

A Menagerie of Misogyny: Cats, Dogs & Gender-Based Stereotypes

Are cats feminine, and are dogs masculine? Such a notion is obviously absurd. Like all mammalian species, both cats and dogs produce an equal number of female and male offspring. Nonetheless, could it be possible that cats are *perceived* as feminine, and dogs as masculine? As I will detail in this paper, existing research suggests that this is a very real possibility. A survey of cat and dog depictions in popular media, including media both created for advertisement and entertainment, only reinforces this hypothesis. Our society not only views cats as companion animals for women and dogs as companion animals for men, but cats *themselves* as more likely to be female or feminine, and likewise dogs as more likely to be male or masculine. Absurd or not, the categorization alluded to in the first sentence of this paper is one of widespread adoption.

According to a popular idiom, women are from Venus and men are from Mars. Considering the lightyears of difference posited by such a planetary metaphor, it might seem almost mundane to suggest that women and men, or female and male attributes, are stereotypically associated with cats and dogs respectively. However, while tongue-in-cheek theories that gender the planets have little effect on the way we live our lives, uncritically accepted myths that gender household pets affect the way we view these animals: creatures over whom we have dominion, and whose lives we control. As I will attempt to demonstrate in this paper, there are legal and cultural ramifications to our societal gendering of companion animals. This may not come as a surprise. It is well-established that there are differences in the way society sees and treats women and men; when we gender companion animals, there will naturally be differences in the way society sees and treats cats and dogs.

I will first outline some of the history of gendering cats and dogs in popular culture, as well as assess the prevalence of such gendering in modern media, and report some findings from scientific studies on the perceptions of cat and dog owners. Second, I will detail some of the differences, in addition to some of the similarities, in the ways in which our society treats cats and dogs, both legally and culturally. Finally, I will attempt to advance the theory that these phenomena are not unrelated, but that our society treats cats as lesser than dogs because they are stereotyped as both sharing characteristics with, and being suitable for, humans who do not have the privilege of being straight men, specifically women and gay men.

A Faulty Portrayal of Cats' and Dogs' Genders, Historical and Modern

The illogical position that cats are women and dogs are men is not a new assumption. As early as the 1800s, popular works of art were assigning such labels to the world's two most commonly owned pets.¹ "[D]ogs are masculine and cats are feminine,"² writes Alice Murray Dew-Smith in a nineteenth century collection of short stories. Academic literature of the time notes this:

Confusion of gender arises constantly with regard to the dog and cat; these animals are so intimately connected with their human friends that they are seldom spoken of as neuter; the baby may be *it*, but the dog is *he*, and the cat is *she*.³

Furthermore, politically, cats were used to symbolize the women's suffrage movement, both anthropomorphically and abstractly. Not only were suffragettes commonly depicted as cats, but

¹ More fish are kept as pets, but more households own cats or dogs than fish. This is due to the fact that fish owners often own several fish. See Andrea Thompson, "What's the Most Popular Pet" (January 15, 2013), online: Live Science <<https://www.livescience.com/32415-whats-the-most-popular-pet.html>>.

² Robert W. Mitchell & Alan L. Ellis, "Cat Person, Dog Person, Gay, or Heterosexual: The Effects of Labels on a Man's Perceived Masculinity, Femininity, and Likeability" (2013) 21:1 Soc & Animals 1 at 2 (quoting Alice Murray Dew-Smith, *Tom Tug and Others* (London: Seeley & Co., 1898) at 43).

³ Mitchell (2013) at 2 (quoting FB Harrison, "Gender and sex" (1891) 13:4 The J of Educ 202 at 203).

the languorous cat relaxing as the husband made home came to represent the fear-mongering notion of the household turned upside-down by feminism.⁴

The same nonsense holds true in 2020. Food and toys for cats and dogs are often promoted as feminine and masculine respectively, even to the point of cat products being packaged in pink and dog products in blue.⁵ Not only that, but women are more likely to be depicted as the owners of cats, and men as the owners of dogs.⁶ And it should be noted that this depiction persists in spite of growing evidence that the *opposite* may be true, at least in some parts of the world.⁷ The same stereotypical pairings are rendered in media, including children's books.⁸ And in the eyes of society, cats and women share certain attributes (like grace and sneakiness) and dogs and men share attributes too (like aggressiveness and protectiveness).⁹ In summation, according to both market and media stereotypes, cats are feminine companions, ideally for women, and dogs are male companions, ideally for men.

There are counterarguments to this hypothesis. Like many gender-based assumptions, there are beliefs about gender that conflict the dominant stereotypes as well. The universal gendering of cats and dogs does not necessarily hold up even under the scrutiny of the very stereotypes of these animals. While cats are more likely to be considered female, they are also often considered self-sufficient and able to survive ferally, attributes whose stereotypically

⁴ "Cat Imagery in the Suffrage Movement" (May 7, 2013), online: Human-Animals Studies Images <<http://hasimages.blogspot.com/2013/05/cat-imagery-in-suffragette-movement.html>>.

⁵ See, e.g., Corey Lee Wrenn, "Pointlessly Gendering Cats and Dogs" (July 8, 2017), online: Vegan Feminist Network <<http://veganfeministnetwork.com/pointlessly-gendering-cats-and-dogs/>>. See also, e.g., Lisa Wade, "Cats Are For Girls, Dogs Are For Boys" (April 25, 2011), online: Jezebel <<https://jezebel.com/cats-are-for-girls-dogs-are-for-boys-5794888>>.

⁶ Kim Sheehan, *Controversies in Contemporary Advertising* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2004) at 92.

⁷ Stian Alexander, "Cats are really man's best friend: Men today prefer felines while women would sooner own a dog" (April 16, 2014), online: Daily Mail <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2606478/Cats-really-mans-best-friend-Men-today-prefer-felines-women-sooner-dog.html>>.

⁸ Julie A. Nelson, *Feminism, objectivity and economics* (New York: Routledge, 1995) at 5.

⁹ Mitchell (2013) at 2.

masculine associations harken back to our species' days as hunters and gatherers.¹⁰ Similarly, though typically symbolized as male, dogs are renowned and appreciated for their happy and loyal subservience to their human masters,¹¹ a notion akin to a view that has infected our society for centuries: one of women as chattel to be married off. At the same time, subcategories of cats and dogs are used to invert the standard pairing. Some cats are seen as "toms", and some dogs as "bitches".¹² It should be noted, though, that the inversion is predicated on the promotion of traits not normally associated with the respective animals; bitchy dogs are uncharacteristically uncooperative, and tomcats are uniquely strong, aggressive and in possession of a fighting spirit.¹³ Regardless, unlike the blanketing of cats as pink and dogs as blue, these stereotypes refer specifically to subsets of cats and dogs, and not the animals as a class themselves.

A Corresponding Misapprehension of Reality

There is data suggesting that the portrayal of cats and dogs as feminine and masculine respectively is not confined to advertising and other media, but also prevalent in the popular beliefs of society at large. A 1996 American study confirms that people tend to assign feminine qualities to those who like cats and masculine qualities to those who like dogs.¹⁴ Even male cat owners are prone to view other cat owners as more feminine than they view dog owners, despite the fact that they do not view *themselves* as possessing more femininity than they do typical dog owners.¹⁵ If we are to place any stock in such self-reporting, it becomes immediately evident that the assumption that cat owners are more feminine than dog owners is simply incorrect. Nevertheless, people continue to believe the falsity.

¹⁰ Wade (2011).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Mitchell (2013) at 3.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Claire R. Budge et al, "The influence of companion animals on owner perception: Gender and species effects" (1996) 9:1 *Anthrozoos* 10 at 24.

¹⁵ Rose M. Perrine & Hannah L. Osbourne, "Personality characteristics of dog and cat persons" (1998) 11:1 *Anthrozoos* 33 at 40.

The inherent adherence to traditional gender roles that gives body to the stereotypes of cats and dogs as feminine and masculine respectively also combines with societal assumptions about homosexuality and gender to create a heteronormative understanding of men who love cats. Not only are they seen as more feminine than their dog-owning counterparts, but they are more likely to be seen as gay. A 2013 American study shows that there are correlations between the views of men as cat people, feminine and gay, and corresponding correlations between the views of men as dog people, masculine and straight.¹⁶ Notably, there was no correlation between likability and animal preference, gender qualities or sexuality, suggesting that the stereotypes are not the result of overt homophobia or a dislike of feminine men, but in fact a non-negative assessment of cats and gay men as more feminine and less masculine than dogs and straight man respectively.¹⁷

Similarities Between Cats and Dogs in Society and Law

To be sure, though, stereotypes not grounded in any antipathy can still be dangerous. The divergent ways in which our culture views cats and dogs is not just intellectually problematic, but dangerous for cats, and in some ways, even dangerous for dogs. Before explaining the differences in the way society treats cats and dogs, however, it bears mentioning that, all animals considered, cats and dogs are actually treated similarly. Not only are they the two most common pets, but they are overwhelmingly the two most housed and adopted animals by pet shelters.¹⁸ They are so inextricably linked that they appear together commercially,¹⁹ academically,²⁰ and even idiomatically ("raining cats and dogs" and "fighting like cats and dogs",

¹⁶ Mitchell (2013) at 11.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 12.

¹⁸ "Pet Statistics | Shelter intake and surrender", online: American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals <<https://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>>.

¹⁹ See, *infra*, the discussion on the marketing of cat and dog products.

²⁰ See, *infra*, the discussion on studies of cat owners and dog owners and the perceptions thereof.

to name a couple common phrases). Clearly, cats and dogs are the two quintessential pets in our world.

In the United States, the slaughtering of cats and dogs for food is prohibited, and the bans were enacted as part of the same legislation.²¹ In France, also as a piece of joint legislation, cats and dogs were declared to have rights that make them not exactly human property, as they had been previously.²² In Canada, an attempt was made to enact legislation that would have, again collectively, banned the import of cat and dog fur.²³ Thus, it appears that in our country and other similar nations, both culturally and legally, cats and dogs are considered to be the same type of animal.

Differences Between Cats and Dogs in Society and Law

That being said, this close link between cats and dogs only makes society's contrasting treatment of the two animals all the more stark. Among animals housed by the Humane Society, a Canadian organization devoted to the rescue and adoption of household animals, a greater percentage of the cats than the dogs housed by the society are adopted.²⁴ Despite this, cats are more likely to be euthanized by the organization, with 15% of cats taken in ultimately being put down and only 11% of dogs reaching the same fate.²⁵ It is true that, for both species, the majority of animals euthanized were done so because they were unsustainably unhealthy or

²¹ Erin Kelly, "Eating dogs and cats is banned in U.S. in House-passed bill" (September 13, 2018), online: USA Today <<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/09/13/eating-dogs-and-cats-banned-house-passed-bill/1288897002/>>.

²² David Chazan, "Pets no longer just part of furniture in France" (April 16, 2014), online: The Telegraph <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/10771361/Pets-no-longer-just-part-of-furniture-in-France.html>>.

²³ Peter Zimonjic, "Bill to end import and sale of cat and dog fur in Canada to be debated in House" (May 9, 2016), online: CBC <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/cat-dog-fur-bill-1.3571581>>.

²⁴ "2018 Canadian Animal Shelter Statistics Report" (November 28, 2019), online: Humane Canada <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cfhs/pages/427/attachments/original/1576179265/Shelter_Statistics_2018_HR.pdf?1576179265>.

²⁵ *Id.* at 6.

otherwise unsuitable for adoption.²⁶ However, when adjusting for these numbers, as well as for the fact that there were relatively fewer cats than dogs that could potentially be put down in the first place (due to the fact that cats are more likely to be adopted), the difference only becomes more alarming. While only about 4% of unadopted but adoptable dogs were put down, approximately 18% of cats in the same situation were euthanized.²⁷

In the scientific community, dogs are studied far more than cats. Dogs are written about in biomedical journals with a frequency more than twice as great as that of cats.²⁸ Cancer in dogs has been studied extensively and, indeed, cancer genes shared by dogs and human beings have been identified.²⁹ However, even a scientist who studies the dog genome, Dr. Elinor Karlsson, notes that "many of the cancers in cats may actually be better models for human cancer, but there has been almost no research into them."³⁰ Dr. Karlsson is of the belief that this could be because cats are "taken less seriously than dogs".³¹ Behaviourally, cats are studied less as well, with Dr. Karlsson explaining that "people tend to laugh at the idea of studying behavioral genetics in cats."³² This is the case despite the fact that it is our feline friends, not their canine counterparts, who have shown that they can for example be the successful recipients of potty training.³³

Legally, there are far more regulations governing the way human beings interact with dogs than there are rules about how our species deals with cats. A Westlaw search for

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *See id.* 53% of dogs taken in went unadopted and 2% of dogs taken in were euthanized despite being healthy (2% ÷ 53% = 4%). 38% of cats taken in went unadopted and 7% of cats taken in were euthanized despite being healthy (7% ÷ 38% = 18%).

²⁸ James Gorman, "Why Scientists Love to Study Dogs (and Often Ignore Cats)" (February 26, 2018), online: The New York Times <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/science/dog-science-cats.html>>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ Mikkel Becker, "Should You Train Your Cat to Use the Toilet?" (June 11, 2013), online: Vet Street <<http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/should-you-train-your-cat-to-use-the-toilet>>.

Canadian statutes and regulations containing "dog" returns 1290 hits; the same search parameters but for "cat" returns a mere 269 hits. In the United States, although every state has some sort of dog code, only three states (California, Maine and Rhode Island) have the equivalent regulations for cats.³⁴ Even in instances in which there exists legislation regarding both cats and dogs, there can be differences in the ways in which cats and dogs are presented or thought of. For example, nothing in Manitoba's *Animal Care Act* distinguishes between cats and dogs,³⁵ but the fact remains that the impetus for the legislation was public outrage at puppy mills, not kitty factories.³⁶ In an animal cruelty case in which the defendant was accused of torturing both his cat and his dog, the many abuses suffered by the dog are listed, but there is no equivalent tally for the cat.³⁷

Cats and dogs are treated differently in the courtroom in other ways, as well. Despite the fact that scientific literature indicates that both cats and dogs can provide emotional support to human beings in the face of stressful situations,³⁸ it is only dogs that have been allowed to accompany witnesses as support animals in a Canadian court.³⁹ The custody rights of both dogs and cats are, presumably, contested in divorce proceedings, yet while there are an abundance of published opinions on custody and access to jointly owned dogs, there are none that discuss cats.⁴⁰

³⁴ Rebecca F. Wisch, "Detailed Discussion of State Cat Laws" (2005), online: Animal Legal & Historical Center, Michigan State University College of Law <<https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-state-cat-laws>>.

³⁵ *The Animal Care Act*, SM 1996, c 69.

³⁶ Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings (Hansard)*, 36-2, No 56 (30 September 1996) at 3864 (Rosann Wowchuk).

³⁷ *Between Her Majesty the Queen, and Steven Helferl*, [2014] O.J. No. 2984; see also *Sentence: Animal Cruelty*, Mack Crim LB 2017-20.

³⁸ Karen Allen, Jim Blascovich & Wendy Mendes, "Cardiovascular reactivity and the presence of pets, friends and spouses: The truth about cats and dogs" (2002) 64:1 *Psychosomatic Med* 727 at 739.

³⁹ Helena Gluzman, "Four legs provide greater support: The use of support dogs in Canada and the US" (2017) 38 *Crim R* (7th) 305.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., *Kitchen v MacDonald*, 2012 BCPC 9; *Warnica v Gering*, [2004] O.J. No. 5396; *Henderson v Henderson*, 2016 SKQB 282; *Ireland v Ireland*, 2010 SKQB 454.

The *Criminal Code* of Canada details limits on human behaviour towards animals and punishments thereof. Oddly, not unlike its moderately conceivable distinction between animals and birds, in certain sections, the prohibitions distinguish between animals and *dogs*:

Every one commits an offence who, wilfully and without lawful excuse,
(a) kills, maims, wounds, poisons or injures dogs, birds or animals that are not cattle and are kept for a lawful purpose; or
(b) places poison in such a position that it may easily be consumed by dogs, birds or animals that are not cattle and are kept for a lawful purpose.⁴¹

While dogs are mentioned specifically, in no place are cats recipients of the same treatment.

Of course, not every imbalance in society's treatment of cats and dogs works in the favour of canines. There is no such thing as a prohibition on keeping a specific cat breed as a pet, but many jurisdictions around the world, including certain provinces and municipalities in Canada, have enacted bans on owning pit bulls.⁴² Furthermore, it is probably fair to presume that no cat has ever been put down for being too dangerous, although this happens to dogs frequently.

My Theory: Disparate Treatments of Cats and Dogs Are an Effect of Society's Gendering of the Animals

It is demonstrable that cats and dogs have historically been, and currently are, gendered as feminine and masculine respectively. Additionally, a careful study of the way our society and our courts and legislatures look at cats and dogs indicates that the two species are treated dissimilarly by human beings. While these two facts are not linked merely by virtue of their dual

⁴¹ *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 445(1).

⁴² See, e.g., *Dog Owners' Liability Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. D.16.

existence, I do believe there is a relationship between our gendering of pets and our differing treatments of the different species of companion animals. Before advancing that argument, though, I will explore some of the reasons why that might *not* be the case.

Potential Counter-Arguments to My Theory

While there are significantly more regulations concerning dogs than cats, there could be logical reasons for this disparity. Cats, by their nature, are not controllable creatures; we do not leash cats. There are limits to where a person can or cannot bring their dog, rules on whether their dog must be leashed, and prescribed punishments for offenders whose dogs harm other human beings. Such rules for cats, of course, would be ridiculous. A cat goes where it wants, and this is accepted. Almost no one would be upset if the neighbour's cat wanders into their yard, but it is completely unacceptable to allow one's dog to roam the neighbourhood unmoderated. And that in itself has logical foundations as well. First of all, dogs are simply more dangerous than cats. Cats scratch, but dogs can kill and have killed adult human beings. Secondly, not only are a cat's peregrinations accepted, but they are a reflection of cats' usefulness to human beings. Historically, cats have been most valued for their ability to control the populations of pests.⁴³ It is hard to imagine a cat killing mice and rats if it were cooped up and held down by a leash.

There is also a key difference between our species' relationships with cats and dogs that has nothing to do with our views of the two animals. On the contrary, scientists now believe that there is a discrepancy in each of the two animals' views of *us*. While dogs look at humans as uniquely human, cats see humans as, from an emotional perspective, no different than cats.⁴⁴

⁴³ Christopher Beam, "Man's First Friend" (March 6, 2009), online: Slate
<<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2009/03/which-animal-did-we-domesticate-first.html>>.

⁴⁴ Christine Dell'amore, "What Do Cats Think About Us? You May Be Surprised" (January 28, 2014), online: National Geographic
<<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/1/140127-cats-pets-animals-nation-dogs-people-science/>>.

Summing up the research on the matter in an interview with National Geographic, Dr. John Bradshaw states:

There's been a lot of research with dogs and how dogs interact with people. [It's] become very clear that dogs perceive us as being different than themselves: As soon as they see a human, they change their behavior.

...

[Cats] obviously know we're bigger than them, but they don't seem to have adapted their social behavior much. Putting their tails up in the air, rubbing around our legs, and sitting beside us and grooming us are exactly what cats do to each other.⁴⁵

This insight can be used to promote a great many theories on why society treats dogs more dearly than it does cats. Maybe dogs' understanding that we are fundamentally different than them allows us to have stronger bonds with them. Perhaps it allows us to have more beneficial (to us) relationships with them. And it may simply be the case that dogs' knowledge of their masters' superiority has led *them* to act in a way that effects more respect from human beings.

Lastly, although they have both been domesticated for thousands of years, we as a species have a more storied relationship with dogs than we do with cats. Cats have been pets for approximately 7000 years (it was not until the advent of agriculture that we began using cats for pest control), while dogs have been domesticated for at least 13,000 years.⁴⁶ Having lived with us for at least nearly twice as long, it may be that our species has developed a more regulated, and even regulatable, relationship with dogs than it has with cats.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Beam (2009).

My Attempted Refutations of These Counter-Arguments

These are all plausible arguments, but I do not think they are sufficient to explain all the differences in society's treatment of cats and dogs. A cat's nature as a peripatetic rodent hunter, especially as compared to a dog's role as a protector, might shed some light on why there is more legislation regulating the behaviour of dogs than cats. Additionally, the sheer strength and deadliness of dogs might explain why they are "destroyed" for being dangerous, while cats are not. However, there is not only a disparity in the amount of regulatory law relating to cats and dogs, but also published case law mentioning the two species. Custody battles over dogs are evidently taken more seriously by the courts than disputes over cat ownership, and this cannot be chalked up to any innate difference between cats and dogs.

Moreover, although it has been established that cats fail to understand the differences between them and human beings to the extent dogs do, it is fallacious to suggest that this is a source of our inferior treatment of cats. Since when do humans care what other animals know? Apes are by far the most cognitively developed species outside of our own, but that did not prevent people from conducting horrific experiments on other primates. Human beings have generally treated animals in whatever way most benefited themselves. Dogs' and cats' respective levels of knowledge might affect how they see us, but there is no reason to infer that this would in turn affect how we see them.

Finally, the duration of cats' and dogs' domestication should not have had an impact on the way we treat them legally. The law as we know it is essentially a modern invention. The concept of human rights is only a few hundred years old, and animal rights were only promulgated in the preceding century. Cats and dogs have been domesticated to the same degree for the duration of the time period during which our laws have undergone all serious

developments. In other words, dogs are not treated better than cats because they, and not cats, were domesticated at 10,000 BCE.

Ideas Which Advance My Theory

It is not enough to demonstrate that the aforementioned reasons do not fully explain the inequality in the treatment of cats and dogs. The mere fact that those arguments fail does not evince beyond doubt that mine succeeds. However, there is evidence that not only do people conceive of cats and dogs as feminine and masculine, but that we treat cats and dogs with the same prejudice and privilege that our patriarchal society treats women and men.

A 2018 Swedish study examined the attributes that pet owners value in their cats and dogs.⁴⁷ While there were similarities (love and companionship figured in the top three responses for both species), there were some key differences, as well.⁴⁸ Appearance was the fourth most common answer for cats, but came in at 22nd for dogs.⁴⁹ Evidently, just as society values the physical appearance of women more than men, it does of cats more than dogs. Friendship was the most popular response by dog owners, but only the twelfth by cat owners.⁵⁰ Thus, while cats, like women, are valued in large part for their looks, society has decreed that for dogs, just as for men, that what is on the inside counts for more.

Furthermore, cats and their value are often ignored or rejected in the same manner as that of women and their value. The existence of the idea of the "cat lady" exemplifies the connection between heteromisogyny and the dismissal of cats' worth. Women with many cats are often automatically assumed to have either eschewed marriage, because they are lesbians, or to have failed to attract a man, because they are in some way deficient.⁵¹ In the eyes of our

⁴⁷ Ruben Hoffman et al, "An empirical examination of the conceptualization of companion animals" (2018) 6:15 BMC Psych 1.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 6.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ See *generally* Will McKeithen, "Queer ecologies of home: heteronormativity, speciesism, and the strange intimacies of crazy cat ladies" (2017) 24:1 Gender, Place & Culture 122.

patriarchal society, a woman who loves cats "too much" is the same as a woman who loves women "too much": an emotionally and socially maladapted person with misplaced priorities who is doomed to spinsterdom. Furthermore, the fact that, as previously articulated, dogs have received more stock as service animals is a reflection of the way the patriarchy views female labour. Both cats and dogs were domesticated because doing so served our species. But while dogs' services are exalted to the point of the creatures being allowed to accompany witnesses in court, cats' labour is awarded no such valuation.

The differences in the likelihoods of sheltered cats and dogs experiencing euthanasia also lends credence to the idea that society's relative mistreatment of cats is a reflection of our feminizing of the feline species. As stated previously, even though cats are *more* likely than dogs to be adopted, adoptable cats are put down at a markedly greater rate. Logically, should it not be the other way around? Not if it is true that, in spite of (or maybe because of) their greater acquisitional worth, cats are viewed as more expendable and interchangeable. This is the exact same way the patriarchy treats women: as pretty things to be either acquired or tossed aside in place of newer models.

Importantly, too, the ways in which dogs are treated worse than cats bear resemblance to the ways in which patriarchy, and the violent lens through which it makes people view the male experience, mistreats men. Dogs are "destroyed" for being dangerous. Dogs are abused for the purpose of training them to be better fighters. Dogs are used by more powerful parties to inflict violence on each other. Just as not every instance of misogyny hurts women more than men, not every instance of assigning gender roles to household pets hurts cats more than dogs.

Conclusion

The beliefs of the past are filled with misguided premises about gender and sexuality. Unfortunately, many such errors in understanding have managed to survive to the present. One

such error is the absurd idea that cats are feminine creatures who are most apt as companion animals for women and gay men, and that dogs are masculine animals who are suitable as pets for the typically masculine, straight male. Though an abundance of evidence suggests that this is a widespread view, interpretations of the same studies suggest that this belief is categorically false. This, of course, corresponds with a basic understanding of mammalian genetics: there are female and male (and thus feminine and masculine) cats, as well as female and male (and thus feminine and masculine) dogs, and said females and males exist in essentially equal numbers.

But such wrongly held views are far from innocuous. On the contrary, the misogyny of our patriarchal world, and the differences in the law's treatment of and society's view of women and men, coalesce with society's poorly formed understanding of feline and canine nature to produce a world in which cats suffer more harm than dogs, the rights of cats are taken less seriously than the rights of dogs, and indeed, the law treats cats differently than it does dogs. And just as toxic masculinity harms young boys in addition to young girls, gender-based stereotypes about companion animals can lead to the mistreatment of the allegedly masculine dogs, as well. Misogyny can be brutal and obvious, but it can also be a subtle and pernicious beast. It can even harm animals, female and male alike. The first step towards eradicating this harm is to understand the ways in which these deeply embedded and often unnoticed gender-based stereotypes exist and the myriad effects they have.