

FILMIC WARFARE OVER ANIMALS:
WINNING WEAPONS
OF THE TRADE
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FILMIC WARFARE OVER ANIMALS:
WINNING WEAPONS
OF THE TRADE

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This thesis is dedicated to

Celestine, Vic,

Billie Girl,

Ginny,

B,

and

Tabu

I am extremely grateful for their faith in me

and their

unconditional love.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ANIMAL MACHINE	1
II. RHETORIC AND HISTORIES OF ANIMAL RIGHTS: WHY ARE WE IN THIS HANDBASKET AND HOW CAN WE GET OUT OF HERE	11
III. NEW PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE IN THE ANIMAL WELFARE MOVEMENT	27
IV. CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE: ANIMALS IN DOCUMENTARY FILM	35
V. HUNTING FOR BAMBI	46
VI. THE BEAST AND ITS BEAUTY: DILEMMAS AND DUALITY OF MASCULINITY AND ANIMALITY IN JEAN COCTEAU'S <i>LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE</i>	54
VII. THE HEART OF THE ANIMAL MACHINE	66
WORKS CITED	70

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ANIMAL MACHINE

In his studies of animal behavior, biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944) argues for the importance of understanding and justly treating the world with an integral comparative analysis of the relationship between human existence and animal life. Brett Buchanan expands on Uexküll's philosophy and notes, "Rather than conceiving the world according to the parameters of our own human understanding—which, historically, has been the more prevalent approach—Uexküll asks us to rethink how we view the reality of the world as well as what it means to be an animal" (2). Uexküll's request for his colleagues to "rethink" another's "reality" is not an uncommon mission within film studies. In spite of this visionary goal, a neglected *Other* in film theory and criticism persists in the figure of the animal, even though filmmakers have continued to appropriate animal imagery and narratives throughout the history of cinema.

Uexküll proposes that we seek to understand the life story of each animal according to its own perceptions and actions: to value the animals that are esteemed, if not loved, in virtually the entire human world. Using Victor Schonfeld's documentary, *The Animals Film* (1981) as a foundational text, this thesis examines the rhetoric, imagery, and exposition of animal life stories in representative documentary and fictional films, as they demonstrate repeated patterns of imaginative response to relationships between humans and animals.

This study begins with the rhetorical framework for the animal rights movement, as illustrated in such works as the Bible, *Aristotle's Conception of the Soul* by E.E. Spicer, *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* by Richard Ryder, and *A Stroll Through the Environments of Animals and Humans* by Jakob von Uexküll. Rhetoric, didacticism, ethics, and aestheticism have all taken their place in our evolving understanding of animals and humans' relationship to the fellow beings they classify as "animals."

The rhetoric of animal rights began in world religions "as part of the sacred and thereby subject to the will of the gods" (Wise 11). From there it shifted in the 6th century B.C.E. to include science and philosophy. With the onset of the Renaissance, many of these ancient conceptions began to disperse when scientists began to think about physical phenomena as natural processes. Darwin's rhetoric revolution in the 19th century then marched through not just science but also theology, philosophy, sociology, political science, and law. However, the original ancient conceptions have not disappeared, even though their intellectual foundations fell apart long ago. Instead of perceiving animals as sentient beings, people are still inclined to objectify non-humans as things.

The catch phrase from *The Animals Film*, "It's not about them—it's about us," reiterates the need to accept Uexküll's invitation and rethink our perceptions of the animal. This study examines the filming techniques employed in *The Animals Film* and the way it addresses Uexküll's invitation as well as provides insight to the human predicament of breaking down the thick wall that separates us from perceiving non-human animals as intelligent, sentient beings. *The Animals Film* does not ignore

societies' adoration of animals nor does it gloss over most people's isolation from actual animal abuse. The importance of people's idealized infatuation with animals, as embodied in *The Animals Film* introduction, is a brutal contrast to the rest of the documentary, which exposes the reality of existence for the multi-billions of animals each year that are the terrorized, mistreated victims of factory farming, the fur industry, scientific animal research, and other exploitations. Furthermore, by using many of the same editing techniques that were used in early movies to appropriate animals, *The Animals Film* helps combat the social construction of animal existence with the same weapons of the trade that were originally used in film to exploit animals.

While thinking about society's exploitation of animals in 1839, Annie Field Elsdale writes in "Christianity in Its Effect Upon Man's Treatment of Animals Considered," "We do trust, we will indulge the firm belief, that the time is not far distant when not merely actual cruelty will be reprobated, but when the rights of animals upon a more extensive scale will be fully recognized" (423). Her prediction seems overly optimistic today. Originally released one hundred forty-two years after Elsdale wrote her treatise, *The Animals Film* was highly acclaimed for its recognition of animal rights issues but not for its filmic techniques. In an interview in the *The Animals Film* (2007) director's cut release, Schonfeld states that he was not an "animal lover" but a "political activist" who was addressing the "vast amount of suffering on sentient beings." As a member of an undisclosed New York political film group, Schonfeld was determined to expose policies and principles detrimental to the "environment, world hunger," and their intricate connection to animals' true lifestyles. Perhaps the era Elsdale had forecast finally arrived, or the activist atmosphere of the 1970s and early 1980s simply galvanized

an existing animal rights movement portrayed in *The Animals Film*.

Even though critics neglected the filmmaking and larger content in favor of the animal rights message, *The Animals Film* fuels the animal rights cause while simultaneously transcending it by addressing the broader issue of the politics of animal identity. In Bill Nichols' discussion about "redefining the politics of identity," he states:

To the extent that an important political voice of documentary has become implicated with a politics of identity, it has also had to address the question of alliances and affinities among various subcultures, groups, and movements. This represents another shift from the earlier construction of national identities to the recognition of partial or hybrid identities that seldom settle into a single permanent category. Such categories, with their elusive, variable nature, even call into question the adequacy of any notion of community that can be permanently identified and fixed. . . . As a result, an emphasis on hybridity and diaspora, exile and displacement exists in tension with the more sharply defined contours of an identity politics. (160)

Nichols' acute observations on identity are noted under the subtitle "Beyond Nationalism: New Forms of Identity," in a chapter titled "How Have Documentaries Addressed Social and Political Issues?" Unfortunately, his documentary film discussions on these issues are limited to the human species. Ideally, his discussions should encompass the animal species; the species classification "animal" denotes a humanly defined congregation deprived of individual and unique national or species identities. The pertinent issues of "hybridity and diaspora, exile and displacement" capture and describe

the reality of animals' lives—another's reality that is almost totally vulnerable to the species-centered actions of humans. The mere consideration of animals' identities not only deserves attention and exploration, but also provides a crucial component of redefining the politics of identity.

The assertion that perception of animals' reality should fit into the efforts and categories of political identity redefinition is further exemplified when Nichols notes: "To take on a primary identity . . . has a contingent, political dimension to it, pegged to a specific historical context, that runs counter to any notion of a fixed or essentialized group identity. This sense of fluid, liminal boundaries that defy categories and blur identities has itself become the subject of documentary representation" (Nichols 160). In reference to Trinh Minh-ha's *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), a "thesis about the instability of categories" (161), Nichols argues that "the film prompts us to rethink the usefulness of any notion of documentary as a form that conveys information, or truth, naturally, without problem," and it "also prompts us to rethink what it means to understand another[']s] life. . . . Trinh . . . wants us to remember that any claim to knowledge that we take away with us comes thoroughly filtered through the form in which that knowledge reaches us" (Nichols 161). In other words, as Trinh claims, "The Real? Or the repeated artificial resurrection of the real, an operation whose overpowering success in substituting the visual and verbal signs of the real for the real itself ultimately helps to challenge the real, thereby intensifying the uncertainties engendered by any clear-cut division between the two" (Trinh 96).

It is the "repeated artificial resurrection" of the primary political identity of animals that Victor Schonfeld brings to our attention in *The Animals Film*. Through this

work, Schonfeld provides a voice for the animal *Other*; they have a common set of interests, even if generally incapable of independently achieving any influence or enacting reform in any traditional sense. However, the visual and verbal signs of the real in *The Animals Film* also engender a clear-cut certainty: the unreal, too, is an artificial resurrection both purposefully and insensibly engendered by the species human. Like a bubble, this certainty manufactures a false ideology while providing a protected, isolated, and exempted area for human existence.

Thus, it seems appropriate when Jakob von Uexküll asks us to “rethink how we view the reality of the world as well as what it means to be an animal,” to leave our filtered, man-made reality and step inside an animal’s bubble. In setting the stage, he says:

The best way to begin this stroll is to set out on a sunny day through a flower strewn meadow that is humming with insects and fluttering with butterflies, and build around every animal a soap bubble . . . to represent its own environment . . . that is filled with the perceptions accessible to that subject alone. As soon as we see ourselves step into one of these bubbles, the surrounding meadow . . . is completely transformed. Many of its colorful features disappear, others no longer belong together, new relationships are created. A new world emerges in each bubble. The reader is invited to traverse these worlds with us. (Buchanon 1)

Unfortunately, the fields of flowers and butterflies are nowhere near the animals represented in Schonfeld’s film. In order for us to begin that journey from fantasy to another reality, we must recognize the human delusions about the environments in which

most animals exist. *The Animals Film* bursts the rosy bubbles of human perception in order to enter the domain of animals and traverse their worlds in the best way that Schonfeld can offer—no matter how predetermined, tainted, and limited our human vision may be. As Trinh does, Schonfeld calls for us to “remember that any claim to knowledge that we take away with us comes thoroughly filtered through the form in which that knowledge reaches us” even as it exposes animal realities that humans both create and try to ignore.

Consequently, *The Animals Film* captures the reality of existence for abused and victimized animals with its contrasting montage of these *living* animals and other film clips that include historical animal film, pharmaceutical ads, and interviews with unconscious human beings that expose how “thoroughly filtered” human knowledge is. Schonfeld’s dialectical montage reminds us that our claims to knowledge are filtered through whatever form we are currently experiencing, as well as the previous structuring forms we have already experienced. To refute viewers’ perception and claims that *The Animals Film* is merely an animal rights documentary, Schonfeld states: “I’m a filmmaker exploring a reality that exists in the world as powerfully as my medium will allow me to. And I’m offering you a machine that will explore it for you. That’s this film. And you can use that or not as you choose” (*The Animals Film* 2007).

The Animals Film also sheds light on the forms we have not consciously experienced, but which nonetheless influence our reception and perception. People’s relationships to animal systems are perceived and dealt with as if they are unrelated or even nonexistent. This “account of reality and knowledge” is reminiscent of Donald D. Palmer’s explanation of structuralism, which includes

the “outrageous claim that every ‘object’ is both a presence and an absence”:

It is there to the extent that it appears before us, but it is Not there insofar as its being determined by its relation to the whole system of which it is part, a system that does not appear to us. In this sense, each ‘object,’ even in its quasi-absence, reflects the total system, and the total system is present in each of its parts. (Palmer 2-3)

On the level of quasi-absence represented in *The Animals Film*, an interview with behavioral psychologist Roger Ulrich, offers insight into the relevance of relationships within the total (animal) system. When Ulrich’s interviewer confronts him about his part in degrading that system and participating in years of government-funded pain experimentation on animals, Ulrich acknowledges both his role and his remorse. Ulrich then exposes the interviewer’s *own*, albeit less obvious, current contribution to that system through the use of technical recording devices manufactured by large corporations that ultimately sponsor pharmaceutical testing and factory farming. Ulrich claims that “we all, in the end result, are linked up together. Everything I, . . . you, . . . anyone does is linked up together and together we assume this responsibility” (*Animals Film*). Beyond exposing conditions that humans create but would rather not see, Schonfeld shows us that any claim to knowledge is limited by structures that prevent us from being aware.

In our search to appreciate and understand others, we seek what we are unaware of by striving to follow Uexküll’s recommendation to leave our own structurally filtered reality to enter and truly see an entirely distinct and separate one. It is as if we must take apart all the parts of our communal machine and examine them in order to see what they are and how each one works. In so doing, we must also be aware that one part performs

in conjunction with another and its performance is influenced and determined by another.

Like Schonfeld sees his own work, I envision *Filmic Warfare Over Animals: Winning Weapons of the Trade* as a machine. My machine examines Schonfeld's vision as well as the visions of others concerned with our relationships with and to animals—likewise, parts of the big machine. These machines have likely grown and evolved to support, benefit, and even justify the existing components. However, in reality, antiquated machine cogs—ideology and dogma—are insidious and obsolete. To ensure the advancement of both humans and animals, machines need to be conscientiously rebuilt, not repurposed.

When exploring parts that we are unaware of, it is essential to recognize why we are or have been unaware. In addition, it is of the utmost importance to examine why we so often accept and promote what we are aware of, no matter how deceptive or outmoded. We must concede not only the status of our animal system, but how it has become the status quo.

Mapping out the further exploration of my thesis, Chapter II will investigate the rhetoric and histories of animal welfare. Chapter III will describe contemporary philosophies and language that largely facilitated the animal rights movement. Chapter IV provides a history and examination of animals in documentary film. Furthermore, I will examine filming techniques in several governing films as well as *The Animals Film*. Chapter V will explore Walt Disney's animated film, *Bambi* (1942) and its effects on animal rights, especially compared to *The Animals Film*. Chapter 6 will reexamine a Jean Cocteau film, *La Belle et la bête* (1946), as a prominent illustration and a gay perspective on the existence of a homoerotic *Other*, which yields a new understanding of the beast

inside the man. To conclude, Chapter 7 reviews the evolution of human understanding and representation of animals as well as inquiring into the actual possibilities of rethinking the reality of animals.

CHAPTER II

RHETORIC AND HISTORIES OF ANIMAL RIGHTS: WHY ARE WE IN THIS HANDBASKET AND HOW CAN WE GET OUT OF HERE

In many of *The Animals Film* interviews, people make the statements, “I don’t know,” “I’ve never thought about it,” or “I don’t want to know.” If one can get past not wanting to know, perhaps a prerequisite to seeking and exploring what we are unaware of should be a conscious awareness of *not* knowing. As Peter Ralston states in *The Book of Not Knowing*, “Any valid inquiry begins with not-knowing, or else it merely serves to confirm what is already known. Making a shift from knowing to not-knowing opens up a space for new understanding to arise” (27). From his perspective, we can accept Uexküll’s invitation, which asks us to “rethink how we view the reality of the world as well as what it means to be an animal.” By accepting that individuals’ perceptions are the foundation of the status quo, we may be able to concede that the status of our animal system is a result of the building blocks that comprise what Ralston has named, “the cultural matrix”:

We tend to overlook the fact that a culture exists only within the people who make it up. Instead, we live as though individuals and cultures are separate events, as though somehow we exist apart from our culture. This is a bit like thinking a forest exists independently from the trees. When we look at it impartially, it’s plain that culture is purely conceptual; there is

not culture outside the minds of the people who comprise one. Our culture is made up of our collect temperament and values, our assumptions and beliefs, our methods of thinking and our cosmologies. Our culture is found in every building, every work, every idea, every routine, every ritual, every method, every book, every mind, every emotion, every value, every action, every bias—in short, it’s made up of everything we do and are.

(43)

By adopting this outlook, we are more open to understand the reality of animals. And at this point in our analysis, it is time to examine the building blocks that comprise the history of animals being in our cultural matrix; a matrix that we must also concede is structured by the animals we call human.

The status of the animal system reflects the historical context of our current state of beliefs, as expressed through philosophical and scientific treatises, as well as literary, dramatic, and filmic explorations of animal and human relationships. Human dominion over non-human animals began thousands of years “before [people] knew how to record it” (Wise 10). Archaeologists suggest that our “precursors” first brought animals under control eleven to twelve thousand years ago. With the coming of agriculture and animal husbandry, and its “penning, yoking, harnessing, hobbling, shackling, and castrating,” animals were physically disempowered (Mason, *When God* 19). “While animals were once successfully coequals or superiors, with domestication they became our slaves or subordinates. Additionally, [those domesticated] became reliant upon humans for care and protection” (Serpell 33). But animals’ dependence upon people was not one of choice. Previous to their submission to humans, they managed to survive and flourish

without human intervention. And beyond using animals for a food source when necessary, just as animals did with people, humans' yoking of animals for agriculture and animal husbandry advanced human supremacy on earth. With the growth in human population and dominance, both domestic and wild animals became lower subjects on the planet.

The enslavement of fellow earthlings resulted in humans' rationalization of their dominion and superiority, which has been expressed and perpetrated in religious dogma. Another source of supremacy that continues to influence the current relationship humans have with animals is that of the intertwining of Western religion and philosophy. Both of these systems have tended throughout history to relegate animals to the control and caprices of human beings (Merz-Perez and Heide 11).

The Judeo-Christian granting of human dominion over animals in the first few pages of the Old Testament in Genesis 1:26 (*King James Version*) reads, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." In early philosophical texts, Aristotle maintains that animals live for the benefit of humans (Spicer 45). Although Pythagoras was an ethical vegetarian who believed that animals and humans had the same kinds of souls, it was Aristotle's argument that was destined, through later thinkers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas—recently Rene' Descartes—to have the greatest influence on Western Christian thought (Ryder, *Animal* 21-23; *Political* 3,6,8,12).

Aristotle imagined *all* nature as having a pecking order. This brainstorm coincided with other Greek philosophies such as Plato's "principle of plenitude" [in]

which every conceivable form that could exist in the universe did” and Socrates’ belief “that nonhuman animals existed just for us” just as “the sun crossed the heavens for our sake” (Wise 11). These designs became syndicated into the “Great Chain of Being,” which explained and rationalized human supremacy over animals as a great universal design.

In *Rattling the Cage Toward Legal Rights for Animals*, Steven Wise titles his second chapter, “Trapped in a Universe That No Longer Exists.” Within this category, the “Great Chain of Being” can be seen as a primary shackle that has not only kept animals in bondage, but has also kept humanity existentially confined in its own archaic, mucky stall. In prefacing his description of the “Great Chain of Being,” Wise states, “It became . . . one of the half-dozen most potent and persistent presuppositions in Western thought” (Wise 11). This powerful image was fashioned with a chain of command:

An infinite number of finely graded forms were arranged along the ladder. Creatures who were barely alive occupied the lowest rungs. Above them ranged the sentient beings, conscious, perhaps able to experience. Rational being inhabited higher rungs, with the most rational human being on the highest rungs that could be assigned to beings with physical bodies. Above them, looming incredibly high, dwelled an infinite number of spiritual and divine beings. The lower-rung dwellers were designed to serve the higher-rung dwellers, for they generated more heat, had souls made from better stuff, and were more perfect. (Wise 11)

In this Aristotelian universe, the less perfect always acts or exists for the sake of the more perfect. According to the logic, non-human animals exist for the sake of humans: “the

tame, for use and food, the wild, if not all, at least the greater part of them, for food and the provisions of clothing and various instruments. . . . [Because] nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man” (Spicer 45-46).

There were some notable exceptions to hierarchical thinkers like Aristotle. For example, Plutarch, the Greek-born philosopher who lived in Rome, based his own vegetarianism on ethical concerns: “But for the sake of some little mouthful of flesh we deprive a soul of the sun and light, and of that proportion of life and time it had been born into the world to enjoy” (qtd. in Wynne-Tyson 249). According to nineteenth-century Irish philosopher Lecky, Plutarch was probably the first writer to truly promote consideration to animals based on universal goodwill, as opposed to the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of the soul (244).

Centuries later, in 1588, Michel de Montaigne published “Of Cruelties.” Australian moral ethics philosopher, Peter Singer, cites Montaigne as the first since the Roman age to condemn violence against animals as immoral in itself (*Animal*, rev. 199). Nonetheless, until the Enlightenment, the exploitation of animals was not given much reflection. It was commonly thought that animals had been designed for humans to use. Slowly but surely, however, people began to acknowledge that animals do suffer and deserve some consideration (*Animal*, rev. 202). Towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Europe experienced the beginning of an outburst of academic interest in the well being of animals (Ryder, *Political* 28).

Theologians, philosophers, poets, artists, and other intellectuals readily conveyed and promoted the formerly infrequent and unusual attitude of compassion for animals. In

1776, Anglican priest Humphry Primatt established a central premise in the contemporary animal rights movement: "Pain is pain, whether it be inflicted on man or on beast; and the creature that suffers it, whether man or beast, being sensible of the misery of it whilst it lasts, suffers evil" (21). As a retired vicar, Dr. Primatt approached the subject from the standpoint of a clergyman of the Established Church. Although not openly affirming that animals have rights, Primatt disagreed with the idea that humans ought harm them with impunity:

Now if amongst men, the differences of their powers of the mind, and of their complexion, stature, and accidents of fortune, do not give to any one man a right to abuse or insult any other man on account of these differences, for the same reason, a man can have no natural right to abuse and torment a beast, merely because a beast has not the mental powers of a man. . . . A brute is an animal no less sensible of pain than a man. (22-23)

Although not a clergyman like Primatt, Jeremy Bentham was hailed as "the first patron saint of animal rights" (Benthall 1). As a philosopher and social reformer, he promoted animal rights concurrently with Primatt. By the time Jeremy Bentham wrote his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, African slaves had already been freed in France, but Britain's territories still permitted slavery. In 1780, in response to current political and social attitudes and conventions, Bentham reiterated Primatt's argument:

The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the

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 the 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. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?

(311)

Echoing concerns about the practice of slavery in the previous decade, the rising support for animal wellbeing expressed by Primatt, Bentham, and other European writers put in place the intellectual foundation for the emergence of an organized animal welfare movement in the early nineteenth-century (Ryder, *Political* 25). By then, the basic principles of the modern animal rights movement had been established: animals, like humans, are capable of pain and suffering; and this capacity warrants them both legal protection and moral rights (Ryder *Animal* 76). These opinions about animals, based upon human-like characteristics and supporting the animal welfare movement, helped to widen human perspective on a different species' existence.

Another defining moment in the understanding of animals occurred when Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859 and followed by *The Descent of Man* in 1871. By 1870, Darwinism was commonly acknowledged both in England and

America (Ryder, *Animal* 160-61). It was a significant moment in the animal welfare movement, for Darwin argued that humans and nonhumans were not only physically but mentally similar: “[t]he difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind” (319). By emphasizing the kinship between humans and other animals, he helped narrow the conceptual gap between the two (Ryder, *Animal* 160). In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin states: “the senses and intuitions, 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 even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals” (105). Darwin’s opinions about evolution had a major impact on Victorian thought. In both Britain and the United States, people began to consider that humans and non-human animals shared common ancestors in addition to the ideas that animals’ intelligence and ability to suffer were not so different from our own (Jasper and Nelkin 16). Because they are related to humans, the nature of animals deserved more consideration. Darwin’s scientific writings triggered human empathy for animals as well as curiosity about them.

The emotional and intellectual reactions of human empathy for animals resulted in legal actions. Prior to the nineteenth century, the first known law to protect animals in English speaking nations dates back to 1635. In that year, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Stratford, enacted legislation that prohibited the pulling of wool off sheep and attaching ploughs to the tails of horses. One of the primary reasons for the law was anti-cruelty (Ryder, *Animal* 53). In 1641, the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony printed their first legal code, “The Body of Liberties.” Two of the one hundred liberties presented legal protection for animals in stating “No man shall exercise any Tirranny or Crueltie

towards any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use" (Leavitt and Halverson, "Evolution" 1).

Then nearly two hundred years later, in both Britain and the United States, the nineteenth century offered substantial change in society's attitudes toward animals. As David Favre and Vivien Tsang note, the legal systems in both countries began the century perceiving animals as simply items of property, "not much different than a shovel or plow" (2). However, during the first half of the century, lawmakers began to acknowledge that animals were capable of suffering and hence were deserving of protection against at least some forms of cruelty (1-2).

Both historically and currently, the U.S. tends to lag behind Britain and Europe in its progress for animal rights. Yet the first modern law for the protection of animals was American, enacted in 1821 by the Maine Legislature. Notably, the law made no distinction as to who owned the animal. It forbade citizens from beating his or her own horse or cattle, as well as the horse or cattle of another (Favre and Tsang 8). Favre and Tsang suggest that "[s]ince common law criminal concepts did not limit what a person did with their own property, this law suggested a new societal interest: concern for the animal itself" (8).

The following year in 1822, the British Parliament passed an act to prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle, or "Dick Martin's Act," as it came to be known. The bill made the abuse of certain domestic farm animals punishable by a fine or imprisonment (Leavitt xiii-xiv). This passage of "Dick Martin's Act" was a crucial moment in the history of animal rights, not so much for the protection it provided animals (for such protection was limited to certain species and the law did not apply to owners of

the animal victim), but rather for the precedent it created (Salt 6). Martin's Act made cruelty, which had not been indictable as a criminal offense under the common law, an offense per se. More importantly, it established the legal principle that animals have certain minimal rights (Carson 50; Favre and Tsang 5).

Along with legal remedies, societies became significant forces in shaping the rhetoric surrounding animal rights. In 1824, Martin followed the passage of his law in 1824 with the creation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), the first such organization that survived more than its first few gatherings (Finsen and Finsen 31; Ryder, *Animal* 89). The organization is the oldest animal protection society still in existence (Carson 53). In its first year, the society brought nearly one hundred fifty prosecutions for cruelty. It also campaigned against bull-baiting, dog fighting, the abuse of horses and cattle, and cruelties in London's primary meat market at Smithfield.

By 1832, the SPCA was actively lobbying Parliament; the organization's language reflected the important roles all social classes had in forwarding the goals of the group. However, it didn't take long before the SPCA's conservative agenda became apparent (Ryder, *Animal* 91; Ryder, *Political* 21). Princess Victoria became a patron of the society in 1835; and in 1840, after she became queen, allowed the society to add the word "Royal" at the front of its name (Carson 54). The royal endorsement rendered animal welfare a responsible and fashionable cause, which in turn helped ensure its progress (Ryder, *Animal* 99). Not long after, similar associations were formed in Dresden (1839), Berlin (1841), Munich (1843), Paris (1845), and Vienna (1846) (Ryder, *Political* 22). It was not until twenty years later that the United States followed suit.

Henry Bergh founded the first American organization directed at protecting

animals, the New York-based American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), in 1866. It was chartered on April 10, by a special act of the New York Legislature. The state attorney general and the city district attorney commissioned Bergh to represent the state in cases involving the abuse of animals (Carson 96, 99; Favre and Tsang 13). It did not take long for societies modeled after Bergh's ASPCA to be formed in Pennsylvania (1867), Massachusetts (1868), San Francisco (1868), Illinois (1869), and Minnesota (1869). In 1877, the American Humane Association (AHA) was founded to provide coordination and communication among the approximately 700 animal welfare organizations that would be established by the end of the 19th century (Jasper and Nelkin 58; Finsen and Finsen 47).

Late nineteenth century animal welfare organizations began to focus their efforts on specific animals, thus a hierarchy of animals' values and needs emerged. Certain animals were afforded a more privileged, sentimentalized position vis-à-vis their masters. For example, the ASPCA took over the statutory duty of caring for New York City's stray dogs and cats in 1892. Unfortunately, during the next 80 years, while the organization was preoccupied with this problem, modern institutionalized animal uses and abuses of other non-domestic or orphaned domestic animals became firmly rooted, even under the ASPCA's watchful eye. In fact, some writers have suggested that, had the SPCAs not been so single-mindedly focused on the cat and dog problem, they might have served as a check against the growth and spread of some of the issues of concern with respect to vivisection and factory farming (Ryder, *Animal* 174).

In Britain, anti-vivisection campaigns began as early as 1824, when the French animal experimenter François Magendie visited London and performed public

demonstrations of his physiological experiments on dogs, cats, rabbits, and frogs, provoking considerable outcry (Ryder, *Animal* 107). After the conservative RSPCA failed to take action to restrict animal research, in 1875, anti-vivisectionist Frances Cobbe formed an abolitionist organization called the Victoria Street Society, which later became the National Anti-Vivisection Society. In February 1898, after the organization voted on a policy of “lesser measures” (i.e., short of demanding total abolition), Cobbe and some associates resigned. Later that same year, Cobbe founded the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, which adopted a pure abolitionist position (Hopley¹⁷; Ryder, *Animal* 114, 139).

The American Anti-Vivisection Society and the New England Anti-Vivisection Society were founded in 1883 and 1895, respectively. Although animal research was not the major issue it had become in Britain (in large part because at this time American science was lagging behind England and less such research was occurring here), American anti-vivisectionists tried to prohibit the practice before it became established (Finsen and Finsen 47-48). However, American proponents of vivisection had had the opportunity to learn from the British situation, and had effectively organized themselves defensively. The bioresearch community was thus in a position to defeat efforts to restrict vivisection in late 19th-century America (Ryder, *Political* 28). Furthermore, within SPCAs, anti-vivisectionists embarrassed the more numerous conservative members and were viewed as eccentric extremists. Gradually, they were marginalized and pushed to the fringes of the humane movement, and “[t]he humane and antivivisection forces went separate ways, rejoining only with the development of the animal rights movement in the 1980s” (Jasper and Nelkin 59-60). Ultimately, the American animal research community

was victorious. By World War I, anti-vivisectionism, “the first wave of animal rights sentiment in the United States,” had been stymied (Finsen and Finsen 52).

After World War I, people’s tolerance for discussing issues of animal protection seemed to wane, and most people settled into a long period of reifying the status quo. Those who expressed excessive concern for animals were dismissed as cranks or extremists, as were vegetarians, and animal protection was regarded as the occupation of old ladies and eccentrics (Ryder 29). Understandably, after witnessing and surviving the horrors of the First World War, people turned their attention to rebuilding human society—the concerns of the animal welfare movement paled in comparison (Ryder, *Animal* 130). As a result, the years between World War I until well after World War II were barren years for animal welfare, in both Britain and America. During this period, even the ASPCA participated in the sale of unwanted cats and dogs to research laboratories (Ryder, *Political* 29).

In a movement that reflected the principles of Taylorism, after World War II, the number of factory farms increased rapidly in both the U.S. and Europe. Factory farms are large industrial agribusiness operations where tens of thousands of animals are “produced” in factory-like settings. Caged or crated, these animals are confined in warehouses, where “[e]verything about animals’ lives—their genetics, diet, digestion, sexual behavior, social behavior—even their ability to move about—is manipulated to try to force them to produce more” (Mason 37). But despite being a difficult time for animal welfare, the issue of pound-seizure, especially, spurred the revolution and revitalization of organized animal protection during the early 1950s. The AHA responded to pound-seizure by attempting to negotiate with the biomedical research community. After some

supporters questioned the appropriateness of such negotiation, the AHA withdrew from the issue completely.

Consequently, several factions broke away from the AHA and formed the first of the new, more progressive animal protection organizations that would emerge in the early 1950s, including the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) in 1951 and the Humane Society of United States (HSUS) in 1954 (Unti and Rowan 21-22). These new organizations began targeting the institutional practices that their predecessors had tended to ignore.

Moreover, these newer groups laid the groundwork for the dozens of more radical animal rights organizations that would form later in the 20th century (Jasper and Nelkin 61).

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that even these newer, more progressive organizations still were concerned with and described the problem in terms of animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights.

Awakening from its half-century-long slumber in the 1950s, the animal protection movement revived and revitalized campaigns for the humane slaughter of farmed animals and the regulation of the use of animals in laboratories (Unti and Rowan 22). First, animal protectionists squared off with the meat industry. An editorial in the June 18, 1956 issue of the *New Republic* graphically described the killing process taking place inside America's slaughterhouses:

Cattle, like horses, are slugged with iron mallets. The first blow frequently fails to stun them, and, as they stumble, electric shocks force them to their knees so that they may be struck again and again. Calves, hogs and lambs are strung up by chains tied to their hind legs. When the chains slip, or legs are disjointed and broken, they crash from high conveyor lines to the

slaughter house floors. The throats of the calves are severed by sawing motions; lambs are knifed behind an ear and slowly bled to death; hogs with slit throats frequently pass, still squealing, into scalding vats. (4-5)

Aided by such horrific yet scientifically worded reports as these, humane groups were able to secure the enactment of America's federal Humane Slaughter Act in 1958, a full 82 years after Switzerland had enacted its humane slaughter law (Leavitt and Halverson, "Evolution" 52-53). The statute requires slaughterhouses to render animals insensible to pain (i.e., stun them) before they are killed.

The animal protection movement then again turned its attention to the use of animals in laboratories. In 1959, the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare published *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*, by W. M. S. Russell and R. L. Burch, the first serious contribution to the field of alternatives to the use of animals in experiments. Public interest in the treatment of animals used in research grew, and between 1960 and 1966, much effort was again made to pass legislation similar to Britain's Cruelty to Animals Act, which had been enacted nearly a century earlier. Finally, on August 24, 1966, Congress passed the laboratory Animal Welfare Act (later renamed the Animal Welfare Act), the first federal law dealing with the care and treatment of laboratory animals, which was followed by strengthening amendments in 1970, 1976, 1985, and 2000. With the 1985 amendment, the U.S. finally achieved a law protecting animals used by researchers that was comparable to the laws already in effect in fourteen western European countries (Stevens 66, 71, 76-77).

With the federal legislative victories of the Humane Slaughter Act and Animal Welfare Act, animal protection had secured for itself a position in the language of

everyday Americans and on the American political landscape. Although wildlife issues had not been a priority for animal protectionists before World War II, the protection of wildlife in general emerged as a priority for several humane groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Unti and Rowan 22-23). More than just coincidence, this priority also emerged after Lewis Herber's *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962) and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) were published. Subsequently, humane groups would join environmentalists in additional successful legislative campaigns.

The history of animals in our cultural matrix had not seen the overthrow of human dominion, but animal welfare had human allies that came from various fronts. Intensifying new understandings on animal reality were the ontological and philosophical expansions on "animal being" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Forthcoming in Chapter 3, these developments accelerated progress for animal welfare by taking a firm hold in its movement by the 1960s.

CHAPTER III

NEW PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE IN THE ANIMAL WELFARE MOVEMENT

The inherent value of individual animals as living beings came under the scrutiny of philosophical and ontological study during the nineteenth century. Although not usually associated with animal rights, semioticians, philosophers interested in ontology, and biologists concerned with ethical research began rethinking what it means to be an animal at the turn of the century. In 1934, Jakob von Uexküll wrote his small book entitled *A Stroll Through the Environments of Animals and Humans*. Brett Buchanan notes, “While the title certainly captures the casual attitude that pervades this monograph, it belies the more radical venture that Uexküll presents in his theorization of animal life”; Uexküll “unlock[s] the gates that lead to other realms, for all that a subject perceives becomes his perceptual world and all that he does, his active world” (1). According to Uexküll, Animals are not to be regarded as mere objects, but as subjects whose essential activity consists of perceiving and acting (2). Despite Uexküll’s relative anonymity, many others have taken up *his* chain of thought and applied it to their own studies. Ranging from “classic ethology to cognitive neuroscience and from linguistics to art and philosophy . . . each has found in Uexküll’s thought something compelling” (Buchanan 4). Within continental philosophy alone, Uexküll’s questions and answers have appeared in many of the more formative thinkers of the twentieth century, including Martin

Heidegger, Ernst Cassirer, Hans-Georg Gadmer, Jose Ortega Y Gasset, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Georges Canguilhem, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben (Buchanan 3). It would be fair to say many have taken Uexküll's stroll.

Philosophical rhetoric entered the animal rights fray in the late 1960s, when a group of philosophers based in Oxford, England, began publishing articles and books about the rights of animals. This informal "Oxford Group," as it has since been referred to, was responsible for such influential works as *Animals, Men and Morals* (1971), edited by Stanley and Roslind Godlovitch and John Harris ("the first serious book on animal rights for half a century" (Ryder, *Political* 31); Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975); Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983); and numerous academic articles (Ryder, *Animal* 6).

When *Animals, Men and Morals* was published in Britain in 1971, members of the Oxford Group had hoped it would lead to widespread discussion about the issues it raised. But the book was ignored, and not one major newspaper published a review of it. To try to generate more interest in the American edition that would soon appear, Australian philosopher Peter Singer submitted an unsolicited review of the book to the New York Review of Books. The essay, titled "Animal Liberation," was published on April 5, 1973 (Singer, *Ethics* 48-49). Singer was then asked to expand the essay into a book of his own. His consequential work, *Animal Liberation*, was published first in the U.S. in 1975, and in Britain one year later. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of *Animal Liberation*; it gave animal rights an ideology and a vocabulary (Jasper and Nelkin 92), and became a sort of Bible for the developing movement.

The arguments and language presented by Singer are primarily utilitarian. He

asserts that the pleasures and pains of animals must be taken into consideration for a proper moral calculus: “[T]here can be no moral justification for regarding the pain (or pleasure) that animals feel as less important than the same amount of pain (or pleasure) felt by humans” (*Animal* 15). Singer, however, does not argue that humans are precluded from all use of animals (provided such use yields higher aggregate benefits than individual pain). Essentially, his is a plea for equal consideration of animals’ interests, based on their sentience, or capacity to suffer. Furthermore, Singer argues that we must “bring nonhuman animals within our sphere of moral concern and cease to treat their lives as expendable for whatever trivial purposes we may have” (*Animal* 21). To fail to do this is to be guilty of speciesism—“a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species”—an injustice similar to that of racism or sexism (*Animal* 7).

In 1983, the American philosopher Tom Regan published *The Case for Animal Rights*. Using a different tactic than Singer, Regan asserts that individual animals — like individual humans — have inherent value as living beings. This fact confers those individual animal rights and prohibits their being used as resources. Although Singer’s book is thought of as the Bible of the movement, Regan’s rights argument really is the philosophy that is reflected in the rhetoric of the movement’s agenda, “often pushing it beyond reformism and pragmatism” (Jasper and Nelkin 96). Introduced as Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Tom Regan states his case in *The Animals Film*:

In laboratories, in zoos, in school science fairs, in modern factory farms; in all these and more, animals are treated as things — as if they had no

value themselves. This treatment must be stopped. Not only because it is a good thing for us to be kind to animals, but because we owe it to them. When rights are violated, justice — not kindness — is the issue. Their defenseless state, their inability to speak out for their rights, makes our duty to help them all the greater. Tomorrow they will suffer. Tomorrow they will be killed unless we act today. And act we must. Respect for justice requires nothing less.

Regan's focus on animals' inherent value and entitlement does not disregard the issue of suffering in his argument, but includes it as something animals experience because their rights are violated.

Amid the growing philosophical and political animal rights environment nourished by the Oxford Group, *The Animals Film* was first released in 1981. In addition to Tom Regan, prominent members of the Oxford Group as well as other animal welfare and/or rights proponents are a part of the human cast who are lobbying for animals. Psychologist Richard Ryder offers a testimony avowing that a century earlier Darwin offered the scientific proof that renders animal victimization despicable, especially in the scientific fields:

It's been more than a hundred years since Darwin pointed out the biological kinship between the nonhuman animals and us. And I feel, therefore, it's only logical to say that there should also be a moral kinship; that we should all be in the same moral category. If we can all suffer, then we should all be given similar respect. We should be accorded similar rights based upon our sentience, our capacity to suffer. It's particularly, I

think, discreditable that scientists—even more than other people—know and believe in the biological brotherhood of all the animals, should so totally exploit the other species merely, it seems, because they are of another species. And I've coined the word 'speciesism' because I feel our prejudice against the other species is irrational, small-minded, and selfish in the same way that racism is; and the same way, if you like, that sexism is. And speciesism is by far the greatest and cruelest form of exploitation in the world today. (*Animals Film*)

Ryder's insistence is further depicted in *The Animals Film* in a scene where the RSPCA council meets behind closed doors to consider the expulsion of Richard Ryder, then leader of the RSPCA Progressives. However, RSPCA Traditionalists had a failure of nerve and withdrew their motion. Animal rights activism is burgeoning in this scene and the era in which *The Animals Film* is produced. The power of the movement may be yet disjointed, but it is still felt and somewhat effective.

The importance of “putting animals into politics” to acquire any type of real progress for animal welfare is expressed in *The Animals Film* by Parliament member Lord Houghton of Sowerby. Lord Houghton attributes the lack of progress in the animal welfare movement to the ineptitude of animal organizations:

The trouble with animal organizations is that they're fragmented. In many cases they're rivals. In some cases, they're overlapping. The reason the animal welfare movement has failed to achieve its purpose over the years is because it hasn't understood politics, it hasn't understood Parliament, and it doesn't seem to have the will and the courage to exert the maximum

pressure on the political position.

The disorganization of animal organizations reminds one of a pertinent point made by Tom Regan: animals cannot organize themselves into their own social movement. Unlike humans, animals cannot be the agency of their own liberation, let alone defend themselves amidst the domination of a human society (*Animals Film*).

Nevertheless, since the time *The Animals Film* was originally released, the methods of various animal welfare movements have changed and served to at least make some solid improvements in the ways animals are perceived and treated. Organizations such as Animal Rights International (1976), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (1980), and Animal Rights Mobilization (1981) are just a few. In addition, the formation of more traditionally esteemed professional groups that include the Animal League Defense Fund (1979), Physicians for Responsible Medicine (1985), and Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (1980) earned respect from audiences who previously had taken lightly or discredited animal welfare movements. Aided by the effects realized by these organizations, the animal protection movement, “staid promoter of compassion for more than a century,” embraced animal rights (Jasper and Nelkin 167-68).

Organization of the animal rights movement had progressed to the point that, on June 10, 1990, an estimated 24,000 animal rights advocates participated in the first March for Animal Rights in Washington, D.C. (Guither 11). However, by this point, a backlash to the movement had escalated to high extremes. The day before the march, Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services, referred to those who had gathered in Washington for the march as terrorists (Singer, *Political* 156). By 2005, the FBI had declared radical animal rights and environmental activism to be the nation’s “No. 1

domestic terrorism threat” (Schuster, 2005). Animal rights had become associated with one of the world’s greatest and current fears, terrorism.

When Victor Schonfeld states it was not his intention in creating *The Animals Film* to produce an animal rights film, he also says what he is hoping to do is “change consciousness by persuasion” (*Animals Film*). When originally released in 1981, the last scene of *The Animals Film* does openly show the more extreme factions of the animal rights movement in action. Schonfeld describes this scene as an “outlet to say there are people who will risk their own lives to save animals” (*Animals Film 2007*). But with the DVD release of his 2007 director’s cut, Schonfeld cuts this scene and says he “wouldn’t do it now because the world is different. Now the animal rights movement has had successes and is taken seriously. The last thing needed now is to see violence and aggression” (*Animals Film*).

It seems very ironic for Schonfeld to make this statement when a great portion of *The Animals Film* consists of the brutal violence and aggression inflicted on animals by humans in a magnitude so extremely greater and consistent than any animal rights radical movements ever perpetrated. But perhaps this irony, or the fact that he himself makes the statement, is just the point. It is the catch phrase of Schonfeld’s own film that asserts, “it’s not about them, it’s about us” (*Animals Film*). Because it is “about us,” it is very difficult to really see beyond our human perception or what affects our own species. We are not exempt from our historical chains or conditioning. They are difficult to break and overcome.

It is the prevalence of humans’ desire to understand, change, and overcome our shortcomings that loosen our shackles, albeit with scars. Despite people making the

statements, “I don’t know,” “I’ve never thought about it,” or “I don’t want to know,” we are a curious species and we are social animals. The academic study of animal existence in historical, philosophical, literary and artistic movements offers insight into the status of animals’ reality as well as the animal rights movement as a social progress. Further, these studies also provide lessons for us to learn from experiences. Like Schonfeld’s film, *The Animals Film*, such studies, too, are tools in the animal machine.

CHAPTER IV

CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE: ANIMALS

IN DOCUMENTARY FILM

The cultural appropriation of animals has traditionally served humans for self-interested purposes, and it has long been established in the domain of documentary film. The three basic types of animal films that first emerged and coexisted were scientific/educational films, hunting/safari films and narrative adventures in which animals play a central part. Curtiss Scott, in “Animal Pictures,” addressing animal purpose in film reports that these three basic types of animal pictures in early cinema all purport a common impulse to capture and to tame what is “wild” in wildlife, often via an analogy between the camera and the rifle” (25). Etienne-Jules Marey literalized this analogy with his “photographic gun,” a camera in the shape of a rifle designed to capture the movements of birds. In order to photographically “capture” wild animals in action at the Philadelphia Zoo, Eadweard Muybridge set a tiger loose on a water buffalo, “inaugurating a tradition of ‘disposable subjects’” (25). Additionally, the hunt theme extended into the narratives of popular jungle films as seen in Selig Polyscope’s production of *Lost in the Jungle* (1911). A few narratives, such as the popular *Rescued by Rover* (1905), featured animal protagonists “but they were relatively rare in early cinema” (25).

The example of *Rescued by Rover* is worth considering, because it set a pattern

for subsequent animal films. It is about a Collie dog that rescues a baby by canine detective work and leads its master, the father of the baby, to the baby's location. Blair, the dog actor that played Rover, was required to master enactment these feats for the sake of the filmmaking process. As Paul Sheehan notes in discussing the screen animal: "Animals are trained to appear comprehensible in human terms, to give their actions meaning and substance; and when this falls short of the mark audiences, for their part, are 'trained' to read human characteristics in to the most recondite behavior" (123). Victor Schonfeld gets this point across when he uses clips from *Rescued by Rover* in the introduction of *The Animals Film*. Rover is seen as leading his humans to the location of the kidnapped baby. Any ambiguity arising about what Rover is actually doing is erased by the intertitles, which tell the film's viewers exactly what is going on. These clips also show the affectionate relationships people have with animals.

A more revealing exposure occurs in the dialectical montage created by Schonfeld, when he alternates the *Rescued by Rover* clips with other historical documentary film shots in which humans use animals, most pointedly in Thomas Edison's *Cock Fight, No. 2* (1894) and *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903). The moral shock therapy provided by Schonfeld with clips from *Electrocuting an Elephant* zap one into wondering what possibly could have been the intention in killing this animal and publicizing it. Perhaps it is Schonfeld's hope, as well as intention, that one would investigate and be stunned by the answer.

In *Empires of Light: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse and the Race to Electrify the World*, Jill Jonnes explains that from the early 1880's, Edison had been waging a marketing war against his rival, George Westinghouse, over electric distribution.

Edison's innovation was direct current (DC), which he erroneously argued was safer and more efficient than Westinghouse's alternating current (AC). But Edison's ego often got the better of his amazing business acumen. To further his interests, he mounted a propaganda crusade highlighting the dangers of AC, in the hope it would be outlawed by government regulation. When it became clear that electricity could light and power entire cities (a realization, to be fair, arrived at on the part of the general public by spectacular demonstrations staged by Edison) there began a War of Currents.

The brilliant scientist Nicola Tesla, a former employee of Edison, had developed, with the financial backing of George Westinghouse, a system that worked with alternating current. Edison, who stood to gain nothing from the success of alternating current, tried to discredit this technology. Edison pushed his own direct current system as being much safer. To prove this, he supported the development of the electric chair, which he powered with AC generators. He gave many grisly, public demonstrations in which he connected wires from an AC power supply to animals: dogs at first (he paid local boys a quarter for every stray dog they dragged in for this purpose), and later horses, which he electrocuted in order to prove how dangerous Tesla's AC current was. Although George Westinghouse was a staunch opponent of capital punishment, Edison actively encouraged the use of the term "being Westinghoused" as meaning death by electrocution. Edison claimed, incredibly, that no one could be hurt by direct current. But Edison's high profile film, "*Electrocuting an Elephant* could be seen as the *coup de grâce* of his campaign, arresting proof that even a five-ton sentient mass cannot resist the lethal effects of Westinghouse's electrical system" (Jonnes 171).

In order to analyze this use of animal imagery, it is useful to turn to Bill Nichols'

paradigm, in which he states, “Documentary engages with the world by representing it, and it does so in three ways” (2); this distinction is useful in analyzing how Edison employs his animal footage. First and foremost, documentaries present a reproduction of the world that bears what Nichols calls “a recognizable familiarity” a principle we can readily observe. Considering the second way, “stand(ing) for or represent(ing) the interests of others” (Nichols 3), we see how Edison’s documentary, *Electrocuting an Elephant*, appears to represent the public’s electrical safety concerns while promoting the financial interests of General Electric. More significantly, under the pretense of representing the public, Edison’s documentary also falls into Nichols’ third category:

Documentaries may represent the world in the same way a lawyer may represent a client’s interests: they put the case for a particular view or interpretation of evidence before us. In this sense documentaries do not simply stand for others, representing them in ways they could not do themselves, but rather they more actively make a case or argument; they assert what the nature of a matter is to win consent or influence opinion.

(4)

The Animals Film likewise stands in the interests of *Others* and seeks to influence opinion. But whereas Edison’s marketing concerns are camouflaged by apparent concern for public safety, Schonfeld reveals the marketing and commerce agendas of pharmaceutical companies, food corporations, the fur industry, higher education establishments, and their interdependence as big business conglomerates. Within this exposure, *The Animals Film* also shows that like Edison, these businesses hide behind the façade of public health and safety.

Behind his façade of concern for public safety and his own business interests, Thomas Edison did play a key position in the starting and founding of the movie-making industry and helped shape an image-making tool that would take the world by storm. William Everson has discussed many of Edison's technical contributions to the film industry and notes in *American Silent Film*:

Although history (and the movies, via Spencer Tracy's portrayal of the investor) has tended to paint Thomas Alva Edison as a great humanitarian and dreamer with little eye or thought for business, his involvement with the young movie industry seems to indicate otherwise. By 1897, Edison was already instituting lawsuits to protect his patents. (24)

But whereas Edison's legal pursuits and battles distract him from his treatment of animals within his early film documentaries, Schonfeld's film clip exposition highlights the exploitation of animals for prominence and big business gains.

Schonfeld doesn't hesitate to depict the lack of integrity in big business concerns throughout his film exposition. Because Schonfeld pulls no punches, the view of animals' reality in *The Animals Film* is not only unpleasant but, at times, disturbing. Spectators of the film witness vivisection on non-anaesthetized animals, primates having psychotic breakdowns caused by LSD or painfully withdrawing from morphine addiction, filthy animals struggling in beyond-crowded living conditions, conscious baby chicks being de-beaked, animals being shocked and beaten, and the list goes on and on. In its machine-gun style montage, the film has many similarities to Vsevolod Pudovkin's Soviet documentary film, *Mechanics of the Brain* (1926). A propagation of Ivan Pavlov's studies in classical conditioning, "[t]he film was composed from such models as mad men, idiots,

syphilitic patients, paralytics ... ordinary dogs and dogs without a brain, dissected frogs and undissected frogs, (and) monkeys” (Sargeant 37).

Although *Mechanics of the Brain* contradicts *The Animals Film* in that it supports a “tradition of disposable subjects,” the film techniques in *Mechanics of the Brain* indicate how the film camera might be employed as an instrument of exposition and how Pudovkin constructed a logical scenario to accomplish this task. Pudovkin “says that ‘specifically filmic means’ must be found through which to effect the film-maker’s understanding of his subject” and the best way to accomplish this is with “‘film art’s own specific procedures for interpretation: montage’” (Sargeant 45).

Montage is commonly described as “a composite of several different and typically unrelated elements that are juxtaposed and arranged to create or elicit a particular mood, meaning, or perception” (Murfin 312). In one of the most influential examples of montage of slaughterhouse imagery, Georges Franju’s *Blood of the Beasts* (*Le Sang des bêtes* 1949) produces surrealism as well as revulsion through an almost scientific film style. Butchers, a number who have been mutilated from their talent, whistle or sing while they slay animals. The elements of light-hearted song and slaughter fuse together in Franju’s short French documentary, each perverting the other’s existence to the point where the initial reality of the environment seems utterly distorted.

Franju’s science film element is introduced at the knacker’s yard. Slaughtering tools exhibited on a table are explained in order. This shot fades to a white horse being led to its death, where the severity of its fall after a shot to the forehead from the Behr-gun reminds one of Edison’s elephant electrocution. The horse’s limbs jerk convulsively, its neck is slashed, and blood gushes out. Next, a tranquil voice recites the bleeding and

skinning procedures. This disparity between the calm presentation and the shocking visuals in Franju's film shots results in a disjunction of emotional responses to the viewing experience. The slaughterhouse juxtaposition is described by Adam Lowenstein in *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*:

The contrast between the clinical account of the mechanics of slaughter and the visceral horror of the visuals (often enhanced by close-extended shot duration, and a minutely detailed diegetic sound track) is so pronounced that the scientific discourse ultimately collapses on itself like the corpse it attempts to process. By juxtaposing the shocking carnage with matter-of-fact commentary, the scientific discourse implodes under pressure from the sheer visual display of all it denies. Franju restores strangeness and violence to the distant, rationalist tone of the science film, and reintroduces all the painful affect that this discourse of modernity represses. (25-6)

The connection between livelihood and horror are quite diegetically pronounced in *Blood of the Beasts* during the violent staccato sequence depicting a man cleaving an ox in beat with the twelve chimes of noon. With more of a twang, Schonfeld diegetically soundtracks a debeaking scene at a poultry factory farm as a seedy worker keeps time to the country music radio by mangling baby chick mouths. But this does not lessen the connection between livelihood and horror. Nor does the absence of a clock chiming diminish the effect of time going by. If anything, at the poultry farm, time seems endless. It seems like the debeaking scene will go on forever, with baskets full of chicks and a

radio station that never goes off the air. Although *The Animals Film* does not support Pudovkin's "tradition of disposable subjects," Schonfeld exposes how expansive and horrid this tradition is.

In addition to Pudovkin's filmic means, Victor Schonfeld is very aware of the strength of the collision impact of montage to "[a]ffect the understanding of his subject." Sergei Eisenstein's montage theories are based on the idea that montage originates in the collision between different shots in an illustration of the idea of thesis and antithesis. This basis allowed him to argue that montage is inherently dialectical, thus it should be considered a demonstration of Marxism and Hegelian philosophy. His collisions of shots were based on conflicts of scale, volume, rhythm, motion including speed and direction within a frame, as well as more conceptual values such as class (Eisenstein 45-52).

Dialectical montage is a primary filmic tool in *The Animals Film*. The aforementioned compassionate-heroic clips of animals in *Rescued by Rover* are mixed with repulsive shots from *Cockfight, No. 2* and *Electrocuting an Elephant* and provide historically shocking effects. As the film progresses to pet ownership, shots of animals being euthanized are intercut with clips of humans who feel that is unacceptable, but still enter a pet store to buy more animals. The deplorable conditions of animal existence in factory farming and their inhumane slaughtering are combined with interviews with people about eating meat. One woman who works in a meatpacking factory says that of course she eats meat — she is a "meat packer." When asked if she thinks this is right, she admits that she has never thought about it. The film cuts to a slaughterhouse where a live, bawling, and thrashing cow is being pulled by its back legs from a pit into the slaughter room where it will be humanely shocked unconscious before it is killed.

Similar uses of dialectical montage appear repeatedly throughout *The Animals Film*. Addressing the fur industry, shots of women wearing fur coats are aligned with clips of animals chewing off their own legs to get out of traps and interviews with fur wearing women saying “it isn’t right” but they “block it out of (their) mind(s).” By the time the film progresses to scientific lab research on animals, Schonfeld integrates clips and interviews of experts in the field and animal rights activist groups into a montage with the exploited, tortured animals used for experiments. The theoretical application of dialectical montage in *The Animals Film* is not limited to its contrasting arrangements from one scene and site to another. The technique extends to shots within one location. Also valuable in transferring the understanding of his subject, Schonfeld juxtaposes intense close and partial shots of the subject, medium shots of the whole subject, and long, surrounding shots of the subject creating an alternative montage. Amy Sargeant shares from “Kino-zhurnal” what Pudovkin says about this type of filming:

It is generally known that the essence of proper montage consists in correctly connecting the attention of the spectator. If I photograph a thing whole, then the spectator will perceive that thing in its entirety, whereas the closer I approach it with the camera, the more the spectator will grasp only selected details. This applies both to the filming of a static object and to the filming of a dynamic process. An observer following a demonstration guides his attention sometimes here, sometimes there, then he pursues some detail, then he occupies himself with the whole. As a result of which the attentive observer secures a clearly delineated impression of the thing. He will endeavor not to disregard any particular

characteristic point whatever. . . . It is clear that the shifting here and there of concentration—corresponding to montage—is a strictly regular process . . . and becomes part of the montage structure. (Sargeant 48)

Montage is commonly described as “a composite of several different and typically unrelated elements that are juxtaposed and arranged to create or elicit a particular mood, meaning, or perception” (Murfin 312). The close-to-medium-to-long shots of subjects in *The Animals Film* become an alternative type of montage because they expose elements that have been typically assumed as unrelated. One example concerns Schonfeld’s shots of baby chicks. The first close-up shot shown is a cute fuzzy ball that brings warm thoughts of Easter. The second medium shot shows it is thrown in a basket with hundreds of other chicks, many of which are dead, and it is obvious (even if it is Easter) that the chicks have poor living conditions. The third long shot shows that the chick, in the basket of chicks, is in an assembly line of chicks which are to be de-beaked; a process where a machine chops off its nose and the chances of it dying from shock are high, as witnessed by the dead chicks that are thrown on the ground. The third shot’s voiceover explains the process is to keep chickens from pecking each other in their close quarters at the poultry factory farm. During the film sequence, the jovial Easter mood is quickly dampened by an unbelievable realization: “why are we in this hand basket, and how did we get here?” and winds up revealing that Chicken Little does not live on Easter land, but is far, far away in reality at the chicken factory farm.

Within the entire film’s montage, Schonfeld’s use of intertitles annihilates not only a viewer’s fantasy of life on the farm, but also any hope that the products of pharmaceutical drug companies can avail suffering animals. In the tradition of early

cinema, *The Animals Film* intertitles explain what's going on when the pictures cannot. Schonfeld's intertitles are labels and display ads from pharmaceutical companies and trade magazines. Inserted into a montage sequence, the brevity of these intertitle pages serves to inform the viewer that these poor living conditions of animals are necessary in order for pharmaceutical corporations to thrive.

In addition to intertitles' clarification of what's going, they tell people directly what they should think. In *Rescued by Rover*, for example, an intertitle says, "The Baby is Kidnapped." Then we see a shot of a woman taking a child away, which is followed by the intertitle, "Rover Rescues the Baby." Viewers then assume because of the name Rover, a male dog they see running towards the camera is tracking down a kidnapped child, even though the female dog Blair could be running at the camera for a dog treat or for some other good reason. But whatever the case, the point is that people follow the story. In *The Animals Film*, Schonfeld's intertitles serve to break through the stories previously created to make people assume pharmaceutical companies and other big business animal concerns are truly interested in the welfare of animals. While the cultural appropriation of animals has traditionally served humans for self-interested purposes and has long been established in the domain of documentary film, *The Animals Film* operates to reveal these cultural appropriations and serve animals. Schonfeld counter attacks the corporate despots who oppress animals for financial gain. But are all cultural appropriations in animal film only self-serving? In the following chapter, we will see how human empathy, even through misconceptions, can result in benefits for animal welfare.

CHAPTER V

HUNTING FOR BAMBI

Perhaps the most prominent name associated with animals in film and financial success in the film industry is Walt Disney. Type “Walt Disney” into an online search engine, and the first suggestion your server provides you with is its stock market holdings report for that moment. Ask both children and adults whom their favorite movie animal characters are and you’re bound to hear the name of a Disney animal, whether it is Mickey Mouse, Dumbo, or the ever-popular Bambi. It would be extremely rare to hear someone say his or her favorite animal movie character was a star in *The Animals Film*. In fact, with the exception of Mona, who is living a relatively happy, peaceful cow’s life on a commune, and the unseen Ralph, behavioral psychologist Richard Ulrich’s experimental squirrel monkey, the thousands of animals portrayed in *The Animals Film* are unnamed and not particularly cute or lovable. They would have to be described in terms of their torture in order to be identified: the psychotic monkey who was given L.S.D., the cat with its eyes pried open and implants exposed in its brain while undergoing insomnia research, the pig who was screaming and bleeding while being beaten in the head.

While the nonhuman characters in *The Animals Film* create horror and perhaps sympathy, it is hard for human animals to look at these tortured creatures, let alone love and cherish them. Yet these animals are real, whereas Disney’s animal stars are not. Walt

Disney's anthropomorphized animals cannot be denied creating human reaction resulting in a more caring, if not positive, attitude towards nonhumans. Moreover, because humans enjoy watching Disney films, these movies' animal caricatures have infiltrated our social matrices. And even if warping or preventing a true sense of animal reality, changes in the attitude towards and treatment of animals have been a direct result of Disney's power.

The weight of Disney's authority has been summed up by Ralph H. Lutts: "Walt Disney's influence is so pervasive in American culture that it often goes unrecognized. It is easy to overlook the obvious. 'All the world is watching the United States,' proclaimed a bumper sticker, 'and all the United States is watching Walt Disney'" (Lutts 160).

This is far from the case with Victor Schonfeld. Although his credits as a writer, director, and film producer are more prevalent in the United Kingdom, most people have never heard of him or *The Animals Film*. Even if they had, the gruesome content in most of the film makes it extremely difficult for most human beings to even watch. Because the film has horrifying scenes depicting animal brutality, it is not something parents likely let their children watch. Schonfeld's political statement is clear; *The Animals Film* promotes social change for the improvement of animals' existence. Consequently, how can such a film inspire society to improve the treatment of animals if the status quo is not even watching it?

If the societal consensus cannot stand the reality of animals' existence, nor want to look at it, it would seem that a little known movie like *The Animals Film* would be unable to entice viewers to forego the catharsis that Walt Disney films render. Nonetheless, both types of film work in their own ways. Whereas *The Animals Film* is far from reaching the entire film-viewing planet, it has dramatically shifted audiences'

perceptions about animals' existence. Disney films often idealize animals' lives; however, they have positively influenced peoples' attitudes and actions towards animals. In particular, Walt Disney's film *Bambi* (1942), "has played and continues to play a key role in shaping American attitudes about the understanding of deer and woodland life. It is difficult to identify a film, story, or animal character that has had a greater influence on our vision of wildlife than the hero of Walt Disney's 1942 animated feature, *Bambi*" (Lutts 160).

Walt Disney based his animated film on the fictional *Bambi: A Life in the Woods*, written in 1926 by Felix Salten. Victor Schonfeld's film montage, although mostly based upon the living reality of animals, contains animated clips that at times provide comic relief. But unlike *The Animals Film*, Disney's *Bambi* is full of merriment and beauty. *Bambi* is set in an idyllic, magical forest that not only portrays this as the environment of forest animals, but also acts as an attractive force field that magnetizes viewers and makes them crave the illusion because it feels so good. Schonfeld, as he describes in his interview in the director's 2007 cut of *The Animals Film*, montages his animated clips with the stark, ugly, and painful reality of animals in order to take the edge off of his viewers discomfort so that they will be able to watch the film (*Animals Film*). Schonfeld also brings attention to the warm, cozy feelings people associate with animals by using "paintings made by children," which Julie Christie narrates as "animals" being "wondrous" creatures living out their own lives free and unmolested in companionship with people and in the wild" (*Animals Film*). But as far as being "creatures living free and unmolested in companionship with people," this is where *Bambi* draws the line.

Disney departs from fantasyland, and, like Schonfeld, brings horror to his captive

audience. Hunters come to Bambi's forest and instill the greatest fears within both deer and viewers. As Ralph Lutts notes:

The scene with the single greatest impact on the public was the death of Bambi's mother, an impact compounded by Bambi's vulnerability and dependence upon her. Initially, Disney had considered showing the mother's death on screen, with Bambi later returning to find her impression in the snow where the hunters had dragged away her carcass. He finally decided that this would be too much for the viewer. Nevertheless, its impact is so great that many people will swear that they actually saw her shot. (161)

In this film scene, Disney secures his power by tapping into what affects children the most. Discussing this emotional impact that *Bambi* has on children, Dr. Louise Bates of the Gesell Institute of Human Behavior stated to Ralph Lutts that the film "feeds into a young child's worst fear, that of losing a parent." She also recommended that any child less than seven years old should not view the film (Lutts 161).

Although very few children have likely been allowed to view *The Animals Film*, Schonfeld addresses the separation of animal children from their parents, also. In reality, he shows how most factory farm animals barely even see their mothers, let alone their fathers. Calves and piglets are birthed while the mothers are shackled in a stall and then separated immediately. Schonfeld contrasts these births of weak, sickly animals with those on smaller farms where healthy parent animals are seen protecting and nursing healthy, young offspring. Baby chicks hatch by themselves in a dirty, huge conglomerate of eggs. The camera zooms in on one chick, in particular, which has a bee stinging it over

and over again. Julie Christie narrates, “A mother hen would have helped it out” (*Animals Film*).

In *The Animal Film*, the absence of parent-child relationships is disturbing but, in effect, doesn't generate more of an impact than the rest of the film. In contrast, Disney primes viewers prior to the death of Bambi's mother to evoke audiences' empathy. The characters are anthropomorphized, thus resulting in identifiable parent-child relationships. In addition, the time spent developing Bambi's relationship with his mother was extensive, just as in most human mother-child relationships.

Disney spent nearly three-quarters of the film building sympathy for Bambi as a cute, lovable, vulnerable child. His mother nurtured and cared for him, and then, just as they had come through winter's hardships, she was killed. Bambi was left a virtual orphan, without his principal caregiver, alone until his loving but aloof and uncommunicative father appeared. (Lutts 161)

The death of Bambi's mother acts as an anti-hunting message. Although the film never verbalized a voice against hunting, the death of Bambi's mother is remembered and speaks for itself. The general deaths of the other forest animals, the dog pack tormenting Faline, and Bambi himself being shot create panic but do not measure up to the death scene of Bambi's mother and where it hits home with its viewers:

Disney's anti-hunting message was conveyed on a completely emotional level through sympathy with its characters. It was targeted at children in their most impressionable, formative years. The memory of the incident remains with them even into adulthood. But the film's immediate impact

was not limited to children. It also shaped the opinions of many adults. For example, one man told how his grand-father, an avid hunter, had taken him to the theater to see *Bambi* when he was a child. When the film was over and they were walking out into the sunlight, his grandfather said, ‘I’ll never hunt again.’ He disposed of his hunting paraphernalia and never did hunt again. (Lutts 162)

Bambi became a national symbol that was tantamount to opposition against hunting.

In 1943, one year after Disney’s *Bambi* was released, an antlerless deer season proposal to control overpopulation in Wisconsin was squashed by public opposition strongly influenced by the film (Meine 442). In 1991, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that, “A poll taken by supporters of a June ballot measure that banned mountain lion hunting in California found that people reacted more negatively to the lions when told that they regularly kill deer than when informed that lions had mauled a couple of children.” The executive director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy responded by saying, “there was a real *Bambi* constituency out there” (Dolan 14). *Bambi* was not produced as an animal rights film, yet the film created an unintended political statement that not only changed ways people view animals, but also resulted in laws to protect them.

One might wonder if a popular, fictional, animated film—albeit truly removed from the reality of animals’ existence—might not serve more as an animal rights tool than a realistic animal rights’ documentary such as *The Animals Film*. After all, people enjoy watching *Bambi*, the film provides a long-term impression, and it has reached viewers worldwide. Although *Bambi* addresses wildlife and especially deer, maybe

animated films with issues touching other animal rights issues would serve better than the brutal, horrendous animal realities documented in animal rights films that are avoided by human masses. When Ralph Lutts addresses “the impact of *Bambi* on American Culture,” he says:

Bambi has become one of our most widespread and emotionally powerful national symbols of nature, one that motivates deep concern, and dedicated action to protect wildlife. However, Disney’s *Bambi* is an empty symbol, because the concept of nature that his fawn represents is impoverished. The film motivates, but does not educate. It may stimulate action, but not understanding. Instead of affirming nature, it represents a flight from the natural world into a comfortable nature fantasy. Ironically, it offers no hope for us poor humans to be anything other than destroyers of the natural world. (Lutts 169)

At least equally ironic is the comparison of these observations about *Bambi* by Lutts to the same observations of *The Animals Film*. Like *Bambi*, *The Animals Film* is emotionally powerful. It motivates, educates, and stimulates action. In contrast, it promotes understanding and represents a pilgrimage to the human created hell of animal reality. Although Disney’s unseen antagonist is surely man, Schonfeld’s unseen antagonist is surely ignorance. Human enemies abound in *The Animals Film*. They are all over the place and range from individuals to huge corporations. Schonfeld focuses attention on how little each individual knows, wants to know, or cares to acknowledge; whether as a person in his film or a person watching his film. This actuality does not feel good but it is the truth; as truthful as it is, it may make a viewer feel much emptier, in

effect, than when watching what Lutts calls the empty symbol of Bambi. Maybe that emptiness is an opportunity to be filled with a determination to face reality, to view an entire true horror documentary called *The Animals Film*.

Additionally, if it is so hard to watch such a documentary as *The Animals Film*, then who is watching it? To give *Bambi* some credit for “hope for mankind,” perhaps it is the hope for wildlife that walks within each of Disney’s viewers; the ones who will never hunt, vote against hunting, and protect the deer. Perhaps despite any wrong notions of animal being, these people who care about wildlife are and will be among those who choose to watch *The Animals Film* and address the many facets of animal existence that Victor Schonfeld presents in his film.

The Animals Film, like *Bambi*, takes a hard look at hunting. But that is only one living nightmare for animals that is addressed in Schonfeld’s film. And although *The Animals Film* does not take credit for changes, at the end of the film, Schonfeld leaves you with this information:

Since this film was completed, millions more people have become vegetarians. Cosmetic testing has been halted in Britain and the USA. Factory farming for eggs has been prohibited in Switzerland and Austria. Hunting with hounds has been banned in Britain. The European Union has taken steps to soften a few of factory farming’s harshest practices. (2007)

Perhaps credit for change is due to not only to the reality of *The Animals Film*, but to the fantasy in *Bambi*. People derive meaning from Disney’s animated, anthropomorphic legend, which opens perceptual doors and creates action for others.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEAST AND ITS BEAUTY: THE DILEMMAS AND DUALITY OF MASCULINITY AND ANIMALITY IN JEAN COCTEAU'S

LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE

Critics most often discuss the film *La Belle et la bête* (1946), by Jean Cocteau, in terms of his Beast being cursed and alienated, and they usually relegate it to the generic, albeit familiar, fairytale genre. Nevertheless, Cocteau's film adaptation offers more depth than the tale's eighteenth-century narratives, collectively entitled *Beauty and the Beast*. Upon closer examination, *La Belle et la bête* offers a gay account and illustration of the existence of the homoerotic *Other* who yields a new understanding of the beast inside the man.

The latent homoeroticism expressed in *La Belle et la bête* manifests through Cocteau's dual casting of roles: directly through Jean Marais's characters of Beast and Avenant, and indirectly through the double entendre created in those characters' masculinity. Cocteau simultaneously critiques heterosexual love through his characters and his filming techniques. His dual casting of roles parallels Schonfeld's exposition of the dual casting of animals' existence roles and provide insight into how others may be accepted and treated fairly only if they are perceived in classical, straight-forward, fairytale roles. Using the Beast as his device, Cocteau mutually exploits anthropomorphism and reverse anthropomorphism in order to both reveal and "screen"

Reality—depending upon what one is able or wants to see. The release of Cocteau’s film in the twentieth century, during a pertinent time of changing theory on “animal being,” serves as a precursor to discussions of other kinds of rights in the human community. Just as Henry Salt mentioned in *Animals’ Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (1894), there are “notable instance[s] of how the mockery of one generation may become the reality of the next” (3-4).

When Mary Wollstonecraft published the work, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, her views were widely dismissed as absurd. Attempting a *reductio ad absurdum* of Wollstonecraft’s essay, Taylor tries to refute Wollstonecraft’s argument by demonstrating the silliness that would result if they were taken one step further: “If the argument for equality was sound when applied to women, why should it not be applied to dogs, cats, and horses?” (Singer, *Animal*, rev. 1). This question bears a striking resemblance to some modern-day extremists’ rhetorical questions on gay marriage: If we allow same-sex marriage, why not polygamy or marriage to animals?

The fairytale makes use of animal imagery, and in film, the challenge is to create believable and sympathetic animal and human figures that reveal something about our connection to the animal within ourselves. The issues of what it means to be human are problematized further in Jean Cocteau’s film version of *Beauty and the Beast*, because of his introduction of homosexual subtexts throughout the work.

The original *Beauty and the Beast* folktales may be taken for granted as representing a traditional, heterosexual story. In contrast, more varied adaptations of the classical, straight eighteenth-century written narratives entitled *Beauty and the Beast* emerged after the turn of the twentieth century. A prominent illustration and arguably gay

account of *Beauty and the Beast* is Jean Cocteau's film, *La Belle et la bête* (1946). In addition, Cocteau critiques heterosexual love in much the same way that the Animal Film critiques humanity's treatment of animals, through the behavior of his characters and through his filming and editing techniques.

Jerry Griswold, in *The Meanings of "Beauty and the Beast,"* says "the gay males behind the Cocteau film ... have not only repositioned it in a homosexual context but shifted the story in a decidedly masculine direction" (Griswold 232). But why should Cocteau use the "beast" story for this artistic path and framework? One response, as noted by author Pat Calafia is that those who do not conform to the "mainstream's sexual mores are also seen as monsters" (Calafia 123). One might argue that the significance of bestiality being distinct from homoeroticism overshadows Calafia's connotation. But possibly another incentive, both echoing Calafia's sentiments and justifying this indistinction, is provided by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*. In his second chapter, "The Perverse Implantation," Foucault discusses the moral rules engaged through the eighteenth century and states:

Breaking the rules of marriage or seeking strange pleasures brought an equal measure of condemnation. On the list of grave sins ... there appeared debauchery (extramarital relations), adultery, rape, spiritual or carnal incest, but also sodomy, or the mutual 'caress.' As to the courts, they could condemn homosexuality as well as infidelity, marriage without parental consent, or bestiality. What was taken into account in the civil and religious jurisdictions alike was a general unlawfulness. (38)

Potentially, Cocteau's authorial intent in turning to Jeanne-Marie LePrince Beaumont's

fairytale (1756) to create his film, *La Belle et la bête*, drew upon the tale's historical moral codes—but for a further variety of suggestive adaptation fidelity. Furthermore, the suggestion of bestiality reminds one of another eighteenth century version, Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve's *Beauty and the Beast* (1740), where instead of asking Beauty if she will marry him, the Beast asks her to sleep with him and “the beast does not transform into a man until the (relationship) is consummated” (Griswold 105-110). The array of historical and sexual symbolism associated with the Beast stories support Cocteau's homoerotic construction in *La Belle et la bête*. And even if they did not, Cocteau as the artist would present the “beastliness” as he saw and experienced it.

After the monstrosity of World War II, although urged by his colleagues, Cocteau was adamant that the time was not right for patriotic and realistic cinema. Instead, as noted in his *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film*, Cocteau wanted a film of enchantment, and one “based upon the faith of childhood” (Diary 5). His diary also details the many problems he encountered in making it. Among other things, Cocteau wanted to shoot the film in color, but postwar shortages obliged him to make it black and white. Then, ironically, during the filming of the story about the ugly Beast, Cocteau suffered from a number of painful and disfiguring skin problems, including boils, carbuncles, eczema, and impetigo (ibid). It was as if Cocteau's coined term, “love can make a Beast of a man,” pertained to his love for his art of filmmaking — not just the love he sets forth in *La Belle et la bête*.

Set in eighteenth-century France, Cocteau's film begins with an archery match between Beauty's brother Ludovic (Michael Auclair) and his best friend, Avenant (Jean Marais). The significance of this friendship commencing the film should not be

overlooked. Although Avenant's roles may be more easily seen as a suitor for Beauty and a metamorphized Beast, throughout Cocteau's story he is most often paired with Ludovic, not Beauty. It is through their joint masculine horseplay that the phallic symbol of the arrow overshoots their target (or objective) and penetrates the second floor window to introduce the female rivals in Cocteau's story.

These feminine counterparts are themselves contrasted between the hardworking and peasant-like Beauty (Josette Day) and her sisters, Felicie (Nane Germon) and Adelaide (Mila Parely), who act like rude aristocrats. Together they are living in the country with their merchant father (Marcel Andre), who lost his fortune when his ships went down in a storm. Avenant asks Beauty to marry him; but she declines his offer in order to take care of her father. When Avenant attempts to force his masculine attentions on her, Beauty's brother, Ludovic intervenes.

During Avenant's proposal to Beauty, an arrow pierces Beauty's reflection on the floor she is scrubbing and Avenant remarks on her great beauty "that even the floor wishes to mirror." Here Cocteau introduces Avenant's courtship to Beauty as well as her own relationship with mirrors. And by the end of the scene, after Avenant's burst of testosterone results with him punching Ludovic in the face, an emotional intensity in the male friend relationship appears that only is clarified by close observation in the following scene when Beauty's father arrives home with good news.

Beauty's father announces that one of his ships has safely arrived in port and that they will all soon be rich. In a medium shot we see him sitting center, at the end of a long table with several of his cohorts sitting on each side. They are celebrating and drinking wine. Standing directly behind his chair is Beauty; to his and her right is Ludovic: to his

and her left is Avenant. The camera shoots straight down the table, eye level with the centered father. In the foreground, sitting upon the table is a phallic sized and shaped candle that overtly separates Beauty (as well as her father) from Avenant. During this shot, Beauty's complaining sisters have returned home after being refused company by a duchess. As they storm up the stairs and Beauty's father says, "Let those two devils sulk. I'll soon make it up to them" (*La Belle et la bête*). Avenant winks at Ludovic who casts him a romantic look while stroking the cheek that Avenant has struck. Beauty appears to catch this quick interlude between her brother and Avenant and looks quite taken aback; but Avenant averts his smiling at Ludovic to her until she downcast her eyes in private thought.

The private, intimate relationship revealed between Avenant and Ludovic is revealed as covertly as it must be kept between them. But once it is recognized, further action in the film that otherwise might seem ambiguous or vague becomes logical and clear. For example, although Avenant vows to protect Beauty, he does not exhibit any mannerisms that make his avowals believable. Instead he shares his interests and time with Ludovic—playing chess, smoking pipes, and making fun of the women. When they work together in the garden, Avenant wipes the sweat off his barebacked muscles for the benefit of Ludovic—not his sisters. And when Beauty reappears back home with her father in this scene, Ludovic seems disappointed in Avenant's gladness that she is back. Furthermore, the presence of Avenant in Cocteau's adaptation becomes relevant when he is seen in his homosexual role. At the end of the film when Avenant has broken into the virgin, Diana's space, he tells Ludovic while gazing into his eyes, "Don't let go until I tell you." It is within this gaze that Diana shoots him with an arrow and he transforms

into the Beast as the Beast transforms into his image. By reversing each other's images, Cocteau achieves dual filmic goals: Avenant turning into the Beast visualizes the punishment or beastliness afforded by heterosexual love, i.e. breaking into the virgin's space; the Beast becoming the Prince confirms that the Beast's true nature, exhibited in the image of Avenant, is homoerotic, and that his previous troubles resulted from exhibiting his masculinity through heterosexual love.

Before they magically fly off to his kingdom, the Prince explains to Beauty that he was under a spell and could only be transformed by the love of someone like her. Beauty seems a bit disconcerted over the whole deal. Is it because she is missing her beast after acquiring a dispensation for bestiality? Or does it have to do with the Avenant issue? First she claims not to be happy that the Prince looks like him, but then she says she is. And when the Prince asks her if she is afraid to fly with him to his kingdom, she replies, "I don't mind being afraid with you." Like the Beast's new appearance as the Prince, it seems Beauty will "have to get used to it." Ironically, despite what she has experienced with both Avenant and the Beast, it is the Prince who tells Beauty at the film's end, "You're a strange girl, Beauty — a strange girl," as they fly away to kingdom come.

Jerry Griswold has observed that Beauty and the Beast tales traditionally embrace a "happily ever after ending." The stories tend to present a rather rapid change of genres and what starts as a horror story soon changes into a romance:

Apuleius's myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' begins with what appears to be the sacrifice of a virgin to a monster as Psyche is readied for a 'dark wedding' that seems like a funeral. Dressed in her bridal clothes, the lamenting

maiden is accompanied by her weeping family to a mountaintop where she is to be sacrificed to a god who is said to be a monstrous snake. But the mood soon changes when Psyche's life is spared and she finds herself in luxurious circumstances, enjoying the nightly visits of her lover and falling in love with Cupid, the most beautiful of the gods. Beaumont's story also begins in a ghastly mode with Beauty anxious that the monster will consume her; but events soon shift and she begins to enjoy the Beast's company, and that courtship ends with her marriage to the handsome prince. What appears different about Cocteau's film in comparison with prior treatments of the story is the way he prolongs these horror motifs well beyond the point where they are customarily abandoned.

(Griswold 234-35)

Cocteau's extended use of the horror genre may serve several purposes. His motifs are suggestive of other popular films in the horror genre. In one of the early scenes, for example, Beauty's father walks up the steps to the Beast's castle and, like Dracula, his shadow appears to swing open the door. Later, Beauty faints and in a manner reminiscent of the wedding night in *The Bride of Frankenstein* and her beastly bridegroom carries her across the threshold into her boudoir. But most interesting is Cocteau's purpose in adapting a gothic horror motif into this particular film.

Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim suggests that the motifs of horror in the early part of *Beauty and the Beast* reflect a maiden's anxiety about heterosexual intimacy, and the tale's termination of these motifs suggest a re-evaluation of those attitudes when an intimacy that had first seemed disgusting is now considered desirable (305-6). Cocteau's

consistency of these beastly motifs in his film rules out such a rapid revision of these attitudes; heterosexual intimacy remains horrific, repulsive, and animal-like. Offering a biographical explanation for this, critic Dennis DeNitto points out “Cocteau, who freely admitted his homosexuality, often reveals in his creative writing an antipathy toward male-female sexuality” (DeNitto 153).

If the film reflects its maker’s homosexual critique of heterosexual contact as horrific and repulsive, Cocteau is even more precise about identifying where the problem lays—in male heterosexual desire. At the end of Cocteau’s film, his prince offers a moral to the story: “Love can make a Beast of a man. It can also make an ugly man handsome.” The second part of this statement, regarding the transformative power of love, is the conventional lesson associated with Beaumont’s story, as well as other classical versions of *Beauty and the Beast*. But “the first part of this statement, . . . ‘Love can make a Beast of a man,’ . . . is Cocteau’s own tradition” (Griswold 235). And in his film adaptation, *La Belle et la bête*, Cocteau indicates the beastly nature of male heterosexual desire.

This “beastly nature” is evident in two bedroom scenes. In fact, the “boudoir” is the location of some of the most powerful moments in the film. On one occasion, Cocteau’s Beauty spies the Beast outside her bedroom door after he has surrendered to his animal urges, gone on one of his nocturnal hunts, and slain an animal. Literally smoking with passion, the Beast is full of self-disgust as he looks at his bloody hands. He wanders into Beauty’s boudoir whereupon she ejects him and makes apparent her revulsion at his animal ways. Still crazed but half-mindful of the man he *should be*, the Beast shouts at Beauty to close the door, to lock him out of her bedroom when his bestial fit is upon him. On a similar occasion, the Beast appears at her bedroom door once more

after another night of hunting, again smoking with passion and still bloody from the kill. She again turns him away saying, “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Go and clean yourself up.” In Cocteau’s frequent association of the Beast’s animal urges with Beauty’s bedroom, we soon understand his bloodlust and carnivorous desires in sexual terms. What is ugly and repulsive, disgusting and shameful, are male sexual desires and giving into them.

In addition to the negative depiction of sexuality suggested in the bedroom scenes, Cocteau’s antipathy towards male heterosexuality is seen in his introduction of the entirely new character, Avenant, who is played by Cocteau’s lover, actor Jean Marais: “Avenant is phallically aggressive and sexually assertive; and Cocteau, a great admirer of Freud, often pictures his character with bow and arrows (DeNitto 124). At the opening of the film, for example, Avenant shoots an arrow through the window of the house and it pierces Beauty’s reflection on the floor that she is washing. Shortly thereafter, when he proposes to Beauty and she declines his marriage offer, Avenant does try to force his intentions upon her. Only the untimely intervention of Beauty’s brother saves her from events that seem headed in the direction of rape, events that again reflect unfavorably on male heterosexual desire.

The finality of Avenant’s masculinity, as exhibited in heterosexual masculine aggressiveness, appears, however, near the end of the film. For when Avenant breaks the glass in the skylight of Diana’s temple and forces his way into the place, this Freudian director wants us to understand this as the equivalent of rape. For his violation, Avenant is killed when the statue of Diana looses an arrow and strikes him. It is a significant moment of the film, when Avenant is dying and his features change until he looks exactly

like the Beast. In this way Cocteau shows (quite literally) the ugliness of male heterosexual desire or how “Love can make a Beast of a man.”

Having established his antipathy to heterosexuality, Cocteau solves the problem of concluding the film with a romantic marriage conclusion by satirizing the story’s ending. When Cocteau’s Beast is transformed in to the handsome prince, he appears as a gay fairy-tale dandy wearing leotards and a tutu. It appears that Cocteau deliberately evokes cynicism and comedy. First of all, the fairy-tale prince in leotards is a bit much, even if the physical appearance of Avenant evokes homoerotic characteristics. Other viewers have felt the same. The critic Arthur Knight has noted in his film commentary that at the premiere of *La Belle et la bête*, when the dandy prince appeared on the screen, Greta Garbo is reportedly to have loudly moaned, “Give me back my Beast!” (*La Belle*).

Throughout much of his film, Cocteau shows his own personal distaste for heterosexuality. His introduction of the character, Avenant, exposes the duality of masculinity in both his homosexual and heterosexual roles. By reframing this romantic fairytale as a gothic thriller, Cocteau lengthens the initial apprehension of heterosexual intimacy as horrific well beyond the point where that motif is usually abandoned in most treatments of *Beauty and the Beast*. He then presents an unflattering vision of masculine sexual desire as animal-like and repulsive by adding various moments to the story that show his own additional theme that “Love can make a Beast of a man”: in the bedroom scenes, and in the scenes that introduce the phallically aggressive nature of Avenant. Finally, in the film’s conclusion, Cocteau ridicules heterosexuality with parody. In these, *his* adaptations of *Beauty and the Beast*, Jean Cocteau has created a brilliant gay critique of heterosexual love in *La Belle et la bête* by refiguring the representation of the animal

and thus re-presenting the notion of what is human.

In re-presenting the notion of what is animal, *The Animals Film* resembles *La Belle et la bête*: subtext is revealed through the fact that animals are cast in both fairytale and horror story motifs. Schonfeld exposes the duality of animal roles and how humans cast them. It's just that people would rather see, or are only capable of seeing, what they can experience as being human.

CHAPTER VII

THE HEART OF THE ANIMAL MACHINE

Despite the many ways we humans do endeavor to rethink the reality of animals, *The Animals Film* also asks how much we have not tackled this difficult task. Through his striking images, Schonfeld also exposes the myriad ways humans have appropriated animals and images in order to formulate a reality of animals. Then again, maybe even each appropriation has been inspired by a (re)thought, whether it is a rationalization for treating another species poorly, or an epiphany which inspires worship of a non-human animal. In these and other ways of thinking, rethinking the reality of animals becomes almost inseparable from creating the reality of animals, whether for better or worse. Thus once again, maybe a better question is, “What makes us (re)think?”

In relationship to this animal thesis, we can hypothesize a variety of answers. Perhaps the earliest human hunters and farmers were so hungry that they only thought of ways to fill their bellies in the most expedient ways possible. In the case of Aristotle and other early age philosophers, we have seen how humans’ rationalization of their dominion and superiority was perpetrated through religious dogma and further resulted in a universal chain of command. However painstaking and long a process it has been, over the course of history something kept popping up in people’s minds to keep them rethinking the reality of animals. A common thread that inspires this rethought is the human inability to avoid fellow feelings for animals. Despite our spotty track record, as

A whole, humans do not want to see others suffering. Thus by the Renaissance, “Of Cruelties” was written by Michel de Montaigne in defense of animals. Further reinforcement came in the compassion expressed by Jeremy Bentham and Humphry Primatt. Then Darwin dropped a bomb that was difficult for anyone to avoid: “The senses and intuitions, 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 even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals” (105).

“[O]f which man boasts,” Darwin interjects. This phrase identifies an inflated, human species ego appearing to lie at the rationalization crux for the misappropriation of animals. Even as this boast sits and lies so close to love in Darwin’s statement—identifying faculties esteemed by humans as their own exclusive set of attributes—it signals a declaration of war over perceiving animals that seems to be a battle between love and ego. It is not a war between animals and humans. The fight over animals is a human war that is entrenched much deeper than simply between separate human groups and entities we can observe. The heart of the matter lies right in our own hearts.

Disney’s *Bambi* is so heartfelt that it still continues to move a growing world audience. Franju’s *Blood of the Beasts* is so horrifically heart-wrenching that any delusion of day-to-day practicality in the slaughterhouse collapses when hit by the stark reality of human’s brutality to animals. Cocteau’s *La Belle et la bête* makes note that “[I]ove can make a beast out of a man” and yet serves to identify not only the animal within each human, but human *Others* who suffer due to questions of “being” that take aim at the heart.

Instead of only connecting to others in ways that hurt or exploit, we also have a

history of striving to experience and share with them the wonder and beauty of a universal connection that is exempt from any “chain of command.” Beyond sharing knowledge, we recognize that openness and love appear to be our greatest forces to create ways to relate. Despite this recognition, within human-animal relationships, humans not only use and abuse animals: they ruin and thoughtlessly take their lives. Yet, with domesticated animals, it is as if humans have these “friends” and compatriots of the universe who comfort, console, and rescue us. They are loyal and provide people with an unconditional love that may never be experienced through another human being.

Throughout history, literature, and film we see how humans want and receive so much from animals but still treat them in large part with indifference, at best. In this respect, it seems the species human is the least understandable, the true *Other*. As Herman Melville asserted when Ishmael described the actions of whales, “Best, therefore, withhold any amazement at the strangely galled whales before us, for there is no folly of the beasts of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men” (420).

In order to understand animals, we must first understand ourselves both individually and as a cultural matrix. In *seeking* to understand animals, we must remember the catch phrase from *The Animals Film*, “It’s not about them — it’s about us.” It not only reiterates the need to accept Uexküll’s invitation and rethink our perceptions of the animal, but also sums up Jacques Derrida’s observation about the word itself: “‘Animal’ is our word, a human word for all that crawls, slithers, creeps, stalks, and walks the earth other than ourselves, of course, or at least the part of our selves that is not the least — that which is culturally recoverable from our animal bodies” (392). In saying that what is “culturally recoverable” is that which is not animal, Derrida claims that the

determination of the animal's being is itself a cultural appropriation of our selves. *The Animals Film* not only reinstates this idea. Its acknowledgement of animals' misappropriation, in more ways than one, results in *The Animals Film* as a reply in itself.

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