

The Pornography



of Meat

Carol J. Adams

Author of The Sexual Politics of Meat



2004

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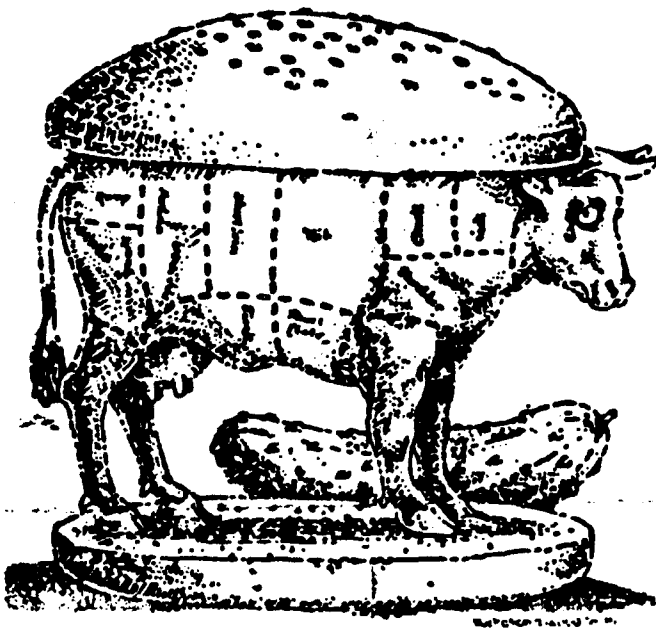
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which constitutes an extension of this page.



When a hamburger is eaten, no one looks harmed. But that is because someone, a unique being, has become something, an object, with no distinctiveness, no uniqueness, no individuality. Someone has become a *mass term*.

Mass terms refer to things like water or colors; no matter how much you have of it, or what type of container it is in, it remains the same: water remains water; red stays red. You

can add a bucket of water to a pool of water without changing “water”; you can mix red with red and you still have “red.”

When you add five pounds of hamburger to a plate of hamburger, it is more of the same thing, nothing is changed. But if you have a living cow in front of you, and you kill that cow, and butcher that cow, and grind up her body, you have not added a mass term to a mass term and ended up with more of the same.

What is on the plate in front of us is not devoid of specificity; it is the dead flesh of what was once a living, feeling being.

The crucial point here is that we make someone who is a unique being into something that is the appropriate referent of a mass term.

Mass terms signal the *thingification* of beings.

In the summer of 2000, New York City hosted more than 500 life-sized fiberglass cows that had been decorated by artists. They were placed around the five boroughs of New York in a so-called CowParade. Among fanciful and colorful cows like a Rockette cow, a surfing cow, and a taxi cow, was filmmaker David Lynch’s *Eat My Fear* cow.



FARM



This cow had not “died” of old age. With forks and knives stuck into the cow’s behind, the bloody disemboweled cow was displayed for only a couple of hours. During that time, according to *New Yorker* writer Tad Friend, at least one small child, upon seeing it, started crying. Then it was banished to a warehouse and put under wraps.

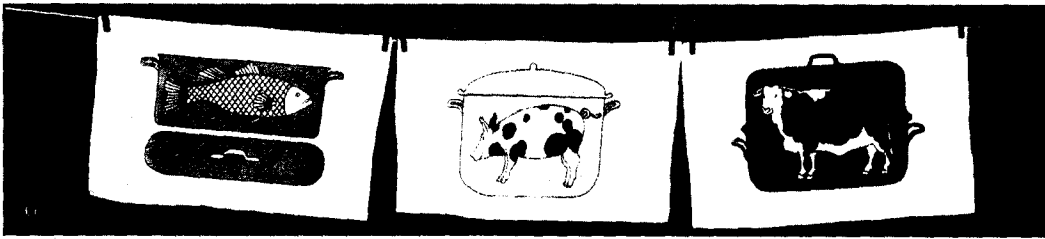
Why was this cow banned from the CowParade? We do not want to experience uncomfortable feelings about violence, butchering, suffering, and fear. This is the function of the *absent referent*—to keep our “meat” separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal who was butchered, to keep *something* (like hamburger) from being seen as having been *someone* (a cow, a lamb, a once-alive being, a subject.)

With the absent referent, we do not have to ask of someone, “What are you going through?” since there is no one there to ask.

Formula for the absent referent
 nonhuman animal + butchering =
 “meat”/consumable flesh/mass term

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The Fish in Water Problem



G. **MAIN DISH TOWELS.** Beef, pork and fish—potted up and ready for cooking—on our 27x17" cotton tea towels. Or, perhaps each tasty beast is just contemplating the future. . . . Cow, A-09548. Pig, A-09696. Fish, A-09571. Each **\$5.00**; 2 for **\$9.00**.

CALL TOLL-FREE 800-228-5656
24 HOURS—7 DAYS
(In Nebraska, Call 800-642-8777)

MARSHALL MCLUHAN ONCE NOTED, “if a fish could speak, water is the last thing it would identify as part of its environment.”

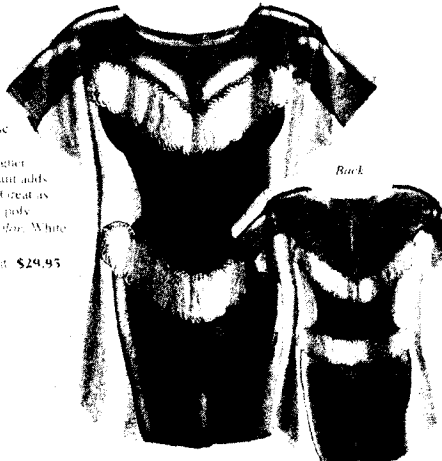
Catharine MacKinnon observes, “All women live in sexual objectification the way fish live in water.”

And so do nonhumans when they stand in for women.

Mrs. Claus's Sexy Santa Suit!

How does Mrs. Claus spend her Christmas Eve? Waiting to surprise Santa! Women dilly-wicked in its front and back silk-screening, designer Chris Zoch's eye-catching Santa suit adds a bit of spice to winter getaways. Great as a nightgown, too! 50% cotton/50% poly. Hand washable. Made in USA. Color: White. One size fits most. 30" long.

V25-801 Mrs. Claus's Santa Suit \$29.95



TITIAN, *VENUS OF URBINO*

The *Venus of Urbino* is one of the most familiar images in Western art. By the middle of the twentieth century, when this pig was posed in imitation, it had become a commonplace to interpret the *Venus of Urbino* (rightly or wrongly) as a painting whose model was a prostitute.

Note the dog asleep on Venus's bed. Recall that one

aspect of pornography is to install a nonhuman animal in the scene to suggest the animalizing of the woman. (Recall, too, the words of the woman from the "Club": "one even brought me a puppy.")

The question has to be asked of both of them: Are they masturbating? Those who manipulated the pig offer the answer that at first art historians hesitated to admit about Venus: her genitalia are not being *covered*, they are being *stimulated*.

The major difference between them is the gaze: Venus beholds us directly, but would, or could, the pig?



Is the pig alive or dead?

And in between them, a pose from the fashion section of the *New York Times* magazine. Dressed in pink, bathed in phallic symbols, she refers back to Venus and forward to the pig.

What do you see in the pose of the pig? Her painted toenails? The bikini panties? Her trotter tucked into her panties like a hand? Her



smooth legs? Her facial expression beaming pleasure, relaxation, enticement, desire? Her notched ear to show ownership?

Is that the kind of drink that hides the drugs of a date rapist? Is that why she looks passed out? If she were in some fraternities, her unconscious state would be seen as “asking for it.”

Next to the drink, sits a cat lamp (the *suggestion* of another animal). But look more quickly at the cat’s leg and foot. Are they shaped to recall a black dildo?

The luxury implied in this photograph is important too. Is this perhaps modeled after a Victorian brothel?

With this masturbating pig, we encounter the scene setting of pornography. All the cues are there so that this is a pornographic shot. Pornography sends these cues that this is sex. That we can look at a pig and know that this is pornography is because of these cues. The images here are ways to convey the message, “I can’t be wealthy, but I can own a woman. I can eat meat.”

Of the late designer Gianni Versace, Richard Martin, the curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said, “He looked at prostitute style and made it high style in the eighties.” When I present my slide show, I ask for a male volunteer to come forward when this slide of a Versace dress is projected on the screen. I ask him to face the audience and invite them to tell him how to pose so that he imitates this Versace ad. There is some laughter.

Then, a voice, usually female, calls out: “Stick your butt out.” Other voices join in, both male and female: “Show your breasts.” “Take off your shirt.” “Put your hand on your crotch.” “Balance on your toes.” “Suck in your cheeks.” “Look dead.”

More laughter occurs, as the man attempts to conform his body to these commands. We applaud him for trying and I ask him how he felt. “Uncomfortable.” “Weird.” “Awkward.” “I don’t know how women do it.”

I point out that those men are not used to “swimming in women’s water.” One young man, who had a hidden life dressing in drag, most closely approximated this pose with ease.



Versace's "high prostitute style" of clothing is a reminder that women are socialized to act *and* dress like whores.

Posing a man makes the water that is sexual objectification visible, if only briefly. The directions that are called out to the man, like the posing of a pig in a pornographic scenario, highlight what I call cues of violability.

Cues of violability are cues of inequality. Women learn to exhibit, rather than to inhabit their bodies. These cues arise through three main arenas: *appearance, gestures, and ornamentation.*

CUES OF VIOLABILITY



Configuration/appearance:

- Small waist.
- Accentuated breasts.
- Smooth legs
- Eyelashes curled (like the pig's in *Hamtastic*)

Gestures/postures/movement:

- Casting the hips or pelvis rolling
- Arching the back
- An exposed and unstable stance that telegraphs, "I cannot hold my ground."
- Arm signals
- Eyebrow signals

Ornamentation:

- Garter and bra—a fetish of underclothes
- Earrings
- Bracelets
- Heels or painted toes (like the painted toenails of the "Venus" pig).

These cues show how inequality is made sexy. Take Betty Boop, for instance. Betty Boop was originally drawn as a feminine, “voluptuous,” little dog with long ears. Soon earrings replaced the long ears, and she became a cute “girl.” Just like Betty’s transformation from dog to girl, cues of violability are taken from the Not-A side of the dualism and include as well rear-end views, nakedness, the presence or suggestion of an animal, and the fetish of skin color.

Cues of violability themselves are fragmented body parts, in which the accentuated body part stands for the whole, available, “fuckable” woman. (“I’m here; come and get me.”) Cues of violability for women are the basic scene setting of pornography: she desires penetration.

In chapter 2, I proposed that nonhuman animals become absent referents through the institution of meat eating. Through socialization to sexual objectification, women become absent referents as well.

Absent referent formula

Woman + cues of violability =
sexy/sexualized dominance/inequality made sexy/
destruction of subject status.

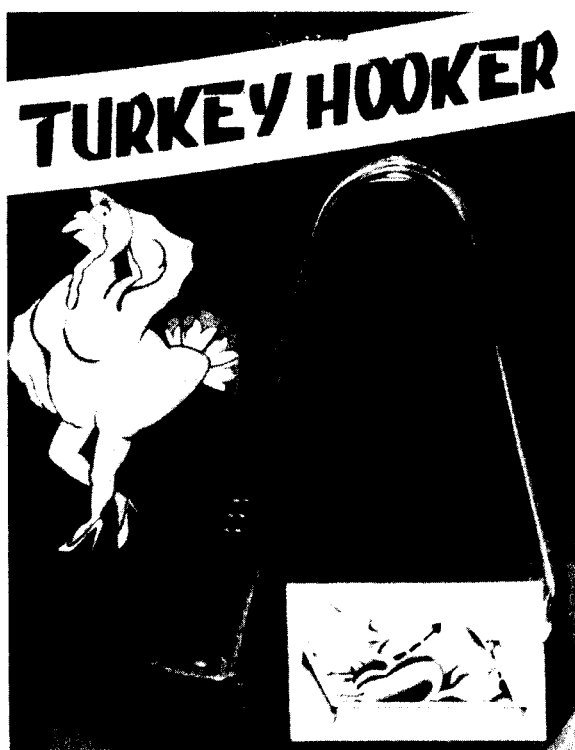
Just as with the structure of the absent referent in meat eating, another being can replace “woman” and the fact of sexualized dominance will still be present—as long as the someone taking the woman’s place is also from the Not-A side of the dualism. Otherwise it is a mere parody.

The substitution makes the sexualizing culture of which we are a part visible because the taken-for-grantedness of women’s bodies is replaced by the surprise that other animals are being pornographed. Just as the normalized act of butchering assumed horrific qualities when used against a woman in the example of the *Hustler* cover, so the depiction of woman as sex object becomes explicitly a construct and, in that, a forced identity when imposed upon another Not-A being, like a pig.

The absent referent is a woman. To make the nonhuman violable, we make those animals “female.” Cues of violability construct female consumability. Consider the turkey hooker on the next page.

Here are all the cues of violability: "Here I am. I am available." The farmed animal becomes a stand in for a woman. What is absent is "woman."

What do the pose of the turkey and the pose in the Versace ad share in common? Both are the pose of a hooker . . . a purchasable commodity. And just in case we missed all the visual references, they are repeated through words: *an easy pick up* from pan to platter. Here the phallic symbol of the snake/penis/asparagus is replaced by a hook.



Is the hooker the paradigmatic consumable female? An interesting study of prostitution in Norway, *Backsteets*, found that "The number of peepers is much higher than the number of customers. This means that far more men than just the customers have a concrete, visual relation to prostitution: it becomes images on the retina that can flash by in situations and places far removed from prostitution."

Like the turkey-filled oven on Thanksgiving?

Prostitution, they conclude, *is about men's sexuality*. And pornography means *writing about whores, writing about hookers*. So pornography, too, is about men's sexuality.

These depictions of a pig or a turkey are not just anthropomorphic images. They too are about men's sexuality—with a twist. They are *anthropornography*.

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Average White Girl

ROWS OF DEAD, EVISCERATED PIGS hang in a meat locker. Their legs are parted so that a special clamp can hold them, hanging downward from the ceiling. They are clearly dead pigs: one nearest our sight is beheaded and the front legs appear amputated; this pig has no innards. They are all dehaired. Others, those with their backs to us, appear intact: we catch sight of ears and pigs' tails, but then take in the sight of bloody mouths. The very pinkness of them leaps out at us: rows of pink-fleshed dead pigs.

But smack in the middle of the photo of the meat locker is a nude white woman. She too hangs upside down. Her pinkness, too, leaps out at us. Her legs and armpits, like the pigs' bodies, are dehaired. Her ankles are bound together to attach them to the ceiling.

We know she is alive because this is a performance piece called *Average White Girl*. The circus/cabaret performer, Kirsty Little, said she was evoking the search for identity from a female point of view. Where did she search for a white girl's identity? In a meat locker, among dead pigs.



CATHY GOEGGEL



BRUCE BUCHANAN

Average White Girl meets Pork, the other white meat. Why are the pigs depicted in advertisements pink? These advertisements are not only speaking about the “pink” of femaleness, they are speaking about whiteness, too.

In fact, pigs are many different colors: There are black and white pigs, chocolate pigs, nutmeg pigs. But with pink pigs, the inside and the outside are the same—pink outside, pink inside (though the pink is called “white”).



DOUGLAS BUCHANAN



BENJAMIN BUCHANAN

Although a few leering customers might tell Lorene Cary—when she was the first African American waitress at a restaurant—that they preferred “dark meat,” to sexualize pigs, pink pigs are used to recall white female flesh. (*Young* white flesh since the anthropornographed pigs have no explicit pubic hair.) Whiteness becomes the anthropocentric anchor, that which hooks it to the human side of the equation. A “colored” pig would tip the associations too far onto the Not-A side.

A	Not A
MAN/male	woman/female
CULTURE	nature
HUMAN	animal
“WHITE”	not white—“colored”

The pinkness of nonhumans in anthropornography highlights whiteness as a racial identity.

A friend told me a story about the time her brother brought a white girlfriend home to share the Thanksgiving meal with his African American family. As their nervous father carved the turkey's corpse, he turned to his son and asked, "Do you want white meat or colored?" Like the waitress-turned-writer Lorene Cary, they too were "back to black and white in America."

In chapter 11, "Anthropornography," I described A REAL CHEAP DISH and its pink stripper cow posed above those words. Underneath, half the size of the looming words, and just one-third the size of the pink sex object towering above, rising from the lower part of the page is a blue bull. Looking in a knowing way from underneath his Jack Nicholson glasses, he flexes his large muscle, and in doing so, calls attention to his strength. His muscular chest, with just a little hair, is clothed in an athletic T-shirt that proclaims BEEF-CAKE on its front.

He is power and strength, self-assurance. He is in command.

He might be a "dish"—that word is the only one that is near *his* image, but not cheap. No way. A small headline near him tells us, "With a little preparation, lesser cuts of meat can become great substitutes."

With a ring through his nose, he is the assurance that *we*, (*this kind of meat*) are *good* substitutes.

Did I say she is pink, he is blue?

Natalie Angier remarks, "Men grow up with the conviction that they are always stronger than somebody." (She observes this in a chapter on exercise and muscle entitled "Cheap Meat"). The something they are stronger than is *woman*.

She is *a* cheap dish; he's just working on his "cheap" meat—his muscle.

Did the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* show men's strength juxtaposed with women's strength? Of course not. It's men's strength—beefcake or not—juxtaposed with woman as sex object.

Men *act*; women *appear*.

Men are strong; women are strong temptations, especially if cheap.

This is the difference between anthropornography and "beefcake." The bull in his Jack Nicholson glasses is in possession of himself. "A" possesses "A." There is no thrusting toward another. No signs of subordination. Men may be "beef" or "beefy" but woman/animal is meat/whore. Sexuality is not something she possesses, but is something that allows her to be possessed by another.

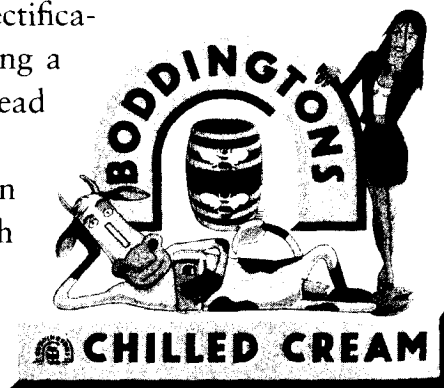
With anthropornography, man is in possession of another being; "A" possesses "Not-A." Someone has become something.

Herbert Muschamp, the architecture critic of the *New York Times*, devoted a celebratory article in the magazine section to a discussion of beefcake: "Bruce Weber's the Name, Beefcake's the Game." Bruce Weber's homoerotic photographs of "dressed-down male models" have encouraged men to turn to personal trainers and plastic surgeons for help in attaining "an implausibly trim physique." His photographs, declares Muschamp, do to men what has usually been done to women, with Weber the active subject, his photographed-male models the passive object.

Muschamp muses that Weber's photographs "subvert the hierarchy that values men for their achievements, women for their looks." Yet, Muschamp must ask: "At the same time, these images affirm the right of some people to turn other people into objects. Do we like objectification? Is it so different from necrophilia?" Making a subject into an object seems like a fetish for dead bodies.

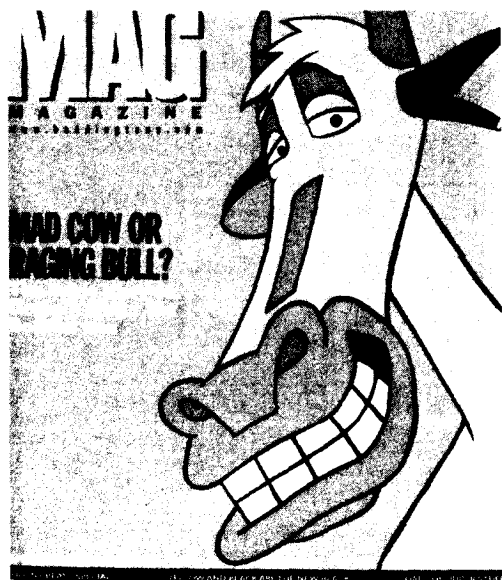
But beefcake doesn't really make men objects in a way similar to women. Consider the British Boddingtons's beer advertisements that feature "Graham Heffer"—a male cow.

In the text that accompanies the advertisement that poses Graham as a cover story, Graham tells about his life since he became a "superstar" as an actor for Boddingtons. Puns abound, about "milking" the offers and "everybody



wants a piece of me." He concludes by saying he has joined a gym, and goes there every day since he has to stay in shape and he needs some "beefing-up."

Although on the one hand we have in Graham Heffer a sort of gender-bending performance piece, after all he is an anomaly—a *male* cow—the ads actually hold to several aspects of "beefcake." Anthony Cortese, who has analyzed advertisements, reports that "The ideal man in ads is young, handsome, clean cut, perfect, and sexually alluring. Today's man has pumped his pecs and shoulders and exhibits well-defined abs. . . . Shirtlessness is



part of a trend that corresponds to the rise of the beefy male model."

Even Graham Heffer wants to triumph over femaleness—his own.

One final difference between "beefcake" and anthropornography is that men's "beefiness" in advertisements, even gender-bending Graham Heffer's, *usually sells something other than meat*.

In the Camel ad, men are supposedly being viewed as meat by cannibalistic women.

But what do we really have? White men in a hot tub with white women spa attendants.

This is beefcake: Muscularity. Athletic. Wholeness. Self-possession. Muscle. Integrity has not been compromised. Sexual agency is there, and it is *his*.

"Beefcake" might suggest the illusion that women are equal to men in terms of entitlement over another's body. But beefcake is actually a confirmation of men's power. It is man-to-man language, too. Men's meat nature, "man stew," is enhancing. They are not fragmented by slaughtering or the cues of violability. They are not there to sell fragmented pieces of slaughtered nonhumans.

Here, too, we are back to black and white in America. The cannibal theme, when used in advertisements in the 1930s, featured depictions of Africans or African Americans preparing to eat whites. To place African Americans around an ad announcing "man stew" would now be seen as a recycling of racist attitudes. Cannibals were "savages" of the worst kind. Historically, the charge of cannibalism was used to legitimate colonial incursions that were going to save "savages" from their immoral behavior. And it became another way to confirm that African Americans were nearer to the gorillas than the (white) human. Rather than representing beast-like passions, white women provide a sign of domesticity to the cannibal theme.

The composition of the ad confirms that it is directed most importantly to men: they are the center of attention. One aspect of the message is *It's important to take care of men*.



We see again and again that beefcake is actually a confirmation of men's power, men's muscle. It has little to do with being a piece of meat.

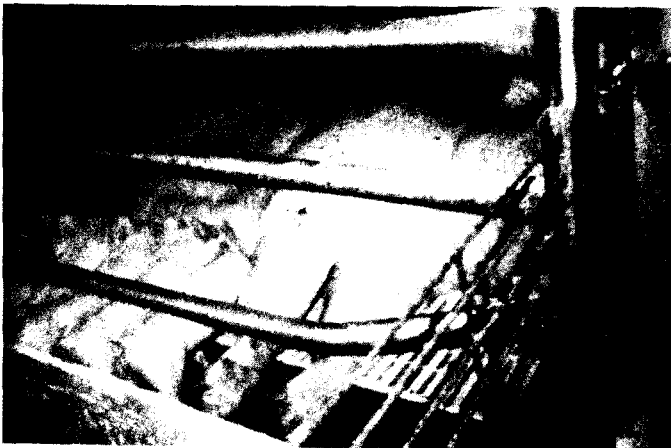
In a discussion of the increasing nudity of women in mainstream films, the *New York Times* had to address the question of men's nudity. The terminology was revealing: women are *naked*, *nude*, *bare*; men are *uncovered*. When a man is shown nude, Suzanna Andrews reported, "the reaction is that he is extremely vulnerable." They may feel "anxious," "inadequate." Women's bodies become public; but men's bodies are to remain their private property. Even the slang definition of beefcake confirms this: The men aren't nude but "partially clad muscular men."

Lenore Rosenman, a psychologist, perceives that this is still "a society that protects men. . . . One way we do it is by not exposing them." She continues, "There is something of a power trip in stripping women and keeping men covered and safe."

The men are in a hot tub; yet, we, like them, are protected from their nudity.

"Beefcake" contains power. Perhaps one final reason that beefcake muscles itself above cheap cuts and pieces of meat is because normal, healthy adult males are rarely eaten in our culture. Meat eaters consume females, castrated males, and babies.

This "crate" keeps mother pigs from rolling over on their babies. If rolling over on their babies was a major problem, one wonders how it is that pigs did not become extinct before the twentieth century and this crate's invention. In fact, if they can, pigs build "nests" of grass, leaves, and straw.



JIM MASON

Farrowing crates are not nests, but a prison cell, limiting the sow's ability to nurture her young, and her ability to walk, or even turn around.

How is the sow's reproductive slavery appropriated within the world of sexual dominance? As though it were a plaything for a sado-masochist encounter.

S & M HOG EQUIPMENT WAREHOUSE

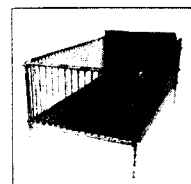
We will not knowingly be overstocked



For "Your" Ears Only
Tattooing outfit. Discomfort guaranteed! If this feels good, we'll give you your money back.
\$29.95 Alphabet and numbers included

Or maybe you're into whips and canes

Whips made of genuine cowhide. Serves those cows right.
\$12.00
Canes made of realistic wood. Knock 'em silly for only **\$9.95**



New Weaner Decks
You want out? You crowd over!
\$89.95

S & M Hog Equipment Warehouse has the largest selection of painful - pleasurable - playthings. All items come fully guaranteed* or your money refunded.

*For as long as you live or for ten minutes, whichever comes first

"It Hurts So Good"



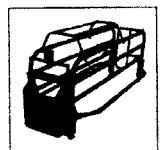
Keep your lover on hold with the OUCH™ Brand Nose Noose
Wonderfully painful. Delightfully inexpensive.
Only **\$14.95**



No! Not my big teeth you lunatic!
It's Doctor Snippers poorly shippers. Plies manufactured from durable steel for the removal of your lover's teeth against their will. Surprise them. Very kinky! Hurts like crazy.
\$6.95



How about the Electric Shocker Prod?
This little persnader is great for piking fun at each other. She'll love it, he'll love it. Shocking results.
Only **\$19.95** complete (batteries not excluded)



Try to get out of this baby!
Introducing the Mach 1 Humiliation Confinement crate. It's an easily assembled, hot-dipped galvanized steel crate. You'll beg to get into it and plead to get out.
\$119.95

Order NOW
Call Toll Free 1-800-969-OUCH
Ask for our catalogue of other fine products.

This *Playboar* "S & M" page takes all the tools used to control pigs and reinterprets them. "You'll beg to get into it and plead to get out" they playfully declare about *their* farrowing crate, implying that the pigs really like it and want more. This is a form of denial: *We aren't harming anyone!* Of course, the idea that farmed animals desire what happens to them is very comforting. This approach has worked for explaining the sexual exploitation of women. Why not blame the victims of our meat eating, too?

The existence of harm vanishes because it is fused to what men see: women (or pigs) "wanting" it.

It is hard for men to perceive

the harm in sexual force and degradation because it has been made fun. The pig in a farrowing crate is being harmed. Her movements restricted, her access to her own babies controlled, her mothering under the tyranny of a controlling someone—a subject.

S & M, the "advertisement" informs us, is akin to the way humans treat farmed animals.

Playboar's choice of sado-masochism as the framework acknowledges that these implements are aspects of a dominating relationship to pigs. It is just *sexual* domination and that is fun. Human domination, which might hurt someone, fades as an issue.

On the following page is one final image of men as meat. Again, they retain power and wholeness. And as football players they reiterate the idea that the stronger women get (gaining some muscle?), the more men love football.

These football players are armored against their own nudity. Again, when men are "beefcake," no butchered flesh is visible. Like men's nudity, actual reminders of slaughtering must not occur. We might rephrase the psychologist's insight to say, "There is something of a power trip in showing women as meat but keeping men as beefcake."

Brandon Juhl, who noticed this ad and sent it to me, suggests that it indicates a tension in our view of football players. "Our macho, male-centered culture loves sports and sports figures, especially football, and yet it seems this ad signals that we also look down on them as being more brawn than brain, more like animals or cuts of meat who perform for our amusement and entertainment, modern-day gladiators."

The ad calls attention to men's bulk: how much each of them weighs—and not a one under 200 pounds. (The average female model weighs 23 percent less than the average woman.) If this ad were actually selling "meat" those numbers would represent their price per pound.

Notice one thing: Which so-called meat is the least expensive? Subconsciously, we are brought back to black and white in America. Or maybe we never left.

