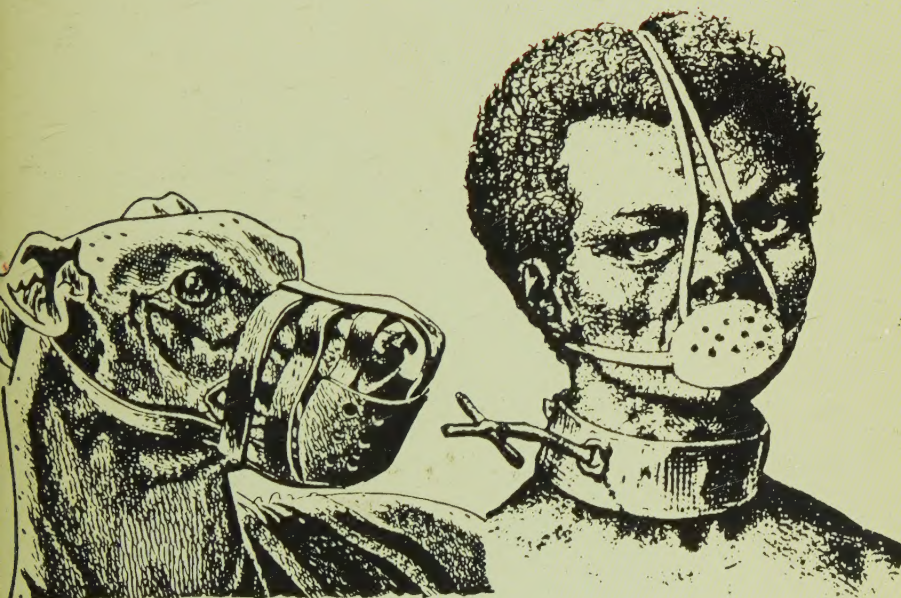


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MARJORIE SPIEGEL

# THE DREADED COMPARISON

HUMAN AND ANIMAL SLAVERY



PREFACE BY  
ALICE WALKER



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This edition is published in parallel by Heretic Books and New Society Publishers. Inquiries regarding requests to reprint all or part of *The Dreaded Comparison* should be addressed:

*in the UK to*  
Heretic Books  
P O Box 247  
London N15 6RW

*in the USA to*  
New Society Publishers  
27 Springfield Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

ISBN 0-946097-25-9 (UK paperback)  
0-86571-140-2 (US hardcover)  
0-86571-141-0 (US paperback)

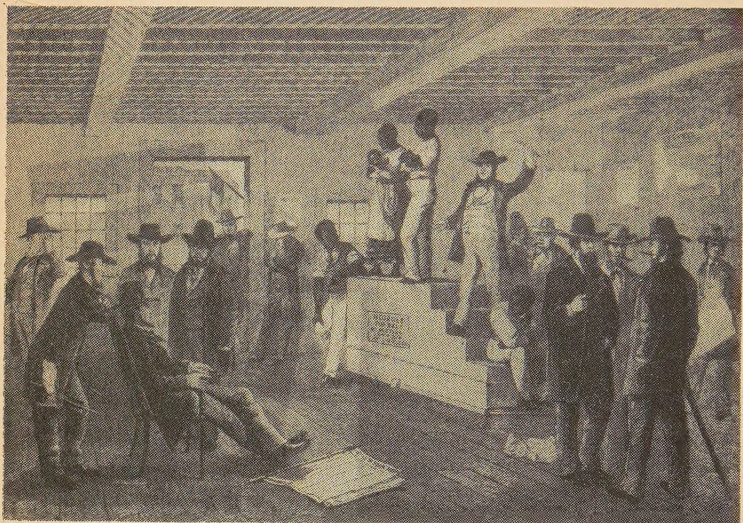
*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Spiegel, Marjorie  
The Dreaded Comparison  
1. Animals. Treatment by man. Ethical  
aspects  
I. Title  
179 .3

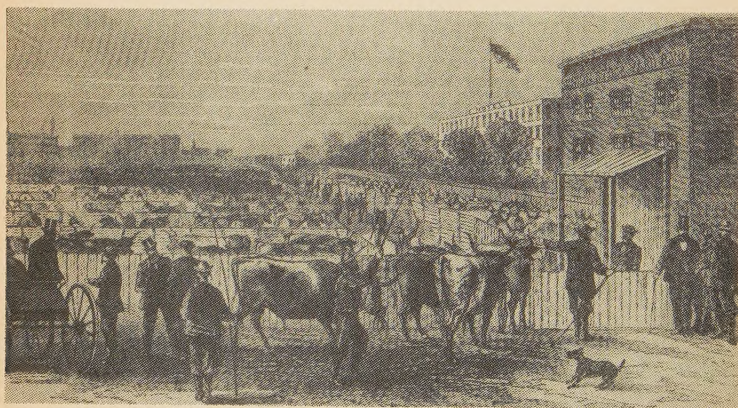
Printed in the European Community by  
Norhaven A/S, Viborg, Denmark

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Slave auction in Virginia, 1861



The cattle market at Chicago in 1868

*racism* (rā' siz əm), n. 1. a belief that human races have distinctive characteristics that determine their respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others. 2. a policy of enforcing such asserted right. 3. a system of government and society based upon it. — *rac' ist*, n., adj.

*speciesism* (spē' shēz iz əm), n. 1. a belief that different species of animals are significantly different from one another in their capacities to feel pleasure and pain and live an autonomous existence, usually involving the idea that one's own species has the right to rule and use others. 2. a policy of enforcing such asserted right. 3. a system of government and society based upon it. — *spe' cies ist*, n., adj.

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## PREFACE

by Alice Walker

This powerful short book, which can be read in an hour, once read with comprehension will take a lifetime to forget. In *The Dreaded Comparison*, Marjorie Spiegel illustrates the similarities between the enslavement of black people in the past (and by implication other enslaved peoples) and the enslavement of animals, past and present. It is a comparison that, even for those of us who recognize its validity, is a difficult one to face. Especially so, if we are the descendants of slaves. Or of slaveowners. Or of both. Especially so if we are also responsible in some way for the present treatment of animals. Especially so if we, for instance, participate in or profit from animal research (what beings who loved life died for our lipstick, lotions, medicines and so on?) or if we own animals or if we eat animals or if we are content to know that animals are shut up 'safely' in zoos. In short, if we are complicit in their enslavement and destruction, which is to say if we are at this juncture in history, master.

But there is hope following close behind the initial despair that one feels on reading this book. Despair because one realizes one has eaten eggs produced by mutilated (de-beaked) beings crammed four to a cage the size of a record album cover; one has tasted veal from a baby calf ripped from its mother's womb without so much as a goodbye lick or look from her; one has used cosmetics derived from 'products' forced out of animals' bodies in great pain. The civet cat, for one, is whipped in the face until it sweats the essence that is

the foundation for many a sweet perfume. We are guilty. But that is only a first response. And normal. What do we do with our heightened consciousness, is the question. It is the author's clarity that produces hope. Her scholarship. Her assuredness in pointing out the 'dreaded comparison' between the pain felt by human animals who are abused and the pain felt by non-human animals who are abused, and recognizing it as the same pain.

The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for whites or women for men. This is the gist of Ms Spiegel's cogent, humane and astute argument, and it is sound.

## SYMPATHY

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs soft through springing grass,  
And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals —  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting —  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore —  
When he beats his bars and he would be free;  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to heaven he flings —  
I know why the caged bird sings!

— *Paul Laurence Dunbar, poet and writer, son of two runaway slaves.*



## THE DREADED COMPARISON: AN HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

*Pain is pain, whether it be inflicted on man or on beast; and the creature who suffers it, whether man or beast, being sensible to the misery of it, whilst it lasts, suffers evil... [T]he white man...can have no right, by virtue of his color, to enslave and tyrannize over a black man... For the same reason, a man can have no natural right to abuse and torment a beast.*

— Dr. Humphrey Primatt, 1776

*[The tyranny of human over non-human animals] has caused and today is still causing an amount of pain and suffering that can only be compared with that which resulted from the centuries of tyranny by white humans over black humans. The struggle against this tyranny is a struggle as important as any of the moral and social issues that have been fought over in recent years.*

— Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 1974

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Comparing speciesism with racism? At first glance, many people might feel that it is insulting to compare the suffering of non-human animals to that of humans. In fact in our society, comparison to an animal has come to be a slur.

Why is it an insult for anyone to be compared to an animal? In many cultures, such a comparison was an honor. One of the first comparisons which comes to mind is that of Native Americans, who actually adopted the names of admired animals. Names such as Sitting Bull, Running Deer, and Hawkeye are familiar to us; they expressed the admiration Native Americans had for the animals with whom they shared the earth. Native Americans, some African tribes, and other peoples including the Ancient Egyptians worshipped various animals as gods or messengers to god. So how is it that we find ourselves in a time when comparison to a non-human animal has ceased to be a compliment and is instead hurled as an insult?

By the time the New World was 'discovered' and colonization began, Europeans had 'subdued' most of the land which they had inhabited for centuries.<sup>1</sup> What this meant was that the huge expanses of wilderness which had once existed in Europe were long gone, leaving, in England for example, a very 'managed' countryside — rolling hills and relatively few stands of forest.

Understandably, it came as quite a shock when the British ventured to North America and found not the giant golf-course they had hoped for, but a deeply forested wilderness instead. The white Puritan colonists measured 'progress' and 'civilization' in terms of (among other things) how far a people could distance themselves from Nature. 'Countless diaries, addresses and memorials of the frontier period,' writes historian Roderick Nash, attest to this in their representations of 'the wilderness as an "enemy" which had to be "conquered", "subdued", and "vanquished" by a "pioneer army".'<sup>2</sup> Nash describes how the average colonist viewed Nature:

Wilderness...acquired significance as a dark and sinister symbol. [The pioneers] shared the long Western tradition of imagining wild country as a moral vacuum, a cursed and chaotic wasteland. As a consequence, frontiersmen acutely sensed that they battled wild country not only for personal survival but in the name of nation, race and God. Civilizing the New World meant enlightening darkness, ordering chaos, and changing evil into good.<sup>3</sup>

Holding these beliefs, white Christians were convinced that it was virtually a moral obligation to conquer any people who were still living in harmony with nature — as ‘savages’, in their opinion. Paying no regard to the level of cultural sophistication or even to the general happiness of the people living within their native societies, the conquerers merely saw ‘heathens’ while proceeding to destroy entire cultures.

In 1688, the idea of the ‘noble savage’ was introduced by Aphra Behn in *Oroonoko*. The noble savage hated his fellow slaves because they were:

...by nature slaves, poor wretched rogues, fit to be used as Christian tools; dogs, treacherous and cowardly, fit for such masters; and they wanted only to be whipped into the knowledge of the Christian gods, to be the vilest of all creeping things.<sup>4</sup>

This attitude echoes that expressed towards nature. In order to ease their consciences, or perhaps because they actually believed it, the conquerers were convinced that they were serving god by whipping Nature, animals, and black people into submission. And how convenient that they could obtain a slave work-force while performing their sanctimonious acts.

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In the above passage by Aphra Behn we also see the seed of the trend towards using comparison to an animal as an insult: '...dogs, treacherous and cowardly...' Centuries later, James Baldwin exemplifies the integral part this comparison has come to play in blacks' consciousness as they continue to struggle for equality:

The American triumph — in which the American tragedy has always been implicit — was to make Black people despise themselves. When I was little I despised myself; I did not know any better. And this meant, albeit unconsciously, or against my will, or in great pain, that I also despised my father. *And* my mother. *And* my brothers. *And* my sisters. Black people were killing each other every night out on Lenox Avenue, when I was growing up; and no one explained to them, or to me, that it was *intended* that they should; that they were penned where they were, like animals, in order that they should consider themselves no better than animals. Everything supported this sense of reality, nothing denied it; and so one was ready, when it came time to go to work, to be treated as a slave.<sup>5</sup>

All of this has a negative effect on the lives of human and non-human animals alike. As long as humans feel they are forced to defend their own rights and worth by placing someone beneath them, oppression will not end. This approach, at the very best, results only in an individual or group of people climbing up the ladder by pushing others down. There is evidence of this approach in the world today: racially motivated gang-wars amongst impoverished youth; in the United States, white working-class racist violence directed at working-class blacks, who suffer from the residual effects of slavery in the form of prejudice and job

discrimination; in Britain, black youths attack Indian-owned businesses. It is very convenient for those who actually make the laws, profit from the system, and exert great influence over economic opportunities, when the disadvantaged and powerless quarrel amongst themselves for the crumbs which chance to fall their way.

But there is another approach which is gaining momentum today, the main tenet of which is that we can no longer maintain that suffering is fine for some because they are not like us. Only through a rejection of oppression and institutionalized suffering *themselves* will we ever find a long-term freedom and justice *for all*. It is not an 'either-or' situation; the idea that one group will have their rights protected only after another 'more important' group is totally comfortable has been rejected for the self-serving nonsense that it is. Women were told to keep waiting for years for their right to vote because other issues were 'more important'. Black people in the U.S. were told that their slavery was an 'economic necessity' to be continued for the good of the country. Black people in South Africa are still being told that apartheid is necessary. Necessary for whom? Surely not the people who are living under this form of slavery.

With the exception of those who still cling — either overtly or subtly — to racist thought, society has reached the conclusion that it was and is wrong to treat blacks 'like animals'. But with regard to the animals themselves, most still feel that it is acceptable to treat them, to some degree or another, in exactly this same manner; to treat them, as we say, 'like animals'. That is, society has decided that treatment which is wholly unacceptable when received by a human being is in fact the *proper* manner in which to treat a non-human animal.

A line was arbitrarily drawn between white people and black people, a division which has since been rejected. But what of the line which has been drawn between human and non-human animals? We often behave as if there were a

wide and bridgeless chasm, with humans on one side and all the rest of the animals on the other. Even our terminology reflects this attitude: we speak of 'humans' in one breath, and in the next, lump all other animals into one grab-bag of a category entitled 'non-human animals'. On what basis was this line drawn? Surely the line, if it need be drawn at all, could have been placed with equal or greater appropriateness in any one of a number of places. We are, for instance, much closer genetically and behaviorally to other primates than non-human primates are to toads. So perhaps the line could be drawn *after* other primates. Or, the line could just as reasonably be drawn so as to separate all mammals from other creatures, for mammals share common attributes which other animals lack.

But one problem with this approach is that it presupposes some sort of 'worst-to-best' ascension list, ranging from the 'simplest' being straight up to human beings — at the top, of course. Now first, this is a misinterpretation of Darwin's evolutionary theory, which, in its misconstrued popularized version, seems to suggest the appropriateness of ranking beings' existences, with humans the supposed 'finished product'. On the contrary, Darwin's *The Origin Of Species* implied that humans were evolutionary first cousins to modern-day apes and orangutans, all distinctly and simultaneously evolving from a common ancestor. Darwin wrote in his notebook that 'animals may partake from our common origin in one ancestor... we may all be netted together.'

From the concept that humans are evolutionarily better than animals it easily followed (to those who were predisposed to this position) that whites could be evolutionarily superior to blacks. In fact, based on the popularized (mis)interpretation of evolutionary theory came the trend of 'Social Darwinism'. Darwin had spoken of natural selection in relation to adaptation, but the Social Darwinists — usually the powerful or wealthy — adopted natural selection as the key to 'progress'. Darwin himself took great exception to

this misconstrued application of his theory, by which ruthless behavior — towards different races, classes, or species — could be rationalized and justified as being only a demonstration of evolution in action, a manifestation of 'nature red in tooth and claw'.

Before the concept of evolution was widely known and accepted, religious doctrine, which placed ('civilized', white, Christian) humans above all other beings, served as a justification for the subjugation of blacks (whom pro-slavery writers and orators often claimed were of a different species!) and non-human animals; this subjugation was said to be ordained by God. Later, under the banner of Social Darwinism, both the unmitigated violence towards the 'lower' animals and the enslavement of black 'savages' in Africa were looked at as expressions of an evolutionary birthright.

The more we learn about the earth's environment, its ecosystems and the creatures who live here, the more we see the absurdity in the concept of ranking species against one another. Each species of animal has a niche for which it is more or less adapted. Each species has attributes which others lack, and it is only an anthropocentric world view which makes qualities possessed by humans to be those by which all other species are measured. If the earth was suddenly colonized by a species more powerful and bellicose than human beings, they could just as easily use attributes special to themselves when devising their ranking system. Let us suppose that by chance the aliens closely resembled a member of the cat family. They might decide to use the ability to see in near-darkness as the determining factor for who was worthy of freedom and who would be exterminated or enslaved. Their use of night-vision as a criterion would only be *as self-biased* as the criteria which we have decided to use.

We might think back to those charts which depicted the evolution of primates, up through various hominids, to a black person, and finally a fully upright aryan male. These

have largely been dismissed as racist propaganda (and poor science with regard to our relation to other modern primates), though one may still occasionally come across a copy. These charts might give us some reason to pause as we consider a similar ranking system which places *all* humans up on the evolutionary pedestal, to the exclusion of other animals. This is not to deny that evolution did occur and that humans evolved from distant ancestors, more distant to us than to many other creatures who reached a state of relative adaptation and evolutionary stability much earlier on. The crux of the matter is that evolutionary history is no basis for deciding 'who is better than whom,' an end to which it is often put in its popularized version. Evolution occurs as the result of a random genetic mutation and there is no moral basis for declaring that the mutated form is better than the unmutated ancestral form. But even comparison to evolutionary predecessors makes better sense than what is usually attempted: comparison of humans to other 'highly developed' animals of completely different families, in an effort to determine 'which is best.' Actually, in evolutionary time humans are relatively new additions to the landscape and as such have had much less time to mutate into a harmonious or stable position within an ecosystem. We haven't yet 'worked out' all the quirks in our physiology or behavior, leaving our species with real problems which simply don't exist for some other species, e.g. members of the cat family.<sup>6</sup>

But this too is irrelevant in determining if humans or any other animals are 'worthy' of moral consideration. What are the qualities which a being need possess before treating them 'like an animal' would be unacceptable? If, as mentioned above, the ability to see clearly at night was the requirement, virtually all humans would be miserably lacking and, if those cats were anything like us when it came to ethics, humans would spend their lives in bondage. But we, not they, seem to be calling the shots, and as such we have attempted to make those characteristics which are *exclusively human attributes*

the requirements for moral consideration.

Instead of approaching this problem by trying to list those qualities possessed by humans and lacked by other animals, let us first look for those qualities which are specifically relevant to determining if a being is worthy of moral consideration. Darwin wrote 'that the senses and intuition, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc. of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or sometimes even well-developed condition in,' as they were commonly called in Darwin's day, 'the lower animals.'<sup>7</sup> And again, Darwin states: 'There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties.'<sup>8</sup>

In direct conflict with Darwin's views were those espoused by René Descartes, who believed non-human animals lacked souls (while humans possessed them), intelligence, and even the ability to feel — pleasure, pain, or *anything*. If you struck one, the animal would cry out only in the same manner as a clock would chime, as a result of similar internal machinations. Very few people today would publicly support such views (though unfortunately much of society still behaves as if they were fact). Most people, I believe, informally and *in theory* agree with Darwin's views and recognize that animals are thinking, feeling beings.

Indeed, our laws which regulate our treatment of animals, feeble and few though they be, officially recognize that *some* animals are worthy of our moral consideration and deserve to be free from the infliction of pain. But the laws are conveniently accommodating to humans and exclude from their embrace many of those who are in need of protection. And although there are more laws regarding the treatment of animals now than ever before in history, there is now a greater *need* for these laws, as the system of dominance and control tightens its grip on animals' lives. These laws are largely ineffectual, merely bureaucratizing oppression while doing little or nothing to alleviate it. For example, while laws

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do not prohibit the prolonged electric-shocking of unanesthetized animals during the course of an experiment, the cage in which the tortured animal is imprisoned must meet certain size requirements. (90 per cent of animals used in experiments are not included under the scope of this law, and as such are not afforded even this minimal protection.) In the case of animals in the wild, while laws forbid shooting, for example, a certain species three months out of the year, for the remaining nine months it's 'open season'. Laws such as this are motivated not by a desire to protect animals, but to ensure numerous hunting targets in the future. Domesticated 'food' animals are entirely excluded from protective legislation except in a few cases where interstate transportation vehicles must provide a certain minimum amount of head-room. This noticeable lack of significant protective legislation is evidence of the flaw in our considerations, a sign of moral laziness. For if animals are capable of suffering in the course of their daily lives, if it is wrong for a child to wantonly stone a kitten to death, then other animals whom we may want to *use* in some way are no less capable of this suffering or less deserving of consideration.

There have been many attempts at finding qualities possessed by humans and lacked by non-human animals, in an effort to concoct a defensible reason for which we might discriminate against animals. One of the qualities most commonly attributed solely to humans is the ability to reason. But, as Perry Phillips states in his essay 'Ten Common Arguments Against Animal Rights Refuted',

Although animals are unable to do algebra, they are able to make rational decisions regarding their own interests. Dogs, for example, would never be so irrational as to intentionally inhale smoke; they must be forced to do this by contemporary 'researchers'. I think it is safe to say that animals, in their own way, are at least as reasonable — that is,

rational in pursuit of their own interests — as human beings.<sup>9</sup>

Attempts at moral disqualification on the basis of reason have not, by the way, been used only to exclude non-human animals. For centuries, black people were called 'irrational', and this was used as a reason to both continue their 'protective custody' (in the form of slavery) and to open them up to virtually limitless abuse. Just as this claim has been popularly abandoned with regard to blacks, so too is it finally being disproven and retired with regard to animals.

There are many other approaches used in the effort to exclude animals from the scope of our moral consideration. The ability to speak a language, to make free choices, and other qualities are said to be distinguishing features possessed only by humans. But these distinctions, even if they were true (and a good case can be made for their falsity)<sup>10</sup> are quickly shown to be irrelevant by what has come to be called the 'argument of marginal cases'. Marginal cases are those humans, for example babies and the mentally feeble, who are unable to do any of these supposedly uniquely human things, and yet are still recognized as being deserving of moral consideration. And really, even if these marginal cases didn't exist *and* these qualities were actually exclusively possessed by humans, they would still be irrelevant. For what does someone's ability to speak French, drive a car, see in the dark, do algebraic equations, etc. have to do with whether or not it is acceptable or just to enslave, torture, or in some other way inflict cruelty upon them? The only *relevant* requirement which should be necessary to keep us from unnecessarily inflicting pain and suffering on someone is that individual's ability to feel pain and to suffer. Similarly, the only qualification individuals should need to make it wrong for us to dominate their lives is that they *possess life*, that they are alive. For these issues, all else is morally irrelevant.

This is not intended to oversimplify matters, however, and imply that the oppressions experienced by blacks and animals have taken *identical* forms. A complex web of social, political, and economic factors sustained slavery and made possible the life of a slave as it was known. This book in no way attempts to make the case that these factors are the same for animals; there are distinct social, political, and economic factors which create and support the subjugation of animals, as well as differences between the possible manners in which blacks and animals could respond to their respective enslavements. On this latter point, one very notable difference is exemplified by the history of slave rebellions. While there are innumerable instances of animals having *escaped* from zoos, circuses, slaughterhouses, etc., animals' natures vis-à-vis humans seems to preclude the possibility of organized rebellion, while enslaved blacks managed to overcome overwhelming odds and stage rebellions and innumerable *organized* escapes. But, as divergent as the cruelties and the supporting systems of oppression may be, there are commonalities between them. They share the same basic essence, they are built around the same basic relationship — that between oppressor and oppressed.

So, even though we may think of the experiences of black people in this country as being unique — which they were — there are many disturbing similarities between their treatment at the hands of white people in the United States and the treatment of animals at the hands of a large sector of the American population. Indeed, just as humans are oppressed the world over, animals receive poor treatment in nearly every human culture on earth.

Further, any oppression helps to prop up other forms of oppression. This is why it is vital to link oppressions in our minds, to look for the common, shared aspects, and fight against them as one, rather than prioritizing victims' suffering (what we have already identified as the 'either-or' pitfall). For when we prioritize we are in effect becoming one

with the oppressor. We are deciding that one individual or group is more important than another, deciding that one individual's pain is 'less important' than that of the next. This often leads to infighting, if you will, amongst the oppressed or defenders of the oppressed, doing little to upset the very foundations of cruelty.

Comparing the suffering of animals to that of blacks (or any other oppressed group) is offensive only to the speciesist; one who has embraced the false notions of what animals are like. Those who are offended by comparison to a fellow sufferer have fallen for the propaganda spewed forth by the oppressors. To deny our similarities to animals is to deny and undermine our own power. It is to continue actively struggling to prove to our oppressors, past or present, that we are *similar to our oppressors*, rather than those whom our oppressors have also victimized. It is to say that we would rather be more like those who have victimized us, rather than like those who have also been victims. Let us remember that to the *oppressors*, there is often very little difference between one victim and the next. When both blacks and animals are viewed as being 'oppressable', the cruelties perpetrated upon them take similar forms. Later we will explore whether these similarities are due to mere chance or to something which operates deep in the minds of the oppressors. In the meantime, let us note that the oppression of animals, which was being honed to a clumsy science centuries before black slavery in America began, was in many cases used as a prototype for the oppression of blacks. So observed Keith Thomas when he wrote:

Once perceived as beasts, people were liable to be treated accordingly. The ethic of human domination removed animals from the sphere of human concern. But it also legitimized the ill-treatment of humans who were in a supposedly animal condition. In the colonies, slavery, with its

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markets, its brandings and its constant labour, was one way of dealing with men thought to be beastly. The Portuguese, reported one English traveler, marked slaves 'as we do sheep, with a hot iron,' and at the slave market at Constantinople, Moryson saw the buyers taking their slaves indoors to inspect them naked, handling them 'as we handle beasts, to know their fatness and strength.'<sup>11</sup>



'Sure, we used to throw 'em on the ground and cut their balls off with a pen-knife. Didn't give them any pain-killer, are you kidding? And that's not all; at the same time, we'd brand 'em and cut off their horns. And you know what? It didn't bother me...I never felt anything for them'  
—Mick, an ex-ranchhand, in a personal interview



From this we see that the liberation of animals, while a pressing and worthy goal in its own right, is not of importance *only* to non-human animals. While people are no longer branded or inspected at auction, subtler forms of oppression are still in operation which have their counterparts in animals' slavery. Advances toward the goal of animal liberation will also serve to lessen the oppression of blacks and others who suffer under the weight of someone else's power. By eliminating the oppression of animals from

the fabric of our culture, we begin to undermine some of the psychological structures inherent in a society which seems to create and foster 'masters'. With a philosophy of universal respect for others' lives, treating anyone — human or non-human — in a cruel manner begins to be unthinkable.

The suffering animals must endure today in laboratories, on 'factory farms', as 'pets', and in the wild, sadly parallel those endured by black people in the antebellum United States and during the lingering postbellum period. The parallels of experience are numerous. Both humans and animals share the ability to suffer from restricted freedom of movement, from the loss of social freedom, and to experience pain at the loss of a loved one. Both groups suffer or suffered from their common capacity to be terrified by being hunted, tormented, or injured. Both possess the ability to experience objectification. And both blacks, under the system of slavery, and animals were driven to a state of total psychic and physical defeat, as a result of all or some of the variables mentioned above. (With animals, of course, this continues today in its most extreme form.) The excerpts in this book by such eminent thinkers, writers and activists as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Richard Wright, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and others show us that they were acutely aware of these similarities. Let us follow their examples and begin to reject repression in all its forms.

*[Slaves] have been treated by the law upon the same footing as in England, for example, the...animals are still. The day may come when the rest of animal creation may acquire those rights which could never have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny.*

*[Some] have already discovered that the blackness of skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate... [T]he question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?*

— Jeremy Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1789

## OPPRESSION IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

*In dem days ole Brer Dog wuz e'en 'bout like he is dese days, scratchin' fer fleas en growlin' over his vittles stidder sayin' grace, en buryin' de bones w'en he had one too many. He wuz des like he is now, 'ceppin' dat he wuz wile. He galloped wid Brer Fox, en loped wid Brer Wolf, en cantered wid Brer Loon. He went all de gaits, en he had des ez good a time ez any un um en des ez bad a time.*

— 'Why Mr. Dog is Tame', by Joel Chandler Harris, from *Nights with Uncle Remus: Myths and Legends of the Old Plantation*, 1883

Lasting testimony to the severity of white oppression of blacks can be found in American literature. Not surprisingly, this literature also preserves tangible evidence of the intermingling, in the minds of some whites, of the two groups with which we are concerned: blacks and non-human animals.

Because society's opinion of animals was so low, racist authors propagandized against blacks by comparing them to negative stereotypes of non-human animals. 'The Brute Negro' is one of seven stereotypes of black people found in American literature, as identified by Sterling A. Brown in his longer essay 'Negro Character as Seen by White Authors'. One of the most blatant ironies of these comparisons is that this stereotyping of blacks rests upon stereotypes of animals which are false in their own right. Reality was blindly ignored by these authors as they churned out banalities of savage apes and lewd, promiscuous beasts. As could be expected, the books made no mention of the very real and widespread practices of rape and brutalization of slaves by slave-owners. Some authors, such as H.R. Helper in his book *Nojuque* (1867), set up 'black' and 'beastly' as exact synonyms. In his book *The Negro a Beast* (1900), a racist theological tract, author Chas. Carroll wrote, 'All Scientific Investigation of the Subject Proves the Negro to Be An Ape.'

As the above dates indicate, 'the stereotype of the "brute Negro"' was relatively insignificant in antebellum days,' because, writes Brown,

the pro-slavery authors were anxious to prove that slavery had been a benefit to the Negro by removing him from savagery to Christianity... There were references to vicious criminal Negroes in fiction (vicious and criminal being synonymous to discontented and refractory), but these were considered as exceptional cases of half-wits led astray by abolitionists.

## 32 *The Dreaded Comparison*

Authors stressing the mutual affection between the races looked upon the Negro as a docile mastiff. In the Reconstruction this mastiff turned into a mad dog. 'Damyanks', carpetbaggers, scallawags, and New England schoolmarms affected him with rabies. The works of Thomas Nelson Page are good examples of this metamorphosis. When his Negro characters are in their place, loyally serving and worshipping ole Marse, they are admirable creatures, but in freedom they are beasts, as his novel *Red Rock* attests.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Dixon, another writer of what Brown terms 'Ku Klux Klan fiction', is responsible for such works as *The Clansman* and *The Leopard's Spots*, with chapter titles such as 'The Black Peril', 'The Unspoken Terror', 'A Thousand Legged Beast', and 'The Hunt for the Animal'. Dixon helped to firmly fix this stereotype in the minds of the masses. Brown writes:

The stock Negro in Dixon's books, unless the shuffling hat-in-hand servitor, is a gorilla-like imbecile, who 'springs like a tiger' and has the 'black claws of a beast'. In both books there is a terrible rape, and a glorious ride of the Knights on a Holy Crusade to avenge Southern civilization. Dixon enables his white geniuses to discover the identity of the rapist by using 'a microscope of sufficient power [to] reveal on the retina of the dead eyes the image of this devil as if etched there by fire.' ...The doctor sees 'the bestial figure of a negro — his huge black hand plainly defined... It was Gus.' Will the wonders of science never cease? But, perhaps, after all, Negroes have been convicted on even flimsier evidence.<sup>13</sup>

Sterling cited the work of Thomas Nelson Page as an example of the metamorphosis which occurred in people's minds in reaction to the transition of blacks from slaves to free individuals. When the person in question was still a slave — a 'good slave', mind you — he was portrayed as a 'docile mastiff', in Sterling's words. When no longer enslaved, authors turned him into a 'mad dog'. Sterling comments that when 'in their place, loyally serving and worshipping ole Marse,' slaves were portrayed as 'admirable creatures, but in freedom they are beasts.'

We don't even need to invent a metaphor to see how these attitudes relate to non-human animals; animals are *already used as the metaphor*. We need only to turn the metaphor on its head to see how animals are affected.

When obedient and subservient, an animal is a loyal companion, a 'good slave'. When independent, an animal is suddenly transformed in our eyes to an uncontrollable beast. Think of the stories we were raised with, stories of 'Big Bad Wolves' who prey on the innocent, silly, *domesticated* (and therefore good) piglets. Stories of 'Lions and Tigers and Bears' who, in their wild and *uncontrolled* state, seem to live only to single-mindedly lunge at you from behind every tree. Upon closer examination, we find the thoughts and language of oppression to be present not just in children's stories and other literature, but woven into the very fabric of our culture. For example, think of the term we use for the domestication of a wild horse: 'to *break* a horse'. This has quite a literal meaning, for when we tame a horse, we actually do *break* her. We break her spirit, bend her to our will, make her a subordinate and subservient servant. In the antebellum South, there were men called 'nigger breakers', to whom 'troublesome', 'uppity' slaves were sent. Frederick Douglass was, in fact, sent to such a man.

But the purpose of this study is not to root out the terminology of slavery which is present in our language. It is to examine the similarities between two systems of

slavery — the past enslavement of black people in the United States, together with the postbellum racist society which followed this bondage, and the enslavement of animals which continues (and is perhaps at its strongest and certainly most 'refined') today. The oppression of blacks and other humans in the U.S. continues in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, through economic, political and social means. However, in this study we will concern ourselves with the overt system of slavery into which blacks were thrust and held captive, and the postbellum period of segregation and institutionalized racist economic and political practices which lasted well into the twentieth century. As the later sufferings of blacks resulted from their prior slavery, in this book terms such as 'slavery-related sufferings' are meant to encompass this entire period of overt racist oppression.

## SLAVES AND MASTERS

*There is no sin in using a thing for the purpose for which it is. Now the order of things is such that the imperfect are for the perfect...and [thus] all animals are for man.*

— St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II, II, Q64, art.1

*Man is born to subjection... The proclivity of the natural man is to domineer or to be subservient... If there are sordid, servile, and laborious offices to be performed, is it not better that there should be sordid, servile, and laborious beings to perform them?*

— Chancellor Harper, of the University of South Carolina, 1838

*There are now between four and five millions of negroes in the United States. They or their descendants must remain forever — for good or evil — an element of our population. What are their natural relations to the whites? — what their normal condition?*

*The Almighty has obviously designed all his creatures — animal as well as human — for wise, beneficent, and useful purposes. In our ignorance of the animal world, we have only domesticated or applied to useful purposes a very small number, the horse, the ox, ass, dog, etc... The most ignorant farmer or laborer...knows the natures of these animals...and governs them accordingly.*

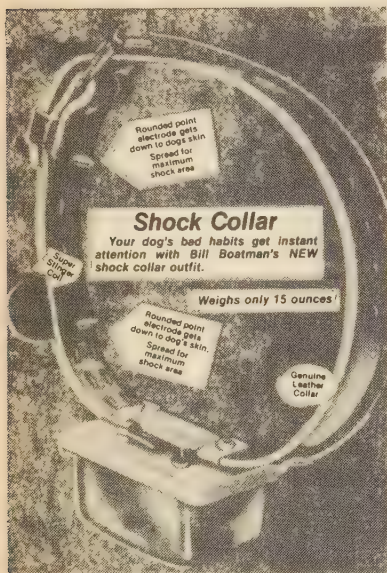
*[In the South] our people have practically solved their natural relations to the inferior race, and placed or rather retained the negro in his normal condition, ...in domestic subordination and social adaptation, corresponding with [negroes'] wants, their instincts, their faculties, the nature with which God has endowed them.*

— J.H. Van Evrie, M.D., *Negroes and Negro 'Slavery': The First an Inferior Race, The Latter Its Normal Condition*, 1863

In his book *Cruelty*, Philip P. Hallie defines what to him is the center or essence of slavery:

People, not by virtue of their individual weaknesses or strengths, are put in the position of being as passive as groceries. When they are 'good' they are good by the white master's standards for chattel, and their highest goals must be to satisfy his standards, the way a hard-working mule is a good mule... Utter passivity in total independence of individual traits, under the will of the white man — this was American slavery.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, we might look at the relationship between a dog and her *master*, just one example of what is sometimes a modern slave/slave-owner relationship. The dog is considered by her *owner* to be a 'good dog' if she walks to heel, displays no great interest when nearing other dogs, doesn't run except when allowed, doesn't bark except when required, and has no emotional needs except when desired by the master. Many dogs spend their entire lives in isolation, chained to a slab of concrete or a tree in their master's backyard. If a dog wishes to do something other than what pleases her master — play with other dogs (socialize), for instance — she may be beaten or otherwise punished. All independent actions are thus discouraged, and the dog learns that she will win approval — and thus avoidance of future beatings or her very survival — by suppressing her own desires and conforming to those of the omnipotent human who legally owns her. If at any point the master grows tired of his slave, she can simply be turned over to 'the pound', which euphemistically means that she will be quietly and secretly killed. Or if she is pure-bred, a high-quality slave, the master may sell her over to a new owner.



'A trained dog is a joy and pride. An untrained dog is an infernal nuisance to everybody. Most dogs are untrained'

—*The Next Whole Earth Catalog*



'A state of bondage, so far from doing violence to the law of nature, develops and perfects it; and that, in that state [the Negro] enjoys the greatest amount of happiness, and arrives at the greatest degree of perfection, of which his nature is capable'

—R. R. Cobb, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America*, 1858

Another aspect of a slave's existence common to these two systems of slavery might be likened to treading water merely to stay afloat. In the slave/master relationship, there are no permanent rewards for performing up to par with what the master expects. In his essay 'Picking Cotton...', Solomon Northrup wrote of what this meant:

...a slave never approaches the gin house with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight — if he has not performed the full task appointed him, he knows that he must suffer. And if he has exceeded it by ten or twenty pounds, in all probability his master will measure his next day's task accordingly.<sup>15</sup>

In order to see the similarities between this and what faces some animals, let us look at the example of a dairy cow, and examine just one facet of her life: milk production.

A dairy cow is expected to produce a certain number of pounds of milk per day and, in the long run, a certain tonnage per year. As she grows older, or perhaps suffers from an illness, and becomes less productive, she ceases to make a large profit for the owner and eventually, despite her years of service, is killed and sold. She is killed when her milk output drops below a certain point of profitability. If at some point during her life she outdoes herself by producing more than the expected amount of milk, this is the standard by which she will thereafter be judged; more likely than not, her high productivity will result in her being used in intensive super-ovulation breeding programs as well.

Earlier in this book I said that the slavery-related sufferings of black people are paralleled by the sufferings of animals lost in the machinery of modern institutionalized cruelty. A few examples of this have already been seen: that of an animal who is forced to 'produce' for her human master, and that of some 'pets'. We shall now examine several more of

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these parallels, from the disruption of self-regulated reproduction, to birth and the consequential destruction of the familial structure, throughout life and the many cruelties to which individuals are subjected, such as vivisection and hunting. Finally, we shall look at the similar ways in which these slaveries are kept hidden from those who do not profit from them, and rationalized by those who do.

## SOCIAL RELATIONS: THE DESTRUCTION OF SECURITY

*The first instinct the farmer frustrates in all animals...is that of the newborn animal turning to its mother for protection and comfort and, in some cases, for food. The chick comes out of the incubator and never sees a hen; the calf which is to be fattened for veal or beef is taken from the cow at birth, or very soon after; and even the piglet is weaned far earlier now than it used to be. The factors controlling this are mainly economic.*

— Ruth Harrison, *Animal Machines*, 1964

*I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise... I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother in the light of day.*

— Frederick Douglass, *An American Slave*, 1854



Chances are that one of these four newborn dairy calves will die soon after being brought to this confinement nursery.



If a slave gave birth to her child at the same time as the mistress of the plantation, she had to nurse the white child rather than her own.

'It was often remarked that the affection of the slaves was stronger toward the whites than toward their own offspring'

—Thomas Nelson Page, *The Negro: The Southerner's Problem*, 1904

One of the most tragic aspects of life as a slave comes about through destruction of the family, and in a larger sense, the social structure. In the time of the African slave trade, it was common to kidnap children while their parents were off gathering food or tending to some other chore.<sup>16</sup> Once kidnapped, the children would be sold 'down the coast', and eventually end up on a Southern plantation, if they survived the ordeal. Thus, relationships with their entire families — extended and immediate — were at once ended; the family was never reunited. In the States, slaves were brought to auction: children sold away from their mothers, husbands away from their wives, lovers auctioned off separately.

It can only be guessed at whether these practices were employed to give blacks a sense of total defeat and hopelessness in an effort to forestall rebellion, or if they were perpetrated upon blacks 'merely' through obtuse callousness on the part of slave-owners. It would seem that in most cases the latter explanation held true, because of then-common perceptions. In the eyes of the white slave-holders, black people were 'just animals', who could soon get over separation from a child or other loved one. In fact, when dealing with the subject of intimate relationships between blacks, antebellum racist thinkers denied that love existed. They maintained that it was just 'animal lust' and 'animal attraction' which were responsible for intimate bonding between two slaves, two more examples of metaphors based in societal speciesism.

Similarly, most people today find it hard to accept the notion that non-human animals feel love for one another as individuals. Even life-long pairing is dismissed as 'instinct'. Anyone who has heard the protracted, pained protestations of a cow and her calf who have been separated might have had to give it a second thought, but it seems we assume that as soon as the outward signs of suffering have died down, so too have the inner torment and pain. But, as anyone who has sustained the death of a loved one or a particularly

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painful separation from someone knows, the pain can continue long after we have stopped crying or complaining. And if it is true that the pain lingers in so verbal an animal as a human being, for whom vocalization of anguish is 'standard' behavior, what are we to surmise when hypothesizing about a much less verbal animal such as a cow, for whom vocalization of anguish is naturally a much rarer event, and for whom pain is usually suffered in silence?

Every day, in countless ways, humans are destroying the relationships of other animals. In the wild, we randomly shoot the mates of waterfowl, some of whom pair for life. Often, the surviving mate dies of starvation while mourning. We shoot mother primates in order to capture their infants for display in zoos or use in laboratories. In breeding facilities for laboratories, we 'produce' millions of rodents — mice, rats and rabbits — each year, delivered by caesarian section into individual cages, to provide scientists with 'sterile' animals who have never been allowed contact with another of their kind. There is even an entire area of psychological experimentation — 'maternal deprivation' — in which researchers create and observe in animals extreme cases of mother-child separation and pathology. Although nearly every species of animal has been used in these studies, non-human primates are the favorite victim of researchers' curiosity. The quote which follows is from the published results of one such experiment:

Separation of mother and infant monkeys is an extremely stressful event for both mother and infant, as well as...for all other monkeys [nearby]. The mother becomes ferocious toward attendants and extremely protective of her infant. The infant's screams can be heard almost over the entire building. The mother struggles and attacks the separators. The baby clings tightly to the mother and to any object to which it can grasp to

avoid being held or removed by the attendant. With the baby gone, the mother paces the cage almost constantly, charges the cage occasionally, bites at it, and makes continual attempts to escape... The infant emits...shrill screams intermittently and almost continuously for the period of separation.<sup>17</sup>

In food production the tragedy continues. Chicks never see a hen; pigs have but a brief interlude with their mother sow, who is kept tethered to a metal stall to ensure minimal calorie-burning and food consumption. Dairy cows are artificially inseminated (and thus deprived of any contact with a bull) to produce a long succession of calves needed to stimulate milk production, only to have each calf ripped away from her immediately following birth. If the calf is a male — and is not needed for veal production — he will be immediately killed. If female, the calf may have the same fate as her mother: life in a milk factory, doomed to churn out babies whom she will never nuzzle, never run with in a field.



*Lawdy, lawdy, them was tribbollashuns!  
Wunner dese here womans was my  
Antie en she say dat she skacely call to  
min he e'r whoppin' her, 'case she was  
er breeder woman en' brought in chillun  
ev'y twelve mont's jes lak a cow  
bringin' in a calf...*

— Martha Jackson (born 1850), in  
*Alabama Narratives*

*Do you think nothing of their families  
left behind? Of the connections broken?  
Of the friendships, attachments, and  
relationships that are burst asunder?*

— William Pitt, Speech on the Slave  
Trade, House of Commons, 2 April  
1792

## TRANSPORTATION, OR THE UNBEARABLE JOURNEY

*Deponent further sayeth The Bella J  
left the Guinea Coast  
with a cargo of five hundred blacks and odd  
for the barracoons of Florida:*

*'That there was hardly room 'tween-decks for half  
the sweltering cattle stowed spoon-fashion there;  
that some went mad of thirst and tore their flesh  
and sucked the blood...'*

— Robert Hayden, from his poem  
'Middle Passage'

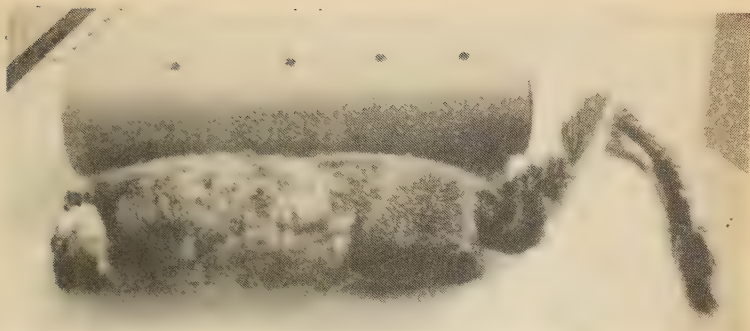
*Animals that die in transit do not die  
easy deaths. They freeze to death in  
winter and collapse from thirst and heat  
exhaustion in summer. They die, lying  
unattended in stockyards, from injuries  
sustained in falling off a slippery loading  
ramp. They suffocate when other  
animals pile on top of them in an  
overcrowded, badly loaded truck. They  
die from thirst or starve when careless  
stockmen forget to give them water or  
food. And they die from the sheer stress  
of the whole terrifying experience, for  
which nothing in their life has given  
them the slightest preparation.*

— Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*



Above: Canoe used to take slaves from the beach to the slaving ships. Two hundred slaves were packed beneath the deck in a space about 40 feet long and 12 feet wide.

*It is known that...where they carry the prisoners to the ships, those on land weep copiously, horrified and fearful of the violence that is done to them, seeing that in addition to taking men against their will, they treat them very inhumanely on the ships, whence a great number die suffocated by their own stench and from other bad treatment. There was one night in which thirty died on one ship in port because they would not open the hatch for fear [the slaves] would escape, no matter how loudly those below shouted for them to open because they were dying; the only response they received was to be called dogs and similar names. — A Portuguese Clergyman of the Eighteenth Century.<sup>18</sup>*



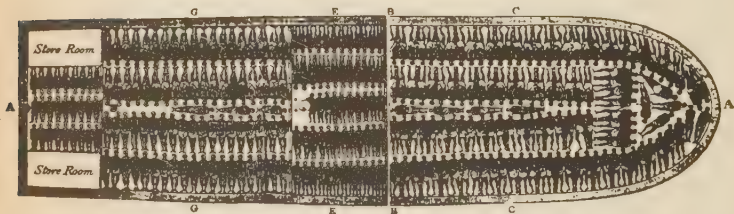
One of ten Giant squirrels imported by a UK zoo from Indonesia packed in plastic tubes and stacked within a wooden crate. Two of the squirrels died during transit and the rest were in poor condition.

Only about fifteen million of some thirty or forty million black Africans survived the ordeal of capture and transport to become slaves in the Western hemisphere. Those who survived had managed to live through the hellish 'Middle Passage', transport by cargo boat to the New World. When demand for slaves soared in the eighteenth century, those ship captains who 'tight-packed' their human cargo won out over the 'loose-packers'. Two and sometimes three tiers were built in a six-foot hold. Slaves were frequently so tightly packed that, in the words of one observer, 'the shelf would not easily contain one more.'<sup>19</sup>

Today, it is common to call such a ship a 'cattle-boat', just as Jews and others were transported to the concentration camps in 'cattle-cars'. Once again, this is not just an eccentricity of our language. One historian, in fact, writing about the Middle Passage, saw fit to comment that 'the slaves were treated like cattle.' Cattle, and other animals, are indeed transported in vehicles such as these, in no greater comfort than their historical human counterparts. Steers are

shipped, sometimes as far as two thousand miles, without regard to summer heat or winter cold, to their final destination: the slaughterhouse and packing plant. Sometimes they experience such a journey several times in their short lives, shipped from auction, to feedlot, to auction, and finally the slaughterhouse. Tremendous losses in body weight occur — up to 9 per cent of total body weight in a one- or two-day trip — as a result of the stress of transport. So great is this stress, that the animals actually lose weight from their bones. Stressed cattle also fall victim to what is known as ‘shipping fever’, of which hundreds of thousands die yearly.

Other animals are subjected to even more intensive conditions during their lives than are ‘beef’ cows. The horrors of the Middle Passage, with its cramped conditions, pools of excrement and urine, ‘acceptable’ mortality rates, seemingly interminable length of duration, and finally



‘The poor creatures, thus cramped, are likewise in irons for the most part which makes it difficult for them to turn or move or attempt to rise or lie down without hurting themselves or each other. Every morning, perhaps, more instances than one are found of the living and the dead fastened together’

—Rev. John Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade*, 1788

insanity leading to violence and cannibalism, have been projected into modernity in the form of factory farming. Sows are chained or clamped into narrow farrowing stalls for months and years on end, to conserve space and food-calorie energy expenditure. Chickens, and increasingly pigs, are stacked three, four, or five tiers high in rows of tiny 'battery' cages. Pigs' tails are 'docked' — cut off without anesthesia — to prevent stress-induced tail-biting. Australia, the world's largest producer of wool, annually ships seven million sheep to the Middle East on tightly packed 'slave ships', with 50,000 or more sheep on each three-week boat trip. Aside from the 'usual' deaths which occur on these journeys, there are periodic disasters (disease, fire, ventilation-system breakdown) which result in the deaths of thousands. Upon reaching their destination, those who survived are killed in the brutal 'Halal' ritualistic slaughter style.<sup>21</sup>



Chickens, pigs, cows and other animals on the way to the slaughterhouse are usually not fed as this would 'waste' food, the cost of which those in the industry would rather keep as profit. Depending on the distance between the farm or feedlot and the slaughterhouse which will pay the most, animals may travel 12, 36, or even 72 hours.

When those blacks who did survive Middle Passage reached the shore, what awaited them was the terror of the slave market or auction, and a life of slavery. When animals reach the end of their journey, what awaits them is the ultimate extreme to which slavery can be taken: the deprivation of life itself — slaughter.

*The deck, that is, the floor of their rooms [in the slave ship], was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughterhouse.*

— Dr. Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, 1788



Conditions were so cramped on the slavers that many slaves spent the entire voyage from Africa to America like this.

Died in transit – monkeys destined for vivisection. *Environment Investigation Agency*





'Silo-type' egg factory, New Mexico. *USDA*



Pregnant sows

## HUNTING

*Two men on a drunken hunting trip  
failed to find any deer and instead cold-  
bloodedly murdered a deaf black man,  
yesterday as he walked along a railroad  
track in Chico.*

— *Los Angeles Times*<sup>22</sup>

Hunting. A seemingly straightforward word, but one which connotes many, often contradictory images. A carefree day in the woods with 'the boys'? A show of skill? A demonstration of absolute power over someone else: the ability to *end* someone's life. Many people are uncomfortable with the pronoun *someone* being used to define a non-human animal. Perhaps they feel more comfortable with the term *something*. But a thing doesn't have a life. If you shoot it, it doesn't die because it was never alive. It can't bleed, it can't feel pain. Perhaps it was once alive, but now dead it is a thing. A corpse is a thing. So hunting can be looked at as turning *someone* into *something*. Turning a vital, living being with a past and a potential future into a corpse. It takes the independent relatively autonomous (uncontrolled) being and turns her or him into an *object*, some *thing* which is no longer capable of any independent thought or action. And in this way the hunter has proved themselves. He (more rarely she) has proved that he has the power, the ultimate power of life and death, and can exert it over someone else.

In the following passage from the book *Black Like Me*, the

author, John Howard Griffin, relates an experience he had and in the process helps to illustrate the idea that what is of essence here is not the *species* of prey, but the issue of power. The outcome of who will be the next victim of this hunter's ego is always in question, as the potential victim changes hazily from black person to deer and back again. Perhaps the only thing which saved Griffin from his death was that power over a human being (who speaks the same language) can be effectively asserted through verbal means.

I hitchhiked up toward the swamp country between Mobile and Montgomery... I walked some miles before a large, pleasant-faced man halted his truck and told me to get in. When I opened the door I saw a shotgun propped against the seat next to his knee. I recalled it was considered sport among some elements in Alabama to hunt 'nigs' and I backed away.

'Come on,' he laughed. 'That's for hunting deer.'

[As the conversation continued, it deteriorated, and the driver displayed his racist attitudes.]

'...What're you doing down here?'

'Just traveling around, trying to find jobs.'

'You're not down here to stir up trouble, are you?'

'Oh god no.'

'You start stirring up these niggers and we sure as hell know how to take care of you.'

'I don't intend to.'

'Do you know what we do to trouble makers down here?'

'No sir.'

'We either ship them off to the pen or kill them.'

He spoke in a tone that sickened me, casual, merciless... The immensity of it terrified me. But it caught him up like lust now. He entertained it, his voice unctuous with pleasure and cruelty. The highway stretched deserted through the swamp forests. He nodded toward the solid wall of brush flying past our windows.

'You can kill a nigger and toss him into that swamp and no one'll ever know what happened to him.'<sup>23</sup>

Each year, hundreds of millions of animals are murdered under the guise of 'sport'. Twice as many are not killed outright but are wounded and die eventually of gangrene, infection, blood-loss, or starvation. The U.S. Department of the Interior reports that each year two to three million waterfowl die of lead poisoning caused by the ingestion of lead bullets in streams and marshes,<sup>24</sup> deposited there by hunters who missed their 'target'. These deaths are in addition to the millions of birds who are directly killed by hunters.

The most common species of animal hunted in the U.S. is deer, the target of some 81 per cent of all hunters.<sup>25</sup> The *type* of deer most hunters go after — the male deer, the stag, the buck — supports the idea of hunting as a display of power. Hunters try to kill the most 'virile' of the males, those with the biggest antlers. If they are successful at ending this life, they have proved their own manhood.

Is it just chance which gave us *buck* as the racist slang term for a black man? Runaway slaves were hunted down in much the same manner as animals are today. It was common to employ specially trained dogs who were, in fact, trained to hate negroes.<sup>26</sup> Until 1831 throughout the South 'there were men who made it a profession to keep "nigger dogs" and with them to follow up and catch runaway slaves.'<sup>27</sup>

Closely paralleling this is the sort of hunting practiced by the British upper classes. On horseback, and with a team of trained dogs, they track weasels, otters, deer, foxes, hares, minks, and other animals. The 'target' is predetermined, with certain hunts focussing on particular species. The end goal is to kill the animal; the 'sport', the protracted process by which it is actualized.

After the kill in British bloodsports, the trophies are extracted from the victim: stags' teeth are pulled out, the heart is ripped from the chest. In the U.S., the desired trophy is a buck's head, complete with antlers, to stuff and hang over the sofa. And of course, there is the grisly practice of *eating* the victim of the hunt, whether it is a deer, duck, pheasant or other species of animal. This too had its parallel in racist action. Michelle Russell writes of:

the biological metaphors which told us, in no uncertain terms, what kind of animal Anglo-Americans thought us to be. The consequences of those ideas in action: the spits and crossties where we were roasted after the hunt. Our mutilated body parts smoked and sold as trophies.<sup>28</sup>

Notably, Native Americans, and many other aboriginal peoples, hunted out of real necessity, with respect for and in harmony with the balance of nature. Theirs was not a profane act, nor an unconscious attempt to symbolically conquer chaos. Hunting as an exercise of power is a completely different act, one which only serves to further and further upset the balance of nature, the balance of humans to nature, and ultimately, the balance of humans themselves. It is not sufficient to pay lip-service to the concept of respect and harmony prior to (let me here run the risk of exaggeration) switching off the television set, grabbing a beer, and driving to the woods to blow away a deer. Harmony and respect were central to an entire world-view, a

view of the universe, in which the very lives of Native Americans were steeped, from birth until death, and, in their philosophy, from death until rebirth.

The act of hunting, as performed in the manner explored earlier in this chapter, was, and continues to be, an expression of the power which the ruling race or species exerts over the powerless. The law, that set of customs generally agreed to by those in power, prior to 1863 recognized that hunting down black people — 'slaves' — was a sanctioned act. Presently, the laws are such that hunting down non-human animals is legal. Perhaps our society will soon realize, with due horror, that we have been late in extending our respect and the law out to protect all of those who need protection.

## VIVISECTION

*They administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference, and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. They said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck, were only the noise of a little string that had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood which was a great subject of controversy.*

— Nicholas Fontaine, *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, 1738

*Negroes...are void of sensibility to a surprising degree. They are not subject to nervous diseases. They sleep sound in every disease, nor does any mental disturbance ever keep them awake. They bear chirurgical operations much better than white people, and what would be the cause of unsupportable pain to a white man, a Negro would almost disregard.*

— Dr. Mosely, *Treatise on Tropical Diseases*, 1787

The term 'vivisection' means 'live dissection', but has come to be used to define *any* experiment performed on a living creature, human or non-human. This includes burning, freezing, non-therapeutic operations, disease studies which involve inducing disease in a healthy individual, psychology experiments, drug testing, and virtually any other procedure which involves tinkering with someone's life in a non-therapeutic manner.

Currently, each year in the United States alone, some 100 million non-human animals die at the hands of scientists and laboratory technicians. That's three animals every second of every day. In Great Britain an animal dies in a lab once every six seconds. Many of these experiments are completely non-medical in nature, being done to test out new hair sprays, oven cleaners, shampoos, etc., for toxicity. A myriad of alternatives to using live animals in research exist — many often *superior* to methods employing animals — making current practices an archaic holdover from a less sophisticated era, fairly calling back to the days of dungeons and sweat-boxes.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, *billions* of tax-dollars are spent *each year* to literally torture animals — supposedly for our benefit — while many *humans* in this country lack access to even basic health care.

At a rally in San Francisco protesting the use of animals in research, Alameda County supervisor John George said, 'My people were the first laboratory animals in America.' Indeed, blacks suffered at the hands of scientists just as animals continue to do today. Perhaps the best documented and widely known example of medical experimentation on black people is the Tuskegee syphilis study. It was, in fact, the longest experiment performed on human beings in medical history.

Funded by the U.S. Public Health Service, the study was conducted in Macon County, Alabama, beginning in 1932. This was a very poor, rural area where living conditions for the black cotton-field workers were not too different from



Syphilis-infected chimpanzee

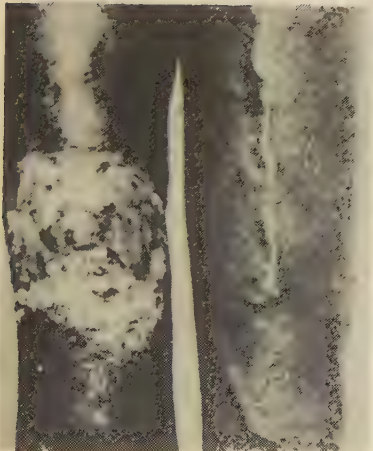


*Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*

Spinal tap, 1933. From left: Jesse J. Peters, Nurse Rivers, and unidentified subject

*Below left:* Case of ulcerated cutaneous syphilis on left leg, photographed from rear

*Below right:* Case of ulcerated cutaneous syphilis on right arm (Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Ga.)



when slavery was still legal. The white scientists, working on the racist hypothesis that syphilis affected whites and blacks differently, observed the course of untreated syphilis in the black male for forty years, until the experiment was exposed by a journalist and finally ended and investigated. The men were never told they had syphilis, were not offered any treatment, nor were they told how the disease was transmitted.

Richard Wright, reknowned author of *Native Son*, worked as a menial laborer in 'one of the largest and wealthiest hospitals in Chicago'. In this excerpt from his essay 'The Man Who Went to Chicago' he gives us a glimpse into his reaction to his experiences there:

Each Saturday morning I assisted a...doctor in slitting the vocal cords of a fresh batch of dogs from the city pound. The object was to devocalize the dogs so that their howls would not disturb the patients in other parts of the hospital. I held each dog as the doctor injected Nembutal into its veins to make it unconscious: then I held the dog's jaws open as the doctor inserted the scalpel and severed the vocal cords. Later, when the dogs came to, they would lift their heads to the ceiling and gape in a soundless wail. The sight became lodged in my imagination as a symbol of silent suffering.<sup>31</sup>

## IN DEFENCE OF SLAVERY

*[The abolition of the slave-trade] would be extreme cruelty to the African savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre, or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life.*

— James Boswell, 18th century pro-slavery writer

*In the 18th century it was widely urged that domestication was good for animals; it civilized them and increased their numbers: 'we multiply life, sensation and enjoyment.'*

— Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, quoting Benjamin Rush

*[It was] best for the beasts that they should be under man.*

— *The Theological, Philosophical, Miscellaneous Works of the Reverend William Jones*, 1801.

It has long been contended that, for some — and of course, never *us*, but always *them* — life as a slave proves more beneficial than detrimental. In fact, hundreds of years before any of the above sentiments were expressed, Aristotle had used this same approach in his attempt to justify the subjugation and domestication of animals *and* some humans. For this rationalization to be effective, the victims need to be transformed — in the mind of the captor/master — from oppressed beings to thankful underlings; grateful for being used, appreciated and protected, while fulfilling the needs of their superiors. Wrote Aristotle:

...for all tame animals there is an advantage in being under human control, as this secures their survival. And as regards the relationship between male and female, the former is naturally superior, the latter inferior, the former rules and the latter is subject.

By analogy, the same must necessarily apply to mankind as a whole. Therefore all men who differ from one another by as much as the soul differs from the body or man from a wild beast (and that is the state of those who can work by using their bodies, and for whom that is the best they can do) — these people are slaves by nature, and it is better for them to be subject to this kind of control, and it is better for the other creatures I have mentioned. For a man who is able to belong to another person is by nature a slave (for that is why he belongs to someone else)... Assistance regarding the necessities of life is provided by both groups, by slaves and by domestic animals. Nature must therefore have intended to make the bodies of free men and of slaves different also; slaves' bodies strong for the services they have to do, those of free men upright and not much use for

that kind of work, but instead useful for community life...<sup>32</sup>

In 1832, John P. Kennedy published a widely read novel, *Swallow Barn*, whose narrator was supposed to be from the liberal North. The narrator visits a plantation in Virginia expecting to see all manner of horrors perpetrated upon whom he presupposes are the miserable victims of slavery. But (and what an enlightening experience!) he finds only, in the words of Sterling Brown, 'a kindly patriarchy and grateful, happy slaves.'<sup>33</sup> Kennedy's narrator croons:

I am sure they could never become a happier people than I find here... No tribe of people has ever passed from barbarism to civilization whose progress has been more secure from harm, more genial to their character, or better supplied with mild and beneficent guardianship, adapted to the actual state of their intellectual feebleness, than the Negroes of *Swallow Barn*. And from what I can gather, it is pretty much the same on the other estates in this region.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, a worker in an egg 'factory' revealed paralleling attitudes to me in the course of an interview I conducted with her. The conditions in the area where the chickens were housed were so abhorrent that I had to go outside every few minutes to breathe. The air was filled with dust and ammonia as the excrement pit beneath the rows and rows of 'laying-hens' cages was emptied only once every two years. The chickens had part of their upper mandible cut off (de-beaking) and were living four to a cage a little larger than a record album. They lived in these conditions for two years until they were moved into trucks — their first and only experience of the outdoors — and driven to a slaughterhouse. Below is a portion of our conversation:

Q: Do you think about the chickens much?

A: Usually I don't... The chickens here...know where their next meal is coming from, and they don't have to worry about predators...

Q: It seems like a lot of their natural tendencies are inhibited though, in terms of expression, a pecking order, being able to mate...

A: Well, no, they don't mate. They do, oh...they stretch; and they're happy. We see them, when we're walking through the place removing the dead...and they stretch. The pecking order: I think they have it in their individual cages.

Q: Well, not being able to walk, or turn around, or scratch...

A: Well on the other hand, if we were to put them out on the floor, it would take a lot more labor to gather the eggs. And eggs would cost a great deal more.

Q: But in terms of the chickens who are doing the actual work, producing the eggs. What would they be happier with?

A: On the other hand, what's the alternative? Do we quit eating eggs?

Q: Why do you have to debeak them?

A: The chickens will, in their pecking order, pick on the weakest chicken... Once they draw blood, then they just keep on going. They're quite cannibalistic.

Q: But when they're in a barnyard that usually doesn't happen.

A: No, but then the one who's being picked on can get away.

*Swallow Barn* was intentionally written as a pro-slavery propaganda piece, whereas the comments of the egg-worker show how thoroughly a person is able to *internalize* propa-

ganda. While the novel hoped to convince those who had *never visited* a plantation of the idyllic life led by slave-inhabitants, the interview reveals how it is possible to be daily confronted with reality, yet cease to see it.

What is at work here in both these instances, is an attempt by society to brush over reality; to cease to hear the cries of our slaves, to believe that their spilt blood means something different from our own, and, finally, to believe that not only is the bondage we impose upon our slaves not a hindrance to them, but that it is a benefit.

In his book *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point*, sociologist Philip Slater describes a pattern of thought which he terms 'The Toilet Assumption',

the notion that unwanted matter, unwanted difficulties, unwanted complexities and obstacles will disappear if they're removed from our immediate field of vision...

He continues:

Our approach to social problems is to decrease their visibility. This is the real foundation of racial segregation, especially in its most extreme case, the Indian 'reservation'. The result of our social efforts has been to remove the underlying problems of our society farther and farther from daily experiences and daily consciousness, and hence to decrease in the mass of the population, the knowledge, skill, and motivation necessary to deal with them.<sup>35</sup>

## 70 *The Dreaded Comparison*

This pattern of thought, so necessary for those who wish to simply ignore the myriad problems and suffering inherent to oppression, is also an integral requirement for the maintenance and perpetuation of the secrecy which surrounds the machinery of oppression. The next chapter will explore this secrecy.

## SECRECY: HIDING FROM THE TRUTH

*If you do not see the victims of cruelty and can explain cruelty away and live with the destruction comfortably, you are adrift...*

*Institutional cruelty does everything it can to conceal the fact that it is destroying its victims, and in doing this it keeps its spectators from feeling disgust and from being confused by the paradox of trying to justify the unjustifiable, of trying to praise the smashing of the weak.*

— Philip P. Hallie, *Cruelty*

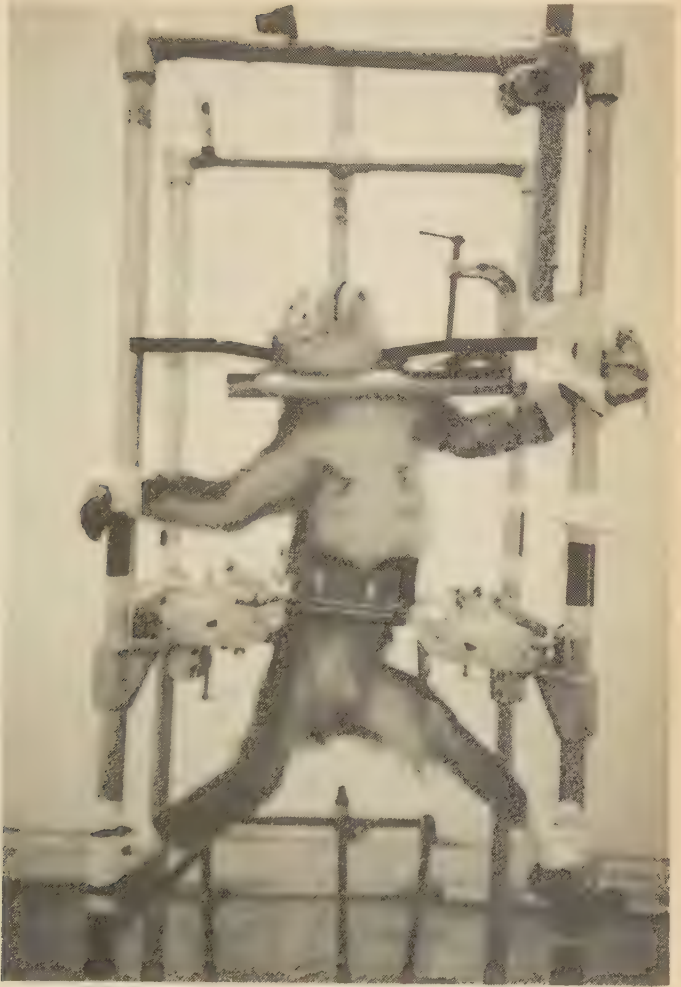


'The owner of a slave destroys two freedoms — that of his slave and that of himself'

—John Bryant, *Fettered Kingdoms*

'Negroes have no rights which the white man is bound to respect'

—Justice Taney, a member of the U. S. Supreme Court who heard the Dred Scott case



'So far as I can see, unless one is initially prepared to adopt a rather rampant anthropomorphism in respect to animals, they can have no rights'

—R. G. Frey, *Interests and Rights, The Case Against Animals*, 1980

In the institutionalized cruelty of black slavery in the United States, secrecy was maintained, explains Hallie, by way of 'isolated plantations, and later (after the abolition) by xenophobic little communities that jealously concealed from the outside world any facts about the way they treated their black people.'<sup>36</sup>

Segregation was another apparatus by which a complex and disturbing social reality was concealed from members of society. For some — the die-hard racists — segregation allowed a continuation of the myth of white superiority by eliminating the possibility of normal day-to-day contact between the races, which, if it occurred, would inevitably point to equality between them. For those others who were not actively racist, segregation served to forestall 'unpleasant' awakenings into the gross disparities between the economic and educational situations and opportunities of the two races.

Secrecy serves to conceal the details of the horror from all but those who must participate in it to keep the cogs of the machinery running smoothly. In the case of blacks, those participants in the system included the slave-owners, dealers, and hunters in the antebellum period, as well as many in the postbellum era, such as owners of stores and restaurants serving blacks, owners of the buildings in which they lived, owners of the land they worked, police and sheriffs, and many others. In effect, segregation served to blind those who were outsiders to the system to its workings.

This same technique was used in Nazi Germany. Long before the mass killing of Jews actually began, a succession of restrictive laws were enacted, which served to segregate Jews away from the rest of the German population, in both the physical and social sense. Non-Jews were forbidden to speak to Jews, even in the case of a long-standing prior friendship. This was necessary to reduce people's understanding of and empathy for Jewish people, an a priori requirement for mass extermination. This way, whatever happened to the Jews

was out of the line of people's moral vision.

Secrecy and distancing are also used to protect the very profitable institutionalized cruelty to animals as it exists today. Vivisection laboratories and other facilities are notoriously difficult to enter. In most cases it is impossible for a citizen to enter them without breaking the law. Even veterinarians can be denied admittance, and law-enforcement agents are not permitted to enter without a search warrant, which is difficult to obtain without evidence of wrong-doing. And, in the epitome of Catch-22 situations, one cannot gather the necessary evidence without first gaining access to a lab.

Likewise, the public is not generally admitted to the windowless 'factory farm' buildings, each an isolated plantation in itself, which are scattered in out-of-the-way locations across the country. On a single farm one might find ten windowless structures, each holding 70,000 chickens whose entire existences have been reduced to egg production. Or one might find dairy cows or pigs in these buildings, as it is becoming common to house these animals, too, indoors for the duration of their lives. Slaughterhouses, located off the beaten track, are also closed to public scrutiny.

All of this secrecy is necessary to keep the system intact. In the case of animal slavery, the outsiders are not mere spectators, as mentioned by Hallie above, but are complicit in the system. Nearly everyone feeds quite literally upon the fruits of this cruelty. In order to go on doing so, we must be able to disassociate the actual producers — the animals themselves — from their 'products': meat, milk, eggs, leather, fur, etc. In order to go on with 'business as usual' and not disrupt their life in any 'major' way, it is necessary for the average person to be able to smilingly purchase that carton of milk and picture a happy cow frolicking with her calf in a field. When buying what is euphemistically termed 'beef', this person must picture, if *anything*, a large beefy brainless sort of creature who doesn't even have the sense to notice

he's alive.

But what of those who are not mere spectators, complicit in their silence, but are active participants, willfully committing violence against others? While the spectator participates in the system through his or her inaction, these individuals' participation is in the realm of action. Of course, those whom we term 'spectators' are often active participants in terms of buying and using the products of exploitation, as mentioned above. But there are those whose active role in the system goes far beyond this level. These are the people who hold the scalpels, wear the white hoods, wield the whips, and in whose pockets are the keys to the chains and shackles. The next chapters will explore why they have come to commit their violence and crave control over others.

## PROFITS OVER ALL

*...the anti-slavery crusade...the ranting of a handful moralistic bigots, [which attempted]...to abolish so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest, must have been crushed at once had not the insignificance of the zealots who vainly took the lead in it, made the vast body of planters, merchants and others, whose immense properties were involved in the trade...suppose that there would be no danger.*

— James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*,  
1791

*It is not difficult to appreciate that a cow's udder is highly important to a great industry and even to the welfare of the peoples of the world.*

— YAPP, *Dairy Cattle*

Part and parcel of attempts to justify slavery, and to obfuscate its existence in the eyes of spectators, are the motives for doing so. On a personal and societal level, monetary gain can be implicated as quite a motivator. To a large extent, the heightened *institutionalization* of oppression of blacks (in the form of legalized slavery), and animals (in factory farming and vivisection), can be attributed to the profit motive. Indeed, anti-abolitionists contended that the end of slavery would bring with it the collapse of the economic structure of the Southern United States; and in the eighteenth century C. W. Hume wrote that:

The major cruelties practiced on animals in civilized countries today arise out of commercial exploitation, and the fear of losing profits is the chief obstacle to reform.<sup>37</sup>

Certainly it is true that a fear of competition and dwindling profits may be responsible for a farmer's decision to automate his egg production system and tight-pack more birds into fewer cages. As others in the industry force their animals to produce more, an individual farmer is often economically badgered, if only by the bank, into following accordingly. But it is only possible for him to increase pressure on his chickens if he has already mentally negated their existences as individuals. He must already view them as lessers to himself, perhaps so much his lessers that he has denied the importance of their feelings, or actually can no longer think of them as having any feelings at all. To him they have become merely a means to his profitable end.

A person who owned a large number of slaves, but left them under the charge of an overseer, was in a similar situation. He could let the machinery (in this case the very human overseer) run its course, doing whatever was necessary to push the slaves toward maximum productivity without having to deal with them — in thought or

action — as individuals.

These examples seem to point to a neat bundle of explanation: 'Slavery and oppression are created in the quest for profit.' But we have already seen that there is more to the problem than this explanation would allow. Before the possibility of any profitability can be conceived of, the minds of those who will stand to profit must be ready to accept all that the oppressor/oppressed relationship will entail. For some, a hazily understood version of evolutionary theory is all they need to avoid giving the lives of their victims another thought.

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 BY PUBLIC AUCTION,  
 On **MONDAY the 18th of MAY, 1829,**  
 FROM THE TOWN  
 FOR SALE,  
**THE THREE FOLLOWING**  
**SLAVES,**  
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 WILLIAM, about 25 years old, a Labourer,  
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 All the above are **WARRANTED** true and sound in mind and body  
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**TO BE LET,**  
**MALE and FEMALE**  
**SLAVES,**

**TO BE SOLD**, on board the  
 Ship *Bance Island*, on Tuesday the 6th  
 of May next, at *Ashley-Ferry*; a choice  
 cargo of about 150 fine healthy



**NEGROES,**

just arrived from the  
*Windward & Rice Coast*.  
 —The utmost care has  
 already been taken, and  
 shall be continued, to keep them free from  
 the least danger of being infected with the  
**SMALL-POX**, no boat having been on  
 board, and all other communication with  
 people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

*Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.*

*N. B.* Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the  
**SMALL-POX** in their own Country.



Also for Sale, at *Blossom & Clark's*,  
 Fine Rice, Ginns, Paddy, Books, Muslins,  
 Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.  
 BY ONE OF OUR CITY'S DISTINGUISHED ENGLISH HOUSES,  
**BLUCHER,**

A notice advertising a sale of slaves

In the pre-Darwinian seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, religion — Christianity, to be more precise — served a similar function. The Christian worldview saw ('civilized' as opposed to 'savage') humans as being the beneficiaries of God's universe, the reason for which all else was created. A characteristic essay written in 1833 was entitled 'On the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God as Manifested in the Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man'. By inverting evolutionary theory as Darwin had intended it, through a very minor but far-reaching adjustment, this attitude toward the rest of life on the planet could continue to be justified and rationalized. (This skewed vision and application of evolution was termed Social Darwinism, discussed earlier.) So, despite the huge scandal the theory of evolution caused in Darwin's age — enraging the church and its leaders — with a quick twist in meaning and intent it was used to serve one of the same *purposes* as some forms of religion once had: justifying the exploitation and oppression of others based on their differences. What was once 'Manifest Destiny' became 'Evolutionary Destiny'. And, in the minds of many, we eventually saw the system of science supplant that of religion as a justifier of atrocities perpetrated upon others. The *purpose* hadn't changed, only the *masters*.

But what still remains unexplained is the proclivity of the 'civilized' human's psyche towards accepting the justification of oppression that Social Darwinism or some forms of religion have to offer. And this is the essence of our riddle, for we see that one system of justification is easily superceded by another, even when the other, as in the case of evolutionary theory as it was intended, might have actually served to *lessen* oppression. It seems that the desire to oppress others is so ingrained in many humans that they can even distort a liberating theory into its inverse.

Throughout this book, and especially in the chapter on hunting, we began to explore the nature of power, and saw

that this, perhaps, was somehow much more crucial to our study of oppression and slavery, and closer to their roots than many other components we have explored. For while the profit motive serves to explain *some* aspects of vivisection, factory farming, and the black slave trade, it fails miserably at explaining, for example, lynching or segregation, or the calculated cruelty involved in many 'scientific' experiments, or the joy many people derive from killing. Oppression is carried far beyond the point of profitability and mere economic exploitation.

To attempt to flatly arrive at *the* cause of humans' cruelty is to attempt the impossible. There is no more *one* reason for someone's cruelty towards another than there is *one* manifestation of that cruelty. What we can hope to do is explore several possible sources or motivators for cruel behavior, and through them form a sort of patchwork image of the face of human cruelty.

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## POWER

*The ox, as the Greeks used to say, was the poor man's slave; and even the poorest tinker had a dog at his heels on which to bestow the kick which indicated his superiority.*

— Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*

Often, when someone is ill-treated or relegated to a demeaning position in society, they will respond by venting their frustrations on someone whose societal position is even lower than their own. It is not rational; their violent action in no way serves as a retaliation towards their own oppressors. On this subject, Coral Lansbury writes:

Rather than being seen as an aberration of human nature, the torture and killing of animals permitted those who had no rights, no possibility of ever imposing their will upon [other humans], to demonstrate, often publicly, their strength and dominance. When men who were accustomed to being thrashed and abused could watch the chained bull harried by a pack of dogs, it was like seeing the authority of the master torn apart by the mob.<sup>38</sup>



Taking this concept one step further, we can see that by torturing or dominating a powerful animal, such as a bull, or a tiger in a big-game hunt, the oppressors feel, unconsciously, that they have destroyed those who held power over them. By destroying or tormenting the weak, such as a rabbit or a child, the oppressors become the master who has in turn tortured them. Their own victims' helpless writhings echo what they have felt, and temporarily replace them in the role of victim. And so these new reactive torturers ascend, momentarily in their own mind, to the social- or physical-power position of their own oppressor.

But this ascension is short-lived and ineffectual. For the rise to power is only in their own minds, and has really only occurred in relation to those who are proven to be much weaker than themselves. They have done nothing to upset the relationship which is the source of their problem: that between their master and themselves, the victims. And they are still as powerless in this regard as they were before becoming someone else's oppressor. As long as their anger is directed at an innocent instead of at the perpetrator of their own victimization, the cycle — once started — will probably not be broken. Here we can see one possible factor in the creation of the serial murderer, the hunter, etc. They can not torture or murder enough of those who are weaker, though they may turn to this occupation obsessively. For as hard as they may try to wipe out their oppressor, they are only doing it symbolically, which never works in the end. A new symbol springs forth as the last gasps its final breath, and the lust for blood and power is never sated. These victim/oppressors, by the way, may not be actively oppressed by another individual. They may be the slowly crushed victims of an inequitable economic system, or even suffer from the emotional wounds of a childhood which has long since passed.

In *Pornography and Silence*, Susan Griffin explores the deep roots of cruel behavior in human beings. Her terms 'fascist' and 'chauvinist' are used to denote anyone who engages in

prejudicial and oppressive behavior toward others, and we see that her paradigm easily extends to include the racist and the speciesist. She writes:

...far from experiencing nature directly, or as part of himself, the fascist mystifies natural knowledge. In this way he imagines himself to have been conferred with a special dispensation by nature, which paradoxically places him above nature.

Thus the chauvinist confers upon himself the right to manipulate nature. He uses natural power to control his enemy. He transforms the natural experience of this other into an experience of helplessness, terror, and pain. He uses nature as an instrument of revenge against those...he has chosen as a symbol for his natural self... In the pornographer's world, therefore, sexual coitus, a most natural act, becomes an act of aggression, rape and violence. And it is no accident that for the prisoner of the Nazi concentration camp, every natural impulse — hunger, thirst, the need to defecate, even to swallow, or to sleep — became another form of suffering, the basis for ridicule, or a means of torture.

By manipulating nature in this way, the chauvinist can control his experience of nature. Because he projects a disowned self on the other, whom, vicariously, he tortures with nature, he can experience his own fear of nature. (And at the same time he can prove to himself the truth of his conviction that nature is terrible, that nature is sadistic.)<sup>39</sup>

This model affords us new insight into the minds of the white colonists, driven to destroy and civilize wilderness; turn darkness into light; control the herbivorous animals of

the forest while destroying the carnivores, over whom domination could not be as complete and whose predatory behavior (more similar to humans' own than was that of the herbivores) terrified the colonists. In 1707, for instance, Cotton Mather warned of 'the *Evening Wolves*, the rabid and howling *Wolves* of the *Wilderness* [who] would make...Havock among you, and not leave the *Bones* till the morning.'<sup>40</sup> Roderick Nash notes that 'legends and folktales from the first contact until well into the national period linked the New World wilderness with a host of monsters, witches, and similar supernatural beings.'<sup>41</sup>

In the colonists' terrified delusional state, these fears of supernatural forces were blended with a fear of very real and natural beings until all took on the glow of the netherworld, real and unreal alike. These irrational fears can be said to be born of a fear of what is sometimes termed 'the darkness within', itself a racially-loaded phrase. People who are afraid of elements within themselves, such as strong emotion, sexual feelings, weakness, or violent urges, repress even their own knowledge of these parts of themselves. Really, then, what I have termed 'irrational fears' are actually a fear of the so-called 'irrational' part of one's own self. People deny these elements, yet at the same time want or need to know them, so they are projected onto someone or something else: women, black people, Jews, animals, or even Nature herself. Then, because these beings have now come to represent something of which this person is afraid, or cannot understand, or wants to deny in himself, the torture or perhaps even eradication of the symbol is enacted. Thus we see Southern white men, for whom the rape of black women was not uncommon, portraying black men as rapists of white women. We see humans, themselves engaging in wars (often as a result of this same sort of delusional fear), and perpetrators of slavery and other injustices to humans, justifying their wholesale violence towards non-human animals on the grounds that 'animals are incapable of

distinguishing moral from immoral behavior.' Through violent actions towards the symbol, the oppressors unconsciously try to destroy those qualities in themselves which they find so threatening and wish to deny. And this is why the actions, justifications, and even language of oppression is, so similar even when the victims are, in some ways, so very different. This is one reason why the outward expressions of the oppression of blacks and animals have been so similar; because to the powerful oppressor, all victims are all too similar: they are a part of their own self reflected back to themselves. The victims are not seen as autonomous beings.

This relates as well to the oppressor/oppressed relationship we first examined in this section: that of the oppressed *becoming* the oppressor. For the person who is a victim merely projects different qualities on their own would-be victims, and forces them to suffer the pain and degradation which they themselves have experienced at the hands of their own master.

But these delusional plays are not acted out only in the minds of isolated individuals. They operate on a much larger societal level, and this society serves to indoctrinate its members into its macro-mindset. Thus the fears and inhibitions which are peculiar to a given society are conveyed to and impressed upon its members often from birth, leading them, as we have seen, to play out society's pathological games on an individual level.

In 1965, Robert Wernick, a correspondent for the *Saturday Evening Post* declared the wilderness to be the following:

It is the dark, the formless, the terrible, the old chaos which our fathers pushed back... It is held at bay by constant vigilance, and when the vigilance slackens it swoops down for a melodramatic revenge.<sup>42</sup>

This passage encapsulates much of our society's formula for relating to 'the other' which is really ourself. We can imagine the author to be speaking interchangeably of the black race; of the natural progression of plant life as it 'threatens' to re-establish itself in a cleared forest area; of the nature and spirit of a dog or horse who (but for our constant vigilance) might revert to their unbroken state; or of the woman accused of possession by devils. Blacks, animals, nature, women, Jews and others have all been associated with the above sentiments, and with this paranoid imagery has come prejudicial treatment and oppression. Let us again consider the term 'breaking-in'. We associate wildness and freedom with chaos, whereas someone who is literally *broken* is civilized and thus a positive figure. That which is under our control, even if it is dead, *even if it must be killed*, is positive, while that which retains autonomy is threatening and negative.

In the Bible, Eve is led into temptation by a snake (an animal) and life in the civilized Garden of Eden comes to an end; Adam and Eve are banished to the dangerous wilderness. Adam's only downfall was being led astray by Eve. The white, male, human has projected all of his guilt, weakness, and desire for sin onto a woman and an animal. And it is these two, along with the terrible wilderness and all those associated with it (let us not forget the 'Prince of Darkness') who will continue to be the reflective surfaces onto which are projected the innermost fears, desires, and insecurities of human beings. When the *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent wrote of 'the old chaos which our fathers pushed back,' he would never have guessed that he was giving us an insight into the chaos — their denied and confused selves — which 'our fathers' have been interminably struggling to push back into the unknown corners of their unconscious minds.

With this deeper understanding of what motivates people to oppress others, we are perhaps better equipped to see

through attempts at justification made by the victimizers. We might now begin to test and understand, for example, the conflicting statements made by the vivisector about the nature of his victims. On the one hand, it is said that the animals are so unlike us that they are not worthy of our consideration. On the other hand, vivisectors claim that animals are so like us that they are essential to research. In these conflicting statements we see the researchers' own confusion as to the genuine nature of their 'subjects', and their nature in relation to the researchers' own.

We must beware of those who seek to convince us that their deeds of violence towards others are necessitated by the 'common good'. No matter how noble the oppressors claim to be, we must remember that the infliction of pain and suffering becomes a pleasureable act, an end in itself. Of this, Coral Lansbury writes:

...that cruelty can be extraordinarily satisfying cannot be denied, for cruelty is the magnifier of identity, a simplifier of social function, and the temporary resolution of insecurity and doubt... Cruelty relies upon a rigid observance of the categorical distance between victim and oppressor.<sup>43</sup>

The pleasure derived from committing acts of cruelty has been noted by others. Turn-of-the-century anti-vivisectionist Frances Cobbe, writes Lansbury, argued that:

vivisectors had fallen victim to *Schadenfreude*, that most insidious form of wickedness, a delight in the spectacle of pain. The students watching an animal contorted with agony in a laboratory were responding in the same fashion as the crowd around the cockpit (the arena used in cockfights) or bullring, and that it was disingenuous to claim otherwise...<sup>44</sup>

*Schadenfreude*, as Frances Cobbe observed, could take many different forms, from flogging children and wife-beating to tormenting animals in the name of science.

To those who would be master, what matters is not so much *who* their slaves will be, but that there *are* slaves to be had. As one group becomes off-bounds due to changing laws or the tide of social change, attention will be turned to a different weak group, or focussed more intensely upon a prior class of victims. But even this shift comes begrudgingly, for the oppressors have come to enjoy their cruel pleasures. The most important things to masters, therefore, is that the public will not become cognizant of what is being done — often in their name — and that public opinion will not turn against them, thus depriving them of their slaves.

In order to prevent these two events from occurring, masters have built into society a long succession of supposed





defenses and justifications for systems of oppression and slavery, designed to confound the public into complacency. Masters have done everything in their power to hide the very fact that oppression was and is taking place, knowing that secrecy is the best protection of their power.

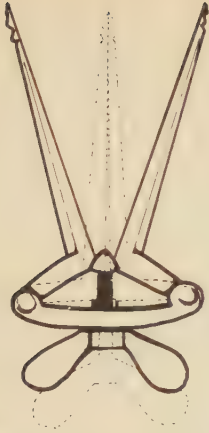
Returning to Slater's notion of 'The Toilet Assumption', we see that this secrecy cannot be maintained for very long

unless potential witnesses wish to ignore reality. For those Germans living in the surrounding areas of Nazi death camps with their crematoriums, it must have taken a lot of energy to *avoid* realizing (as they claim) that the endless black clouds streaming out of the immense smokestacks were actually the ashes of murdered people. Similarly, South African President Botha's media blackout, instated in 1985, can do little to hide the events in his country, unless people *choose* not to think, understand, and then act.

The realization that the animals we enslave, the animals we turn into *things*, the animals who slave for us that we might eat some luxury from their bodies, are *alive*, are as possessive of their lives as you or I, this realization would throw a wrench into the system. If this realization were reached, people would have to change an aspect of their lifestyle. And this is why many people resist thinking about it, resist questioning the system, and fail to know the obvious. Which greatly pleases the *slave-owners*, those who directly profit from the lives of animals and from our passive and active acceptance of slavery and oppression. For if individuals did question it, and refused to participate any longer, the system would collapse.

*It is only by the spread of the same democratic spirit that animals can enjoy the 'rights' for which even [humans] have for so long struggled in vain. The emancipation of [humans] from cruelty and injustice will bring with it in due course the emancipation of animals also. The two reforms are inseparably connected, and neither can be fully realized alone.*

— Henry Salt, 1894



*Speculum oris*

Used to pry open the mouths of suicidal slaves, for force-feeding



## WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

There is no denying that slavery had a direct and positive tendency to produce coarseness and brutality in the treatment of animals, especially those most useful to agricultural industry. Not only the slave, but the horse, the ox and the mule shared the general feeling of indifference to the rights naturally engendered by a state of slavery. The master blamed the overseer, the overseer the slave, and the slave the horses, oxen and mules, and violence fell upon the animals as a consequence.

— *Frederick Douglass*

I and my daughters and husband have been regarded as almost fanatical in our care of animals wherever we have been, and in Florida we have seen much to affect us; not so much in the oppression of the useful animals, as in the starving of other creatures which people keep and will not feed. Again we have been distressed by the wholesale barbarity of tourists who seem to make Florida animals mere marks for unskillful hunters to practice upon, and who go everywhere maiming, wounding and killing poor birds and beasts that they do not even stop to pick up, and shoot in mere wantonness. Last year we exerted ourselves to get a law passed protecting the birds of Florida which were being trapped and carried off by thousands to die in miserable little cages...veritable slave ships... I for my part am ready to do anything that can benefit the cause.

— *Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, from letter, 6 November 1877, to Henry Bergh, founder of first U.S. Humane Society.*

It should be the study of every farmer to make his horse his companion and friend, and to do this, there is but one rule, and that is, uniform sympathy and kindness. All loud and boisterous commands, a brutal flogging should be banished from the field, and only words of cheer and encouragement should be tolerated. A horse is in many respects like a man. He has five senses, and has memory, affection, and reason...  
— *Frederick Douglass*

I am in favor of animal rights as well as human rights. That is the way of a whole human being.  
— *Abraham Lincoln*

At one time the benevolent affections embrace merely the family, soon the circle expanding includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity; and finally its influence is felt in the dealings of [humans] with the animal world. In each of these cases a standard is formed, different from that of the preceding stage, but in each case the same tendency is recognized as virtue.  
— *Lecky, European Morals*

[The horse] is by Nature a very lazy animal whose idea of heaven is an enormous field of lush grass in which he can graze undisturbed until his belly is full, and after a pleasant doze can start filling himself up all over again.  
— *Captain Elwin Hartley Edwards, From Paddock to Saddle*

The Negro if left to himself will not work, he will lie down and bask in the sun... [I]t is very evident that [if slavery were abolished]...the free white operative would be compelled to pay all the expenses necessary to support this idle, drunken, lazy population.  
— *John Campbell, Negromania, 1851*

[T]he brand mark of inferiority has been indelibly, irrevocably, irretrievably, and eternally impressed by the Creator upon the negro, and...nothing can erase or obliterate it.

— *John Campbell, Negromania, 1851*

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered.

— *The Bible, Genesis 9: 1-3.*

...the philosophy of nonviolence which I had learned from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., during my involvement in the civil rights movement, was first responsible for my change in diet.

I became a vegetarian in 1965. I had been a participant in all of the 'major' and most of the 'minor' civil rights demonstrations of the early sixties, including the March on Washington and the Selma to Montgomery March. Under the leadership of Dr. King, I became totally committed to nonviolence, and I was convinced that that nonviolence meant opposition to killing in any form. I felt the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' applied to human beings not only in their dealings with each other — war, lynching, assassination, murder and the like — but in their practice of killing animals for food and sport. Animals and humans suffer and die alike. Violence causes the same pain, the same spilling of blood, the same stench of death, the same arrogant, cruel and brutal taking of life.

One night...I made the decision never to eat meat again. I had become firmly convinced that the killing of animals for food was both immoral and unnatural.

— *Dick Gregory, Dick Gregory's Natural Diet For Folks Who Eat, 1973*

Animals, whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal.

— *Charles Darwin*

I think the rapidly growing tendency to regard animals as born for nothing except slavery to so-called humanity absolutely disgusting.

— *Sir Victor Gollancz, The Unlived Life*

...So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He hand it to his womanfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see...

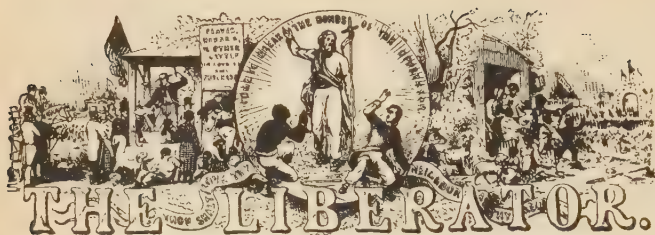
— *Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God*

[Animals are] those unfortunate slaves and victims of the most brutal part of mankind.

— *John Stuart Mill, 1868*

'The owner of a slave destroys two freedoms – that of his slave and that of himself!'

– *John Bryant, Fettered Kingdoms*



The head of *The Liberator*, the abolitionist newspaper started by William Lloyd Garrison in 1831



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The 'dreaded comparison', which many flinch from making, is between human and animal slavery. The parallels are many, despite the obvious differences, and the comparison yields new and powerful insights into oppression in general. Far from diminishing the oppression of black people, the dreaded comparison has been forcefully argued by respected black writers past and present, and those who have raised their voices against the abuse of animals range from former slave Frederick Douglass to contemporary civil rights campaigner Dick Gregory.


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— Alice Walker, author of 'The Colour Purple'

  
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