

A Feminist Recipe for a Greener Planet: Exploring the Environmental Vegetarian Debate from a Feminist Perspective



Universiteit Utrecht

Emily Swaddle

August 14th 2016

Student number: 5632838

MA1 Gender Studies

Graduate Gender Programme

Faculty of Humanities

Utrecht University

Supervisor: Dr Marieke Borren

Second reader: Dr Peta Hinton

Abstract

The animal agriculture industry causes detrimental environmental impact on a large scale (FAO, 2006). In order to curtail the damage caused by meat production, documentaries, books and campaigns have emerged from the environmental movement encouraging consumers to reduce their intake of animal products. The subsequent debate surrounding the ethics of meat production and consumption from an environmental perspective touches on concerns of vegetarian philosophy, social hierarchies, and the human connection to nonhuman nature. Through critical feminist analysis of media from the environmental vegetarian movement, this paper investigates the significance of these concerns. In doing so this research uncovers a grounding for further feminist research within environmentalism, beginning with the environmental vegetarian debate.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Marieke Borren, for her support throughout the process of writing this paper. Your kind guidance and encouragement has been much appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr Peta Hinton, for giving her time and feedback as the second reader on this project. I am very grateful to all the tutors and professors involved with the Graduate Gender Programme for everything they have done over the past year. The MA1 Gender Studies programme has been a captivating whirlwind through feminist theory that has left a deep and lasting impression. Utrecht University offered the perfect environment to spread my feminist wings.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the significant influence of the Green Office Utrecht in my decision to write on this topic. My employment at the Green Office fuelled my passion for sustainability and aroused my curiosity in this topic in particular. I am so grateful for the myriad of opportunities offered to me there. Of course, it would have meant nothing without my dear colleagues whose interested inquiries into feminist theory pushed me to examine my own understanding of the fight for equality.

Finally, I would like thank my family and friends. Your unconditional support during this process, and throughout my academic career, has been invaluable. I feel overwhelmed by your bountiful deliveries of love and compassion. Near or far, my sanity has been preserved by your presence in my life, and by the bottomless supply of tea.

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Introduction

The 2006 FAO report on animal agriculture, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, outlined the damaging environmental effects caused by modern day meat production. Among environmentalists and ecologists there is now general consensus that in order to tackle climate change it is essential to confront the issues caused by the current culture of meat consumption. In recent years, an understanding of these issues has permeated into general media. Popular documentaries, such as *Cowspiracy* (Andersen & Kuhn, 2014), and nonfiction literature, such as *Eating Animals* (Foer, 2009), highlight the substantial impact of the meat industry, including rainforest destruction, high emission of greenhouse gases, and intense use of land and natural resources. This literature is often controversial as it confronts the economic giants of the global meat industry and calls into question the political as well as commercial power that they wield.

These environmentalist voices are not only calling for changes within the industrial production of meat but also behavioural shifts in societal consumption. As with other environmental issues, a certain level of responsibility lies with the individual and their decisions and personal habits. Therefore a large part of the environmental fight against the detrimental impacts of meat production is a call to reform popular eating habits. In Western¹ culture, a significant reduction in meat consumption would be a huge societal shift and a substantial lifestyle change for many individuals. Globally, traditions and customs in the production and consumption of meat are far from universal (although, meat consumption in developing nations is on the rise (Nigatu & Seeley, 2015)) and the intricacies of this debate are heightened by the nuanced significance of meat eating around the world. Without underestimating the enormity of the request, the environmental scientists behind the FAO report, supported by international celebrities (Arnold Schwarzenegger, Natalie Portman, and Paul and Stella McCartney to name but a few²) and even some local governments (as is the case in Ghent, Belgium³), are calling for meat consumers worldwide to rethink their eating habits and to modify their priorities in consumption.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the term 'Western culture' is used to refer to the dominant culture of the geopolitical areas of Europe and North America.

² Schwarzenegger recently appeared in a PSA to promote cutting down on meat consumption in China (WildAid, 2016), Portman considers herself a vegan activist (Portman, 2011) and the McCartney family front the British subsidiary of the international Meatless Monday campaign, *Meat Free Monday* (Meat Free Monday, 2016).

³ In Ghent, Thursdays have been designated an official vegetarian day to raise awareness among citizens ("Ghent declares every Thursday 'Veggie day'", 2009).

This thesis focuses on the feminist considerations present within this environmental call to action. As has been highlighted by Carol Adams (2015⁴), among other feminist writers, the modern culture of meat consumption is sexualised and gendered to such an extent that the very decision to become vegetarian⁵ could be seen as a feminist choice. Furthermore, the social concern for the wellbeing of nonhuman⁶ animals has been connected to feminist ideology through an extension of the feminist pursuit of social justice to encompass the plight of nonhuman animals (Adams, 2015; Twine, 2010). However, there is little feminist analysis that focuses on the ethics of reducing meat consumption for primarily environmental reasons. The underlying ethical and philosophical considerations behind the environmental social shift towards vegetarianism and the connection to (eco)feminist theory form the basis of this thesis.

Eco-feminists see the relationship between humans and the planet as an oppressive hierarchy that requires the insight of feminist research. Just as many feminists understand that women cannot truly be liberated from sexist oppression until they are liberated from *all* oppressions (including racism, classism, and ageism), ecofeminist philosophy includes abolition of domination over nonhuman nature (also known as naturism) in the feminist pursuit of equality (Warren, 1997). As environmental vegetarianism asks consumers to consider nonhuman nature when constructing their eating habits, it raises ecofeminist ethical concerns about the human position within the social hierarchies and power structures related to meat eating. There the environmental vegetarian debate could benefit from feminist intervention that analyses and deconstructs these hierarchies. This thesis will conduct media and theoretical analyses of environmental vegetarian movements, feminist-vegetarian arguments and ecofeminist theories in order to further explore the following research questions.

⁴ Adams' work was originally published in 1990 however all references to the text throughout this paper are taken from the 2015 Anniversary Edition.

⁵ For the purposes of this paper, the definition of vegetarian is understood as someone who does not consume meat or fish. For practical reasons, this umbrella term is used to also include vegans (those who do not eat meat, fish, eggs or dairy) who are here considered to be a particular type of vegetarian. At various points throughout the paper vegans or veganism are referred to specifically. In those cases it is a reference to the work of another author, who specifies veganism, or it is in reference to the particular practice of veganism.

⁶ The term 'nonhuman' is used throughout this thesis not without recognition of the debate over feminist engagement with nonhuman nature (see Hird & Roberts, 2011). The usage in this context aims not to perpetuate a human-nature binary but on the contrary to act as a reminder of the human position within nature and the animal kingdom.

Research questions

Main question: How is a feminist perspective beneficial to the environmental vegetarian debate?

Sub questions:

1. What is the position of the feminist voice within the environmental debate on vegetarianism?
2. In what way is vegetarianism a feminist choice?
3. In what way can feminist intervention support the goals of the environmental movement?

Methodology

Through critical discourse analysis of environmental media, this thesis aims to engage with the ethical and philosophical arguments within the popular vegetarian debate and disrupt these norms through the application of a feminist perspective. The environmental issues surrounding meat consumption warrant feminist analysis and this study will help to develop a new understanding of the benefits of including feminist considerations within the environmental debate.

Within the media analysis of this research, this thesis utilises feminist media research practices which look to highlight the ways in which mainstream media constructs and conserves dominant ideas of gender hierarchies, as set out by Hesse-Biber (2013, p.290). The media analysis also takes into account theories of intersectionality (Twine, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989) to extract feminist concerns that go beyond gender and into the realms of race, culture, class, and nonhuman nature. Integration of the theory of productive power relations (Foucault, 1983) positions the research from a feminist perspective that deals with the recognition, analysis and deconstruction of these hierarchies and social power relations (Hesse-Biber, 2013).

Hesse-Biber also notes how reflective research is vital in feminist analysis as it allows researchers to 'account for personal biases' by exploring how personal perspective can influence research processes and outcomes (2013: p.3). Throughout the process of my research I maintain a keen awareness of my position as a feminist environmentalist researcher. Personally, I believe I have an understanding of the detrimental environmental and social effects of many contemporary consumption practices, and I consciously try to reduce my own environmental impact in my everyday life. That said, I do not identify as a vegan or a vegetarian; I regularly eat eggs and dairy, and I occasionally eat meat and fish. In recent years, my decision to reduce my consumption of animal products has been based on a concern for the environmental impact of these practices rather than concern for animal welfare. My choice to continue eating meat and other animal products, in spite of the known negative impact of their production, is more complex than I am capable of exploring here but is most likely based on

habit, preference and social convenience. In my position as a feminist researcher, I have developed my critical lens throughout the MA1 Gender Studies programme. Alongside these studies, I have nurtured my personal interest in environmentalism and sustainable development, through which personal incentive to explore the theoretical and practical collaboration of feminism and environmentalism was born. While I consciously try at all times to maintain a neutral perspective as a researcher, I maintain an awareness that my research is informed by my position as a white middle-class feminist, an environmentalist and a non-vegetarian.

Chapter outline

As an introduction to the subject matter of this thesis, the first chapter contextualises the vegetarian debate from an environmental standpoint using data from the above-mentioned United Nations report (FAO, 2006). Subsequent critical discourse analysis explores the ethics and vegetarian philosophy put forward by the following media: a documentary film, *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (Andersen & Kuhn, 2014); two nonfiction books, *Eating Animals* (Foer, 2010) and *Meathooked* (Zaraska, 2016); and two international vegetarian campaigns, *Meatless Monday* and *The Reducetarian Movement*⁷. These campaigns and media examples were chosen to represent an overview of current public debate as they have each been influential within the environmental vegetarian debate. Through these examples, the analysis highlights the feminist concerns present within the environmental vegetarian debate which will be explored further in the following chapters.

The second chapter is a theoretical analysis of the feminist discourse surrounding vegetarianism. The chapter presents an investigation of the debate on the philosophy of vegetarianism and the ethics of the vegetarian movement between such feminist scholars as Adams (2015), Bailey (2007), George (2000), Gaard and Gruen (1995), and Lucas (2005). The potential for the inclusion of environmental concerns within this debate is introduced with Twine's (2010) suggestion of the inclusion of nature as an intersection in feminist analysis. The chapter concludes by applying this feminist theoretical framework to the practicability of environmental vegetarian campaigns presented in Chapter 1.

Through an analysis of ecofeminist ethical theory (Plumwood, 1997; 2004; Warren, 1987) and ecofeminist theory of sustainable development⁸ (Shiva, 1989; Braidotti et al., 1994), the third chapter of this thesis aims to address the significance of feminist research within environmentalism and

⁷ Details of both campaigns were sourced from the official campaign websites, as referenced in the bibliography.

⁸ In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland et al., 1987).

climate change. This analysis, together with the works of MacGregor (2009) and Banerjee & Bell (2006), shapes the argument for incorporation of feminist concerns within environmental thought and as the potential mutual benefits of collaboration for both fields of study are explored.

To conclude, this thesis draws together the analyses of environmental vegetarian media, feminist vegetarian debate, and ecofeminist theory set out in the three main chapters. It is important to note that this research does not aim to uncover an innate connection between feminism and environmentalism but rather encourages deeper collaboration in the two fields by demonstrating the concrete need for it. With a discussion of the potential benefits of an integration of a feminist perspective into the environmental forum, the conclusion attempts to highlight why the environmental vegetarian movement is the ideal moment in which to introduce feminist interventions within the environmental debate.

Chapter 1 - Environmentalism and Vegetarianism: Contextualising the environmental debate on meat consumption

The environmental issue

In recent decades the environmental movement has evolved beyond its radical beginnings and has grown in popularity as the cause of climate change has grown in urgency. Every day the effects of global warming become more tangible rendering the need to fight climate change undeniable. The question of environmental wellbeing has found its way to the forefront of political discussion leading to international agreements that aim to curtail the detrimental human impact on the state of the planet. The movement has also succeeded in finding a place in homes and offices, where environmentally friendly practices such as recycling and energy conserving have become commonplace. New scientific and technological developments make processes and products ever more sustainable and 'going green' is becoming cool. Across the globe, the environmental movement is growing: this is no longer a cause reserved for hippies and tree huggers.

As environmentalism has become more acknowledged and accepted, a recent debate has emerged that has caused some controversy, even among environmentalists themselves. Scientific data released by the UN, among other sources, has outlined the undeniable detrimental effects of modern day animal agriculture on the environment. In 2006 the FAO reported that animal based agriculture accounts for 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which is higher than the emissions from all types of transportation combined (FAO, 2006: p.112). Although rearing livestock only contributes about 9% to global carbon dioxide emissions, levels of other greenhouse gases emitted from livestock are much higher: 37% for methane and 65% for nitrous oxide (FAO, 2006: p.272). These figures are based on all emissions associated with producing meat for human consumption including rearing and processing livestock, transportation, and growing crops to feed the animals.

Rearing livestock is also dependent upon the utilisation of vast amounts of natural resources such as land and fresh water. It is estimated that around 30% of the Earth's land surface that is not ice-covered is in use by the animal agriculture industry (FAO, 2006: p.74). As the industry expands, new farmland is generated through deforestation, especially in the South American rainforest, and destruction of other natural ecosystems (FAO, 2006: p.xxi). Often these lands are not naturally suited for grazing and making them suitable for raising livestock requires huge amounts of water and overgrazing of these lands can lead to desertification (FAO, 2006: p.xxi). In fact, 8% of all fresh water that is used by humans is used for animal agriculture which is then likely to be polluted by pesticides, antibiotics and heavy metals (FAO, 2006: p.167). These pollutants lead to environmental problems such as eutrophication,

erosion of coral reefs, and ocean 'dead zones' as well as causing human health problems and contributing to antibiotic resistance (FAO, 2006: p.xxii). Due to pollution, habitat loss and global warming, animal agriculture also has an impact on biodiversity as it irreversibly affects ecosystems and leads ultimately to species extinction. The seas and oceans are also affected by land-based animal agriculture as habitat loss, pollution, and species extinction can be detrimental to marine ecosystems. The detrimental impact of consuming seafood should also not be overlooked. Overfishing has also led to more than 75% of the world's fisheries being exploited or depleted (FAO, 2016).

Based on the overwhelming amount of evidence that covers all aspects of the environmental impact of modern practices of rearing livestock, a growing number of environmentalists agree that fighting climate change without addressing the issues of animal agriculture would be inefficient and irresponsible. There is no denying it: animal agriculture is damaging the planet.

Consumers in the dark

Although these statistics undoubtedly establish that animal agriculture is a significant factor in climate change, there is little public understanding of the importance of diet in sustainable living. A 2014 report by London think tank Chatham House entitled *Livestock - Climate Change's Forgotten Sector* indicated that there is lack of recognition of this issue in the thinking of policy makers and environmental organisations (Bailey, Froggatt, & Wellesley, 2014). It suggests that governments and NGOs may be reluctant to contribute to this debate for fear of public backlash with accusations of prescriptive campaigning as well as resistance from private sector parties that have invested commercial interest in the agriculture industry (Bailey et al., 2014: p.15). This creates a lacuna in reliable research and information distribution which thereby contributes to a lack of knowledge about this subject amongst consumers. Literature from the environmental movement, international campaigns and documentaries such as those I discuss in this chapter aim to close this awareness gap by drawing attention to this industry and its detrimental effects on the environment.

The documentary *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (Andersen & Kuhn, 2014) uncovers this widespread reluctance to acknowledge the extent of the climate problems created by livestock. The documentary follows the journey of Kip Andersen, the director and a life-long environmentalist, as he uncovers the true environmental cost of animal agriculture and tries to discover why this information is not widely recognised. He requests interviews with environmental organisations, researchers, members of local government, and actors within the animal agriculture industry in order to assemble a complete account of the situation. In some cases, he was refused interviews by environmental organisations who feared that the topic of animal agriculture and climate change was too contentious

to be associated with this project. The documentary points to the full scale of the danger when one of Andersen's interviewees mentions the terrible fate of some activists, such as Dorothy Stang who was murdered because she took a stand against the actions of agricultural industry giants in the name of environmental and social justice. It is no surprise then that governmental departments and environmental organisations prefer to distance themselves from such a potentially dangerous issue.

The documentary suggests that corruption is structural, that agricultural companies even contribute financially to environmental foundations in exchange for their silence on the issues surrounding the modern system of rearing animals. Although there is no concrete evidence for this claim, the stranglehold that large stakeholders in the agricultural industry have over other actors is clear and the documentary constitutes a shocking and terrifying reality check for those endeavouring to fight climate change.

Since the global success of *Cowspiracy*, the taboo surrounding this topic has dissipated and the discussion of it has grown globally. More and more people are taking action to spread the word of the detrimental environmental effects of animal agriculture, from celebrities (most recently Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Cameron⁹) to local governments, such as in the case of Ghent where Thursdays have become an official vegetarian day to raise awareness among citizens ("Ghent declares every Thursday 'Veggie day'", 2009). Campaigns that call for cutting out meat one day a week, as suggested by the global *Meatless Monday* campaign (also known as *Meat Free Monday*), or eating vegan before 6pm, recommended for health reasons by Mark Bittman's book *VB6* (2013), are widely known and gaining popularity. Such campaigns aim to raise awareness of the environmental and health benefits of abstaining from animal products whilst avoiding the potential industry and public backlash that could follow calls to completely eliminate consumption of animal products from the diet.

The 'small changes make a big impact' approach adopted by these campaigns appeals to members of the public who want to lead a more sustainable lifestyle without making the drastic change of eliminating animal products altogether, and research shows that it might be working (Gyton, 2014). Although the number of people who consider themselves vegetarian has stayed constant in recent years (according to surveys by the Vegetarian Resource Group (2015) reporting on the American population and Bates et al. (2014) reporting on the UK population on behalf of the Food Standards Agency), the number of people actively trying to reduce their meat intake has increased globally (Gyton, 2014). The grey area between vegetarian and meat-eater is becoming ever more populated

⁹WildAid has announced that Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Cameron will appear in an upcoming public service announcement to promote their new climate action campaign, *5 To Do Today*, which promotes reducing meat consumption, specifically in China (WildAid, 2016).

by those who identify as pesco-vegetarians, or pescatarians, (those who do not eat meat but do eat seafood (Forestell et al., 2012)), semi-vegetarians (those who eliminate red meat from their diet but continue to eat other animal products (Forestell et al., 2012)), and flexitarians (those who mostly follow a vegetarian diet but occasionally eat animal products (Raphaely & Marinova, 2014)). *The Reducetarian Movement* aims to unite these groups that appear to fight for the same cause, even if admittedly with varying levels of commitment. Brian Kateman, the president of the *Reducetarian Foundation*, co-founded the movement and delivered a TEDx Talk in 2014 that highlighted the inanity of distinguishing between these individuals. Kateman introduces the term 'reducetarian' to describe anyone who aims to cut back on their meat consumption, whether it's just one day a week or forsaking animal products altogether (TEDx Talks, 2014). By including everyone in the same category, Kateman hopes to encourage even those who will only make the smallest changes to realise their impact and adhere to their convictions. The reducetarian model tells us that everyone can do something to make an impact that does not have to be a drastic lifestyle change and that those with little commitment to the cause are just as valuable to the movement as those who are fully committed.

Pragmatically, the 'every little helps' premise that underlies both the *Reducetarian Movement* and the *Meatless Monday campaign* seems like an effective way to inform and involve as many individuals as possible without being too daunting; however, it raises some questions regarding the ethical reasoning behind these dietary choices and the unspoken assumptions behind both campaigns. Both campaigns are based on the expectation that most people care about their environmental impact and want to lead a more sustainable lifestyle. Promotion videos produced by these campaigns open with facts about greenhouse gas emissions emanating from animal agriculture and statistics about water use in rearing animals for human consumption. It is unclear whether the use of this data is intended to shock the audience, grab their attention, incite concern, or all of the above but there is an assumption that those who continue watching have a level of care for or at least an interest in the global environment.

The fact that the *Meatless Monday* campaign is active in over 40 countries worldwide suggests that this assumption is not misplaced and demonstrates the broad reach of concern for this issue (Meatless Monday, 2016). The campaign is based on providing information about the repercussions of animal agriculture without asking for draconian action from its followers. This simple premise is adaptable to various cultural as well as socio-economic environments. That is to say that by concentrating on recommending personal dietary changes on such a small scale as one day per week, the message of *Meatless Monday* remains accessible to those who live at a socio-political distance from the influence needed to change the fundamental system of food production and also to those who have little financial means with which to make substantial changes to their eating habits. This consideration

makes *Meatless Monday*, in its numerous iterations in countries around the world, a relatively inclusive campaign for sharing information, raising consciousness, and mobilisation.

It could be said that the *Reductarian Movement* has an even broader potential audience than the *Meatless Monday* campaign as it claims to encompass all those trying to reduce their meat intake, from *Meatless Monday* followers to strict vegans. The campaign is not yet as widespread as *Meatless Monday* in terms of reach or recognition and its target audience also seems more limited. The 2014 TEDx Talk in which Brian Kateman presents the campaign was delivered at an event organised by the City University of New York for students and guests. Kateman easily engages his audience with his friendly manner and his relatability. He proudly points to various examples of sustainable behaviour in his typical consumerist lifestyle, such as his use of a reusable coffee cup and his willingness to recycle, whilst also admitting that there are many more things he could do to be more environmentally friendly without much effort or inconvenience. It can be assumed that Kateman is representative of the general demographic within his audience: educated, economically stable, environmentally aware Westerners. Through the similarities that Kateman shares with his audience he is able to build a relationship and sell the idea of 'reductarianism'.

Kateman's success in connecting with this specific audience is supplemented with the isolation of those who do not fit this demographic. Although the *Reductarian Movement* aims to involve all those who want to reduce their meat intake, whether it's just one day a week or a complete denial of all animal products, this presentation of the campaign anchors it to its middle-class American roots. This narrow interpretation of sustainability that is linked to assumed consumerism robs the campaign of its universal potential. Although Kateman may well have been pandering to the specific audience he addressed during this talk, some environmental movements have been criticised for being too centred on a white, middle-class population and in doing so marginalising those who do not fit this demographic (Morrison & Dunlap, 1986; Gibson-Wood & Wakefield, 2013).

In reality, both the *Meatless Monday* campaign and the *Reductarian Movement* make assumptions about their audiences. The most basic assumptions, namely that most people have an understanding about the human-caused threat to the environment and are motivated to do something to counteract it and that those people are in a financial position which allows them freedom of choice over what they consume, are fundamental to the campaigns and cannot practically be eliminated. However, these two basic assumptions seem somewhat at odds with the fundamental message of both campaigns and mask an underlying assumption that the public is fundamentally unwilling to completely eliminate animal products from its diet. Both campaigns are predicated on the principle that small changes are sufficient in the fight against climate change due to an unspoken understanding

that asking the general public to completely give up all animal products is simply asking too much. If those following these campaigns are indeed environmentally conscientious and in a position to make decisions about what and how they consume, it seems strange that the data on the detrimental effects of animal agriculture does not suffice to persuade them to avoid the industry entirely. The campaigns appear to assume that even those who wish to practice environmentally friendly behaviours are fundamentally unwilling to completely eliminate animal products from their diets. With the known harm that rearing animals causes to the environment, the animals themselves and humans around the world, it is difficult to imagine a valid reason for continuing to consume these products.

[Addicted to meat, addicted to power](#)

Over the many millennia that humans have been consuming nonhuman animals, eating meat has taken on social and cultural importance in a manner which makes a dietary shift away from animal products all the more significant and challenging. In her book *Meathooked* (2016), Marta Zaraska explores the history and evolution of the human race's relationship with eating meat in terms of biochemistry, genetics, social status and cultural traditions. Throughout the book Zaraska points to the importance of power relations in human consumption as she explains that eating meat "stands for wealth, for masculinity, and for power over the poor and over nature" (2016: p.200). Physical power has always been associated with the killing and eating of animals due to the element of danger and the skills required to hunt. If indeed 'you are what you eat', the natural strength of the conquered creature will surely be acquired by the consumer (Zaraska, 2016: p.107). The acquisition of strength and virility associated with meat eating has historically been designated a masculine activity. Even today marketing executives repeatedly use the idea of 'man food' to promote meat products as a symbol of manhood (Zaraska, 2016: p.108). Conversely, it is made obvious through the everyday use of terms such as 'veg out' and 'couch potato' that vegetables are not seen to offer the same potential for physical strength. This perception of the power of what we eat translates into dangerous social inequalities around the world. Women often miss out on meat when supplies are low, especially in times of war, and in some cultures women are forbidden from eating meat altogether in order to preserve this supposed superior form of nutrition for men (Zaraska, 2016: p.110). Aside from gender inequalities, Zaraska also points to the significance of food in identifying nationality and class, distinctions which unfortunately lead to tensions and discrimination (2016: pp.114-115). Given the amount of American patriotism tied to the consumption of a hamburger, the British pride that rests on roast beef, and the undeniably high social status associated with eating a filet mignon, the significance of meat as an indicator of social categories cannot be underestimated and difficulties behind abandoning animal agriculture all together become clear.

Chapter 2 will further explore the cultural significance behind the consumption and abstinence from meat, through the work of Carol J. Adams (2015) and an exploration of the feminist vegetarian debate. For now, it is interesting to note Zaraska's (2016) observation of meat consumption as a symbol of power. In the media analysed so far in this chapter, two types of power have been brought to light. In his documentary, Andersen (2014) aims to unveil the oppressive power held by large agricultural corporations within the meat production industry. As agents of power, Andersen (2014) claims that these corporations abuse their position of economic and political influence with complete disregard for environmental and social consequences in order to satisfy their own financial agenda.

Although Andersen (2014) is very attentive to this liberal concept of power, he alludes to, but never fully engages with, power in a second sense, that is the complex power relations implicit in the practice of meat consumption. This poststructuralist idea of power stems from the Foucauldian theory that power operates not only in a top-down trajectory emanating from an institutional or governmental level but also from and within all echelons of society (Foucault, 1983). In the case of the meat industry, feminist analysis must look past the displays of repressive power from above in order to explore the productive power relations that are present at all levels of meat consumption. Foucault (1983) claims that power is productive because ubiquitous interactions of power create knowledge in all social networks. This knowledge then recreates the conditions of the power structures by which it was produced, reinforcing its own result (Foucault, 1983: p.223). For example, the power structures of meat consumption in modern society produce ideas of masculinity and therefore the association of meat eating and masculine power become mutually reinforcing. Zaraska highlights issues of power beyond gender which are present within this social practice including reinforcing class divides within nations and perpetuating global social inequality between developed and developing regions (2016: p.117). With this understanding of power relations, critical feminist analysis becomes essential to the vegetarian debate.

Jonathan Safran Foer, in his book *Eating Animals* (2010), introduces another level of power interaction as he unravels the varied and complex relationships between humans and the nonhuman animals that they care for, own and consume. The focus of the book is the practice of factory farming which produces the overwhelming majority of meat consumed in the United States of America. Foer's (2010) personal story is intertwined with detailed description of factory farming practices as well as testimony from all sides of the debate. Foer (2010) makes it abundantly clear that he finds factory farming practices unethical and unacceptable and the aim of his writing is to persuade the reader to share his view.

As mentioned in *Cowspiracy* (2014), nearly all of biomass on Earth is now made up of humans and the animals that they own, with wild animals constituting just a small percentage of the planet's biomass. Foer explores the idea of human ownership over nonhuman animals by looking at the theory of animal consent in which animals are human property with the justification that animals are given what they need and in exchange humans take what they want (2010: p.99). He briefly presents the argument of evolutionary benefits of cooperative existence between species in bygone millennia but quickly undermines this idea in the context of the modern agricultural system and compares the myth of consent to similar justifications expressed for human slavery (Foer, 2010: p.101). This argument against human ownership of animals skirts around the issue of human and nonhuman hierarchies and unfortunately Foer (2010) does not develop the matter further and offers no guidance to the reader on dealing with these ideas. The issues raised by a human-nonhuman dualism and its relevance to the discourse of the environmental movement will be explored from an ecofeminist perspective in Chapter 3.

On a number of occasions the book compares the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals within modern day farming techniques to other social hierarchies, such as gender inequality, racism, and slavery (Foer, 2010: p.243 and p.101), and the fight to develop beyond factory farming is likened to the civil rights movement and campaigns for workers' rights (p.258). He writes, "[w]e have let the factory farm replace farming for the same reason our cultures have relegated minorities to being second-class members of society and kept women under the power of men. We treat animals as we do because we want to and can" (Foer, 2010: p.243). In these examples Foer (2010) alludes to an assumed innate human need for authority over an oppressed Other and societal structures that are created around these hierarchies of power. However, these comparisons are fleeting and left undeveloped. Questions remain with regards to Foer's (2010) stance on anthropocentrism¹⁰, a concept which is briefly discussed in an earlier chapter then left in the back of the reader's mind as Foer makes associations that even he seems unsure of: "We might want to say that these social-justice movements have nothing to do with the situation of the factory farm. Human oppression is not animal abuse" (2010: p.259).

Despite appearing throughout the book to be sympathetic to the power struggle apparent when humans consume nonhuman animals, Foer's (2010) overall message seems to be one of complete condemnation of the practices involved in factory farming, not the fundamental act of eating animals. This inconsistency from Foer is confusing. He has inadvertently introduced the idea of power relations

¹⁰ Anthropocentrism is defined by Foer as "[t]he conviction that humans are the pinnacle of evolution, the appropriate yardstick by which to measure the lives of other animals, and the rightful owners of everything that lives" (Foer, 2010: p.46).

but seems unsure how to deal with the questions he himself has raised and leaves the reader in a similar state of uncertainty. What is more, the reluctance to explicitly advocate an entire elimination of animal products from our diet, a conclusion that would not have been out of line with a number of his arguments, mirrors the position taken by the *Meatless Monday* campaign and the *Reductarian Movement* and perhaps also masks a concern that campaigning for complete veganism is simply asking too much.

The documentary *Cowspiracy* (2014) is much more direct in exhorting its audience to completely shun all animal products. After investigating various farming methods, the director/narrator Kip Andersen concludes that any process of producing meat, be it industrial factory farming or smaller scale 'sustainable'¹¹ farming, is unjustifiable in terms of respect for animals and for the planet. The film includes interviews with various contributors, some of whom are notable authors and researchers in the field of environmentalism, and they offer their input to both the viewer and the filmmaker. Dr Richard Oppenlander, an environmental researcher, describes compliance to the *Meatless Monday* campaign as "false justification" for contributing to climate change every other day of the week and Howard Lyman, author of *Mad Cowboy*, addresses the as yet unspoken reality with his firm bottom line: "[y]ou can't be an environmentalist and eat animal products, period" (in Andersen, 2014).

In both Andersen's (2014) documentary and Foer's (2010) book, the abuse of commercial power is the driving force behind their arguments yet little, if any, attention is paid to further exploring hierarchies of productive power within the industry. Parallels are drawn by Foer (2010) between the human-animal relationship and other social power disparities but, are only mentioned in passing, and these comparisons are not used to deepen the understanding of the hierarchies he presents. Within its own field of research, feminist theory addresses issues of power relations, structural hierarchies and biased knowledge production, and could therefore be utilised in this case to lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the culture of meat production and consumption. With this enhanced understanding, the potential for overcoming the limitations and detrimental effects of such power structures is increased. The following chapters aim to explore how a feminist perspective of the power relations and hierarchies present in meat production and consumption could contribute to addressing the questions raised by the media analysed in this chapter, and how the use of (eco)feminist theory could be beneficial in the environmental vegetarian debate.

¹¹ It should be noted here that what is considered sustainable farming does not always coalesce with what might be best for animal welfare, despite consumer perception that the two are synonymous (Harper & Makatouni, 2002). For instance, attempts to reduce land use, avoid greenhouse gas emissions and improve productivity per animal can have a significant impact on the welfare of livestock (Scholten et al., 2013).

Chapter 2 - Vegetarianism and feminism: in what way is vegetarianism a feminist choice?

As Zaraska asserts in *Meathooked* (2016), meat consumption is a practice steeped in cultural significance. Considering the extent to which social complexities are weaved into the hunting, buying, cooking, and consuming of meat, it is unsurprising that the forgoing of these practices, especially for moral reasons, continues to garner social debate. For many feminists, vegetarianism and feminist theory is a natural pairing. In discourse within Western culture, the two movements are linked by the pursuit of social justice and rejection of the accepted norm. However, the question of accepting vegetarianism as a feminist pursuit and the repercussions of social structures involved in the vegetarian movement need to be keenly argued for. This chapter will examine key texts in the feminist discussion on vegetarianism with the aim of expanding the debate into the realm of environmental vegetarianism.

The feminist-vegetarian debate

Carol J. Adams' book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2015), is a foundational text when investigating feminist research into vegetarianism. Adams claims that feminism is inherently linked with vegetarianism to the extent that, for her, "vegetarianism is part of the practice" of feminism (2015: p.155). Adams bases her critical theory around the idea of the 'absent referent'. She explains that when meat is consumed, nonhuman animals and especially their deaths, are absent (2015: p.19). The animal is necessary yet unseen, instead transformed into sensorial pleasing food which masks the violence of the reality. Just as the nonhuman animal is the absent referent when humans eat meat, Adams (2015) claims that women are the absent referent in much discussion of cultural violence as the language of sexual assault and rape is so often used metaphorically. As Adams points out, "[t]hese terms recall women's experiences but not women" (2015: p.21). Based on this theory, Adams compares the oppressive experiences of women and animals in a meat-eating patriarchal society.

In the preface to the twentieth anniversary edition of her book, Adams (2015) explicitly defines the sexual politics of meat as "an attitude and action that animalizes women and sexualizes and feminizes animals". Throughout the book, she goes on to point to examples in which this is evident in the production, sale, distribution and consumption of meat products. She presents cases of sexualised imagery of both animals and women that are used to advertise meat products; the overlap in use of language to describe the butchering of animals and violence against women; and instances in which women have been animalised in order to fulfil the sexual desire of men. The sexual politics of meat

also include gendered everyday dietary practices, as mentioned in Chapter 1, such as the masculinisation of meat and the feminisation of vegetables (Adams, 2015: p.11); the trend in some cultures for women and girls to receive less meat than men, if any at all, particularly when supplies are scarce (Adams, 2015: p.4); and the tendency for men to control the distribution of meat (Adams, 2015: p.5).

While Cathryn Bailey echoes Adams' claim that meat eating is masculinised and eschewing meat is seen as emasculating (2007: p.44), she points to several ways in which feminist-vegetarianism can be problematic. Bailey (2007) presents an alternative stance taken by many feminists who wish to assert their equal social position to men by consuming their fair share of what is considered 'man food'. In consuming animal products that are so often reserved for men, women can reclaim their position at the table and in society, especially in circumstances of food scarcity which result in women missing out on nourishment altogether (Bailey, 2007: p.46). She goes on to highlight the privileged position of those who can afford to reject any kind of food in order to maintain ethical vegetarianism and points to the importance of contextualisation in the call for vegetarianism in order to appreciate the real life circumstances of individuals (Bailey, 2007: p.54).

Bailey's argument for 'contextual vegetarianism' is based on a critique of the work of Kathryn Paxton George who presents her view of vegetarianism in her book *Animal, Vegetable or Woman?* (2000) and a preceding article in *Signs* journal (1994). George's work claims that ethical vegetarianism in fact perpetuates patriarchal structures as it too easily dismisses global diversity in defining an ideal moral position and adopts Western male standards as the norm for everyone. Building on feminist critiques of scientific bias (such as Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991), she claims that in order to make ethical vegetarianism realistic for the majority of the world's population, there is a need for scientific research to shift its perspective. She cites research that shows that women, especially when nursing or pregnant, require more protein than men and that consuming animal products is the best way to achieve this. Although she does not doubt that women would be extended an exception to the ethical ideal in such circumstances, she believes that even the acceptance of this exception would perpetuate problematic assumptions that women are, morally and physically, weaker than men. According to George (1994), ethical vegetarianism therefore perpetuates patriarchal structures in its universal call to avoid animal products.

In pointing out these varying social and cultural differences faced by women and men and women generally living in poorer conditions, Bailey (2007) claims that George's argument of ethical vegetarianism perpetuating patriarchal structures fails to take into account the role of "the patriarchal system that devalues women and animals in the first place" (Bailey, 2007: p.51). Despite drawing

attention to the necessity for cultural context, George (1994) only utilises context which suits her argument. As Gaard and Gruen (1995) point out, George's claim that women are at a higher risk of iron deficiency and therefore require meat as part of a healthy diet ignores the reality that a lack of many important nutrients, including iron, is common in women and girls around the world because they are more likely to be deprived of food and suffer from malnutrition (1995: p.236). In this context, it is in fact their socio-political situation rather than their physiology that puts women at a disadvantage, a symptom of the very patriarchal structures that feminist vegetarians critique.

Gaard and Gruen (1995) also critique George's reliance on scientific data that shows that women would have more difficulty maintaining a healthy lifestyle on a vegan diet than men following the same dietary regime. They question the validity of this research (1995: p.231) and accuse George of simply ignoring research which does not sit easily with her theory (p.234). They raise some concerns about that which they believe to be lacking in George's research including an investigation into the benefits of a diet free from animal products and the negative consequences of a meat-rich diet on personal health, society and the environment.

Further critique of George is based on her proposal that those who cannot stand up to the moral ideal of veganism (i.e. women, due to the supposed physiological differences that make it more difficult to exclude animal products from their diet) should be offered exception and a semi-vegetarian diet which would be a more inclusive alternative to ethical vegetarianism. Lucas (2005) opposes George's position because she claims that any exception to this moral standpoint fundamentally undermines the position itself as well as contradicting the simultaneous assertion by George of species equality between humans and nonhumans. George quotes Singer (1975) in saying that "failure to regard animals as full members of the moral community is 'speciesism' and is wrong in the same way that racism and sexism are wrong" (George, 1994: p.411) yet she claims that calling for all to abandon the consumption of animal products, regardless of their physiology and nutritional needs, is arbitrary. Lucas (2005) belittles this claim of arbitrariness in the light of George's own view of species equality. Lucas (2005) opines that those who have more difficulty in fulfilling a moral ideal should not then be given exception to abandon that ethical permission, especially when the alternative involves the suffering and death of other beings, in this case nonhuman animals; to include this exception within the paradigm of ethical vegetarianism would be to confirm the wellbeing of nonhuman animals as subordinate to that of humans.

Cultural intersections of feminist-vegetarianism

Within the feminist-vegetarian debate, critique of hierarchal structures goes beyond implications of gender. Adams (2015) discusses the importance of recognising differences in race and culture when engaging in dietary debates and suggests that common rhetoric which pronounces animal products as a superior form of protein ignores the reliance on plant-based proteins by millions of people around the world: “[r]acism is perpetuated each time meat is thought to be the best protein source” (2015: p.10). This argument highlights dietary standards as a symptom of problematic globalisation in which Western ideals are imposed upon other cultures.

Bailey (2007) expands the question of cultural identity in meat consumption by exploring human-animal comparisons from the perspective of racial identity. Bailey (2007) points to language used to describe racists practices such as likening the enslavement of black people to the treatment of animals. She questions why, when it is now acknowledged that such treatment is deplorable when directed towards humans, it is condoned when nonhuman animals are subjected to these practices. She suggests that the deployment of such comparisons in fact perpetuates the acceptance of such treatment towards nonhuman animals (Bailey, 2007: p.43).

From the other side of the argument, George claims that veganism, rather than meat eating, is a Western moral standard that has been imposed universally and arbitrarily (1994, p.408). She points to potential practical difficulties of a universal vegan diet in cultures that have little access to regular medical check-ups, effective dietary supplements, and the required facilities to manufacture such products, all of which she deems necessary if individuals are to maintain full health on a diet free from animal products (1994: p.426). George in fact falls into the trap outlined by Adams of asserting animal products as the superior source of protein. Once again, Lucas refutes this accusation of cultural imperialism resulting from George’s failure to acknowledge the widespread tendency towards vegetarianism in developing countries: “[e]thical vegetarianism is idiosyncratic *in* the West, not *to* the West” (Lucas, 2005: p.164). Donovan (1995) reiterates this point and in fact accuses George’s assumption that other populations would need help from Western nutritional supplements in order to lead a healthy vegan lifestyle of being culturally imperialistic (p.227).

Intersectionality and environmentalism

With this introduction of nonhuman animals into debates on cultural and gender identity, Richard Twine (2010) looks to the feminist practice of intersectionality for clarity. Intersectionality is an approach which considers the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, gender, class and age, and the compounded nature of many such intersections felt simultaneously (Crenshaw,

1989). As Twine (2010) points out, the works of Adams (2015) and other feminist-vegetarians are in fact investigations into “the relations of power that intersect gender and species” (Twine, 2010: p.400). He therefore considers it valid to extend intersectional feminism to include the intersections of animal and nature as it could help to develop better understanding of other intersections, such as gender and race (Twine, 2010: pp.399-400). Although Twine advocates the importance of this inclusion, he is quick to point out the difficulties in practical application of the theory: “It is one thing to include the nonhuman in one’s understanding of intersectionality, another also to accept the nonhuman into the political and act accordingly” (2010: p.400). He points to the work of Donna Haraway as a valuable example of nonhuman intersectionality, and praises her for her defence of eco-feminism on this topic, yet emphasises that she does not entirely support veganism (Twine, 2010: p.400). Whilst admitting the difficulties in applying the realm of the nonhuman alongside other intersections, Twine commends feminist vegetarianism and veganism for challenging the “perceived anthropocentrism in mainstream feminist discourse” (2010: p.400) and calls for future feminist research to recognise these amendments to intersectionality, especially in regard to the growing importance of environmental awareness (2010: p.402).

Leaving aside ecofeminist views for now (to be returned to in Chapter 3), most (mainstream) feminist analyses of vegetarianism focus on animal welfare rather than environmental concerns. Those who do mention the needs of the environment in popular feminist-vegetarian texts do so fleetingly. In her thorough feminist critique of meat consumption, Carol J. Adams (2015) briefly acknowledges that avoiding animal products would be beneficial for the planet and asserts the recognition of sexual politics of meat as a way to address such detrimental side effects of meat production. In an ideal world, a widespread understanding of the problematic gendered issues surrounding meat eating will lead to a reduction in meat consumption which would rectify many of the associated environmental issues. Therefore, feminist-vegetarianism is, at least passively, environmentalist.

George (1994; 2000), on the other hand, actually believes that creating a global vegan population would in fact be detrimental to the global environment. She supposes that to lead a healthy vegan lifestyle would entail having to import the technological and nutritional amenities available in developed Western nations which would cause major environmental degradation (2000, p.114). For example, the industrial infrastructure required to produce fortified foods and nutritional supplements, which George considers essential for the world’s population to sustain a healthy lifestyle without animal products, would be a significant contributor to environmental destruction. This claim is entirely dismissed by Lucas (2005) who points out the multi-faceted inconsistencies in George’s argument. Not only does George ignore the destructive reality of the animal agriculture industry, she also entirely overplays the need for new development to maintain a healthy vegan society, based on her somewhat

narrow view that Western technologies would be required in any nation wishing to sustain veganism (Lucas, 2005: p.167).

Elitism in vegan movements

Beyond the questionable science and the inconsistencies in George's argument, her theory echoes the concerns that were mentioned in Chapter 1 when analysing environmental vegetarian campaigns. Historically, class hierarchy has had a significant influence on the culture of meat consumption: those with higher social status would eat most meat and those with lower status would eat less or go without altogether (Zaraska, 2016: p.115). Contemporary dietary trends in some developed nations now seem to show that the situation has reversed. In the USA for instance, meat products are heavily subsidised, fast food burgers are a cheap convenient meal, and the vegan movement has an elitist reputation (Brisman, 2009). The *Reductarian Movement* which was analysed in Chapter 1 stands as an example of a dietary campaign against meat that is aimed at those who are privileged by education and relative economic wealth, despite the superficial appearance of universal inclusivity. During the TEDx Talk for the campaign, Brian Kateman makes certain assumptions about the members of his audience: that they are sufficiently educated to be aware of human-caused climate change and the role of animal agriculture in it, as well as holding a strong enough position on the capitalist ladder to be concerned consumers (TEDx Talks, 2014). In the university setting in which he delivers the talk, these assumptions may not be misplaced but it hints at an uncomfortable truth within the broader vegetarian and vegan movements. Despite Adams' proclamation that "[o]ur dietary choices reflect and reinforce our cosmology, our politics" (Adams, 2015: p.175, epilogue), not everyone is in a position, financially or socially, to exercise their political views in this way.

What is more, campaigns such as these not only fail to recognise their privileged position, they also fail to utilise their full change-making potential. The *Reductarian Movement* targets those who are financially and socially privileged and therefore are best placed to make ethical changes to their diets. Such changes could contribute to a reduction of all the negative social impacts associated with meat production, including environmental damage and the mistreatment of animals, and yet the main message of the campaign is a reassurance that full commitment to the cause is not obligatory. Passivity and apathy appear to be the lures of this campaign.

The point then is not to entirely avoid the 'vegan ideal' (as George (1994) refers to it) because it is far more accessible to the privileged few and therefore fundamentally biased, nor is it to force those who would struggle financially to follow a vegan lifestyle. It even seems unfair to criticise the *Reductarian Movement* for its, admittedly shallow, attempt to include as many individuals as possible in its

campaign. And yet, in order to find success in the environmental movement which seeks to reduce the consumption of animal products, those with the knowledge and the means must be willing to act without excuse or delay. In the end, it comes down to the consumer and how they choose to exercise their privilege, whether they choose to perpetuate the power politics of meat eating or to recognise their privilege and do what they can to lead a lifestyle which will be ultimately beneficial for all.

Recognition of feminist concerns within vegetarian ethics and philosophy can be complex but due to undeniable issues of gender, class and race, feminist insight is clearly necessary within this debate. Adams (2015) and Zaraska (2016) clearly point out the layers of gendered assumption associated with meat consumption: from masculinised agricultural and hunting practices, via sexualised language and imagery, to the idea that eating meat is masculine and avoiding meat is feminine. The feminist research discussed in this chapter shows to what extent the culinary choices we make as individuals are influenced by more than our taste buds and have social repercussions beyond our own dinner tables. The feminist-vegetarian analysis of animal ethics has been thorough but, as environmentalism becomes increasingly important on a personal and global stage, the debate surrounding environmental ethics in vegetarianism deserves similar feminist attention. Through the lens of ecofeminist theory and beyond, the following chapter will explore the necessity of mutual recognition and collaboration between feminism and environmentalism.

Chapter 3 - Feminism and environmentalism: in what way can feminist intervention support the goals of the environmental movement?

Nonhuman nature and sustainable development constitute a major element in ecofeminist theory, scholarship and activism. That said, the mainstream feminist movement remains reluctant to incorporate many ecofeminist ideas and often overlooks environmental concerns. The environmental movement likewise lacks recognition of feminist issues when addressing issues of climate change and sustainable development. Due to the social hierarchies apparent within meat consumption and vegetarianism, as discussed in the previous chapters, it seems that feminist intervention in the environmental vegetarian debate is appropriate, if not essential. This launch pad could indeed raise some interesting questions about the parallels between the fields of feminism and environmentalism. This chapter will examine the existing discourse that relates the two fields and will go on to suggest some of the mutual benefits of feminist-environmentalist collaboration.

Equating all kinds of oppression

The field of ecofeminism is a logical place to commence the exploration of an environmental-feminist connection. Val Plumwood (2004) explains that ecofeminism grew as a sub-discipline of feminism that developed in opposition to sexism within the environmental movement as well as the lack of environmental awareness in the feminist movement. Ecofeminism grew into a “critique opposing all forms of oppression” (Plumwood, 2004: p.43), including human oppression of nature. Modern ecofeminism is a varied field that consists of many sub-disciplines each with their own particular set of theories and beliefs. The underlying thread that unites all subdivisions of ecofeminism is the belief that patriarchal structures oppress both women and nature, and an analysis of human domination over nature, or ‘naturism’, should be included in feminist discussion (Warren, 1987). For ecofeminists, the importance of the natural environment cannot be underestimated. They believe that all life on Earth exists within interdependent ecosystems in which all life has equal value (Warren, 1987: p.7). Ecofeminism also recognises the importance of reciprocation from the environmental movement. That is to say environmentalism must embrace feminism as well as feminists embracing environmentalism. Otherwise, as Warren (1987) warns, there is a risk that the environmental movement will inadvertently take action in ways that perpetuate the patriarchal oppression of women. Many ecofeminists also believe that women have a strong bond with the ‘natural’ world which makes them innately more caring in their approach to the environment and more adept at solving problems of ecological degradation than men. Although this view is not held by all

ecofeminists, it has been a point of contention and the source of accusations of essentialism faced by the ecofeminist movement. To condemn all ecofeminist theory as essentialist would be to ignore the diversity of the field and the importance of the issues it deals with.

For Plumwood (2004), the role of ecofeminism is not to insist upon woman's innate connection with the 'natural' world while men dominate the 'cultural' world but to in fact question the dualisms behind such a belief. Postulating a world in which humans reside as 'cultural' and the world in which nonhuman animals reside as 'natural', or indeed viewing humans as apart from nature entirely, contradicts the ecofeminist view of an interconnected world. As Plumwood puts it, "[c]ritical ecofeminism sees culture/nature (or human/nature) dualism as the key to the ecological failings of Western culture" (2004: p.44). Rhetoric which embraces this dualism distances humans from systems upon which they depend for survival as well as disengaging them from any responsibility to preserve the environment. Therefore, deconstructing the human/nonhuman dualism is vital to the success of the environmental movement in rallying human support for nonhuman nature. Plumwood (2004) promotes a reconsideration of ecofeminism as a starting point for the deconstruction of these binaries.

When it comes to the vegetarian debate, Plumwood (2004) presents two ecofeminist stand points, as follows. 'Ontological veganism' advocates complete avoidance of all animal products in order to protect all nonhuman species (Plumwood, 2004: p.52). 'Ecological animalism' is a semi-vegetarian position which recognises the need to consider cultural and individual context in terms of human/nonhuman interactions (Plumwood, 2004: p.51). Plumwood (2004) supports the 'ecological animalist' position as she believes that it fulfils a more realistic role in terms of theory and activism within a diverse global perspective (p.54). She also argues that the 'ontological veganist' claim that all human consumption of animals is damaging perpetuates the human/nature dualism by removing human activity from the natural sphere. Although the recognition of contextual analysis is important in understanding the ethics of vegetarianism, there is a risk that Plumwood's (2004) argument for 'ecological animalism' relies too heavily on the caring practice of alternative farming methods, which in reality are scarce in dominant Western agriculture.

Part of ecofeminist theory involves an understanding that the dualism between culture and nature is linked to those between mind/body, reason/emotion, and masculine/feminine. Beyond the division caused by such a binary structure is the problematic hierarchy that it inevitably generates. Patrick Curry (2011) points to the 'master mentality' behind these hierarchies which reinforces the role of the supposed inferior to serve the needs of that which is seen as superior (2011: p.129). Therefore, the structures and logic that result in the domination and exploitation of nature mirror those that result

in the oppression of women (Curry, 2011: p.130). This is the foundation of the ecofeminist belief that oppressions of all kinds, including sexism, racism, classism and naturism, are inherently linked and cannot be addressed or overcome in isolation.

Women, climate change and development

The connection then between environmentalism and feminism appears to be that they both resist oppressions; the oppression of nature and the oppression of women respectively. However, Trish Glazebrook (2002) notes in her analysis of Warren's ecofeminism that this similarity only serves to highlight how the movements run in parallel to each other, both fighting for social justice on a global scale against a destructive norm. In order to display an essential link between feminism and environmentalism and to demonstrate that the two are in fact intertwined rather than running in parallel, according to Glazebrook, one would have to prove that "patriarchy is inherently naturist" (2002: p.15), that is to say that patriarchal systems *always already* oppress nature.

Yet, the aim of Warren's ecofeminism, much like that of this research, is not to uncover an innate connection between the two fields rather to encourage deeper collaboration by demonstrating the concrete need for it. Warren does so in her 1997 work in which she uses empirical data to outline the ways in which environmental issues are simultaneously feminist issues. Warren (1997) explains that she considers something to be a feminist issue if "an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression or subordination of women" (1997: p.4). With that in mind, she presents data highlighting scarcity of natural resources due to environmental issues and analyses the disproportionate effect that these problems have on women's lives. For instance, Warren (1997) discusses the situation of women in rural areas upon whom the task of collecting natural resources, such as wood and water, falls since many men have migrated to urban areas in search of employment. Degradation of forests, wild fires, drought, and water pollution impede the sourcing and collection of these essential items. Other examples identify instances in which economic or environmental solutions do not take into account the needs or circumstances of women and therefore result in a worsening of their situation. Her examples of ecological technological solutions which have been developed without an understanding of the needs of those who use it, i.e. women, include "solar stoves for women who cook before dawn and after dusk" (1997: p.9). These cases demonstrate the patriarchal structures which are ingrained within environmental and development issues. These issues are shown to be feminist issues due to the disproportionate effect they have on the lives and circumstances of women.

Warren (1997) goes on to illustrate how environmental issues can also affect people based on other social categories such as race, class and age. She uses the example of the United States of America

where data shows that pollution and disposal of hazardous waste are significantly higher in areas populated by African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native American communities and other minorities (1997: p.11). She notes that, although harmful toxins in environmental pollutants affect everyone, those most at risk are the very young and the very old (1997: p.10). From this work, Warren (1997) hopes to expose the need for an intersectional feminist approach to environmental issues in order to ensure that those who are the most vulnerable in society do not become victims of the patriarchal structures that appear within the environmental movement. The need for these considerations highlights the necessity for an ecofeminism that views environmental problems and solutions through a feminist framework.

As touched on here by Warren (1997), projects intended to advance the development of communities, especially in the global South, can in fact have a detrimental impact if social aspects are not considered. Other prominent ecofeminist works, such as those of Vandana Shiva (1989) and Rosi Braidotti et al. (1994), utilise a feminist framework to analyse the process of international development in terms of gender issues and underlying hierarchies. Shiva (1989) opines that the ideals of development and progression are too economically and intellectually centred and they neglect the knowledge and expertise of local women when it comes to nature and survival. She claims that violence against the Earth and against women “forms the basis of the current development paradigm” (1989: p.xvi). Using women’s environmental movements in India as her case study, she critiques the knowledge production of patriarchal systems and hails these grassroots initiatives as ecofeminist alternatives to invasive and exploitative development.

The work of Braidotti et al. (1994) also considers the roles of women within sustainable development initiatives in less developed countries. The research utilises new feminist epistemologies in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the lived realities of those most vulnerable in such societies. Viewed against a background of women’s oppression by the patriarchy, Braidotti et al. (1994) critique dominant forms of development and undertake analysis of women’s assumed close connection to nature. The work highlights the fundamental need for alternatives to traditional capitalist development whilst emphasising the essential integration of social research in sustainable development.

Sherilyn MacGregor (2009) underlines some of the gender issues involved not only in everyday experiences of the effects of climate change, as outlined by Warren (1997), Shiva (1989) and Braidotti et al. (1994), but also in the universal environmental calls to adopt a more eco-friendly lifestyle. At a personal level, the changes required to live more sustainably focus on the private sphere: our homes, our modes of transportation, the ways in which we consume. These realms are traditionally feminised

and in many cases still dominated by women. Conversely, at the decision making level of the climate change movement, many of the roles are filled by men. MacGregor (2009) attributes this to dominant patriarchal systems of knowledge production at the very conception of the idea of climate change which constructed the environmental debate as one focused on science, technology and defence from disaster (2009: p.128). Framing the environmental debate in this way not only excludes the issues traditionally supported by women, such as social issues and health concerns, it also tends to exclude women from the process of finding solutions. As MacGregor notes, men dominate in these fields as “scientific and economic experts, entrepreneurs, policy makers and spokespeople” (2009: p.128) which leads to a lack of diversity at the top end of the environmental movement. This example demonstrates one way in which the environmental movement mirrors traditional patriarchal systems of male power exercised over female subjects.

Expanding on MacGregor’s (2009) point, we can see an example of how an environmental call for vegetarianism could become a feminist issue. As stated above, the private sphere remains a feminine realm and therefore much of the responsibility to ‘go green’ within the household is focused on tasks that are traditionally carried out by women. MacGregor mentions that consumption itself is often thought of as a feminine activity while production is classed as masculine (2009: p.134). In this sense, as they are buying and cooking for their families, women will likely bear the majority of the burden of converting the population to a diet free from animal products. This pressure, loaded primarily upon women, should be taken into account by the environmental movement in its call to vegetarianism.

Eco-feminism or fem-environmentalism?

The ecofeminist arguments set out above underline some of the reasons why the feminist movement should recognise the parallel struggles with hierarchy that are represented within the environmental movement. Beyond this recognition, the feminist movement should truly engage with environmental discourse in order to ensure feminist outcomes to environmental issues. In the pursuit of universal equality, the feminist movement cannot ignore the need for feminist analysis and intervention in environmental issues and solutions. The benefits for the feminist agenda in engaging with environmental issues are certain but, viewed from the other side of this pairing, the motivation for environmentalists and those involved in sustainable development to engage with feminist discourse is unclear. The remainder of this chapter will explore the potential benefits for the environmental movement in utilising gender analysis and fully engaging in feminist issues.

From a theoretical perspective, part of the ecofeminism movement is an exploration of environmental issues using tools of feminist analysis. Practices that are commonly used in feminist research, such as

the analysis of power relations, the deconstruction of dualisms and hierarchies, and the questioning of established assumptions, can be revealing and valuable tools when applied to environmental philosophy and ethics. As demonstrated above in the discussion of Plumwood's (2004) approach to deconstructing dualisms, this practice offers a more holistic view in the search for solutions to environmental issues. Another example is found elsewhere in Plumwood's work (1997) as she applies feminist understanding of androcentrism to the issues in environmental ethics around critique of anthropocentrism. The critique of androcentrism, in which masculine properties and mentalities are considered of principle importance, is central to feminist theory and Plumwood believes that a critique of anthropocentrism, in which human needs and endeavours are given dominance over all nonhuman existence, is central to the success of the environmental movement (1997; p.328).

However, this belief has not drawn much support from other ecophilosophers, some of whom see anthropocentrism as natural and inevitable (p.329). William Grey (1993; quoted in Plumwood, 1997: p.329) claims that any alternative structure would require a complete surrender of our perspective as humans and a detachment from any and all prejudices or preferences. As it is impossible to eliminate all aspects of our human experience in this way to achieve "a view from nowhere" (Plumwood, 1997: p.330), Grey (1993) concludes that thinking beyond anthropocentrism is unrealistic. In contradiction to this argument, Plumwood compares this example with the feminist approach to androcentrism which she stresses is not the pursuit of gender neutrality nor "the abandonment of all gender location or perspective" (1997: p.336). Rather Plumwood emphasises that the "sensitivity, sympathy, and consideration" for the welfare of others necessary to overcome such a centrism, as well as other centrisms such as Eurocentrism and ethnocentrism, may indeed "involve some form of transcendence of our own location, but it does not require us to eliminate our own location" (1997: p.331). She suggests that it is not our locus which must be abolished, rather our ignorance of the "nexus of political relationships which exhibit a centric structure" (1997: p.336). In Plumwood's view, undertaking examinations of the interplay of the relationships between humans, nonhuman animals and the Earth, as feminist philosophers do with gender relations when confronting androcentrism, ecophilosophers could challenge the common and dangerous perception of humans as apart from nature. In doing so, Plumwood suggests that researchers could begin to "close the gap between ecophilosophy and ecopolitics" and support the pursuit of essential environmental change.

Beyond the application of feminist practices within environmental philosophy, the inclusion of feminist concerns is vital to other aspects of the environmental movement. The 1987 report by the World Commission on Environment and Development highlighted social sustainability is an integral pillar of sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). It states that, "physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to

resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits”, and, “physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations, a concern that must logically be extended to equity within each generation” (Brundtland, 1987). Therefore as much attention must be paid to human rights and social structures as to environmental and economic concerns when pursuing sustainable development. Since such investigations by Braidotti et al. (1994) discussed above, social sustainability has gained a steadier footing in developmental policy. For instance, the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals set out by the UN include gender equality among their aims for future global development. According to the UN website, gender equality goes beyond human rights, it is in fact “a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” which will “fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large” (United Nations, 2016). That said, in terms of sustainable development, preoccupation with the economy and the environment often remain the principle concerns of researchers and policy makers. As MacGregor notes, these are the ‘hard politics’ aspects of sustainability whereas social issues are seen as ‘soft politics’ and are often feminised (2009: p.128). She claims that issues over which women have shown most concern, such as the *health* risks associated with nuclear waste and GMOs, are overshadowed by the perceived importance of the *environmental* aspects.

Despite the recognised need to include social issues within a holistic approach to sustainable development, discussion of gender concerns remains scarce within academic environmental discourse. Banerjee & Bell (2006) confirm this reality with empirical data that shows the remarkably low frequency with which gender related words were mentioned in journals of environmental social science between 1980 and 2005. They blame this trend on the heavy critique and lack of popular support for ecofeminism, both within and without the feminist movement, and propose a new field of study to fill the void between environmental discourse and feminist concerns: ecogender studies. The paper echoes common critique which accuses ecofeminism of “essentialism, romanticization, and West-bashing” (Banerjee & Bell, 2006: p.8). The new field of ecogender studies avoids any suggestion of an innate connection between women and nature and instead focuses on the necessity of understanding the social consequences of climate change in order to appreciate the complete damage caused by environmental changes (Banerjee & Bell, 2006: p.14). In this way, Banerjee & Bell believe that an environmental engagement with gendered issues, through the field of ecogender studies, will further the progression of both fields.

A uniting aspect of all arguments set out in this chapter is that, whether the environmental movement acknowledges it or not, climate change is a gendered issue. Environmentalism falls into a number of patriarchal traps. This is true when women experience the most pressure to act sustainably in their approach to everyday consumption, when there is a lack of consideration for those that feel the

harsher effects of environmental changes, and when male dominated knowledge production is the norm. Further issues of racial hierarchies, class divide and ageism are also present and could be investigated further in future research. Without an acceptance of this connection and climate change solutions that demonstrate consideration for gendered outcomes, as MacGregor (2009) and Banerjee & Bell (2006) suggest, any response to climate change will be incomplete and therefore unsustainable. Due to the importance of meat consumption in the climate change debate and the gendered issues also surrounding that topic, this research shows that the vegetarian debate would be an appropriate place to begin further exploration of the feminist environmentalist connection. Ultimately, this collaboration will strengthen the feminist debate, the environmental movement and the vegetarian movement itself.

Conclusion

As it becomes increasingly urgent to alter our eating habits and address the detrimental practices that are relied upon in animal agriculture, this thesis has explored the role of a feminist perspective in this societal transition. The environmental vegetarian movement is growing every day as mainstream media coverage, celebrity endorsements and political engagement continue to raise awareness of the issues and promote change. This is an ambitious and necessary campaign that challenges centuries old tradition, and the accompanying ingrained societal attitudes, in an attempt to support the ecology of the planet and ensure a habitable environment for future generations.

In daring to propose drastic change, those supporting the environmental movement must take account of social structures and sensitivities upon which such a campaign inevitably touches. As Adams (2015) and Zaraska (2016) so clearly demonstrate, our history and our consumer culture are saturated with reminders of the importance of meat consumption for physical strength, unbeatable taste and social standing. The intense masculinisation of meat eating in Western culture, through the assumed acquisition of strength and marketing hyperbole of 'man food', is supplemented by the feminisation of vegetables as a weak, nutritionally inferior, lower class alternative (Zaraska, 2016: p.107). Within these representations lie acute implications of gender, race, age and class that are so deeply embedded in Western cultural understanding of food that they are undeniably significant barriers to the success of any campaign within the environmental vegetarian movement.

It is important to reiterate that culture and traditions surrounding the production, distribution and consumption of meat are not universal. In many cultures, meat eating is not as widespread as in Europe or North America, and in some cases meat is distributed according to religious beliefs or social categorisation, such as gender or class (Adams, 2015: p.4). What is more, the effects of climate change are being experienced most prominently by women and by women and men in a lower socio-economic position (Warren, 1997). Calls from Western research and media for a reduction in meat intake on environmental grounds must be sensitive to these facts. Furthermore, meat consumption in developing nations has increased significantly, a trend which will have serious detrimental environmental impact if it continues (Nigatu & Seeley, 2015). As the realisation of this impact leads towards a push for universal vegetarianism, the importance of social factors, such as civil, financial and political inequalities, in terms of both the effectiveness of the movement and the sustainability of the outcome, cannot be underestimated.

From a feminist perspective, everyday culinary choices and the complex philosophies and social structures behind them offer fascinating insight for social study. Through research in this field,

intersectional feminist theory on power relations, hierarchical dynamics and understanding of social difference can develop deeper comprehension of the everyday realities of research subjects. Feminist insight in the vegetarian debate, including the work of Adams (2015) and ecofeminists such as Plumwood (1997; 2004), has already extended the discussion to issues of gender and has furthered philosophical arguments for vegetarianism with an investigation of dualisms and power structures. An understanding of the ethical and moral discussion behind eating nonhuman animals, including feminist input in these areas, is essential for the progression of the environmental vegetarian movement. As the environmental debate gathers momentum in the coming years and decades, as it inevitably must, the level of engagement with social research must increase. As MacGregor (2009) argues, in order to achieve vital progress in the field of environmentalism, it is necessary to strive for socially conscious solutions that recognise and embrace differences of gender, race, ethnicity, class and age.

This research has explored the environmental vegetarian movement trying to uncover a worthwhile position for the feminist voice. Undeniable concerns for gender and other social categories in the practice of meat eating and vegetarianism, the social implications of climate change, and the importance of dealing with these social sensitivities in any campaign within the environmental vegetarian movement give clear voice to the need for feminist insight. Further feminist investigation within environmental research would be beneficial to both fields and it would seem that the debate on reducing meat intake would be a particularly valuable starting point.

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