the anthology by that name and, of course, that is how I changed), but I know first hand that when people read books they can be changed. I hear from people almost daily about how reading *The Sexual Politics of Meat* changed their lives. And I suspect Coetzee, as an author himself, has heard similar attestations. There are multiple ways to change consciousness.

I would love to co-curate a show called “the sexual politics of meat” that gathered many of the negative images that I have collected as well as art like Sue Coe’s and other’s that resists the hegemonic world view, and in the space, create an environment for experiencing and reflecting on interconnected oppressions, and ways that we can resist it. Since I’m daydreaming here, I’d place it on the Turbine level of the Tate Modern or at the Hammer museum at UCLA.

**Potts:** *In your opinion, what does an effective visual campaign against animal exploitation involve?*

**Adams:** I don’t think there is any one way to come to consciousness about animals, which I presume is the usual motivation behind visual campaigns against animal exploitation.

I think the question is: How do we believe change happens? Do we need visual campaigns to succeed? Maybe our problem is that as a visual culture we are so hooked to visual solutions that we don’t see other possibilities. In *Living Among Meat Eaters* I propose that meat eaters are blocked vegetarians/vegans. (Whether this is actually true or not, acting as though it is true has changed how I relate and reach out to meat eaters.) Basically, people don’t want to give up their privilege; after all inequality is tasty. I like addressing the “blocked” aspect of the situation. What’s keeping you blocked? Confused notions of change? Confused notions of veganism. Realistically, here in the United States, if the United States government simply stopped subsidizing meat eating and dairy products, it would become exponentially so much more expensive that people would decide to consider veganism!

It seems PETA and other animal rights organizations assume we have to converse (often with

great urgency) with the left brain to bring about change. Often the approach is something like this: "Don't you know? Why can't you see! Do it now! This is urgent!" People resist being told what to do and they want to decide for themselves what is urgent. They automatically resist the message. I like to find ways around that resistance. I offer one-liners that keep people thinking, answers like "we don't eat anyone who had a mother," or "we don't eat anyone who has bowel movements." I also believe good vegan meals provided in non-stressful situations communicate a great deal on their own, and allow the person to incubate these ideas. I believe in the power of incubation and that we should structure campaigns that assume people can be reached through incubating ideas.

I had been resisting answering this interview for more than a month. Then I travelled out of town to show *The Sexual Politics of Meat Slide Show* and I did what I always do – the next day I went to the art galleries in the town. As always, it widened my sense of the world. And that's when I realized I hadn't been resisting, I had been incubating my answers!

**Potts:** *Animal activist artists may also incorporate the bodies of dead animals in their politicized work. For example, New Zealand-based Angela Singer performs what she terms 'de-taxidermy' in her art; this process involves peeling back fur and skin on hunting trophies to expose where bullet holes have been deliberately hidden by a taxidermist. Singer's works overtly draw attention to the ways in which animals who have been shot or trapped suffer at the hands of hunters. She has also shown how possums, demonized as 'pests' and killed without compassion in New Zealand, endure great pain when poisoned with toxins such as 1080; to this end, Singer places funereal beads on parts of a possum's body where a traumatic injury or disease process is obvious, again to highlight the intense suffering inherent in so-called 'possum control' campaigns in New Zealand. Do you have any objection to art such as this? (If so, why? If not, why not?)*

**Adams:** I've followed her career for a while and find it fascinating and important. (And I should acknowledge she used quotes from *The Sexual Politics of Meat* [as well as quotes from other writers] in her 2002 MFA Show *Wild-deer-ness*). I think she, like Beckett in *Not I*, creates ways to explore violation without motivating the act of violation. She also demonstrates how to engage with the issue of human-animal relations, and animality, without requiring any more deaths. Singer does not participate in what J. M. Coetzee's (2003) Elizabeth Costello calls "an enterprise without end, self regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock, ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them." I like the way in which she creatively recycles the dead body to re-animate the issue of the structure of making an animal absent (bullet holes, what animals experience who have been shot or trapped).

Earlier I suggested that the difference between reification and consuming dead animals is that the

anxiety against reification contains within it the possibility of reversing reification, but an animal once dead cannot be restored to life. Singer situates herself in such a way as to show us another way. As I have suggested, she provides ways to engage with animals' death without motivating the death. She takes the will to be dominant out of the equation. Earlier, I also quoted Scholtmeijer as saying "we have a liking for the effect of animals upon our thoughts, as long as they do not challenge their instrumentality as mediators of culture." Besides not motivating their death, Singer allows animals to challenge their instrumentality. I think she is doing something akin to what we see developing in and against vivisection: Technological advances have created alternative, non-animal methods, including "computerized modeling and predication systems... genetically engineered cell lines, X-ray assays, batteries of human skin and tissue cultures, epidemiological studies of populations, and carefully controlled clinical trials." (1997: 136). There is no need to require new animal deaths. Artists have new mediums, too, as technology continues to change (creating art on iPhones etc.), or by hunting through the trash (as Singer does), so when artists stick to imposing or requiring the death of an animal, it makes me curious. Why, now, participate in this regressive activity? What is being compensated for?

Looking at Singer's work, she shows us a transpecies ethics — in which we encounter animals subject to subject.

**Potts:** *In his research on the New Carnivore movement, New Zealand scholar Jovian Parry has shown how recent popular TV shows for 'foodies' – such as Gordon Ramsay's The F Word and Jamie Oliver's Fowl Dinners – graphically flaunt the killing and consumption of pigs, calves and turkeys personally raised by and known to the celebrity chefs. Parry argues such shows seek to impress upon viewers that in order to be authentic consumers and true gastronomes they must know about, accept as 'natural', and even actively participate in, the taking of lives for food. In your view, how does the New Carnivore movement – and its links to shows such as The F Word – impact on the notion of the 'absent referent'? What worries you about this?*

In the introduction to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, I say that "When there is anxious masculinity, there will be manifestations of meat eating." The need to reassure masculinity is an unstated project of these television shows — a sort of desperate rebuilding of the carnophallogocentric subject. They want one sort of honesty (killing) and hide behind a greater dishonesty. The need to make the kill present is a hypermasculine reinscription of the sexual politics of meat.

Of course, everyone seems to prefer to define "natural" according to what they wish to do. What, after all, makes the killing of animals "natural"? Plutarch points out that people do not have bodies equipped for eating flesh from a carcass, "no curved beak, no sharp talons

and claws, no pointed teeth." In *The Sexual Politics of Meat* I quote Plutarch's taunt to his readers in "Essay on Flesh Eating": If you believe yourselves to be meat eaters, "then, to begin with, kill yourself what you wish to eat — but do it yourself with your own natural weapons, without the use of butcher's knife, or axe, or club" (1883: 47-48). We have no bodily agency for killing and dismembering the animals we eat; we require implements. The essence of butchering is to fragment the animal into pieces small enough for consumption. Implements are the simulated teeth that rip and claws that tear. Hannah Arendt claims that violence always needs implements. (1970:4) So to begin with, the violence in these television remains is implemental violence. Without implemental violence, would human beings be able to eat dead animals? They would be scavengers of dead flesh left by carnivores or consumers of insects — which is how scholars think human beings began as meat eaters. Is that, then, what is "natural"?

At this point, veganism has shown we can survive without animals and we can do it well; the food is good, etc. Vegans might claim this is what is "natural." But I think it is useless to play the game of staking a claim for the "natural" in a world so culturally overdetermined.

Implements remove the referent. For most eaters of dead animals, the structure of the absent referent means that the killing of the animals is off stage. But the structure of the absent referent does not require that the killing be off stage; it requires that the animals' life be subordinate to a human's desire. The structure of the absent referent renders the idea of individual animals as immaterial to anyone's selfish desires for consumption. In fact, looking at a living being as a disposable life initiates the process. Killing an animal onscreen or in your own kitchen participates in the structure of the absent referent because it makes the animal as an individual disappear. Someone becomes something — that could be one definition of the structure of the absent referent.

In the taking of the animal's life these television chefs participate in the structure of the absent referent, especially if, after the killing, the animal's dead body is referred to by words that objectify and fragment the body, i.e., if after the death, the animal is now known only through his or her body parts (wings, rack, breasts, hamburger, etc.) That is yet another aspect of the structure of the absent referent.

So, a sophisticated analysis might begin by saying "the structure of the absent referent is xyz, (the literal death of the animal, the hiding of the facts of that death, the lifting of the animals' death to a higher meaning through metaphor and consumption). With these television shows, we see x and z still functioning (the objectifying, the eating of a dead object) but y isn't absent; it has been made demonstrably present (the death isn't hidden). Why "y"? And the answer turns on the issue of the instantiation of the human male subject. I think this approach is helpful when we consider artists who use living or dead animals in their art, too.

We then see that these activities — killing as spectacle, eating as spectacle, displaying dead bodies — are a human imperialism of the gaze.

***Potts: If in another twenty years you are revising The Sexual Politics of Meat again, what would you hope to be able to add to that future edition?***

Before I directly answer that question let me tell you about one way I became involved in an artist's envisioning of the future. In October 2008, I experienced the installation of *TH.2058* by Dominique Gonzales-Foerster. It was part of the Unilever Series at the Tate Modern, and had just opened. She imagined a future London where climate change (in this case, nonstop rain), has prompted the creation of an urban "ark" (my interpretation). Her explanation, "As well as erosion and rust, [urban sculptures] have started to grow like giant, thirsty tropical plants, to become even more monumental. In order to hold this organic growth in check, it has been decided to store them in the Turbine Hall, surrounded by hundreds of bunks that shelter — day and night — refugees from the rain." Amongst sculptures by Bourgeois (her famous *Maman*), Calder, Moore, etc., were the bed bunks, and on the bed bunks were books by Bradbury, Borges, LeGuin, Wells, etc. I haven't read all the books she included, but clearly they, like the installation, imagined a future world. She concludes her statement saying, "In the huge collective shelter that the Turbine Hall has become, a fantastical and heterogeneous montage develops, including sculpture, literature, music, cinema, sleeping figures and drops of rain."

At ground level, being among all this, the coherence of her piece was not so clear. Walking through it, people would stop and sit on the bunks and thumb through the books. During this trip to Scotland and England, when I visited a vegetarian restaurant, I would give them a copy of my book *Living Among Meat Eaters*. I had two copies left; one was going to be hand delivered to Rootmaster the next day.

My partner came up to me and said, "Do you have copies of your book with you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, leave it on one of these bunks that doesn't have a book."

I was astonished at the idea, but also intrigued. I headed toward the exit, where there was less light. My partner said, "No, not there. Put it up where there's light. Just sit down on one of the bunks." B. walked forward toward the center of the exhibit. As I wrote in my journal the next day, "I walked into the lighted area, but didn't have the ovaries to go into the heavily trafficked area. Book in hand, I sat down on one of the things and flipped through it. Then I put it down."

Meanwhile, B. was calling to me to come nearer. I shook my head. Thinking I had lost my nerve, B came back to where I sat. I gestured to the book on the bench and then B. understood, I had already inserted my book into the exhibit.

As we walked out of the Tate Modern, B. reflected, “It’s guerilla art. I bet they have a stack of books to put out if some of these walk away. You have more exposure here than you would at a veg. restaurant.”

Now I could rationalize this and say “I imagine a different world, too, one without oppression.” But neither my partner nor I truly grasped the dystopian situation Gonzales-Foerster was presenting. There were books on bed bunks, add another one. And so I did. But it, too, is a vision of a future, a future without meat eaters.

I know that the cultural transformations that we are working for will take longer than 20 years (unless a few more e. coli scares as well as a few scares from other zoonotic diseases linked to meat eating [“factory farm” influenzas] actually awaken self interested meat eaters to what they are doing). But to answer your question, what would I hope to add to a future edition of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*? I’m going to assume that a real transformation of our culture has occurred and our culture no longer confirms the claims I make in that book. I’d love to be able to say: Look at how human subjects used to constitute themselves — through objectification of others. Consider how consumption used to work to confirm a certain kind of subject, a dominating one. I am heartened by the changes that have occurred in the past twenty years that have released animals and nondominant humans, especially women (whose sexual servitude seemed to have been assimilated into a postmodern ethos with little disturbance) from their role as objects for the privileged human subject. What was all the fuss about anyway? Why was it always seen as a deprivation? Like equality, vegan food is great! Yes, it’s hard to understand now how worked up people got at the idea they had to give up eating animals and animal products! Ultimately it wasn’t about taste. It was always about their sense of self, their sense of entitlement and privilege. Taste changes easier than our self-definitions.

It isn’t remarkable that artists were a part of this transformation, but let’s take a moment and acknowledge that epochal moment when artists stopped using animals for their own artistic “oink.”

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