19

CAROL J. ADAMS

The Sexual Politics of Meat*

Carol Adams, a graduate of Yale Divinity School, is a feminist author and an antiviolence activist. In the 1970s, she co-founded a hotline for battered women and directed a rural ministry program that worked to combat issues of poverty, racism and sexism in rural New York. Adams is internationally known for studies of the links between forms of violence against humans and those against other animals. She has written several influential essays on feminism, animal rights, and the relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence, as well as books on vegetarianism and the connection between sexual violence and meat-eating. The extract reproduced below is from Adams's ground-breaking book *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, in which she describes how sexism, racism, and classism are implicated in patterns of meat consumption. In this extract Adams explains that many societies reserve meat for the powerful (privileged men) and soldiers in times of war, while less powerful groups have had to be content with consuming fruits, vegetables, and grains. On the other hand, during times when meat is plentiful it is expected that all will consume it. Thus, she argues that meat has been equated with male dominance and privileged masculinity and has become ascendant in our culture over types of food not derived from the flesh of animals, and "[t]he foods associated with second-class citizens are considered to be second-class protein." In this extract and in her larger body of work Adams demonstrates how the marginalization of oppressed groups of humans and other animals are mutually reinforced conceptually. The next reading by David Nibert examines a substantive case of the linking of these forms of oppression.

MYTH FROM THE BUSHMAN:

In the early times men and women lived apart, the former hunting animals exclusively, the latter pursuing a gathering existence. Five of the men, who were out hunting, being careless creatures, let their fire go out. The women, who were careful and orderly, always kept their fire going. The men, having killed a springbok, became desperate for means to cook it, so one of their number set out to get fire, crossed the river and met one of the women gathering seeds. When he asked her for some fire, she invited him to the feminine camp. While he was there she said, "You are very hungry.

> Just wait until I pound up these seeds and I will boil them and give you some." She made him some porridge. After he had eaten it, he said, "Well, it's nice food so I shall just stay with you." The men who were left waited and wondered. They still had the springbok and they still had no fire. The second man set out, only to be tempted by female cooking, and to take up residence in the camp of the women. The same thing happened to the third man. The two men left were very frightened. They suspected something terrible had happened to their comrades. They cast the divining bones but the omens were favorable. The fourth man set out timidly, only to end by joining his comrades. The last man became very frightened indeed and besides by now the springbok had rotted. He took his bow and arrows and ran away.†

I left the British Library and my research on some women of the 1890s whose feminist, working-class newspaper advocated meatless diets, and went through the cafeteria line in a restaurant nearby. Vegetarian food in hand, I descended to the basement. A painting of Henry VIII eating a steak and kidney pie greeted my gaze. On either side of the consuming Henry were portraits of his six wives and other women. However, they were not eating steak and kidney pie, nor anything else made of meat. Catherine of Aragon held an apple in her hands. The Countess of Mar had a turnip, Anne Boleyn – red grapes, Anne of Cleaves – a pear, Jane Seymour – blue grapes, Catherine Howard – a carrot, Catherine Parr – a cabbage.

People with power have always eaten meat. The aristocracy of Europe consumed large courses filled with every kind of meat while the laborer consumed the complex carbohydrates. Dietary habits proclaim class distinctions, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity.

MALE IDENTIFICATION AND MEAT EATING

Meat-eating societies gain male identification by their choice of food, and meat textbooks heartily endorse this association. *The Meat We Eat* proclaims meat to be "A Virile and Protective Food," thus "a liberal meat supply has always been associated with a happy and virile people."[1] *Meat Technology* informs us that "the virile Australian race is a typical example of heavy meat-eaters."[2] Leading gourmands refer "to the virile ordeal of spooning the brains directly out of a barbecued calf's head."[3] *Virile: of or having the characteristics of an adult male,* from *vir* meaning *man.* Meat eating measures individual and societal virility.

Meat is a constant for men, intermittent for women, a pattern painfully observed in famine situations today. Women are starving at a rate disproportionate to [that of] men. Lisa Leghorn and Mary Roodkowsky surveyed this phenomenon in their book *Who Really Starves? Women and World Hunger.* Women, they conclude, engage in deliberate self-deprivation, offering men the "best" foods at the expense of their own nutritional needs. For instance, they tell us that "Ethiopian women and girls of all classes are obliged to prepare two meals, one for the males and a second, often containing no meat or other substantial protein, for the females."[4]

In fact, men's protein needs are less than those of pregnant and nursing women and the disproportionate distribution of the main protein source occurs when women's need for protein is the greatest. Curiously, we are now being told that one should eat meat (or fish, vegetables, chocolate, and salt) at least six weeks before becoming pregnant if one wants a boy. But if a girl is desired, no meat please, rather milk, cheese, nuts, beans, and cereals.[5]

Fairy tales initiate us at an early age into the dynamics of eating and sex roles. The king in his countinghouse ate four-and-twenty blackbirds in a pie (originally four-and-twenty naughty boys) while the Queen ate bread and honey. Cannibalism in fairy tales is generally a male activity, as Jack, after climbing his beanstalk,

quickly learned. Folktales of all nations depict giants as male and "fond of eating human flesh."[6] Witches – warped or monstrous women in the eyes of a patriarchal world – become the token female cannibals.

A Biblical example of the male prerogative for meat rankled Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leading nineteenth-century feminist, as can be seen by her terse comment on Leviticus 6 in *The Woman's Bible:* "The meat so delicately cooked by the priests, with wood and coals in the altar, in clean linen, no woman was permitted to taste, only the males among the children of Aaron."[7]

Most food taboos address meat consumption and they place more restrictions on women than on men. The common foods forbidden to women are chicken, duck, and pork. Forbidding meat to women in nontechnological cultures increases its prestige. Even if the women raise the pigs, as they do in the Solomon Islands, they are rarely allowed to eat the pork. When they do receive some, it is at the dispensation of their husbands. In Indonesia "flesh food is viewed as the property of the men. At feasts, the principal times when meat is available, it is distributed to households according to the men in them ... The system of distribution thus reinforces the prestige of the men in society."[8]

Worldwide this patriarchal custom is found. In Asia, some cultures forbid women from consuming fish, seafood, chicken, duck, and eggs. In equatorial Africa, the prohibition of chicken to women is common. For example, the Mbum Kpau women do not eat chicken, goat, partridge, or other game birds. The Kufa of Ethiopia punished women who ate chicken by making them slaves, while the Walamo "put to death anyone who violated the restriction of eating fowl."

Correspondingly, vegetables and other non-meat foods are viewed as women's food. This makes them undesirable to men. The Nuer men think that eating eggs is effeminate. In other groups men require sauces to disguise the fact that they are eating women's foods. "Men expect to have meat sauces to go with their porridge and will sometimes refuse to eat sauces made of greens or other vegetables, which are said to be women's food."[9]

MEAT: FOR THE MAN ONLY

> There is no department in the store where good selling can do so much good or where poor selling can do so much harm as in the meat department. This is because most women do not consider themselves competent judges of meat quality and often buy where they have confidence in the meat salesman. (Hinman and Harris, *The Story of* Meat)[10]

In technological societies, cookbooks reflect the presumption that men eat meat. A random survey of cookbooks reveals that the barbecue sections of most cookbooks are addressed to men and feature meat. The foods recommended for a "Mother's Day Tea" do not include meat, but readers are advised that on Father's Day, dinner should include London Broil because "a steak dinner has unfailing popularity with fathers."[11] In a chapter on "Feminine Hospitality" we are directed to serve vegetables, salads and soups. The New *McCall's* Cookbook suggests that a man's favorite dinner is London Broil. A "Ladies' Luncheon" would consist of cheese dishes and vegetables, but no meat. A section of one cookbook entitled "For Men Only" reinforces the omnipresence of meat in men's lives. What is for men only? London Broil, cubed steak and beef dinner.[12]

Twentieth-century cookbooks only serve to confirm the historical pattern found in the nineteenth century, when British working-class families could not afford sufficient meat to feed the entire family. "For the man only" appears continually in many of the menus of these families when referring to meat. In adhering to the mythologies of a culture (men need meat; meat gives bull-like strength) the male "breadwinner" actually received the meat. Social historians report that the "lion's share" of meat went to the husband.

What then was for women during the nineteenth century? On Sundays they might have

a modest but good dinner. On the other days their food was bread with butter or drippings, weak tea, pudding, and vegetables. "The wife, in very poor families, is probably the worst-fed of the household," observed Dr. Edward Smith in the first national food survey of British dietary habits in 1863, which revealed that the major difference in the diet of men and women in the same family was the amount of meat consumed.[13] Later investigators were told that the women and children in one rural county of England, "eat the potatoes and look at the meat."[14]

Where poverty forced a conscious distribution of meat, men received it. Many women emphasized that they had saved the meat for their husbands. They were articulating the prevailing connections between meat eating and the male role: "I keep it for him; he *has* to have it." Sample menus for South London laborers "showed extra meat, extra fish, extra cakes, or a different quality of meat for the man." Women ate meat once a week with their children, while the husband consumed meat and bacon, "almost daily."

Early in the present century, the Fabian Women's group in London launched a four-year study in which they recorded the daily budget of thirty families in a working-class community. These budgets were collected and explained in a compassionate book, *Round About a Pound a Week.* Here is perceived clearly the sexual politics of meat: "In the household which spends 10s or even less on food, only one kind of diet is possible, and that is the man's diet. The children have what is left over. There must be a Sunday joint, or, if that be not possible, at least a Sunday dish of meat, in order to satisfy the father's desire for the kind of food he relishes, and most naturally therefore intends to have." More succinctly, we are told: "Meat is bought for the men" and the leftover meat from the Sunday dinner, "is eaten cold by him the next day."[15] Poverty also determines who carves the meat. As Cicely Hamilton discovered during this same period, women carve when they know there is not enough meat to go around.[16]

In situations of abundance, sex role assumptions about meat are not so blatantly expressed. For this reason, the diets of English upper-class women and men are much more similar than the diets of upper-class women and working-class women. Moreover, with the abundance of meat available in the United States as opposed to the restricted amount available in England, there has been enough for all, except when meat supplies were controlled. For instance, while enslaved black men received half a pound of meat per day, enslaved black women often found that they received little more than a quarter pound a day at times.[17] Additionally, during the wars of the twentieth century, the pattern of meat consumption recalled that of English nineteenth-century working-class families with one variation: the "worker" of the country's household, the soldier, got the meat; civilians were urged to learn how to cook without meat.

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF MEAT

The hearty meat eating that characterizes the diet of Americans and of the Western world is not only a symbol of male power, it is an index of racism. I do not mean racism in the sense that we are treating one class of animals, those that are not human beings, differently than we treat another, those that are, as Isaac Bashevis Singer uses the term in *Enemies: A Love Story:* "As often as Herman had witnessed the slaughter of animals and fish, he always had the same thought: in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right."[18] I mean racism as the requirement that power arrangements and customs that favor white people prevail, and that the acculturation of people of color to this standard includes the imposition of white habits of meat eating.

Two parallel beliefs can be traced in the white Western world's enactment of racism when the issue is meat eating. The first is that if the meat supply is limited, white people should get it; but if meat is plentiful all should eat it. This is

a variation on the standard theme of the sexual politics of meat. The hierarchy of meat protein reinforces a hierarchy of race, class, and sex.

Nineteenth-century advocates of white superiority endorsed meat as superior food. "Brain-workers" required lean meat as their main meal, but the "savage" and "lower" classes of society could live exclusively on coarser foods, according to George Beard, a nineteenth-century medical doctor who specialized in the diseases of middle-class people. He recommended that when white, civilized, middle-class men became susceptible to nervous exhaustion, they should eat more meat. To him, and for many others, cereals and fruits were lower than meat on the scale of evolution, and thus appropriate foods for the other races and white women, who appeared to be lower on the scale of evolution as well. Racism and sexism together upheld meat as white man's food.

Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, Beard proposed a corollary for foods; animal protein did to vegetable food what our evolution from the lower animals did for humans. Consequently:

> In proportion as man grows sensitive through civilization or through disease, he should diminish the quantity of cereals and fruits, which are far below him on the scale of evolution, and increase the quantity of animal food, which is nearly related to him in the scale of evolution, and therefore more easily assimilated.[19]

In his racist analysis, Beard reconciled the apparent contradiction of this tenet: "Why is it that savages and semi-savages are able to live on forms of food which, according to the theory of evolution, must be far below them in the scale of development?" In other words, how is it that people can survive very well without a great deal of animal protein? Because "savages" are

> little removed from the common animal stock from which they are derived. They are much nearer to the forms of life from which they feed than are the highly civilized brain-workers, and can therefore subsist on forms of life which would be most poisonous to us. Secondly, savages who feed on poor food are poor savages, and intellectually far inferior to the beef-eaters of any race.

This explanation – which divided the world into intellectually superior meat eaters and inferior plant eaters – accounted for the conquering of other cultures by the English:

> The rice-eating Hindoo and Chinese and the potato-eating Irish peasant are kept in subjection by the well-fed English. Of the various causes that contributed to the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, one of the chief was that for the first time he was brought face to face with the nation of beef-eaters, who stood still until they were killed.

Into the twentieth century the notion was that meat eating contributed to the Western world's preeminence. Publicists for a meat company in the 1940s wrote: "We know meat-eating races have been and are leaders in the progress made by mankind in its upward struggle through the ages."[20] They are referring to the "upward struggle" of the white race. One revealing aspect of this "upward struggle" is the charge of cannibalism that appeared during the years of colonization.

The word "cannibalism" entered our vocabulary after the "discovery" of the "New World." Derived from the Spaniards' mispronunciation of the name of the people of the Caribbean, it linked these people of color with the act. As Europeans explored the continents of North and South America and Africa, the indigenous peoples of those lands became accused of cannibalism – the ultimate savage act. Once labeled as cannibals, their defeat and enslavement at the hands of civilized, Christian whites became justifiable. W. Arens argues that the charge of cannibalism was part and parcel of the European expansion into other continents.[21]

Of the charges of cannibalism against the indigenous peoples, Arens found little independent verification. One well-known source of dubious testimony on cannibalism was then plagiarized by others claiming to be eyewitnesses. The eyewitnesses fail to describe just how they were able to escape the fate of consumption they

report witnessing. Nor do they explain how the language barrier was overcome enabling them to report verbatim conversations with "savages." In addition, their reports fail to maintain internal consistency.

One cause of cannibalism was thought to be lack of animal protein. Yet most Europeans themselves during the centuries of European expansion were not subsisting on animal protein every day. The majority of cultures in the world satisfied their protein needs through vegetables and grains. By charging indigenous peoples with cannibalism (and thus demonstrating their utterly savage ways, for they supposedly did to humans what Europeans only did to animals) one justification for colonization was provided.

Racism is perpetuated each time meat is thought to be the best protein source. The emphasis on the nutritional strengths of animal protein distorts the dietary history of most cultures in which complete protein dishes were made of vegetables and grains. Information about these dishes is overwhelmed by an ongoing cultural and political commitment to meat eating.

MEAT IS KING

During wartime, government rationing policies reserve the right to meat for the epitome of the masculine man: the soldier. With meat rationing in effect for civilians during World War II, the per capita consumption of meat in the army and navy was about two-and-a-half times that of the average civilian. Russell Baker observed that World War II began a "beef madness ... when richly fatted beef was force-fed into every putative American warrior."[22] In contrast to the recipe books for civilians that praised complex carbohydrates, cookbooks for soldiers contained variation upon variation of meat dishes. One survey conducted of four military training camps reported that the soldier consumed daily 131 grams of protein, 201 grams of fat, and 484 grams of carbohydrates.[23] Hidden costs of warring masculinity are to be found in the provision of male-defined foods to the warriors.

Women are the food preparers; meat has to be cooked to be palatable for people. Thus, in a patriarchal culture, just as our culture accedes to the "needs" of its soldiers, women accede to the dietary demands of their husbands, especially when it comes to meat. The feminist surveyors of women's budgets in the early twentieth century observed:

> It is quite likely that someone who had strength, wisdom, and vitality, who did not live that life in those tiny, crowded rooms, in that lack of light and air, who was not bowed down with worry, but was herself economically independent of the man who earned the money, could lay out his few shillings with a better eye to a scientific food value. It is quite as likely, however, that the man who earned the money would entirely refuse the scientific food, and demand his old tasty kippers and meat.[24]

A discussion of nutrition during wartime contained this aside: it was one thing, they acknowledged, to demonstrate that there were many viable alternatives to meat, "but it is another to convince a man who enjoys his beefsteak."[25] The male prerogative to eat meat is an external, observable activity implicitly reflecting a recurring fact: meat is a symbol of male dominance.

It has traditionally been felt that the working man needs meat for strength. A superstition analogous to homeopathic principles operates in this belief: in eating the muscle of strong animals, we will become strong. According to the mythology of patriarchal culture, meat promotes strength; the attributes of masculinity are achieved through eating these masculine foods. Visions of meat-eating football players, wrestlers, and boxers lumber in our brains in this equation. Though vegetarian weight lifters and athletes in other fields have demonstrated the equation to be fallacious, the myth remains: men are strong, men need to be strong, thus men need meat. The literal evocation of male power is found in the concept of meat.

Irving Fisher took the notion of "strength" from the definition of meat eating as long ago as 1906. Fisher suggested that strength be measured

by its lasting power rather than by its association with quick results, and compared meat-eating athletes with vegetarian athletes and sedentary vegetarians. Endurance was measured by having the participants perform in three areas: holding their arms horizontally for as long as possible, doing deep knee bends, and performing leg raises while lying down. He concluded that the vegetarians, whether athletes or not, had greater endurance than meat eaters. "Even the *maximum* record of the flesh-eaters was barely more than half the *average* for the flesh-abstainers."[26]

Meat is king: this noun describing meat is a noun denoting male power. Vegetables, a generic term meat eaters use for all foods that are not meat, have become as associated with women as meat is with men, recalling on a subconscious level the days of Woman the Gatherer. Since women have been made subsidiary in a male-dominated, meat-eating world, so has our food. The foods associated with second-class citizens are considered to be second-class protein. Just as it is thought a woman cannot make it on her own, so we think that vegetables cannot make a meal on their own, despite the fact that meat is only secondhand vegetables and vegetables provide, on the average, more than twice the vitamins and minerals of meat. Meat is upheld as a powerful, irreplaceable item of food. The message is clear: the vassal vegetable should content itself with its assigned place and not attempt to dethrone king meat. After all, how can one enthrone women's foods when women cannot be kings?

THE MALE LANGUAGE OF MEAT EATING

Men who decide to eschew meat eating are deemed effeminate; failure of men to eat meat announces that they are not masculine. Nutritionist Jean Mayer suggested that "the more men sit at their desks all day, the more they want to be reassured about their maleness in eating those large slabs of bleeding meat which are the last symbol of machismo."[27] The late Marty Feldman observed, "It has to do with the function of the male within our society. Football players drink beer because it's a man's drink, and eat steak because it's a man's meal. The emphasis is on 'man-sized portions,' 'hero' sandwiches; the whole terminology of meat-eating reflects this masculine bias."[28] Meat-and-potatoes men are our stereotypical strong and hearty, rough and ready, able males. Hearty beef stews are named "Man-handlers." Chicago Bears' head football coach, Mike Ditka, operates a restaurant that features "he-man food" such as steaks and chops.

One's maleness is reassured by the food one eats. During the 1973 meat boycott, men were reported to observe the boycott when dining out with their wives or eating at home, but when they dined without their wives, they ate London Broil and other meats.[29] When in 1955 Carolyn Steedman's mother "made a salad of grated vegetables for Christmas dinner," her husband walked out.[30]

GENDER INEQUALITY/SPECIES INEQUALITY

> The men ... were better hunters than the women, but only because the women had found they could live quite well on foods other than meat.
>
> Alice Walker, *The Temple of My Familiar*[31]

What is it about meat that makes it a symbol and celebration of male dominance? In many ways, gender inequality is built into the species inequality that meat eating proclaims, because for most cultures obtaining meat was performed by men. Meat was a valuable economic commodity; those who controlled this commodity achieved power. If men were the hunters, then the control of this economic resource was in their hands.

Women's status is inversely related to the importance of meat in nontechnological societies:

> The equation is simple: the more important meat is in their life, the greater relative dominance will the men command ... When meat becomes an important element within a more closely organized economic system so that there exist rules for its

> distribution, then men already begin to swing the levers of power ... Women's social standing is roughly equal to men's only when society itself is not formalized around roles for distributing meat.[32]

Peggy Sanday surveyed information on over a hundred nontechnological cultures and found a correlation between plant-based economies and women's power and animal-based economies and male power. "In societies dependent on animals, women are rarely depicted as the ultimate source of creative power." In addition, "When large animals are hunted, fathers are more distant, that is, they are not in frequent or regular proximity to infants."[33]

Characteristics of economies dependent mainly on the processing of animals for food include:

- sexual segregation in work activities, with women doing more work than men, but work that is less valued
- women responsible for child care
- the worship of male gods
- patrilineality

On the other hand, plant-based economies are more likely to be egalitarian. This is because women are and have been the gatherers of vegetable foods, and these are invaluable resources for a culture that is plant-based. In these cultures, men as well as women were dependent on women's activities. From this, women achieved autonomy and a degree of self-sufficiency. Yet, where women gather vegetable food and the diet is vegetarian, women do not discriminate as a consequence of distributing the staple. By providing a large proportion of the protein food of a society, women gain an essential economic and social role without abusing it.

Sanday summarizes one myth that links male power to control of meat:

> The Mundurucu believe that there was a time when women ruled and the sex roles were reversed, with the exception that women could not hunt. During that time women were the sexual aggressors and men were sexually submissive and did women's work. Women controlled the "sacred trumpets" (the symbols of power) and the men's houses. The trumpets contained the spirits of the ancestors who demanded ritual offerings of meat. Since women did not hunt and could not make these offerings, men were able to take the trumpets from them, thereby establishing male dominance.[34]

We might observe that the male role of hunter and distributer of meat has been transposed to the male role of eater of meat and conclude that this accounts for meat's role as symbol of male dominance. But there is much more to meat's role as symbol than this.

"VEGETABLE": SYMBOL OF FEMININE PASSIVITY?

Both the words "men" and "meat" have undergone lexicographical narrowing. Originally generic terms, they are now closely associated with their specific referents. Meat no longer means all foods; the word *man,* we realize, no longer includes *women.* Meat represents *the essence or principal part of something,* according to the *American Heritage Dictionary.* Thus we have the "meat of the matter," "a meaty question." To "beef up" something is to improve it. Vegetable, on the other hand, represents the least desirable characteristics: *suggesting or like a vegetable, as in passivity or dullness of existence, monotonous, inactive.* Meat is *something one enjoys or excels in,* vegetable becomes representative of someone who does not enjoy anything: a *person who leads a monotonous, passive, or merely physical existence.*

A complete reversal has occurred in the definition of the word vegetable. Whereas its original sense was to *be lively, active,* it is now viewed as dull, monotonous, passive. To vegetate is to lead a passive existence; just as to be feminine is to lead a passive existence. Once vegetables are viewed as women's food, then by association they become viewed as "feminine," passive.

Men's need to disassociate themselves from women's food (as in the myth in which the last Bushman flees in the direction opposite from women and their vegetable food) has been institutionalized in sexist attitudes toward vegetables and the use of the word *vegetable* to express criticism or disdain. Colloquially it is a synonym for a person severely brain-damaged or in a coma. In addition, vegetables are thought to have a tranquilizing, dulling, numbing effect on people who consume them, and so we can not possibly get strength from them. According to this perverse incarnation of Brillat-Savarin's theory that you are what you eat, to eat a vegetable is to become a vegetable, and by extension, to become woman-like.

Examples from the 1988 Presidential Campaign in which each candidate was belittled through equation with being a vegetable illustrates this patriarchal disdain for vegetables. Michael Dukakis was called "the Vegetable Plate Candidate."[35] Northern Sun Merchandising offered T-shirts that asked: "George Bush: Vegetable or Noxious Weed?" One could opt for a shirt that featured a bottle of ketchup and a picture of Ronald Reagan with this slogan: *"Nutrition Quiz:* Which one is the vegetable?"[36] [...]

The word vegetable acts as a synonym for women's passivity because women are supposedly like plants. Hegel makes this clear: "The difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because their development is more placid."[37] From this viewpoint, both women and plants are seen as less developed and less evolved than men and animals. Consequently, women may eat plants, since each is placid; but active men need animal meat.

MEAT IS A SYMBOL OF PATRIARCHY

In her essay, "Deciphering a Meal," the noted anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests that the order in which we serve foods, and the foods we insist on being present at a meal, reflect a taxonomy of classification that mirrors and reinforces our larger culture. A meal is an amalgam of food dishes, each a constituent part of the whole, each with an assigned value. In addition, each dish is introduced in precise order. A meal does not begin with a dessert, nor end with soup. All is seen as leading up to and then coming down from the entree that is meat. The pattern is evidence of stability. As Douglas explains, "The ordered system which is a meal represents all the ordered systems associated with it. Hence the strong arousal power of a threat to weaken or confuse that category."[38] To remove meat is to threaten the structure of the larger patriarchal culture.

Marabel Morgan, one expert on how women should accede to every male desire, reported in her *Total Woman Cookbook* that one must be careful about introducing foods that are seen as a threat: "I discovered that Charlie seemed threatened by certain foods. He was suspicious of my casseroles, thinking I had sneaked in some wheat germ or 'good-for-you' vegetables that he wouldn't like."[39]

Mary McCarthy's *Birds of America* provides a fictional illustration of the intimidating aspect to a man of a woman's refusal of meat. Miss Scott, a vegetarian, is invited to a NATO general's house for Thanksgiving. Her refusal of turkey angers the general. Not able to take this rejection seriously, as male dominance requires a continual recollection of itself on everyone's plate, the general loads her plate up with turkey and then ladles gravy over the potatoes as well as the meat, "thus contaminating her vegetable foods." McCarthy's description of his actions with the food mirrors the warlike customs associated with military battles. "He had seized the gravy boat like a weapon in hand-to-hand combat. No wonder they had made him a brigadier general – at least that mystery was solved." The general continues to behave in a bellicose fashion and after dinner proposes a toast in honor of an eighteen-year-old who has enlisted to fight in Vietnam. During the ensuing argument about war the general defends

the bombing of Vietnam with the rhetorical question: "What's so sacred about a civilian?" This upsets the hero, necessitating that the general's wife apologize for her husband's behavior: "Between you and me," she confides to him, "it kind of got under his skin to see that girl refusing to touch her food. I saw that right away."[40]

Male belligerence in this area is not limited to fictional military men. Men who batter women have often used the absence of meat as a pretext for violence against women. Women's failure to serve meat is not the cause of the violence against them. Yet, as a pretext for this violence, meat is hardly a trivial item. "Real" men eat meat. Failing to honor the importance of this symbol catalyzes male rage. As one woman battered by her husband reported, "It would start off with him being angry over trivial little things, a trivial little thing like cheese instead of meat on a sandwich."[41] Another woman stated, "A month ago he threw scalding water over me, leaving a scar on my right arm, all because I gave him a pie with potatoes and vegetables for his dinner, instead of fresh meat."[42]

Men who become vegetarians challenge an essential part of the masculine role. They are opting for women's food. How dare they? Refusing meat means a man is effeminate, a "sissy," a "fruit." Indeed, in 1836, the response to the vegetarian regimen of that day, known as Grahamism, charged that "Emasculation is the first fruit of Grahamism."[43]

Men who choose not to eat meat repudiate one of their masculine privileges. The *New York Times* explored this idea in an editorial on the masculine nature of meat eating. Instead of "the John Wayne type," epitome of the masculine meat eater, the new male hero is "Vulnerable" like Alan Alda, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Phil Donahue. They might eat fish and chicken, but not red meat. Alda and Donahue, among other men, have repudiated not only the macho role, but also macho food. According to the *Times,* "Believe me. The end of macho marks the end of the meat-and-potatoes man."[44] We won't miss either.

NOTES

† H. R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil* (New York: Pocket Books, 1964), p. 37.

1. P. Thomas Ziegler, *The Meat We Eat* (Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1966), pp. 5, 1.
2. Frank Gerrard, *Meat Technology: A Practical Textbook for Student and Butcher* (London: Northwood, 1945, 1977), p. 348.
3. Waverley Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (New York: William Morrow, 1976), p. 279.
4. Lisa Leghorn and Mary Roodkowsky, *Who Really Starves? Women and World Hunger* (New York: Friendship Press, 1977), p. 21.
5. Lloyd Shearer, "Intelligence Report: Does Diet Determine Sex?", summarizing the conclusions of Dr. Joseph Stolkowski, *Parade* 27 June 1982, p. 7.
6. William S. Baring-Gould and Ceil Baring-Gould, *The Annotated Mother Goose* (New York: Bramhall House, 1962), p. 103.
7. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible: Part I* (New York: European Publishing Co., 1898; Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974), p. 91.
8. Frederick J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances in the Old World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961, 1967), p. 12. The quotation in the following paragraph is found in Simoons, p. 73.
9. Bridget O'Laughlin, "Mediation of Contradiction: Why Mbum Women do not eat Chicken," *Woman, Culture, and Society,* ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 303.
10. Robert B. Hinman and Robert B. Harris, *The Story of Meat* (Chicago: Swift & Co., 1939, 1942), p. 191.
11. Sunset Books and Sunset Magazines, *Sunset Menu Cook Book* (Menlo Park, CA: Lane Magazine and Book Co., 1969), pp. 139, 140.
12. *Oriental Cookery* from ChunKing and Mazola Corn Oil.
13. Edward Smith, M.D., *Practical Dietary for Families, Schools and the Labouring Classes* (London: Walton and Maberly, 1864), p. 199.

14. Laura Oren, "The Welfare of Women in Laboring Families: England, 1860–1950," *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 3–4 (Winter/Spring 1973), p. 110, quoting B. S. Rowntree and May Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives: A Study of the Rural Labour Problem* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1913). The quotations in the following paragraph are from Oren, p. 110, quoting Rowntree and Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week.*
15. Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (G. Bell and Sons 1913, London: Virago Press, 1979), pp. 144 and 97.
16. Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (1909, London: The Women's Press, 1981), p. 75.
17. Todd L. Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 91.
18. Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Enemies: A Love Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 257.
19. George M. Beard, M. D., *Sexual Neurasthenia (Nervous Exhaustion) Its Hygiene, Causes, Symptoms and Treatment with a Chapter on Diet for the Nervous* (New York: E. B. Treat & Co., 1898, New York: Arno Press, 1972). This and succeeding quotations are found on pp. 272–78.
20. Hinman and Harris, *The Story of Meat,* p. 1.
21. W. Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
22. Russell Baker, "Red Meat Decadence," *New York Times* 3 April 1973, p. 43.
23. Aaron M. Altschul, *Proteins: Their Chemistry and Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p. 101.
24. Reeves, p. 131.
25. Helen Hunscher and Marqueta Huyck, "Nutrition," in *Consumer Problems in Wartime,* ed. Kenneth Dameron (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1944), p. 414.
26. Irving Fisher, "The Influence of Flesh Eating on Endurance," *Yale Medical Journal* 13, no. 5 (March 1907), p. 207.
27. Quoted in "Red Meat: American Man's Last Symbol of Machismo," *National Observer* 10 July 1976, p. 13.
28. Marty Feldman, quoted in Rynn Berry Jr., *The Vegetarians* (Brookline, MA: Autumn Press, 1979), p. 32.
29. *New York Times* 15 April 1973, p. 38.
30. She concludes, "and I wish he'd taken us with him." Carolyn Steedman, "Landscape for a Good Woman," in *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing Up in the Fifties,* ed. Liz Heron (London: Virago Press, 1985), p. 114.
31. Alice Walker, *The Temple of My Familiar* (San Diego, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), p. 50.
32. Richard E. Leakey and Roger Lewin, *People of the Lake: Mankind and Its Beginnings* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1978, New York: Avon Books, 1979), pp.210–11.
33. Peggy Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 65, 66.
34. Sanday 1981, p. 39.
35. Sandy Grady, "The Duke as Boring as Spinach," *Buffalo News* 26 March 1988.
36. From a catalog from Northern Sun Merchandising, 2916 E. Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN, 55406.
37. From Hegel's *Philosophy of Right,* para. 166, p. 263, quoted in Nancy Tuana, "The Misbegotten Man: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Images of Women," unpublished manuscript.
38. Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 273.
39. Marabel Morgan, *Marabel Morgan's Handbook for Kitchen Survival: The Total Woman Cookbook* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1980), p. 13.
40. Mary McCarthy, *Birds of America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965, New York: New American Library, 1972), pp. 167, 180, 183.
41. R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 100.
42. Erin Pizzey, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 35.
43. James C. Whorton, "'Tempest in a Flesh-Pot': The Formulation of a Physiological Rationale for Vegetarianism," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 32, no. 2 (April 1977), p. 122.
44. Editorial, *New York Times,* 17 August 1981.