

Western Culture and the Ambiguous Legacies of the Pig

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Benton Jay Komins,
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Abstract: In his paper, "Western Culture and the Ambiguous Legacies of the Pig," Benton Jay Komins provides a cultural lineage of the pig by the example and reading of *Piggies* by the Beatles. Komins observes that *Piggies* enacts the possibilities of the ubiquitous pig in Western culture by juxtaposing swinish antics with interpretations of limitation and heartbreak thereby forcing listeners to blur the distinctions between struggle, unrequited love, and boorishness. Komins continues his discussion by locating this juxtaposition within the Western pantheon of real, metaphorical, and imaginary animals, where the pig is noted to have obsessively endured. Komins argues that through the depictions and representations of the pig, we are able to gain particular insight into Judeo-Christian ambiguities, fixations, and inconsistencies. Komins's observations about the pig in Western culture serve to define and to delineate a boundary between the civilized and the uncivilized, the refined and the unrefined. This real or imagined border is further mapped out in the paper via a consideration of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, and Henson's *Miss Piggy*.

Benton Jay KOMINS

Western Culture and the Ambiguous Legacies of the Pig

In the Beatles's *White Album* (1968), George Harrison's rigidly structured song "Piggies" lies nestled between the songs "Blackbird" and "Rocky Raccoon"; the song's namesake piggies' playfulness and gourmandism is surrounded by Lennon's sad blackbird who struggles for the freedom of flight ("Take these broken wings and learn to fly...") and McCartney's tragic young man who falls in a shoot-out over his girlfriend ("And Rocky collapsed in the corner..."): "Have you seen the little piggies / Crawling in the dirt / And for all the little piggies / Life is getting worse / Always having dirt to play around in. // Have you seen the bigger piggies / In their starched white shirts / You will find the bigger piggies / Stirring up the dirt / Always have clean shirts to play around in. // In their styes with all their backing / They don't care what goes on around / In their eyes there's something lacking / What they needs a damn good whacking. // Everywhere there's lots of piggies / Living piggy lives / You can see them out for dinner / With their piggy wives / Clutching forks and knives to eat their bacon."

Piggies ingeniously juxtaposes swinish antics -- starched and fattened excesses -- with interpretations of limitation and heartbreak. Beyond its musical frame, the form of the song follows a balanced pattern: Harrison's carefully enunciated lines elegantly counterpoise the chords of a harpsichord -- like a perverted baroque *basso-continuo*. At its conclusion, the song's gluttonous theme finds a musical reflection in a grotesque symphony of porcine squeals and snorts. *Piggies* forces its listeners to blur the distinctions between struggle, unrequited love and boorishness; the Beatles recognize well the possibilities of the ubiquitous pig. Certainly, in the Western pantheon of real, metaphorical, and imaginary animals, the pig symbolically endures as an ambiguous, "portmanteau term which covers a complex of feeling and attitude" (Leach 54; of course, pigs are not the only animals that act as "portmanteau terms": Gillespie and Mechling's 1987 volume *American Wildlife in Symbol and Story* captures the figurative meanings and interpretive importance of animals in US culture, especially the ways that particular beasts, like the armadillo and the bear, elicit emotional responses and imaginative possibilities).

What does it mean when a song about pigs introduces a paper on culture and aesthetics? What is at stake in this initial musical gesture: mockery?, laughter?, an attempt to understand the lyrics of rock music? Through its structure and position, *Piggies* addresses candidly the qualities which I discuss in this essay, namely the dense and at times contradictory meanings which we attach to images of the pig, from the velvety innocence of piglets -- adorable *Piglet* in A.A. Milne's stories, extraordinary Wilbur in E.B. White's novel *Charlotte's Web*, gifted *Babe* in his own blockbuster films, and a fictional styer filled with other lovable porkers -- to uncomfortable images of gluttony, greed, and squalor (the use of pig as a deriding and abusive epithet). According to anthropologist Edmund Leach in his *Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse* (1964), "Some animals seem to carry an unfair load of abuse. Admittedly, the pig is a general scavenger but so, by nature, is the dog. ... I suspect that we feel a rather special guilt about our pigs. ... Pigs, like dogs, were fed from the leftovers of their human masters' kitchens. To kill and eat such a commensal associate is sacrilege indeed" (50-51). I contend that the pig's recent appearances in literature and popular culture quite comfortably link psychological tensions, or taboos and sacrilege, to the fragmentation and fetishization that characterize many contemporary works. "The question of ancestry in culture is quite spurious," notes cultural critic Greil Marcus in *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (1989): new "actors scavenge the past for ancestors, because ancestry is legitimacy and novelty is doubt -- but in all times forgotten actors emerge from the past not as ancestors but as familiars" (21). From medieval bestiaries and animal trials to the Beatles' suggestive lyrics, the scavenging, "commensal associate" pig remains familiar, as that which is all-too-human and that which remains a vilified other. "A pig is both an animal and a trope extraordinaire," writes Richard Horwitz in his *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Morality in American Culture* (1988): Its flesh marks special events and abstinences, and its image "stands for such extremes of human joy or fear, celebration, ridicule, and repulsion" (23). Indeed, through the pig's lasting interpretive qualities, we are granted insight into our Western, Judeo-Christian ambi-

guities and inconsistencies. As Robert Malcolmson and Stephanos Mastoris argue in their book *The English Pig: A History* (1998), "Pigs, it seems, served in part to define in consciousness a boundary between the civilised and the uncivilised, the refined and the unrefined. ... The pig highlighted what should be avoided; and thus any reference to it often clarified, implicitly, alternative conduct that was deemed proper and commendable" (2).

Pigs and Carnival

Since antiquity, the pig has held a privileged place in European carnivals. From being the delectable meat at the center of the celebration (the carne that is consumed prodigiously) to an image that figures into dramas of greed and slovenliness, the pig has played literal and symbolic roles. As the following discussion will show, the symbolic roles of animals have been explored by cultural critics such as Mary Douglas, Keith Tester, Edmund Leach, and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White. For example, in their historical and cultural analysis of hierarchies in European society, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), Stallybrass and White analyze the ways in which the pig in particular circulates as a curiously emblematic image. According to the authors: "In the fair and the carnival, we would expect to find a quite different orientation toward the pig: in 'carne-levare' the pig was celebrated; the pleasures of food were represented in the sausage and the rites of inversion were emblemized in the pig's bladder of the fool. ... Even in the carnival the pig was the locus of conflicting meanings. If the pig was duly celebrated, it could also become the symbolic analogy of scapegoated groups and demonized 'Others'" (53).

More than a piece of succulent meat or an inflated toy, the pig encapsulates ambiguity. In its appetite for feces and its essential act of wallowing, the pig embodies disgust. Yet, Stallybrass and White go to great lengths to show that this disgust has a verso of admiration: "The pig could also be praised as well as abused for its appetites" (45). Unlike the fully domesticated sheep or cow, the pig has enough intelligence to survive against a keeper's odds. In the universe of livestock, only the wily pig finds sustenance in the privy and a salve for its delicate skin in a fetid pool of mud. From the clever Asian bearded pig, *sus barbatus*, which trails monkeys to catch fallen fruit, scraps and offal to the rather adaptable African bush pig, *potamochoerus porcus*, which eats anything -- living, dead, or excreted -- that it can digest, the behavior of wild pigs, like that of their cultivated farm cousins, illustrates a peculiar connection between offensiveness and admirability (Whitfield 128). Further confounding this ambiguous model, unlike other domesticated animals that offer fleece, milk, or eggs, the pig "[lives] to die ... [is] only useful to eat and, proverbially, only [becomes] valuable when dead" (Stallybrass and White 47). Highlighting the strangeness of this situation, from a psychological standpoint, Edmund Leach notes: "We rear pigs for the sole purpose of killing and eating them, and this is a rather shameful thing, a shame which quickly attaches to the pig itself" (Leach 51). Of course, the shame that we attach to the pig is part of a larger debate on animal rights. In his 1996 essay "To Farm Without Harm and Choosing a Humane Diet: The Bioethics of Humane Sustainable Agriculture," Michael W. Fox defines the predicament of our relationship to animals in the following economic way: "No other society past or present raises and kills so many animals just for their meat. No other society past or present has adopted such intensive systems of animal production and nonrenewable resource-dependent farming practices. These have evolved to make meat a dietary staple, and to meet the public expectation and demand for a 'cheap' and plentiful supply of meat" (92). Adding a practical point to Fox's scathing critique, we also cannot lose sight of the many fine pairs of gloves and the prized American football that the pig also yields. Based on its peculiar habits and use as a commodity, this compelling beast comes to represent abhorrence, respect, pleasure, and guilt.

In addition to intriguing behaviors and the shameful reality of the slaughterhouse, the pig invades systems of representation. As one good example, the animal's "open-mouthed squeal," according to Stallybrass and White, [becomes] "a powerful figure for the festive and sinister imaginary" (47). The pig's distinctive grunt comes to represent something outside ordinary experience. In the medieval mind of Europe, the animal became identified with those aspects of human sin that demanded the most severe retribution. In this respect, Keith Tester describes the astonishing medieval trial of a sinful pig in the French town of Falaise: "In 1386 a court tried a sow which had bitten and torn the face of a human child who subsequently died. ... The pig was found guilty of

the offence. After the trial ... the pig was dressed in human clothes and taken to the town square where it was publicly mangled and maimed in the head and the forelegs, before being hanged" (72). Underscoring the importance and didactic value of the event, Tester notes that the execution was immortalized in a church fresco. The trial, human accoutrements and religious coding of the Falaise sow certainly illustrate the sinister values ascribed to the medieval pig. While memories of the pig's notorious past haunt later representations, it became a hyperbolic sign of rudeness in bourgeois sensibility.

At carnival time the pig's symbolic ambivalence reaches explosive potential when it collides with clichéd images of marginalized groups. Stallybrass and White bind the animal's fate to events in certain historic Italian carnival celebrations: "Like the pigs in the Venice carnival, which were chased across Piazza San Marco and stoned, in Rome Jews were forced into a race at carnival time and stoned by the onlookers. This similarity between the fate of the Jews in Rome and the fate of pigs in Venice during carnival time points up a frequent association whereby the pig became a focus of what we call *displaced abjection*, the process whereby 'low' social groups turn their figurative and actual power, *not* against those in authority, but against those who are even 'lower'" (53). As inverse logic might explain the symbolic economy of the pig, so might it explain with whom the pig becomes identified.

Outside the rich psychological suggestion of *displaced abjection* whereby those at the base of the social pyramid vent their dissatisfaction on groups and beasts at proper Christian society's margins, the tortured animal's identification with Jews illustrates its naturalized irony. In this sense, the authors read the medieval carnival connection between pig and Jew as a convoluted elision between two antithetical terms: since Jews refused to eat the flesh of the filthy, cloven-footed animal, they assumed certain villainous aspects of its ambivalent role (53). The Jews who excluded themselves from the pig *carne-levare* ("lifting of meat") not only became a human embodiment of the animal's festive and sinister aspects, they also were a gloomy reminder of the real abstinence of the flesh which follows the carnival season, i.e., Lent. There is more than convoluted elision at work in the medieval linking of pig and Jew. In her 1996 book *Natural Symbols* Mary Douglas interprets the Jews' refusal of the pig as a consolidating symbolic event: "Pork avoidance ... gains significance as [a] symbol of allegiance simply by [its] lack of meaning for other cultures" (40). Jealousy and misunderstanding then may account for the Italian carnival elision between pigs and Jews. But I should note that the linking of pigs to Jews goes far beyond carnival games and dietary abstention. The insult of *Saujude* (Jewish sow) in German, for example, frequently resounded through Central Europe, from medieval jeers to the pages of the notorious Nazi tabloid *Völkischer Beobachter*. In the era of the Inquisition, the Spaniards used the word *Marrano* (pig) "to describe the 'New Christians' whom the courts endlessly accused of Jewish practices, the main victims of oppressions orchestrated by the Jesuits" (Halevi 137).

This convoluted connection between Jew and pig is quite brilliantly captured by the artist Marc Chagall. His *Study for Introduction to the Jewish Theater* (1920) includes an intercalated panel at the bottom right corner, where an artist's signature normally appears. In this canvas that depicts scenes of a Yiddish drama, the embedded panel shows a peasant urinating on the head of a beast that resembles a pig. In effect, Chagall is commenting here on the strange relationship between his people and this singular beast -- how it haunts the imagination of both the Christian and Jewish world. Within an overly determined Jewish scene, a gentile peasant is defiling a pig. Indeed, the shame coded into the pig -- guilty recognition that we are cultivating a creature only to destroy it -- may well relate to the carnival connection, or transposition, of Jews and pigs. Historically and ideologically, this medieval transposition between pig and Jew, following the argument of Keith Tester, may be conceived of as a Christian response to the Jewish rejection of "Jesus's [divine] position as half-god, half-human ... an abomination of Mosaic classification" (38). Indeed, the abhorrent figure of the pig holds a significant place in the medieval narrative of Christian and Jewish relations and thus the pig represents in many ways an icon of Western culture.

As a carnival figure or emblem, the pig reaches beyond the interpretive domain of ambiguous habits, allegorical gestures, and elided modes of persecution. "Even in carnival" Stallybrass and White note, "the pig could be a symbolic instrument, and even the victim of demonization. Howev-

er, alongside demonization in the carnival ... There were two fundamentally important processes at work: inversion (the world turned upside down), and hybridisation" (56). Within the real, historical, and interpretive contours of the exceptional pig, an understanding of the carnival phenomenon begins to coalesce. To the captivated eye and ear, each of the pig's distinctive behaviors and squeals acts as a sign of carnivalesque possibilities. While Stallybrass and White contextualize these possibilities historically, from the obsessive demonization and didacticism of the Middle Ages to the celebrated hybrids of English country fairs, their analysis stops at the contemporary period, when their version of the carnival pig resurfaces as an *unheimliche* affront to bourgeois notions of propriety and taste, a sensibility which still prevails. The sensitive bourgeoisie, to use the suggestion of William Ian Miller, are "just as likely disgusted by how badly [they] measure up to [this animal] as that [they] fear being like it" (49). Indeed, we do not want to be bourgeois pigs, as the derisive contemporary epithet would suggest. Like the vilified and uncanny carnival pig, "our bodies generate, fornicate, secrete, excrete, suppurate, die, and rot" (49). Tester has gone so far as to locate the origins of humanitarianism in the bourgeoisie's desire to remove itself from the *unheimliche* aspects of animals and their "compatriots," the lower classes: the bourgeoisie "were presented with the difficulty that some groups of people did not represent humanitarianism and instead they gave free, violent rein to the wild beast within. The urban working class diluted its human being by mixing with animals and not upholding bourgeois definitions of social respectability. And if the workers were not fully social, neither could they be fully human. The bourgeoisie imposed the burden to humanise the lower orders upon itself" (121).

Pigs and Literature

From its embodied and symbolic presence in fairgrounds and carnival spectacles, the contemporary carnival pig resurfaces as a powerful image in late-twentieth century Anglo-American literature. I contend that this literary pig encodes a critical dimension because it necessarily incorporates ambiguity; the same disgustingly clever behaviors, sinister squeals, and inversion which haunted the medieval imagination now frame the literary animal in such a way that it has the capacity to reflect upon history, popular culture and even, if I may carefully use the term, obsession.

Arguably the two most renowned literary pigs, Napoleon and Snowball, in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, are really not pigs at all -- among other things, Orwell's pigs neither exhibit a clever appetite for feces nor the essential act of wallowing upon which some of the pig's sinister meaning relies. Initially, in Orwell's fairy story -- the term which he used to describe the novel -- Napoleon and Snowball lead the other animals in ejecting the exploitative Mr. Jones from Manor Farm, founding the utopian Animal Farm in its place, where all liberated livestock collectively reap the benefits of freedom. As a "large rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar" and as a "vivacious, quick in speech and inventive porker," Napoleon and Snowball possess the perfect qualities for guiding the new collective. Through overly determined clichés, Orwell presents a model of brawn and brain. Early on, Napoleon and Snowball are not simply pigs, following the logic of Keith Tester; they are characters whose "differences [are] condensed into degrees of similitude to the human body ... [each] a metaphor within metonymy" (83). But this perfect, metaphorically human union of muscle and mind quickly goes metonymically astray; Napoleon violently ousts his partner. Under this pig's exclusive leadership, the liberated livestock progressively lose their rights, reverting to the deplorable conditions of Mr. Jones. There are neither vile appetites nor filthy habits here; the famous literary pigs of *Animal Farm* seem only to exist as political animals.

Much has been written about the politics of this novel -- the human society which Napoleon's nightmarish world reveals. In an essay entitled "Politics and the English Language" Orwell states: "Since 1930 I had seen little evidence that the USSR was progressing toward anything that one could truly call socialism. ... [It was developing into] a hierarchical society, in which the rulers have no more reason to give up their power than any other ruling class" (x). Orwell himself fled from Spain in 1937 to escape the purges that were taking place, just as they were in the Soviet Union. Against this biographical context, it is tempting to relate Napoleon's dictatorship at *Animal Farm* to the historical reality of Stalin's empire; in this way, the reviled Snowball acts as a stand-in for Trotsky and the other animals replace Stalin's manipulated millions. More broadly, the novel can be read as a critique of all revolutions which go awry; while Stalin represented a failure on the

part of the idealistic Left in the 1930s and 1940s (Orwell was active in the British Socialist party), it also addresses the contemporaneous Fascist horror of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco.

What does the horror of totalitarianism have to do with pigs? What does Orwell's hierarchical order of animals mean? I quote the last paragraph of the novel: "Twelve voices were shouting in anger and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which" (139). By the end of the novel Napoleon and his ruling clique wear human clothing, drink alcohol, live in Mr. Jones' house, and in an ultimate affront to the principles of the animals' revolution, walk on two legs. The anthropomorphized state of Napoleon and his coterie fictionally code the classical ideal that "animals were simultaneously ... separate from the properly human (which was increasingly equated with urban life), whilst retaining a wealth of symbolic meaning in the countryside" (Tester 81). Along with classical ideals, or convoluted inversion of the human and porcine, *Animal Farm* reverts to its original name of Manor Farm, erasing every memory of the livestock's liberation. By the last paragraph, a drunken Napoleon and his cronies cannot be separated from the human beings whom they entertain. To the again enslaved animals, the pigs have become human; pig and human being are interchangeable in this new Manor Farm. By blurring the boundaries between the human and the porcine, Orwell invites us to look at the pig very carefully, locating our own exploitative capacities within the beast's meanings: "Comrade! ... You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in the spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. ... Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. ... We pigs are brainworkers. ... Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back ... cried Squealer" (52).

Long before Napoleon consolidates his dictatorial control of the farm, the pigs' logic becomes clear. Stolen milk and the sweetest apples, as well as an excess of other farm commodities, go directly to this thinking circle of hogs, who need it to protect their animal comrades, or so Squealer's reasoning goes. In this animal world, greed necessitates obligation; the pigs easily justify their ravenous consumption because they are the "cleverest of the animals." This human-like justification of ecological exploitation is more than coincidental. The messenger of this rationalized greed is Squealer, Napoleon's future propaganda director, whose cunning and frenetic use of language (perhaps his namesake squealing) rely upon an understanding of sin -- that is greed and bad manners -- that is gluttony. But there is another aspect to Orwell's Napoleon and Snowball that links the world of *Animal Farm* to the carnival pig's demonization. When Napoleon assumes complete control of the animal collective, Snowball becomes the dictator's convenient scapegoat to whom all of the farm's problems are attributed. Napoleon begins his carefully orchestrated campaign of blame with an ironic accusation: "Comrades ... do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill? SNOWBALL! ... Comrades, here and now I pronounce the death sentence upon Snowball" (82). The very windmill that Snowball designed becomes the vehicle that Napoleon uses to warrant the ousted pig's death penalty. There is more to this windmill incident than thwarted designs; ironically, Napoleon mocked Snowball's plans to build the mill, exaggerating its impracticality and extravagance. This inverted windmill sets an engine of terror into motion. In Napoleon's new order, Snowball serviceably lies behind each transgression, mistake, and even natural failure. With the help of his bloodthirsty dogs, Napoleon forces recalcitrant animals to confess that they worked in cahoots with Snowball to undermine the Farm. These harassed beasts realize Snowball's death penalty; many confessing hens and sheep have their throats torn out by Napoleon's dogs, thereby strengthening the dictatorial grip of power. The pig Napoleon demonizes others -- critical and questioning animals -- through the unique opportunities provided by his scapegoat-pig Snowball, fictionally capturing the associations of the carnival pig. In a perverse way, the dictatorial pigs of *Animal Farm* -- the very fact that they are not funny -- heighten the seriousness of Orwell's allegorical message.

Not all recent literary pigs follow the ideological and didactic pattern of Orwell's Napoleon and Snowball. Some revel in humorous possibilities, highlighting the animal's real and symbolic disjuncture. In the same way that Orwell's pigs have the interpretive density to critique megalomaniacal human traits, other literary piggies, to use the Beatles' suggestive portmanteau title, illustrate

ridiculous human situations. At first blush, Sybil, the -- yes -- sibylline sow in Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* (1986), resembles little Orwell's renowned literary pigs. Even in this postmodern novel of inconceivable characters and fantastic situations, Sybil does not transcend her animal status. In this fictional universe of bird-women, polymorphously perverse prostitutes, and peculiar carny folk, Sybil remains almost believably bound to the world of clovenhoofed animals. The plot of the novel gravitates around a traveling circus and its amazing performers. Intercalated into this carnivalesque travel narrative is the mystery of Sophia Fevvers, an *aerialiste extraordinaire*, whose wings (or lack thereof) motivate the actions of an American journalist, who joins the circus to discover if the famous bird-woman's appendages are real or a hoax. Between the adventures of the circus party and the story of Fevvers, *Nights at the Circus* incorporates both a "metaphysical" brothel Madame in Whitechapel who owns a painting by Titian and the Sadean nightmare world of *La Schreck* -- another enterprising Madame who employs caged hermaphrodites, dwarves, and comatose prostitutes. Proficient pigs like Sybil are everyday, normal fare in Carter's novelistic menu of freaks, frauds and fantasy.

Unlike Orwell's Napoleon and Snowball, Sybil neither speaks nor dabbles, even symbolically, in politics. She enters the narrative in a way that separates her from her earlier literary brothers: "If one pig trotted off to St. Petersburg to pray, another less pious porker [traveled] to Petersburg for fun and profit between silk sheets in a first class wagon lit. The lucky one, the very good friend of the great impresario, was particularly accomplished; she could spell out your fate and fortune with the aid of the alphabet written on cards -- yes, indeed! Could truffle the future out of four-and-twenty Roman capitals if they were laid out in order before her and that wasn't the half of her talents" (98). Sybil is initially compared to an admirable pig in an old babushka's story; lacking the religious and altruistic convictions of the babushka's creation (perhaps separating her from the initial revolutionary zeal of Napoleon and Snowball), this pampered sow earns her way through looks and refined tricks. She belongs to Colonel Kearney, the impresario who owns the circus that employs Fevvers and her bizarre retinue. Kearney dotes on his "delicious creamy yellow" darling who "[shines] like gold because he [massages] her with the best olive oil from Lucca" (99). With truffles and superior olive oil, we might wonder if Angela Carter has embedded a recipe for an exotic pork dish in the initial description of Sybil. This delightful sow's role is incidental. She only appears as the circus makes its way across Russia, contentedly snuggled under the Colonel's yielding arm.

Sybil is the latest of Kearney's talented pigs, "in [his] great dynasty of ... porcine assistants" (100). She participates in his "ludic game" nudging out letters to create messages. Whenever Kearney has an important question or troubling predicament, Sybil does her duty with a "gruff little squeak" and an "ear-jiggling nod" (101), from determining job roles (Sybil spells out CLOWN on an occasion for one intrepid applicant) to haggling over contracts (while a bite from one of Sybil's apples clinches a deal, a reproachful grunt bears other consequences). The smitten Kearney succinctly captures his adored pig's purported prowess with the ironic two sentences: "Sybil knows. Sybil can tell" (163). This dainty sow is certainly special. Although she holds the boss's heart, Sybil must continually elude threats and violence. At one point she even "screeches as though it were sticking time," dashing away from a tiger that hungrily follows her delectable scent. At the end of an unpleasant negotiation, a disgruntled party unceremoniously blurts at Sybil: "Pork and beans. . . Spare-ribs. ... Hickory-smoked ham" (170). Indeed, this porcine experience is different from the pigs' actions in *Animal Farm*, when they ceremoniously remove "some hams hanging in the kitchen ... for burial" (Orwell 41). Sybil walks a tight-rope between the privileges of her cultivated position and the reality of her consumable status. The treasured sow that answers the Colonel's most important questions is nothing more than a luscious dish (truffled and cloaked in fine oil) to the hungry everyday people and caged carnivores who surround her. However precious and provocative, Sybil remains tied to the world of the circus and carnival, where, according to Randy Malamud, "an animal recruited for human culture may be painfully dispatched when [she] ceases to function expediently" (186).

Yet, in Angela Carter's circus fiction of freaks and fantastic situations, Sybil is not the only creature that teeters between the roles of entitled performer (or, great consumer of goods) and pre-

ferred food-stuff. "Pigs eat everything a man eats ... That's why a man tastes same as a pig. That's why cannibals called roasted homosapiens 'long pig,' yessir! Omnivores, see mixed feedin'! Give us both that gamey taste" (203). Just as the traveling circus party is about to begin eating veal cutlets with "too bright a brown [gravy] for authenticity," the Colonel comments on the gustatory connections between pigs and humans; in his reasoning, a common diet creates common flavor -- the omnivore's distinctive "gaminess." As he expounds upon his notions of flavor, Sybil, unlike certain nauseated human members of the dining party, dispatches her mystery meat with speedy abandon. This clever pig, that not too long ago dodged a tiger's maw and threats of the slaughterhouse, now gobbles the dish in front of her, ignoring or perhaps relishing its possible human component. In this topsy-turvy circus world, roles flip-flop; one who eats -- human or pig -- can quite easily become one who is eaten. By the end of *Nights at the Circus*, we are never quite sure who, or what, "clutches forks and knives to eat bacon" (Harrison). Angela Carter, through delightful Sybil, parodically renovates an aspect of the historicized pig in such a way that omnivorous pigs and humans are interchangeable items on a menu. We leave the gifted literary sow Sybil devouring a questionable cutlet, in a way that merrily emphasizes her connection to the shameful world of her clovenhoofed kin.

Pigs and Us

While Keith Tester asserts that animals' "differences [are] condensed into degrees of similitude to the human body ... [each] a metaphor within metonymy" (83), he states that "one of the most fundamental interstices is the metaphorical and metonymical relationship between society and animals" in effect that, "animals are like humans, but we are not like them" (43). The Falaise sow and *Animal Farm's* clique of ruling pigs certainly exemplify the metaphorical dimension of Tester's point. Just as the medieval Falaise sow which behaved like a violent human being received a violent human punishment (dressed in human clothes), Orwell's literary pigs who assume exploitative positions learn to walk on two legs (again dressed in human clothes). But postmodern Sybil invites another interpretation. She never leaves her animal realm, but parasitically relies upon human sentiment and superstition, from Colonel Kearney's corny affection to her purported sibylline gifts. This dainty sow has a metonymic relationship to humanity. Through Sibyl's characteristics, stereotypes, and cliches, Angela Carter invites us to consider the ways that we reflect the world of pigs, that is, the animals in which we invest so much interpretive meaning. Between metaphorical pigs like the Falaise sow and Napoleon and metonymic pigs like Sibyl something significant has occurred, inviting speculation on the present relation between pigs and us.

In her 1991 *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Carol J. Adams begins her discussion of "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women" with the following provocative description: "A healthy sexual being poses near her drink: she wears bikini panties only and luxuriates on a large chair with her head rested seductively on an elegant lace doily. Her inviting drink with a twist of lemon awaits on the table. Her eyes are closed; her facial expression beams pleasure, relaxation, enticement. She is touching her crotch in an attentive, masturbatory action. Anatomy of seduction: Sex object, drink, inviting room, sexual activity. The formula is complete. But a woman does not beckon. A pig does. 'Ursula Hamdress' appeared in *Playboar*, a magazine described by critics as 'the pig farmer's Playboy" (39). Like a pornographic picture of a woman, the sow in *Playboar* is lasciviously packaged for the male gaze. Adams collapses the deviant eroticism in the image with the cutting question, "Is she inviting someone to rape her or to eat her?" (39). Ursula is not the type of attractive pig that one would expect to encounter in a pork producer's journal, perhaps best described through the words of Richard Horwitz as: "One that will eat, shit, grow, and die, all in good time -- good, that is, for the farmer but only for the farmer if also for the hog up to the moment of death" (236; indeed, pigs that suffer excessively before they are slaughtered quickly go rancid; their meat is less tasty than their happy brethren). Horror and humor conspire in the image of Ursula Hamdress; this inviting sow asks us to consider our own shameful appetites all the while laughing at the unexpected presence of a pig in a pornographic picture. Like Sybil, *Playboar's* Ursula begs us to recognize our own pig-like characteristics -- our animal drives and desires. This sow aims to trigger our hunger for sex, food, and violence. Metonymically throwing a cliched image of our desire at us, Ursula tells us that we are animals too.

But metonymic pigs need not always confront us so violently. Jim Henson's irresistible *Miss Piggy*, the gaudy and gluttonous pink muppet who continually pursues *Kermit the Frog*, puts the pig into a different metonymic frame. From children's programming like *Sesame Street* and the various *Muppet Movies* to adult novelties, this always brash stuffed sow reaches multiple audiences. She sees herself as a paradigm of taste and style. Like an incensed and famished real pig, Miss Piggy aggressively forces herself upon others (muppets as well as humans), demanding attention, veneration, and an occasional fattening treat. Ever a crass opportunist, or opportunistically manipulated muppet, *Miss Piggy* has made a contribution to the boon of self-help books; in fact, *Miss Piggy's Guide to Life* offers advice on everything from curing depression to financial affairs, always with a greedy snout turned towards overindulgence. Coaxing her readers, Miss Piggy declares: "Now, not everyone can be a superstar, but anyone can be a semistar, a starette, or a teensyweensystar. The most important thing is to believe that you are beautiful. If, when you start out, you don't get immediate results, don't be discouraged. For one thing, beauty takes practice. But, more important, often the only view we have of ourselves is from a mirror or a photograph. Due to defection, refraction, confection, and infliction, mirrors always make you look larger in the wrong places. (An important scientist at a big university in a famous place discovered this)" (3-4).

Embedded into the sow's words are notions of beauty and distortion. Like her vulgar expressions and glitzy accoutrements, neologisms and parataxis are typical Piggy traits. Her rambling use of language violates syntax, clearly highlighting her gluttonous nature. In this narcissistic pig-universe beauty remains the property of the individual. Miss Piggy ignores the reflective capacity of cameras, mirrors and eyes, admonishing her readers of distorting powers -- "defection," "refraction" and a host of other "proven" processes. In her beautiful world, guests ("the guestest with the bestest") send reports to their hosts after a dinner party, critiquing the "successful aspects of the evening and tactfully pointing out areas that could stand improvement" (43). Miss Piggy is certainly one pig that turns bourgeois propriety on its head (all the while trumpeting her own grace, glamour, and social savvy), revealing the base desires behind guises of refinement. As a contemporary humorous icon, she is a stuffed embodiment of the Beatles's starch and dirt -- the truculent yet lovable piggy who forces us to see our own connection to the world of animals. Through *Miss Piggy* we happily recognize that we are like pigs.

As I hope this suggestive encounter with the status of some exemplary pigs in Western English-language culture has shown, pigs convey dense symbolic meanings. The pig elicits contradictory responses, from the shame associated with consuming its savory flesh to delight in its cunning and charm. In medieval carnivals, for example, the pig played the literal role of the delicious, festively squealing main course and the metaphorical role of the vilified other. In the examples from contemporary literature, I discussed the metaphorical and metonymic relationships between pigs and humans. On one hand, George Orwell uses Napoleon as a metaphor for human behavior; there is an allegorical distance between pig and human in *Animal Farm*. On the other hand, Angela Carter uses Sibyl as a metonym to illustrate the intimate connection or relationship of contiguity between pig and human. While Orwell's allegory provokes, at most, a shameful recognition of ourselves, Carter's Sibyl invites us to laugh in recognition at our connection to the porcine world. Through Sibyl, Ursula Hamdress, and even Miss Piggy, we enter the world of our barnyard "commensal associates." Through a recognition of the unique position of the pig in Judeo-Christian Western culture, its real intelligence and symbolic density, we are provided with an opportunity to see the complexity of our animal selves.

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