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ENTANGLEMENTS OF CONSUMPTION, CRUELTY, PRIVACY, AND FASHION: THE SOCIAL CONTROVERSY OVER FUR

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The 1980s may be remembered as a moment when the grand debates of the twentieth century imploded. In place of bipolar confrontation between competing global systems, one finds the scrupulous dismantling of cultural hegemonies and the blurring of traditional identities. In lieu of the great narratives that once animated publics by offering salvation, emancipation, or progress, one finds either the banality of staged-for-media events or local, minimalist politics. In place of disciplinary certitude, one finds the rhetoricizing of philosophy and the sciences coupled with the relentless critique of received humanistic tradition.

This essay offers a reading of a rhetorical argument that proceeds, like most of the contemporary era, from the ground up, in order to show how objections raised over the use of animal¹ fur for human display complicate understandings of human communication. We proceed (1) by delineating a way of reading social controversy in order to open horizons for critical inquiry, and (2) by critically engaging the controversy to see what it has to teach about human communication in a time when arguments are raised not so much to engage enthymematic elaboration of accepted opinion in the pursuit of persuasion as to block, unsettle, and reshape the commonplace in the interest of sustaining opposition.

SOCIAL CONTROVERSY AND OPPOSITIONAL ARGUMENT

A social controversy is an extended rhetorical engagement that critiques, resituates, and develops communication practices bridging the public and personal spheres. The loci of such controversy include participation in governance, distribution and use of economic resources and opportunities, assumption of personal and collective identities and risks, redress of common grievances, assignments of rights and obligations, and the processes of social justice (Goodnight 1991). Social controversy occupies the pluralistic boundaries of a democracy and flourishes at those sites of struggle where arguers criticize and invent alternatives to established social conventions and sanctioned norms of communication.

An inclusive public space is a commons where human communication emerges.

By virtue of its political qualities, public space provides an arena for spokespersons, parties, and institutions to advocate and contest matters of shared concern using the available means of persuasion. By virtue of its commonness, public space also provides a place where communication practices that have been sealed off socially, institutionally compartmentalized, or culturally repressed can find openings for articulation, at least in principle. The principle of "publicity" is neither a free-floating ideal nor a co-equivalent term for the dissemination of mass-mediated products; rather, publicness is an immanent characteristic of argumentative engagements that are open by virtue of implicit or explicit claims to speak for or to those whose interests are affected in making common action.

Ordinarily, public discussion engages incrementally the issues familiar to a polity: elections, taxation, representation, administration, trade and foreign affairs. Hence, public debate is conducted within the compass of a more or less consensual vocabulary, institutionally sustained by tradition and adapted to suit changing communication technologies. Yet, within the customary idiom of debate always resides a risk to the continued viability of public communication because at any historical moment a public sphere is occupied by practices of inclusion and exclusion that define differences between significant and trivial issues, central and peripheral spokespersons, and appropriate and inappropriate customs of advocacy. Because such distinctions split off communication practices from the public into adjacent arenas, they are contestable (Goodnight 1982; Fraser 1990; Zulick and Laffoon 1991). For example, if access or interest is defined too narrowly, it may be argued that a public incurs the risk of unwisely excluding views that should be discussed and unfairly stifling voices that ought to be heard.² Because "the public" is in principle inclusive of all and yet takes shape in time as a contestable commons, the public sphere generates space for social controversy.

Social controversy challenges the parameters of public discussion by extending argumentative engagements to the less consensually-based cultural and social regions of oppositional argument. Oppositional arguments work outside and against traditional practices of influence. The enthymeme, one of the most fundamental forms of argument described by Aristotle, involves an audience in its own persuasion. The enthymeme is an argument with one part unspoken or suppressed; the arguer depends on the auditors' ability and willingness to supply the missing portion from shared knowledge, experiences, or assumptions and so complete the argument (*Rhetoric* I.ii.15-19). Whereas the Aristotelian enthymeme accomplishes the end of persuasion by affiliating the claims of the speaker to the conventional knowledge or opinions of an audience, oppositional argument functions to block enthymematic associations and so disrupt the taken-for-granted realm of the uncontested and commonplace. So, oppositional argument unsettles the appropriateness of social conventions, draws attention to the taken-for-granted means of communication, and provokes discussion. The work of oppositional argument, thus, is not "adjusting ideas to people and . . . people to ideas" (Bryant 1953, 413) as much as rendering evident and sustaining challenges to communication practices that delimit the proper expression of opinion and constrain the legitimate formation of judgment within personal and public spheres.

Key to understanding oppositional argument is a peculiar speech act, the objection. For Aristotle, an objection is a contra-positive statement often raised as

refutation. Objections serve the ends of scientific, dialectical, and rhetorical reasoning (*Posterior Analytics* I.xii; *Topica* VIII.x; *Rhetoric* II.xxvi). Following Aristotle, contemporary thinkers like Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik (1979) internalize the objection within reasoned discourse as a "rebuttal" that is made meaningful by the ordinary context in which an argument is grounded. It can be conceded that in many, perhaps most, cases argumentation is conducted within shared boundaries of technical, personal, and civic contexts where common understanding of reasoning and rules of communication permit interlocutors to ground the content of a claim and to strive to anticipate and overcome refutation. But an objection is more than an opposing statement, because the performance of an argument always raises the relational question: Are the implied norms of understanding, testing, and adjudicating appropriate for us? The objection as a speech act thus may be directed to debate within a consensual context in order to take or rebut exceptions, or it may be raised to challenge the legitimacy or appropriateness of communication practices. Such challenges entwine discursive and nondiscursive argumentation.

Discursive oppositional argument in social controversy deploys refutation of claims and moves further to dispute the implied norms of participation signaled by the communication. A failure to find consensus on a claim that joins interest invites reflexive objection to the communication practices by which advocacy is sustained, despite what one party considers dispositive argumentation. Absent a common agreement as to the means of reaching consensus, debate over the "truth" of an asserted claim is set aside, in whole or in part, and challenges are raised as to the acceptability of the communicative context within which the argument is offered as secured. Objections may be directed either to the legitimacy of procedural rules or the fairness of grounds invoked in asserting a claim and establishing the conditions of communicative reasoning. Contested rules may be redressed through review, mediation, rehearing, and so forth; improper ascription of common grounds may be fixed by redrawing the context in which acceptable evidence and claims may be forwarded reasonably. A sustained controversy, however, resists such repairs by blocking incremental adjustments to communicative reasoning.

Social controversy may, but does not always, limit measures to adjust communicative reasoning by raising the stakes of opposition to the level of global discursive indictments. Objections are leveled against the projection of consensus because all rules of reasoning and division of grounds are said to be but rationalizations of oppressive power conditions. Such objections include: (1) The illusion of freedom of inquiry and expression creates repressive tolerance where resources are not accorded to the most significant problems nor is meaningful expression honored. (2) Public speech is a substitute for or a diversion from other meaningful types of action. (3) Individual judgment is rendered irrelevant to the process of decision-making by ingrained prejudices and suppression of class interests. (4) Within the status quo, the future is determined by institutions driven by bureaucratic momentum and sustained by monetary and/or power interests. (5) There are many governed by the system whose interests go unrepresented because they cannot speak for themselves and no one with power in the existing system speaks on their behalf. (6) Communities exist only as fugitives from a hegemonic system that elaborates a code inducing complicity in alienation and social atomization. The aim of such objections is to delegitimize the grounds upon which any claim to reasonability, good faith, or trust

may be justified. If argumentation is corrupt, then a claim in question cannot be advocated responsibly.

Were objections limited to the discursive arena alone, then totalizing critique that empties public space of all valid norms of communicative reasoning would end controversy. Nothing further could be said. Discursive argument has its nondiscursive side, however. Even critique is a performative argument articulated in some way at some time by someone. Indeed, by throwing open to question the "respectable" means of conducting argument, critique may function to free up exploration and experimentation with alterior, novel forms of communication. With the production of social controversy, the impulse to close the discursive space of argumentation, whether at a global or local level, thus evokes gestures that widen and animate the nondiscursive production of argument.

In social controversy, nondiscursive arguments usher into the public realm aspects of life that are hidden away, habitually ignored, or routinely disconnected from public appearance. By rendering these aspects noticeable and comment-worthy, performed arguments expose specific social conventions as unreflective habits and so revalue human activities. As the discursive side of social controversy may expand opposition, sometimes radically, by questioning the imputed grounds of reasonable argumentation, the nondiscursive side works to reconstitute grounds by the display of radically recontextualized appearances that provoke reexamination of the norms of personal conduct and challenge the range of publicly acceptable means of communication. Whereas the discursive arguments work to block enthymematic associations by contesting the means of establishing "accepted" opinion, the nondiscursive arguments work—in the new, "free" space of reassociation—to redefine and realign the boundaries of private and public space.

Confronted by strategies of delegitimation and reassociation, those who are caught up in the controversy work to bolster, alter, or abandon the social and communication practices in question. To the extent that such practices inscribe fundamentally conflicting interests, a controversy will become marked by diminishing space for agreement among contesting interlocutors. Yet, the debate does not so much fragment discussion into incommensurable positions as it creates pressures for new forms of resistance through the transformations and reiterations of discursive and nondiscursive arguments contesting definitions of acceptable and unacceptable social conventions and norms of communicative reasoning. Even as prospects of agreement become more remote, argumentation intensifies and develops. Neither side can release the other, as both compete in a contested social world.

A social controversy may become a firestorm, drawing into its vortex distant, seemingly innocuous practices and customs as metonymically bearing association with divisions salient to a specific time and set of practices. Thus, a disturbance in a minor quadrant in a single sector of the social world may have implications far in excess of its seeming social centrality and intellectual density.³ We think that the recent contretemps concerning fur and fashion constitutes such a disturbance and propose a critical reading of a debate over what often is regarded as the most superficial and fleeting of subjects: seasonal changes of taste and style in the display of the human surface. Ironically, the argumentative engagements of this controversy address an issue that has troubled social theorists across the twentieth century, namely the disappearance of the public with the rise of mass society (Dewey 1927;

Habermas 1989 [1962]). We believe that the oppositional arguments lodged here presage the advent of a contemporary public sphere and further that its emergence is not without substantial opportunity and risk for the projects of human communication.

OPPOSITIONAL ARGUMENT IN THE FUR CONTROVERSY

The U.S. fur controversy thriving in the late 1980s and the 1990s exemplifies how social controversy sparks public discussion and debate. Speaking on behalf of beings that cannot speak for themselves, anti-fur advocates invent and deploy oppositional arguments to block accepted opinion and challenge the legitimacy of claims offered to support established contexts of communicative reasoning, thereby contesting reigning divisions between private and public space. For instance, conventions that secure individual public display as a matter of private choice are opposed by showing that the use of a part of another being cannot be detached neutrally from the social means of production. Conventions affirming that human use of animals can be regulated properly by following standards of minimal cruelty are contested by disputing the assumption that responsible conduct in relation to animals is a matter to be left for state-of-the-art, professional judgment. Conventions according status to those who display traditionally prestigious coverings are repudiated by altering the expressive value of fashion and politically reoccupying the human surface. Finally, conventions that legitimize celebrity opinion as a paid-for commodity are disavowed by performative disruptions that reconnect individual preference to public accountability. In response, the pro-fur forces attempt to reground the core assertion that animals may be used for human ends, reassert the typical division between use and abuse, retrench fur consumption as a matter that rightly belongs in the private, rather than public, space, and, most remarkably, refashion the display of fur itself. Before turning to examine these arguments in controversy, it is important to establish: (1) the central assumptions put at risk in the debate; (2) the factors that make fur consumption a site of struggle at this historical juncture; and (3) the general shape the discussion assumes.

The Contours of a Controversy

The social conventions central to the fur controversy involve accepted relationships between humans and animals, traditional meanings attached to buying and wearing fur garments, and the sanctity of consumption as a matter of private choice. For centuries, humans have assumed a right to use other animals for their own purposes, although causing animals needless pain has been discouraged. Giving priority to human needs, the rabbinic tradition permitted killing animals in moderation for human use, but opposed wanton killing and insisted that the animals used be caused as little pain as possible (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1971). In his lecture "Duties Towards Animals and Spirits," Kant (1963 [1930]) argues that animals exist "merely as a means to an end. That end is man" (239). He further claims that one should treat animals humanely, not for the animals' own sakes, but in order to avoid damaging the humanity that a person is duty-bound to practice toward other humans: "If [a man] is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practise kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings

with men" (240). Though American University historian DiBacco (1991) reports that colonial New England adopted the first law protecting animals kept for human use from cruelty, *The Oxford Companion* (1980) recognizes no positive legal steps until 1822 when Richard Martin secured the passage of an anti-cruelty act through Parliament; two years later the English Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded.

The second social convention disputed concerns the traditional messages communicated by consuming and displaying fur. In selections of dress, consumption choices encounter the body as a site of public display. By adorning the body, one makes a nondiscursive public statement about one's identity, and clothing choices become an extension of one's self-concept (Davis 1992, 25; Horn 1975, 120-144). Dress is not only the fastest way to declare a role, but also the mode of human activity reflecting one's values and lifestyle most vividly (Horn 1975, 214, 1). Since people recognize that their dress conveys messages about identity, they exercise choice over it in an active and often conscious attempt to create an image of the self that expresses how they want others to view them (Horn 1975, 199).

Although consumption choices themselves usually are treated as private matters, as is argued below, conspicuous consumption sends messages even to people unacquainted with the consumer regarding his or her social status and role. The most obvious example is the existence of material status symbols, items that Goffman (1951) argues "visibly divide the social world into categories of persons, thereby helping to maintain solidarity within a category and hostility between different categories" (294). Though such status symbols may be employed "fraudulently" to signify a status that the claimant does not in fact possess, material status symbols remain in use because they are better suited to the requirements of communicating relative position than are the rights and duties that they signify (Goffman 1951, 295-296). In American society, those who wish to communicate that they enjoy a high social status traditionally have used accepted status symbols of dress, such as fur or jewelry, to express this aspect of their identity. Status symbols reflecting a relatively high class position are valued both for their scarcity and their distinction as an "expressive" vehicle (Goffman 1951, 298; Blumberg 1974, 481). Sandy Blye, executive vice president of the trade association American Fur Industry (AFI), summarizes the desirability attached to fur: "Fur is fashion Now it's lifestyle" (quoted in Beck, 1988). Bernard Groger, co-publisher of the industry weekly *Fur World*, acknowledges the capitalistic importance of the expressive dimension of fur's desirability, saying, "The minute the American woman thinks fur is not fashionable, the business is doomed" (quoted in Hochswender 1989, B8).

The third convention at issue in the American fur controversy is consumption's position as a private rather than public matter. In the United States, consumption is treated as a relatively inviolate private right. While Americans sometimes choose to send public messages or support political causes with their consumption choices (e.g., boycotting grapes or lettuce to protest the working conditions of migrant agricultural laborers; "green" buying), the right to spend one's own money as one chooses is treated as almost sacrosanct. Porpora (1990) argues that the reason Americans hold so dear their license to consume freely is that it has become their primary means for expressing individuality. Near the end of a lengthy indictment of

the American political system and citizens' acquiescence, Porpora explains the role he sees consumption playing:

Oh, but in America, we are all individuals. So my students tell me. Yet 90 percent of these young adults are majoring in the same thing. Ninety percent have the identical goal in life—to make lots of money. Virtually all believe without question that the United States is the best country in the world. . . . Where is their individuality? In what they consume. Some want Porsches and some want BMWs. Some listen to Sting and some listen to the Stones. Some drink Coors and some drink Bud. There you have it: a nation of individuals. (198)

Whether or not one accepts Porpora's critique of American politics, his analysis of the symbolic role of consumption rings true. If consumption is a primary means for expressing individuality in this country, then certainly one resents efforts to interfere with one's consumption choices; such efforts restrict the free expression of one's individuality. Of course, there are restrictions on what can be consumed legally (e.g., certain drugs, products from endangered species), but within these legal boundaries the main restriction on one's consumption options is the amount of resources one commands. The greater one's resources, the greater the options available for asserting individuality.

There are two reasons that challenges to these conventions reached fruition in the mid- to late 1980s. First, U.S. fur consumption underwent a period of unprecedented growth from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. In 1977 fur sales stood at \$612 million (Hirsch 1988); yearly sales tripled between 1979 and 1987, with sales reaching an historic high of \$1.8 billion in the 1986–87 season (Foltz 1989; Hochswender 1989). This sharp consumption increase marked the fur industry as one whose need to kill animals had increased dramatically in a very short period.

Second, much of this sales growth resulted from the combination of whole new categories of consumers showing a willingness to enter the fur market and the fur industry's strategy for wooing them. In the 1940s, the traditional customer was a man in his fifties buying a gift for his wife that was "as much a symbol of his success as a sign of his affection" (Belkin 1985, D5; Haynes, 1987). By the early 1970s, the average age of first-time fur buyers had dropped to about 40 (Johnson 1985, F8). And, by the mid-1980s, the average first-time buyer was a 26-year-old working woman buying a fur to affirm her own success and glamour and as only the first installment of a whole fur wardrobe (Johnson 1985, F8; Kay 1991, C4; Haynes 1987).⁴

The emergence of new potential buyers inspired the fur industry's vision for the future and its strategy for achieving that vision. As "more and more secretaries and middle-income women [found] it financially possible and morally acceptable to buy themselves furs" (Johnson 1985, F8), furriers imagined a glowing future in which most women would own at least one fur and many a whole collection. In retrospect, *Newsweek* notes that the message of the 1980s "was that every secretary deserved to wrap herself in mink" (Darnton 1992). The companion marketing strategy involved both making fur more available to these new consumers and advertising it to stress accessibility. To promote the "class to mass" shift, discount fur merchandisers began actively marketing furs to young working women, employing such techniques as holding stadium sales and selling furs in settings less intimidating than the traditional fur salon (Hochswender 1989, B8; Haynes 1987). The Jindo fur chain set out to become "the McDonald's of the fur industry" (Leach 1993). Volume retailers

employed advertising designed to destroy "any vestigial perception of furs as reserved for the well-married elite," and the Fur Vault adopted the advertising slogan, "A fur for every woman" (Johnson 1985, F8, F9). And, according to a *Working Woman* article, a fur for every situation:

Smart retailers realize that appealing to this younger, more independent customer means rethinking some of the industry's outdated marketing strategies. Instead of relying on fantasy or snob appeal, today's fur advertisements picture people wearing fur in real-life situations—over business suits, with attaché cases, even skiing, says Blye. "The ads are making furs accessible. Women look at them and say, 'Hey, that looks like me,'" she adds. (Haynes 1987)

The fur industry's success in boosting sales by attracting new types of consumers and showcasing new uses for its fashions generated both urgency and opportunities that energized anti-fur protestors. As Avi Magidoff, founder of the Human Animal Liberation Front (HALF), comments, "There are more fur coats, so there are more of us" (quoted in Belkin 1985, D5).

Ironically, the success of industry efforts to mass market fur interacted with fur's longstanding image as a luxury item to make it appear vulnerable to becoming the next U.S. battleground in the crusade for animal rights. Initially, animal rights protestors were open to pursuing the fur issue; their advocacy already had been so successful in putting the issue of animal experimentation on the national agenda that, by the late 1980s, Congress received more mail about animal research than on any other topic, and the letters ran 100 to 1 against the use of animals in experiments (Rosenberger 1990, 30). Further, animal rights activists' stunning successes in opposing fur consumption in other countries set an encouraging example for U.S. protestors to make it their next major target and to concentrate particularly on New York, the site of one-third of all U.S. fur sales (Kasindorf 1990, 27; Wilson 1989). For example, the anti-fur movement in Germany, a country that was once the world's largest consumer of furs, virtually destroyed the fur business there (Hochswender 1989, B8). In the Netherlands, sales of fur dropped nearly 90 percent between 1982 and 1990, and fur sales in Switzerland and Britain fell 75 percent between 1985 and 1990 (Johnson 1990). More recently Canada's fur trade was damaged both by protests at home and in its Scandinavian markets (Lee 1992; "Fur Firm Cuts" 1992). The success of animal rights' protests on other issues in the U.S. and of anti-fur protests elsewhere set the stage, and, by 1988, anti-fur advocacy was fast becoming the most visible aspect of the U.S. animal rights movement (Beck 1988).

Fur's status as a luxury item further facilitates protests. By definition, luxuries are expendable and therefore make vulnerable targets:

Partisans insist that the fur industry is also the easiest to attack, since it trades on vanity and status symbols. "It isn't necessary to torture and kill animals to show people how much money you have—you can buy a nice cloth coat and pin money to it," says [Bob] Barker who resigned as host of the Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants this year [1988] when officials insisted on awarding the winners fur coats. (Beck 1988)

Fur's role as an expendable luxury and as a potentially resented marker of the upper class make it an ideal site for controversy.

Moreover, because fur is a recognized luxury item, its consumption is an issue on

which various groups concerned about animals comfortably can join forces, even though they may oppose fur consumption for different reasons. Dan Mathews of the relatively radical People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) remarks, "We'd prefer it if people didn't wear leather or eat meat. But we realize these are big steps for people to take, and all we ask is that they take things one step at a time. Since fur is a luxury item, if you can do just one thing, then don't wear it" (quoted in Bushnell 1989, 77). And Patricia Ragan, a spokesperson for the more moderate Humane Society, notes, "[W]e believe it is simply not right to cause animals to suffer and die for luxury. We're not opposed to killing animals for food or for leather, which is a byproduct of that process. But we think that fur is the logical place to draw the line" (quoted in Johnson 1990). Fur's unambiguous position as a luxury rather than a necessity makes it an inviting target for protests uniting animal activists eschewing all uses of animals with those rejecting only certain uses.

Within these general contours, the controversy takes its distinctive shape. U.S. anti-fur advocates adopt an argumentative style that is *at once consumer-directed and confrontational*. While activists occasionally target fur producers, disrupting fur shows, fur auctions, and speeches by furriers' public relations representatives or vandalize fur establishments and farms (Campbell 1991; Reed 1989; "Controversial Clients" 1989; Torry 1992; Leo 1989; Kasindorf 1990; Belkin 1985; Hirsch 1988; "\$35,000 Award" 1992; Beck 1988), they primarily address their protests to actual or potential fur consumers, the group they see as most open to influence (Moore 1991; Wilson 1989). Barbara Chadwick, Chicago director of Animal Rights Mobilization, reasons, "If the demand for fur is down, they'll have no reason to increase the supply" (quoted in Kay 1991, C4). PETA's Mathews notes, "We realized that in New York, where fashion is word one, you have to attack at a peer-pressure level" (quoted in Hirsch 1988). And Magidoff of HALF also explains, "We want to reach the women the fur sellers want to reach, the young women who think furs are status" (quoted in Belkin 1985, D5). Advocates justify targeting even consumers who already own furs because, according to Angie Metler, who directs the New Jersey Animal Rights Alliance (NJARA): "By wearing a fur coat you are a walking advertisement that fur is acceptable and glamorous" (quoted in Reisner 1992).

Anti-fur tactics also include direct confrontations and staging media-felicitous, often shocking performances. Although it is one of the great myths of the fur wars that American anti-fur activists adopt the European tactics of throwing eggs or paint at fur consumers, they do confront people wherever they are and comment or offer literature (Kasindorf 1990, 28; see also Bushnell 1989, 72, 77). Steve Siegel, the New York director of Trans-Species Unlimited, explains the strategy:

Every other weekend after Fur-Free Friday we are out on the street in front of the Fur Vault or a store that sells furs. We also organize "speak-outs" in which we send people out on Fifth Avenue and confront people and give them literature. . . . We tell [our members] to say whatever they want, to go right up to the point of legal harassment but not to harass them. We have lawyers who instruct our people how far they can go. (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 28)

For example, during the 1989 holiday shopping season, members of Friends of Animals positioned themselves in front the Fifth Avenue Fur Vault with a banner reading "Peace on Earth Begins with Your Wardrobe" and pictures of animals captioned "Let Me Live" (Kasindorf 1990, 33). Protestors also gathered in front of

Fred the Furrier's store, handing fur-wearing passersby cards that read "Enjoy your coat. Its real owner was killed in it" (Belkin 1985, D5, D1) or pamphlets featuring a picture of a baby animal with the caption "Does your mother have a fur coat? His mother lost hers."

Furthermore, anti-fur advertisements in newspapers and national magazines, pictures on buses, cabs, billboards and posters in New York and other large cities, images on protestors' literature and signs, and protest demonstrations often are designed to gain people's attention through their shock value (Foltz 1989). For instance, Mobilization for Animals of New York sponsored advertisements on buses featuring two little raccoons and the caption "These babies are looking for their mother. Is she on your back?" (Belkin 1985, D5). While an undercover "neck-breaking video" of a fur farm plays nearby, advocates tape a red carpet to the sidewalk across the street from fur retailers like Bloomingdale's where they then stage a "fashion show" of redesigned furs that illustrate the "true" nature of fur; some of the slogans on the coats read: "40 Dead Animals," "Don't Be Cruel; Don't Wear Fur," and "Anally Electrocuted for Your Vanity" (Rosenblatt 1992). Former PETA lawyer Gary Francione notes that this group's campaigns in particular "are selected more for media image than content" (quoted in Rosenberg 1992, 20). And Metler (NJARA director) and Ingrid Newkirk (PETA co-founder and national director) readily admit that any media coverage, pro or con, is useful because it promotes discussion of the issues (Reisner 1992; Rosenberg 1992, 20). The anti-fur forces' publicity-generating performances run the gambit from the tragic to the comic; symbols of outrage include staging fur funerals with coffins filled with furs (Reed 1989), encouraging customers to return the credit cards of stores selling fur (Beck 1988), featuring mock fur-burnings ("Champions" 1989), and holding an annual march down Fifth Avenue on Fur-Free Friday each year since 1986, complete with game show host Bob Barker leading protestors in chants of "Fur is murder! Don't buy fur!" (Beck 1988). With consumer-targeted, confrontational tactics, anti-fur forces continually invent novel discursive and nondiscursive expressions of resistance.

Pro-fur forces initially ignored anti-fur protests, hoping to make them "non-events" that could be disposed of perfunctorily via communicative reasoning drawing on traditional norms, and some vociferously denied a causal connection between anti-fur protests and the drop in sales (Kasindorf 1990, 28; Kay 1991, C4). They blamed flagging fur sales on the 1987 stock market crash, a series of mild winters, worldwide overproduction of mink, a glut of cheap imports and of furs in Europe, overstocking, and an over-expansion of retail outlets ("The Right" 1989; "The Furriers" 1989; Foltz 1989; Johnson 1990; Kay 1991, C1; Hochswender 1989).

In spite of publicly downplaying the role of anti-fur protests, fur industry officials eventually had to make adjustments in response to the opposition (Kay 1991, C4). By 1989, after two poor sales seasons, furriers implicitly acknowledged the success of anti-fur protests and united to launch a multi-million dollar public relations and advertising campaign defending the consumption of fur (Kasindorf 1990, 28; "The Furriers" 1989; "The Right" 1989). The Fur Information Council of America (FICA) retained Burson-Marsteller as public relations counsel (Wilson 1989). Their \$2 million campaign includes large generic pro-fur advertisements in newspapers in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Phoenix (Johnson

1990). In 1991, Stephen Sanders, senior fur buyer for Marshall Field's, noted that the fur industry had undergone more change in the last three years than in the previous thirty (quoted in Kay 1991, C1). Skip Lea, president of the National Fur Commission, likened the upheaval to Operation Desert Storm: "When it comes to the future of our own industry, we can't afford to go back to business as usual. Like Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf, we're going to rewrite the book" (quoted in Kay 1991, C1). Through changes in both appeals and fashions, pro-fur forces prepared to do battle.

The Burson-Marsteller campaign and other materials position pro-fur advocates as "educators" intent on informing consumers about the "real" animal rights agenda. One trapper blamed some of his problems on a "public relations failure," claiming that in the earlier days of anti-fur protests "there was nobody out letting people know the truth about animals"; consequently, "[a] handful of people are intimidating a nation" (quoted in Moore 1991). And Marsha Kelley, communications director for the Fur Farm Animal Welfare Coalition (FFAWC), contends, "The most significant effect of the animal rights movement is that now fur farmers and retailers are very motivated educators. The public has come to realize that the animal rights issue is not a fur issue at all. It is a value system that says humans and animals are equals" (quoted in Kay 1991, C4). So, pro-fur arguers encountered the opposition.

Anti-Fur Advocates' Arguments

Although two main arguments serve a range of anti-fur arguers, it is important to realize that these protestors are not a monolithic group in order to understand the pro-fur responses. More radical anti-fur advocates accept Peter Singer's (1975/1977) perspective that even beings that cannot speak and are not the intellectual equals of adult humans can think, know fear, suffer foreboding, and feel pain much as a human infant can (see also Pacelle 1992).⁵ Animals' capacity to suffer rather than reason gives them a right to freedom from unnecessary suffering, though they do not rate rights equivalent to those of humans. Just as it is morally unacceptable to use humans with limited abilities (e.g., infants, the mentally retarded) to benefit more capable humans, it should be unthinkable to use non-human animals for the benefit of humans (Singer 1975/1977; see also Rosenberg 1992; Pacelle 1992). Since the right to use another cannot be grounded on differences of intelligence, justifications for humans using animals is reduced to an indefensible preference for one's own species, or "speciesism." These more radical animal rights activists argue instead for "veganism," a lifestyle excluding the use of all animal products including ones like wool and dairy products (Reisner 1992; see also Wilson 1989). More moderate advocates tolerate humans' use of animals to produce "necessities," even when the process yields luxuries as byproducts, if that use is characterized by humane treatment of and a minimum of pain for the animals. Despite differing motives, radicals and moderates agree on the following two arguments.

1. *Cruelty/Luxury Make Fur Production Unjustified.* The claim that it is acceptable to use fur is based on the enthymematically-supplied premises that humans may use animals as long as such use proceeds humanely and that fur production is humane. The argument meets two objections, one directed at the acceptability of use and the other at the assumption of humane production.

First, anti-fur advocates block completion of the "acceptable use" enthymeme, challenging the argument's implicit premise by defining "cruelty" as *any* use (humane or inhumane) of animals for the primary purpose of producing luxury items. George Cave, president of Trans-Species Unlimited, states the principle behind this attack: "The issue is clear cut. To kill an animal to wear its skin is a violation [sic] of basic principles of decency and civilization" (quoted in Hirsch 1988). Wayne Pacelle (1992), the national director of the Fund for Animals, states categorically: "At one time, say in the 17th century, some humans needed to kill to survive—for food and clothing in particular. That's not true today. . . . And if these practices cause pain and are entirely unnecessary, isn't that the very definition of cruelty?"

On the nondiscursive side, anti-fur advertisements block the habitualized disconnection of fur garments from the living creatures used in their production by showing images of healthy, fur-bearing animals. For example, some ads display endearing pictures of live animals and bear captions like "Meet one of the 65 pelts it takes to make a single fur coat" and "When you choose to wear fur, animals suffer and die needlessly." Another pictures Vogue model Carrae, saying, "I'd be ashamed to wear fur," while the caption reads, "When you choose to wear fur, animals suffer and die needlessly. It's that simple. Don't wear fur" (Johnson 1990). This aspect of the "cruelty/luxury" argument challenges the traditional convention on which the enthymeme depends by suggesting that, even if the animals involved receive quality care and die painlessly, their deaths are needless and therefore inherently cruel. Thus, the oppositional argument challenges the communication norm that permits clothing to function expressively without intimate connection to its source of production. This revision of communicative reasoning to link cruelty *necessarily* to luxury seems to have had some effect. In her 1989 nonpartisan article, Bushnell notes, "After all, many of us grew up with an image of the fur coat as the ultimate luxury item, implying status, wealth and glamour. However, as we become more knowledgeable about the way such animals live and die, killing them for luxury's sake does seem selfish and unnecessary" (77).

Anti-fur forces challenge the "humane use" enthymeme by further associating fur with cruelty. Even if luxury use could be justified, anti-fur advocates depict the horrors of production. These displays expand awareness of the number of locations of production, yet narrow the scenes of forests, ranches, and factories to sights of traps, tiny cages, and instruments of death; through display of these graphic images, sites of production are concentrated into scenes of terror. The larger the number and the more intense the reductions, the greater the power of objection.

Introduced in 1855—coincidentally also the year that John Call Dalton performed the first vivisection (DiBacco 1991)—steel-jaw traps proffer sickening visual displays of cruelty. Banned in more than 70 countries, steel-jaw leg-hold or body-gripping traps are the most commonly used traps in the U.S. When set underwater, the traps cause their prey to drown; on land, a trapped animal may die from injury, exposure, or an attack by a predator. Since the traps are indiscriminate, they sometimes catch cats, dogs, or other animals not meant to be trapped. A Humane Society study estimates that at least 23 percent of animals found in traps were not meant to be caught (Kasindorf 1990, 31–32). Anti-fur advocates' visual materials graphically detail all varieties of the misery these traps cause. Some

animals caught in such traps are so desperate they attempt to, and may succeed at, gnawing off their own legs (Bushnell 1989, 77); those who do succeed later may die from infection or blood loss (Gerard and Gerard 1992). Consequently, a Friends of Animals poster shows a bloody paw caught in a trap; the caption reads, "Get a feel for fur. Slam your fingers in a car door."

The horrors of fur farms ground a second visual association between cruelty and fur production. According to anti-fur advocates, ranched animals do not fare much better than trapped ones. Arguers claim that minks and foxes live several to a single cage, where they fight and sometimes maim each other. And, even if fur farm conditions improved, claims Stephen Zawistowski of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), it could not solve the cruelty of fur farming, even using the traditional "use but don't abuse" convention; he notes, "[M]inks and foxes are not domesticated animals. Under normal conditions, they do a lot of roaming and might cover several miles a day. Simply keeping them in cages is cruel" (quoted in Bushnell 1989, 96). Similarly, this response to a pro-fur essay asserts the inhumanity of fur ranching:

Perhaps Ms. Cattallanotti would like us to believe beavers, raccoons and minks live the good life on an idyllic farm until their time comes. In fact minks and foxes (animals mostly farmed) spend their man-altered short lives jammed into tiny filthy wire-mesh cages where they suffer from poor diets, inadequate water, contagious diseases and severe stress. (Gerard and Gerard 1992)

Corroborating photos of the wretchedness described bear captions like "Behind the Glamorous Image of Fur" and "Would St. Francis of Assisi Approve of This?" The pictures suggest an unequivocal answer.

The most grisly pictures display the cruelty involved in harvesting either trapped or ranched animals. Since hunters are unregulated, they can kill trapped animals any way they want, claims PETA's Mathews (Bushnell 1989, 77). One of the most disturbing choices, evidenced in PETA and Friends of Animals visuals, is the death stomp in which the hunter crushes the animal's rib cage. Other execution methods for trapped animals include clubbing them with a hammer or shooting them (Kasindorf 1990, 32). Similarly, the killing of animals ranched for fur is not regulated by the 1978 Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which applies to cattle, sheep, pigs, and other livestock. Consequently, according to ASPCA's Zawistowski, farmers use methods that are easiest, quickest, and cheapest for them, even if these methods are agonizing for the animals (Bushnell 1989, 96). Methods for killing ranched animals include poison, decompression, electrocution, and suffocation; animals that do not die immediately simply are skinned alive (Gerard and Gerard 1992). Mink fare best, especially when they are gassed in special chambers filled with carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide; however, some small mom-and-pop operations simply put mink in an enclosed area and suffocate them with the exhaust from a pickup truck (Kasindorf 1990, 31). Perhaps the worst execution method, anal electrocution, is used on ranch foxes. Although FFAWC guidelines call for the use of lethal injections instead of electrocution for foxes, the group concedes that this more painless method is not always used. With anal electrocution, a fox is held down by two people who place an electric clip on the animal's lip, put a probe in its anus, and then shoot a bolt of electricity through its body (Kasindorf 1990, 31). One Friends of Animals poster shows the grim electrocuting device with the caption: "In Order Not

To Hurt the Outside of the Fox You Have to Hurt the Inside." The copy concludes, "If this shocks you, don't buy fur."

By entwining discursive and nondiscursive arguments, then, anti-fur advocates disrupt the most basic, habituated enthymemes of the fur industry concerning the acceptability of disconnecting the production of fashion from its use. The disruption enables the elaboration of extended opposition by transforming the places of fur production into contested sites of social practice. Associating fur with these dark places of cruelty, either traditionally or newly understood, sets the stage for the second strategy.

2. *Inverting the Expressive Meaning of Fur.* Anti-fur forces' second objection blocks completion of an enthymeme concerning the traditionally positive expressive value of fur. Even with their fresh "cruelty" reassociations deployed in the public sphere, anti-fur arguers have many longstanding positive fur associations to overcome. In this enthymeme, the premise to be supplied is the conventional assumption that consuming and displaying fur reflects positively on the wearer. The explicit portion of the enthymeme, exemplified by traditional commercial advertisements for fur, is either that one should own and display fur because one wants to send others a positive message about one's wealth, status, and/or glamour or, conversely, that, because one is wealthy, successful, and/or glamorous, one deserves to and should express this identity publicly by displaying a fur.

To block audience completion of this enthymeme, anti-fur advocates invert the valence of fur from a social positive to a social negative. If the move is successful, people will be deterred from uncritically supplying the unspoken assumption that a fur garment comments on its wearer in an unambiguously positive way. The forces of fashion then should be discouraged from producing fur because its expressive value has soured. Siegel of Trans-Species Unlimited explains the overarching strategy: "In addition to relying on the moral argument, we decided we would also have to give selfish people a selfish reason to stop wearing fur. We decided to make fur seem vulgar, a symbol of someone who is tasteless and uneducated, so that people would feel they were being admired if they didn't wear fur" (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 29). If much of fur's appeal is the comment it makes on the wearer, then inverting the traditionally positive associations of fur (e.g., luxury, glamour, status, wealth) should dissuade some consumers who are not moved by the "cruelty/luxury" argument. So, advocates decided to convince consumers that, as one "Compassion Fashion Alliance" bumper sticker proclaims, "Wearing Fur is Passé & Déclassé." Activists set out to make wearing fur publicly an experience much like smoking in public: a stigmatizing, shame-producing act that is not worth the trouble. ASPCA's Zawistowski claims, "Wearing fur is going to become like smoking. There will always be a few who do it, but more and more people are going to realize that they just don't need to wear fur" (quoted in Bushnell 1989, 77; see also Hirsch 1988). Siegel says simply, "Let's make wearing a fur coat a miserable experience. We're going to make a fur coat mean 'no class'" (quoted in Beck 1988). The campaign to invert the expressive value of fur uses three primary strategies: direct shaming, presence of celebrities, and mocking remakes of fur ads.

Advertising campaigns deployed a host of negative reassociations in an effort to shame customers by portraying fur garments as "sadist symbols" (Reed 1989). One new connection touted is fur's association with death. The slogan "Fur Is Dead"

gained prominence. A PETA leaflet with a picture of a dead animal on it bears the headline "Buy a Fur and Slip into Something Dead." The copy reads, "Not a very glamorous thought, is it? But the fact is, when you slip into a fur, you're surrounding yourself with the corpses of dozens of animals. . . . [I]f you're going to wear fur, you should know what you're getting yourself into." A Humane Society pamphlet, graced with the picture of a live raccoon, reads, "It's a shame to wear fur! People should be ashamed to wear fur. When you choose to wear fur, animals suffer and die needlessly." Other associations advocates link to fur-wearing include: "callous," "self-indulgent," "unhip," "unchic," (Hirsch 1988; "Champions" 1989). The Humane Society's "The Shame of Fur Campaign," launched in 1988, includes visuals that summarize the direct shaming tactic well; for instance, one colored picture of a woman in a fur hiding her face with a purse is captioned "You Should Be Ashamed to Wear Fur."

Shaming is also a matter of public performances that strive to invert the relationship between shame and status. Waiting near upscale shops in Manhattan in 1989, PETA supporters pelted fur-wearers with slogans. "Wear the bloody side out!" they yelled. "Blood on your coat! Blood on your conscience!" "Do you wear your dog and cat?" they screamed. One demonstrator, Karin Capra, told a woman directly: "That's a lot of death to wear on your back." When protestors identified individual targets, they taunted, "SHAME! SHAME! Look at that fur" ("The Fur and the Fury" 1989, B4). Other demonstrators proceed similarly with shouts like "Dead animals are not pretty!" (Wilson 1989). The strategy here seems to be to testify to one's own "ethical commitments" by violating propriety conditions that ordinarily constrain communication. Such wrought up displays thus dramatize the seriousness of the issue and provoke comment, some of which is unfavorable. As a *Washington Post* writer summarizes on the PETA demonstration: "The sight of fur wearers being bullied by protestors is a public relations boon to [the fur industry]. It can pose as harassed and shift attention from the death and gore that is basic to the . . . marketing of fur" (McCarthy 1989).

The uncivil acts of public shaming have an emancipatory counterpart, however. Capturing the magic of the fashion industry that offers clothing choices that reveal more than they conceal, protestors perform the illusion of nakedness, appearing in public places (e.g., airports, fashion shows, and malls) only visibly wearing a sign with a slogan like "I'd rather go naked than wear fur."⁶ Asked why they do it, the standard reply is the one given by ex-fur model Christy Turlington: "I thought that by showing some of my own skin, I might save some animal's skin" (quoted in "Looking to Actors" 1993). Thus, public nakedness, a state often associated with deprivation or depravity and with shame, is embraced with a spare pride. The human surface is "recovered" as a site of humane gesture apart from the codes of status, reforming in the process what it takes to make a fashion statement.

A second tactic inverting the social meaning of fur involves the presence of celebrities. Participation of respected celebrities is a powerful advocacy tool, especially on issues of fashion, because they are the tastemakers of American society; without royalty of our own, Americans assign mass media celebrities high status positions and then look to them to determine what is fashionable and glamorous (Horn 1975, 228). In this case, the world's arguably most fashion-setting royal, Princess Diana, joins a host of American celebrities in condemning fur consumption

(Reed 1989). Celebrities appearing in anti-fur materials designed to shatter the image of fur as smart and sexy include Candice Bergen, Daryl Hannah, Kim Basinger, Ally Sheedy, Ali MacGraw, Rosanna Arquette, Kirstie Alley, Loretta Swit, Amanda Blake, Belinda Carlisle, River Phoenix, as well as "Golden Girls" Rue McClanahan, Betty White, and Bea Arthur (Hirsch 1988; Bushnell 1989, 77; Beck 1988; Kasindorf 1990, 27, 29). The celebrities' role in anti-fur advocacy is not only to publicize the new negative associations linked to fur, but also to make fur consumption unfashionable by showing fashion-setters rejecting fur publicly. In 1992, PETA's Mathews asserted, "Big corporations pay millions of dollars for name recognition, but we have celebrities who publicize us free. We've made it almost fashionable to stand up for animals now" (quoted in Mullen 1992, E2). Oddly enough, some of the spokespersons most dependent on the seamless reproduction of the code of consumption have found a public voice on the fur issue.

Third, anti-fur efforts to invert the expressive value of fur sometimes take an especially inventive turn in reversing the code through parody, as PETA's 1989 anti-fur advertisement spoofing mink-breeders' Blackglama advertisements illustrates. The original fur commercials show various famous women, known as Blackglama "Legends," swathed in fur coats; the pictures are captioned "What Becomes a Legend Most?" The PETA version portrays a startled, wide-eyed, mink-wrapped Cassandra Peterson, the actress most famous for her "Elvira" character in horror-movie parodies. The headline reads, "What Disgraces a Legend Most?" On her coat are the words "Fur Is Dead." The advertisement ran in issues of *Interview*, *Details*, and *L.A. Weekly* (Foltz 1989; "The Right" 1989; Kasindorf 1990, 29). Such fashion parody opens a route from the rejection of a product to positive affiliation with others who reject the same product. For example, Carol Burnett, once a Blackglama "Legend," says publicly that she has given away her fur coats. Candice Bergen observes the new thinking among celebrities: "Lately, people have acquired an enormous consciousness about [fur]. . . . There are a lot of people who have been approached to do those Blackglama advertisements who would no longer consider doing them" (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 29). After the parody advertisement appeared, even Nancy Reagan, who earlier had agreed to pose for a Blackglama ad, changed her mind without giving a reason (Foltz 1989).

The very malleability of fashion itself offers opportunities for rhetorical invention. Status and shame are reversed both by associating fur with death and by reoccupying the human surface. Equally inventive is the disruption of the code by celebrities who, in dramatizing their new rejection of fur, realize the possibility of a genuine public presence. The result is a disruption of the communication code undergirding the operation of the fashion industry in particular and consumer culture in general, namely that celebrity tastemakers' opinions are always available for purchase in support of products.

Pro-Fur Advocates' Arguments

Although reluctant at first to admit that anti-fur advocacy had an impact on fur sales, pro-fur forces were driven eventually to respond. What had been enthymematic assumptions legitimizing fur as fashion now had to be argued explicitly. Through numerous discursive and nondiscursive arguments (see Mullen 1992), three of which are especially enlightening, pro-fur advocates transform and reiter-

ate conventions supporting human use and enjoyment of animal products, thereby reinforcing the code of fashion and reigning norms of communication.

1. *Commercial Fur Production Is Not Cruel, but Constructive*. In 1989, furriers commissioned a study ultimately showing that people needed reassurance that the fur industry treats animals humanely (Foltz 1989). If pro-fur forces can convince the public that fur production methods are not cruel, they bolster the expressed premise of the "humane use" enthymeme by reaffirming that fur production is as humane as possible and at least as humane as other uses of animals. Further, they attempt to turn the objection to the "acceptable use" argument that equates luxury with waste by showing fur consumption to be beneficial to animal populations and the environment.

First, pro-fur forces explicitly argue that fur production follows state-of-the-art standards. The "Fur Is for Life" campaign and AFI's Blye argue that 70 to 80 percent of all animals used for fur are raised on ranches, like chicken or cattle, and that most die painlessly by gas (Haynes 1987; Hirsch 1988; Reed 1989; Beck 1988). Fur producers have an economic motive to treat ranched fur-bearing animals well, they argue. Marc Rubman, editor of industry publication *Fur Age Weekly*, insists that fur ranchers who expose their animals to stress would be committing economic suicide: "People are presenting lies [about inhumane treatment on fur farms]. . . . Stress shows up in the coats. It creates inferior skins" (quoted in "The Furriers" 1989).

Until they die, the animals are "happy," contends Robert Buckler, executive director of FFAWC, an industry group monitoring ranch conditions. He continues, "The better the care [ranchers] provide, the better the fur product" (quoted in Beck 1988; see also Wilson 1989). Others in the fur industry concur, arguing that in order to provide prime pelts animals must be raised under good conditions—one to a cage, with separate sleeping, eating, and exercising areas (Bushnell 1989, 96). With respect to anti-fur claims regarding the cruelty of confining such animals in cages, Buckler contends:

This is nonsense. Comparing ranched animals to their wild counterparts is like comparing pigs to wild boars—they're that different. These are minks and foxes that have been raised on farms for over a hundred years, since the 1860s. They're bred not only for the quality of their fur, but also for their propensity to thrive in a farm environment. (quoted in Bushnell 1989, 96)

And Buckler counters the contention that the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act does not apply to the fur industry with the claim that fur farmers follow the recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association's panel on euthanasia, which means that minks are killed with carbon monoxide gas and foxes with lethal injections (Bushnell 1989, 96).⁷

Another facet of this strategy aims specifically at meeting consumers' needs for reassurance that the fur industry treats animals humanely. Tom Riley, vice president of FICA, is establishing a Standards Review Board of veterinarians and scientists to assure that animals on fur farms are treated responsibly. He looks forward to a day when coats will be labeled with tags that satisfy customers that the pelts came from farms meeting specific standards or from certified trappers (Kasindorf 1990, 31). And, by 1991, satin labels assuring customers that the fur in a

garment comes from a certified farm were in voluntary use, a move assuaging some customers' concerns about cruelty.

With respect to trapping, pro-fur arguers dismiss concerns about cruelty, maintaining that body-gripping traps are designed to kill instantly by catching an animal's neck, while leg-hold traps usually do not injure the prey. Kathleen Marquardt, founder of Putting People First (PPF), smiles and springs a steel-jaw trap on her hand. Still smiling, she says, "See, I'm not screaming; I'm not yelling. And this is for coyotes. Think about it. They're not small animals" (quoted in McCombs 1992, D1). Gordon Batcheller of the New York State Bureau of Wildlife comments, "The common misconception is that these traps are brutal. I take exception to that. A trained trapper can set a leg-hold trap so in most cases it doesn't injure an animal, and can set a body-gripping trap so it results in a quick kill" (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 32). Advocates also note attempts to develop a "soft catch" trap and publicize the donation of seed money to Furbearers Unlimited by FFAWC to finance the training of trappers ("The Furriers" 1989; Kasindorf 1990, 30-31).

In conjunction with the defense of humane production, the fur industry avers comparative benefits for animal populations and so counters attacks on the "acceptable use" enthymeme with the constructive argument that fur production is justified for the environment. FICA's Riley contends, "We feel that ranch animals are part of the agricultural cycle. We believe [humans have] the right to use animals for these purposes, provided [they are] treating these animals responsibly" (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 32). Marquardt of PPF argues that there is no difference between using animals for fur and getting eggs, milk, meat, or leather from them: "[W]e are human and we are part of the food chain, we're part of nature, we have canine teeth and intestines, we're omnivores. It's reality" (quoted in McCombs 1989, D1; see also Marquardt 1992). Likewise, designer Isaac Mizrahi claims, "Wearing fur is no worse than eating steak or wearing leather shoes" (quoted in Hochswender 1989, B8). If one accepts that fur is produced and harvested humanely, then it should not matter that fur is a luxury item. At the very least, arguers observe, the treatment of and execution methods used to harvest fur-bearing animals are no worse than those experienced by animals killed for "necessities" like meat or leather (Kasindorf 1990, 32). For instance, fur industry analyst Edward B. Kearney is not alone in believing that wearing farm-bred fur is "as innocuous as eating a hamburger at McDonald's" (quoted in Johnson 1985, F8; see also Bushnell 1989, 77; Rietveld 1989). Thus, this second part of the argument reasserts the conventional "acceptable use" enthymeme governing relationships between humans and animals.

The argument then takes a constructive turn, adding the idea that fur production has beneficial consequences for animals and the environment. Pro-fur advocates, such as Fred "the Furrier" Schwartz, and campaigns like "Fur Is for Life" expressly present the fur industry as one "in harmony with nature" and contend that trapping in particular is a "responsible conservation tool" (quoted in Belkin 1985, D5; Haynes 1987). AFI's Blye and FICA, among other pro-fur arguers, maintain that none of the species trapped is endangered and that humane fur farming and harvesting are preferable to the animals dying of overpopulation, disease, or starvation (Bushnell 1989, 77; Wilson 1989; Belkin 1985; see also Kasindorf 1990, 33). Henry Foner, president of the Fur Leather and Machine Workers Union and

chair of AFI's committee on wildlife conservation, comments, "Since these animals must be harvested, the industry is playing a constructive role. The fact that there is an economic incentive just makes it easier for that balance to be achieved" (quoted in Belkin 1985, D5). Doug Judkins of the Bridger Fur Company states, "A trapper is actually a conservationist. Mother Nature is a lot more cruel than a trapper" (quoted in Moore 1991). The general manager of Northwood Fur Farms goes so far as to argue that a drop in trapping causes more animals to be hit by cars, claiming as proof the unspecified numbers of wildlife killed on rural roads (Rietveld 1989).⁸ In states where overpopulation of certain species threatens the ecology of an area, some pro-fur arguers consider trapping integral to wildlife management; says Johnnie Tarver of Louisiana's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries: "If you want to do something for wildlife, buy a fur coat" (quoted in Beck 1988).

Pro-fur forces also claim that the fur industry is a constructive force because it depends on a "renewable resource," while the fake fur industry uses nonrenewable fossil fuels (Rietveld 1989; Wilson 1989). And fake furs made from petrochemicals are not biodegradable, while real fur is biodegradable and "a natural fabric whose production does not pollute the environment or use fossil fuels" ("The Furriers" 1989; Reed 1989). FICA's Riley observes that fur is "an organic product that doesn't deplete the ozone layer like products made from petrochemicals" (Kasindorf 1990, 33). In sum, the industry response is to reassert that fur use is justified because its means of production are acceptable. This conclusion is reached both by bolstering state-of-the-art methods and by erasing distinctions drawn between animal life in the wild and on the ranch. Cost benefit analysis is forwarded to establish the salutary effect on overall animal populations and to escape the entanglements of cruelty.

2. *Consumption Is a Private Matter that Anti-Fur Forces Wrongly Make Public.* Pro-fur advocates' second strategy responds primarily to oppositional attempts to alter the expressive meaning of fur. Instead of tackling head-on the difficult task of attempting to make associations with fur exclusively positive again, pro-fur forces center the debate as a rights issue by arguing that the choice to buy and wear fur is no one's business except the consumer's. In the process, pro-fur arguers activate another social convention through their own enthymeme characterizing consumption as a private matter. To deploy the enthymeme, pro-fur exponents articulate the argument that consumption choices of fur are a matter of taste and expect audiences to supply the idea that the public discussion of such choices is inappropriate. Consequently, pro-fur advocates hope to delegitimize and foment resistance to anti-fur protests by convicting them of violating the boundary dividing the public from the private. This argument should be especially persuasive if auditors already are convinced that fur consumption has positive consequences (e.g., conservation, environmental benefits) or at least consequences no worse than those of other animal uses.

In developing the argument, pro-fur advocates begin by positioning fur consumption as a matter of politically-secured private choice. They claim the existence of each American's "freedom" to choose/consume/dress in fur and maintain that no one is justified in trammeling someone else's "freedom to buy and wear fur" ("The Right" 1989; Foltz 1989; Lawson 1989; Darnton 1992). Some pro-fur proponents demand recognition of a civil or "constitutional freedom of Americans to choose"

("The Right" 1989). AFI's Blye contends:

It's not just a simple question of whether or not to wear fur. What it comes down to is a question of constitutional rights. Animal-rights activists are a small minority. If they don't want to wear fur, fine, that's their business. But what right do they have to harass people on the street for thinking differently? What right do they have to tell other people what to do? (quoted in Bushnell 1989, 77)

Elsewhere, she comments, "The issue here isn't whether people should wear fur, but whether anyone has the right to intimidate the public" (quoted in Foltz 1989). Arguers next suggest that this right is violated when others challenge consumption choices. Fur farm manager A.A. Rietveld (1989) claims, "Most of all the fur industry supports the right of a person to choose his or her own life style, and not impose his views on the rest of society." *Fur World's* Groger states, "Nobody can tell the American woman what to wear," and "women in this country don't like to be told what not to wear" (quoted in Reed 1989 and Beck 1988). Seattle furrier Nicolas Benson takes an even stronger stand on anti-fur efforts to reduce consumers' choices, saying: "You're seeing signs of terrorism. People are afraid to wear furs on the streets because of what might happen" (quoted in Reed 1989). Most ingenious of all is a full-page colored Saga Fox advertisement appearing in national magazines that shows a beautiful blonde woman clad in a blonde fur coat with a little girl dressed in white on her back. The caption reads, "Some people are opposed to a very basic luxury: Your freedom of choice." The advertisement not only advances the "privacy" argument, but also redefines the conventional meaning of "luxury" by collapsing rights (i.e., one's basic due) and luxuries (i.e., pleasant but inessential superfluities). The new association subordinates the anti-fur "cruelty/luxury" argument, which is difficult to overcome completely on traditional grounds, to the more winnable "privacy" argument.

In relegitimizing the consumption of fur, the pro-fur "privacy" argument gains impact from its "slippery slope" dimension. At this point pro-fur characterizations of anti-fur arguers as either "hypocrites" or "fanatics" comes into play. Pro-fur forces portray anti-fur moderates who reject the use of fur but accept animal use for meat, leather, or research as "hypocrites" with no right to criticize fur consumers (see Kasindorf 1990, 32). Conversely, anti-fur radicals who reject any use of animals are depicted as wild-eyed "fanatics" using fur consumption as a wedge issue (see Rosenberg 1992; Kasindorf 1990, 28). Once these radicals succeed at constricting people's right to consume fur, pro-fur advocates charge, they will chip away at humans' rights to use animals for meat, leather, eggs, wool, medical research, etc. (see Reed 1989; "The Right" 1989; Kasindorf 1990, 28, 30). In PPF's Marquardt's (1992) words, "They want no milk for babies, no seeing-eye dogs, no insulin for diabetics."

In this light, pro-fur comments on the "deceptiveness" of anti-fur arguments assume new meaning. AFI's Blye says, "We want to tell consumers what these groups are really after"; according to Blye, their ultimate goal is to limit consumer choices ranging far beyond the freedom to wear fur (quoted in Foltz 1989). A classic example of this argument is found in a FICA advertisement beginning: "Today fur. Tomorrow leather. Then wool. Then meat. . . ." The copy describes how animal rights activists eventually will eliminate medical research, circuses, and zoos—if they are allowed to pry open the issue of using animals by prevailing on the wedge issue

of fur consumption. A second FICA advertisement with the same theme is headlined: "The people who say today is Fur Free Friday said yesterday was Turkey Free Thursday." The copy predicts, "If we let them continue with this insanity, *every week* will feature Meat Free Monday, Trout Free Tuesday, Wool Free Wednesday, and on and on." A final arresting ad capitalizing on fear of the slippery slope shows a striking brunette woman in a striking brunette fur coat who is sitting at a table and holding a wine glass. The caption says, "Aren't you tired of animal activists telling you what you can't wear and eat?" The advertisement extends the impact of the "privacy" argument far beyond the fur issue and blocks efforts to trivialize the stakes of this particular controversy. By reasserting a traditional convention that positions consumption as a protected private matter and then predicting the slippery slope quality of the threat anti-fur forces pose, pro-fur advocates magnify the importance of successfully defending the right to consume fur.

3. *Using Fashion to Outflank Confrontational Anti-Fur Advocates.* A third pro-fur tactic occurs nondiscursively on the fashion front and focuses on obviating the opportunity for anti-fur advocates to confront fur consumers. Initially, pro-fur forces sought celebrities to reassert the traditionally positive social messages of fur. However, it was difficult to recruit credible celebrities willing to go public in support of fur. FICA's Riley claims that a celebrity who becomes a pro-fur spokesperson risks receiving 6,000 to 10,000 disapproving letters. Not surprisingly, then, pro-fur forces found few celebrities willing to defend their position publicly. Former Olympic skier Suzy Chaffee, who helped design a collection of "sports furs," was foremost. An extended quotation from Chaffee demonstrates why she is unlikely to help pro-fur forces reestablish the positive expressive value of fur:

A lot of people don't want me to talk to the press 'cause they say they'll make a clown out of you. But my credibility is very important to me, and I feel I am really being responsible to the animals and to nature and to the environment, because trapping them is better than letting them die the disease-and-starvation route. I mean, it's like tough love. It would be sweet if you didn't have to kill anything, but they have to survive, we have to survive, and I think that's the price of it. I wish the animal-rights extremists would give their fur coats to the homeless. The fur industry does it every year at Grand Central station, and it's one of the most inspiring things I've ever done. First, they thought we were nuts. Then the light started coming back into their eyes. There's nothing like curling up in a fur coat in a corner of Grand Central station and fighting the cold. (quoted in Kasindorf 1990, 29)

Obviously, pro-fur advocates needed an alternate route to revive fur's faltering fashion image.

Having failed to locate celebrities who persuasively could reassert positive associations for fur, pro-fur forces seek to outflank the anti-fur advocates through fashion design. Two examples illustrate this tactic. First, designers began to create real fur garments that look like fake fur. Technology has improved to the point where it is possible for fake furs to look authentic, but they often are made purposely to look artificial, partly because of the anti-fur forces' success (Morris 1992b; see also "Why Not Slip" 1989). In fact, some consumers who buy realistic-looking fake furs further protect themselves from a mistaken confrontation with anti-fur advocates by wearing large buttons that proclaim "No Fur" or "Real People Wear Fake Fur" (Reed 1989). Because some customers fear that wearing fur will make them a target of anti-fur protest, various designers who work with real fur now use color and

shearing to make their real fur garments look fake (Campbell 1991; see also Morris 1990; Kay 1991; Milburn 1991). For example, sheared mink that is dyed colors like purple, blue, pink, turquoise, mauve, or green looks as if it is made of a deep-pile plush fabric. One fashion reporter, describing the offerings at what she called "one of the liveliest fur presentations in years," writes:

The short, swingy, bright plaid fur coats that looked like velvet brought the first applause when Oscar de la Renta showed his ready-to-wear in Paris two months ago. They were joined by other dazzling concoctions in the same sheared mink, which looks and feels like velour In the afternoon Christie Brothers, long known for traditional mink coats, changed its image with cheerful coats in colors like deep purple or bright green mink and a variety of sheared furs (Morris 1991; see also "Why Not Slip" 1989)

Commenting on such garments, Kenneth Wagner of Wagner Furs says, "The Europeans couldn't believe they were fur" (quoted in Morris 1992a). And some consumers bought them with an eye toward avoiding participation in the controversy; one ad copywriter with a sheared beaver coat that she wears to work comments, "I hope the anti-fur people will think it's fake" (quoted in Lawson 1989).

Second, designers now produce garments with the fur discretely hidden on the inside, fur-lined garments with removable linings, and garments that are reversible to conceal the fur whenever the wearer chooses (Morris 1991; 1992a). Bill Blass, who no longer designs fur coats for "personal reasons," notes the history behind such a fashion move: "In postwar Paris, when all the black marketers' wives wore fur, Christian Dior did fur-lined raincoats so rich women could look like they were wearing an ordinary mac. The right women always distinguish themselves" (quoted in Hochswender 1989, B8). Thus, in the past when the expressive message of fur turned sour, consumers still wore fur but concealed it to avoid conveying an image they did not wish to communicate. For instance, the same customer quoted above also owns a mink-lined raincoat; she states, "It is reversible, so I can wear it as a mink, but I can also hide the fur whenever I feel like it" (Lawson 1989). By 1992 most houses showed reversible styles with fur on one side and cashmere, wool, satin, silk, poplin, denim, or even synthetic material on the other (Morris 1991; 1992b). So, both by disguising fur and by covering it up, pro-fur forces nondiscursively decrease potential sites where controversy can flourish.

THE SHAPES OF THINGS TO COME

Analysis of the American fur controversy illustrates several broader implications of oppositional argument's power to set in motion social controversy. By challenging common assumptions licensing the habitual use of fur, anti-fur advocates move consumer choice from the private to the public realm. Using untraditional and sometimes even "counter-traditional" means of influence, they block enthymemes favorable to pro-fur interests and advance objections with hard-hitting pictures and their own bodies as well as words. The industry responds aggressively, trying to counter oppositional argument with arguments of its own.

Fashion is often controversial, but controversy typically serves the interests of the industry as a whole. "Risqué" and "conservative" styles of dress help separate social identities (see Davis 1992; Donovan 1983), letting some members of the industry front their goods as "the latest" while others claim to attest to "quality" and "good taste." Such controversies come and go with the seasons. Their rhythms depoliticize

fashion; questions of public display are encompassed as varied manifestations of individual taste, generational differences, or class identification. Indeed, these splits among social identities of consumers frequently are accentuated, even flaunted, by varying products to increase sales. Once the fur industry's dream of turning fur into a bourgeois symbol of luxury was disturbed by controversy, the industry followed the traditional institutional pattern of fashion argument by making the most of notoriety, taking the opportunity to reassert traditional consumption habits as signs of social standing and to offer something new. Both strategies encountered trouble.

Whatever merits may be found in the pro-fur arguments, the industry could not reestablish the fur garment's standing as an uncontested item of glamour, prestige, and desire. Apparently the reassociation of fur with living creatures was disturbing enough to disrupt the usual relation between celebrity tastemakers and the commodification of opinion-making. Unable to appear uncontestedly fashionable, the industry entrenched its defense of fur garments in the realm of political rights, an appeal that may succeed somewhat by emphasizing fur as an emblem of class cleavage, but that is unlikely to be of great interest to bourgeois dressers who are not engaged in a day-to-day fight for fashion freedom. But there was more to the strategy.

Designers also tried to flee the political realm by seeking to disguise, hide, or alter the appearance of their product. Turning fur fashion inward, however, evokes a war-time culture of sacrifice, drabness, anxiety, and guilt and suggests that the industry has been cornered into denying its own essence, open luxurious surface display. Innovations in open public display required faking the real by disguising the surface as "another" fabric. When the dreams of self-presentation turn on appreciating the difference between a "fake" fur and a "fake-looking" real fur, mass appeal plummets. Because fashion itself requires a surface to be seen as fashionable, the strategies of disguise merely undercut the power of the institution to sustain its codes associating fur with desire. Fashion driven to the political realm loses its surface buoyancy as mere appearance. Fashion driven to disguise as the ordinary ceases to appear fashionable.

The fur controversy is by no means over. At the moment fur sales are up from 1991's \$1 billion to \$1.1 billion in 1992, the last season for which figures are available (Leach 1993; Reilly 1993, B1), and the industry readies to recover its consumer code. A new 1993 fall campaign features fur-clad models on a beach (Janofsky 1993). The copy reads, "The way it reveals, the way it empowers, the way it embraces. Fur: more than any other fabric" (Reilly 1993, B8). The ad seductively captures the language of affiliation ("reveal," "empower," "embrace") and renders human sentiments slogans through perfervid repetition of "the way." Notice, though, how the controversy has left its mark; "fur" is hidden within the dense, omnipresent category of "fabric." Despite renewed assertions by the Fur Council that "animal activists are not a significant factor" (Reilly 1993, B8) in fur sales, the recent shift back from "mass to class" advertising suggests the opposite. If the anti-fur forces have not succeeded entirely, they at least have blunted the industry's Henry Ford-like ambitions.

While a live social controversy cannot be summed, the trajectory of its arguments does invite reflection. For pro-fur forces, the proud assertions of consumer rights remain inherently conflicted by the scattered efforts to disguise their once unquestioned symbols of prestige. Whether such a contradiction can be brought to crisis

remains uncertain as the anti-fur forces flirt with strategies of coercion, including the threat of bombings, that may catalyze among consumers something similar to the war-time culture and hardened class cleavages upon which the industry rests its hopes (Krause 1993; Mulvey 1993; "9th Fire-Starting" 1993; Roberts 1993a, 1993b). So, as all advocates struggle both to block and to coopt one another's arguments, the irresolutions brought about by oppositional argument resist any neat reformulation of the means of persuasion and an untroubled consensus.

Analysis of oppositional arguments over fur demonstrates how social controversy disrupts the assumptions that keep capitalistic society operating in its usual patterns, assumptions reaching beyond the particular issue or even ecological discourse in general. Capitalism has powerful codes and means of reproduction. However, its very ubiquity creates and connects multiple sites for controversy. Because expressions of capitalism are metonymically connected, struggle at one site speaks to others. While it may be true that each public use of a product turns persons into walking commercial displays for one enterprise or another, social controversy turns each act of display into a potential place for discussion. In the process of defending capitalism's codes at an initial site of struggle, fur producers lost control of the shallowest, and presumably most manageable, manifestation of capitalism: fashion as surface display. Critical examination of this breach of control alerts us to the fact that, even though the codes of mass society may have powerful institutional backing, the organs of capitalistic production and the unreflective habits of consumer culture also provide places and conduits for the meaningful expansion of controversy. Rhetorical inquiry into controversies over consumption will assume increasing importance as consumerism steadily replaces work or production as "the cognitive and moral focus of life, the integrative bond of society, and the focus of systemic management" (Bauman quoted in Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 223; Bauman 1992, 49). To the extent seduction eclipses repression as a primary means of influence and advocates struggle to construct differing political identities for consumers to inhabit, the accompanying, ingenious uses of oppositional argument will require critical attention.

Critical inquiry into the controversy over fur and fashion supplies a reminder that the rise of mass society need not eclipse permanently the public sphere and that the rise of a public itself is not without troubling, as well as hopeful, prospects for human communication. If one were to judge from the fur controversy, a contemporary public that is brought into being by oppositional argument contests the privatization of common interests, challenges social conventions for justification, and works to expand a sense of shared interests to all affected by common action—the traditional work of the public sphere. These contests over public/private boundaries bespeak an inventiveness able to capitalize on ubiquitous and congealed social codes, thereby opening and sustaining civic discussion bridging personal and public discourse. Alternately, such oppositional argument seems to promise thus far only a limited discussion: one focused on a single issue or identity to the exclusion of others, one that asks for civility for the oppressed while not extending such respect across a community of interlocutors, and one that functions in a narrow time span driven by the tempo of argumentative performances and the changing seasons. Of course, such generalizations must be reserved in anticipation of additional inquiries into social controversy and the further developments of a contemporary public sphere.

Near the end of his *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, Apel (1980 [1972, 1973]) poses a paradox for modern public living: "a universal, i.e., intersubjectively valid ethics of collective responsibility . . . seems both necessary and impossible" (229). Such an ethic appears necessary because of the great and dangerous potentials humankind have amassed in the transformation of the natural world. Such an ethic appears impossible because the norms of science and technology themselves outstrip social mores that have developed in local and culturally specific ways. Apel rests his hopes for a solution to this dilemma on the performance of argumentation in communication communities, assemblies committed to acknowledging the force of the better argument. Analysis of social controversy suggests that the public argumentation of a diverse society may proceed, albeit in unexpected ways, along the lines Apel anticipated.⁹ In performing objections and blocking enthymemes deployed by others who perform traditional social conventions, anti-fur advocates justify a cause for themselves and engage discussion over expanded moral and civic claims. If the arguments do not meet the formal standards required by Apel or the classical public sphere, they nonetheless prompt lively experiments with human communication. It is these rich moments of rhetorical invention to which critics should attend, for, even as the potential of genuine deliberation may emerge through social controversy, such arguments render more complex and difficult the tasks of understanding and appraising a contemporary public sphere.

NOTES

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¹"Animal" is used in this essay to denote non-human animals.

²These issues accumulate to create a fluid, constantly reworked interplay of personal and public discussions. In our opinion, it is not the critic's role to gainsay the location of private/public dividing lines at particular moments, but instead to analyze discussions seeking to bind such spaces and to probe what they reveal about communication and controversy by attending to the advocates' symbolic actions themselves.

³Social controversies are not impenetrable discourse formations; understandably, advocates involved in various controversies borrow strategies, premises, and stylistic moves back and forth from each other. For example, Zarefsky (1991) demonstrates how the abortion controversy echoes aspects of the slavery controversy, and some anti-fur advocates not only appropriate material from the slavery and Civil Rights controversies (Rosenberg 1992; Malveaux 1991), but also present animal rights as the logical extension of movements designed to overturn sexism, racism, and discrimination based on sexual orientation (Rosenberg 1992; Carroll 1990; "Animal Welfare" 1992). While such borrowing makes it possible to use insights gained by studying one social controversy to inform analyses of other controversies, as well as to investigate the same controversy from a variety of useful perspectives (e.g., undertaking a feminist analysis of the fur controversy), our critical approach here is to allow a controversy some integrity in order to examine it on its own terms to learn what it reveals about communication norms and social conventions.

⁴Men, too, began to purchase fur garments for themselves. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, sales of men's furs grew from next-to-nothing to represent 10 percent of fur consumption (Johnson 1985, F9).

⁵Singer, who has been called the Karl Marx and the Adam Smith of animal liberation, is an Oxford-educated Australian professor of philosophy (Carroll 1990). His 1975 book *Animal Liberation* touched off the expansion of the animal rights movement and gave the movement its language (Rosenberg 1992).

⁶It has been noted that industries sometimes coopt social movements (Goldman, Heath, and Smith 1991). In this case, the reverse occurs as social protest coopts industry strategies for promoting desire. Variations on performed nakedness include appearing publicly in skin-colored underwear or jock straps and shouting anti-fur slogans (Campbell 1991; "Champions" 1989).

⁷Bushnell (1989) notes that, while the American Veterinary Medical Association admits that these are acceptable methods for killing small animals, such as dogs and cats, it has not taken a position on killing animals for fur (96).

⁸Merritt Clifton (1989), news editor of *The Animals' Agenda*, takes issue with Rietveld's claim: "It is absurd to claim . . . that 'the car has taken the trapper's place'. Road kills of all types of animals exceed 350 million a year, and were as common in 1978-82, when the trapping kill reached a high of about 25 million animals a year. Further, the overwhelming majority of road kills occur in urban areas, not woods and swamps, and cats are the most common mammalian victims."

⁹Recent analyses of contemporary social controversy include Mechling and Mechling (1991), Lange (1993), Moore (1993), and Hyde (1993).

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