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# **Journal for Critical Animal Studies**

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## EDITORIAL

Each year the critical animal studies literature continues to develop in new and exciting directions. Wherever possible the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* has always sought to publish submissions that are contributing - and thus situated - at the very cutting edge of this burgeoning literature. In addition to this we are committed to promoting those fresh, distinct and unique voices that lie beyond the traditional walls of academia - and seek innovative ways to solicit contributions from a broad range of non-academic communities, groups and activists. To help encourage this diversity we invite a wide range of submissions that go well beyond traditional essay based formats, in the hope that this may capture a broader diversity of authors (and readers). I would like to think that the spirit of this approach and commitment has been highly rewarded in recent years, and it is captured in the diversity and rigour evident throughout the content of this issue.

The Issue begins with two **Essays**. The first of these, "*Resisting the Globalization of Speciesism: Vegan Abolitionism as a Site for Consumer-Based Social Change*" is written by Corey Lee Wrenn. Drawing on an extensive literature, Corey focuses on a series of interconnected critical animal issues as they are influenced by the contested realities of globalization. Here Corey develops a range of well-presented, highly persuasive themes and arguments that demonstrate (in part) how globalization has exacerbated speciesism through the ever widening commodification of non-human animal life. Following a critique of the (global) commodification process, and the implications that arise from this, the paper helpfully focuses on the impact and legitimacy of vegan abolitionism as an effective resistance movement to globalized speciesism.

The second excellent essay is written by Lauren Corman. In "*Getting Their Hands Dirty: Raccoons, Freegans, and Urban Trash*", Lauren expertly unpacks the shared nature(s) of the social and culturally constructed vilification that (human) freegans, and (non-human) raccoons endure (as pests, vermin etc.). The narrative is as clear and accessible as the critique is deep and hard-hitting. Happily, there is much to be found in the content of this essay that complements the central arguments harnessed in Corey Wrenn's essay, not least in the discussion of freeganism as a challenge to consumerism, but also later when focusing on how

"Raccoons and freegans disrupt and reroute state-regulated and socially-sanctioned food pathways." Importantly, Lauren argues, there is much to be gained by seeking a better - more critical - understanding of these vilified groups not least in affording insight into "radically different ways of understanding and being in the city".

"*Plattered Beings*" by Alejandra Maria Bozzolasco is the solitary **Poetry** contribution for this issue. With echoes of Alice Walker's famous observation, "We are one lesson", the poem explores, through superb, haunting and unflinchingly direct imagery, the invisible reality of violence, suffering and sense of outrage that is present whenever other animals are killed - and quite literally torn apart - to be consumed by humans. As Alejandra acknowledges, this poem stands not only as an outcry for other animals but also as a creative catharsis for self.

Paul C. Gorski's "*Strategic Oppositionality to the Animal Rights "Antis": Identity-Building and the United States Sportsmen's Alliance*" is published in the **Strategy and Tactic** section. Here, Paul explores the strategic formation of organizational identity with direct reference to the United States Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA). What follows are intelligent, nuanced and critical readings of the ways in which the USSA successfully continues to promote itself by harnessing itself in opposition to animal rights "antis". This approach has obvious highly significant implications for animal rights and liberatory movements, and Paul takes time to reflect openly on what these implications are, as well as suggesting constructive ways in which this oppositionality may be successfully confronted and de-constructed.

The **Interview** is conducted between Jon Hochsartner and the long standing animal activist Josh Harper. Through asking a range of thoughtful, interesting, timely, and highly relevant questions Jon allows a meaningful, insightful and critical exchange to be brought to the fore. The result in a fascinating and rich interview, which gives fresh insight not only into the ideas and experiences of Josh, and the challenges he faces, but also offers considered reflection on a broader set of issues and changes that have occurred across both space and time (reflecting on the changes in the animal rights movement since the 1970s).

This issue sees the inclusion of a new and valuable **Open Data** section. In this section we publish a succinct report that focuses on all the "*United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Recalls from 2006-2010*". The data has been provided by Carol L Glasser in her capacity as the research director of The Human Research Council (HRC). A lengthy

discussion about the importance of such data, and the methodology that underpins it is also provided by Carol. It is hoped that these statistics and collective insights will be applied constructively within and beyond the academy to help further the twin goals of animal rights and animal liberation.

Jessica Gröling provides the **Conference Review** for this issue. Focusing on the "*International Rights Conference held in Luxembourg*" in May 2011 Jessica highlights the main speakers; includes broad summaries about the nature of the conference; and pays close reflective attention to the key themes that were introduced and explored. The result is an extremely articulate and insightful review that will make for interesting and informative reading for many, not least for those who didn't get to attend the conference.

In the **Film Reviews** section, Adam Weitzenfeld presents a highly favourable review of the 1996 HBO documentary "*To Love or Kill: Man vs. Animal*". While noting some unfortunate gaps in the film - for example, a lack of explicit discussion of the intersectional nature of oppression - Adam argues that the film does an excellent job of highlighting the institutionalization of speciesism in myth, tradition, and political economy. Indeed Adam contends that the film offers "perhaps the greatest and most accessible prompt for a complete rethinking of contemporary human-animal relations": high praise indeed.

Carol L. Glasser reviews another documentary film, the 2010 "*Vanishing of the Bees*". While arguing that the film is a "must-see", Carol critically exposes some of the glaring weaknesses that are overlooked by the film makers. Most disappointingly perhaps the film fails to develop any critical arguments that would focus on the bees *intrinsic* qualities associated with being subjects-of-a-unique-life and thus mount a challenge to the speciesist's *instrumental* valuing of bees (i.e. as purely a means to human ends). However, the strengths of the film - and its potential appeal to a range of audiences (community, high school and college classes etc.) - are significant enough to recommend viewing.

The **Book Reviews** begin with an honest, insightful and critical review by Colin Salter focused "*The Vegan Revolution,...with Zombies*". Colin concludes that the book has all the necessary qualities that are associated with the most important literature, gauged in its ability to influence readers on many different levels, and also to cause the reader to fundamentally question and re-consider their own worldviews.

The second review by Hilary Malatino, explores: "*The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory 20th Anniversary Edition*". Focusing on 'Carnophallogocentrism and The Sexual Politics of Meat', and incorporating infamous examples in the recent past (Lady Gaga's meat dress for example) Hilary harnesses an extremely interesting, challenging and timely review of Carol Adams's influential text. Drawing on an impressive range of authors and philosophers, this review firmly supports the notion that the Sexual Politics of Meat is at least as relevant to the contemporary world as it was when it was first published though perhaps, Hilary would argue, for different reasons.

In "*Muzzling a Movement: The Effects of Anti-terrorism Law, Money & Politics on Animal Activism*" Melanie Wellsmith finds the book to be well written, accessible and clearly presented. Orientated around analysing post 9/11 U.S. 'eco-terror laws' generally, and through the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act in particular, the book successfully addresses the key contribution that it seeks to make. Hence it becomes an important book on many levels, not least by encouraging readers to think more deeply and more critically about broader socio-political considerations. Beyond this, it also forces individuals to question the implications of freedom in light of the repressive legal restrictions that have been ushered in through anti-terror legislation.

Piers Bierne's "*Confronting Animal Abuse: Law, Criminology and Human-Animal Relationships*" is reviewed by Jennifer Gannett. Impressed by the scope and depth of the book, and thus finding it a wonderful resource of context and information, Jennifer argues that this makes an important addition to the burgeoning literature on human-animal relationships. Indeed the key themes and arguments presented in the book force us continually to challenge our own assumptions and beliefs and allow us to gain new and deeper insights not only into ourselves but into the human condition more broadly. Thus it allows us to think actively about how to better present ourselves in a way that can more effectively influence the human-animal relationships in the world at large. It is certainly a book that deserves to be read as widely as possible.

The final book review is by Steve Remanin who focuses on "*Critical Theory and Animal Liberation*" (edited by John Sanbonmatsu). The review is highly favourable, and Steve draws particular attention to the way in which the book successfully applies critical perspectives in



political and social thought to the question of our relationships with other animals. This, he argues, is an extremely important intervention, giving much needed direction to 'left' political traditions as well as broader animal liberation movements. While noting problematic gaps, the omission of overt critical race or queer theory perspectives for example, Steve considers this an "invaluable" multidisciplinary text for scholars, students, or anybody interested in critical animal studies.

With a brief overview regarding the content of this issue now in hand, I hope that you enjoy the rest of this regular JCAS issue and uncover many things of interest, importance and critical insight.

**Richard J White**

**Editor-in-Chief**

## **ESSAYS**

### **Resisting the Globalization of Speciesism: Vegan Abolitionism as a Site for Consumer-Based Social Change**

**Corey Lee Wrenn<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Abstract**

Globalization has exacerbated speciesism both socially and economically. Veganism and its subsequent labeling schemes have arisen as an important political site of resistance to growing non-human animal inequality. This paper explores globalization's impact on non-human animals, veganism and vegan labeling, as well as important divides within the modern non-human animal rights movement in regards to utopian and pragmatic approaches to alleviating growing speciesism.

#### **Keywords**

Globalization, veganism, labeling, animal rights movement

#### **Introduction**

Globalization is a hugely contested idea (Held and McGrew, 1999; McMichael, 2008; Steger, 2009). How it is defined and whether or not it is a new phenomenon are two of many debates within the discourse (Steger, 1999). Just as varied as the conceptualizations of globalization are claims to the impacts it is having. Transformed connectedness, the spread of capitalism, (Giddens, 1990), technological change, the acceleration of consumption, and the uneven access to resources (Harvey, 1989) are some of many observations used to identify the phenomenon of globalization. It is sometimes described as an internationalization, Westernization, modernization, or respatialization (Held and McGrew, 1999). Despite various conceptualizations, there is some consensus among scholars that globalization has

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significantly challenged or restructured social, economic, and political spheres both locally and internationally (Raynolds, 2009; Steger, 1999).

Often, globalization is associated with deepening global capitalism (Hoogvelt, 2001) and the global spread of neo-liberalism (Held and McGrew, 1999). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western capitalist ideals in regards to *lassiez-faire* economic conditions had expanded to create a capitalist global economy with an international division of labor (Hoogvelt, 2001). Based on Adam Smith's concept of the invisible hand (Smith, 1776), it is argued that participants who act self interestedly in the economy with little government interference ultimately benefit all of society. The neoliberal perspective recognizes that this system does create inequality, but that inequality also promotes hard work, talent, and ingenuity. While inequality may persist, the overall well-being for participants will be improved (Firebaugh and Goesling, 2004). Yet, critics, particularly of the Marxist tradition, argue that preexisting inequalities are exacerbated, unequally distributed (Stiglitz, 2002), and informed by historical situations of third world dependence on Western nations: "[ . . . ] at all times, and at all levels, the 'invisible' hand was guided and steered by politics and power, and that it always, and indeed cumulatively so, ended up in the concentration of wealth and prosperity for some people in some places, while causing abject misery, poverty and appalling subjugation for a majority of people in most other places" (Hoogvelt, 2001: 15). Free-trade neoliberalism, it is argued, suppresses government through corporate power and creates significant deprivation for many within the system (Chomsky, 1999).

When defining and discussing globalization, we generally do so in reference to human animals. Yet, non-human animals, too, are experiencing much of this phenomenon and are arguably the most impacted by exacerbated inequalities created under neoliberal globalization. Global meat production has increased more than five-fold since 1950 (Nierenberg, 2003). Two-thirds of the increase in meat consumption in 2002 occurred in the developing world (Nierenberg, 2003). In 2009 alone, almost 57 billion non-human animals were slaughtered (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009). This figure is not accounting for aquatic non-humans or the exploitation of those not immediately killed for their products. Other non-human animal industries are expanding as well. Fur sales have increased in Russia, China, and Korea, creating new markets for U.S. and Canadian pelts (Dasgupta, 2006). In another example, Humane Society International reports a surge in developing countries for marine parks which rely on captive marine mammals to draw audiences (2010).

Under neoliberal capitalism, non-human animals are generally understood only as commodities. However, because non-human animals are also sentient, their plight warrants immediate attention. Consequently, this commodification, or the objectification of bodies and labor into products, is increasingly recognized as misplaced and has triggered a consumer backlash. This discontent with non-human animals as commodities and property has been enveloped by the newly established vegan abolitionist movement (Francione, 1996a; Torres, 2007). Increasingly, those in the West who have turned to veganism have done so for ethical reasons (Maurer, 2002) and those who have turned to abolitionism as well are interested in the complete cessation of non-human animal use and exploitation (Francione, 1996a).

This paper will examine how globalization has impacted non-human animal inequality insofar as it has been exacerbated by the global deepening of neoliberal capitalism. It will explore vegan abolitionism as a bottom-up, consumer-based resistance movement responding to increasing inequality. It will also briefly examine the present discourse between utopian and pragmatic approaches within the non-human animal rights movement. Vegan abolitionism challenges pragmatic, mainstream welfarist reform and envisions a critical utopia where there is no exploitation or use of non-human animals. It is argued that the increasing use of non-human animals is one of the most critical consequences of globalization and requires sincere attention. It is also argued that veganism offers an important site of resistance to globalization's negative influence. Specifically, vegan abolitionism is the most appropriate approach as it seriously considers our moral obligation to non-human animals and adopts an incremental, vegan consumption-based action towards ending non-human animal use altogether.

For the purposes of this paper, veganism will be defined as an ideological belief that the abstinence of non-human animals' use has the power to liberate non-human animals (McGrath, 2000). Furthermore, this paper's use of the term speciesism will be guided by Ryder's understanding: "Our moral argument is that species alone is not a valid criterion for cruel discrimination. Like race or sex, species denotes some physical and other differences but in no way does it nullify the great similarity among all sentients [sic]—our capacity for suffering" (1989: 6). In other words, speciesism is discrimination based on species membership which fails to recognize equality of sentience.

## **Globalization and Speciesism**

As previously discussed, globalization is defined and conceptualized in various and in sometimes competing ways. Most scholars agree that globalization represents significant technological change and an intensification of connectivity that influences social, economic, and political realm with uneven reach and results (Raynolds, 2009). Because this article examines the commodification of non-human animals and consumer resistance, the conception of globalization as a deepening of neoliberal global capitalism will be utilized.

Hoogvelt (2001) distinguishes four major periods of capitalist expansion which influences modern understandings of globalization. The Mercantile phase from approximately 1500 to 1800 was characterized by European expansion and plundering as Western powers searched for gold, spices, and slaves in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Colonial period, from 1800 to 1950, was defined by Western imperialism and the creation of third world dependency relations on first world nations. The Neocolonial period from about 1950 to 1970 saw reinvigorated colonization through developmental projects. Here modernization theories emerged seeking to develop third world nations according to the Western model. Dependency theories also emerged that recognized the importance of imperialism in perpetuating poverty and stagnating economies in third world nations. The Postimperialism period from approximately 1970 to today is characterized by the perpetuation of peripheral dependence on the core through debt. Furthermore, this period has seen a new international division of labor whereby newly-industrializing economies are more intensively integrated into the world market while other peripheral nations are marginalized (Hoogvelt, 2001). The failure of the world capitalist system in expanding the market in the periphery in the 1970s and 1980s led to crises in capitalism and a reconfiguration of the capitalist model (Hoogvelt, 2001). New technologies and production paradigms meant a switch from the mass production and accumulation of Fordism to a global economy that valued knowledge and information (Hoogvelt, 2001). Global market exchange, then, is not a new phenomenon. Furthermore, current global inequalities are part of an ongoing historical project of Western domination. Globalization can thus be conceptualized as the next phase of world capitalism whereby capitalist integration is deepening (Hoogvelt, 2001). It is a new development promoted by nation-states designed to reinvigorate accumulation (Gritsch, 2005).

Held and McGrew (1999) also define globalization as a stretching of political and economic activities. Others emphasize the sharp increase in connectedness, technologies, and information (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989). Non-human animal agriculture has been heavily influenced by these trends. Following World War II, the American fascination with industrialization and the rise of Fordist production systems led to a corporate domination of agriculture and an emphasis on efficiency and productivity (Rollin, 2006). This, in turn, led to a dramatic increase in non-human animal production and cemented the commodity status of non-human animal labor and life. Unfortunately, this capitalist focus on efficiency and productivity coupled with the commodification of non-human animals is becoming a global phenomenon.

Societal reactions to these changes range from isolationism to conformity. However, there is some evidence that a global culture is emerging (Feathersone, 1990; Steger, 2009). These new cultures are globally conscious and meld traditional and modern, moving towards cultural homogeneity in response to the tension of globalization (Featherstone, 1990: 1). In India, for example, the influence of Western lifestyles has dramatically increased the institution of pet ownership. However, the Western pet food industry has had to alter pet food to meet Indian vegetarian standards before import (Sangeetha, 2009). Also in India, Western fast food chain McDonald's is catering to Indian vegetarianism and does not sell pork or beef (Petrin, 2007).

Unfortunately, these compromises have not led to a global culture that is in anyway morally obligated to non-human animals. The Western-influenced Indian pet industry, for example, reinforces the ideology that non-human animals are property and pet ownership has increased. Pet overpopulation in India is at a critical point (PETA, ~2009) with over 30 million street dogs and numerous human deaths from rabies (Falconer, 2009). Similarly, the compromise nurtured by McDonald's India is cause for concern. While no McDonald's in India sells beef or pork and in lieu of vegetarian entrees, the chain has supplemented its menu with chicken products (Petrin, 2007). And, increasingly, chicken is not seen as contradictory with the Indian vegetarian diet (Kala, 2005). This creation and exacerbation of a demand for chicken flesh spells disaster for the billions of chickens who must suffer and die to meet that demand. Between 2000 and 2005, chicken consumption in India doubled (Kala, 2005). Beyond McDonald's influence, the Indian vegetarian diet in general is under attack: "Home to over 90% of the world's Hindus, Hinduism is the world's only major religion with a streak of vegetarianism. But globalisation [sic] is changing that, as Indian food habits move in tune with a meat-eating world" (Kara, 2005). Additionally, beyond rising meat consumption, the

reliance on non-flesh non-human animal products is on the rise also mirroring the Western diet (Kala, 2005). India is now the largest dairy producer in the world (Thakkar, 2009).

Reinforcing the socio-cultural aspect, globalization and speciesism are intrinsically linked to the economy. As previously discussed, many scholars argue that a neoliberal global common market has materialized which has meant the spread of capitalism and inherent inequalities (Giddens, 1990; Hoogvelt 2001; Steger, 2009): “Neo-liberalism has indeed used the tools provided by generic globalization to construct a global system of domination” (Evans, 2008: 275). And, while the actual state of inequality for humans resulting from globalization is in debate (Held and McGrew, 1999), there can be no question that non-human animals are suffering a dramatic increase in inequality based on the dramatic increase in numbers used and slaughtered.

Non-human animals are exploited in two ways: their labor is exploited (in the form of wool, honey, reproductive excretions such as milk or eggs, etc.) and they themselves become commodities (in the form of their flesh, as companions, etc.) (Torres, 2007). The extraction of surplus value from the labor and lives of non-human animals is foundational to many aspects of the current global economy. In 2004, the top fifteen dairy industries, both global and regional, brought in almost 100 billion in sales (Blayney et al., 2006). In 2006, the global production of eggs had risen to 65 million tons (Sluis, 2008). In less direct ways, the exploitation of non-human animals is realized through the grain industry, the automobile industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and so forth:

[...] if we scratch the surface of common aspects of our society, we see animals commodified, and this and hidden and obscured as part of the ideological machinery of capitalism. [...] Behind these seemingly everyday products is a vast array of hidden institutional, cultural, and economic logics that depend on the exploitation of animals to produce a profit. (Torres, 2007: 55)

Furthermore, this growing economic reliance on non-human animals is beyond coincidental or natural, but rather, it could be seen as a product of global power differentials and Western domination.

Following World War II, the United States food-aid regime pushed overproduced, subsidized commodities onto third world nations. This challenged viability and profitability of local food production in these third world nations, creating a food dependency on the United States and transforming traditional diets (McMichael, 2008). In particular, the United States glut in cheap grains intended for non-human animal feed created a growing reliance on non-human animal consumption in areas previously absent of such markets. United States

policy furthered this growing dependence by funding local development in non-human animal production in third world countries to provide greater markets for this surplus grain (Insel, 1985). So, rather than a simple reflection of growing affluence in third world countries, the growth in non-human animal use is largely a result from Western manipulation and domination: “[...] dietary differentiation reflects who controls production of certain foods [...]” (McMichael, 2008: 75).

Thus, non-human animals have become increasingly integral to much of the global economy as part of Western cultural expansion and deliberate food dependency. Polanyi (1957), however, argues that this globalizing neoliberal system and its perpetuation of exploitation is problematic, as the market is not serving society, but rather society is serving the market. This system fails to mitigate risks or offer social protection (Evans, 2008). The neo-liberal paradigm argues that welfare programs and other civic services that might be provided by the state interfere with economic activity and should be privatized (Jessop, 1993). Instead, the state should function only to manage territories and uphold optimal economic conditions. Central to Polanyi’s analysis of neoliberal failure is the commoditization of that which cannot, or should not, be treated as though it could be exchanged (Evans, 2008). He points to land, labor, and money as the primary market commodities that are not true commodities and are thus fictitious (Polanyi, 1944). A hyper focus on the market can lead to a commodification of the fictitious (in this case, the lives and labor of non-human animals). It can also lessen protection for important social issues (in this case, mass non-human animal exploitation) and increase inequality. As a result, fictitious commodification, he argues, sparks resistance from below.

New social movements have arisen to address the social shortcomings, economic weaknesses, and political issues raised by globalization. These movements are characterized by a criticism of the economic focus, social injustices, and hierarchies created by globalization. Concerned with global justice, these movements question dominant values and power relations (McMichael, 2008) and are a representation of changing popular forces and an inevitable social response to neoliberalism (Amoore et al., 2006). Because the state and the economy are so closely intertwined, it is argued by some that political resistance must necessarily arise from civil society (Amoore et al, 2006; Francione, 2009a).



## **The Vegan Movement: A Bottom-Up, Consumer-based Site of Resistance**

In response to this rapidly expanding speciesism, the vegan abolition movement (as distinct from those who adopt veganism for reasons of health, trend, etc.) has become a pertinent social movement concerned with the neglected rights of non-human animals and functions as a consumer-based site of resistance. While in various points of Western history, many groups have abstained from some or all non-human animal products, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that major social and political headway were made in terms of group membership, social acceptance, and law reform (Spencer, 1996). Historically, the Western vegetarian movement did generally eschew the consumption of all non-human animal products, however, modern vegetarianism has come to include non-human animal products and has become less concerned with use (Davis, 2010). Vegetarianism today is focused merely on the exclusion of non-human animal flesh from the human animal diet and is variable in elimination of non-food non-human animal products from consumption patterns (i.e. leather and mainstream toiletries which contain slaughterhouse renderings). Furthermore, vegetarianism does not contend with the ethical problems of dairy and egg industries which continue to entail the exploitation and death of non-human animals and their offspring. The modern vegan movement was initiated with the establishment of The Vegan Society in Britain in 1944 in response to these ethical inconsistencies of vegetarianism (Watson, 1944). Veganism is the abstinence from all non-human animal products and explicitly challenges the property status of non-human animals (Francione, 2008):

As a direct protest against the commodity form and property relations that animals are subject to, it is a great refusal of the system itself, a no-compromise position that does not seek reform, but which seeks abolition. For anyone who wants to end animal exploitation, living as a vegan is living the end that we wish to see—no one will exploit animals for mere choices of taste and convenience. (Torres, 2007: 131)

Veganism in this abolitionist sense, then, directly opposes the commodification of non-human animals and recognizes consumption as a political action. Furthermore, vegans reject “organic” and “humanely-raised” non-human animal products often promoted by the mainstream animal rights movement (Singer and Mason, 2006; Rollin, 2006) as these continue to include the actual consumption of non-human animal products and continue to use non-human animals as resources. Hence, while the vegan abolition movement is certainly concerned with the treatment of non-human animals in the production process, its fundamental concern is with the existence of non-human animal products. Non-human

animal life and labor are seen as fictitious commodities. Therefore, values-based labeling which focuses on process and quality (Barham, 2002) is rejected by veganism as irrelevant (or even counterproductive) to the concern with non-human animal use.

Instead, the vegan movement represents a bottom-up consumer political action: “Veganism [...] is a daily, lived expression of ethical commitment and of protest” (Torres, 2007: 134). Singer and Mason (2006) posit that a mass adoption of veganism could stop the demand for non-human animal products, and cause non-human animal businesses to stop production and shift to new industries. Thus, what we choose to purchase and consume can become an important political act (Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007; Singer and Mason, 2006). Furthermore, by continuing to consume products which represent objectionable ethical practices, the consumer is responsible for upholding that injustice (Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007). Fortunately, it can be argued that the very tools of globalization used for dominance and inequality might also be used to alleviate these problems (Evans, 2008). The interdependence so characteristic of globalization for example, could prove its most important weakness. In this situation, power exists below as it is heavily dispersed and intertwined. Thus consumers have the ability to disrupt the status quo, affect politics, and harness the disruptive potential and the possibility for change inherent to globalization (Piven, 2007). Society, it is argued, can be shaped and benefited by the consumer’s economic vote (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991).

Here the consumer-citizen is engaged in merging economic action with political action in hopes of creating social change with certain choices in consumption (Parker, 1999). To facilitate this consumer-based change, labeling has emerged to indicate products that are free of non-human animal ingredients. Specifically, there is an increase in vegan labeling (Yacoubou, 2006). Established in 1991, the Vegan Society operates the international vegan standard trademark (Figure 1) which requires companies displaying the trademark to adhere to specific criteria such as the abstinence from non-human animal ingredients, testing, genetically modified organisms, and contamination from non-vegan sources in production (The Vegan Society, 2009). Thousands of products sold across the globe are certified for this trademark. While the trademark is registered internationally, producers must trademark on a country by country basis (Therkelsen, 2010). The certified vegan logo (Figure 2) is similarly popular and holds comparable guidelines (Vegan Action, 2009).



Figure 1: The Vegan Society Trademark



Figure 2: Certified Vegan Logo

As there are no federal guidelines or third party certification for vegan labeling, each certification group upholds its own guidelines (Yacoubou, 2006). While the Vegan Society trademark and the Certified Vegan logo are widely used, other smaller scale certifications are utilized. Additionally, grocers and producer are also self-labeling products (Yacoubou, 2006). The current inconsistency between various vegan labels and the ease of circumventing them altogether with self-labeling could become problematic in regards to ingredient accuracy and ethical consistency. Further, the mainstreaming of ethical consumption labeling can be subject to a dilution of moral vision as the project grows (Raynolds, Murray, and Wilkinson, 2007). Despite these concerns, vegan labeling does address the shortcomings of values-based labeling (i.e. Animal Care Certified, Certified Humane, etc.) and assists consumers in avoiding non-vegan products altogether. Further, as globalization exacerbates non-human animal consumption, these labels may hold some transformative potential in guiding consumer choice away from non-human animal products and counter capitalist trends towards the deepening commodification of these animals.

However, consumer-based resistance is argued by some to be counterproductive in that it continues to function within capitalism and supports rather than challenges it (Johnston, 2008). A hyper-focus on consumption can delude social action by overriding initial concerns with citizenship and obligations and responsibilities to society. An example is seen in the emergence of vegetarian sandwiches in some major fast food chain menus. The increased availability, affordability, and convenience of non-meat options in fast food menus might be seen as a way of easing meat eaters into a vegetarian diet (Iacobbo and Iacobbo, 2006). Specifically, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals celebrated the addition of a faux meat sandwich to the menus of Canadian Kentucky Fried Chickens by stationing their scantily-clad “Lettuce Ladies” at KFC restaurants to hand out free samples (The Windsor Star, 2008). KFC and other large fast food chains, of course, still derive the majority of their profit from the exploitation of non-human animals. Efficacy and ethical consistency might be called into question when supporting these restaurant chains with the purchase of any sandwich, vegan or not. It can be argued that, in this instance, useful social action could be overshadowed by an over reliance on the power of consumer choice.

Resistance through consumption has also been criticized in regards to access (Johnston, 2008). Consumer choices, diets, and taste are restrained and influenced by socioeconomic status (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Bourdieu, 1984; Bryant and Goodman, 2004). Middle-class persons are in a better position to afford special diets, and it may be no coincidence that vegetarians and vegans are more likely to be middle class (Maurer, 2002). Certainly, extra cost, time (Singer and Mason, 2006), and inconvenience (Cole, 2006) can impede adoption of veganism for some socioeconomic statuses. It might also remain that the cultural capital conducive to the adoption of veganism is lacking for lower classes or other minorities (Harper, 2010). The vegan abolitionist movement would be wise to meet these challenges to consumer-based resistance and continue public outreach across different socioeconomic strata as to the potential ease, affordability, and palatability of veganism. It would also benefit from the incorporation of reflexive consumer practices which, “[...] offer the prospect of thoughtful, politicized engagement with the food system” (Johnston and Szabo, 2010). This reflexivity can encourage consideration beyond self interest and encourage sincere concern with those negatively impacted by modern food systems and needs not be restricted by socioeconomic status (Johnston and Szabo, 2010).

Given these criticisms, consumer-based action should not be seen as the only site for resistance. For example, some have argued that legislative action to protect non-human animal rights might spur a change in public attitude (McGrath, 2000). Though, this has been disputed by others who argue that law can only be successfully enacted when it reflects preexisting public attitudes (Francione, 1996b). A critical mass of vegans and the discontinued perception of non-human animals as property would be required before law could successfully liberate (Francione, 1996b). Moral shocks (namely graphic narratives or imagery), too, have been employed to draw attention to the need for veganism (DeCoux, 2009; Jasper and Poulsen, 1995). However, the efficacy of such tactics has been called into question. Francione suggests that, while narratives are important, graphic advocacy could turn the public towards welfare reform. If used at all, he argues that narratives must be used in context with abolitionist theory to effectively advocate for an end to non-human animal use (Francione, 2009b). Protests, demonstrations, and open rescues, too, can become counterproductive. These tactics are often focused on one issue, such as fur, meat-free Mondays, or factory farmed chickens. Francione argues that these tactics tend to single out certain types of exploitation as more important than others and undermine the need for complete abolition (Francione, 1996). These types of advocacy, if used at all, must be carefully utilized within abolitionist theory to clarify that all types of animal use are equally

unacceptable and that reform is not the end goal. Beyond these tactics, other forms of direct action, such as leafleting, tabling, speaking engagements, and other forms of public education, have been utilized. Vegan education is necessary to give weight to vegan labeling and vegan consumption. Veganism is inherently involved with the transformation of consumer choices, but activism in the form of vegan outreach and education is critical to recruiting new vegans and addressing potential problems with blind adherence to consumer resistance and socioeconomic barriers.

### **Utopian and Pragmatic Approaches to Globalized Speciesism**

As discussed previously, there are two groups of labeling concerned with non-human animal products: vegan labels and values-based labels (“organic,” “grass-fed,” etc.). The divide between these two types of labeling is indicative of a larger conflict regarding non-human animal welfare. Welfarism, the dominant group, does not necessarily challenge the use of non-human animals or recognize veganism as necessary. Instead, it is concerned with suffering and addresses that suffering with a strategy of institutional reform (and is supportive to values-based labeling) (Francione, 1996a). Welfarism adopts a pragmatic approach, presuming that the present domination of capitalism through neoliberal globalization is the reality of the present and probably the reality of the future (Ball, 2009; De Sousa Santos, 2008; Rollin, 2006).

In opposition, vegan abolitionism challenges the *use* of non-human animals and the subsequent property status of these animals. Strategies of reform are understood to make institutions of non-human animal use more efficient and productive, thus, they are counterproductive to the suffering of non-human animals. Vegan abolitionism also accepts veganism as a necessary baseline (Francione, 1996a).

Standing opposite to welfarism, abolitionism is often negatively contrasted as utopian (Phelps, 2009; Sztybel, 2007). However, vegan abolitionism could be understood as a necessary and critical utopia as it envisions an alternative society: “[...] On the basis of this alternative vision and the credible possibility of fulfilling it, the present is considered as violent, intolerable, and morally repugnant” (De Sousa Santos, 2008: 253). Utopian visions pose a threat to the exploitation and oppression of the established status quo (Moylan, 2000). By these understandings, then, vegan abolition forms in opposition to the gross inequalities suffered by non-human animals and envisions and strives for a world where these animals are

no longer burdened by human exploitation. Veganism speaks to a “[...] utopian moral value of posthumanist/posthuman compassion” (Cole, 2006). As a utopian vision, veganism challenges what we believe to be necessary and absolute in society, offers alternatives, and can be transformative (Cole, 2006). Yet, most welfarism criticizes vegan abolitionism on two major points: we must work to reduce suffering in the here and now and total abolition of non-human animal *use* is an unachievable goal.

It is often argued that total abolitionism will never be attained (Rollin, 2006). Therefore, resources spent towards an unrealistic goal are wasted. Then, if vegan abolitionism is wasting resources, the suffering of presently exploited non-human animals remains unaddressed: “Obviously, McDonald’s is not going to become vegan tomorrow. In the meantime, we can help lessen animals’ suffering by supporting reforms” (Ball, 2009).

Unfortunately, there is little hope of reconciling these two approaches. While it is necessary for the pragmatic approaches to have a utopian vision to incite mobilization and work towards a societal paradigm shift, there is often a sense of urgency which necessitates short term action (De Sousa Santos, 2008). Sadly, welfarism, working under this sense of urgency, fails to address the paradigm shift necessary to truly address non-human animal exploitation. Welfarist short-term action only serves to make non-human animal exploitation more efficient and is thus counterproductive (Francione, 1996a). On the other hand, the vegan abolitionist movement challenges the consistency of short-term welfare reforms which improve productivity and compromise social justice for non-human animals. To address urgency, abolitionism pushes for further vegan education and the subsequent building of a vegan critical mass. A vegan diet, which directly rejects consumption of non-human animal products, is considered immediate action. Any other immediate action must constitute a prohibition which is not constitutive of the exploitative institution and which recognizes a non-institutional non-human animal interest (Francione, 1996a). The vegan-based abolitionist animal rights movement is new and continues to develop. As such it retains potential as a critical utopia, particularly as the pragmatic welfarist approach has failed to achieve significant improvement for non-human animals.

## **Conclusion**

The staggering magnitude of non-human animal exploitation aggravated from globalization’s spreading capitalist neoliberal markets and Western lifestyle norms has caused a societal

backlash in the form of consumer-based resistance. The vegan abolitionist movement has become an important site for this resistance, insisting that every purchase is a political action which can protest or perpetuate the injustices done to non-human animals. Vegan abolitionism in particular has the potential to elaborate a critical utopian vision for the movement but also provides pragmatic, short-term action through consumer choice. The vegan abolitionist movement, as a new social movement, challenges hegemonic discourse and ideology perpetuated by globalization and bridges political action with economic action. Vegan abolition challenges the taken-for-grantedness of neoliberal globalization. It also challenges fictitious commodification of non-human animal life and labor as well as ongoing domination and hierarchies of power. However, the abolitionist movement might improve efficacy and avoid important contradictions by incorporating reflexivity. This reflexivity should recognize the potential capitalist co-option and moral disillusion sometimes connected with movement growth. It should also focus on eroding socioeconomic barriers to participation. Furthermore, vegan abolition could be benefited by beginning to look beyond the consumer vote and embracing non-economic tactics and creative vegan education.

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## **Getting Their Hands Dirty: Raccoons, Freegans, and Urban “Trash”**

**Lauren Corman<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Freegans and raccoons experience social and cultural vilification within North America. Rather than separate phenomena, there is a distinct interdependence of discourses relating to humanity and animality that inform popular constructions of these human and nonhuman urban foragers. Discourses related to pests, vermin, and dirt potentially combine with others about social delinquency, race, and class. Adjacent, maintenance of urban civility and garbage containment is threatened by the physical and symbolic disruption of trash, refigured by freegans and raccoons as food; Western consumption patterns and their excesses are made visible by urban foraging. Such behaviors help inspire questions not only about conventional capitalist foodways but also the problematics of green consumerism.

### **Keywords:**

Raccoons, freegans, consumption, urban foraging, animality, prejudice

### **Introduction**

During the summer of 2005, a local radio show prompted me to investigate the meaning(s) of raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) within urban landscapes. During the call-in program, listeners were invited to share their thoughts about raccoons and the implementation of Toronto’s municipal Green Bin waste management program. I was amazed by the callers’ largely vitriolic responses. Positioned as pests, raccoons were understood as enemies worthy of elimination, a so-called ‘problem’ in need of fixing. Yet, the problem was an old one: the Green Bin Program simply drew the tensions between humans and urban animals into sharper focus.

The Green Bin Program began in 2002 within the Toronto municipality of Etobicoke. By September of 2004, central Toronto residents were introduced to the Program. Initiated

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by the city's Waste Diversion Task Force, the bins were part of a three-pronged plan to eventually eliminate the exportation of 907,000 tonnes of annual garbage to Michigan (City of Toronto, 2010a).<sup>2</sup> Some might guess that such a move to concentrate organic, edible waste<sup>3</sup> would benefit non-human foragers, such as raccoons: making the disposal of organic waste municipally-regulated meant that nonhuman animals could potentially gain greater access to food, as the city-donated bins were placed curbside by residents each week.

Although the public was assured that the bins were raccoon-proof, in practice the metal latches often provided little security. The temptation proved too great for the raccoons, and the challenge of the latches too small. "[E]ven if you're not feeding raccoons on purpose, their lives and livelihoods in our communities are often sustained by one of the City's biggest design backfires: the green bin", claims Clayton (2009: 51). Typical of previous encounters between urban raccoons and 'garbage', many people were aggravated when these night-roamers rummaged through their disposal containers, and scattered the refuse (Sadler, n.d.; Vasil, 2005; Wanagas, 2005). The nature and concentration of the waste made the resulting mess particularly potent and foul. Consequently, a year after the program launch, the "raccoon wars" (Sadler, n.d.) were raging.

To keep raccoons out of the bins, people devised several deterrence strategies, such as fastening the bin lids with bungee cords or packing tape, and applying Lysol or Vicks VapoRub to the containers. These strategies resulted in varying degrees of success. While

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<sup>2</sup> Toronto disposed of its garbage at landfill sites within the province of Ontario until the closing of the city-owned Keele Valley landfill site at the end of 2002. When the Keele Valley site closed, the city was forced to send its garbage to a Michigan landfill site, where the cost of disposal ballooned from \$12 per tonne (at the Keele Valley Site) to \$52 per tonne. In light of such numbers, The Waste Diversion Task Force's 2010 report emphasized both the economic and environmental benefits of Waste Diversion: "It's not only about doing the right thing for the environment but also doing the wise thing for our wallets" (City of Toronto, 2010a).

<sup>3</sup> I refer to a number of different materials under the umbrella term 'waste'. Firstly, there is non-recyclable waste, which could include certain kinds of packaging, plastics, and other inorganic material. Secondly, there is inedible recyclable waste, which includes tin, plastics, cardboard, and paper. Thirdly, there is organic waste, which is collected by the city of Toronto for the Green Bin Program. While these materials may be processed differently, conventionally they are all considered 'waste'.

Toronto citizens embraced the Green Bin Program, with 90% participation from its inception (Sadler, n.d.), accepting raccoons' responses was clearly more difficult, as evidenced by the city-sponsored literature on raccoon-proofing (City of Toronto, 2010b.). As of 2007, the City of Toronto offered a \$9 Green Bin latch lock, to "provide additional security against persistent pests like raccoons" (City of Toronto, 2010b), while the most recent *North York Region Green Bin Newsletter* (City of Toronto, 2006) advises how to "discourage four-legged creatures" from getting at the Green Bin contents.

In part, this essay considers the lives of urban raccoons—designated "trash animals"<sup>4</sup> (Humane Society of the United States, 2009) by some—in order to investigate the negative cultural responses to these frequently maligned creatures. For example, as one irate Torontoist commenter wrote in response to an article about raccoon control, "The best raccoon is one squashed and flattened on the road. I do a little giggle of glee every time I see one dead by the road in the city. Hell, if I had a car, i'd [sic] go trolling for them at night!" (Snailspace quoted in Metzger, 2006). I write the following piece from within Toronto, the so-called "raccoon capital of the world" (Woloshyn, 2011),<sup>5</sup> inspired by the belief that raccoons are part of a shared cityscape; they also lay fair claim to this place.

How might we make sense of the vitriol heaped upon raccoons? I suggest it is useful to contextualize such hatred within a larger discursive framework, wherein anger directed at raccoons is understood within a broader cultural network of prejudice and fear related to

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'trash animal' has a number of contemporary usages. For example, the term is sometimes used to define an animal from a non-targeted and/or 'nongame' wildlife species who is caught through trapping (Humane Society of the United States, 2009), fishing, etc. In relation, 'trash animals' can refer to abundant animals who some people consider worthless and/or vermin, as opposed to desirable game animals. Wolch, Brownlow, and Lassiter point to this latter usage in their summary of Marks' study of hunting culture in rural North Carolina: "so-called 'trash' animals have long been a default form of protein for many local African Americans due to the sequestration of 'legitimate' game animals (e.g., deer, partridge, quail, etc.) by local, often wealthy, white hunting clubs. Animals like opossum, 'coon', and squirrel are generally considered vermin by the dominant Euro-American ideology, more often recognized as roadkill than as something prepared for dinner" (2000, p.79)

<sup>5</sup> There are approximately 14,000 raccoons in Toronto, with an average of ten to twenty per square kilometre, according to Ministry of Natural Resources' scientist Dr. Rosatte (Clayton, 2009).

ideas about humanity and animality that impact humans and nonhumans alike. Consequently, in this essay I address a number of major parallels between raccoons and another commonly disparaged group: freegans<sup>6</sup>. I elucidate how both groups threaten dominant urban consumption patterns and, in relation, explore their cultural vilification. I take up two major lines of inquiry: examining the sometimes-tenuous relationship between humans and raccoons within urban environments, while also exploring urban foraging, in the form of ‘freeganism’, as a political praxis. While I am particularly interested in elucidating the negativity leveraged against raccoons and freegans, I also hope to demonstrate how both groups act as mirror for Western society, reflecting back a complex set of beliefs about ourselves and (human and nonhuman) Others (see also, Arluke and Saunders, 1996).

I draw upon the perspectives of both scholars and freegan activists, as well as commentary from contemporary popular media in Canada and the United States. I primarily employ discourse analysis as a means of paying attention to the ways in which raccoons and freegans are culturally figured. While various academics eloquently write about urban, nonhuman animals (e.g., Griffiths, Poulter, Sibley, 2000; Sabloff, 2001) and freegans (e.g., Gross, 2009; Shantz, 2005), to date none place the two groups in conversation and explore the similarity between their practices and larger cultural responses. Alternatively, as shown below, some freegans offer expressions of solidarity with nonhuman, urban foragers. In contrast, some popular critics also highlight overlaps between freegans and raccoons, but such comparisons are frequently offered as insults. These comparisons take on the usual tone of vilification, as suggestions of freegans’ supposed animalistic debasement and relinquishment of humanity: “To suggest that someone or some group has behaved like an

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<sup>6</sup>The Freegan.info website gives the following definition: “The word freegan is compounded from ‘free’ and ‘vegan’. Vegans are people who avoid products from animal sources or products tested on animals in an effort to avoid harming animals. Freegans take this a step further by recognizing that in a complex, industrial, mass-production economy driven by profit, abuses of humans, animals, and the earth abound at all levels of production (from acquisition to raw materials to production to transportation) and in just about every product we buy.”



animal (or wild beast) is to accuse them of plumbing the very depths of moral degradation: no description could be more damning”, argues Neal (Quoted in Baker, 2001: 89). Yet despite their similarities in behavior or cultural rendering, there are also multiple and important ways that raccoons and freegans differ (such as how they are ultimately valued within an anthropocentric and speciesist human culture and the kinds of recourse they have when harmed). Certainly their own self-understandings are heterogeneous and particular, as are the disparate responses to them. I acknowledge that the complexity of these groups is not fully represented here, and I encourage further critical analysis.

Often considered dirty, disruptive, and conniving freeloaders, either as natural pests or social delinquents respectively, raccoons and freegans continue to pick their way through Western society, valuing what others deem valueless. Waste transforms into food, affluence transforms into excess, and ‘necessary purchases’ transform into choices. The presence of raccoons and freegans uncomfortably reveals ideas such as civility, urban progress and economic inevitability as interrelated constructions, rather than natural realities. Historically-informed prejudice is marshalled to stymie raccoons’ and freegans’ disruptive force, while the negation of one group is leveraged in the disavowal of the other. Below I suggest some of the specific ways in which ‘race’, class, and capitalism inform these processes.

### **Freeganism: A Challenge To Consumerism**

A billboard in Toronto shows the smiling face of renowned Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki basking in the warm glow of a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). The spiralled glass hovers magically above his palm. “You have the power”, declares the corresponding slogan. Of course, the image makes a kind of crisp, cultural sense. David Suzuki, arguably Canada’s most iconic environmentalist, is paired with a CFL,

arguably Canada's most iconic environmental product. As public consciousness (and fear) grows about the perils of global warming, governments, activists, and corporations simultaneously encourage people to act through their consumption choices, including those as simple as buying different light bulbs. As Tarrant argues, the image of a radiating light bulb is a particularly powerful symbol:

Sight, and its object light, appear to be universal metaphors in human language, both for intellectual apprehension or activity and its objects and also for the experience of aesthetic and moral values. The figure is applied equally to the course or end of a rational approach to knowledge, giving scarcely-felt imagery like 'I see', 'look into', etc., or to a pictorially described 'illumination' or 'vision' that lies beyond the range of reason. Some phrases are applicable to both senses; to 'see the light' may connote either logical grasp of a fact or religious conversion (1960: 181).

Suzuki and his light bulb tap into a network of positive metaphors that resonate within a larger rubric of ideas about morality and knowledge.

The light bulb image is, culturally speaking, an easier 'sell' than many of the images currently associated with freegans or freeganism: buying environmental products fits more comfortably within Western capitalism than recovering products that are deemed no longer profitable. Environmentalism, contends Sociology professor Torres, "is becoming this issue of, consume the right set of green goods and you're green" (Quoted in Kurutz, 2007) despite the resource-consumption required to produce and distribute those goods. Green consumerism today offers a vision of plenitude that is much easier for many North Americans to accept than the possibility of consuming something that came from a dumpster.

In this context, freeganism appears to be an expression of scarcity and denial, rock-bottom scrounging that is similar to the survival practices of people who are poverty-stricken and homeless. The movement, which began in the mid-1990s and grew out of the anti-globalization and environmental causes, focuses on resistance to production systems that commodify food (Gross, 2009). Freegans are people who voluntarily reclaim the refuse of consumer culture as a stance against capitalism and excess consumption (Freegan.info, 2008).

They employ many tactics<sup>7</sup> to put their political beliefs into practice, including (but not limited to) waste reclamation, waste reduction, squatting, hitchhiking, and voluntary joblessness (Freegan.info, 2008).<sup>8</sup> “Simply put: freegans seek to prevent waste by reclaiming, recovering and repairing available resources rather than generate new profit”, states freegan advocate Adam Weissman (Quoted in Adams Matthews, 2006).<sup>9</sup>

In the mainstream press, freegans are described as dressing in “castoff clothes” and standing “knee deep” in trash bins (Kurutz, 2007). Consider, too, the revelation of one reporter who felt compelled to note the partially-trimmed lamp in one freegan’s home: upon the journalist’s detailed inspection, even though the “bright and airy prewar apartment [that] Ms. Nelson shares with two cats doesn’t look like the home of someone who spends her evenings rooting through the garbage”, her home is revealed as a kind of ruse. The reporter eventually spots “an old lampshade in the living room [that] has been trimmed with fabric to cover its fraying parts, leaving a one-inch gap where the material ran out” (Kurutz, 2007). The performance of a middle-class aesthetic literally falls short. Similarly, in her article, “Free-lunch foragers”, reporter Hayasaki writes, “Freegans troll curbsides for discarded clothes and ratty [sic] or broken furniture... They trade goods at flea markets. Some live as squatters in abandoned buildings, or in low-rent apartments on the edges of the city, or with family and friends” (2007).

Taken out of context—context that includes the voluntary nature of freeganism—such actions may appear to be descriptions of destitution. Yet freegans themselves offer a

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<sup>7</sup> Elaboration on freegans’ tactics can be found at [www.freegan.info](http://www.freegan.info).

<sup>8</sup> Obviously, there are people who are homeless and poor who engage in ‘waste reclamation’ or other such ‘freegan’ activities without any political motivation. Likewise, there may be those for whom urban foraging is a necessity, but who also see it as a political act, though they may be unacquainted with the term ‘freegan’. For the purposes of this paper, I consider freegans to be those who explicitly identify themselves as such.

<sup>9</sup> I largely focus on dumpster-diving, as opposed to other common freegan activities (such as wild foraging), because this practice takes a similar form to the garbage rummaging of raccoons. These represent major points of overlap in behaviours between raccoons and freegans, and they inspire comparable revulsion in outsiders.

different rhetoric, one that finds reclamation a “thrill” (Bone, 2005), especially in the case of a “good find” (Hayasaki, 2007) where fridges are packed with tasty edibles (Bone, 2005), and the realization that one can live without new goods seems to be a source of happiness and empowerment rather than hardship. For example, *Globe and Mail* reporter Gearey describes one freegan as “quick to show off two jars of unopened honey<sup>10</sup> he found in the trash, his blueberry eyes sparkling with pride” (2007: F6). Positioning freeganism within a broader movement of DIY (Do It Yourself) anarchist politics, Shantz writes, “In place of the ‘purchasing of pleasure’ anarchists assert the ‘arming of desire’ to create their own pleasures”

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10 Many vegans would consider honey an animal product, and thus would not consume it. While Freegan.info (2008a) maintains that freegan is a portmanteau of ‘vegan’ and ‘freegan’, and an attempt to extend the politics of veganism further, freeganism does not necessarily imply veganism. According to Freegan.info (2008b), the term ‘freegan’ is also a critique of veganism, when the latter is practiced in ways that do not resist all forms of capitalist-driven exploitation, such as contemporary slave labour cocoa production. This position is presented within what is arguably the original freegan manifesto, “Why Freegan?” (Freegan.info, 2008c; originally published in 2000), assumed to be written and popularized by U.S. American musician Warren Oakes. In his article, Oakes names veganism as a “good first step” (2008c) but questions vegans’ support of corporations that sell products free of animal products. He writes, “I couldn’t get behind any aspect of the corporate death consumer machine so I decided to boycott everything” (Freegan.info, 2008c).

Unsurprisingly, debates between freegans and vegans have been heated at times. For example, there has been some confusion between freeganism as a sustained political critique and practice, and a more casual consumption of free animal products (e.g., eating a hamburger at a friend’s barbeque) (Freegan.info, 2008b). However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the intricacies of the ‘freegan versus vegan’ discussions. Notably, though, well-known freegans such as Adam Weissman are both dedicated vegans and freegans. Freeganism and veganism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For an interesting sample of online discussions regarding the potential differences in diet, lifestyle, and underlying arguments between freeganism and veganism, see Kwan (2007), Southan (2010), The Post Punk Kitchen forum thread “Freeganism, could it be more ethical than veganism?” (2010). Dylan Powell, founder of The Vegan Police podcast and website, succinctly argues against freegan consumption of animal products in blog posts, “Species Privilege and Dumpster Diving” and “Species Privilege and Dumpster Diving...Reply 2” (2011a, 2011b). He asks, “Would you eat the corpse of another human being? Of course not. But why?” (2011a). ... (cont) In his later reply, he retorts, “I reject opening a dumpster and seeing animal products and plants [sic] products as being on the same ethical playing field and reject the notion that commodification happens at the ‘point of purchase’ instead of something which happens to a non human animal throughout it’s [sic] entire life” (2011b). Freegans tend to focus on retraction of their ‘votes’ from corporate consumerism through a withdrawal of their purchasing dollars. “To a freegan,” argues Freegan.info, “anything we buy is morally suspect, and recovering things without driving demand for further production of these commodities with our dollars is a moral imperative” (2008b). I share Powell’s position, however, and do not personally support the consumption of animal products (free or otherwise) except in cases of true necessity. While some freegans would consider a refusal to eat dumpstered animal products as also wasteful, I ethically could not stomach eating the flesh or secretions of someone who had been regarded as property, tortured, and killed. The freegan butchering and consumption of ‘roadkill’ provides another layer to the debate about free meat, as suggested by Gross (2009). Animals who have been hit and killed by cars, including raccoons, are preferred over discarded factory-farmed meat that might be laced with hormones and antibiotics. “Freegan blogs talk about eating roadkill as having more political advantages than other forms of anti-capitalist food gathering. Unlike dumpster diving, it is entirely free of capitalist trappings, they say”, observes Gross (2009: 72). Additionally, wild game and leftover trophy hunt carcasses are part of some freegans’ diets (Gross, 2009).

(2005: 10). Gross (2009) similarly finds that her freegan interviewees intentionally cultivate alternative forms of pleasure. “They talked about the pleasure of getting food for nothing and sharing it with other people”, offers Gross (2009: 71). “Often with the dumpstering crowd, one person might have one ingredient and someone else might have another and they’ll either combine food to make a meal or trade food if they’re going separate ways”, she adds (Gross, 2009: 72).

Similar to raccoons who face disdain and revulsion within the urban environment, freegans struggle against stigmas (Hayasaki, 2007)<sup>11</sup> attached to the reclamation of discarded goods (especially food); they also challenge various prejudices regarding the contexts and practices involved in reclamation. For instance, like raccoons, freegans often forage late at night or early in the morning (Gearey, 2007), and by definition, collect things “without paying a cent” (Hayasaki, 2007). Not only do ‘trash’ and ‘garbage’ have their own negative (human) cultural connotations, but dumpsters and the people – so-called ‘trash pickers’ – who frequent them also carry their own stigmas. These layered aspects combine to connote criminality, or at minimum, desperation. As one editor of AskMen.com, a free men’s magazine, bluntly muses, “It’s no secret that ours is a rather consumerist culture, and that our planet could use some environmental loving. But is reducing ourselves to homeless, jobless, trash-eating bums really a worthwhile movement?” (2007). Similarly-toned comments poured in, including the following:

You know, I’m sure these people have the best of intentions, but they’re lunatics. It’s disgusting to eat from dumpsters. That’s just not sanitary or healthy. And this jobless thing? Can you get any lazier? What do you do with your life when you don’t have a job to do? (2007)

The anti-capitalist stance of freeganism is interpreted by some critics as a matter of sheer laziness or as a simple distaste for work.

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<sup>11</sup> For example in Hayasaki’s article, Deirdre Rennert refused to name her place of employment because of the stigma associated with eating food from dumpsters.

The fact that many freegans are middle-class, employed, or voluntarily unemployed (Bone, 2005; Kurutz, 2007; Hayasaki, 2007) is juxtaposed against cultural ideas about the urban poor, those who have long been associated with garbage consumption as a means of survival (Adams Matthews, 2006). Disparaging naysayers have dubbed freegans “free-loaders” (The Summa Mommas, 2007; Van Horn, 2006) while witty article titles such as “free-lunch foragers” (Hayasaki, 2007) imply a certain level of moral, if tongue-in-cheek, disapproval. *New York Times* reporter Kurutz, for example, points to Weissman’s “considerable free time” and is quick to note that Weissman “doesn’t work and lives at home in Teaneck, N.J. with his father and elderly grandparents” (2007). (The Kurutz article fails to mention that Weissman, according to Ramsay [2007], would likely choose to be a squatter if it were not for the fact that he lives with and takes care of his grandparents.)

Yet those within the movement, such as Weissman, mention the extra time afforded by their lifestyles as a promotional aspect: “I have pity for people who have not figured out this lifestyle. I am able to take long vacations from work, I have all kinds of consumer goods, and I eat a really healthy diet of really wonderful food” (Quoted in Bone, 2005). Similarly, Weissman argues, “[Freeganism] is motivated not by ‘laziness,’ but by a desire to devote time to community service, activism, caring for family, etc.” (Quoted in Adams Matthews, 2006). Still, besides children, volunteer care providers, and those unable to be employed, the societal expectation remains that people ought to have paying jobs and thus be so-called ‘productive members of society’, even if that means producing something environmentally or socially damaging. The notion that urban scavenging could be an ecologically efficient behaviour, or grounded in an environmental ethic, is lost in such an analysis. As Gerard Daechsel, who has dumpster-dived for five decades, laments, “When people see me rescuing things, they offer me money and I say, ‘No thanks, I’m doing this for the environment’.

Sometimes they just stuff [money] in my coat pocket and run off anyways – they don't understand” (Quoted in Gearey, 2007: F6).

The dumpster-diving of freegans exposes Western consumption patterns largely as choices rather than inevitabilities. The consumption of ‘trash’ or ‘waste’ helps spur questions about the underlying causes of poverty and resource plundering. Co-founders of Food Not Bombs,<sup>12</sup> Lawrence and McHenry, contend that in the United States alone, “every day in every city, far more food is discarded than is needed to feed those who do not have enough to eat” (1992: 1).<sup>13</sup> According to Freegan.info, the network “puts freeganism into action. By using food that would otherwise be wasted, Food Not Bombs reinforces its message, challenging a society that allows vital resources to be wasted rather than ensuring that the needs of all are met” (2008).

Food reclamation and distribution has a much longer history than Food Not Bombs or freeganism, though. For example, the Old Testament stipulates that crop surplus should be reserved for those in need and that ‘gleaners’ continue to harvest leftovers from farmers’ fields and other sources (Baker, 2006). Taking this history into account, the apparently radical actions of Food Not Bombs and sharing freegans are simply extensions of some already deep-seated traditions (Dowdey, 2007). I recognize, however, that food reclamation is not exclusively a human activity, and that freegans may trace their history back to non-human roots. In the following section, I seek to situate the previous critiques of freegans and raccoons within a broader (human, Western, dominant) cultural milieu, gesturing toward the depth and breadth of the discourses that mark both groups as beyond acceptable to ‘civil society’. The activities of both groups threaten the very maintenance of the culture/nature

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<sup>12</sup> Food Not Bombs is an international network of autonomous collectives that reclaim, prepare, and distribute food for free.

<sup>13</sup> Though Butler and McHenry’s statement may seem to be hyperbole, current food waste statistics in the US paint a fairly bleak picture. For a brief, recent overview see “Half of US Food Goes to Waste”, Foodproductiondaily.com, <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/Supply-Chain/Half-of-US-food-goes-to-waste>.

boundary, a key organizing principle of Western modernism and one of ontological and moral implication (Sabloff, 2001). In his excellent examination of the cultural maligning of urban pigeons, following Birke (2003) and Douglas (1984), Jerolmack (2008: 14) reminds us, “We live in an era that celebrates ‘medical triumph and the conquest of disease’ and nature as a cornerstone of modernity; dirt and other ‘pollutants’ [within the city] threaten that vision”.

### **Purity and Danger**

In her classic text, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Douglas argues that “contemporary European ideas of defilement” are not simply a matter of hygiene nor aesthetics (1984: 35). According to Douglas, they are grounded in symbolism:

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systemic order and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity (1984: 35).

Notably, the demarcation of certain classes and races as dirty or filthy has helped perpetuate classist, racist, and imperialist ideologies. For example, as McClintock demonstrates in her discussion of soap, ideas about cleanliness and purity served a symbolic role in the justification of British imperialism. Such notions served as a key means of constructing certain people and values as degenerative:

The emergent middle class values—monogamy (“clean” sex, which has value), industrial capital (“clean” money, which has value), Christianity (“being washed in the blood of the lamb”), and class control (“cleansing the great unwashed”), and the imperial civilizing mission (“washing and clothing the savage”)—could all be marvellously embodied in a single household commodity (1995: 208).



Notions of dirt and filth have not only fuelled racist ideology but have also combined with notions of ‘the animal’ and animality to create a powerful set of mutually reinforcing and negated categories. Within Western culture, animality is typically aligned with ideas about what is unclean, in- or sub-human, and uncivilized. As cultural geographer Anderson argues, animality serves as a key dynamic in the construction of sociospatial difference and hierarchy (2000: 302).

The co-mingling of ‘dirt’ and ‘animality’ within racist discourses is clearly highlighted through the figure of the pest. Describing the historical racialization of vermin, Patell insists, “The outcast group is often described in the very same language used to describe biological pests: unclean, exploitative, opportunistic, etc.” (1996: 63-64). Racists often appropriate the figure of the pest in an attempt to legitimate their attitudes by grounding their rhetoric within the natural world (Patell, 1996: 63-64).

One has to look no further than the racial slur, ‘coon’, or its variant ‘dirty coon’, to find evidence of Patell’s argument. According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ‘coon’, meaning a ‘negro’ or ‘fellow’, is aphetic of ‘raccoon’. “The coon caricature is one of the most insulting of all anti-Black caricatures. The name itself, an abbreviation of raccoon, is dehumanizing”, states sociologist Pilgrim (2000). (Alternatively, other scholars, such as African American Studies professor Adams, suggest that that racial epithet stems from the Portuguese word ‘barracoon’. “The word ‘barracoon’ translates into English as the word barrack, barrier, something that holds you back” [Quoted in Riggins, 2006], asserts Adams.<sup>14</sup>) Brown Lavitt contends, drawing on Roediger, that ‘coon’ transitioned from an insult directed at working class whites in the early 1800s to a racial

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<sup>14</sup> Some sources indicate that ‘coon’ stems from the Spanish word ‘barracoon’, from ‘barracón’, meaning an enclosure used to temporarily confine convicts or slaves [see <http://m-w.com/dictionary/barracoon>].

epithet for Blacks by 1948, gaining force by the 1880s and '90s "as white anxieties flared in the face of rising unemployment, swelling immigration, and economic depression" (1999: 256).

The racist use of the term 'coon hunting', a reference to targeted attacks against Black people, strongly invokes animality. For example, historian Davis recounts his youth during the Jim Crow era:

Once, when a black family moved into our working-class neighborhood, I remember us white kids riding our bicycles the three or four blocks to their house just to get a look. We'd heard that some older kids had tossed sacks of dog poop at the nicely painted white house. I remember my father bemoaning the likes of them "invading" our neighborhood. I also remember that, a few years later, some of my teenage friends would go "coon hunting" on Friday nights, which meant driving into black neighborhoods and tossing bottles or sacks of garbage at elderly blacks walking alone on the streets. It just was something working-class white boys did in Kansas City in the 1950s (n.d.).<sup>15</sup>

Given the bloody and violent history associated with the transference of animal names onto humans, "calling people animals is always an ominous sign because it sets them up for humiliation, exploitation, and murder" (Patterson, 2002: 28). The Nazi depiction of Jewish people as rats serves as an illustrative and salient example of this phenomenon (Patterson, 2002).

According to Dion and Rockman, editors of *Concrete Jungle: A Pop Media Investigation of Death and Survival in Urban Ecosystems*, pests prompt a specific kind of anxiety, as they remind us that we are part of a larger, interconnected ecological reality (1996). Concomitantly, this "dangerous class of animals" points to our inability to control nature and its various dynamic interactions (Dion and Rockman, 1996: 8). Pests threaten us both literally and figuratively. They are a part of nature that we would prefer to cast away or

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<sup>15</sup> A contemporary example of the racist use of 'coon' can be found at <http://niggermania.org/coonhunter/>. The site claims to feature 'Nigger Videos' by 'Coon-Hunting Inc'.

annihilate, at times for practical “legitimate scientific” reasons, such as their capacity to act as disease vectors or their destruction of biodiversity (Patell, 1996: 62). They represent decay, contamination, and a challenge to order (Dion and Rockman, 1996), reminding us, too, of our own deaths. “In the same way that advanced urban society refuses to acknowledge shit, distances itself from food production, and denies the process of aging”, state Dion and Rockman, “these animals remind us that we too are animals, and therefore, mortal” (1996: 9). In this way, ‘pests’ such as raccoons speak to both an external and internal threat, ultimately indivisible from understandings of what it means to be human at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in North America (Patell, 1996). Notably, the definition of ‘pest’ varies from time and place, culture to culture; for example, “what is a pest for one culture may be a delicacy for another” (Patell, 1996: 63).

### **Urban Foraging: Capitalism’s Underbelly**

Raccoons and freegans disrupt and reroute state-regulated and socially-sanctioned food pathways, which includes purchasing food at grocery stores, consuming it in the home<sup>16</sup> or other designated area, placing waste within the appropriate receptacle (recycling, garbage, or compost), and depositing it in a city-approved container. These materials are then to be retrieved and streamlined into various waste management facilities.

Raccoons and freegans, who do not pay for food or patronize stores, subvert each step of that conventional process. Through their consumption, they also shift the category ‘food’ back onto products that were previously labeled ‘trash’ and ‘garbage’ (or ‘compost’) and

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<sup>16</sup> Or, in the case of other urban wildlife, food is also foraged but the foraging does not necessarily infringe on human proprietorship, as it sometimes does with raccoons. For example, squirrels are also urban foragers but they are not as readily perceived as a pseudo-criminal menace, ‘stealing’ from people’s garbage and littering the area.

thrown away. Thus, I propose that these groups transgress both capitalism and a cultural taboo. They transgress capitalism (a kind of cultural taboo action itself) because they benefit from, but do not purchase, materials produced by the economic system.<sup>17</sup> As Shantz contends,

Advanced capitalist societies are organized around surplus value or valorization for capital. That IS one reason why perfectly useable goods will be discarded rather than given away. Surplus value simply cannot be realized if free alternatives are readily available. Against surplus value, freegans pursue what some heterodox Marxists call “self-valorization.” This is the pursuit of productive and distributive activities that are based on the realization of human need whether material, emotional or ideational (2005: 10).

Freegans and raccoons also transgress a cultural taboo, because they both touch and consume ‘trash’. Furthermore, raccoons not only eat ‘trash’; they also often overturn garbage cans, scatter the contents, and leave large messes in their wake. (Notably, raccoons keep themselves quite clean. Clayton remarks, for example, “While they are the ultimate dumpster divers, they’re also fastidious about washing” [2009: 51].) Subsequently, through their actions, raccoons interrupt the waste containment and management systems that serve both a literal and symbolic purpose within urban environments.

Raccoons symbolically challenge the definition of ‘trash’ by treating it as food, and they literally displace ‘waste’ through their foraging. In other words, within the dominant classification system, raccoons do something regarded as dirty (i.e., digging through ‘trash’ and consuming pieces), while they also contribute to dirt through the displacement of previously contained ‘trash’. Unlike companion animals, who may be willingly offered table scraps within the home, raccoons are frequently understood as ‘stealing’ similar scraps from the trash (Whitetail Deer Management and Hunting, n.d.). Their distinct mask-like facial markings further prompt their common categorization as ‘thieves’ and ‘bandits’ (Holmgren, 1990), names which clearly carry normative weight: such metaphorical condemnation draws

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, raccoons who take food from people’s gardens are also commonly met with disdain.

its strength from a comparison with human beings who steal property and break the law, and these individuals are understood as morally corrupt and worthy of punishment. In capitalist contexts, they have broken both a cultural and economic taboo.

Like raccoons, freegans also consume the waste of Western culture, although the intentions behind the behaviour of both groups vary. Though freegans are also sometimes called thieves, unlike their nonhuman foraging cohort, they potentially face prosecution for theft (Hibbert, 2011).<sup>18</sup> Freegans, perhaps because they are human, tend to inspire a unique type of public disgust, as they also disregard the traditional classification systems regarding waste and dirt, and therefore throw the system into question. They appear contaminated or debased by such practices, as if they have somehow revoked their humanity (Essig, 2002).

Freegans rummage near and sometimes in trash bins, like other foraging animals in cities. To some, the behaviour of freegans seems inhuman or animalistic: “To eat ‘trash’ is to go against our cultural consciousness... To consume the abject trash is to risk contamination and status as a fully civil human being”, maintains Essig (2002). Consider, for example, the commentary from the *Times Online*: “Freegans often go ‘dumpster diving’ in packs, delving into skips at supermarkets and restaurants” (Bone, 2005). His choice of the word ‘packs’, as opposed to ‘groups’, gestures toward animality. Further, ‘foraging’ is a name commonly associated with non-human animals, such as raccoons and bears; freegans themselves refer to dumpster-diving as urban foraging (Freegan.info, 2008) or urban scavenging (Weissman, 2006), again evoking terms that are commonly associated with non-human animals. As one blogger coarsely states, “Rats go through people’s rubbish so Freegans are like rats except

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18 The risks are even greater for raccoons. Although they do not face criminal prosecution, raccoons in cities have been poisoned, beaten, and intentionally killed. For example, baby raccoons were recently beaten (and (cont) some killed) with a shovel by a Toronto man as the kits’ mother attempted to rescue them. “It’s believed the man was frustrated with the damage raccoons were causing in his garden”, reports the CBC News (2011). In another instance, raccoons in a Toronto park were poisoned to death. One was posed to appear as if holding flowers. Another was placed alongside a squirrel (CBC News, 2008).

much worse because they're also like tramps and bag-ladies and rats aren't like that. I suspect Freegans carry more diseases than rats too" (Twenty Major, 2006). Yet for freegans, the comparison to foraging animals does not necessarily carry such presupposed negativity. For example, the "Urban Foraging" page on [Freegan.info](http://Freegan.info) includes the link "Dumpster Diving Bear!", about a bear who toppled over a large dumpster. Association with non-human foragers, at least in some instances, appears welcomed.

Freegans are not a homogenous group, however, despite discourses that either collectively condemn or celebrate them. While it may be reasonable to suggest that raccoons and freegans may share some affinities (either through shared practices or discursive rendering), the particularities of individual freegans' experiences are also informed by historical and contemporary oppression, such as racism and misogyny. For instance, the racist slur 'Africoon' still circulates today, as does the epithet 'coontang', which refers to Black women (Taylor, 2008). (I assume 'coontang' is a variant of 'poontang', a sexist term which refers to "sexual intercourse with a woman" or a "woman regarded as a sexual object" [Dictionary.com].) Extending my argument, some might suggest that freegans should recognize raccoons as allies as part of a multi-dimensional stance against racism, sexism, classism and speciesism, yet given the gruesome past and contemporary deployment of such vicious and intentionally degrading terms such as 'Africoon', reluctance or outright rejection of such associations is certainly understandable.

Drake, a contributor to the Vegans of Color blog and student at Vassar College, directly points to some of the racial politics surrounding freeganism in the United States. In one post, he describes how senior students discarded food during their apartment exodus at the end of the semester. Drake and friends—"broke students who [were] working on campus during the summer" (2009)—salvaged some of it from dumpsters. In his blog post he identifies himself as a freegan of colour, and asks where the others are. He then reflects on

some salient differences between his experience as a Black male dumpster-diver and that of his white companions:

Freeganism is a largely white middle-class movement (that seems to forget that poor folks have been eating garbage forever). And when I'm dumpster-diving I seem to have a few more issues to deal with, as a Black male, than my white comrades. They aren't nearly as afraid of the police (or security), or threats of calling the police (or security), nor do they get harassed by law enforcement while diving to the degree that I do. I got harassed by security several times while diving on my own campus, until my white friends pop their heads out of the dumpsters. I'm also extremely embarrassed for people to see me diving, because I can tell that I'm not just me, I'm also a representation of Black people in general (Drake, 2009).

Drake raises crucial questions about freegans as an unmarked group, whose praxis by white activists in the United States is facilitated through racial privilege, despite whatever anti-racist views they may hold. Specifically, freegans, by the voluntary nature of their activities, can choose not to participate in dumpster-diving or other stigmatized behaviors. The ability to 'step out' of discrimination clearly indicates a huge difference between the stigmatization experienced by white freegans, for example, and other persistent and inescapable forms of oppression. The texture of stigmatization resulting from freeganism is influenced by one's social location. Following Drake, Weitzenfeld summarizes these observations well:

A white freegan need not worry about being a token representation of his or her people during dumpster diving, but a person of color does because 1) they are most often a racial minority, 2) they are already popularly depicted as poor and dirty, and 3) they are marked as people of color in contrast to "whites" whose race is most often invisible (to other white people that is).

Weitzenfeld also argues that freeganism can signal not only an enactment of racial privilege but also class privilege. Middle-class freegans have a safety net of financial security when faced with a disappointing dumpster-dive (Weitzenfeld, 2009). Similarly, those without class privileges (in the present or past) may understandably be reluctant to participate in activities that (further) mark or shame them as poor. In relation, 'race' and class intermingle with

geography, factoring into the types of goods available, including one's access to neighbourhoods where activities like dumpster-diving reap greater or lesser rewards.

As suggested above, arguments regarding shared affinities between raccoons and freegans are especially charged when one considers the specific linkages between raccoons and Black histories in the United States. The cultural contexts for Black people whose histories are intermingled with the racist practice of 'coon-hunting' and demeaning terms such as 'coon', 'Africoon', and 'coontang' necessarily complicate efforts to resist shared forms of stigmatization and negative material consequences meted upon freegans and raccoons.

Raccoons belong to a broader category of 'wild animals', which is also inflected with racist discourse. Consider, for example, two abhorrent so-called Ku Klux Klan 'joke' websites, which endlessly reinforce the animalization of Black people by labelling them as "wild creatures" and apes. On both the NJ (Nigger Jokes) and NJKKK (Nigger Jokes KKK) websites analyzed by Billig, the same definition of 'nigger' is included:

An African jungle anthropoid ape of the primate family pongidae (superficially cercopithecoidae). Imported to the United States as slave labor in the last 1700's – 1800's, these wild creatures now roam freely while destroying the economic and social infrastructure of American and other nations. These flamboyant sub-human love to consume large amounts of greasy fried chicken (2001: 276).

Billig notes the pseudo-biology of the passage and how the "ultimate word of racist hate not only expresses dehumanization but also, in the context of these joke pages, signifies dehumanization" (2001: .278). Under the guise of a 'joke', the naturalizing discourse situates Black people within a false and biologically-essentialist paradigm. The racist (and speciesist) comparison of Black people to nonhuman apes and other nonhuman animals is well documented within Billig's article and elsewhere (e.g., Goff et al, 2008; Jordan, 1974; Sorenson, 2009). The websites' description of "these *wild* creatures [who] now roam freely" (emphasis added, 2001: 276), while wreaking havoc is meant to connote images of wild



nonhuman animals who are loathed for, and partially defined by, their seemingly wanton destruction. The marking out of the wild animal Other helps coalesce one's identity as a fully human subject (e.g., civil, white) (see Oliver, 2009).

So while it is clear that there is cultural disdain heaped upon freegans, and that such disdain overlaps with and mutually reinforces negative discourses about urban raccoons, freegans are, of course, also enmeshed within a larger social fabric of racism, cissexism, classism, etc., that impacts their individual experiences. In other words, whatever the similarities between how raccoons and freegans are perceived, one's experience as a freegan will be specific to how she or he is racialized, gendered, and so on. People positioned as 'Other' may reasonably avoid engaging in freeganism, given historical legacies of oppression. Oppressed peoples who participate will likely experience greater risks and consequences than those who are not similarly positioned. The particular genocidal, colonialist, and racist histories of the U.S. and Canada that have figured certain groups as animalistic and dirty throw this point into sharp relief.

Freeganism, through such practices as dumpster-diving, paradoxically offers both a disruption and potential reinforcement of privilege. This is especially interesting in light of the "Why Freegan?" manifesto, which in a subsection entitled "Privilege", explicitly encourages self-reflection and sacrifice of some of one's privilege:

We, in America, have so much and so many people all over the world have so little. Why do we have more? Because we're number one! Other folks are literally starving so that we can have fully-stocked shelves at our supermarkets and health food stores. If this concerns you (as it should) you can protest the unbalanced distribution in America and the world by sacrificing some of your privilege and feeding yourself off of the ridiculous excess of food instead of consuming products from that supermarket shelves we are so unjustly privileged to have access to (2008c).

Such passages directly point to national and global inequities that freeganism seeks to resist. These words are a rallying cry for social justice via a withdrawal of one's financial support from the "corporate death consumer machine" (2008c). By boycotting consumerism, one is

also seen as boycotting privilege. While this certainly may be true, it is unfortunately not that simple either, as indicated above.

As I have attempted to show, freegans are not a unitary group. They are individuals variously located within and through social dynamics, and whatever stigmatization they may encounter cannot be divorced from greater social contexts. Such an assertion will likely seem obvious to those who already appreciate the ways in which people can be positioned simultaneously as both oppressor and oppressed, for example. Recognition of these axes must come to bear in political analyses of freegans and freeganism.

What is perhaps less readily apparent is that raccoons are also individuals, and though they are not subject to identical forms of social construction as people, the category ‘raccoon’ cannot adequately represent the diversity of experience and individuality of its members. Additionally, while many are willing to forcefully refute biologically-essentialist accounts of human groups, these interpretations remain grossly unchallenged in regard to nonhuman animals (Noske, 1997; Sabloff, 2001). Biological and genetic reductionism of nonhuman life is still overwhelmingly unchecked by those who bristle at similar claims made about people. We might rage against the animalization of various oppressed human groups, and yet fail to recognize how such similar understandings also distort our perceptions of nonhuman animals. We protest dehumanization but often readily accept the “de-animalization” (Noske, 1997: 83) of nonhuman animals.

The reductionist biobehavioural model is frequently critiqued as an affront to humanity, one that fails to recognize sociocultural forces (Noske, 1997). Too often we do not afford nonhuman animals such complexity, and thus flatten the richness and totality of their lives. In her critique of the social sciences, Noske notes that culture and sociality are generally conceived as exclusive to humanity, as key features that define and differentiate us from other animals. We alone are subjects, while they are interdependently cast as objects.

She laments, “[S]ince they began by defining sociality and culturality as exclusively human phenomena they fall victim to the circular argument that animals, not being human, can in no way be social or cultural beings as this would be a contradiction in terms” (Noske, 1997: 82-83). Nonhuman animals, considered outside of the realm of the social or cultural, are instead studied within the natural sciences. The common “biobehavioural conception of animalness” found within these fields renders animals as objects while it dissects them into their “smallest constituent parts, and [conceives of] animal actions as mechanisms of living matter governed by natural laws” (p.83).

I raise Noske’s (1997) critique for two primary reasons. First, we are far more accustomed to think about questions of individuality, personality, social construction, and subjectivity in respect to human, rather than nonhuman, animals. Noske’s arguments encourage us to entertain and appreciate nonhuman animals as beings who also have individual experiences and internal worlds. While I noted the complexity of the category ‘freegan’, the category of ‘raccoon’ should also be recognized as composed of individuals with unique subjectivities. Second, although the main aim of this article is to demonstrate common discourses that malign both freegans and raccoons, and to suggest some broader social dynamics and forces that might explain such negation, I have largely presented ‘culture’ and ‘society’ as human phenomena by default. Given that many within the social sciences and natural sciences unconsciously perpetuate this bias, it seems important to interrupt that assumption here. My hope is this paper can be read in conjunction with ethological research that explores the subjectivities of nonhuman animals (e.g., Balcombe, 2006; Bekoff, 2009; Smuts, 2001), including raccoons. Through a combination of such ethology and critical analyses of the social construction of humans and nonhuman animals, my hope is that we will deepen our sense of humility towards Others and be motivated to

engage in different kinds of relationships. As Raymond Williams contends, “We need different ideas because we need different relationships” (Quoted in Sabloff, 2001: 11).

## **Conclusion**

Much theory now intricately describes the social construction of a variety of Others; unfortunately, similar scholarship dedicated to non-human animals is still relatively new. Nonetheless, animality is slowly becoming recognized as an important dynamic in the construction of humanity, and as a key aspect of various Othering processes (Anderson, 2000; Elder, Wolch and Emel, 1998). The history of human-raccoon relations is interpenetrated with notions of animality and ‘the animal’, and yet, the texture of raccoon-human relations must be acknowledged as also specific and particular. Further, the human meanings of raccoons’ lives will remain, necessarily, in flux.

Of course, raccoons also have their own histories and cultural interpretations. As humans’ cultural perceptions of raccoons vary, raccoons’ cultures are also heterogeneous. How might raccoons’ perceptions of humans differ among disparate groups, for example? Are we pests to them, perhaps? I turn to authors such as naturalist Holmgren (1990) who demonstrates that alternative raccoon-human relationships are possible. Her written accounts draw upon humble and engaged interactions with raccoons, suggesting new ways of being with those who are so frequently considered adversaries.

Perhaps what is most striking about Holmgren’s accounts—based on thirty years of close backyard observation in Portland, Oregon—is the hard earned trust (and the related depth of relationship) that is possible between humans and raccoons when there is genuine commitment to meeting them with equanimity as fellow animals, with unique personalities, preferences, and forms of sociality among themselves and others. When raccoons are

approached with humility, openness, true attentiveness to their needs, and careful deciphering of their many nonverbal signals, rich and respectful relationships emerge that can not only delight, but also offer new insight into raccoons' epistemologies.

Holmgren's argument that we might learn from each other seems heretical when set against a steady stream of rhetoric that casts raccoons as vile vermin. In a radical reinterpretation of human-raccoon relationships, Holmgren's repeatedly tries to "comply with raccoon ideas of territorial rights" by engaging in small gestures of understanding such as re-spacing water bowls at distances so that "whoever came late could usually claim a private space" (1990: 87). Actions that might be dismissed as wanton destruction are regarded with some tenderness, and from a willingness to entertain another's point of view. The resultant characteristic commentary is intimate without being saccharine:

[H]ere they were, and though some of our friends warned us they'd be a nuisance—even outright pests—we couldn't believe we could ever feel that way. And we haven't. For the first fifteen years of the nearly thirty they have been daily visitors they did not tear up our lawn, dig up our shrubbery or do any of the other destructive things we were warned about. I must admit that a raccoon mother did re-design the row of tulip bulbs I planted in a curving line that crossed the path she'd established for her kits. When the leaves poked up through the ground as evidence of coming barrier, she rooted them out and swept them aside. Those not in her path remained untouched. I'd left her room for a new path, but she wanted the old one—and she was in the right. In emergency—the sudden appearance of a dog or human stranger, perhaps—each family needs to know exactly which way to go, no one getting in another's way (1990: 113).

Drawing on Michael's (2004) theory of "animobilities" (wild or feral animals' own trajectories) and Douglas' (1984) scholarship on pollution, Jerolmack explains, "When animal and human trajectories collide in the built environment, to the extent that animals cannot be tamed or controlled there is an existential human experience of social disorder" (2008: 18). Holmgren's relational orientation toward the raccoons as fellow subjects, even when they seemingly destroy aspects of her cultivated and ordered space, demonstrates that what is frequently an "existential human experience of social disorder" (Jerolmack, 2008: 18)

is not inevitability. Indeed, Holmgren continually offers a distinct reversal of ‘pest’ discourse, which positions certain animals as useless:

A common theme that emerges out of sociological investigations of problem animals is that more often than not, the worth of the animals is judged largely on their usefulness to humans. Animals are often seen as “pests” when that are thought to be “useless,” especially if they are viewed as scavengers, are not deemed “charismatic” or particularly attractive, and are perceived to wreak havoc on human settlements or property, such as foxes, rats, raccoons, seagulls, deer, geese, and rabbits (Jerolmack, 2008: 4).

Holmgren instead describes raccoons as ‘visitors’, ‘friends’, ‘neighbors’, or directly by individual names related to their unique characteristics (pp.81-96, 109-123). Additionally, though they bring her joy, raccoons are recognized as valuable in their right. Yet Holmgren does not construe raccoons through some naïve Disney-inspired lens. Her goal is not domestication, and she rails against human efforts to keep raccoons as companion animals. Despite her affection for raccoons, her sentiments are accompanied by an appreciation for their wildness, which engenders a necessary distance between herself and those she observes. From this position, marked by trust and relationship, what Holmgren learns about raccoons equally disrupts popular but also, at times, scientific assessments of their lives. For example, she notices that raccoons are not just active at night (a common claim made in raccoon research): At one point, a raccoon known to Holmgren brings her new kits to the backyard. She remarks, “[H]er look of loving pride left no doubt that she had brought them on purpose to show us” (1990: 83). She continues,

From then on all our raccoon families have come by day as well as dusk and dark—any hour in the twenty-four during the years in which we had no human neighbors nearby. So it seems clear that their reported status as “strictly nocturnal,” cited in encyclopedias and other reference material, is frequently altered by choice (1990: 83).

While I recognize that few people will welcome raccoons into their lives as readily as Holmgren, her narrative encourages a reevaluation of commonly held prejudices. She begins with the understanding that we have encroached upon their territories. For Holmgren,

raccoon-human relationships suggest co-habitation rather than expulsion. In this way, picked-through materials and toppled garbage cans are reminders that we share the city with other beings. Despite many of our best efforts, wildlife does not always adhere to our systems nor subscribe to our world-views. As raccoons are vilified for various reasons, it is worthwhile to contemplate how we have colonized other animals' territories and created urban spaces that are not only hospitable for humans. We dramatically (re)shape urban ecologies and create the category of 'trash animals' in the process; it seems unjust to condemn those who have also adapted to changing environments.

While I do not deny that raccoons can pose valid human health concerns (Patell, 1996; Clayton, 2009), the negative responses to raccoons cannot be explained away on that basis alone. Raccoons confront an onslaught of scathing characterizations, as these animals and their behaviours are interpreted through broader (human) cultural frames, which are at times interlaced with ideas about disease. Understandings of 'race', class, civility, dirt, and pests (among other dynamics) intersect and inform our cultural renderings of raccoons, which also resonate more broadly with our conceptions of nature. "In the West, as elsewhere", posits Sabloff, "the relations of ordinary people with the natural world are reflected in their interactions with other animals" (2001: 13).

Raccoons and freegans share a set of behavioural similarities, and experience some parallel prejudices. I have suggested some of the overlaps between the positioning of both groups. Critics may charge that I have over-emphasized the negative views of these groups at the expense of the more positive interpretations. In some respects, regard for raccoons is marked by ambivalence and complexity (Clayton, 2009). For comparative purposes, I focused on the negative interpretations because they most strongly represent how raccoons and freegans are culturally aligned within mainstream society. In some instances, freegans are metaphorically debased as nonhuman animals, while discourses fold back and

metaphorically render raccoons as socially-deviant humans (i.e., as ‘thieves’ and ‘bandits’, for example). With that in mind, though, I encourage readers to further explore the varied ways that raccoons and freegans are appreciated within and outside of their own communities.

As one sympathetic observer writes:

Some closeted raccoon lovers go so far as to call them ‘vermin’ and put them in the same category as rats and cockroaches. It maybe true that they carry disease, attack if cornered, and sometimes scatter garbage around, but this also describes many human Torontonians as well (Micallef, 2009: 50).

Now is an important historical moment to ask questions about the meanings attached to food, waste, and urban foraging. The environment is increasingly seen as a vital political, cultural, and even spiritual issue. The time is ripe not only to reflect on the strategies we use to confront environmental crises in general, but to also seriously ponder our relationships with the non-human world in our daily lives and immediate surroundings. Disdain for certain nonhuman animals can obscure the roots of human-generated problems. Such displacement allows for the continued vilification of entire groups of animals, and for cultural prejudices to remain unchecked. The larger environmental consequences are grim. As Sabloff purports, “The environmental crisis lies...in the very sources of *how we think*, in the basic and often submerged premises we hold about the world” (Emphasis in original, 2001: 10). We literally refuse our refuse and loathe what infringes upon the civility of the city and ourselves.

Trash haunts the urban landscape, as the image of its modern and sanitized surface is perpetually soiled with the concentrated waste of so many North Americans. It settles under streets and behind buildings. It presses up against biological and cultural aversions. It lingers at the periphery, but always threatens to encroach upon us.<sup>19</sup> Freegans and raccoons point to our inability to contain, and thus control, what we cast away in the name of self-

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<sup>19</sup> See Kristeva’s psychoanalytic text *Powers of Horror* (1982) for a thorough examination of how the process of abjection is essential to human identity formation. See also Butler’s *Bodies that Matter* (1993) for in depth discussion of the role of “abject beings” within the social sphere.



preservation and identity. These groups offer radically different ways of understanding and being in the city. They help ‘make strange’ this environment, and when approached with openness, they can teach us possibilities for different types of relationships with waste, Others, and ourselves.

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## **POETRY**

### **Plattered Beings**

**Alejandra Maria Bozzolasco<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

Human beings most closely interact with non-humans when they consume them. Yet, the vast majority of the meat-eating human population is unaware that they are ingesting beings whose lives were violently torn from them in order to become a plattered delicacy. This poem is an examination of the plight of the non-human oppressed and the need for humanity to acknowledge and recognize their blame. By highlighting the disconnect that exists between those who use non-humans to satisfy culinary desires and the beings who are consumed in relative invisibility, this poem is both a creative catharsis for the author and an outcry for the voiceless.

#### **Plattered Beings**

Sentiments discarded like offal from the slaughterhouse  
Unwanted remnants of rationality gone awry.  
Solitary beings languish behind cages dripping with blood - unspoken thoughts.  
Beasties trenchantly stare with magnifying glass eyes, knowingly.  
Voiceless.

Organs dot the landscape, unnoticed.  
Manufactured doom – living sustenance for the masses.  
Vegetalized beings - living, breathing, walking heads of lettuce – saturated in blood.  
Corpses blight humanity. Billions.  
Unseen.

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Screams – screened, hidden behind archaic philosophies.

Prisoners of selective privilege.

Teeth gnashing in desperation – hunger, greed.

Mechanized murder – disassembly lines into infinity.

Tortured.

Sinews torn from the living bone, digested by the deadened heart.

Invisibility breeds murderous potentiality.

Humanity is guilty, complicit in absentia.

Saboteurs – abattoirs.

Objectified.

Extrinsic value trumps intrinsic worth.

Assuaging desires, taste overrides morality – defines humanity.

Death abounds – blood runs – ruins the rivers, clogging arteries.

Crashing, crushing – skulls, bones, societies collapse, the bodies' demise.

Finis.



## STRATEGY AND TACTIC ANALYSIS

### Strategic Oppositionality to the Animal Rights “Antis”: Identity-Building and the United States Sportsmen’s Alliance

Paul C. Gorski<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

The strategic formation of organizational identity is critical to the work of any social action organization. Like many such organizations which define their work as *in opposition to* rather than as *for* a cause or goal, the United States Sportsmen’s Alliance (USSA), founded in 1977, constructs itself largely in oppositional terms, strategically framing animal rights and animal liberation organizations as cultural or even terroristic threats against its constituents: hunters, trappers, and anglers. In this essay I draw on a critical animal studies framework to examine the USSA’s work and identity-building strategies. By analyzing its institutional literature, interviews of organizational insiders, and newspaper articles written by journalists sympathetic to its mission, I uncover the varied ways in which the USSA continues to grow its membership and its budget almost exclusively by framing itself in opposition to animal rights “antis.” Implications for animal rights and liberation movements are discussed.

**Key words:** animal rights, animal liberation, organizational identity

#### Introduction

Just as organizational identity is critical to progressive social action organizations (Meyer, 2007), so is it critical in the case of not-so-progressive social action organizations. So when a group of sportsmen founded the U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance (USSA) in 1977 as the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA), they sought an identity to distinguish themselves from other organizations that were fighting for the “rights” and interests of hunters and trappers. They found their identity, not by framing themselves as *for something*, but by framing

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themselves *against* organizations that are *for something*; namely, animal rights. The organization's history, as told by the organization itself, began with a board decision to position itself oppositionally. In this spirit, it took as its original mission "the defense of hunting, fishing and trapping in the face of the burgeoning animal rights organizations" (USSA, 2009a: 1). In fact, the entire history of the USSA can be understood as a progression of strategies and tactics aimed solely at protecting its members—the "all-American," "wholesome," "hard-working" family—from anti-science, anti-family, anti-American animal rights fanatics. The USSA continues to see itself as a thorn in the sides of the Humane Society of the United States, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and other U.S. animal welfare organizations. And evidence suggests that, given its comparatively diminutive size and annual budget, it is a fairly effective thorn.

In this essay I examine the essence of the USSA from an animal rights perspective. I base my examination on a review of USSA materials and literature; analyses of literature—particularly newspaper articles—written about the USSA and its work by people sympathetic to the organization's mission; and published interviews with USSA insiders. I use as my lens critical animal studies (Best, Nocella, Kahn, Gigliotti, & Kemmerer, 2007), a theoretical point of entry which, in the tradition of critical studies, refuses the "insularity, detachment ... and profound limitations of mainstream animal studies" (2007:3) and chooses, instead, an explicit advocacy of animal liberation and justice.

I begin by providing a brief overview of the USSA. I then discuss its primary strategies and major policy battles. I end by considering the future of the organization and its possible implications in regard to the struggle for animal rights.

## **Brief Overview of the USSA**

Just over thirty years old, the USSA was organized to coordinate a media blitz opposing an amendment to the Ohio state constitution which would have banned trapping in the state. After raising more than a million dollars in this effort, and finding quick success with the strategy of framing animal rights advocates and anybody who supports them as family-hating “antis” (Gentile, 1987), the USSA formalized itself (as the WFLA) and began raising money to defend its constituents—hunters, trappers, fisher-people—against any legislation that might limit their abilities to pursue their hobbies unabated. By the early 1980s the USSA had expanded beyond Ohio’s borders, lending their numbers and fundraising capabilities to legislative fights all over the United States. Interestingly, the first chairman of the USSA was G. Ray Arnett, former director of the California Fish and Game Department and former president of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) (USSA, 2009a). This might indicate that the USSA recognized the need to have a wildlife “insider” on its side. It could indicate, as well, that Arnett, who had run one of the biggest, and one of the most *conservative*, wildlife organizations in the world (having been founded, itself, by sportsmen) in the NWF, respected the organization or its potential enough to bring his considerable expertise to bare on its behalf.

By 2007, the USSA had a membership of 1.5 million and an annual budget of \$3 million (Freedman, 2007). It also had a more robust mission statement with four primary foci:

To protect and advance America's heritage of hunting, fishing and trapping. We do this by uniting sportsmen to:

- Protect against legal and legislative attacks by the animal rights movement.
- Win public support for outdoor sports.
- Ensure the future of this heritage in involving families in the outdoor experience.
- Promote the sportsman's stewardship role in the scientific management of America's fish and wildlife. (USSA, 2009b)

An examination of the USSA's battles, and the strategies and tactics employed in those battles, shows that they are most focused on the first of these four points; that they define "outdoor sports" and "the outdoor experience" as hunting and trapping; and that, as described below, the "heritage" and "scientific management" aspects of their mission do not describe their programs so much as their strategy for fighting any threat of "movement" by the animal rights movement. These conditions, alone, provide important points for critical analysis. "Whose *heritage* and whose *outdoor experience*?" one might ask, noticing that all fifteen members of the USSA's board of directors appear to be white, as does every individual pictured in the organization's 2009-2010 annual report.

But what I am most interested in here is the way in which the USSA constructs and maintains an oppositional identity in order to garner collective support for what it identifies as its primary purpose: to "protect" hunters and other sportsmen from animal rights "extremists".

### **USSA, Collective Identity, and Oppositionality**

According to its Web site (2009c: 1)

[The USSA] provides direct lobbying and grassroots coalition support to protect and advance the rights of hunters, trappers, anglers, and scientific wildlife management professionals. The USSA is the only organization exclusively devoted to combating the attacks made on America's sportsman traditions by anti-hunting and animal rights extremists. This is accomplished through coalition building, ballot issue campaigning and legislative and government relations

This statement, as well, contains much potential fodder for critical rhetorical analysis: the strategic inclusion of "scientific wildlife professionals" among its self-defined constituencies, language such as "grassroots coalition," and so on. But most telling, perhaps, is how this

statement serves as yet another indication of the USSA's conscious oppositional positioning against animal rights groups—or what it calls “anti-hunting and animal rights extremists.”

In Beers's (2006) language, the primary “bogeymen” against whom the USSA aligns itself are the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and PETA (Freedman, 2005, 2007; Morris, 2008; Oldenburg, 2004). In virtually every interview of a representative of the organization I found, one of these two organizations was mentioned with consternation. Rick Story, USSA's senior vice president, has been particularly blunt on this front, saying in a 2007 interview that HSUS and PETA were becoming “more and more onerous” (Freedman, 2007, 5). Beth Ruth, USSA director of communication, has said of HSUS president Wayne Pacelle, “He is enemy number one” (Oldenburg, 2004, 4).

Aligning action with these sentiments, since the early 2000s, the USSA has rallied its members in protest of any organization that enters into a partnership with the HSUS, even when the purpose of the partnership is to raise money for animal shelters and other service-related programs. Since 2002, the organization has organized boycotts against, and complained publicly to, Accor Economy Lodging (Mueller, 2002), Build-a-Bear Workshop (Mueller, 2002), Iams (Mueller, 2004a), and Michelin (Davis, 2004), among others. Oftentimes these actions have been successful. According to Mueller (2004c), several organizations—General Mills, Pet Safe, Sears, and Ace Hardware, to name a few—have terminated relationships with the HSUS due to the USSA's complaint campaigns.

The organization similarly has gone after politicians who advocate for these organizations. New Jersey governor James McGreevey was the victim of a particularly harsh USSA attack campaign due to his support of SPCAs and his decision not to investigate claims of financial wrongdoing among several of these organizations in the state (*The Beaumont Enterprise* Staff, 2002).

If these examples of oppositional identity are not enough to illustrate the organization's conscious efforts to define itself in terms that are oppositional to animal rights organizations, in 2008 the USSA organized, under its own umbrella, a group called "Sportsmen Against HSUS." Obviously, the purpose of Sportsmen Against HSUS is to fight the organization that the USSA considers to be the world's top anti-hunting group (Frye, 2008). Its priorities are to "(1) mount national campaigns to educate the media, elected officials, the public, sportsmen and others targeted by the animal rights group, and (2) fund the campaigns that combat the lobbying efforts initiated and supported by the HSUS" (Frye, 2008: 4).

Certainly, the strategy of claiming an oppositional stance in order to engender and rally support under a "collective identity" (Wieloch, 2002) is not unique to the USSA or to those opposing animal rights. For decades scholars have detailed ways in which collective identity and counter-identity have played important roles in social movements across the political spectrum. In fact, Cerulo (1997) reviews much of this history *within progressive movements*, detailing how such tactics have been operationalized in order to rally constituents around calls for coalition-building against racism, sexism, economic injustice, and other forms of oppression. She refers to this brand of identification strategy as "collective agency" (1997: 393). A critical component of collective agency, whether defined *for* or *against* something, is that, in Cerulo's words, it is "enacted in a moral space" (1997: 393). The trick for pulling people into the collective is in confirming potential constituents' needs to feel that their worldviews, shared by others in the collective, are "right and good" (Taylor, 1989) or morally righteous (Aho, 1994). This can be accomplished by focusing upon what is righteous about the collective identity within a movement. It can be accomplished, as well, by nurturing the oppositionality of the collective identity (Wieloch, 2002). Although some social movement organizations lean considerably to one extreme or the other, most define

themselves publicly in the former way and draw on strategies across the self-as-righteous and other-as-unrighteous continuum. For example, Taylor and Whittier (1992), in their study of lesbian feminist mobilization, found that collective identity within the movement grew out of the former, but was solidified by the latter.

Key to fomenting mobilization, they found, was in collective oppositionality against domination (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Such oppositionality is achieved most effectively through an unambiguous identification of a *dominator* at which (or at whom) to direct collective scorn (Drury, Reicher, & Stott, 2003). This practice—unambiguous dominator identification—is common in the animal rights movement. Some of the clearest examples are those PETA campaigns—Kentucky Fried Cruelty, McCruelty, and Bloody Burberry, for example—for which mobilization materials (Web sites, pamphlets, and logos, for example) are designed explicitly to point collective scorn at particular corporations. However, although substantial scholarly attention has been paid to these sorts of dynamics in PETA’s campaigns (see, for example, Griffiths & Steinbrecher, 2010), considerably less attention has been paid to how organizations like the USSA, created to oppose the animal rights movement, employ them.

### **Battling the “Antis”**

Framing itself in opposition to the HSUS and other animal rights organizations allows the USSA to rally its constituents and foment their scornful gaze with an overwhelmingly clear message. *The “antis”* (those opposed to hunting, trapping, and angling) *are out to get us. The antis want to take away our rights. The antis want to smear our heritage. We must stand up to the antis.*

“The antis” encompass any organization or individual attempting to place limitations on hunting, trapping, or angling. One of the USSA’s chief strategies is to essentialize animal rights organizations so that it appears as though their only missions are to eliminate hunting, trapping, and angling—to take these hobbies, unrighteously, away from real “Americans.” So just as the USSA targets the HSUS and PETA whenever possible, it also takes every opportunity to reframe these and other animal rights organizations as “anti-hunting” and “anti-sportsmen,” to reframe the entire animal rights movement as an anti-hunting movement (Freedman, 2005, 2007; Frye, 2005; Moran, 2003; Morris, 2008; Mueller, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Roussan, 2007). For instance, Story (cited in Frye, 2005), speaking at a seminar in Alexandria, Minnesota, clarified that the role of the USSA is “to meet, beat, defeat and knock the living daylights out of the anti-hunting movement” (2005:5). In a 2007 interview, Story (cited in Freedman, 2007) explained, “We’re in business to combat the anti-hunting groups. That’s all we do” (2007:2). Similarly, in a 2004 interview, USSA president Bud Pidgeon (quoted in Davis, 2004), explaining the organization’s campaign against Michelin for entering into a partnership with the HSUS, said, “Sportsmen must make Michelin aware that every dollar corporate America provides to fund animal rights groups’ programs represents money that is freed up for use in national campaigns to end hunting and trapping” (2004: 6).

Strategically, the USSA’s work to embed this “us/them” binary and code it into the lexicon of its constituency allows it to impose even harsher frames on its adversaries. And it does so, riding the hegemonic discursive wave of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, regularly referring to animal rights *terrorism* (Kelly, 2002; Moran, 2003; Roberts, 2002), a ploy to marginalize animal rights and environmental activists which became popular after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States (Best & Nocella, 2004; Lovitz, 2010; Phillips, 2004). Like corporations that engage in vivisection, factory farming, and other violence against animals, this tactic enables the USSA



to frame its constituents as the victims or targets of this terrorism (Roberts, 2002), as Tony Celebrezze (quoted in Mueller, 2005), USSA director of states services, illustrated in a 2005 interview: "...anti-hunters will have a field day ensuring that sportsmen are prosecuted on animal cruelty charges" (2005:3). This framing has helped the USSA rally its membership to lobby legislators to treat direct action animal rights activism as domestic terrorism (Kelly, 2002; Moran, 2003). In fact, in 2003 the organization drafted the Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act, calling it "model" legislation for combating animal rights terrorism. They promoted passage of this act in all 50 states (Moran, 2003). This, along with action by the National Rifle Association and other pro-hunting groups, helped facilitate the passage of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act in 2006 (McPhall, 2007), making it easier to prosecute animal rights activity as domestic terrorism (Lovitz, 2010).

The USSA employs many other classic strategies to galvanize its base and discredit the animal rights movement. Like many organizations opposed to social or political change, the USSA often mocks the HSUS, PETA, and individual animal rights advocates as "silly" and their concerns as "ridiculous" (Morris, 2008; Berg, 2005). Like many "conservation" organizations that oppose animal rights groups (Beers, 2006), the USSA defines part of its work, and the hobbies it defends, in scientific terms, as *wildlife management*, while labeling animal rights concerns as unscientific (USSA, 2007). It warns that animal rights groups are dangerous because they block important scientific research (Roberts, 2002). In doing so, the organization implicitly frames itself as *pro-science*.

It also appears as though the organization has a network of journalists employed as sports writers for right-leaning newspapers who regularly and explicitly support its causes. These journalists frequently write articles that advocate explicitly for the USSA, refer to animal rights groups as "antis," and portray them as extremists who want to rob hunters and trappers of their rights. Among them are Mueller (2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005) at the

*Washington Times*, Moran (2003) at the *New York Post*, and Freedman (2005, 2007) at the *Chicago Tribune*. In several instances, these journalists, not even feigning journalistic objectivity, provided readers with information on how to join or contribute to the USSA or how to protest animal rights campaigns. It is interesting, too, that each is a sports writer, and every newspaper article I found that favored the USSA was in a sports section. This might be a strategy employed by the organization to reach its base as directly as possible through the “Outdoors” sections of sports pages, rather than going through other sections of newspapers, which could raise counter-attention by people who are not hunters or trappers (and so who may be less likely to read the “Outdoors” section of their newspapers).

But without question, the organization’s primary and most successful strategy has been framing itself and its constituents as victims of animal rights terrorism. When people are afraid that they might lose something to which they have grown entitled, and when politicians and corporations fear losing the support of a considerable portion of the population, they become much easier to scare into compliance. The USSA knows this, and has become Rove-ian in its ability to understand its sociopolitical and sociohistorical context—one in which the “terrorist” label carries particular weight—and to take advantage of this context, a key skill in the development of sustainable collective identity (Moghadam, 1994; Wuthnow, 1989).

This can be an indication, as well, that the USSA understands its constituents. Their brand of oppositional stance in which collective identity is built largely through the demonization of “the other” speaks to the same hyper-masculinity that drives predominantly boys and men (Herzog, 2007) into hobbies like hunting and trapping in the first place. Just as the National Football League sells itself largely on hyper-masculine violence and sex (in the form of cheerleaders), and not on the athletic artistry and grace of world-class athletes, the USSA sells itself through hyper-masculine conflict—a sort of war game between opposing social and political interests. This, again, is a reflection of informed strategy on the

organization's part. Littlefield and Ozanne (2009), who, through their study of consumer socialization among hunters, identified four "subgroup" hunter identities (traditionalists, gearheads, experientialists, and transcendentalists), found that an elevated sense of masculinity was central to each of them. Similarly, Oleson and Henry (2009) found an elevated sense of masculinity, in the form of high levels of what they called "power motivation," among men who were indifferent to the mistreatment of animals.

And, of course, at the basest level, a vast majority of hunters are men overall. In the U.S., men represent close to 85% of hunters (Herzog, 2007). Men are over-represented, as well, in images adorning USAA materials. In fact, sixteen of the eighteen hunters depicted in the organization's 2009-2010 annual report (USAA, 2010a) appear to be boys or men. According to the same document, twelve of the organization's fifteen board members are men.

### **USAA's Campaigns**

The USAA has applied these strategies to a variety of campaigns. It shares on its Web site an impressive list of victories in a variety of situations across the U.S. (USAA, 2009c). For the most part, though, in addition to its political campaigns against animal rights groups and those who support these groups, the USAA employs its tactics in two major ways: (1) representing hunters' and trappers' interests in state and federal law suits (Marshall, 1990; Roussan, 2007; USAA, 2006, 2007), and (2) bringing legislation against animal rights groups to fight "animal rights terrorism" (Kelly, 2002; Roberts, 2002). In most of these battles, the USAA collaborates with at least one other organization that advocates for hunters, trappers, or anglers (USAA, 2006, 2007), such as the Fur Takers of America and the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

One of the organization's proudest and profoundest victories came through its advocacy for legislation to ease age restrictions on hunting (Berg, 2005; Freedman, 2005; Pyne, 2005). Between 2004 and 2005, the USSA built a coalition with the National Wild Turkey Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation to counteract animal rights groups' advocacy for increasing the minimum hunting age. This coalition resulted in "Families Afield," a program that once again framed hunting and trapping as wholesome American "family" recreation and organizations attempting to impose stronger age restrictions on these activities as anti-family and un-American (Pyne, 2005). As of 2007, the coalition has been successful in easing hunting age restrictions in eleven states. Haas (2007) estimates that, as a result of these victories, five million additional children have been enabled to hunt with their parents or guardians.

Another victory, of sorts, is the organization's continued mainstreaming of itself. Even as hunting becomes less popular nationwide (Freedman, 2005), the USSA has grown more vibrant and increasingly mainstream. Evidence of this is its representation on the panel that publishes *Outdoor Life's* annual Sportsmen's Voting Guide (Absher, 2008) as well as the steadiness of its membership through economic turbulence. This may be an indication of the effectiveness of its strategy of engendering oppositional collective identity in members and potential members. For example, on the "Membership" page of its Web site, the USSA urges people to join in order to "protect against legal and legislative attacks by the animal rights movement" (2010b: 2). Further down the page, the organization continues with this sort of rhetoric, positioning itself clearly as the righteous "dominated":

By joining the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance today, you will be helping on the frontlines to defend your rich American traditions of hunting, fish and trapping. Your financial contribution and personal dedication plays an important role in the protection of your right to enjoy the outdoors today and for generations to come. (2010b: 3)

The USSA has been least successful when it has ventured out of its priority areas, attempting to reach beyond its scope. It has lobbied since 2000, so far without success, for reforms to the Endangered Species Act that would require the Department of the Interior and the Commerce Department to consider how changes to the Act would impact hunters (Holsman, 2000). It has been equally unsuccessful in its attempts to resist stricter puppy mill laws by arguing that they would adversely affect hunters who are raising hunting dogs (Laepfle, 2007). Overall, the USSA is more successful advocating for or against legislation that is more directly—or less indirectly—tied to its core constituents than it is advocating for policies that, like the former, transcend this scope or, like the latter, concern only a small fraction of its constituents. It is interesting to note, as well, that in both of these cases the “antis” were not defined as HSUS and other animal rights organizations per se.

## **Reflections and Conclusion**

Despite the fact that it positions itself in direct opposition to the HSUS, PETA, and other animal rights organizations, there is little indication of these organizations reciprocating the USSA’s oppositional obsession. In fact, it appears, based on my examination of materials from HSUS and PETA, that they, the two primary “villains” in the oppositional identity of the USSA, are content, for now, to ignore the USSA, at least publicly. I was unable to find any specific response campaign from either the HSUS or PETA other than a brief statement about the USSA on a page buried fairly deeply within the bowels of the HSUS Web structure. And this might be the most strategic course of (in)action, as responding directly could provide fodder for the USSA’s strategy of building collective identity in opposition to these and other animal rights “dominators.” However, although the USSA is relatively small, whether measured by membership or annual budget, it remains a formidable thorn in the side

of the animal rights movement, as evidenced by its ability to disrupt partnerships between the HSUS and other organizations. If the leaders of any particular legislative animal rights campaign that targets hunting or trapping does not have the USSA on their radar, it might be in for a tougher-than-expected battle.

It is important to note, then, that although there exists a growing body of scholarship on the construction of collective identity and the reconstruction of corporate-protectionist hegemony in *opposition to* animal rights organizations (Lovitz, 2010) by groups like the USSA and by corporate-friendly legislators, there exists very little scholarship on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of various responses to these discursive techniques by organizations concerned with animal rights or liberation. Certainly the oppositionality strategy is not new; nor is it unique to the USAA or to organizations hostile to animal liberation more generally. However, as Klein (2007) detailed, when employed in a sociopolitical context manipulated by the very corporate interests that have an economic stake in abolishing social movements that threaten profit margins, appeals to fear can be particularly effective. This, unfortunately, is the context in which we find ourselves today (Klein, 2007): a neoliberal context, the very framing (*post-9/11*) of which reminds us to be afraid, to identify enemies, and to refuse to allow *those people* to win by altering *our way of life*.

As animal rights and anti-speciesism movements in the U.S. continue to shift away from mere “protection” and toward “liberation,” and as they attempt to win support for more serious sociocultural changes such as the elimination of sport hunting, socio-capitalist conditions suggest that the USSA likely will grow and become an even more formidable counter-force. It has a sort of hegemonic sentimentality on its side—one that is consistent with the anti-Obama fervor, power gains by Tea Partiers, and the recent increase in gun sales in the U.S. And already it is organized *against* organizations that stand for the same spirit of

“change” that Obama, hegemonic as *he* may be, rode into the White House. In addition, the USSA has strong working relationships with other powerful lobbying groups like the NRA. It can, like those groups, lean on the “protect your heritage” paradigms that traditionally have worked so well in swaying mass white working class sentiment (Prasad, Perrin, Bezila, Hoffman, Kindleberger, Manturuk, Powers, & Payton, 2009)—a sentiment it attempts to exploit, for instance, through the many father-son hunting photographs appearing in its materials. In fact, according to the AFL-CIO, 70% of the 4.6 million union members in the U.S. enjoy hunting and fishing (Egan, 2009). The USSA has demonstrated over the past 30 years a propensity for mobilizing these masses and keeping them mobilized by employing perhaps the greatest change-resisting tool: fear.

The deep, reflexive, analytical nature of critical animal rights scholarship, in addition to framing the problem of animal exploitation in critical, global capitalist terms and providing analyses of interconnections among liberation movements, makes it a potentially potent tool for examining these conditions and responding to both theoretical and practical questions about their implications for animal liberation activism: How might organizations and activists understand oppositional (and other) strategies within a larger socio-capitalist context of neoliberalism and disaster capitalism? How might such a context require new responses from activist communities?

If we fail to do the work to understand them in this larger socio-capitalist context, these strategies may represent a growing threat to already-fledgling solidarities within and among animal liberation movements. After all, organizations like the USSA justify their oppositional stances in part by suggesting connections between various organizations. Some animal rights organizations (such as PETA) are being pressured, publicly and privately, to disassociate from and publicly renounce others (such as the Animal Liberation Front).

Critical animal studies can play an important role in explicating the implications of these pressures in light of larger socio-capitalist conditions.

This is, in part, about knowing one's "opponents"—about understanding how the USSA and other organizations enact strategy to meet their objectives. But it also is about understanding the hegemony of speciesism and how exploiters take advantage of sociopolitical conditions in order to reify it and to justify exploitation, particularly as neoliberalism conditions the masses to relinquish the notion of the "public good".

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## INTERVIEW

### Josh Harper discusses animal rights history, welfarism and “Star Wars”

#### Interviewed by Jon Hochschartner<sup>1</sup>

A long time activist, Josh Harper spent three years in prison for his role in the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) campaign. Now on probation, he’s launched two projects chronicling the history of the animal rights movement. The Journal for Critical Animal Studies interviewed him July 4 2011.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Could you give a little background on your Conflict Gypsy website and the book project you’re working on?

**Josh Harper:** Yeah, absolutely. Conflict Gypsy started because a friend of mine asked me if I had a complete collection of this old, British, Earth First! publication called “Do or Die.” And at one point I did have a full collection. But then a joint terrorism taskforce raided my home and took that and all of my other old publications.

When we started trying to piece together a collection of it again, we started realizing this is the story of our movement as told by the participants. So much of it though is printed on this really disposable medium. Between activist drop-out, police raids, and just the passage of time — these fragile items getting mold and mildew— we realized that our history was really dying. There was no serious academic attempt to really find and archive these items. Most of the attempts we had seen to get them back into people’s hands were for profit and you kind of had to already know what you were looking for.

For example, recently there was a compilation of old issues of “Underground” that was put together. Then the old A.L.F. press officer David Barbarash for many years ran a group called Black Cat Distro that took some of these old publications and put out sort of cheaply

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Hochschartner is a writer from upstate New York. He previously has interviewed Nicoal Sheen, Peter Young and Steven Best for *Negotiation Is Over*.

bound photocopies of them. We didn't really feel like those efforts were going to be sufficient to preserve these items.

Anyway, as we started getting more and more things for the site, Arissa Media (Group) contacted me and asked if I'd like to actually write a book about the history of radical animal rights activism in North America. I jumped at that opportunity. I kind of feel like I have the biggest homework assignment ever now (laughs). I'm a little bit nervous about it.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Have you ever written anything of a comparable length, or anywhere close?

**Josh Harper:** No. The longest thing I've ever written is about a 40-page chapter for a compilation book. This is going to be quite an undertaking. I don't come from any sort of academic background at all either. I'm not a history major. I know very little about research protocol. You know, I dropped out of high school in ninth grade. But I think what I do have that gives me an advantage maybe over people with that sort of that background is fifteen years of participation in the movement. So I think that not only am I going to have access to interview subjects and source materials that your average person wouldn't have access to. But I think that because of my history the information that people will be willing to share with me, and the time they will be willing to put into it, might exceed what you would otherwise see in a more academic approach. Then the other thing is that I've just done an awful lot of fundraising. So I'm going to hire research assistants that have the master's degrees (laughs). Hopefully that will help.

**Jon Hochschartner:** I see that you're starting the history in 1977. Why is that?

**Josh Harper:** Well, 1977 was sort of the date that I used on Kickstarter (fundraising website). To be quite honest, I haven't settled yet when I'm going to start it. But '77 was sort of watershed year for animal rights in North America. It wasn't just the year that we saw the first live liberation of animals in the United States. It was also the year that a lot of very influential activists began putting together groups and small conferences out on the East Coast. There was a rise of anti-fur activism that year. So just looking at my early notes, it seemed like a good, notable place to start, and a place that could also sort of draw readers in very rapidly. You know, liberating two dolphins from a laboratory is something that has a

degree of drama to it that wasn't really present prior in the movement. I don't know. But as the research continues and as I get more and more interviews back and also more access to source materials, that start date could change.

**Jon Hochschartner:** I know she's working with a different time period, but will your book be different in tone than Diane Beer's work? I don't know if you've read her history.

**Josh Harper:** Did she write "For the Prevention of Cruelty?" I did read that actually. I read that in prison. Yeah, it will differ. The thing is that I wanted, first and foremost, to tell the story of people who really put their lives on the line, who saw this as an issue that was worth taking deep physical risks for, the type of risks that could end in injury and then incarceration. That's the aspect of the story that is really fascinating for me. And not just because of some sort of adventuristic sense or glorification of direct action. But when you really consider the history of human and animal relations, to have this sudden turnaround where these people looked at the tide of history, thousands of years of domination and exploitation, and were so disgusted by it that they were willing to leap in and try to physically intervene. That to me is fascinating, that something like that could even occur after such a lengthy period of apathy towards animals.

I totally respect the work of the early welfarists. I also recognize that even back to the 1960s you had people who started talking about things in more of a rights context. But I also feel that their stories have been documented. I feel like that story has been told. Meanwhile, we don't know very much about the history of the more protest and direct action oriented movement in the United States.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Do you have any idea of when it would be finished, or no?

**Josh Harper:** (Exhales loudly, then laughs.) Part of the problem right now with coming up with a timeline is that I'm still on probation, which means that I can't travel. I'm going to have some very able research assistants. And of course between everyone having cell phones and the internet nowadays, I'm certain there's a lot of information I'm going to be able to gather from home. But next year, when I get off of probation, I do think a lot of the finishing touches on the book will come from me being able to travel and personally interact with people. And then the other thing that I've learned from Conflict Gypsy is that a lot of people

say they'll put things in the mail, but they don't (laughs). So I'm thinking that one of the tasks that'll probably have to be undertaken to get certain very rare source materials is that I'm going to have to go and get them in person.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Speaking of Conflict Gypsy, what are your favorite items in that collection so far?

**Josh Harper:** Oh man. I was really excited to find this one zine called "Homo Milk" that was produced by these two very radical queer vegans in the 1980s. One of them, Todd Meszaros, is such a fascinating figure, and one of those people who has just been totally lost to our movement. Kids nowadays have no idea who he is. There was this time when he had never met a vegan. He didn't know anybody who did it. He didn't know if it would be healthy or anything like that. But because he had this animal rights philosophy, he was like, "I can't exploit animals for their meat, or secretions, or anything anymore." So he just went vegan, having never met anybody. He went on to do all these really fascinating things. He was roommates with Rod Coronado and Jonathan Paul. He was a hunt saboteur. He played in a band called Pollution Circus that traveled all over and spread veganism to the subculture that they catered to. I don't know. I could really go on and on about this guy for hours. He and his boyfriend in the 1980s put out this zine called Homo Milk. It was part of a series of really militant, controversial zines that they had done. And finding one of those was just so amazing. Anyway, his boyfriend, Tom Scut, is also a really fascinating guy and I'm sure he's going to get a lot of coverage in the book as well. So that was one of my favorites. And then of course there are the things that really influenced me when I was younger. "No Compromise," "Strong Hearts," "Memories of Freedom," those were the publications that I was reading when I initially became active. So tracking those down has been really wonderful.

I'd say that probably from a purely academic, historical-importance perspective, though, probably Richard Morgan's book "Love and Anger." It was an organizing handbook that was written in 1980. The first edition was published in 1981. It spread all across the world. I've found reviews of it in publications from New Zealand and Australia. Basically this guy laid the groundwork for animal rights organizing and protesting. Many of the people who were initially influenced by him, like George Cave, went on to do things like the first civil disobedience for animal rights in New York at Macy's in 1984. This guy really kind of

launched what we now know as the animal rights movement in the U.S., the aboveground protest-oriented portion of it. And almost no one knows who he is. So getting both editions of it—and we found autographed copies—and getting those scanned and online was really amazing.

I've actually been considering lately hiring a private investigator to track him down and find out if he's still alive. He would be in his 60s now. He disappeared from the movement in about 1985. I've spoken to a few people who were friends of his in the 1970s and early 1980s and no one knows where he went or what happened to him. Norm Phelps, when he was writing "The Longest Struggle," actually tried to track him down as well and was unsuccessful. So I'm kind of hoping that I'll get lucky and I'll be the one to find him or at least find out what happened to him.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Going through these documents, what differences do you notice between the 1970s, the 80', the 90s, and whatever we're calling the past decade, the 2000s?

**Josh Harper:** Well, you know, I guess what I see in the 1970s was this very young and hopeful movement that wanted to grow. There was really this drive to build mass, but also not to water down the message or to back away from controversial tactics. But of course the world was a very different place then. You were coming out of the 1960s and the more radical 1970s. Americans were more used to seeing militant protests on television and magazines and it didn't really have the image that it has now. So in the 1970s, these sort of loud protests and even the liberation of animals, it didn't get the negative media coverage that we see nowadays.

In the 1980s, the efforts of the people in the '70s to grow and build, it came to life. You started seeing this explosion of activism. In the United Kingdom there was this sense that really they were on the cusp of a revolution for animals. We never quite reached that level in the United States, but there were points where you'd see all across the U.S., thousands of people attending days of action. And for Fur Free Friday, you would see 3,000 people in New York, 3,000 people in L.A., 2,000 people in Chicago. We haven't really seen anything like that since.

The downside of the explosion in that popularity though is that suddenly you had a huge



fundraising base. An awful lot of groups, and then really people who I don't think gave a damn about animals, they started developing these offices and salaries. All of a sudden they had this tremendous overhead. And they couldn't really risk the fundraising effort by doing anything controversial.

The American Medical Association definitely saw the precipice that some of these big groups were walking and decided to basically make an ultimatum: "If you support radical action, we're going to come after you. We're going to vilify you. We're going to harm your fundraising efforts."

A number of groups that had previously even really glorified Animal Liberation Front actions in their newsletters—I mean, you had groups that would have pictures of their founders getting arrested on the covers of their newsletters. In a very brief period, all of a sudden that stopped.

Of course toward the end of the 1980s, you had the crackdown. It was kind of like the "Empire Strikes Back" (laughs).

**Jon Hochschartner:** Got to love the "Star Wars" reference.

**Josh Harper:** You got to get a "Star Wars" reference in.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Josh, can I just interrupt you for a second there? You'd probably include PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) in there too?

**Josh Harper:** Oh yeah, absolutely.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Didn't they provide you with a grant at some point?

**Josh Harper:** They did, yeah. In the 1990s, I was facing a grand jury investigation in Portland, Oregon, and I refused to appear and to testify. So I was actually charged with a felony count. At that time, I sent out fundraising letters to a number of people one of the people working for my defense committee actually approached (PETA founder) Ingrid Newkirk at a speaking engagement that she did here in Seattle. So when she got back to

Washington she wrote a check for five thousand dollars and sent it off to my support committee. Where it was then cashed and immediately went to my attorney (laughs).

**Jon Hochschartner:** So they haven't sold out completely. Would that be fair to say?

**Josh Harper:** Oh, there's a lot about PETA that I really love and appreciate. And I'm not trying to knock them in any way. I understand that that overhead is there, that there are things that they need to fundraise for, and that they do very valuable things with the money that they get. One of the reasons that they cannot be as vocal, and I think really as honest, as they would like to be about their feelings on direct action is that after they gave me and Rod Coronado and a few other people money towards legal defense, there was actually a congressional hearing about revoking their non-profit status. Non-profit groups are not allowed to participate or even really advocate for illegal tactics. They had to look at really doing harm to their other efforts if they continued to openly give support to radicals. I'm not angry about that. But that is the reality of the situation. That's the direction that things went.

**Jon Hochschartner:** I totally understand the criticisms against PETA. I just feel like sometimes it's not balanced.

**Josh Harper:** Absolutely. I'm also not talking solely about PETA. If you look at groups like In Defense of Animals, and so on — a number of groups in the 1980s, as things went into the 90s, sort of pulled back their support for all types of direct action, including voluntary arrest and civil disobedience.

**Jon Hochschartner:** OK, I'm sorry. I totally interrupted your chronology of the different decades you're covering in your book.

**Josh Harper:** The 1990s was really fascinating because it was coming out of the repression of the 1980s. It took several years basically for the fear to subside, also for enough young people, enough new blood, to come into the movement that were unaware of the repression for things to begin to really bloom again.

I think one of the big differences in the 1990s was tone. There wasn't the same sense of hope that we had seen in the 1970s and '80s. And a lot less emphasis was put on movement

building. You had all of these hardcore bands that had really intelligent lyrics like, “Stop talking, start revenging.”

So there was more of a sense of “Fuck you. We aren’t waiting anymore. We’re going to take it. We’re going to move forward with or without the rest of society.” And of course that’s a mistake. That abandons billions of animals to a terrible fate. Movement building is difficult. Convincing the public at large is a very tremendous task. But it’s one that we absolutely have to incorporate into our strategies if we’re going to see the type of success that we need. Unfortunately, a lot of the direct action that we began to see in the 1990s and 2000s was very ugly. The rhetoric turned very macho, and I think wasn’t likely to really draw in a lot of new participants except for maybe angry young men who had power fantasies.

**Jon Hochschartner:** The crossed straightedge guns.

**Josh Harper:** Exactly. You also saw some very almost cult-like groups that sprouted up during that time period. You had Hardline that incorporated a lot of various bizarre religious ideas into its ideology. Initially Taoism, but then later with all the weird fractures in the group, various members became Islamic, some of them became Baha’i, some of them actually became Rastafarians strangely enough (laughs). So anyway, that was the negative side of it. I guess the positive side of it though is that there was this tremendous upswing in activity. A number of a people who got involved then did stay involved, continued to develop their analysis and their strategy. And a lot of the best activists that we have right now, I think people would be shocked to find out about their militant origin. There are a number of people working at HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) who I guess to put it bluntly used to be hard as fuck (laughs). But really number of groups that started in the 1990s, like Compassion Over Killing — they’ve become more moderate over time. But their roots really did lie in that upswing of youth participation in the 1990s.

And then of course the story of the 2000s I think is a little bit better known. Unfortunately, for the early part of the decade the ugly rhetoric really did continue. I think we’re still dealing with a lot of the harm that that rhetoric caused. Even the fear that people talk about nowadays — you know, the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, the prosecutions of myself and my co-defendants. I think a lot of people haven’t yet realized. To a degree it wasn’t the action that

brought on the repression. The rhetoric is what really helped fuel the repression. It's what gave police, FBI and federal prosecutors, so much of the fuel that they were able to use to convince judges that this was a desperate issue, to convince legislators that someone was going to get killed.

It wasn't because anyone was arming themselves (laughs), or that there was really any move within the movement to begin using violent tactics. It was because you had a number of people who were speculating.

**Jon Hochschartner:** On the internet.

**Josh Harper:** Exactly. So, anyway, certainly with the SHAC campaign we made a lot of mistakes. I have to say we made mistakes because we were constantly active. You're not going to hit the bull's eye every single time. None of us are born with the skill set that's needed to knock out an international corporation. But really those errors didn't sink us nearly so bad as the no-censorship policy on the website. Basically anything that came in, if it was HLS (Huntingdon Life and Sciences) related, if it had something to do with an action against HLS, it would go up on the website. Of course the danger of that was that if you're providing a venue for every nut-case to basically vent their anger and frustration at the world, you're going to find some people who are less sincerely motivated by the actual plight of animals, and then some people who just really don't have a great analysis yet, some people who might be tremendously good at liberating animals, but don't exactly have a knack for the written word (laughs). All of that was going up on the site. And it made us look — I don't even really know how to say it. It created an atmosphere of just ugliness and borderline ignorance that I don't think we ever really recovered from.

There were some amazing things about the anti-HLS campaign. And I'm so proud to have been a part of it. I think that there were thousands of really, really good people doing really, really good things to try and shut that place down. And I also think there were a few people who we never should have been a mouthpiece for.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Do you think you would have done these projects if you weren't on probation?

**Josh Harper:** You know, probably not. I have to say that the thing that really appealed to me since I began my activism in the 1990s — at least my animal rights activism — I was doing human rights stuff I guess dating back to the '80s or the more early '90s. I was one of the people who really did want to intervene. I was one of the people who couldn't stand the thought that these things were happening. They were happening so close to me and to all these beings that I felt such an affinity for.

I grew up in Oregon and I lived in a lot of small towns. I watched the decline — you know, Great Blue Heron, fox populations, bears, and all these other creatures. I lived amongst trappers, hunters and breeders. So to have all of it right there and then to have the knowledge that I had about animals' ability to socialize, to feel joy, to feel pain — I wanted to do something. I wanted to intervene. And I still feel that. That's still where my heart lies. So I guess if probation and prison hadn't taken me out of the game to the degree that they have, I'd say yeah, it's quite likely that I would be involved in more aggressive forms of protest. And I probably wouldn't have had the time to take these projects on. So I guess maybe that's the only hidden benefit (laughs).

**Jon Hochschartner:** So this question is kind of off the top of my head. But I've been reading a lot about in-vitro meat recently, and the potentials of that. Do you think a vegan society is possible? And if so, what do you see as the pathway to getting there?

**Josh Harper:** I think that there's a pretty broad chasm between possible and likely. Do I think that it's possible? I absolutely think that it's possible. But my participation over the years has kind of led me to one very unfortunate conclusion. And it's that the majority of people who become involved in the animal rights movement — the ones that have enough compassion left in them to even go vegan — most of them are still not going to have the level of commitment, awareness, and self-sacrifice that it's going to take to really cause the types of changes that we need for animals. I wish that that were not true. And I hope that that changes.

But there is not some endless well of people willing to go out and take on that warrior role. I think what that means is that we have to be conscious of the fact that ideology can't blind us to the reality of certain situations. There are times when veganism is not the bottom line. Animals are the bottom line. Animal liberation philosophy, animal rights philosophy, animal

welfare philosophy is not the bottom line. I'm certain that a lot of people will be shocked by this, and call me incrementalist and say that I'm compromising.

**Jon Hochschartner:** You welfarist (laughs)!

**Josh Harper:** You're a potluckist! But anyway, the fact of the matter is that there are times that if you demand 100 percent, you end up with zero. And that of course is tremendously unfair to the billions of lives that need us. I'm disgusted by the idea of in-vitro meat. Ultimately there are still animals at the start of that chain that are suffering and dying. But I also know that, given what I've seen in this world, that's not an area I'm going to put my efforts into opposing. I think that other activists would be bright to continue to critique the situation, to continue to try to pull people in the truly right situation. But I think to spend a tremendous amount of time fighting the growth of things like in-vitro meat would be a mistake. Just as I once wasted a tremendous amount of my activist energies in the 1990s fighting welfarist legislation. I could not shut up about it (laughs).

**Jon Hochschartner:** Actually fighting it? How so?

**Josh Harper:** Oh yeah. I watched this group called the Oregon Bear and Cougar Coalition fighting against different types of hounding and baiting. Where basically drums of rotting meat would be placed out into an open area, bears would come to eat the meat, and then they would be shot while they were in the open.

Anyway, just so many resources went into that campaign. From all the people who they had to get out on the street collecting signatures, to the fundraising, to all the people working the office, working the phones, lobbying. In the end, ultimately the legislation passed. But the thing was, there was no money or will to enforce the law. And a few years later, the state legislators came along and said, "Oh, you know what? We think this was the actual will of the voters." And they just changed the language of the law.

So having watched millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of hours of activists' efforts go into something that ultimately didn't help that many animals, I was incensed. And I felt like my opinion had to be known by everyone in the movement (laughs). So a lot of times when there was even initially discussion of new legislation, I was right there in people's faces,

going to conferences, and trying to convince them of the error of their ways. Of course, they proceeded without me. And all I did was cause a lot of conflict and rifts in the movement. There are people who are never going to see eye to eye with me. But that's fine, because we're not a cult. We don't have to just constantly just mimic back to each other the same ideas. That's dangerous. That would cause a lot of regression in the movement. Really as I've gotten older and begun to look at some of the more welfarist campaigns, I do believe that ultimately they can lead to a great reduction in the number of animals killed for human purposes. And they can lead a number of people to embrace the more rights-based philosophies.

When you think about the fair time doctrine that exists still in some states in the U.S., what will happen when you have the campaign against, for example, battery cages — I don't know if you've ever tried to get a commercial on television that shows brutality against animals. It's not going to happen.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Really, they won't take your money? Obviously that reveals my naiveté, but I always just assumed that for advertisers, money was money.

**Josh Harper:** Oh, no. The thing is that it's not just your money they have to worry about. They have to worry about their other advertisers. They have to worry about McDonalds. They have to worry about Kentucky Fried Chicken.

**Jon Hochschartner:** It's the bigger picture.

**Josh Harper:** Exactly. So the thing is that PETA, and the other groups, even Compassion Over Killing, for years tried to get commercials on television and didn't have a whole lot of luck. But now in a number of states where HSUS, for example, has tried to get legislation passed, you have television stations that cannot say no. And so all of a sudden you have millions of people exposed to this imagery they otherwise wouldn't have seen. So anyway, I think my arguments on these things are becoming a little bit more nuanced. I'm still not thrilled with that direction. Do I think there are better directions we could go? Yes. Do I think we're going to go that direction? Probably not. So to spend all my time and energy trying to block the efforts of other activists is a waste and ultimately I think harmful to the movement. So I'm knocking it off.

**Jon Hochschartner:** Writing these books, you have to take a historian's perspective. How do you hope people in the future will look back on you?

**Josh Harper:** (Laughs) You know, honestly, I hope that when people look back from the future they see me as a really minor character. And here's the reason that I say that. I think it's tremendously sad that the FBI was able at one point to consider SHAC the threat that they considered us. Because, ultimately while it's true that we were doing something pretty groundbreaking and historical, what we were doing wasn't enough. When I look back on the figures that I have admired so much in my life, the people who influenced me to become an activist and pursue the path that I have, I don't really live up. I don't really make muster. I'm not someone like (anarcho-communist) Alexander Berkman. There was a time that he was able to get 40,000 people out on the streets. And when I think about all that he did after the tremendous amount of time he spent in prison, I know that I'm not one of those figures. I think about Rod Coronado taking out the whaling fleet of a whole nation in a single night. I think about all these people like Jonathan Paul, who's a good friend of mine, who in the 1980s, was breaking into laboratory, after laboratory, after laboratory, freeing all of these animals. I know that I'm not one of them.

**Jon Hochschartner:** But I mean where is Rod Coronado now? Is he even vegan anymore?

**Josh Harper:** He's not.

**Jon Hochschartner:** I mean not to "diss" him, but you're still here. At this point you're almost like an elder statement of the movement.

**Josh Harper:** Oh, that's so sad.

**Jon Hochschartner:** I know. It really is, but it's true. And I think there's strength in the person who, maybe isn't a sprinter, but is there for the long haul. I don't know. I feel like you're selling yourself short.

**Josh Harper:** There's something to be said for perseverance. I'm going to continue to persevere. And I hope that the legacy that I leave behind will grow between now and the



time that I die. But I also hope that it's greatly eclipsed by the generation that's coming up now and the generation that'll come after them. I think my ultimate dream is that we'll see people with a much greater intelligence than my own (laughs), and a much greater strategic sense that takes things a lot further along the path for animal rights than I did. You know, don't get me wrong. Everyone hates the idea of being forgotten. But if I did end up playing a very minor role because other people overshadowed me, I'd be happy with that.

## **OPEN DATA**

### **USDA Food Recalls, 2006-2010**

#### **Humane Research Council<sup>1</sup>**

##### **Abstract**

This brief report details a dataset of all United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food recalls from 2006-2010. The recalls have been compiled by the Humane Research Council into a single dataset that includes the severity of each recall, the amount of each recall, and the reason for each recall. This report also describes the methods of data collection and overall descriptive findings of the dataset.

##### **Introduction**

Following is a brief description of a dataset that contains the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) food recall data from 2006-2010. This is a presentation of a dataset only, with some descriptive findings included to give the reader an idea of the nature and scope of the data. The dataset was compiled by the Humane Research Council (HRC) with the intent of making it available to scholars and researchers who wish to use it in their research. The information contained in this dataset will likely be of interest to critical animal studies scholars, animal protection organizations, animal advocates, and food safety analysts. The following summary introduces the dataset, describes the data collection methods, and presents descriptive findings of the results.

We hope that scholars will utilize this data to address important research questions that may be of use to animals and animal advocates. The full data set is available for free to qualifying researchers or organizations in STATA, SPSS or Excel format, along with the codebook, a detailed data collection protocol, and other supporting documentation. To inquire, please contact the Humane Research Council.

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<sup>1</sup> The Humane Research Council (HRC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering animal advocates with access to the research, analysis, strategies, and messages that maximize their effectiveness to reduce animal suffering. HRC has assisted a diverse selection of national and local/grassroots organizations working on a wide variety of animal issues by conducting research on behalf of animals and animal advocacy groups. HRC's research director, Carol L. Glasser can be contacted at [cglasser@humanersearch.org](mailto:cglasser@humanersearch.org)

## **Why Study Food Recalls?**

A recent study prepared for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations found that, on a global scale, about one-third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted or lost each year (Gustavsson et al., 2011). This problem is even worse in affluent nations. The study's authors estimate that annual food waste and loss is between 13 to 24 lbs per person in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, ranging as high as 254 lbs per person in Europe and North America.

The issue of food being wasted is of particular concern to animal advocates given that much of this “food” is animal flesh. For many animal advocates, the idea that an animal dies for food is problematic in and of itself. But even more disturbing is the reality that a huge number of these animals are killed in vain because of issues in processing, transport, or on the consumer end that lead to the flesh of the animal being thrown away. Many recalls also have a cost in terms of human health and social welfare. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that in 2010 there were 1,397,187 cases of Salmonella alone; USDA's Economic Research Service estimates that premature deaths and illness resulting from this cost the U.S. \$2.7 billion (ERS, 2011).

It is important to understand the mechanisms of food waste and loss in order to ameliorate the problem. Understanding *how much* food is recalled and *why* it is recalled can help to elucidate some of these problems. A number of reports and media discuss changes in recall trends over time. However, these discussions often lack the nuance necessary to be meaningful. Recalls vary in severity, with the USDA labeling the recall a class 1 (most severe), 2, or 3, depending on its level of perceived threat to human health. Simply knowing the number of recalls is not sufficient. For example, a sharp decrease in class 1 recalls accompanied by an equal increase in class 2 or 3 recalls would still represent an improvement. Further, recalls also occur for various reasons—mislabeling, foreign objects in the product, processing errors, and contamination with food-borne pathogens such as *E. coli* or *Salmonella*. It is important to understand trends in the causes of recalls to truly understand how they can best be managed.

## Data

All U.S. food recalls are available online from the USDA, but each recall is recorded on a separate web page. This does not allow for a systematic way to track recalls over time and measure the amount and type of animal products/food recalled, why products are recalled, or the severity of the recall. This dataset consolidates information about all USDA food recalls for the five-year period from 2006-2010. There are two agencies that control most of the food recalls in the U.S.—the USDA and the FDA. The USDA inspects and manages recalls for most meat from land-based animals, while the FDA manages all other foods. This dataset is comprised of the USDA food recalls for animal products, which are derived from chickens, cows, ducks, pigs, and turkeys. Each recall was coded for: class of recall (i.e. level of severity of recall as determined by the USDA), reason for recall (coded on a number of levels), type of product recalled, and amount of the product recalled.

To the best of our knowledge, there is only one other dataset that compiles similar information about food recalls, produced by the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRA).<sup>2, 3</sup> Scholars who want more detail regarding the reasons of the food recalls, want to work with the raw data to generate their own analyses, need detailed methodological information, or want to add additional years to the data, will likely prefer the HRC data set. The SRA dataset may be preferable for those who need to track historical recalls over a longer period of time, as the SRA data extends from 1998-2010 while the HRC dataset currently covers 2006-2010. SRA also has some information on the companies that initiate food recalls, while HRC does not.

The HRC dataset is reliable and reproducible; it has been compiled with methodological precision, and the coding scheme was developed and tested using measures of intercoder agreement, such that the final coding scheme has a high level of intercoder

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.sraproject.org/featured/>.

<sup>3</sup> The datasets are generally comparable for the variables covered in both sets, including amount of meat recalled by year and type of animal, with the exception of the year 2009. This is likely due to different coding criteria. There are different ways that the amount of a recall could be recorded. In cases where the *total* amount of food recalled was unknown by the USDA, we recorded it as missing so that we are only reporting on *known* recall amounts, rather than making estimations. This constitutes a total of 3.7% (N=10) of all recalls from 2006-2010. SRA may have approximated the recall number either by using the amount of a recalled food that was eventually recovered, or the initial amount of a recall, in the cases when a recall was updated and, though an *initial* recall amount was stated, the *final* recall amount was never determined. The SRA dataset also includes fewer recalls compared with the HRC dataset, for an undetermined reason.

agreement, attesting to the data's reliability. A detailed codebook is also available, making the coding scheme easily useable by researchers who wish to add more years to the dataset.

The lead researcher coded all cases with a 10% random sample co-coded with the lead researcher and a second coder to evaluate and test the coding scheme. A sample of 15% of the recalls from 2006-2010 was selected randomly from the remaining data and coded by the second coder independently to test for intercoder agreement.

All variables have intercoder agreement ranging from 90%-100%. Though intercoder agreement was high, coder agreement was also tested on all nominal variables<sup>4</sup> with Krippendorff's Alpha, which is considered to be a more robust test of intercoder agreement (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Lombard et al., 2010). Krippendorff's Alpha was calculated using the online program, ReCal2<sup>5</sup>, which is accepted as a reliable program for computing this value, which is not available in most statistical software programs (Freelon, 2010; see also Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). For most variables without 100% coder agreement Krippendorff's Alpha ranged from .84-.98. The only exception to this was one variable indicating, when mislabeling was the cause of a recall, if the mislabeling was due to an unlabeled ingredient that was an allergen. Though this variable had intercoder agreement of 95%, the more stringent Krippendorff's alpha score was negative. The negative score reflects that the variable lacks reliability, likely due to systematic disagreement between coders (Krippendorff, 2004: 222).

There were two cases of coder disagreement on this variable; for each, one coder coded the mislabeling as "unlabeled ingredient, allergen" while the other coder coded the mislabeling as "unlabeled ingredient, non-allergen." Since the coder disagreement was systematic, to ameliorate this lack of reliability these two variables were collapsed into one variable. This new variable indicates if the mislabeling is due to an undeclared ingredient, including both allergens and non-allergens; this variable has 100% intercoder agreement. The full dataset with the revised and original variables, as well as information regarding percent of coder agreement and Krippendorff's alpha scores for all variables, are available from HRC to qualifying researchers.

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<sup>4</sup> All variables in this dataset, except for the amount of each recall, which is measured in pounds, are nominal.

<sup>5</sup> An explanation of and access to ReCal2 is available from Freelon (2010) and the program is accessible at <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/>.

## Descriptive Findings

The number of total recalls each year generally held steady. In 2006 there was a low of 34 recalls, but the number of recalls held steady between 54-58 from 2007-2010, with the exception of a spike of 69 recalls in 2009. Although the number of recalls did not vary widely, the nature and total amount of the recalls did vary. Both the severity of food recalls, as measured by the USDA, and the amount of food recalled decreased during this period.

The USDA classifies recalls by severity; a class 1 recall indicates that there is “a health hazard situation where there is a reasonable probability that the use of the product will cause serious, adverse health consequences or death” (USDA). A class 2 recall indicates that there is a “remote” possibility of adverse health consequences. And a class 3 recall is one in which no adverse health consequences are expected. The class of the recall varied significantly ( $p=.009$ ) by year, decreasing over time. From 2006-2008 class 1 recalls accounted for 76%- 86% of all recalls but in 2009 class 1 recalls accounted for 65% of all recalls, and in 2010 they accounted for just over half (55%) of all recalls.

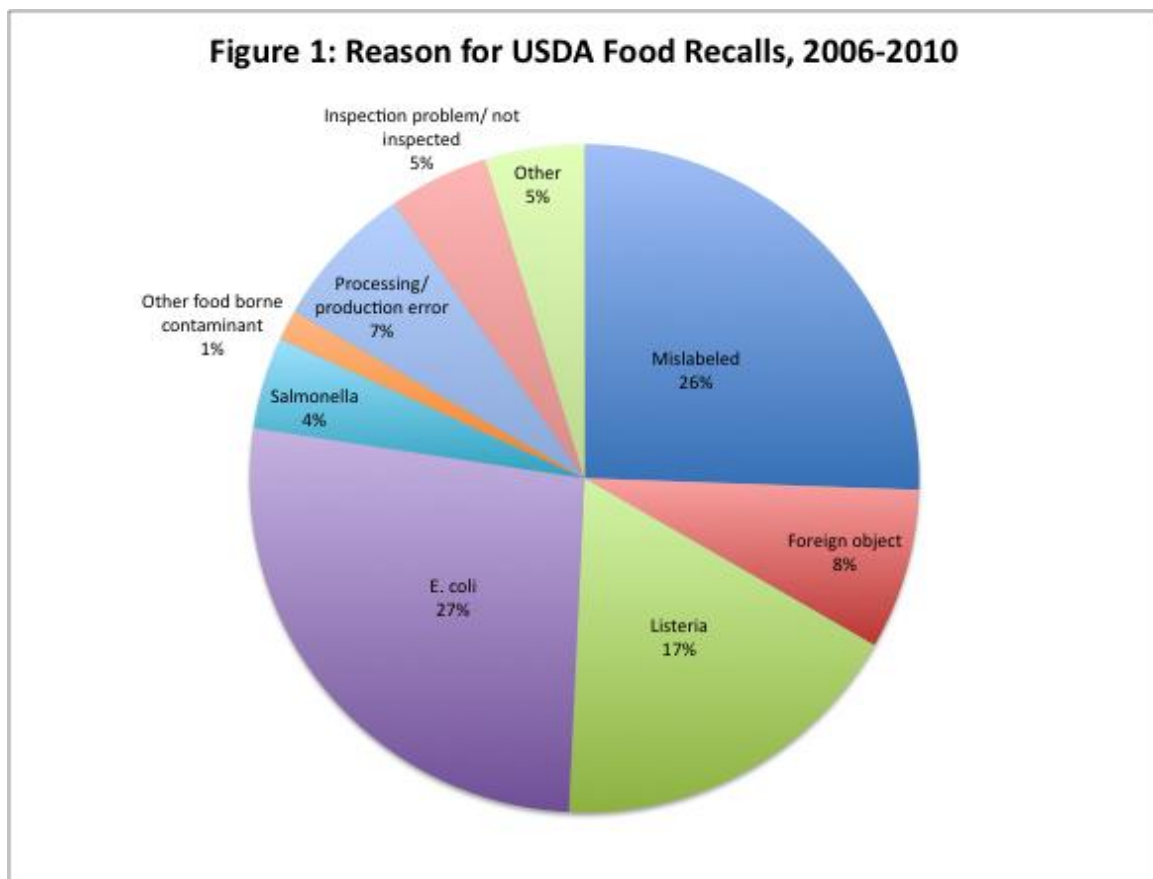
Amount* of Food recalled, in pounds, by type and year							
		2006	2007	Year			Total
		(lbs.)	(lbs.)	2008	2009	2010	(lbs.)
Type of animal product	Cow	689,281	30,414,289	151,891,393	3,760,293	1,693,851	<b>188,449,107</b>
	Pig	48,905	318,182	121,677	2,724,119	43,923	<b>3,256,806</b>
	Chicken, turkey, other "poultry"	216,450	2,936,597	2,167,133	1,880,401	392,343	<b>7,592,924</b>
	Other	4,911,297	3,794,754	546,470	984,020	2,289,983	<b>12,526,524</b>
	Total (lbs.)	<b>5,865,933</b>	<b>37,463,822</b>	<b>154,726,673</b>	<b>9,348,833</b>	<b>4,420,100</b>	<b>211,825,361</b>

**Table 1**

\* This is the minimum amount of food recalled, as data is missing for the total amount of food recalled for one recall in 2006, two recalls in each year from 2007-2009, and three recalls in 2010.

The amount of food recalled varied by year as well. Table 1 details the amount of food recalled, by the type of meat, for each year. During this five-year period the USDA recalled a total of 211,825,361 pounds of meat-based products. Over half of this was recalled in 2008 (154.7 million pounds) with the majority of the recalls coming from cow-based food products (188.4 million pounds).

Recalls occurred for a variety of reasons, with the majority occurring because they were in some way contaminated (60%). Of the 162 recalls due to contamination, 83% were due to a food-borne pathogen, including *Listeria*, *E. Coli* and *Salmonella*. Most of the remaining recalls due to contamination were a result of a foreign object or material, such as metal or plastic, in the food. A quarter of the recalls (N=69) by the USDA from 2006-2010 were a result of mislabeling, with 88% of these recalls due to the label failing to list one or more of the product's ingredients, often allergens, on the label.



## Moving Forward

There are various research questions that one can address utilizing this dataset. For example, what is driving food recalls? Do reasons for recalls differ depending on the type of animal being processed? What presents a greater health risk, careless mislabeling, or contamination through food borne pathogens? Ideally, these questions can generate research projects that have the potential to be used to motivate slaughterhouse reform or to motivate individuals to reduce or eliminate the consumption of animal meats. In the future, HRC intends to create a

similar dataset for all FDA food recalls; interested researchers and potential partners, please contact us for more information.

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## CONFERENCE REVIEW

### International Animal Rights Conference, Luxembourg, May 2011

Reviewed by Jessica Gröling<sup>1</sup>

The first *International Animal Rights Conference* (IARC) took place in Luxembourg between May 19 and 22, 2011, bringing together around 180 activists, scholars and hybrids of the two for an exhilarating four days of presentations, workshops, discussions, campaign reports from around the world, stalls and art exhibitions, a film screening of *Bold Native*, plenty of delicious vegan food, and two special animal rights concerts. During his introductory speech, Heiko Weber, one of the conference organizers, divided the conference into eight themes: reformism vs abolitionism, vegan outreach vs direct action, animal liberation and human liberation, cultural aspects, ecological aspects, psychological aspects, philosophical aspects, and repression of animal rights activists.

The **reform vs abolition** debate was represented by a presentation by Catriona Blanke from Animals' Angels and a panel discussion with volunteers representing both sides of the debate. Blanke gave an introduction to her organization, which campaigns worldwide on the issue of live exports. The campaign consists of investigating and reporting on the suffering that animals endure, 'being there' to help alleviate their immediate suffering, developing training programs for police to enable them to respond appropriately to issues that arise during the transportation of live animals, giving advice to decision-makers at various levels of government, and raising public awareness and support for the campaign to enable legislative action. The group's current campaign is petitioning to reduce live export times to a maximum of eight hours, as a first step in the campaign to end live exports altogether. Concerns were raised in the audience that this was a welfarist campaign that risked being co-opted or giving the impression that limiting transport times to eight hours was enough despite the vast suffering it would still entail. If anything, the Animals' Angels campaign may fall into the

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category of what Gary Francione has labeled ‘new welfarism’, in other words conforming to the long-term goals of animal rights but using welfarist or reformist means in the hope of achieving those goals. This debate was continued in a panel discussion that afternoon, which seemed to conclude that there were no clear lines to be drawn between reformist and abolitionist strategies of achieving social change and that the two are not mutually exclusive.

The **vegan outreach vs direct action** theme included several contributions. A joint presentation by Felix Hnat, Jeff Mannes and Christian Vagedes, representing the Vegan Societies of Austria, Luxembourg and Germany, generated productive discussion of the role of vegan outreach campaigns in the fight for animal rights. Vagedes, who later gave a presentation about the abuse of chemicals in animal agriculture, spoke about his organization’s decision to focus not on the animal rights *struggle* but to promote the positive nature of veganism by encouraging people to “bring love to their refrigerator”. A comment was made that veganism is often reduced to a form of diet or lifestyle, distracting from the issue of animal rights and making it easier for the vegan message to be co-opted and corrupted by capitalist interests. It was argued that the product-focused nature of many vegan societies played into a middle-class consumerist fantasy that is not an adequate response to the ever-worsening issue of animal exploitation. Nevertheless, panelists remained convinced that there was a role for non-confrontational, positive campaigning to attract people to veganism and animal rights who might be turned off by more aggressive tactics.

This point was reiterated by both Felix Hnat and Melanie Joy in their workshops on vegan campaigning. Melanie Joy, psychologist, activist, and author of several books on the psychology of meat-eating and strategic action for animals, outlined some of the key obstacles to effective advocacy. Firstly, the meat-eating mentality, which she has labeled carnism, is structured to defend against our message. Secondly, most activists lack formal training in communication and advocacy strategies to circumnavigate carnist defenses. Finally, our own psychological state can have a negative impact on effective advocacy, leading to reactive rather than responsive campaigning. She provided a list of useful tips on how to communicate effectively, how to create a safe environment so that people are more receptive to our message, how to empower the listener to take action, and how to recognize our own needs. The role of advocates is to be compassionate witnesses, to find common ground, build on existing compassion, and speak from personal experience to expose defenses such as dissociation, denial, and myth without explicitly naming them. Things to

avoid are seeing carnists as the enemy rather than as victims of the carnistic mentality, overwhelming listeners with ‘the Truth’, which can lead to paralysis, demanding that people change immediately and expecting facts to sell the ideology. Knowledge or content, she says, can only lay the groundwork, but feeling inspires action.

Chad Weidner, lecturer and researcher in ecocriticism at Roosevelt Academy, Utrecht University, gave a daring presentation on “animal rights activism and the problem of violence”. Weidner spoke about the ALF, Animal Rights Militia and Justice Department and their respective stances on violence, arguing that the use of violence has proven to be strategically counter-productive because it makes the entire movement a target for state repression and alienates moderates. His presentation attracted heavy criticism from members of the audience, many of whom questioned the evidence he had given for violent intent within the movement, leading next to a discussion about the definition of violence. Melanie Joy reiterated a difference between violence as an ethical issue and violence as a strategic issue, claiming that acts of violence, by virtue of their symbolic nature, are only strategically useful when there is already widespread support for a movement. British activist Brendan McNally also interrogated Weidner on his assessment of the use of violence in past human liberation struggles, arguing that inconsistent pacifism amounts to a speciesist double standard.

The pertinent question of how to define violence was also picked up in a presentation and Q&A session with Camille Hankins, a long-term activist and member of the North American Animal Liberation Press Office, who later also gave a very informative presentation about the use of direct action, and Steve Best, professor, author, and supporter of the ALF and direct action tactics. Best argued that pacifists within the movement exhibit Stockholm Syndrome, having adopted the definition of violence used by the corporate–state complex. At the same time, he argues that being pro-liberation is not the same as being pro-violence, in the same way that being pro-choice is not the same as being pro-abortion. The crucial thing for him is to define and assess violence within a context, rather than excluding it *a priori* from the list of tactical options. Both Hankins and Best provided evidence for the effectiveness of direct action, dispelling the myth that animal liberation is pointless because liberated animals are soon replaced. They agreed that social change comes about through persuasion and coercion and that coercive tactics are often the only option in the face of extreme violence from an oppressive force. Best challenged the idea that veganism is a form of activism, but argued

that there is no outright opposition between vegan outreach and direct action. Rather, we ought to opt for a plurality of tactics and need to be driven by a lucid realization of the vast challenges the movement faces, not least of which is the challenge to do *real* vegan outreach, by which he means speaking to communities that are currently not being reached and avoiding the promotion of white middle-class lifestylism. Best concluded by saying:

The big picture is not this: it's not violence versus non-violence, it's not pacifism versus militant direct action, it's not welfare versus rights, it's not the above-ground versus the underground, it's not liberation versus vegan outreach. It's the whole structural global system of capitalism and do we reform it or do we revolutionize it? The question we must not lose sight of is how do we create a global revolution against capitalism? [...] We live in a system that is nihilistic. [...] The world will be vegan but it won't be because of us.

The need for a holistic appreciation of the crises we face and the intersectionality of different forms of oppression and liberation was also raised in contributions under the **animal liberation and human liberation** heading. Historian and sociologist Renate Brucker traced the roots of the animal rights movement back to ancient times and gave an interesting insight into the more recent links between animal rights and the peace movement and women's movements, naming notable proponents of both animal and human rights. One of the highlights of the conference was a successful videolinked presentation by Carol Adams, ecofeminist theorist and author, who gave a talk about the sexual politics of meat. Adams explained the concept of the absent referent and how it prevents us from seeing ourselves as having any kind of relationship with animals. She talked about how the Western phenomenon of equating manliness with eating meat exerts enormous pressure on men to prove their virility by conforming to the culinary status quo. Women on the other hand are frequently depicted as meat, at the same time as food animals are often depicted as though sexual gratification could be gained from eating them. Women and animals suffer from interlocking oppressions, where the exploitation and objectification of one frequently compounds the oppression of the other. Ecofeminism appreciates that one cannot understand or address the oppression of women without understanding how it relates to the exploitation of animals and the environment, and vice versa. By objectifying women's bodies in the service of animal rights, Adams argues that groups such as PETA reinforce oppressive attitudes towards women by appealing to the human male subjectivity: the Derridean notion of carnophallogocentrism. Many liberal feminists equally reinforce the human–animal binary by explicitly distancing themselves from nature and arguing for their similarities with men.

The argument that different groups are oppressed by being associated with other subjugated groups was also explored by Jessica Gröling, PhD student at the University of Exeter, in her presentation about the commonalities and tensions between anarchists and animal advocates. She made the case for the intersectionality of struggles for human, earth and animal liberation, and suggested that an anarchist critique of capitalism and the state is essential for an appreciation of the causes of most forms of animal exploitation. Dividing her analysis of classical and contemporary anarchist theory into ontological and epistemological forms of anarchism, Gröling examined how thinkers from Kropotkin to Bookchin and contemporary anarchist activists respond or would respond to the animal question, concluding that some anarchist theory is limited by its humanist tendencies and is often dismissed for not offering concrete solutions to the problem of animal exploitation. Gröling concluded by exploring the common anarchist criticism of contemporary veganism as a flawed lifestyle, consumerist attempt to create social change and suggested ways in which ethical veganism could be transformed into a form of prefigurative politics.

In two rousing talks about animal liberation and moral progress and the revolutionary implications of animal standpoint theory, Steve Best expanded on the critique of anarchist and Marxist humanism, outlining how the Left has not adapted to the implications of recent findings in cognitive ethology that show that animals can no longer be reduced to brute beasts, and arguing that the struggle for total liberation is a struggle against hierarchy and dominator cultures, not just capitalism and the state. His animal standpoint theory builds on the leftist tradition of writing history 'from below'. In the same way that feminist analyses reveal the logic of patriarchy, and postcolonial theory or critical race theory can illuminate colonialism and the pathology of racism, animal standpoint theory interprets history from the perspective of human–non-human interactions and shows how human exploitation of other animals has had extensive social and ecological consequences. Only by drawing on multiple perspectives are we able to understand history and the origins of our present predicament. The first hierarchy that we developed, Best reminds us, was human over non-human. Today, progress is still defined according to the extent to which we have imposed our control on other species and replaced nature with culture. Best concluded that rather than discarding the concept of progress altogether, as postmodernists might suggest, we ought to reconstruct it along different lines. This concept of progress could not be based on a zero-sum game, as it currently is, and ought to consist of a broadening of the moral community and the universalization of rights.

The three presentations that formed the **cultural aspects** theme all focused on animal rights in the African context. Kai Horsthemke, associate professor of philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, spoke about the conflict between animal rights and cultural tradition. The pervasive view that African peoples see nature differently and speak to or about nature differently seems to suggest that there is no anthropocentrism within traditional African cultures. Horsthemke however argues that the traditional belief that animals embody the souls of ancestors and that humans have to protect animals in order to safeguard their own surroundings and not degrade their environment contains anthropocentric undertones. Indeed, in quasi-Kantian fashion, the concepts of *ubuntu* (“I am because we are”) and *ukama* suggest that we have only indirect duties to animals in the sense that we must protect them only to ultimately protect ourselves. Furthermore, the holistic idea that humans must aim for peaceful coexistence with animals, plants, and minerals amounts to a quasi-Christian dominionist view of human nature and doesn’t provide concrete suggestions for *how* we might peacefully coexist. Horsthemke questioned whether the bastion of tradition excuses practices such as the Zulu *Ukweshwama* bull-killing ritual, which as Sarah Rutherford Smith explained in her presentation, was brought before the courts but rejected on grounds of “freedom of worship and religion”. Rutherford Smith, lecturer in legal philosophy at the University of South Africa and South African representative of the International Fund for Africa, wondered whether perhaps promoting veganism as a form of culture rather than a form of protest would prove to be an advantage in such cases.

Anteneh Roba, president and co-founder of the International Fund for Africa, concluded this section by giving a talk about factory farming, which coupled with the growing trend in land-leasing, whereby wealthy nations lease land abroad to grow food solely for their own citizens, is causing increased volatility in the food supply. The problem of hunger in Africa is often misunderstood to be technological in nature, when the real causes are dysfunctional trade agreements, international commodity speculation, inadequate food distribution systems, and gross inequality. Factory farming contributes to already existing problems by causing land degradation, food sovereignty issues, loss of biodiversity, and threats to small farms. Dr. Roba argued that food which could feed humans should not be diverted to feeding livestock. He has been campaigning for the adoption of plant-based diets across Africa and has worked with vegetarian and vegan organizations in Ghana, Togo, and Ethiopia.

Lisa Kemmerer, associate professor in philosophy and religion at Montana State University Billings, provided the only contribution under the **ecological aspects** heading. Her talk focused on the significant harmful effects that consuming animal products has on every element of our environment, drawing particular attention to the contribution the livestock industry has made to our most significant environmental problems.

In a series of riveting presentations, Melanie Joy and Stijn Bruers provided an insight into the **psychology** of meat-eating. Joy challenged the audience to question why it is that appealing to logic and reasonable argument concerning the inconsistency of eating some animals and keeping others as pets rarely changes a meat-eater's perception of his or her behavior. She suggested that the cognitive moral disconnect is only the result of a deeper problem rooted in an invisible belief system, which she calls carnism. Carnism is an institutionalized oppressive ideology that enables speciesism and creates a wall of defenses, such as the three Ns of justification (natural, normal, necessary) to maintain perception. By viewing the problem we face as the result of a deeply entrenched belief system rather than as a matter of personal ethics, and by naming that belief system and bringing it into the open, Melanie Joy has suggested a way to overcome one of the obstacles to effective advocacy and begin to break down carnistic defenses. Joy's final conference contribution was a well-attended group discussion about how we relate to meat-eaters in our lives. This discussion provided a space to air frustrations and share personal experiences, while also reinforcing Joy's earlier points about the predictable nature of carnistic defenses. Finally, activist and writer Stijn Bruers presented a series of recent scientific findings in support of the claim that a large group of meat-eaters feel uncomfortable about their meat consumption but suppress and deny their feelings of guilt and continue to consume meat due to social pressure or lack of knowledge. He also briefly touched upon research that suggests that a large group of people eat meat for reasons related to social status rather than taste.

Bruers' other contribution was a presentation about the **philosophy** of animal rights, in which he presented what he believes to be the most consistent approach to animal ethics. Beginning with common moral intuitions about the (im)permissibility of sacrificing one person to save the lives of a few people, he generated three moral principles. These principles of equality represent elements of deontological, consequentialist, and feminist care ethics, and include basic rights, tolerated choice equality, and prioritarian justice, none of which, he claims, are in contradiction with emotional inequality. Next, he contended that the characteristics we use

to exclude non-human animals from our moral community are not morally relevant, nor are there any absolute distinctions between all humans and all non-human animals. The principle of consistency therefore demands that one of our original principles be modified. Bruers argued that we have the choice between permitting discrimination, throwing out the basic rights of humans, or forbidding the consumption of non-human animals, the former two of which he believed to be based on stronger moral intuitions. His presentation raised many interesting questions from the audience, some of whom challenged his original assumptions about common moral intuitions. Bruers now intends to investigate whether this discrepancy between average responses to moral dilemmas and responses from those present during his talk suggests an above-average proportion of deontologists within the animal rights movement, or may even be the result of differences in the brains of vegans, vegetarians, and meat-eaters.

Emil Franzinelli, student of philosophy at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt and editor of the German animal rights magazine *Tierbefreiung* gave two provocative and slightly satirical presentations exploring rational anthropocentric reasons for being vegan and supporting animal rights, arguing that even those who hate animals ought to go vegan, if for no other reason than enlightened self-interest. He argued for an animal ethics that respects individuality and doesn't rely on moral intuition, common sense, religious myths, and traditions, or naturalism, although he acknowledged that an ethics not based on metaphysical assumptions and moral principles risks remaining anthropocentric, unless in quasi-Kantian fashion it can be demonstrated that the abuse and exploitation of animals may lead to violence against other humans.

The final theme, **repression**, was repeatedly touched upon throughout the conference. However, Felix Hnat also provided an update of the Austrian trial, and Camille Hankins and Brendan McNally gave a brief history of the repression of animal rights activists in the UK and the USA, drawing on the experience of hunt saboteurs and SHAC activists as they were faced with new laws concerning aggravated trespass and conspiracy. Hankins also gave a talk about the history of the SHAC campaign, its successes, and the trial of the SHAC 7 and emphasized the importance of prisoner support. Finally, Kai Horsthemke gave a presentation with the title "Animal liberation: terrorism or civil disobedience?", which brought together many of the discussions that had been started about the ethical and strategic use of violent and illegal means to bring about social change.



On top of the busy presentation schedule, conference participants enjoyed two evenings of delicious vegan food at Café ROCAS followed by performances by Gina Simmons & The Nobodies, SoKo and Tes. During the conference a solidarity arts raffle also raised over €1000 in support of Chris Moser, one of the victims of the Austrian trial against thirteen activists. The conference was an overwhelming success and received excellent feedback, due in no small part to the efforts and dedication of the organizers at Save Animals Asbl and the groups that sponsored the event.

## FILM REVIEWS

### **To Love or Kill: Man vs. Animal (1996)**

HBO, 62min<sup>1</sup>

#### **Reviewed by Adam Weitzenfeld<sup>2</sup>**

Sometimes the best things can only be seen on T.V. Well, perhaps this is not exactly the case for those privileged enough to find a copy of the 1996 HBO documentary, *To Love or Kill: Man vs. Animal*. Written, directed, and produced by British filmmaker Antony Thomas, *To Love or Kill* is a rare gem of a documentary on human-animal relationships

Of all the documentaries on the exploitation of nonhuman animals, *To Love or Kill* is the most comprehensive and nuanced in its coverage of human-animal relationships in the English-speaking world and abroad. Strikingly different from the most popular animal rights documentaries, it does not abstract from historical, cultural, and geographic contexts. In fact, it demonstrates a sensitive appreciation of the moral complexity of human-animal relations. In his film, Thomas never attempts to settle the controversy of the contemporary exploitation of animals around the world, but daringly provokes his audience to draw its own conclusions, if one could ever settle on such life and death dilemmas. Yet, he neither lets the audience off easy nor does he feign objectivity. Thomas' narrative is quite challenging to anyone who has never questioned whether humans have a right to use animals. As emotionally challenging as it is to watch the brutal coverage of some of the most heart wrenching scenes of animal exploitation on film, Thomas' dry British wit provides cathartic relief. The deployment of the tragic and comic brings to the forefront the irony and devastation of the all but mutual human-animal relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> While not easily available, *To Love or Kill* can be found on Youtube, with PETA, and at the University of New Brunswick through WorldCat. For immediate access see:

Nacho32's Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/nacho32#p/u/7/Bo89eSqJ9xU>

RalphHighPoint's Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ralphhighpoint#p/u/4/cHd9SmQpU9M>

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Every scene in *To Love or Kill* is historically and culturally situated and each performs a unique function in an impressively concise, comprehensive, and clean narrative. The film provocatively opens at the gates of the Oakwood Penitentiary for the Criminally Insane at which human as well as nonhuman animals are incarcerated. In this hospital/prison, those humans (i.e. murderers and rapists) deemed “animals” and “beasts” by society become “human(e)” again through the therapeutic effect of their relationship with nonhuman animals. Abandoned by their families, the prisoners find new meaning in their lives with their fellow prison-mates. Thomas quips:

It's startling to discover that animals have the power to calm human aggression and madness. But on reflection, why should it be...when so much else on our side of that extraordinary relationship of Man and animal is sheer madness?

While those men at the asylum are classified as *mad*, it is the supposed *reasonable* use of nonhuman animals that perhaps is more deserving of the name. Thomas' biting wit gives not an answer but the gift of a challenging riddle. Hitting home the great hypocrisy of a culture that treasures animal fables to instruct children on moral behavior, Thomas presents a montage of a choir of young children singing "Talks to the Animals" from *Dr. Dolittle* spliced with a barrage of startling and odd images of human-animal relations from later footage in the film.

After the ironic introduction, Thomas focuses on the mythological roots of Western attitudes toward animals in the book of *Genesis*, specifically the religious justification of human dominion over animal others. Among the most explicit cases of religiously sanctioned animal cruelty are the rituals of Coria, Spain where farmed animals are publicly tortured to celebrate the Saints, even Saint Francis Assisi, the patron saint of animals. In the United States, the torture of animals to death is not justified by religion, but in the name of freedom, national identity, and superiority on a canned hunting ranch in east Texas and an annual pigeon shoot in Hegins, Pennsylvania. How strange that murderers and rapists—those who are imprisoned because they are deemed so threatening to the moral order of American society—practice more respect toward animal others than those free men and women who claim to be the defenders of the American values of freedom, equality, and fraternity.

Thomas reminds his viewers of Man's kinship with animal others, evolutionarily and emotionally. Some animals are not only evolutionary kin, but human companions and helpers. For example, one paraplegic man lives with a monkey servant and a woman with multiple sclerosis has a dog as a caretaker. Both acknowledge their dependence on these animals and

express deep affection, but Thomas asks whether they've ever pondered whether they have the right to use these animals and what the animals' thoughts may be. Certainly many U.S. Americans honor some animals no less than their ancient ancestors. Take for instance a Washington Memorial day ceremony for animals killed in combat during World War I and a New York City pet cemetery. Yet, American affection for animal others can be quite absurd as in the case of a couple entrepreneurs who say they fulfill "need" by designing luxurious pet clothing and an animal healer who claims to read animal minds (a scene that provides much needed levity).

The paradoxical relation U.S. Americans have with animal others—treating some as subordinate objects and others as beloved companions—however is not universal. To make his point, Thomas travels to a city in southern China. For several minutes animal others are weighed and dismembered "as if they were vegetables." Later, in the most infamous scene in the film, a child chooses a cat—his lunch—who is subsequently beaten out of her cage, smashed over the skull, snared to a kitchen, submerged alive and conscious into a scalding tank of water, skinned, and thrown skinless into a standby tank. The cat's limbs squirm, her jaw shutting and opening as if she is trying to whisper something. American rabbi Dan Cohen-Sherbock comments:

The Chinese who eat cats and goats are logical. If they are going to eat cows and goats and sheep, then why not cats and dogs... the Chinese are consistent, it is we who are inconsistent.

Thomas supports the rabbi's position with footage of factory farms and discusses how animal others are made absent through the concealment of their deaths and the dismemberment of their bodies. Nonetheless, there are those who stop at nothing, even laying in the middle of a road to stop a delivery of sheep to slaughter. Both the activists on the street and the Rabbi reference the Holocaust, comparing Anglo-American's "desire to not really reflect on what is happening" to the willingness of Germans during WWII to turn a blind eye toward the treatment of the Jewish people.

Although many will intuit the cruel treatment of animals in the name of religious, cultural, and culinary tradition as straightforwardly wrong, there are times when human animals and animal others lives are at stake, when what constitutes "necessary" and "unnecessary," "justified" and unjustified" use is much more ambiguous. One site of moral ambiguity is a pharmaceutical laboratory in the United States where chimpanzees are used to test vaccines for HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. Veterinarian James Mahooney, who directs the

care of the chimps, gives voice to the brutal moral ambiguous nature of his work with a sincerity that may draw sympathy even from some of the most righteous animal activists:

I happen to believe that animals have rights and I don't think we as human beings have a right to use the animals. My only way of coming to terms with it is that we have a need to use them, but I don't think we have a right.

Another site at which the confrontation between human and animal rights to life plays out is in Rajasthan, India where rats are simultaneously treated with reverence as ancestral gods and vermin who threaten human lives with pestilence and therefore must be eradicated. Thomas seems to criticize those cases when privileged people subordinate the lives of humans to animal others such as in New York City where cats are given surgeries and MRIs while one fifth of the city population is left without healthcare, and in India where the Jains care for chronically ill animals in sanctuaries while millions of homeless starve in the streets. He concludes that "because there is no clear boundary separating human and animal...whether in Dehli or New York, it seems we are incapable of fulfilling our responsibilities to both."

Having exposed a couple cases of moral ambiguity (i.e. HIV research and India) and two ironies (i.e. the kindness of murderers vs. the status quo; the treatment of pets vs. the treatment of "food" animals), Thomas highlights two more ironies at a corporately owned midwestern transgenic pig farm. First, animal others who are physiologically the closest to humans bear no great benefit, but rather an endless amount of suffering: "The pig is sometimes known as 'horizontal man,' the size and layout of its internal organs so closely resemble our own—a qualification that pigs may some day come to regret." Second, that many intuitively object to what may be the more "morally justifiable" deaths of a few animals as excessive, while the excess of animal suffering and slaughter of yet more pigs for food is unremarkably banal.

It's illogical when one considers how many hundreds of millions of pigs are reared to be eaten, but as one watches these procedures, one cannot help wondering whether we have the moral right to open up an entire new territory where human preservation requires the whole scale slaughter, of yet more pigs.

There is much at stake in the politics of animal rights, something radically beyond anything animal welfarism proposes. The sacrifice of animal others to defer the deaths of human animals is not "a straightforward issue that can be solved with a vegetarian diet, plastic shoes, or even common decency. This will be a straight moral choice between human life and animal life." Thomas concludes that it is unlikely the animal rights movement will disappear

anytime soon. On the contrary, the movement for animal rights will continue to grow in its ferocity.

Despite all my praise for *To Love or Kill*, it is deserving of some criticism. First, the film explicitly establishes a dualist framework, offering a false oppositional dichotomy: "Man vs. Animal." Animals are homogenized into a single class (as well as all humans into the androcentric class of "Man"), despite the relatively nuanced appreciation of context. The film makes it seem as though opposition between humans and animals is inevitable, especially during moments when Thomas concludes:

It seems we are incapable of fulfilling our responsibilities to both... either animals have rights, including the rights to compete with us even endanger us, or we have the right to exploit or exterminate as human need or greed dictates.

Such rhetoric, however, reveals that the "stark choices" may be less a product of material relations, but more a discourse which divides "humans" and "animals" into two opposing classes of which only one can have rights—a codified morality that is inherently oppositional and absolute. One can imagine a New York City where affordable (human) health care is universal and people can still maintain the lives of their companion animals, an Indian city where greater sanitary measures are taken (in policy, infrastructure, technology, and custom) that would make such rat hunting unnecessary, and vaccine research that does not require animal exploitation.

Second, while neither ignoring nor demonizing non-Western cultures, Thomas' representation of southern China is questionable. Indeed, by representing it as a land of necessity and superstition, he comes close to orientalizing it, treating it as the Other to the excessive and rational United States. He says "we" find their attitude "incomprehensible;" their split between human and animal is supposedly so radical that "there seems to be some element of humanity missing." On the other hand, he does universalize his criticism of this particular culture in China to all humans (i.e. "Oh, what a piece of work is Man"), and he questions his moral outrage (i.e. "is it the openness we find so disturbing?"). Though this Chinese market is disturbing, it is only because the people do not disavow what they are doing, they make no rationalizations. Still, his commentary concerning the treatment of nonhuman animals in southern China is notably more disparaging and less nuanced than when describing practices in other cultures.

Third, the film gives a simplistic account of world religions, especially Abrahamic ones. Thomas is complicit in his subscription to the authority of the human mastery interpretation of *Genesis* 1:2-3, never mentioning the increasingly popular stewardship and

vegetarian interpretations of the original human-animal relations. He seems to ignore the extensive amount of cruel practices that exist outside Western cultures in those where the differentiation between “humans” and “animals” is unimportant. Likewise, Thomas’ commentary on the Jains and the people of the rat temple of Dishnok may come across as slightly cynical. Although, it is true that this ambiguous discourse—a balance between generosity and irony—is present throughout the film.

While *To Love or Kill* may put-off some people because of its discursive oppositional framing between human and nonhuman animals, there is still good reason why everyone in the critical animal studies community should not miss this film. *To Love or Kill* does not feign objectivity, nor is it theory-for-theory’s sake; it is quite normative, even though it does not give its audience clear and self-certain answers to how human animals ought to live with animal others. The international, multiple-issue perspective of the film depicts a more comprehensive picture of animal exploitation, and never does it offer reform as a sufficient response. Though the film may not cover the intersectionality of oppressions, it does demonstrate the institutionalization of speciesism in myth, tradition, and political economy. For instance, the president of the transgenic pig corporation is heard describing the utility of his business: “The sad thing is that not only we are losing hundreds of thousands of lives, but we losing the opportunity to save money.” Thomas concludes this represents the tension between two movements: “the force of a growing moral and scientific awareness of our close relationship with the animals” and “the commercial pressure to meet our expanding human needs through the massive exploitation of animal resources.”

In summary, *To Love or Kill* is among the least dogmatic and most thoughtful, daring, and biting of animal rights documentaries, offering perhaps the greatest and most accessible prompt for a complete rethinking of contemporary human-animal relations.

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## **Vanishing of the Bees (2010)**

Hive Mentality Films and Hipfuel, 87 min

### **Reviewed by Carol L. Glasser<sup>1</sup>**

*Vanishing of the Bees* is a documentary about Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Within the first few minutes the audience is convinced that CCD, the phenomenon of entire hives of bees simply disappearing without a trace, is an issue worth caring about. The film, produced and directed by Maryam Henein and George Langworthy, tells a story that educates the audience and generates enough concern and sense of immediacy that some viewers will likely be motivated to take action, and both the film and the DVD case provide actionable items for those so inclined. This is a social movements documentary, aimed at spreading a particular perspective and encouraging people to “bee the change” needed to help fix this problem.

The documentary is a must-see, as it brings light to an important issue that is little discussed. At that same time, the film is problematic and disappointing for its failure to fully extend the compass of concern to the namesake of the movie, bees. What the film lacks will be glaring to a critical animal studies audience, but may be undetectable to other viewers—the plight of the bees matter only insofar as it effects human survival. Bees as subjects and as individuals are somehow absent from the story. There are a few moments in the film that discuss possible causes of and solutions to CCD that do take bees’ welfare into account; however, these segments are hurried and underdeveloped. The audience is encouraged to care about the fact that bees are disappearing, but are not taught to actually care about the bees themselves.

The story is told through interviews with beekeeper David Hackenberg, the beekeeper who first called attention to CCD in the United States, and beekeeper David Mendes. There are also prominent interviews with scientists who are studying the problem, food and farming experts such as Michael Pollen, and interludes from the narrator, Ellen Page. The film’s point is clear: bees are central to food production, their disappearances are likely because of chemical interventions in agriculture, and if CCD persists it will have a devastating impact on human populations due to a lack of food.

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Two-thirds through the film, Langworthy and Henein address systemic pesticides as the likely cause of CCD. The film promotes this explanation by taking the viewer to scientists, beekeepers, and even a bee keeping conference in Europe. Research into the link between systemic pesticides and CCD that has been done in other countries is briefly introduced and the reasons why this research is not conducted in the U.S. is also highlighted.

Two important concepts are discussed as necessary to ending CCD—synergy and applying a precautionary principle in agricultural management. *Vanishing of the Bees* presents the perspective that both need to be applied to farming and agricultural practices in the United States to ameliorate the problem of CCD. However, neither concept is extended to include an honest evaluation of how bees themselves are either being treated in practice or discussed in the film.

Through several interviews, the documentary presents the idea that monoculture has degraded past systems of farming, which were based on diversity. A return to agriculture based on a principle of synergy, where multiple aspects of a system function together, is encouraged; rather than acres of one crop, farms should have multiple crops and even bees that work together to create a successful, diverse farm. As the film highlights, the United States is currently reliant on monocultures that are typically managed with pesticides; more recently, systemic pesticides have been used. Systemic pesticides are integrated into the seed of the plant and remain within the plant itself as it grows, rather than being sprayed on top.

*Vanishing of the Bees* also highlights a distinction between how the United States and many other countries manage potential agricultural risks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is responsible for protecting environmental health in the United States, relies on insufficient testing of pesticides. The pesticide companies conduct the research that the EPA uses to evaluate safety, rather than a third party or the government. Through interviews with experts, the audience learns that the United States relies on “risk assessment,” while the many other countries facing CCD have used a “precautionary principle.” The latter principle is premised on the idea that safety is the main concern and if there is a doubt one should err on the side of caution. Following this principle, France, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia have placed some bans on the use of systemic pesticides. The United States, on the other hand, relies on risk assessment—in the absence of certainty that something has adverse effects, a degree of risk to human health is tolerated—and so the EPA does nothing in regard to regulating systemic pesticides.

Though Langworthy and Henein present the idea that a lack of synergy, monoculture and not acting on a precautionary principle are problematic in the treatment of agriculture,

they fail to extend this argument to the bees. Just like with food production, mass production for profit with disregard to environment can be applied to the way the bees are treated and it may even be a cause of CCD. Unfortunately, this later point is only summarily addressed. About a third of the way through the film the audience is introduced to Günter Haunk, a farmer with a bee sanctuary, and Dee Lusby, founder of the Organic Bee Group. In this segment of the film, viewers learn that in order for beekeepers to make larger profits they engage in unnatural practices such as replacing a bee's honey with sugar water and killing a hive's queen bee (by pinching off her head) and replacing her with an artificially inseminated bee who has been filled with semen that is selected to reproduce specific, human-valued, traits.

The streamlining of preferred genetics through the murder of one queen and the forced insemination of another is a clear example of abuse to the bees. One of the most shocking scenes of the film is watching geneticist, Sue Cobey, artificially inseminating a bee. For people who feel equating the forced breeding of animals to rape is hyperbole, this scene might change their mind. Using tweezers, Cobey casually pries open an unconscious bee's vaginal cavity to the circumference of her body and pours in sperm to breed a bee with "desirable traits."

Though the unnatural practices enacted on bees for the sake of generating revenues may contribute to or be the cause of CCD, after the brief segment introducing this idea there is little discussion of it. Further, there is no blatant critique made of the beekeepers who engage in these practices. Rather, the heroes of the story are Hackenberg and Mendes, with 3,000 hives and 7,000 hives respectively; each are in the business of mass-producing bees and shipping them across the country on tractor-trailers to have them pollinate fields. In other words, our story centers on individuals who factory farm bees and treat them as commodities. The commercial beekeepers disregard anything approaching synergy; they want the EPA to embrace precautionary principles and synergy rather than supporting monoculture when it comes to agriculture, but they don't do the same when it comes to bees.

While the movie provides the audience with enough information to understand that corporate beekeepers are reproducing the same systems utilized by the monocropping system they blame for CCD, no clear critique of this is made in the film. A frustration about this is that the film does present the ideal, synergistic alternative briefly. The audience is shown small organic gardens and interviews with individuals who create habitable spaces for bees, though this is presented mostly through images and only briefly through interviews.

Some films might be able to levy the argument that they are merely letting the beekeepers speak for themselves, but Langworthy and Henein cannot. As previously noted, this

documentary is not concerned with presenting a story without bias. It is a social movements film, concerned with forwarding a perspective and motivating people to agree with, care about, and act on that perspective. However, the problems that bees, as a species and as individuals, face are not thoroughly presented beyond their application to human welfare and health. In one scene that receives no pause or critique, scientists put live bees into a plastic jar, seal the lid, put the jar into a cooler, and toss an icepack on top. The narrator's monologue goes on without any critique, as so many individuals were just doomed to a fate of slow suffocation or freezing to death.

*Vanishing of the Bees* is a good film for high school and college classes discussing agriculture, food sustainability, or other issues of food justice. It is also ideal for a community-focused screening, since CCD is an important issue for all communities to address. From a critical animal studies perspective the film is disappointing for its lack of critique of the mass production of bees and the way bees are treated. Henein and Langworthy provide all of the necessary footage and information for a critical viewer to make the connections I have highlighted here, but they do not raise these concerns to the viewer and only those already sensitive to the exploitation of other animals are likely to make these connections. Regardless of its shortcomings, *Vanishing of the Bees* does a number of things well—it conveys information about what CCD is, that it matters, and that a probable cause is the use of systemic pesticides. Most importantly, *Vanishing of the Bees* is a film motivated not just by a desire to educate the viewer, but also by a desire to fix a problem.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Vegan Revolution... with Zombies*

David Agranoff (2010) *The Vegan Revolution... with Zombies*, Deadite Press.

#### Reviewed by Colin Salter

David Agranoff's satirical *The Vegan Revolution... with Zombies* (TVR) is an unrelenting, if at times subtle, tongue in cheek expose of the insular, self-centered and self-aggrandizing of hipsters, locavores and a number of other 'alternative' subcultures. Founded on critiques of speciesism and genetic engineering, the zombie metaphor is used doubly as a critique of consumer-capitalist society in a general sense, and more specifically to expose anthropocentric and human chauvinist concern for the treatment of nonhuman animals.<sup>1</sup> It is from here that the apocalyptic zombie plot emerges—forming a humorous and enjoyable reading experience.

TVR starts with a press release outlining a 'breakthrough' in the genetic engineering of nonhuman animals to satiate anthropocentric concern over their treatment and suffering. This new process limits/inhibits the production of specific proteins important to brain function, targeting regions and receptors that transcode pain signals. The outcome is that nonhuman animals can now be reared without pain to assuage taste buds of the 'conscientious omnivores' — all without any feelings of guilt. Adding another layer to the placating of any normative and well-meaning, if inconsistent, concern, further advances have facilitated the suppression of boredom, abandonment and stress typical to the rearing of nonhuman animals for consumption. What has emerged, or perhaps should be described by the hand of 'man' as 'god', is the literal pinnacle of 'happy meat'.<sup>2</sup>

The first two pages, having outlined the (scientific) realization of René Descartes soulless beast, set the scene for the consumption of pain and stress free animal products. The

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard and Val Routley (1979) for a detailed outline of human chauvinism.

<sup>2</sup> A number of scientists are actively engaged in what Richard Twine (2010) refers to as 'welfare bioethics', seeking similar breakthroughs in genetic manipulation to that fictionalized by Agranoff. Such outcomes are not as far fetched as they may seem.

stage is also set for that which much of the readership will see as a form of reciprocal justice, and far from ironic, apocalyptic downfall of the first ‘victims’.

Controversial ethicist and public intellectual Peter ‘Sangar’ (Singer) and the Humane Society of the United States add their voices to the chorus of praise, reflecting arguments presented by both, often at the chagrin of those working to end the exploitation of animals (in contrast to it’s regulation). Michael ‘Poland’ (Pollan), a figurehead of the conscientious omnivore movement, and Sangar are ceremoniously identified and lauded as the first to consume the genetically engineered happy meat. The forthcoming, first, and central, reap what you sow moment of TVR is set in motion.

Consumption of these ‘100% Stress-Free label products’ (including dairy and eggs) is the root of the zombification process. The genetic manipulation central to the inhibition of brain function to produce the undead farm animals has an unexpected bio-accumulatory effect. The ‘infliction’ is transferred to those who consume the genetically altered products. Over a short period of time, an increasingly noticeable lack of consciousness (directly paralleling the selfish unconsciousness, or strategic ignorance<sup>3</sup>, of carnism<sup>4</sup>) is visible amongst the infected — the vast majority of the population. The pandemic spreads rapidly, with all non-vegans (including freegans and some raw foodists), becoming undead (at least in the USA, where TVR is set).

What might be initially perceived as a linkage to the popularity of the rising ‘with zombies’ genre in literature—of it being overrun, pun intended—is itself a critique upon which TVR builds. This is not to take away from the efficacy of the zombie literary subgenre which emerged in the 1990s. Rather, it takes aim at what followed Seth Grahame-Smith’s (2009) remix parody *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: portrayed as another consumer-capitalist enterprise unleashed on a zombie-like public. I am certain there are many nuances throughout TVR that are beyond my limited exposure to the genre.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, I will focus more on the commentary about the societal positioning of nonhuman animals.

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<sup>3</sup> By Strategic ignorance, I am referring to what Charles Mills (1997) and others have referred to as cognitive disfunction, the management of collective social memory and formation of patterns of ignorance (see Sullivan & Tuana 2007). In essence, a strategic practice of (at times unmarked and unconscious) actively maintaining ignorance. The outcome of this is a non consideration of the exploitation inherent in the use of animals for human pleasure.

<sup>4</sup> Carnism is a term coined by Melanie Joy (2010) to label to the normalised practice of consuming (certain) animals. It is a belief system that renders the practice unquestioned. The term acts in the same way as veganism — it identifies the actions as emanating from ideology.

<sup>5</sup> There are also a number of ‘geek’ inferences, name-dropping (and equivalents) that are outside my realm of scene knowledge.

Set in Portland', considered the centre of the vegan universe for some, what is considered the 'vegan mini mall' — home to a number of well-known (in North America) vegan small businesses including Food Fight Grocery, Herbivore Clothing Company, Scapegoat Tattoo and Sweet Pea Baking Company — becomes the rallying point. Those uninfected, and a number of freegans and raw foodists without visible symptoms, converge on the mall seeking to escape the slow moving and intellectually challenged zombie population. Discussions begin regarding how to survive the apocalypse, how to respond to and deal with the approaching zombie hordes, and how to envision the approaching world free from the exploitation of nonhuman animals.

Whilst we can regard TVR as merely a humorous light read, it is strengthened significantly by Agranoff's detailed awareness of key issues and debates. He lucidly exposes and engages with, in a clever way, many of the divisions within discourse surrounding the use of nonhuman animals in contemporary society — including debates about how to challenge and undermine this. These, at times subtle, engagements continue throughout the novel.

Agranoff's nuanced understanding is made visible in the portrayals of, or references to, key figures within public debate and those positioned within what we can loosely term as the animal movement(s). I have already introduced Peter Sangar and Michael Poland—readers can clearly deduce who these two characters represent in real life. Agranoff's depth of awareness is most clear, and will be for those who have followed key issues and debates (those having an insiders perspective), in references to a non-present character: Professor Gary L. Fonzie (Francione). Many readers will find this as a rather witty, apt, and quite humorous choice. Whether Francione will see any humor, or substantive critical commentary, in this portrayal is another story entirely. This is in part based on emerging criticisms of a fanboi like culture of identity politics among some of the many who see the value in his theorizing on the exploitation of animals. This is, unfortunately, embodied in a zombie-like either/or rationalist-exclusionary approach, often mobilized via dismissive rhetorical devices, which are explicitly highlighted in meetings between those in the mini mall about how to deal with the zombie 'problem'. TVR satirises this in two ways: through introducing one of his books with a title of *Animal Freedom—The Only Way, My Way*; and multiple instances of the character Samantha, a Fonzie abolitionist, responding to other perspectives and approaches with 'as Professor Fonzie says...'.

Beyond the specific critiques of discussions within the animal movement(s), the zombie metaphor drawn on, increasingly used in academia, provides the foundation on which

the story rests as a broader social critique. Both before and after the affliction and transformation of the masses, the (technological) somnambulism of the zombie or the ‘walking dead’ has resonance.<sup>6</sup> The anthropocentrism behind the genetic engineering central to the plot, introduces a dualistic positioning. The framing of the brain (un)dead masses and the enlightened vegans will most certainly be a source of criticism labelled against TVR. Those who do so, however, will miss the more important and pertinent satire of the dualism—which will also be seen as overly-critical and controversial by those positioned in the potential zombie pool.

What TVR explicitly sets out to critique is patently visible in the character of Sangar, and to a lesser extent Poland, as the first to undergo the zombie transformation. Peter Singer’s utilitarian and consequentialist philosophical approach to the question of the nonhuman animal, and the inaccurate however widespread references to him as the godfather of the animal rights movement, position him as an obvious choice for the first inflicted (as the character Sangar).

It is far from a stretch to foresee (the real-life) Peter Singer coming out in support of such genetic engineering should it be proposed in the (scarily near?) future. As with the character in absence Professor Fonzie (a.k.a. Gary L Francione), there are many who will find some humor, even satirical pleasure, in this portrayal. At it’s roots, some will incorrectly see and frame TVR as another salvo in the abolition v regulation debate. The nuance blended into the plot by Agranoff goes much deeper, highlighting schisms and (at times unseen) identity politics that act to dismiss valid criticisms. This is most clear in the the created subtitle of Professor Fonzie’s book (*The Only Way, My Way*) and an often uncritical zombie-like deference to his ideas (‘as Professor Fonzie says’). These parallels will certainly resonate with those who have witnessed real life personal attacks against those who have expressed substantive critical and constructive comments about Francione’s definition (even co-option) of the abolition label.

As speculative fiction, which I consider to be an apt label irrespective of whether it is overtly such, TVR has the potential to alter world views of those who read it. This is the cornerstone of good literature — it is the level of influence on the reader which will be differentiated. Amidst the tongue in cheek wit and what may be reacted to as dry humor, the

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<sup>6</sup> See Langdon Winner (1989: 10) for an examination of how we ‘willingly sleepwalk through the process of the reconstitution of human existence’.

social messages throughout are clear for those open enough to see, laugh, and personally reflect on it.

Many will find basis for enjoyment in reading TVR as I did, whether they be punks, hipsters, vegans, zombie geeks, misanthropes, or someone who randomly comes by a copy.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## ***The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition***

Carol Adams (2010) *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. Continuum Press.

**Reviewed by Hilary Malatino<sup>1</sup>**

### **Carnophallogocentrism and *The Sexual Politics of Meat***

At the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards, Lady Gaga rolled onto the stage in a couture dress designed by Franc Fernandez to accept an award from diva elder Cher. The dress was made of meat. In an interview with MTV, Fernandez offered these instructions for those viewers who desire a meat dress of their very own: “Go to your butcher, get some good cuts and start sewing” (Vena, 2010). Scandal followed, with PETA issuing statements of censure, and lesbian vegetarian Ellen DeGeneres offering Gaga a bikini made of vegetables to wear “the next time [she] wants to make a statement” (Oldenberg, 2010). Explicating the politics of her sartorial choice, Gaga offers this assertion by way of defense: “If we don't stand up for what we believe in and if we don't fight for our rights, pretty soon we're going to have as much rights as the meat on our own bones. And, I am not a piece of meat” (Oldenberg, 2010).

The political statement is meant to be of a piece with her stance for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and her general advocacy of GLBT rights, and as such is engaged in an interesting logic. The rhetorical force of her argument hinges on a distinction between *bios* and *zoë*: a distinction between fully civilized and enculturated lives marked by full civic inclusion and life in the most minimal sense, life conceived as mere existence, animation, breathing. Wearing the material trace of violence enacted upon beings firmly conscribed to the realm of *zoë* -- the fleshy evidence of a set of acts of noncriminal killing -- upon her person, she frames a semiotic argument for the full civic inclusion of a marginalized population. Further, she marks the distance between objectification and representation,

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hijacking an interpretation of her celluloid visage as pornographic, sexually objectified and complicitous with the ongoing oppression of women. The subtext of her claim to “not be a piece of meat” is a literalist interruption of discussions of Gaga’s myriad performances that circle around notions of positive and negative representation, around discussions of whether or not her overtly sexual behavior renders her a less-than-desirable role model for teenage girls. How could she possibly be a piece of meat, a thoroughly objectified being, when she’s wearing the dead flesh of thoroughly objectified beings? Wearing the meat dress, she’s selling autonomy, a politics of sartorial and sexual self-determination that is not at all coterminous with sexual objectification.

I was re-reading the Twentieth Anniversary Edition of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* in the midst of this meat-dress hoopla, and I kept returning to one ponderance: what does Carol Adams think of this?

It’s nearly certain she would find the display in poor taste, violent, probably pornographic. Gaga in her meat dress signifies, in a significant sense, as an only slightly varied iteration of the iconic “Cattle Queen” image that graces the cover of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, featuring a woman garbed in only a red cowboy hat and traces of different cuts – rib, chuck, loin, round, rump – across her flesh, posed next to script that reads “What’s Your Cut?” Applying the feminist-vegetarian critical theory developed by Adams would mean cognizing this performance of Gaga’s in a way that stresses a parallel or consanguine relationship between the woman and the meat, a relationship of likeness between the objectification of Gaga and the objectification of the dead animals she wears – in other words, an interpretation exactly the obverse of the one Gaga herself offers. I mention this interpretive tension because I think that it indexes a much larger set of issues regarding the relevance of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* to contemporary feminist theory and politics, vegan and vegetarian praxes, and critical animal studies.

It would be easy to discuss this text in terms of its tendencies toward a relatively unvariegated and universalized notion of woman and, in keeping with this, a particularly white and essentialist variety of radical feminism, and to then figure these tendencies as politico-historical markers that consign the book to the dust-bin of U.S. ‘second wave’ feminism. Easy, but disingenuous. This is, after all, the Twentieth Anniversary edition of the text, and it is a formative text for many. So rather than excoriating it on the grounds of its political datedness, I’d like to approach the text considering what of it remains pertinent, what of it continues to resonate, what of it is recuperable despite certain underdeveloped or problematic presuppositions, and what of it may need to be seriously rethought.

Adams is, above all else, a radical feminist semiotician, a literary theorist dedicated to examining and critiquing what she calls the “patriarchal texts of meat” (47), and *The Sexual Politics of Meat* is, essentially, semiotic analysis enacted in a mode reminiscent of her mentor Mary Daly, who was not content to merely deconstruct patriarchal metaphysics, but dedicated to the creation of a separatist and gynocentric metaphysics. Daly’s approach to advocating for vegetarianism is deeply ingrained in this text, which was conceived in one of Daly’s courses. While Adams’ work is mainly guided by a critical impulse, it is politically oriented by a utopic vision deeply informed by the essentialist feminism of Daly. This vision is clearly extant in the preface to this edition, which begins with an exercise in feminist visionary thought: “Imagine the day when women walk down streets and are not harassed, stalked, or attacked. Imagine the day when we don’t need battered women’s shelters...” (1). This utopic leaning becomes key to understanding the methodology deployed by Adams as she goes about her research and writing. Not beholden to disciplinary constraints, and motivated by nothing other than her political desires and a hunch that there is a relationship and set of common political motivations that unite feminist and vegetarian epistemes and practices, she draws upon radically diverse sources, working as a bricoleur as she builds what she calls a feminist-vegetarian critical theory. Cited in the text are the journals of early 20th century feminist vegetarian Agnes Ryan, porno mags, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, the 1988 Bush-Dukakis presidential campaign, old cookbooks, and Margaret Atwood novels. Her research archive is cobbled together from whatever seems to appear on her cultural radar that addresses the intersection of women’s experience and eating – or not eating – animals. Sometimes this approach to the quotidian elements that comprise the “patriarchal texts of meat” elicits a response in the reader akin to what Walter Benjamin has called a profane illumination – that moment when a banal object, advertisement, or colloquialism suddenly sparks with a new meaning, casting light upon a connection between the oppression of women and the brutalization of animals. This is in keeping with her conception of the book as a consciousness-raising device, a text that, like the dialogic action within a C-R group, “argues with the mythologies we are taught to live by until suddenly we are able to see the same thing differently” (15). Other times, however, her eclectic approach results in suggestive, but otherwise seriously underdeveloped arguments.

I’d like to look at one of these latter instances, appearing in the preface to the Twentieth Anniversary edition. In it, she likens her theorization of the relations between feminism and vegetarianism to Derrida’s notion of carnophallogocentrism, utilizing personal correspondence between herself and philosopher Matthew Calarco as an intermediary in the

mapping of this similarity. Calarco suggests that Derrida, in his addition of the prefix ‘carno’ to phallogocentrism, is iterating a linkage between masculinity and meat-eating similar to that which Adams has been developing “in much more detail” (6). Phallogocentrism is a tripartite conjunction of ‘phallus,’ used to denote not an anatomical penis, but rather the symbolic or representative instances wherein the phallus is conflated with the signification of power; ‘logos,’ the Greek term for ‘word,’ ‘speech,’ and ‘reason’ that serves to highlight a particular kind of privileged gendering operative in the realms of language; and ‘centrism,’ which points to the organization of discourse around this conflation of reason and masculinity. Derrida’s addition of ‘carno’ to this term imbricates acts of meat eating and animal sacrifice as key to the discursive construction of subjects of Reason. Masculinity and carnivorism work together to support the virility, power, and authority of one who argues, dialogues, and speaks reasonably. This term, however, does not work to substantiate or fabricate a concrete subject one could then point to and indict as ‘carnophallogocentric.’ To do this is to misapprehend the deconstructive impulse generally, to substitute a metaphysics of presence and absence for processes of *differance*, to miss one of Derrida’s central points: that carnophallogocentrism shapes certain subject *positions*, not that it creates and overdetermines the meaning of determinate and individual subjects.

Yet this is precisely what Adams does, arguing that carnophallogocentrism underscores the problematics of erotic images utilized in pro-vegan and vegetarian advertising. She writes that “with Derrida (and Calarco’s help) we can comprehend the problem when animal rights organizations chose to use pornographic ads to reach meat eaters: they are speaking to the *male subject* and assume he basically cannot change. We who object to the sexual politics of meat imagine something better. We imagine that the male subject truly can change” (6). Rather than a complicated understanding of differential subject positions, ways of gazing, and modes of perception, we have images of naked or near-naked women posited as irrefutably ‘pornographic,’ a term that should be understood in the register that anti-pornography feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon make use of it: pornography is always violent-in-itself, always contributes to the fragmentation of what should ideally be a whole being. Within this framework, the ostensible reduction of the being of woman to her sexualized parts prompts viewers to construe women as constituted by body parts to be utilized for sexual gratification, rather than as whole beings.

This understanding of pornography and its effects is extremely reductive, however, particularly in an age wherein sites like vegporn.com deliberately embrace pornography and wed it to a queer, feminist, and body-positive understanding of sexuality as well as an

animal-friendly, pro-vegan politics. Adams does not give us critical tools for understanding a porn site like this, for rather than a plurality of desiring bodies and multiple sexualities, she offers us a whittled understanding of sexuality and visibility that presumes only *male* subjects gaze at ‘pornographic’ images of women, and that all images of women engaged in sexual acts are necessarily pornographic, always violent, always harmful, always reductive. The dyadic and non-internally differentiated male and female subjects at work in this assertion are certainly not the troubled, haunted, and non-self-identical subjects theorized by Derrida; nor are they queer, marked by different histories of racialization and class, and constituted by many different sorts of masculinity and femininity. This rather clumsy ignorance of intersectional thought – which insists on multiple differences that cross-cut and thus destabilize monolithic conceptions of masculinity and femininity – as well as the multiple poststructural problematizations of subjectivity shapes many of Adams’ most fundamental assertions.

For instance, Adams characterizes women and animals as linked by a “fused oppression” (102) under patriarchy that operates through language that pairs “‘meat eater’ with ‘virile male’ and women with animals” (102), thus suggesting “another pairing as well: in talking about animals we are talking about a traditional female fate.” She argues that “we oppress animals by associating them with women’s lesser status” (102). “Fused oppression” is a term that indexes a shared and co-constitutive mechanism of oppression that manifests linguistically, particularly through metaphor – the likening of women to animal, and vice-versa. Both woman and animal are construed as “matter without spirit” – that is, objectified, thing-like, instrumentalized – and Adams argues that “when one is matter without spirit, one is the raw material for exploitation and for metaphoric borrowing” (73). Thus, metaphor *is* violence, insofar as it absents, ignores, or elides a substantive subjective reality and facilitates a series of equations that undermine the specificity of oppressions – for instance, when eco-minded folks talk of the rape of the earth, they are making the rape of woman an “absent referent,” as are folks who consume meat and refer to it with gastronomic language that effaces the reality of the slaughter – for instance, using the word ‘veal’ instead of uttering something along the lines of ‘baby cow, forcibly constrained and slaughtered.’

The notion of the absent referent is central to *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, functioning as the lynchpin that sutures the oppression of women to the brutalization of non-human animals. In ontological terms, the absent referent works to rend apart the spirit of women and non-human animals from their corporeal matter; to rob them of full being in the form of complete self-presence, the sort of being wherein one fully possesses themselves, their

actions, responses, and destinies. The absent referent works within a logic of presence and absence, a dialectic of full being and mere matter that ties a categorically conceived and universalized ‘woman’ to the non-human animal. Those of us working in queer theory, feminist philosophy, and critical animal studies today must take seriously the problematics presented by this foundational text, but we must also problematize the traditional ontological underpinnings of the feminist-vegetarian critical theory offered by Adams. Adams seems to understand being as shaped by an *a priori* subjective holism wherein matter and spirit are enmeshed. This understanding of being orients the political project proposed by the text, which can be glossed as the re-creation of a world wherein essences are somehow *restored* to women and non-human animals alike; it proposes a feminist utopian world wherein women and animals belong to themselves, and themselves alone, wherein each being is possessed of its own essence. Given that many scholars working within the aforementioned disciplinary and interdisciplinary realms – queer theory, feminist philosophy, and critical animal studies – are deeply engaged in problematizing and rethinking the traditional philosophical dyads of matter and spirit, male and female, animal and human, presence and absence, it is a thorny process to engage a text that doesn’t trouble and destabilize these divisions. To embrace the work done by Adams without addressing the ways in which her work relies on dichotomous thinking is on some level to ignore the political engagements of communities who have needed to destabilize these dyads to be perceived as legitimate political subjects – queer and gender non-normative folks, peoples of color, peoples shaped by histories of forced migration and colonization, “illegal” immigrants. Perhaps what we need to do is to think how these political communities have been shaped in significant ways by the same dichotomous logics of being that differentiate humans and non-human animals, that utilize this differentiation to legitimate violence. This distinction is certainly operative in processes of racialization – one need only look at 19<sup>th</sup> century western conceptions of species that posited peoples of African and Asian descent as less-than-human, as bestial, as animal-like. Moreover, to embrace this work is also to embrace a metaphysics of being that is not materialist, that accepts the existence of ‘spirit’ as a matter of course – a considerable problem for many agnostic, atheist, and/or Marxist vegetarians.

On some level, Lady Gaga suggests a more interesting path: there is a long Western history of differentiating beings on a gradated scale of the fully to the non-human, a history that the collapse of violence against women with violence against non-human animals elides. Perhaps a better route to take is to insist on the *non-coincidence* of the existential circumstances of the slaughtered animal and the objectified female body, in order to more

fully grasp the specific histories, technologies, materials, and modes of relation that constitute these irreducibly different beings. This approach would also allow us to think carefully about the deep subjective and communal differences that shape our current political and cultural situations. Moving in the direction of specificity rather than conflation only sharpens our engagement with questions of social justice.

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## **Muzzling a Movement: The Effects of Anti-terrorism Law, Money & Politics on Animal Activism**

Dara Lovitz (2010) *Muzzling a Movement: The Effects of Anti-terrorism Law, Money & Politics on Animal Activism*. Lantern Books.

### **Reviewed by Melanie Wellsmith<sup>1</sup>**

In a world changed by the dramatic events of 9/11, *Muzzling A Movement* seeks to critically analyze recent U.S. ‘eco-terror’ laws, most notably the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act 2006 (AETA), in light of the rights and freedoms of individuals enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. The author’s aim is to demonstrate that such legislation has quite unnecessarily labeled a predominantly peaceful movement as ‘terrorist’ and subjected animal rights activists to investigation, legal intervention and control to such an extent that their ability to raise awareness of their cause has been significantly curtailed. The book is constructed around an analysis of U.S. legislation; that which purports, but fails, to protect nonhuman animals (e.g. the Humane Slaughter Act; The Animal Welfare Act) and that which criminalizes those who actively seek an end to nonhuman animal exploitation and abuse. In addition, the passing of the AETA is critically assessed, through a consideration of its key political supporters and their economic and organisational interests in the industries the Act seeks to ‘protect’, such as vivisection and farming.

Dara Lovitz is an Adjunct Professor of animal law and practising lawyer. She brings, therefore, the legal expertise necessary to systematically and critically deconstruct both the legislation and its application. In particular she provides a detailed recounting of *Commonwealth v Esbenshade* (in which she served as a special prosecutor), a case involving the unsuccessful prosecution for animal cruelty of the owner and supervisor of a battery-egg facility; the successful prosecution of the SHAC-7 (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act 1992; and the construction and passage of the AETA. Through this analysis she provides convincing support for her claims that the legislation *as specifically targeted at animal rights activists* presents an indefensible and disproportionate interference in the constitutional rights of such individuals and the groups and organisations they form.

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The book is split into six chapters and three appendices; the latter of which reproduce the AEPA (Appendix A) and the AETA (Appendix B) and summarise State animal enterprise protection laws (Appendix C). The six chapters proceed in an quasi-chronological manner, starting with an indictment of animal ‘protection’ laws (Chapter one). In this chapter, Lovitz considers the inability of legislation drafted within a speciesist framework to truly afford protection to those perceived as other than (read: lesser than) human; reminding us that the legal status of nonhuman animals is one of property. The scene is set in this chapter for what is to follow when Lovitz discusses the reluctance of the (elected) judiciary in *Esbenshade* to “create “new law”” (p29), thus set a precedent in a case where battery hens were clearly “suffering immensely” in conditions that were “not part of normal agricultural operations” (p29). Indeed the Magistrate would not even commit the opinion in writing, which could have been presented to State lawmakers as evidence that existing legislation was not ‘fit for purpose’. The chapter is completed with a relatively brief, but evocative, consideration of the range of industries that ‘use and abuse’ nonhuman animals, and the ineffectual nature of the associated ‘animal protection’ laws.

Chapter two follows naturally from this critique by considering the reaction of U.S. Congress to a developing animal liberation movement. This consideration is brief but does provide context for later chapters, particularly through an illustration of the reactive and ever more draconian legislative measures introduced in an effort to curtail the activities of organisations such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF); thus protecting the interests of those (economically and politically powerful) organisations and enterprises that were being targeted because of their exploitation of nonhuman animals, including vivisection laboratories, university facilities and fur farms. The chapter provides further context by detailing the formation, by a group of U.K. activists, of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), which aimed to shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences (an animal-testing lab). The activities of SHAC members, notably the ‘SHAC-7’, are considered in greater detail later in the book, thus this overview is welcome, particularly for those readers who may be unfamiliar with the organisations involved and their actions.

Chapter three summarizes the investigation, arrest and successful prosecution for inchoate offenses (conspiracy, across a number of charges) of the SHAC-7 under the AEPA. Lovitz presents a convincing argument that *legally* there were not sufficient grounds for findings of guilt against any of the defendants. Further she describes how the case was used, through an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals, to challenge the AEPA on the grounds that it was unconstitutional, being incompatible with the First Amendment right to free speech (the

appeal was also brought on additional grounds). Again, the argument in support of such claims is clearly articulated and, based on the evidence presented, Lovitz's claim that:

The only thing that the SHAC defendants conspired to do, however, was to shut down HLS; the government did not prove that they conspired to commit any illegal acts in furtherance of that goal. (pp74-5)

is hard to discount. The appeal, however, failed on all counts, with only one Judge dissenting in relation to one charge.

Continuing with the chronology of events and legislative developments, chapter four details the Senate and House hearings that led to the replacement of the AEPA with the AETA. This chapter is perhaps the most critical, but in some ways also the weakest. One of the key issues considered in this chapter is the inclusion of the word *terrorism*, not least into the title of the legislation itself. The appropriateness and impact of the terrorist label is revisited in chapter six. Lovitz continues to make her point by highlighting the unrepresentative nature of those invited to speak to the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security as it considered the proposed AETA. Next she discusses the "Money and Politics Behind the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act" (p84). The argument presented is a valid one, and it is one which is clearly not without foundation. It is widely acknowledged that legislation is, by and large, *created* by those with power and influence to *protect* those with power and influence. The AETA is no exception to this. Therefore, Lovitz's detailing of the economic and company interests of those politicians who supported the AETA is unsurprising. Further, the existence of such interests, whilst possibly persuasive, cannot be read as evidence of nepotism or corruption. There is an important argument here, but I believe it would be better made, or at least supported, through a consideration of the wider socio-political literature on the role of power and influence in governance and law making.

Chapter five contains the most detailed legal critique, considering the ways in which the AETA violates the U.S. constitution and the impact of federalizing such 'offences'. Again, Lovitz's analysis cannot be faulted, albeit it feels a little brief. It is worthy of note, that the differential treatment of animal (and environmental) activists, is particularly highlighted in this chapter, and one wonders why such groups have been targeted in this way. I suspect Lovitz's argument relates back to that presented in the previous chapter: that the power to influence legislation is vested heavily in enterprises that most abuse and harm nonhuman animals and the environment. This could have been revisited more explicitly here.

The final chapter summarises the issues that have gone before through a consideration of the impact of the material presented (the legislation, investigatory techniques and cases) on the wider animal rights, or advocacy, movement. The fluid and contentious nature of the terrorist label is firstly presented, though this consideration is extremely limited. A more complete discussion is realistically beyond the scope of the text, but it is so important that more weight should have been attached to it here. Lovitz then considers the ‘activities’ of animal rights activists and how these do not fit those of terrorist organisations. The picture painted of groups such as the ALF supports her assertions, though a similarly convincing counter-argument could possibly be produced. Indeed, many groups labeled as *terrorist* would, I suspect, be keen to argue that not only do they not carry-out such activities, but that their actions are in desperate response to their lack of access and control over ‘democratic processes’ such as law making, which animal rights activists’ may also argue has resulted in their recourse to illegal activities (such as trespass, damage and theft).

However, what is clear is that regardless of the illegal actions of some individuals involved in these organisations, the label of terrorist has been used to (1) curtail the rights of such offenders to a greater extent than others committing similar crimes with different motivations and (2) control the *legal* activities and associations (thus freedoms) of those connected to the wider animal rights movement, through fear of unwarranted interference by authorities and law enforcement. It is this latter point which, I believe, to be the most significant as it involves internalised self-regulation and censorship, thus is the most damning indictment of the inappropriate construction of animal rights activists as terrorists.

Overall, the book is well written, clearly presented and achieves its aims. The book is very much focused on U.S. legislation and its use. An international comparative analysis, particularly with the U.K., would have been of great interest, especially for the non-American reader. The text is clearly focused on the role of law, as would be expected given the author’s academic expertise. As such it provides a succinct consideration of a number of relevant issues. With this focus on legal analysis, I was left feeling, however, that the story was only ‘half told’. There is a wealth of writing on the topic of constructing terrorism, and the wider issue of capitalist influence in the erosion of democracy and freedom. It would be nice to see some of this applied more specifically to animal rights activism. This may well have fallen beyond the scope of such a concise text, albeit the role of money and politics is included alongside law in the subtitle. As such, I would suggest this book is particularly suitable for legal scholars and students. Further, I hope this book will inspire the reader to engage in a deeper exploration of the socio-political considerations and to question the extent to which

anti-terror legislation in particular has been used to curtail the very freedoms that it purports to protect.

## **Frontiers of Justice**

Martha Nussbaum (2006) *Frontiers of Justice*. Harvard University Press

### **Reviewed by Stephanie Jenkins<sup>1</sup>**

With *Frontiers of Justice*, Martha Nussbaum makes her hefty contribution to debates concerning contemporary, global concerns. *Frontiers* tackles “three unsolved problems of social justice whose neglect in existing theories seems particularly problematic” (2006: 1): disability, nationality, and species membership. These three problems demand new ways of thinking about the subject of justice, purpose of social cooperation, and significance of caring for individuals of radically unequal powers. As Nussbaum explains, “the primary topics of this book are all, in different ways, problems of globalizing the theory of justice, that is, extending justice to all those in the world who ought to be treated justly” (2006: 92).

Nussbaum argues that the “strongest and most enduring” (2006: 2) approach to social justice in the Western tradition has been the social contract. However, she believes that classical social contract theory contains constitutive elements that condemn it to inevitable failure on these three unsolved problems of justice. These suppositions concern the bargaining conditions of the initial social contract: social contract theory presumes that the parties of the agreement are in a situation of moral and physical rough equality and that mutual advantage is the purpose of social cooperation. For Nussbaum, justice for people with disabilities, non-human animals, and poor nations will not be plausible with this set of assumptions; social contract theorists cannot account for how and why individuals of disproportionate power would aid people with impairments, non-human animals, or other nations when it is not to their economic advantage to do so. *Frontiers* is organized around these three problems, containing two chapters on both disability and nationality and another on species membership. Additionally, there is an introductory chapter on social contract theory and a concluding chapter on moral sentiments.

Nussbaum’s project is not only critical but also constructive. As an alternative to traditional social contract theory, she proposes her capabilities approach, which she believes

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“advances, rather than displaces” (2006: 6) the Rawlsian theory of justice. The foundational idea of the capabilities approach is the value of dignity. This theory articulates basic entitlements that “should be respected and implemented by governments of all nations, as a bare minimum” to support this dignity (2006: 70). These entitlements are intended as capabilities insofar as they focus on what “people are actually able to do and be” (2006: 70). The capabilities approach is outcome-oriented; it establishes a “threshold level of each capability”, beneath which species functioning is not possible, that a just society must provide for its subjects. Unlike social contract theory, the capabilities approach begins with a social and political conception of the human being. Because, from this perspective, human beings have fundamental sociability and sense of justice, Nussbaum’s approach avoids the problems of how people with disabilities, non-human animals, and other nations become subjects of justice.

Because it will be of interest to readers of this journal, I will focus my attention to Nussbaum’s treatment of species membership as an issue of social justice. Her approach to the question of human treatment of animals in *Frontiers* is surprising, because it advances a far-reaching agenda for a mainstream political theory text that is outside the field of critical animal studies. While it is clear that Nussbaum is not a critical animal studies scholar, *Frontiers* shares some common ground with and offers resources for those of us working in this developing field. There are five components of Nussbaum’s work that critical animal studies scholars will find helpful. While these claims are not groundbreaking, since they have been made by others, their appearance in Nussbaum’s book affords them additional legitimacy as mainstream questions of social justice, rather than the interests of a niche group of “radical” activist scholars.

The first point of interest is that Nussbaum recognizes human treatment of non-human animals as a question of justice with considerable urgency. She makes it clear that the extreme asymmetry of power in the human domination of non-human animals makes interspecies relationships a pressing contemporary problem that just societies must contend with. She writes, “these relationships ought to be regulated by justice, instead of the war for survival and power that now, for the most part, obtains” (2006: 326). To say that animal cruelty is a question of justice is to explicitly distinguish it from matters of compassion and even those of ethics proper. First, to frame the debate in terms of justice is to highlight that humans are accountable for the wrong done to non-human animals. Second, as a question of justice, we must now speak in terms of entitlements that animals have to be treated or not treated in particular ways. As Nussbaum states, “The sphere of justice is the sphere of basic

entitlements. When I say that the mistreatment of animals is unjust, I mean to say not only that it is wrong of us to treat them in that way, but also that they have a right, a moral entitlement, not to be treated in that way. It is unfair to them” (2006: 337). As a philosopher who works on ethical questions, my predisposition has been to frame my work on animals and veganism in terms of ethics. *Frontiers* convinced me that I must begin to think about these issues in terms of justice.

Second, Nussbaum contends that non-humans animals are inviolable subjects of justice who cannot be used as a means to an end. For Nussbaum, this means two things. First, non-human animals are subjects of the initial social arrangement. While they may not be able to participate in the creation of the political principles themselves, Nussbaum maintains that they remain primary subjects of justice through “prudent guardianship” (2006: 376). Here, she seeks to distinguish herself from social contract theory, which she believes conflates the questions of “for whom” and “by whom” the social contract is created. Animals, from this perspective, will be treated “as we currently treat children and many people with mental disabilities, who have a large menu of rights and are in that sense far from being ‘mere property,’ although those rights must be exercised through guardianship” (2006: 376-7). Such relationships would not exclude training and interspecies friendship, but are intended to prevent abuse and cruelty. Second, animals are subjects of justice insofar as they are entitled to pursue their own natural goods. This is to say that an animal is an agent and a subject, “a creature to whom something is due, a creature who is itself an end” (2006: 337). An animal is a someone, rather than a something.

The third point of interest in *Frontiers* is that Nussbaum presents an understanding of dignity that departs from the Kantian conception of personhood that contrasts moral personality and animality. For Nussbaum, there is a continuity between human and non-human animal capacities. Nature offers a “rich continuum of types of intelligence, and practical capacities of many types” (2006: 133). Rationality is only one human capacity among many; it does not exhaust or define human existence. Our dignity is founded in our sociality that we share with animals. More strikingly, Nussbaum contends that animals have a dignified existence of their own. The capacities approach, she argues, recognizes the potential for many different types of animal dignity. At the same time, Nussbaum is only able to offer a negative definition of what this dignity might look like; a dignified existence does not consist of cruelty, starvation, or abuse. She writes, “Dignified existence would seem at least to include the following: adequate opportunities for nutrition and physical activity; freedom from pain, squalor, and cruelty; freedom to act in ways that are characteristic of the

species (rather than to be confined and... made to perform silly and degrading stunts); freedom from fear and opportunities for rewarding interactions with other creatures of the same species, and of different species; a chance to enjoy the light and air in tranquility” (2006: 326).

The fourth component of *Frontiers* that will interest critical animal studies scholars is the interconnectedness of the three unsolved problems of justice. While Nussbaum does not make this argument explicitly, it is difficult to finish the book without getting a sense for how struggles for human liberation are inextricably intertwined with the fate of non-human animals. In the case of global inequity, Nussbaum speaks of how people of poor nations are reduced to the subhuman.<sup>2</sup> Nussbaum draws clear connections between the domination of people with mental disabilities and non-human animals; the hegemony of rationality is used in both instances to perpetuate asymmetrical power relations. Nussbaum’s work provides a resource for working through the ableism within some animal rights literature, in which animal capacities are compared to disabled humans in order to “level up” their moral status.

Finally, Nussbaum offers critical animal studies scholars some much needed hope: she believes that it is possible to come to a public consensus that the mistreatment of animals is unjust and that our society will eventually take measures to end their suffering. While she warns against the human tendency to be self-serving in this area (e.g. one’s desire for meat), she believes that humans are compassionate creatures who accept the good of others as their own. What is needed, in her view, is a solid educational institution for developing the moral sentiments that will support such a system of justice.

While Nussbaum’s capacity approach may be of interest to critical animal studies scholars on these five points, it is on this last insight- her hopeful vision for the future- that her project loses its “critical” edge. In fact, it seems that she loses her focus on justice altogether. In the name of political expediency, Nussbaum ultimately advocates policies that perpetuate human violence against non-human animals. While she does propose the banning of killing for sport and luxury items, she adopts a welfarist approach towards animals that are slaughtered for food. She writes, “It seems wise to focus initially on banning all forms of cruelty to living animals and then moving gradually toward a consensus against killing at least the more complexly sentient animals for food” (2006: 393). Additionally, she believes

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<sup>2</sup> Maneesha Deckha examines the subhuman/human divide and its role in perpetuating violence against humans and non-human animals in the most recent issue of this journal. See M. Deckha (2010), “The Subhuman as a Cultural Agent of Violence,” *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* Vol. VIII (III), 28-51.



that experimentation on non-human animals will continue to be necessary. She acknowledges that this contradicts her emphasis on entitlements, saying that such research is “morally bad” (2006: 404), but argues that it is necessary to “promote human health and safety” (2006: 404). In the end, Nussbaum’s political recommendations contradict the moral foundation of her capabilities approach.

Additionally, Nussbaum’s hesitancy towards banning killing for food comes from a misplaced concern about the consequences of a vegetarian diet. She explains, “The use of animals for food in general is a much more difficult case, since nobody really knows what the impact on the world environment would be of a total switch to vegetarian sources of protein, or the extent to which such a diet could be made compatible with the health of all the world’s children” (2006: 402). Unfortunately her research falls short in this area and she would have benefited from reading documents discussing the acceptability of vegetarian and vegan diets for all stages of life and the necessity of a global shift towards a vegan diet to lessen the impact of global climate change, poverty, and hunger.<sup>3</sup>

Because of her commitments to political liberalism, Nussbaum’s theory of justice must be able to pass a requirement of overlapping consensus. For this reason, she elects to remain agnostic towards the question of whether there is equal moral status across species, a principle that is a starting point for work in critical animal studies. Since the idea of cross-species dignity would not be “readily accepted” (2006: 384), she holds the question of equal dignity as a metaphysical question, rather than a political or moral one. Considering the possibility that the whole schematic of justification is an anthropocentric endeavour, Nussbaum concedes that the sheer fact of animal suffering “raises profound metaethical issues that go beyond the arguments of this book” (2006: 389). In response to this gap, she states, “we do need to think further about how the perceptions and experiences of other sentient creatures enter into the account of what justification is, and I have not solved that problem to my own satisfaction” (2006: 389). It is this problem of justification- or an interspecies ethics- that I hope to see critical animal studies scholars address in the future.

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<sup>3</sup> For recent examples, see: American Dietetic Association (2009), “Vegetarian Diets,” Vol. 109 (7): <http://www.eatright.org/about/content.aspx?id=8357> and United Nations Environmental Programme (2010), “Assessing the Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production”: [http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/documents/pdf/PriorityProductsAndMaterials\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/documents/pdf/PriorityProductsAndMaterials_Report_Full.pdf)

## **Confronting Animal Abuse: Law, Criminology, and Human-Animal Relationships**

Piers Beirne (2009) *Confronting Animal Abuse: Law, Criminology, and Human-Animal Relationships*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc

**Reviewed by Jennifer Gannett<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

Piers Bierne's *Confronting Animal Abuse: Law, Criminology and Human-Animal Relationships* is an important addition to the body of work examining the relationships between humans and animals from a multi-faceted perspective. An expert in the fields of criminology, sociology and human-animal relations, Bierne takes us on a fascinating journey through various aspects of human-animal relations throughout the span of many centuries. Through Bierne's careful research, he reveals that a number of important and often seemingly straightforward anti-cruelty laws often had curious roots. Bierne's research and writing is a reminder of our need to amend our collective vision of appropriate ways to safeguard animal's rights and rethink what it means to violate those rights.

### **English Animal Welfare Law as a Tool of Irish Suppression**

Highlighting early complexities in animal protection, Bierne spends the first chapter exploring an obscure Irish law passed in 1635, the Act Against Plowing by the Tayle and Pulling the Wooll Off Living Sheep (1635 Act) (leaving aside discussion of the sheep, Bierne focused entirely on the 1635 Act as it impacts horses). Socio-political events both in Ireland and England during the decades leading up to the 1635 Act contributed to the passage, compliance and enforcement of the legislation in a remarkable way.

Plowing by tail was a popular way for farmers in 17th century Ireland to turn up soil, and, as the term suggests, incorporated a short, relatively lighter plow being attached directly

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to a horse by the animal's tail. Plowing by tail was slow and inefficient, but an improvement over doing the work by hand. Since this method was most commonly used by impoverished Irish farmers, from their perspective, it was sensible to plow in a way that required no capital investment in harnesses or larger plows since they did not have the means for such expenditures. Though not specifically Irish in origin, the custom persisted in Ireland during the 1600s. The actual level of pain to the horse is unquantified, though Bierne rightly notes that it was a custom that would have exhausted itself if it caused immediate severe damage to the animal. From a utilitarian perspective, causing immediate debilitating damage to one's animal would be counterproductive. However, it is clear that this was an unpleasant, painful experience for the animal.

Rather than focus solely on the suffering of the animal, Bierne gives the reader impressive details regarding the societal framework that existed during the lead up to the passage of this law. Bierne supplies plenty of evidence to establish that these details are crucial to a critical look at what at first blush seems to be an early anti-cruelty law. Bierne's piecing together of the scant historical record pertaining to plowing by tail provides support for his belief that it is likely that the 1635 Act was not enacted simply as an anti-cruelty law with the best interests of the animals as primary motivator but rather used by the colonial English as a tool of oppression against the Irish. Bierne weaves details gleaned from the record on legislative, contemporary socio-political attitudes (usually via English correspondence and other writing) and enforcement to further this idea and posits that there were four main reasons for enactment of the legislative wrangling that finally coalesced into 1635 Act.

The first is that plow fines served as a handsome source of income for the English. The money collected from offenders was an important source of revenue for the English administration in Ireland. Moreover, Bierne notes that British authorities doubtless used the act as a source of graft, reducing payments in return for bribes, or taking payment but never reporting the offense. In the latter cases the 1635 Act served as an illicit tax, rather than a prohibition on the activity.

Second, the criminalization of the activity served as another vehicle through which the English could regulate the Irish. It is difficult to overstate the level of cultural imperialism with which the English approached their role as administrators in Ireland. Bierne cites excerpts from contemporary writers to buttress this position; it is clear not just from Bierne's writings but from any examination of the Irish-English relationship that considerable

effort was made on all levels to make the Irish more English. Bierne makes the unique connection in demonstrating that this may have had an impact on animal-related legislation.

The third prong of the connection is that the 1635 Act was another tool of control over human-animal relationships and perhaps represented a shift into a more animal-friendly way of thinking. Bierne is adamant that this is not the case.

The fourth point was that the Act served to suppress social behavior that the English found undesirable. The Puritan influence during this period meant that strong restrictions were placed upon many practices including drinking, gambling, adultery and dancing. Puritans also criminalized most activities performed on a Sunday that were generally permitted during the rest of the week (i.e. making hay, loading ships, hunting). But what motive might the Puritans have had for promoting welfare? Overlapping with material later in the book, Bierne connects the ideas of these types of laws as civilizing. Criminalization of activities like animal baiting worked to further state control of social behavior.

Bierne also points out other potentially influencing factors in the law's creation, which is the English love of their own horses, their own horse-centric society (including as symbols of nationalism) and, at the time, their hostility and distaste toward both Irish horses as well as the Irish treatment of their equines. Dovetailing with this attitude specifically toward horses was a general increase in husbandry techniques. As England saw a rise in interest in husbandry techniques, including concepts of proper methods of plowing as well as proper horse breeds for plowing, the English grew increasingly convinced that their own practices were superior and that Irish practices bordered on barbaric.

Bierne does an impressive job of scouring through the available records and writings that pertain to the 1635 Act and the events and context that led to the Act. It would be even more intriguing if we could have had a chance to learn more about the Irish perspective regarding the 1635 Act and how the actions of the English impacted their daily lives. The historical record will always be missing this important perspective, especially since Bierne informs us that there is a complete absence of judicial records having to do with this issue.

### **Puritan Regulation of Animal Welfare in the Massachusetts**

After exploring the context of an alleged anti-cruelty law in seventeenth century Ireland, Bierne then moves across the pond to fledgling New England for an equally intriguing look at the state of human-animal relationships in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Bidding farewell to all that was familiar to them, the Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts in 1620. Many of them arrived from areas in England where the previously mentioned husbandry principles had been embraced. The colonists set to work establishing a complicated network of extraction and appropriation of natural resources as well as a thriving economy based on trade in cattle, pigs and sheep. Bierne points to the importance of the trade in animals as part of the impetus for regulation of human-animal relationships. These regulations (and other non-related laws) varied from town to town and soon created a complex hodgepodge of ad hoc rules.

Contributing further to the confusion, large numbers of cattle roamed unattended, trespassing not only upon other colonist's land but also onto land inhabited by Native Americans. These free-roaming animals frequently caused damage to property by destroying fences and eating or trampling crops. In 1635, while Ireland was seeing a finalized version of prohibitions and regulations regarding aspects of animal husbandry, the call was sent out by the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony to institute a body of laws, based on the concept of the Magna Carta. After several years of permutations and political (to say nothing of religious) wrangling, Massachusetts Bay Colony instituted a mixture of common law, equity, Mosaic commandments and localized input entitled Body of Liberties in 1641.

Two particular mentions of interest specific to the study of animal cruelty and human-animal relationships are found within the Body of Liberties. Liberties 92 and 93 contain language ostensibly pertaining to animal cruelty. Liberty 92 states, "No man shall exercise any Tirranny or Cruelty towards any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use." Liberty 92 is, of course, notable because it is considered the first piece of anti-cruelty legislation established in America.

Liberty 93 pertains specifically to the treatment of cattle, prohibiting cattle from being led or driven "from place to place that is far of, so that they be weary, or hungry, or fall sick, or lambe" - as well as requiring that they be rested "for a competent time."

In an examination of concerns arising around these Liberties, one of the first questions addresses the vague wording -- for example, what was considered tyranny or cruelty? And what of animals kept for human use but usually considered wild animals? A later Liberty entitled Liberties of Servants also discussed cruelty and tyranny-- were servants and animals in the same category? When seeking to answer these questions, or at least attempting to discern a viable interpretation, importance should again be placed on some particular aspects of the historical and social period and especially the Puritan hierarchy, which unequivocally placed God at the top, with "brute Creatures" at the bottom. While non-human animals were

on the lowest rung of the hierarchy, the Body of Liberties placed obligations upon human members of society to ensure that their non-human counterparts were treated with some measure of kindness based on their belief system. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the Puritanical religious and cultural system had strict social rules. With all of the constrictions inherent in Puritan society, it is unsurprising that one of the rationales for instituting laws like Liberty 92 may have been to further serve as controls on unwanted behavior, especially where undesirable behavior intersected with practices involving animals, as in the case of cockfighting.

However, when those directives failed, there was a probability that enforcement and punishment would ensue via the criminal justice system. An examination of extant resources from the period informs our understanding of how the term animal cruelty was interpreted by the Massachusetts Bay Colony: Bierne surveys several early modern colonial American records and finds that despite challenges with its indexing system, the Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County Massachusetts 1636-1683 (QCEC) holds the most promise in terms of revealing contemporary ideas of animal cruelty.

Much of the mention of animals in the QCEC, notes Bierne, is simply due to the fact that the economy of the society at the time was based in large part on the aforementioned agricultural relationships-- relationships which obviously featured animals, especially horses, cattle, pigs and poultry to a considerable extent. The QCEC is very limited in revealing many of the facts surrounding the cases, often simply providing one-line dispositions of the case without any further evidence or information. Most of the potential cruelty cases are viewed through the lens of property offenses. Bierne found that between 1636 and 1683 there were fourteen out of approximately three thousand cases dealing with animal cruelty, or approximately one conviction for cruelty in Essex County every three years. In these cases, the defendants were accused of using knives, guns and stakes to torment, wound, maim and kill a wide variety of animals, including dogs, horses, pigs and lambs. Sanctions for those who were guilty of infractions included warnings, fines, an order of restitution, incarceration, whippings and disenfranchisement.

As Bierne points out, in early modern culture, animal cruelty was embedded in everyday life and generally not recognized as problematic by Puritans and their contemporaries. Bierne rightly states that the most significant cruelties were found in the eating habits of the Puritans, including brutal recipes for softening and live roasting various birds, eel and pigs. While roasting live animals has fallen out of favor in the past four

hundred centuries, Bierne's assertion that the kitchen was the destination for the end result of tremendous cruelty still holds true in our modern culture.

Bierne's final comment in this chapter is that Liberty 92 did not represent a predicate for either a more humane worldview or a series of anti-cruelty laws that sought to protect animals for their own sakes. According to Bierne's impressions, it failed on this account because it was enacted with only an eye toward human dominion over animals and, likely, human dominion over fellow humans. While this may be accurate, argument can be made that if the law stopped someone from treating animal cruelly, the intent in crafting the law matters less than the fact that a cruel interaction was avoided. As Bierne clearly illustrates, the Puritans lived in a society in which they were heavily involved in use of animals for agricultural use, as well as food. While our society continues its slow evolution in treatment and attitudes toward non-human animals, a first step was necessary, despite the imperfect launching point.

### **Views on Animal Sexual Assault**

The book's next chapter moves toward an examination of bestiality, referred to by Bierne as animal sexual assault. Bierne deserves credit for crafting a thoughtful treatment on a topic that much of society still regards with varying levels of distain and distaste.

We are first presented with an overview of historical prosecutions of animal sexual assault as well as a survey of some well-known examples in print and film, including cultural, biblical and mythological references such as Leviticus, and a historical treatment of bestiality in Sweden and England.

Strict religious prohibitions on animal sexual assault and other aspects of sexual behaviors guided most Western societies, but with the advent of the mid-nineteenth century, a "drift to tolerance" arose, in which a number of previously non-reproductive sexual practices no longer received strict censure and the shift of social control around animal sexual assault moved from religion and criminal law to a medico-psychiatric process. Within this shift, there has emerged a stereotype of the individuals who engage in animal sexual assault as diseased individuals ("sickos," in popular vernacular) who are simpletons and may have psychopathic personalities. This drift to tolerance is described by Bierne as being influenced by a pseudoliberal stance of tolerance.

To illustrate the pseudoliberal stance of tolerance, Bierne points to a Peter Singer article entitled "Heavy Petting," a review of *Dearest Pet*-- a book about sexual relations between humans and animals. In answer to "Heavy Petting," Bierne makes a number of points relative to the review. The first is that Singer's review accepts that animal sexual assault is both common and legitimate in all societies. Bierne later discusses the problems regarding a lack of statistical confidence, and that existence of a fact does not necessarily legitimize it. The second problem, yet again, is one of definition-- what exactly is bestiality? Without a clear definition, it may be hard for some to realize when it has occurred. Finally, Bierne notes that it is challenging to wrap one's mind around Singer's view that sex with animals without cruelty may not be not wrongful. This, he points out, seems to give assent to animal sexual assault without attendant cruelty, and Bierne then properly enquires whether we should also tolerate the actions of rapists and molesters if their actions are not accompanied by cruelty. This is an interesting argument that Bierne might have expanded upon, with discussion of intent. Is it acts only that incorporate cruelty, or must there also be assaultive behavior? Author Carol Adams asserts that bestiality is always sexual coercion, a viewpoint Bierne embraces but does not completely agree with based on his ideas about consent and power dynamics in sexual congress.

Bierne also reviews the role of sexist and speciesist language. Problems remain with society's use of reductionist language, especially where males continue to use language to both distance and elevate themselves until the others are "less than me." These points support an unfortunate move toward legitimatizing sexual assaults on both animals and women.

Bierne undertakes an ambitious project in this chapter identifying and creating of a typology of animal sexual assault. Bierne divided his typology into four categories: commodification, adolescent sexual experimentation, aggravated cruelty and zoophilia. Commodification occurs when animal sexual assault is packaged for sale in a market. This includes a wide range of activities (and therefore markets) including human and non-human animal sexual interaction, crush videos, and in one instance a chimpanzee who performed a striptease at parties. Adolescent sexual experimentation is arguably an extremely prevalent form of animal sexual assault. Bierne notes that the individual incidents vary greatly according to social contexts and may occur individually or in groups. Aggravated cruelty refers to a heightened level of cruelty and this discussion includes some appalling examples of rape and assault against animals. Zoophilia is the term given when animals are favored partners for human sexual activity.



Within zoophilia, three main viewpoints are of import: those who engage in the abuse (“zoos”), psychiatric professionals and sexology professional. Zoos themselves are convinced that they are justified in their assaultive behavior because their relationship involves mutual love and, in their opinion, consent and enjoyment. They employ a vocabulary similar to people who engage in incest and pedophilia and use language to justify their assaultive behavior as well as imply explicitly and implicitly that theirs is a legitimate preference and they are misunderstood and in fact suffer from discrimination. Zoophilia is classified by the American Psychiatric Association as a form of paraphilia, though Bierne seems to caution against taking things at face value and again urges his readers to delve deeper, looking into various statistics for a clearer picture. As with other areas of this book, specifically the section discussing interhuman violence, Bierne addresses the issues that exist regarding challenges in finding clear, accurate data. While the Internet has been utilized by sexologists to gather information, Bierne notes that there are inherent methodological problems associated with gathering evidence in this way.

Bierne calls for a further exploration of the typology that he has devised, and he notes that there are elements in which multiple categories of the typology can overlap, for example, use of what is termed a rape stand by breeders of fighting pit bulls (this type of stand is used because a premium is put on females that are so mean that they might attack a male who attempted to mate with them). Bierne wonders, as all of us must, if this is not an example of both aggravated cruelty as well as commodification?

Finally, Bierne reiterates an important problem in the study and analysis of animal sexual assault – how to obtain comprehensive information on its prevalence? Bierne finds problematic both Alfred Kinsey’s data from his landmark survey on sexuality as well as online sexology surveys, believing that they capture skewed data (or suffer from skewed interpretation). While some information can be gleaned from studies of criminal law, prosecutions for bestiality have generally been very rare, and problems arise in analyzing the reporting practices and witness accounts. Bierne’s research reveals that there are many problems when it comes to animal sexual assault, such as animosity between parties and contemporary social and legal constructs. The prevalence and character of animal sexual assaults remains a difficult research subject for a variety of reasons, including the nature of the crime, the fact that victims cannot communicate with humans in a clear, detailed manner regarding their experiences and, of course, problems with existing data.

## **Why Do We Only Love Some Horses?**

Horses receive special attention in the fourth chapter, entitled “Horse Maiming and the Sport of Kings.” The chapter opens with a vivid description of the moment in time when the public was fascinated by Barbaro, the famous colt who collapsed at the Preakness after injuring his leg. Whisked off by ambulance, the colt had multiple surgeries in order to attempt to save his life. Well-wishes from the public poured in as the media continued to provide frequent updates on his status. His story continued to captivate the public for months afterward until he was euthanized eight months later. We are asked to question where the line may be between human-perpetrated injuries to horses: when are horses seen as victims and when are humans seen as offenders?

Bierne focuses in particular on a series of unsolved brutal horse maimings that occurred in Britain in the 1990s. The assaults of twenty-seven horses who were cut, slashed and burned both internally and externally in Hampshire County, England between 1991 and 1993 are discussed in relation to moral panics. Every moral panic has specific individual factors that contribute to it but generally moral panics have four identifiable properties: (1.) identification as a social problem in need of a solution; (2.) a group of people who emerge as a vanguard of moral fitness who purport to attack the problem; (3.) the vanguard determines the severity of the problem and identifies victims and offenders, usually disseminated to the concerned society via mass media and (4.) call for agents of social control to identify and apprehend the offender(s) and reaffirm the moral values of the community.

Within this context, Bierne provides important details surrounding the horse maimings in Hampshire. Horse maimings in the England are not unheard of, and occurred not infrequently in the past as both a form of social rebellion (in cases of horsekeepers assaulting their masters’ horses) and disputes between craftspeople (often taking out personal differences on their adversary’s donkeys and horses).

One of the most compelling facts about this particular moral panic is that while it was certainly identified as a social problem needing to be solved, and a vanguard did indeed emerge, it had as its central characters animals and not humans. The victimhood in this moral panic was generally ascribed to animals by the vanguard, in stark contrast to the role of animals in previous moral panics as passive agents (i.e. witchcraft trials and mad cow disease) -- though often the owners of the horses saw themselves as victims. Further analysis informs the role of the media, and excerpts from *The Times* are provided by Bierne. These excerpts

reveal a level of explicitness in describing the assaults that further influenced considerations of the moral panic's newsworthiness.

Of particular note, and a theme that is woven throughout the book (and one familiar to most animal advocates) is the dichotomy inherent in the social reaction to the Hampshire maimings, which were universally regarded as morally reprehensible, and the run-of-the-mill, day-to-day treatment of working horses. For illustration, Bierne provides us with information and sad statistics surrounding horse racing, and throughout the chapter sprinkles references to the public show of support for Barbaro as well as the fate of Lauren's Charm, a filly who collapsed during a race and died without fanfare days after Barbaro's injury. Her end was far more typical of that of a racehorse - unnoticed and unheralded. One campaign, Animal Aid's "Racehorse Deathwatch," estimates that British racetracks see 375 deaths annually; an expert states that fatal muscle and bone injuries occurred 0.65 times per 1,000 starts in England and 1.5 times per 1,000 starts in the United States. And what of the animals "retired" from the horseracing industry? Most are sent overseas to slaughterhouses, despite restrictions on shipping horses abroad. Bierne does an excellent job in pointing out the hypocrisies surrounding attitudes and treatment of horses in our society.

### **Exploring the Link and the Progression Thesis**

Throughout the Hampshire County horsemaimings, commenters steadily maintained that only sick and disturbed individuals would purposefully injure horses. Chapter 5 explores this specific idea, namely, that a person who perpetuates violence upon an animal is predisposed to violence against humans. This concept that there is a link between violent behavior against humans and animals is so well accepted that it is known simply as "the link." Bierne calls the idea that there is a causal relationship between animal abuse and interhuman violence "the progression thesis," adapting it to usage here from the term's earlier usage in other areas of sociology. For those of us accustomed to hearing about the link, the detailed examination of the progression thesis is elucidating. Bierne is primarily interested in how strong the association is and if there is a strong connection, how is it explained?

Determining these answers from existing data is challenging. For example, the FBI's annual crime report, reporting on crime data throughout the U.S., has no specific categories or entries regarding crimes involving animal abuse. Empirical data, including interviews with human victims of abuse, reports of animal abuse in self-reporting contexts, reporting by

veterinarians, animal control officers, animal shelters, women's shelters and police, does support the idea that companion animal abuse can occur disproportionately in situations where family violence exists. Additional complicating factors include gaps in data, definitional ambiguity in the term animal abuse, unwillingness of subjects to report abuse, and the sensitivity and nature of the way the survey is designed and conducted. Some definitions of animal abuse may leave out clearly abusive situations. A more sensitive and nuanced definition of abuse that includes less severe abuse than society traditionally thinks of such as hitting, tormenting, bothering or being cruel to an animal would likely reveal deeper connections. Bierne finds that his review of existing evidence neither confirms nor refutes the progression thesis; he does not find anything specifically dispositive.

The first portion of the progression thesis proposes that those who are abusive toward are more likely than those who do not to act abusively toward humans. Why might children who engage in assaultive behavior be disproportionately male, anti-social and potentially have mental or characterological challenges? Bierne reviews that available data and finds it is unsatisfactory, serving to open up more questions instead of supplying answers.

The second prong of the progression thesis is that those who act violently toward humans are more likely to assault animals. Bierne walks us through an analysis of this prong and the applicable available data, concluding that there is both non-confirming data as well as counterfactual arguments. Bierne is unsure whether or to what extent that these counterfactual cases weaken the progression thesis. While there are many anecdotal accounts of serial killers who have engaged in animal abuse, the gathering of precise data continues to challenge those studying the link, and specifically those studying the progression thesis. However, Bierne sneaks in an interesting query toward the end of his progression thesis discussion: why do we infer that if an adolescent is fascinated with dead animals that he or she is a potential serial killer and not a potential zoologist or forensic scientist? For example, noted naturalist E.O. Wilson used to kill insects regularly and with great zeal during his youth.

A look at the progression from animal abuse to interhuman violence would not be complete with an examination of how our society views acts of violence and assault toward animals. This analysis begins with a brief look at interhuman violence: one man's killing spree is considered murder but historically, mass killings ordered by governments in the name of God, country and empire are not.

Parallel to this observation, practices that society would consider animal abuse if committed against a cat, dog or other companion animal, for example, are committed regularly against other animals-- namely those killed for food. The annual slaughter of nearly

10 billion chickens in the United States, to name only one example, does not fit particularly well with the image that most people in society have of themselves as compassionate individuals who believe that animal cruelty is untenable. The vast majority of society engages in practices that directly support animal assault at every meal. The humans who engage in directly in the abusive practices, namely the slaughterhouse workers, suffer a significant emotional and physical toll. Their jobs are violent and leave them open to injury. Bierne does not discuss the wide range of animals that are abused during a hunt, for entertainment in zoos and circuses, or in medical and product testing, but the same hypocrisy he points out regarding societal views of these practices as they relate to animal cruelty holds true for these animals as well.

Bierne closes by suggesting that a plausible corollary to the progression thesis may be that children who have been taught compassion for animals may be more likely to become sensitive and gentle adults. This is an idea that merits further exploration, especially as the number of humane education programs continues to grow, though, unfortunately, the opportunities for presenting them are significantly reduced. School districts around the U.S. are restricting curricula, placing tremendous pressure on teachers to teach almost exclusively to standardized tests, and basic related arts programs are either squeezed into shorter time slots or no longer offered at all. If an engaged and morally competent populace is a true goal, the reduction in the scope of our children's education is extremely counterproductive.

## **Conclusion**

Legal scholars and other observers believe that our society is making slow but steady progress – but progress nonetheless – in shifting the way we relate to, care for, interact with, and protect animals. While vast swaths of cruel behaviors remain prevalent in our society, chief among them the systematic confinement, transport and slaughter of billions of animals for food per year in the U.S., social trends for certain animals (i.e. teacup pigs, dogs that fit into one's purse), exploitation of animals in labs, zoos, theme parks and circuses and the continuation of criminally liable human-on-animal assaults, there are bright spots as well. The creation of animal law committees throughout the United States and Canada, the formation of an animal protection litigation section at one of the U.S.'s most mainstream groups, The Humane Society of the United States, and the numerous animal-related non-profits who maintain government relations divisions is particularly heartening. In fact, in

2010, The Animal Legal Defense Fund's annual conference featured a panel discussion on defining the second wave of animal law. While there are many issues that continue to be of import and will challenge animal advocates for years to come, *Confronting Animal Abuse* is an excellent resource for context and information. Bierne's research and writing supports animal advocates as they work to safeguard animals as well as serving as a way for us to measure our progress.

## **Critical Theory and Animal Liberation**

John Sanbonmatsu (Ed) (2011) *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation*. Rowan and Littlefield.

### **Reviewed by Steve Romanin<sup>1</sup>**

“Critical Theory and Animal Liberation”, edited by John Sanbonmatsu knits together a wide range of intersectional and interdisciplinary voices from across the spectrum of Critical Animal Studies. Nuanced and multifaceted, this text succeeds in applying critical perspectives in political and social thought to the problem of our relationship with other animals. In doing so, it articulates a way forward in both the “left” political tradition (which has hitherto failed to give animals much serious consideration) and the animal liberation movement (which has remained largely outside wider anti-capitalist political struggles).

Sanbonmatsu’s introduction is beautifully crafted, beginning with a brief, albeit vivid exploration of the problem of animal oppression. He takes special note of the intersections of oppression between both human and nonhuman animals and makes clear his view that tackling these interrelated problems requires a renewed socialist project – one that includes, within the sphere of political and hence moral consideration, the interests of other animals. His call is direct and uncompromising and sets up both the tone and goals of the chapters that follow.

Central to this purpose of this text is the reinterpretation and reconfiguring of both classical and contemporary Marxist theories around animal issues. To this end, Part 1 of the book includes three articles that reframe classical Marxist notions of commodity fetishism around our relationships with animals. While both Karen Davis and Carl Bogg’s contributions are excellent, Dennis Soron’s “Road Kill: Commodity Fetishism and Structural Violence” stands out. Soron presents a thoughtful application of the theoretical underpinnings of Marx’s commodity fetishism to the oft-ignored (or even, as the chapter demonstrates, ridiculed and commodified) matter of “road kill”. Soron entreats readers to consider the interrelated fetishism of both the automobile and the pulverized corpses of the animal victims of encroaching human sprawl.

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Part 2 brings into sharp relief the theoretical contributions of contemporary Marxist thinkers, best exemplified by the Frankfurt School and, notably, Horkheimer and Adorno – whose examination of animal oppression (explored principally through the desubjectification of the “animal” other) is both clearly laid out for the reader and further probed by such authors as Ted Benton, Renzo Llorente, Christina Gerhardt and Eduardo Mendieta. Although this section may be less accessible to non-academic readers, it nevertheless avoids lapsing into the trap of “baroque” theory-for-theory’s-sake scholarship. Each author takes occasion to demonstrate the real-world applications of their respective philosophical projects.

Having the distinction of being the only section to include a piece of creative writing – a poem entitled “Neuroscience” by Susan Benston which draws heavily upon the author’s correspondence with a vivisector – Part 3 examines the ideological and psychological roots of speciesism. Here, Zipporah Weisberg’s “Animal Repression: Speciesism as Pathology” offers a unique and refreshing approach to theorizing speciesism, adapting Freudian psychoanalytic theories of repression to the way in which empathy for animal others is systematically denied. The highlight of this collection, Part 4, offers an exploration of some key sites of anti-animal liberation resistance from both outside and inside the movement. The most thought-provoking of these, John Sorenson’s “Constructing Extremists, Rejecting Compassion: Ideological Attacks on Animal Advocacy from Right and Left” analyzes key discursive texts from both the political (and religious) “Right” and “Left”, demonstrating the tangible hostility toward animal interests on both sides. His analysis offers a unique picture of the dominant perceptions of the animal liberation movement from both political poles. It is at once inspiring – where the “Right”, motivated by a palpable fear, has vilified and constructed liberationists as “terrorists” and “enemies of humanity” – and, at the same time, discouraging – with the otherwise social justice-seeking “Left” continuing to ignore (and even devaluing) the oppression of other animals. Also in this section, an essay by Vasile Stănescu titled “‘Green’ Eggs and Ham?: The Myth of Sustainable Meat and the Fluidity of ‘Animal’ Domination”, examines and problematizes “locavorism” and the manufactured conflict between proponents of local, sustainable food and veganism (analyzing authors such as Michael Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver). This piece is a long-overdue critique of some troubling currents within the body of ecological food politics that seem to perpetuate sexism and racism as well as celebrating the domination of other animals. Finishing up this section are pieces by Carol J. Adams, who critiques PETA’s objectification of female bodies and warns of sexual inequality within the animal liberation movement and Josephine Donovan,



who promulgates the adoption of an empathetic ethics of care to guide in our treatment of other animals.

Because of the wide range of essays, all with their own unique critiques and theoretical starting points, each and every reader will be able to easily identify their own specific sites of interest in this text. While Part 1: “Commodity Fetishism and Structural Violence” and Part 4: “Problems in Praxis” will appeal most to social scientists, philosophers and more theoretically-minded scholars will undoubtedly be drawn to Parts 2: “Animals, Marxism and the Frankfurt School” and 3: “Speciesism and Ideologies of Domination”. While each section offers a variety of distinctive and differing perspectives, they nevertheless coalesce into a cohesive reconceptualization of the question of the animal within the critical or “left” tradition in political and social thought.

This text is not, however, beyond critique. Missing from its pages are any overt critical race or queer theory perspectives – palpable and glaring omissions, given the extent to which the book attempts to enmesh various ecofeminist, Marxist, poststructural and posthumanist theories. Indeed, the omissions are made all the more obvious specifically because of the wide breadth of other perspectives offered. A common critique of Marxist or explicitly class-based analyses, the voices of queer theorists and critical race theorists are often left out of these debates and it is especially troubling to see that same pattern emerging here – in this otherwise cutting-edge text.

Nevertheless, “Critical Theory and Animal Liberation” is an invaluable text for scholars and students of a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. In particular, this book is a must-have for anyone studying or writing within the burgeoning field of Critical Animal Studies. Perhaps the most compelling achievement of this text is its instrumental role in opening up new debates around critical, “left” classical and contemporary Marxist and posthumanist thought all while sidestepping the popular currents in apolitical, mainstream animal studies. In addition, this book offers a first ambitious step into an uncharted territory – moving away from the liberal ethics on which most animal “rights” theory has, since its inception, been built.

## JCAS: AUTHOR GUIDELINES

### Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established for the purpose of fostering academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies are increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker take a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy.

JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. This journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists to address the important topic of animal liberation. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal for the purpose of facilitating communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal rights movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

### Suggested Topics

Papers are welcomed on any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Because a major goal of the *Institute for Critical Animal Studies* is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytic thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminist, activism and academia, Continental philosophy or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention. The following are a few topic suggestions:

### The reviewing process

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication. All submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

### Manuscript requirements

The manuscript should be in MS WORD format, in 1.5 line spacing and 12 point Times New Roman. Good electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should be run through an American English spell check prior to submission.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words, and have limited endnotes. In exceptional circumstances JCAS will consider publishing extended essays (up to 15,000 words). Authors should supply a brief **abstract** of the paper (of no more than 250 words).

A brief **autobiographical** note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation, e-mail address, and full contact details.

**References** to other publications must be in Harvard style and carefully checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency.

You should cite publications in the text: (Best, 2006) using the first named author's name or (Best and Nocella, 2006) citing

both names of two, or (Best et al., 2006), when there are three or more authors. At the end of the paper a reference list in alphabetical order should be supplied:

*For books:* Surname, Initials (year), Title of Book, Publisher, Place of publication. e.g. Gray, J. (2002), *Straw Dogs*, Granta Books: London

*For book chapters:* Surname, Initials (year), "Chapter title", Editor's Surname, Initials (Ed.), Title of Book, Publisher, Place of publication, pages. E.g. Greenbrier, T. (2006) "Against Civilization, For Reconnection to Life!", in Best, S. and Nocella, A.J. (Eds) *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, AK Press, Oakland, pp. 198-203.

*For journals:* Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", Journal Name, volume, number, pages. e.g. Cudworth, E. (2008), "'Most Farmers Prefer Blondes': The dynamics of anthroparchy in Animas' becoming meat", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, pp. 32-45.

*For published conference proceedings:* Surname, Initials (year of publication), "Title of paper", in Surname, Initials (Ed.), Title of published proceeding which may include place and date(s) held, Publisher, Place of publication, Page numbers.

*For unpublished conference proceedings:* Surname, Initials (year), "Title of paper", paper presented at Name of Conference, date of conference, place of conference, available at: URL if freely available on the internet (accessed date).

*For working papers:* Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", working paper [number if available], Institution or organization, Place of organization, date.

*For encyclopedia entries* (with no author or editor): Title of Encyclopedia (year) "Title of entry", volume, edition, Title of Encyclopedia, Publisher, Place of publication, pages.

*For newspaper articles* (authored): Surname, Initials (year), "Article title", Newspaper, date, pages.

*For newspaper articles* (non-authored): Newspaper (year), "Article title", date, pages.

*For electronic sources:* if available online the full URL should be supplied at the end of the reference, as well as a date that the resource was accessed.

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