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Pilgrim, Karyn, "'Happy Cows,' 'Happy Beef': A Critique of the Rationales for Ethical Meat"

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The ethical food movement signals a significant transformation of cultural consciousness in its recognition of the intimate politics of what we eat and what kind of socio-political systems we sustain. The recent resurgence of economic localization exemplifies a grass roots attempt to undermine the hegemony of transnational corporations and build ecologically and economically sustainable communities. Social justice plays a key role in the guiding philosophies of these movements, and yet, while many ecocritical discourses examine the uncomfortable relationship of anthropocentricism and sustainability, some contemporary texts of the ethical food movement evidence a reluctant embrace of omnivorous eating, while simultaneously indicating a gendered, if ironic, machismo at odds with the principles of ethical eating. An analysis of the rhetoric of three popular nonfiction books that construct a similar narrative of the story of meat—Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* Susan Bourette's *Meat, a Love Story,* and Scott Gold's *The Shameless Carnivore*—reveals an attempt by these authors to naturalize what is essentially an economic and lifestyle activity. Working within a vegetarian ecofeminist framework, though recognizing that multiple compelling philosophical positions exist for considering the ethics of meat eating, this paper intends to argue, not that "ethical" and "omnivorous" are contradictory terms, but rather that a moral ambivalence prevails in these texts despite these authors' claims to the contrary. In elucidating these authors' reactions to their own participation in "the omnivore's dilemma" this paper pinpoints those areas where a resistance to a deeper examination of human-nonhuman relations is in operation. (Text from author's abstract)

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