THE CLUB, THE YOKE, AND THE LEASH
What We Can Learn From the Way a Culture Treats Animals

BY AVIVA CANTOR

Nowhere is patriarchy's iron fist as naked as in the oppression of animals, which serves as the model and training ground for all other forms of oppression.

Its three basic strategies—the club, the yoke, and the leash—operate similarly in the oppression of women and minorities. The club strategy is to kill animals for fun, sadistic pleasure, and the “affirmation of manhood.” It is domination through brute force. The yoke strategy is to domesticate animals to carry burdens and pull vehicles; supply eggs, wool, and milk; and provide flesh and skins. It is domination through enslavement. The leash strategy is to tame animals to provide the psychic benefits of direct rule of master over pet. It is domination through deceit.

THE CLUB

In the Stone Age, when humans feared and respected wild animals, the club—brute force augmented by lethal tools—enabled hunters to wipe out entire populations they did not necessarily require as food but considered threatening. In later periods of history, hunting became a popular sport at times functioning as a symbol of ruling class power and hedged with restrictions. Today its practitioners include large numbers of lower class men, as well as upper class red-coated patriarchs, who derive a “thrill” from this safe reenactment of the primitive hunt.

Present day hunting of animals with high powered rifles, snowmobiles, helicopters, and poison tipped arrows does not give the animal a chance. But the hunter is not interested in a real contest, only in winning. The animal heads, antlers, or feet that hang prominently in men's dens and clubs, significantly called “trophies,” demonstrate a “victory” over the wild that brings men status with their peers.

Hunting animals for sport is a training ground for callousness, cruelty, and insensitivity. It teaches men not to feel anything when they kill or maltreat a living creature. It is a surprisingly close progression from hunting animals to hunting and torturing people: catching and lynching blacks or “smoking out” Jews during the Holocaust. When the protagonist of "The Deer Hunter" returns from the slaughter of Vietnam and goes hunting with his buddies, he cannot bring himself to kill a deer. He has severed the connection between the ease of killing deer and the ease of kill.

A New Role for Eleanor Smeal
Since she stepped down as president of the National Organization for Women, Eleanor Smeal has been developing a newsletter that will be an "insiders' report about women in politics and the likely consequences of their actions on the national political and economic scene." For more on the twice-monthly publication write: The Eleanor Smeal Report, P.O. Box 1995, Washington, D.C. 20010. [For readers get a special six-months trial subscription for $25. A third off the charter subscription rate]

With God on Our Side
Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders take on the “god-provoking preachments of the Radical Right” in The Religious Case for Abortion, a sensible and persuasive collection edited by Hamilton Leery. The source book includes Los Angeles Times columnist Tom Brokaw's moving account of his daughter's rape and subsequent abortion. The $16.95 paperback is available from Macmillan & Co., P.O. Box 8919, Asheville, North Carolina 28804.

"Write Back, Fight Back" is a handbook for writing letters of protest to the producers and distributors of abusive and degrading media images of women. Compiled by Women Against Violence In Pornography and Media (WAVP) in San Francisco, the guide describes how to target letters of complaint, offers samples of effective letters, and highlights basic arguments and statistics about violence against women and its links to abusive images. Send $12.50 to Women Against Pornography, 358 West 47th Street, New York, New York 10036.
ling people, and wants no more of either.

A second club strategy against ani-
mal cruelty is the abuse of animals in por-
ng. Harriet Schnellen, a founder of
Montreal's Women Against Pornog-
raphy and executive director of the Ani-
mal Liberation Collective in Quebec ar-
gues that bestiality is by no means a fringe interest in pornography but has
whole books, magazines, and films de-
oted to it. "Pornographic sex involving
animals is brutal and exploitative," she
writes, "with animals sexually abused and
often ritually killed on film [animal snuff movies] all for the gratification of
men with a taste for fantasizing about
such things."

Vivisection—experiments on live
animals—is a third category of crimes
against animals under the club strategy.
In the U.S. alone more than 100 million
dogs, cats, primates, rabbits, rodents,
and other animals are tortured, maimed,
and killed each year in the interest of
"scientific" medical and psychological
experiments and teaching. The science
establishment insists that such experi-
ments are necessary, although the health
of the nation has not been im-
proved significantly in the past 50 years.
A vast number of experiments have been
performed countless times with only a slight variation to merit a new
federal grant or Ph.D. thesis, and de-
spite the increasing availability of alter-
native methods of research.

The prime function of vivisection
labs is to serve as the training camps for
society's scientific authorities, the high
priests of medicine and mental health.
Learning to suppress feeling, sensitivity,
and emotion is a large part of their
hidden agenda. Hans Ruesch writes the fol-
lowing in Slaughter of the Innocent
about one Nazi experiment on POWs:
"Many of the prisoners screamed as
parts of their body froze. But the per-
forming doctors were used to screams—from the animal laboratories."

Moreover, every zoology major,
every biology and psychology graduate
student, and every doctor and psychia-
trist is required to perform vivisection
in order to qualify for a diploma or license.
(A tiny percentage refuse.) Having
proved themselves callous, insensitive,
and unfeeling—and able to keep their
mouths shut, because what goes on in
the government-funded labs is kept se-
cret from the tax-paying public—patri-
archy's future healers are deemed
worthy of practicing their skills on
people. Though some may manage to
transcend these experiences, too many
retain the callousness they learned in
the vivisection labs. The German doc-
tors on trial at Nuremberg explained
that since they had practiced animal
vivisection, it was "logical" that they
wished to practice on human beings as
well. The popularly held myth that vivi-
section was outlawed in Nazi Germany
masks people afraid that the outwornin of
experiments on animals will inevita-
ably lead to experiments on people, and
therefore believe vivisection must be sup-
tended.

The destruction of hundreds of ani-
mal nations and the killing and maiming
of individual animals have their parallel
in gynocide, the murder of women. Ex-
amples of gynocide, numerous in his-
tory, include the burning of an esti-
mated nine million women as witches in
the Middle Ages in Europe. Signifi-
cantly, animals were often executed at
the same times, as witches' "familiars."

Another example of the club strat-
 egy of brute male power applied to
human females is, of course, rape. Rape,
especially gang rape, strikingly resem-
bles hunting. Both feature the stalking
of the prey, the cruelty and thrill of the
capture and kill, the degradation of the
victim, and the enjoyment of the vic-
tim's terror and defeat.

Andrea Dworkin, in Pornography:
Men Possessing Women (Perigee),
describes a photograph that illustrates
this parallel. The photo, captioned
"Beaver Hunters," shows a naked
woman tied with rope to the hood of a
jeep in which two men dressed as hunt-
ers sit with rifles. The text under the
photo reads: "Western sportsmen re-
port beaver hunting was particularly
good... during the past season. These
two hunters... told Hustler that they
stuffed and mounted their trophy as
soon as they got her home."

THE YOKE

The domestication of animals dur-
ing the Neolithic Age was a long process
whose origins are the subject of debate
among prehistorians and anthropo-
ologists. Whatever its origins, the
methodology of domestication involved
limitation of movement, castration, and
forced breeding to create what are es-
pecially new species.

Bullfights and rodeos are attempt-
ed enactments of the drama of the
domestication and subjugation of ani-
mals. The bull, traditionally and signifi-
cantly the symbol of fertility, is the
strongest and therefore most dangerous
of the domesticated animals in the West.
The bullfight, writes Philippe Diole in
The Errant Ark, "is a ceremony in
which everything has been planned to
bear witness to man's superiority over
the animal," and this is its main purpose.
It is therefore not important that the
bullfight is fixed and resembles more
than anything else, a public execution.

The rodeo is the American version
of the bullfight, reenacting the drama of
"breaking" horses and steers on the
frontier. Here, too, the challenge from
the animal is made to appear real.
Spectators may not be aware—but par-
icipants do know—that the horses and
steers are made to perform by cinching
a bucking strap around their flanks and
pulling it tight while releasing the an-
imal into the arena. In "steer-husting,"
the purpose is to smash the animal to
the ground with such violence that it re-
mains stunned long enough to have
three of its feet tied; one out of 15 steers
is crippled or killed in the process.

Domestication required that ani-
mals be enclosed in a limited space
and prevented from moving around and
escaping to breed freely and find food
other than that provided for them. En-
closing animals as prisoners in fenced-
off areas led to the eventual loss of their
survival skills. Limitation of movement
produced similar results for the domes-
tication of women.

Another domestication method in-
volved forced selective breeding for
small size, docility, and dependency.
juvenile traits artificially made to persist
into adulthood.

In today's cruel factory farming, the
animal is synthetic to the point of being
a meat-, milk-, or egg-producing ma-
chine, and is treated as such. Confin-
ment of animals has escalated to the
point that they do not even have any
minimum semblance of the life of their
ancestors. Calves live an allocated 16
weeks in 22 hours a day of darkness,
chained in a cage in which they cannot move. This treatment produces tender veal. Hens are so crowded under lights shining 18 hours a day (to increase egg production) that some may peck each other to death if not de-beaked. Cows have been so altered by selective breeding to increase milk production that their udders require brassieres to prevent them dragging on the ground.

Genetic engineering is the final stage in the continuum of patriarchy's control over the reproduction of domesticated animals. If science actually becomes able to design from scratch how animal species will look and behave, then men will indeed have become "as gods."

Control over reproduction has also been crucial to men's goal of creating a domesticated human female. By gaining control over whom women mated with, when, and under what circumstances, they were thus able to create a gender close to their own specifications. Because control over reproduction is the key element in the domestication of women, opposition to women's control over it is most extreme and most violent.

The implications of this domestication are terrifying. For if, over the millennia, women were selected for docility, this trait—albeit supplemented by female infantilism and buttressed by "feminine" socialization—may have become embedded in the female genetic structure along, of course, with positive traits women developed to resist/survive oppression, such as cooperation, endurance, and sensitivity. However, docility tendencies can be overcome; many domesticated animals, such as horses, revert to their origins if they break out of the confining environment. The lesson for women is obvious.

THE LEASH

The third patriarchal strategy is to make an animal a "pet." Since prehistoric times people have kept and developed warm bonds with companion animals, but the difference between a companion animal, whose nature and needs are respected, and a pet is that the pet lives with people on a real or invisible leash of suffering.

On the surface, the pet (one of the word's meanings is "favorite") seems to be an exception in the man/animal relationship. But it is not, as the relationship is predicated on power and force. A man makes his pets—rabbits, pinnipeds, coyotes, tortoises, raccoons, deliberately run over squirrels, shoot feral cats with BB guns, run down wolves in a snowmobile, paralyze deer with poison-tipped arrows, and devise scientific ways to make monkeys insane—and come home and pet the dog. What the pet is, actually, is a token. And, being a token, its status can deteriorate at any moment. It is marginal, allowed to exist in the interstices of human society if it fulfills human needs. Unlike the "wild" animal, it has no defenses. Unlike the slave animal, it lacks economic value.

More even than the domesticated slave animal, the pet is a creature totally dependent on its master for food, shelter, and protection. It is a "living toy." Bred to be docile and responsive, deprived of survival skills, it would be unlikely to live for very long in the wild or in the asphalt jungle, as we know from the short and unhappy lives of abandoned and lost pets and strays.

"A pet," wrote Dialè, "is a sovereign remedy against feelings of inferiority or rejection... and our psychological defense against women who reject us, employers who do not appreciate us, our competitors..." Some men need dogs, he continued, "in order to convince themselves they are figures of authority." And Thorstein Veblen wrote that the greater the dog's uselessness, the greater the status accruing to its master, who shows he can afford a creature with no immediate economic value.

Unlike the slave animal, which has been "designed" by selective breeding to work for humans, the pet, while also a creation of selective breeding, requires obedience training in order to be responsive to individual owners. One of the thrills of being a pet owner is to show off "tricks." The "wilder" the animal's nature, the greater the prestige of having it perform.

Just as an animal chosen as a slave animal plays a different role from the animal chosen as a pet, so, too, is the case with the domesticated woman-as-pet. Of course there is some overlap in functions. Significantly, child psychologists Boris Levinson comments in Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy that the domesticated animal caters to man's body; the pet, to man's psyche. "That occasionally animals had dual or overlapping roles as was inevitable as the human [sic] confusion between the roles of a wife and mistress."

The pet-woman is trained to be dependent and helpless, accommodating, incapable of distinguishing or striving to fulfill her own needs, fixed on her master as provider, protector, rescuer. She is programmed to be terrified of the outside world and also to find it uninteresting. Her entire environment...
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is her master. Woman-as-pet supplants woman-as-slave in situations where the uselessness of household members is proof of the master's wealth and power. As a token, the pet-woman is treated differently from other women, a privilege earned by good behavior.

Taming animals into pets has provided useful techniques for taming women into pets. For instance, restriction of movement is essential. For pet animals, there are ropes, leashes, collars, and muzzles; for pet women, there was foot-binding—which ensured, in Dworkin's words, "a nation of women who literally could not run around"—garments such as corsets, which hindered movement, plus locations made unsafe and "immoral" by men, from which women must restrict themselves. A second method of pet-training has been to take away the animals' natural activities. For women, this meant taking away the human activity of labor. A third technique for taming involves keeping the animal away from its own kind. Pet-women, each secluded in her own private home, are encouraged to compete with and disturb other women, and to focus on the master.

As with pet animals, the reward-punishment system molds individual women to the master's specifications. The main reward for good behavior is "love" and material objects. Punishment ranges from withdrawal of "love" and financial support to threats of abandonment, physical abuse, and rape.

A final parallel between pet animals and pet women is the show. The human equivalents of the pet show are "coming-out" parties to exhibit noble upper class pet women, and beauty contests on a local to international level.

Many psychologists have observed that young children readily identify with animals. Therefore, in our culture, it is necessary to program children, especially boys, to oppress animals. The programming continues throughout life via constant and unremitting propaganda designed to make animals unreal, frightening, and disgusting.

The pets given to children to "train" (i.e., control and dominate) at an early age often serve to detach them from the animals, despite parents' often good intentions. Children's cute stuffed animals often serve to teach them to view animals in an unreal way, much as dolls teach girls to view babies and females as objects and toys.

Glorified zoo shows are entertainment primarily directed to children, degrade animals, giving social approval to the domination of animals by force, and also serve to make the animals unreal. As Maureen Duffy observes in her essay in Animals, Men, and Morals (Grove), the mid-19th century heyday for the circus coincided with the disseminations of popular evolution theories that shook previously held beliefs in human uniqueness. It was at this time, she says, that circuses began to feature humans "lesser cousins...seen trying to ape [a man] and failing [so] that his mastery of them should be demonstrated..." and his imitators shown to be "pitifully inert."

Zoos, despite all the best efforts of progressive curators and educators, most often resemble prisons or the mental asylums one visited in the 17th and 18th centuries for an entertaining Sunday afternoon. Children learn that it is all right to capture and pen an animal up for life as long as humans are entertained or "educated" by the spectacles.

Domesticated animals are many objects of disgust to justify their enslavement: the pig is dirty, turkeys too stupid to come in out of the rain. Pets that are not as subservient as pets should be cats, for example—are described as unfriendly, selfish, sneaky. These feelings of disgust and hatred can be transferred to humans by equating them with animals. Derogatory names for women include such insults as cow, bitch, hen, shrew, dumb bunny, goose, dog, bat, crow, and vixen, and the adjectives money, horse-faced, and catty. Colloquial sexual names include bird (British), chick (white American), and fox (black American). Women's genitals are called "pussy" and "beaver.

Similarly, blacks are called "coons," and "jungle bunnies," and Nazi propaganda equated Jews with "vermin."

Propaganda against animals bombard us from the hunting lobby, the science establishment, the fur industry, the pet profiteers, and the entertainment media, where animals are often abused for the pleasure of spectators. While these industries derive profit from the exploitation of animals, it is the patriarchal system itself that benefits, sustains, and recharges itself through the oppression of animals. And when patriarchy benefits through the club, the yoke, and the leash, all animals—human and nonhuman—lose.

Aviva Cantor is managing editor of "Lilith," the Jewish feminist magazine.

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