

# INVITED SYMPOSIUM: FEMINISTS ENCOUNTERING ANIMALS

## Introduction

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In response to the growth of animal studies in the academy, an increasing number of conferences and panels have focused on “the question of the animal” whether from a disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspective. Participating in these conferences over the course of many years we have heard probing comments and contentious murmurs that we thought deserved to be more formally articulated and aired. When we began to read similar comments in some of the referee reports on submissions for this special issue, we were convinced we wanted to encourage these rumblings to be written up so that discussion and debate surrounding the history and reception of feminist animal studies could become more focused and more public. The comments, in some ways, reminded us of old battlegrounds among feminists—debates about just how personal the political should be, conflicts over erotic desire and political commitment, as well as those over strategies for alliance. So we thought it would be informative and productive to invite a number of feminist scholars working in animal studies—those who have been in the field for quite a while and those who have only recently begun to work in it—to voice their thoughts, concerns, and hopes. We prompted them with a set of questions:

- Is animal studies gendered, and if so, to what effect?
- Is so-called animal “theory” at odds with affective and/or feminist political engagement? Do you see a gap between the personal and the political (or theoretical) in animal studies and, if so, how is it manifesting?
- Have the insights of feminists/ecofeminists been overlooked/unacknowledged in animal studies, and if so, what is lost and what should be done to acknowledge and reclaim their insights?

We told those who agreed to have their musings included here that we were not necessarily looking for direct responses to these questions, but rather were

hoping they might use these questions to provoke written reflection. As you will see in the essays that follow, the authors may not have needed much prompting.

Not surprisingly, there is contention among the views expressed in this symposium, but there are also common themes. One clear commonality is the need to maintain feminist, ethical, and political commitments within animal studies—commitments to reflexivity, responsibility, engagement with the experiences of other animals, and sensitivity to the intersectional contexts in which we encounter them. Such commitments are at the core of a second, related area of common concern, that of the relationship between theory and practice. Animal bodies, we can all agree, must not be “absent referents” in animal studies (Adams 1990/2010). But what is the role of theory produced by those whose personal practices might be challenged on ethical or political grounds, even as it helps us to articulate important ideas? Throughout this symposium, as in this special issue as a whole, the importance of affect in feminist animal studies is noted. We know that we touch the lives of other animals and that they touch ours in a myriad of ways, but there remains disagreement about the positive and negative effects of these encounters.

Of course, the conclusions drawn in the musings that follow are by no means the last words on these complex topics. Our hope is that constructive discussion and debate will follow from them.

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## Ambivalence toward Animals and the Moral Community

KELLY OLIVER

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I recently attended an excellent session on Animality and Race at which two young feminist philosophers, Erin Tarver and Alison Suen, presented their research. Tarver presented an insightful analysis of football fans’ reactions to Michael Vick’s criminal sentence for fighting pit bulls (Tarver 2011). She argued that in the media, pit bulls are associated with gangs and ghettos, rounded up without due process, and killed because they are seen as dangerous and spreading danger like contagion. Suen presented a fascinating account of the film *The Cove*, in which Japanese fishermen are figured as cruel because of their treatment

of dolphins (Suen 2011). She argued that the fishermen are seen as dumb beasts whereas the dolphins are seen as innocent victims, intelligent and sensitive in ways that the fishermen are not. With the pit bull, the animal is imagined as dangerous and threatening, whereas with the dolphin the animal is imagined as innocent and victimized.

This leads me to again wonder about the ambivalent place of animals with regard to *the moral community*: on the one hand, they are often figured as innocents by nature and therefore not morally culpable; on the other hand, they can be figured as monstrous threats that require immediate “disposal,” as in the recent case of exotic animals in Ohio where dozens of large animals were summarily killed after their “keeper” freed them before committing suicide. Although it is true that we have different relations to different animals—some are cute and cuddly and others seem abject or dangerous—animals, animality, and “the animal” occupy a fundamentally ambivalent place in our cultural imaginary. Indeed, I would argue that our sense of a moral community is essentially linked to the ambivalent function that animals and animality play in our fantasies about what is cruelty, what is innocence, and what is natural.

Returning to the pit bulls and the dolphins, Tarver and Suen articulated various connections between these animals and race and the racialization of humans. In both cases, animals are part of an imaginary configuration wherein human beings are seen as dangerous by virtue of a process of racialization involving animals. And, in both cases, the ways in which human beings treat animals reflects on their own figuration as animals, a point that Suen makes in her analysis. Yet it seems to me that there is more going on in what I would call the displacements of our own cruelty and animality onto other animals, on the one hand, and our animalization of racialized others, on the other. In both cases, at different extremes, animals come to represent the limits of *the moral community* such that we justify excluding from that community the people associated with them.

In the case of the pit bulls, as Tarver’s analysis suggests, these dogs come to stand in for black men, who cannot be quite so easily rounded up and killed without due process; although statistics show that by far those incarcerated in the United States, and those on death row, are African American or men of color. In this case, dogs represent the imagined threat of black men as dangerous, a fantasy familiar to us within our racist culture. The supposed threat of black men is displaced onto the dogs who are then rounded up and killed, satisfying our fantastic desire to excise what we imagine as dangerous, even monstrous, from our moral community. In other words, whereas black men can be “rounded up and killed” only as part of *the moral community*, or more precisely the legal community wherein their imprisonment and executions must be sanctioned by the state, their dogs can be excluded from both the moral and legal communities as symptoms, so to speak, of “our” desire to exclude black men. On the other end of the spectrum, think of the sympathy directed toward the abandoned dogs

of Hurricane Katrina who received more media attention than the abandoned people. Here again, the sympathy that could have, or should have, been directed at African Americans suffering loss and death is displaced onto their dogs, seemingly because many white Americans can feel more sympathy toward dogs than they can toward African Americans. In a sense, the sympathy for Katrina's human victims can be felt and articulated only through Katrina's dogs. Once again, the Katrina dogs can be seen as a symptom of "our" inability to properly include African Americans in *the moral community* such that we extend to them the care and compassion required—at least as articulated by feminist moral theorists—to be part of it.

In the case of the dolphins, Suen argues that the Japanese fishermen are presented not only as cruel and beastly but also as illiterate or even dumb in the sense that the filmmakers cannot understand them and they cannot understand the filmmakers, who don't speak any Japanese. On the other hand, as Suen points out, the filmmakers listen to dolphin communication using high-tech apparatus. As she suggests, the dolphins begin to move into *the moral community* only insofar as the Japanese fishermen are moved to its margins. Conversely, through the juxtaposition with these playful, intelligent, and ultimately innocent creatures, the fishermen are marginalized as barbaric racial others, more other to proper human society than the marine mammals they kill. The dolphins, like the pit bulls, are presented as not only at the limits of *the moral community*, but also as a test case for entrance into it. If the pit bulls represent nature's cruelty as the monstrous limit, the dolphins represent nature's guilelessness as the innocent limit. In both cases, animals come to represent the limits of *the moral community*, either as monsters or beasts who are too cruel to be included in the moral or civil law, or as absolute innocents who are too childlike or naïve to be included in the moral or civil law.

Animals occupy either pole of the limits of *the moral community*: they are absolutely innocent because they act on instinct and therefore do not control their behavior and cannot be morally blameworthy; they are absolutely monstrous because they cannot control their violent instincts and are therefore beyond the pale of the moral community. Either way, animals serve to shore up the boundaries of what we consider the proper—and properly human—moral community. Either way, animals (and humans associated with them) are outside of moral and civil law. Either way, they are not considered moral agents; or they are liminal moral agents who can be disposed of outside of any civil or moral codes. Even innocents can be sacrificed (like the exotic animals in Ohio, seen as simultaneously innocent and dangerous). And monstrous vermin must be killed in order to protect the proper moral community (like the pit bulls associated with gang violence).

In a sense, animals are what we might call "transitional objects" through which human beings are given, or refused, entrance into the moral community. Human beings are marginalized or excluded from the moral community through

comparisons with animals as either dumb innocents who don't know any better (for example, children or the mentally disabled), or as monsters and beasts whose cruel nature puts them outside of human law (for example, racialized others considered violent by nature or terrorists figured as monstrous). Through their animal representatives, operating in a somewhat totemic fashion, both naïve innocents and certain racialized others are pushed to the margins of *the moral community*. Ambivalence toward animals, then, becomes both a symptom and a displacement of ambivalence toward racialized others whom we imagine as threats to the properly human—and humane—moral community.

Animal studies, especially within philosophical debates over animal rights and animal welfare, continues to be driven in large part by discussions that revolve around some notion of a moral community and whether animals are part of it, and if so, how. Questions of our obligations toward animals, and animals' rights and responsibilities, continue to be at the center of debates in animal studies. Some feminist theorists (Adams 1990/2010; Donovan 1990; Gruen 1993; MacKinnon 2004; and others) have made important connections between animal theory and feminist theory, sometimes also making references to race and critical race theory. Associations among objectified others, including women, racialized others, sexual "minorities," and animals or animality have become commonplace. The role of animals, animality, and "the animal" in our fantasies of gender, race, and sex, however, is complex, and, until recently, undertheorized. Moreover, although many have argued that the domination of, and violence against, women and racialized others is (or has been) justified in the dominant discourse by appeals to their supposed animality (or lack of reason and other characterizations that would make them full members of *the moral community*), few have interrogated how and why the concepts of *animality* or of *the animal* are employed in this way. Why does association with animals justify mistreatment of humans? In other words, what does it mean to treat a being, human or otherwise, "as an animal"? And, following Tarver's and Suen's analyses, we might ask, what does it mean when our own humanity revolves around treating or not treating animals "as animals"?

What is missing from most discussions in animal studies is consideration of the ways in which animals occupy an ambivalent place in what we might call the *psychic space* of what we take to be human. Although philosophers have acknowledged that we define our own humanity against animality, and thereby disavow our own animality, few have diagnosed how this dynamic of avowal and disavowal works, or how it is manifest in both our treatment of animals and in our treatment of other people. Some psychoanalytic concepts can be useful in disarticulating the ambivalent position of animals in our culture: from animals who are valorized, even loved, like dolphins and companion animals, to those who are vilified, even hated, like pit bulls and cockroaches or vermin. Our love or hatred is obviously not species-specific since pit bulls are also icons for everything from RCA to Buster Brown shoes and are often beloved pets; and

cockroaches and other “vermin” have become idolized by children across the globe in Disney and Pixar productions featuring insect and rodent protagonists. Rather, animals and animality occupy an ambivalent place, both inside and outside *the moral community*, or at the limits or margins of that community, whatever we take it to be.

I’d suggest a psychoanalytic supplement to animal studies to diagnose this ambivalence toward animals. Specifically, Freud’s notion of phobia and Kristeva’s reinterpretation of phobia as abjection go some distance toward understanding the dynamics of avowal and disavowal at the heart of our ambivalence toward animals and animality, particularly our own animality. Freud’s most famous cases are those of animal phobias—the rat man, the wolf man, and Little Hans’s fear of horses (Freud 1909a; 1909b; 1918). In all of these cases, among other things, Freud diagnoses a displacement of unconscious fear onto the animals in an attempt to manage ambivalence. In the case of phobic boys, this ambivalence is toward their parents, whom they both love and hate. The phobic negotiates this internal ambivalence by projecting it onto an external object from which he can run away—since he cannot so easily run away from his own feelings, or from his parents’ authority over him.

Kristeva extends Freud’s analysis with her notion of abjection—again triggered by ambivalence—defined as something that calls borders into question (Kristeva 1980). She suggests that abjection is fear of what we do not know and cannot neatly define. Like Freud, she sees the process of abjection as a projection onto the external world of internal ambivalence and confusion. Moreover, she identifies the process of separating ourselves from animals as a process of abjection whereby we project everything beastly in ourselves outward onto animals in order to identify ourselves as “clean and proper” human beings. In her reinterpretation of Little Hans’s fear of being bitten she finds his own desire to bite projected outward onto the horse. By projecting all of the ambivalence of his relations with his family onto the animal, he “resolves” his profoundly troubling feelings of aggression toward them, this family that he both loves and hates. The dynamics of displacement, and projection of aggression outward, become defensive mechanisms that protect the boy from facing his true fears, which lie in himself: indeed, his true fears about his own uncertainty and ambivalence, which is to say, his true fears about his own identity.

Returning to pit bulls and dolphins, the psychoanalytic concepts of displacement, projection, phobia, and abjection help explain how dogs, particularly pit bulls, can simultaneously be both icons of domesticity and contagions of danger; why we imagine it easier to communicate with dolphins than with Japanese fishermen; and why we feel more sympathy for the dogs abandoned to Katrina than for the abandoned people. These concepts also help explain the movement between animals and racialized others, not only in terms of displacements of animality or beastliness onto other human beings through which we rationalize our

fear of them and hostility toward them (that is, African American men or Japanese fishermen), but also in terms of the displacements wherein animals take the place of those whom we abject and onto whom we project those fears and desires (the dogs of Katrina or the pit bulls summarily rounded up and killed). We project our own ambivalence and aggressiveness onto these animals and onto racialized others, and thereby we protect *the proper* boundaries of both the human and the humane by seeing others as animal and inhumane.

Through the perverse logic of phobia, we protect the borders of *the proper moral community* through this inclusive exclusion of animals and animality as simultaneously beloved or fascinating and hated or feared. Animals occupy both poles on the spectrum of the moral community, from naïve innocents who are not morally culpable to monstrous beasts beyond the pale who can be killed, even extinguished, without recourse to law. The level of our ambivalence toward animals as the limits of *the moral community* both in themselves and through slippery displacements among gendered, racialized, and sexual others requires much more analysis.

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# Must Every Animal Studies Scholar Be Vegan?

TRACI WARKENTIN

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Perhaps I have become too skeptical as an academic, but I am never comfortable when someone presents me with “the answer,” regardless of the question. I experienced this unsettling phenomenon recently at an animal studies conference, and it catalyzed my thoughts on related issues regarding feminism and animal studies that I’ve been aware of for some time and have been noticing at various academic events. In particular, it helped me recognize connections between a problematically uncritical promotion of veganism and a seeming lack of presence of environmental/eco/feminist praxis in animal studies generally, along with a corresponding amnesia about what it has already contributed to the field.

The catalyst was the 2011 New York University Animal Studies Initiative, cosponsored with Minding Animals International, symposium titled “Animal Studies: Changing the Subject?” Gary Steiner, the first speaker of the day, presented an incisive critique of the dominant bias in Western thought that humans are intellectually superior to all other animals, upon which conventional practices of animal exploitation are then justified. Rather, he argued, animals are the subjects of their own lives, much like humans are the subjects of theirs, and he asserted theoretical consistency with a revised, nonanthropocentric philosophical tradition of humanism (Steiner 2011). Acknowledging the overwhelming, unspeakable suffering of animals in industrial agriculture, he then prescribed what “we” (in the undesignated, universal sense) must do if we care about animals: we must adopt veganism as a strict moral imperative.

In the current North American socioeconomic context, which champions the status quo of an enormous and elite food industry with powerful, vested economic and political interests, I could appreciate the urgency with which he was willing to simplify the solution to an alarmingly complex situation. My lack of ease grew, however, as questions from the audience fell short of drawing out particular complexities that would have added richness to the dialogue and would have made the imperative and its application more robust and democratic. Participants instead generally accepted it and focused on the absolute practical implementation of the imperative, questioning, for instance, if it would be morally acceptable for a vegan to continue using a tennis racquet made from cow intestine, since throwing it away was costly and wasteful. The nature of the questions posed in response to this first paper seemed to set the tone of the

conversation, effectively eliminating the possibility for a constructive, nuanced critique of the vegan imperative to follow.

Steiner's proposal could have benefited from an acknowledged alliance with a long-established environmental/eco/feminist praxis; environmental/eco/feminist scholars and activists have been promoting vegan and vegetarian lifestyles as a manifestation of the personal-is-political moral imperative for at least a couple of decades (see Adams 1990/2010; Donovan 1990; Warren 1990; Adams 1991; Curtin 1991; Kheel 2004). Indeed, *Hypatia* published a special issue on ecological feminism back in 1991, in which several articles proposed that vegetarianism was a necessary political and moral action. A year earlier, in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, which just celebrated its twentieth anniversary in print, Carol Adams advocated for a vegan lifestyle by providing a nuanced analysis of the intimate linking of women's bodies and the bodies of animals used for food, showing how they are presented as analogous, eroticized, consumable objects for a masculinized diet and gaze (Adams 1990/2010). She has also shown how meat-eating contributes to violence against women, feminized men, and animals. These are significant intersections, which position dietary choices in direct conversation with social and environmental justice, as well as with animal rights and welfare. Adams's work, like that of many others, opened up critical dialogue about the patriarchal *institutions* of food-production and consumption rather than putting both blame and solution solely on individual consumers.

Such an opening also enabled important critiques to emerge from within environmental/eco/feminism about the pitfalls of a universal prescription of a "pure" vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. The development of, and serious engagement in, this internal critique illuminates perhaps one of the most generative characteristics of environmental/eco/feminist theory and practice that is particularly valuable to animal studies: that it can accommodate a diversity of viewpoints and account for the complexity of a given situation, thereby avoiding counterproductive allegations of hypocrisy based on an all-or-nothing type purity; it recognizes that each specific situation may require its own unique and partial resolution. In other words, it allows for rigorously considered grays rather than demanding all-encompassing black or white positions.

Many key contours of feminist, nonanthropocentric environmental and animal ethics include reasoning through a narrative situation, which involves detailed considerations of a highly specific context in which varying degrees of responsibility may arise through human-animal and human-human relationships. There can be no prior assumptions of moral value according to dualistic ontology to provide a one-size-fits-all solution. Environmental/eco/feminist ethics cannot be morally defined in abstract terms or applied from some disembodied, external source. Thus, they are fundamentally different from predominantly rationalist forms of Western environmental ethics, which aim to prescribe a set of universal

principles to apply to all people everywhere at any time. Universal moral vegetarianism has long been a subject of deep critical debate among environmental/eco/feminist philosophers, particularly in terms of its dislocated, universal application and potential for a Western ethnocentric and androcentric bias (see, for example, Gaard 1993; George 2000; Plumwood 2000; Warren 2000; Donovan 2003; Gruen 2004); these critiques and debates deserve to enter and provoke wider conversations within animal studies about the morality of dietary choices, perhaps now more than ever.

Of late, it is becoming fairly customary for animal studies conferences to be vegan events. This is a tremendous achievement and can be seen as a positive manifestation of the personal as political. It is entirely appropriate that conference organizers arrange for all of the catered food to be vegan, knowing that the majority of animal food products used in conventional, commercial catering are the direct result of the exploitation of animals and dominantly inhumane practices in the industrial-agricultural food system. Given the diversity of dietary needs among conference participants and across the spectrum of perspectives on animal rights and animal welfare, providing an all-vegan spread is far more democratic since everyone (with the exception of those with specific food allergies, perhaps) can partake of it. Moreover, not all participants have to be vegan to accept that this is an ethically responsible thing to do and in line with some of the main concerns of animal studies scholars. It also provides a potent, material grounding for ethical debate as participants are made tacitly aware of the connections between eating practices and the treatment of animals.

I have noticed, however, that a troubling rift keeps emerging at these events, made visible in the way that participants appear to feel the need to confess whether they are a “vegan” or a “carnivore,” even if the theme of the conference is focused on other issues. I find this trend urgently in need of unpacking for many reasons, most of all because it hints at an assumption that a vegan lifestyle is unquestionably good, and, perhaps, the *only* ethical choice among animal studies scholars. It is not without irony and extreme hesitation that I make such a statement, given that the dominant attitude in Western industrial society is that human beings are morally justified to use, kill, profit from, and eat animals, with little or no concern for their well-being. I do want to be cautious, however, about the emergence of a reversed dualism—vegan versus carnivore—arising in animal studies that oversimplifies the choices people make as all-or-nothing, and may force us to have to proclaim allegiance to one side or the other, potentially generating a troubling mentality of you’re either with us or against us.

Declarations of veganism may give participants (who may be new to animal studies and environmental ethics) the impression that one must be vegan in order to be an animal studies scholar and not to have the legitimacy of their research undermined, particularly if they don’t voluntarily self-identify. Such an outcome would be unfortunate and unnecessary, since many of us exist in the

messy areas in between the extremes of veganism, vegetarianism, and meat-eating and yet are still allied with the goals and values of animal advocacy in multifaceted ways. When asked directly, I refrain from categorizing myself as one thing and rather explain that I practice what I call a “conscious diet.” It is dynamic and specific to my evolving belief system, personal history, digestive constitution, location, and economic means. I avoid food that is produced through industrial animal agriculture because I believe it is an exceptionally cruel and horrifying practice. I don’t eat animal flesh because that is predominantly the way it is commercially produced in North America, and because my economic and geographic realities allow me to have a nutritious diet without it. Although I attempt to eat mostly organic produce, I am painfully aware that many of the fruits and vegetables I consume are still caught up in the larger food-production and transportation system that is tied to industrial animal agriculture and causes massive environmental degradation, destroys habitat, and harms many animals.

Soy, for instance, is one of the largest conventional crops in the United States and the main ingredient in a large majority of vegan food products, which are marketed as ethical alternatives to meat. At present one large corporation, Monsanto, monopolizes soybean growing. Monsanto has the power to dictate that soy has to be grown using other Monsanto products, such as the herbicide Round-up. The “Round-up Ready soybean” seed has undergone extensive genetic modification so it can withstand the spraying of the herbicide, which has enabled Monsanto to patent it and claim total ownership of the seed itself. The patent has created a dependency of soybean farmers on Monsanto and has resulted in drastic legal actions (leading often to bankruptcy) against farmers whose crops have become inadvertently “infected” with the modified seeds. Monsanto’s soybean seeds are potentially dangerous (to environmental, animal, and human health), genetically modified organisms, designed to be grown according to unsustainable, monocrop practices, which are chemical- and fossil-fuel-energy-intensive and environmentally destructive.

Unfortunately, these complicated realities of uncritically adopting a vegan diet in the context of a North American food system dominated by large-scale industrial agriculture appear to rarely come up within academic spheres outside of environmental/eco/feminism. Dietary choices and food-production have already undergone rigorous environmental/eco/feminist intersectional analysis, a method aimed at investigating explicit and implicit connections between the oppression of women, animals, nature, and “othered” humans resulting from powerful institutions and their underlying conceptual frameworks. In addition to the problematic dimensions of soy-production that extend to industrial animal agriculture, further intersectional analysis reveals that it is based upon the exploitation of female reproductive systems, as well as the exploitation and maintained vulnerability and expendability of undocumented immigrant workers. Although

still of utmost importance, the rights and welfare of animals is not the only moral imperative here. Animal studies, as an academic discipline and forum for animal advocacy, thus needs to remember and re-engage environmental/eco/feminist theories, practices, and methods if it is also committed to environmental and social justice.

That it is even necessary to make this assertion has confused me for some time, since, as an environmental/eco/feminist scholar, I have known of the field's contribution to, and vital role in, animal studies for many years. Some clarity on this conundrum came at the Sex, Gender, Species conference at Wesleyan University, when Greta Gaard cogently pointed out that ecofeminists may be largely responsible for their own disappearance, at least with respect to the collective amnesia of their work in other academic disciplines (Gaard 2011). Paying tribute to the historical development of ecofeminism, through grassroots environmental activism to the much needed theoretical critiques of Euro- and ethnocentrism from within, Gaard highlighted the exceptionally reflexive and diverse field that resulted. She then lamented, however, that the ultimate result was an extensive abandonment of the name that gave it a collective identity. With that, Gaard explained, ecofeminism fractured and has been operating "under cover" with many aliases since, including ecological feminism, feminist environmentalism, environmental feminism, material feminism, gender and environment, and queer ecologies, to name a few (Gaard 2011). So, although ecofeminist scholarship and advocacy did not actually disappear, it effectively dissipated and fell off the radar, so to speak, of the wider academic community as a result. This quite possibly has contributed to its lack of a strong, identifiable presence in the newly recognizable and growing field that has been named "animal studies."

By contrast, animal studies is enjoying a steady rise in recognition and legitimacy within the academy and is serving to bring together scholarship existing in many far-flung disciplines. Unfortunately, vital insights from ecofeminism have been lost or forgotten, and much reinvention appears to be occurring instead of building upon already rigorous work. Generative debate about the ethical treatment of animals and the politics of dietary choices could dramatically benefit from the remembering of ecofeminist work and advocacy. Bringing environmental/eco/feminism (whatever it is called) back in and to the foreground of animal studies is, thus, a vital project. How this project can be accomplished, however, is a question, quite fittingly, without a simple answer.

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## Returning the Ethical and Political to Animal Studies

STEPHANIE JENKINS

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[T]here is an undeclared war being waged everyday against countless millions of nonhuman animals. (Regan 1989, para. 9)

[Humans] do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide. (Derrida 2008, 26)

At the same time that animals have increasingly become objects of philosophical investigation, the commodification and exploitation of those animals for food, entertainment, research, and sport are intensifying to historically “unprecedented proportions” (Derrida 2008, 25). Each year in the United States, 10 billion land animals are killed, which means that, in the time it takes you to read this paper, 250,000 birds, pigs, lambs, and cows will be slaughtered (Humane Society of the United States 2006, para. 1). Yet, in the face of these atrocities, many animal studies scholars remain ambivalent about or even hostile to applying their arguments to practical implications beyond a “free-range ethics” (Oliver 2009, 305). Although these purported posthuman theories reject the ontological dualism between human and animal, hierarchical dichotomies reside within these theories’ normative presuppositions (Twine 2010b). Everyday practices, including what (or who) we eat and wear, mark nonhuman animals as killable, maintaining the last vestiges of humanism. Until we recognize the lives of all animate beings as worth protecting, the hierarchical dualisms of human/animal, mind/body, and nature/culture will remain intact. Unless we “sacrifice the sacrifice” of nonhuman animals, as Derrida would say, feminist philosophy, animal studies, and posthumanist theory will simply continue the entrenchment of the very dichotomies that they seek to undermine.

Extending this critique of ontological dualism into the ethical realm, I call for an affective feminist practice that views animal others as grievable, vulnerable, and valuable. The dissolution of the human/animal binary requires a technique of self or ethical know-how that can be used to combat the “philosophical anthropology” that undergirds moral thought and action (Sandel 1998, 50). I believe that veganism is a necessary component (although not sufficient, as any set of ethics always will be incomplete) of an affective feminist ethics of nonviolence. When built upon feminist ethics, vegan practice is not a universal obligation or a fantasy of purity but rather a “bodily imperative” (Weiss 1999, 129) to respond to another’s suffering and to reject the everyday embodied practices that make certain animate others killable. A vegan, feminist ethics of nonviolence follows from the deconstruction of ontological dualism, a central component of posthuman and feminist philosophies alike.

In responding to a gap between theory and practice in the philosophical investigation of nonhuman animals, I start with the assumption that the division between the human and the animal will always be incomplete, fluid, and indefensible. From this perspective, I identify the domestication, or the “taming” of the radical conclusions of a theory, and anthropological closure, or the limiting of ethical questions to humans, of practical ethical questions in animal studies. Then, I will draw on Judith Butler’s recent ethical work to identify veganism as a responsive, affective ethics of nonviolence.

Many contemporary philosophical discussions of animals remain hypo-critical, insofar as their analyses stop short of or ignore the ethical implications of the

deconstruction of ontological dualisms. These theories are hypo-critical in the sense that they are partial and incomplete. As noted above, the boundary between the human and the animal is always unstable, indeterminate, and porous; any capacity that has been deployed to serve as the threshold to humanity (for example, language, rationality, fear of death, culture, and tool use) has proven unable to maintain the human/animal dichotomy. If the human is no longer ontologically distinct from the animal, then nonhuman animals cannot be exempted from prohibitions against killing, and “thou shalt not kill” must apply to all animate life.

The hypo-critical project of animal studies is an ontological or epistemological investigation whose ultimate goal is understanding the being of the human, even if it marks itself as posthumanist (Oliver 2009). Animal studies theorists often seek to bracket, postpone, or eradicate questions of ethics. Philosophers who study animal–human relations often preemptively foreclose explicitly ethical or political questions about animals. For example, conference presentations, conversations, and lectures will be prefaced with statements such as, “I’m not a vegetarian,” “I’m no Peter Singer,” or “I’m not for animal rights.” More specifically, some theorists are downright hostile toward any mention of veganism. This is best seen in the case of Donna Haraway, who calls for responsible killing rather than an ethics of nonviolence (Haraway 2008, 80).

Contrary to her belief in the necessity of killing some animal others, I believe we cannot deconstruct, problematize, or trouble the human/animal binary without addressing ethico-political and practical questions regarding animal exploitation. Ontological and epistemological investigations are inseparable from ethical inquiry; what (or who) beings are determines how we are ethically obligated to respond to them. Work on epistemologies of ignorance shows us that perception frames our understanding of what is morally permissible. For example, Charles Mills describes how the category “savage” distorted early (white) Americans’ perceptions, enabling them to ontologically exclude Native Americans from whites’ moral prohibitions against violence (Mills 2007).

Because it isolates ontological inquiry from ethical practice, hypo-critical animal studies constitute a response to animal suffering that is a nonresponse. These studies do not call upon us to change how we eat, dress, or entertain in the world in regard to our everyday relationships with other animals. Moreover, the positions taken by its practitioners, who distance themselves from veganism and animal advocacy, often serve to reify the status quo “war” against animals. Too many scholars, such as Harold Fromm, claim that human life requires the killing of nonhuman animals, “To be alive is to be a murderer” (Fromm 2010, para. 6). Haraway makes a similar argument, contending that, rather than “[pretending] to live outside of killing” (Haraway 2008, 79), we must learn to kill responsibly. Responding to Derrida’s call for the sacrifice of the making-killable of animals, Haraway argues:

The problem is actually to understand that human beings do not get a pass on the necessity of killing significant others, who are themselves responding, not just reacting. In the idiom of labor, animals are working subjects, not just worked objects. Try as we might to distance ourselves, there is no way of living that is not also a way of someone, not just something else, dying differentially. (Haraway 2008, 80)

This argument does not distinguish between differences in degree, kind, and intent of killing, which are ethically relevant; the killings for which a vegan is responsible differ significantly from those that an omnivore enacts. First, they are different in degree. By abstaining from the knowing consumption of animal products, the vegan contributes to fewer differential killings. For example, the average vegan will save the lives of 2,000 land animals over the course of his or her lifetime as compared to the average omnivore (Marcus 1998). Second, the killings differ in kind; animals slaughtered in factory farms will have different kinds of deaths than will animals who die because they got caught in farm machinery. Although a vegan may not be able to extricate him or herself from the accidental killing of rodents, insects, or others by machinery in some agricultural practices, these are not the same kinds of horrifying deaths that animals in factory farms and slaughterhouses experience. Third, there are significant differences in intent between the vegan and the omnivore. When one eats a hamburger, one wills the death of the cow whose flesh made the burger possible. When an individual opts for a vegetarian burger, he or she recognizes that death is an undesirable means to the end of his or her culinary pleasure. Simply stated, the vegan refuses to perceive the cow as killable.

My criticism of Haraway is harsh precisely because I have the utmost respect for her work. However, she exchanges her usual rigor and critical edge for polemics when discussing veganism. In addition to homogenizing all forms of killing, she also glosses over vast differences in animal advocacy and theory. Haraway and other hypo-critical animal studies scholars dismiss veganism along with a straw-person "animal rights" argument, as if the latter were the only possible justification for the former. To the contrary, many vegans reject PETA's tactics and renounce Peter Singer's arguments, which are points that Haraway and others miss. This disavowal of ethics in animal studies is especially dangerous because it disengages the relationship between theory and practice. From the standpoint of vegan ethics, the two are inseparable. Our ethics are not just a theory but also a way of life. We sacrifice the sacrifice of the animal in our own lives, in our own ways, as best we can. Each of us struggles with how to answer the call of the suffering animal others.

Judith Butler's recent work, which analyzes the war on terrorism, attempts to understand how social norms and political contexts portray others' lives as

grievable (or not) (Butler 2009). Through a process that she terms *framing*, Butler traces the mechanisms that condition the aptitudes for recognizing moral others. By moving ethics to the question of who counts as a who, Butler makes explicit how moral decisions and theories conceal the boundary between moral subjects and nonsubjects. All lives are precarious, but not all lives are perceived as such, and precariousness is differentially allocated. Animal others such as those trapped within the “animal industrial complex” (Noske 1997, 22), although technically alive, are not recognized as grievable or valuable in their own right. Applying Butler’s insight to animal ethics, we see that what is at stake is not merely the question of how to prevent or minimize violence but rather the question of what counts as violence in the first place. An affective ethics of nonviolence not only witnesses violence committed against animal others but also commits its adherents to its eradication.

After recognizing that moral communities are “imagined” (Anderson 2006) and products of historically and culturally specific power relations, we become aware of the contingent nature of our moral “frames.” Understanding the “human” as a production rather than as a natural entity politicizes ontology. Humanity becomes both an accomplishment and a differential value. Anthropocentric humanism, as long as it exists, will continue to be deployed against vulnerable animals, whether they are human or nonhuman. In part, this is because life always exceeds the frames through which it is recognized. There are, as Butler puts it, “subjects who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are lives that are not quite—or indeed, are never—recognized as lives” (Butler 2009, 4). Nonetheless, the limits of the moral community could and—I would argue—should be different. We must ask ourselves not merely, “What is a life?” but also, “How can I prepare myself to be addressed by a life that lives below my ability to apprehend it?” The “who” of ethics is prior to the “what” in the sense that injunctions against violence do not protect those whose lives are not recognized as valuable.

As Butler in her analysis of racism indicates, moral outrage, indifference, and guilt in the face of violence are not rational, cognitive acts but rather are conditioned, habituated, and affective responses. Our ability to be responsive to others, a prerequisite for responsibility, is found in conditioned, bodily responses. Individuals who are not moved by nonhuman animals, who do not perceive their lives as grievable, will not perceive or recognize the atrocities committed against them as violence. For this reason, the process of becoming vegan is a transformation in one’s worldview. The moral community is seen, smelled, touched, heard, and tasted differently. The smell of bacon may no longer recall childhood memories but instead becomes a perception of death and destruction. A vegan ethics of nonviolence acknowledges the making-killable of animal others as a violent act, and it necessitates the symbolic and practical rejection of such violence.

Once we make explicit the boundaries of the moral community, the division between moral subjects and nonsubjects becomes an ethico-political judgment. We must then ask: How do we draw the precarious line between human, animal, and plant? The division between the human and the animal is marked, in Derrida's terms, by the making-killable of the animal. In other words, those marked as human are subjects protected by the moral prohibition against violence, whereas those marked as mere animals are not. The claim of nonviolence, upon which vegan ethics is based, asks us to hold open the question of who or what requires moral consideration as a means to acknowledge the infallibility of our capacity for recognizing life.

In vegan ethics, ethical action is no longer limited to individual actions in isolated scenarios that demand utilitarian calculation, such as, "Do I eat the bacon or not?" Rather, the concern becomes how to reconceptualize the frames through which animals are perceived to make violence against animals be perceived as violence. Because these frames are rooted in affective and embodied habits, ethico-political strategies must work at the level of perception and the senses. Veganism, from this perspective, can be seen as a practice of expanding the realm of grievable life or as a precautionary principle of moral standing in action. This rejection of violence, or the refusal to accept the "better" and "humane" deaths of free-range ethics as a moral ideal, throws a wrench into the anthropological machine that dissimulates widespread, institutionalized violence against other animals (Agamben 2002).

#### NOTE

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## Disciplinary Becomings: Horizons of Knowledge in Animal Studies

CARRIE ROHMAN

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Recent work in animal studies and animal theory has sometimes coalesced around a kind of “primal scene” in which subjectivities that we call human and animal confront each other, retreat, respond, or otherwise intermingle. Perhaps the most well-known of these is Derrida’s naked-in-front-of-cat scene and, subsequently, Donna Haraway’s insightful reading of its limitations. I have been reminded of both my own scholarly “primal scene”—as a young scholar en route to a career in feminist theory who then turned to the animal—and of the disciplinary “primal scenes” of animal studies itself.<sup>1</sup>

The present moment in animal studies brings to mind the quite similar disciplinary “disputes” that went on within feminist theoretical circles in the late 1990s. Anyone interested in the way that high theory is regularly coming under suspicion in animal studies right now would do well to revisit the exchange between Susan Gubar and Robyn Wiegman in *Critical Inquiry*, for example, around the question, “What Ails Feminist Criticism?” (Gubar 1998; Wiegman 1999).

I was a graduate student at Indiana University when Gubar, Wiegman, and Cary Wolfe were all teaching there. Like many of my colleagues in animal studies, I had an ongoing interest in the ethical question of our relationship to non-human animals that preceded my scholarly career. That interest emerged roughly alongside my interest in feminist theory and gender studies when I was an undergraduate. As a graduate student, I set out with the intention of working in feminist criticism (and feminist literary criticism), but once I began to see the prominence of animals and animality in modernist literature, my scholarly energies migrated in that direction. At all points, however, I was keenly aware of the way that the feminist critique of the subject, to give one example, allowed for an opening onto similar troublings of the species barrier. Nevertheless, what remains a kind of fascinating and “primal” moment in my own turn from feminist work to species work was Gubar’s deeply suspicious response to my scholarly interest in animals. In one especially striking exchange over my use of Lyotard’s concept of the differend to discuss the animal as paradigmatic of the “victim” (the one who does not have the ability to register its injuries in the language of those in control), she asked me point blank if I was suggesting that animals were “more” victimized than women. Instead of seeing the interlocking structures of oppression that writers like Carol Adams, Marjorie Spiegel, and others had already pointed out at that time—and the productive theoretical analogies that might proliferate—Gubar experienced my discussion of animals as a threat: a threat, I can only surmise, to the political position she felt her own work had staked out for women, for a particular set of feminist claims, and perhaps for a semi-institutionalized prerogative that was roughly correlated to the suffering or affliction of women.

I find this anecdote instructive here because it not only demonstrates just how unpredictable a “feminist” response to animal issues can be,<sup>2</sup> but also because it resonates with the way in which some scholars today view developments in “high” animal theory as threatening. As Wiegman pointed out in her own discussion, Gubar’s anxieties about various poststructuralist genealogies rested in part on the association between that body of work and certain European, masculinist “complicities” (Wiegman 1999, 368). We sometimes still hear protests against the “boys’ club” of high theory in work on animals because thinkers such as Derrida, Wolfe, and Agamben are seen as overshadowing the work of female scholars and of critics who are less theoretically entrenched. As a scholar of the modernist period, I am perhaps too keenly aware of how women have historically been excluded from “critical” practice. Despite some of the limitations that high theory might entail, however, I do not want to countenance a feminist or animalist disavowal of critical theory.

In terms of disciplinary primal scenes, there have been prominent disavowals of this kind at the heart of animal studies in its contemporary staging. It is worth mentioning one of the “founding” moments for animal studies here. The confer-

ence *Millennial Animals: Theorising and Understanding the Importance of Animals*, organized by Robert McKay and Sue Vice in 2000, took place in England. Carol Adams and Cary Wolfe were the two keynote speakers. Adams gave a presentation based on her 1990 book that was very interesting, but essentially ten years old. Wolfe, who was my graduate advisor at the time, gave a presentation that engaged a wide range of recent continental theory on the philosophical question of the species barrier. Throughout the conference, Adams made it clear that she was willfully opposed to almost any “theoretical” discussion of animality. Her resistance was extremely disappointing to those of us in attendance who considered ourselves “feminist” and who also felt that new theoretical work was opening up the field in a way that had profound consequences for “animal rights” or “pro-animal” intellectuals, and the real animals who motivated them.

It became quite clear in that crucible for the discipline that Adams was self-styling as specifically and adamantly anti-theory. Such stylings tend to reinforce the misperception that thinkers with a strong “theoretical” commitment in animal studies are not ethically engaged. But the reality is that almost all of the theoretically sophisticated scholars who have been at the forefront of this discipline, in my experience, have a serious eye on the ethical relationship humans have with real animals. And I don’t mean Derrida. I mean the ranks of folks in cultural studies, philosophy, literary studies, and many other fields who were not famous or even well-known at that time, and who saw theory as a meaningful way to understand and describe serious questions about animals and animality. These scholars were using theory in their work on animals long before the discipline got its name a few years ago. Put in theoretical terms, they always recognized the ethical link between the discursive animal and the material animal. To be clear, I don’t mean to suggest that every scholar using animal theory has an “activist” predisposition. But I do mean that many, many important theoreticians in this field are ethically engaged. In fact, some of the best early scholarship in the field has shown how the work of iconic figures like Derrida and Levinas is essentially *more* pro-animal than either Derrida or Levinas would have us believe.

I make these claims recognizing that an “enforced” sense of activism in animal studies would be extremely problematic. But as Wolfe has pointed out in such detail in *What is Posthumanism?* (Wolfe 2010), we can also make distinctions between what work goes about its business without troubling humanist presumptions, and what work unsettles them. We should never be so naïve as to completely collapse scholarship with activism. On the other hand, trying to keep them utterly separate creates a false distinction. Scholarly work and activism in the classic sense operate along a continuum of knowledge-making and knowledge-challenging.<sup>3</sup>

But coming back to Adams’s work, I believe there are ways to acknowledge the (ongoing) role of such contributions, but also to recognize how certain

theoretical developments have opened up broader aspects of animal theory. This is not to devalue or marginalize the work of “earlier” feminists/ecofeminists, but to be frank about the manner in which a discipline must inevitably expand and become complex. One way of putting this is that a discipline, like an event, is always in excess of its causes. Animal studies will (and should) inevitably be in excess of its “causes.” Although this may result in some generational anxiety, we should ultimately embrace the proliferation of knowledges that this excessiveness signals. Deleuze and Guattari’s work on the concept seems apt here, even though we are talking about disciplines: “a concept also has a *becoming* that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same plane. Here concepts link up with each other, support one another, coordinate their contours, articulate their respective problems, and belong to the same philosophy, even if they have different histories” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 18).

What we could use at this juncture in the development of animal studies is a theoretically sophisticated inquiry into the role of affect in the feminist care tradition and in “high” theoretical discourses such as Derrida’s. This might help us clarify what these different methodological approaches can and cannot offer us in the way of intellectual openings, trajectories, and future work in affective engagement. Such a discussion might provide us a sense of where they overlap and where they diverge. For instance, how do we parse the following excerpts from Adams and from Derrida in a way that constructs future work for the discipline? Adams claims, “My own evolution toward animal defense was because of the sudden loss of a Welsh pony, and the feelings that I experienced when I tried to eat a hamburger the night of that pony’s death” (Adams 2007, 199). Derrida writes, “We all know about the episode in Turin . . . where [Nietzsche’s] compassion for a horse led him to take its head into his hands, sobbing . . . Now if tears *come to the eyes*, if they *well up in them*, and if they can also veil sight, perhaps they reveal, in the very course of this experience . . . an essence of the eye” (quoted in Wolfe 2010, 142). There would be a good deal to discuss here, along the lines of individual responsibility, mortality and finitude, sympathetic recognition of animal subjectivity, embodiment, the upending of visual domination, and we could go on. There are both striking similarities in these excerpts and significant divergences. And although theory can sometimes have what I consider a “sanitizing” role, here is nonetheless a moment in which the force of Derrida’s questioning is more than a bit affective. So how do these approaches open up or allow intellectual and ethical work to be done? That is the question we want to pursue.

It has also occurred to me that when women in animal studies decry the male-dominated “boys’ club” of high theory, this protest might be understood to function, at least partially, as an unconscious lament for a highly theoretically sophisticated female intellectual who *has not fully emerged* in animal studies at this time. We can think of the way that a Butler or Spivak have functioned as

—perhaps not a girls' club entirely—but as ultra-theoretical female scholars who are *critically dominant* in their respective fields. It remains to be seen whether or when such a female critic will come to occupy that kind of placeholder in animal studies.

It is also important to ask why theory might be an especially vital site for knowledge-formation in animal studies. There would be any number of responses to this question, but given the space limitations here, I'll refer to my earlier discussions of the conundrum that the "animal" presents to the "human."<sup>4</sup> The animal is uniquely unsettling in its *organic* as well as *subjective* liminality. Where does it figure amid humans and stones? This is a question upon which Heidegger's discourse so famously foundered. How do we understand this "fellow" creature who is both extraordinarily like us and yet the "strangest stranger"? We need theoretical tools to help us reckon with these questions. Moreover, although many animals most certainly have forms of language, respond to us, and communicate in various ways, they do not have a formal or even loosely associative representative voice. In other words, the animal cannot symmetrically "talk back" to our objectifying codes. Therefore, questions of language, the politics and dangers of representation, and even the seemingly benign postures of advocacy and the humane all require our philosophical caution.

I want to move toward a conclusion by suggesting that feminist critics in animal studies embrace theoretical work as an important component of the discipline. Why? In part because there is an evolutionary logic to the development of any academic field. It's simply not possible to become less complex or to remain in some imagined "originary" position. Does this mean we embrace complexity just for its own sake? No. Rather, it means that we remain interested in the movement or becoming of the field—of the way in which it invites ruminations from various critical perspectives—and that we move with that field, assimilating, questioning, yes, but, more important, engaging in an enlivened ethics of *new working* in the field. We need to say yes to new forms of knowledge, to the becoming-other and becoming-different of knowledges that open up future philosophical frameworks for the consideration of animal ethics, animality, and the human–animal or creaturely axis.

I am certainly interested in the ways that earlier work can be reclaimed if it has been overlooked or "lost" in more recent discussions. But I believe that recuperation should be incorporated into new work that energizes the field and creates horizons of knowledge. We also ought to be cautious about a desire for recognition as it tends to produce states of resentment, rivalry, or disaffection. As Rosi Braidotti suggests, "hope rests with an affirmative ethics of sustainable futures, a deep and careless generosity, the ethics of nonprofit at an ontological level" (Braidotti 2010, 217). Let's not invest in the repetition of what we assume we know, but rather, let's work with the claims and discourses we find productive

as we strive for philosophical plenitude and ethical vigilance in our scholarly work.

#### NOTES

1. I am grateful to my colleague, Mary Armstrong, for our conversations about the “histories of disciplines.”
2. For a related discussion of the range of feminist responses to ethical vegetarianism, which includes a valuable overview, see Gruen 2007.
3. Erica Fudge is quite good on this point in the recent forum on speciesism, identity politics, and ecocriticism. See her contribution in Cole et al. 2011.
4. See my fuller discussion of these questions in the introduction to Rohman 2009.

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## “The Animal” and “The Feminist”

EMILY CLARK

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In the Fall of 2011, I attended a day-long animal studies symposium at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. One of the presenters, an anthropologist, began his talk by projecting onto the screen behind him a black-and-white photograph of a kitten. The kitten was hanging crucified from a wire, completely disemboweled, with a cigarette butt sticking jauntily out of its very dead mouth. The presenter proceeded to speak for more than twenty minutes without mentioning a single word about the image. Instead, it loomed from the screen behind him, silently willing us audience members to look at it, and to look away from it. In the final minutes of the panel's Q and A, in what I can only describe as the tone of someone “willing herself to be calm,” a female graduate student asked the presenter what I am certain was on all of our minds: why that image? His response was to nod knowingly, and state that although he knew it was a “provocative” image, it perfectly encapsulated the tenets of his talk (loving, being, and killing animals), and so he had dared to show it, hoping it might provoke discussion.

It did not. Perhaps a more daring audience would have raised the issue of the image at the beginning of the Q and A, hijacking the time that had been allotted to discuss three presenters' work. Perhaps a more daring audience member (and I regret that it was not I) would have interrupted his presentation directly and demanded some account of this body, some accounting of his use of this body to accessorize his work. Instead, we remained silent, as did the body on display. In those moments, two kinds of violence happened: a redoubled violence on the body of the kitten, whose body was splayed open and displayed, at first literally, and then spectatorially, but also the violence against the audience there seated.

It is moments like these that reaffirm my belief that animal studies needs feminism. Feminist scholars understand that what we say about bodies and how we say it matters; they hold the speaking voice accountable for the effects it produces, both those intended and otherwise. By explicitly marrying questions of sex, gender, and feminism with questions of species and animal studies, the contributors and editors of this issue center attention on species within feminism. They also validate feminist animal scholarship to more general feminist readers. Both of these moves are necessary; many feminist scholars do not yet take animals, animal studies, or speciesism seriously.

I know this because I have been called to account for my work by a range of feminist scholars, from tenured faculty advisors to undergraduate students, whose

responses to animal studies range from resentment, dismissal, disbelief, to not-so-passive aggression. The implicit (and sometimes explicit) critique is: “why are you wasting time with animals when there are so many human problems?” or “what do animals have to do with gender?” Greta Gaard notes similar feminist responses in her historiography of ecofeminism and its silencing (Gaard 2011). Although the theoretical and political connections between species difference and sexual difference seem obvious to me now, they have not always, and certainly are not obvious to many of my colleagues, mentors, and students. Therefore, I frequently invoke “the human” to justify this work. I’m not the only one.

In much of the work on animals and species writ large, and certainly in feminist and ecofeminist work, analyses of our treatment of animals, attitudes toward and about animals, representations of animals, and framing of the world along a human/animal divide are necessarily conceptualized alongside the figure of the human. The organizing logic is this: what we think about (some) animals helps us understand what we think about (some) humans. Or, when animals suffer, humans suffer. Or, within feminism more specifically, the status of animals has both direct and indirect implications for the status of women. Connecting the human and the animal is a practical and generally effective way to begin to address the concerns and demands of a feminist audience unconvinced of animal studies’ intellectual relevance or ethical demand. Indeed, connecting these dots makes sense: human and nonhuman animals’ lives are bound up together to a degree that is, frankly, unfathomable in its scope. But perhaps more important, the uninitiated humanist will likely find animal scholarship much more palatable and necessary when she sees it as connected to the lives of humans.

This strategy *seems* necessary and is certainly useful; it labors to convince feminists to take species seriously. This needs to happen in large part because feminism is perhaps best positioned to take on questions of the animal. This is manifest in feminist theory’s commitment to the materiality of the body, to attending to those bodies most vulnerable to abuse, to exposing the logic of exclusion and the politics of abjection, and perhaps most important (and to return to that image of the kitten), in its commitment to thinking about, and critiquing its own participation in, the ethics of representation and “speaking for” others. In both theory and practice, feminism has the greatest capacity to take on what is one of the most ethically and intellectually challenging issues of our time. Part of the challenge is that there are no clear-cut answers here. Another part of the challenge is that this is perhaps the most extreme case possible of “speaking for” others, and as Kari Weil has pointed out, the call for “us’ (we who have language) to speak for those who do not (‘we are their voices’ an ASPCA campaign suggests) . . . risks having us reassert our sovereignty over them” (Weil 2006, 96). Feminism’s extensive history dealing with the messy problems of patriarchy, and its practitioners’ rigorous work to undo both binary and universal conceptualizations of the world, along with its self-reflexive

attention to its own power, are some of feminism's greatest strengths. Along with its intellectual and political rigor, feminist theory unremittingly comments on itself, critiques itself, takes itself as an object of inquiry, and holds itself ethically accountable, a methodology that is absolutely necessary when dealing with bodies, like that of the kitten, that are in so many ways at our mercy.

To restate: animal studies needs feminism, and feminism needs to take animal studies, and speciesism, seriously. While certainly a means toward this end, I would now like to consider what else might be produced by coupling "the animal" and "the feminist." Certainly there are epistemological and political benefits, such as clarifying the ways in which human and nonhuman bodies are bound to each other, and troubling the human/animal divide, along with those I've outlined above. But I wonder, what might be lost when animal studies and attention to species are framed or shadowed by the human? When I, or other feminist animal scholars, must always justify, or explain, or ground our work with attention to the human, and with a ready answer to the question: "What does this have to do with gender?" What might be gained by thinking or at least attempting otherwise? Can we imagine feminist animal scholarship that does not invoke the good of the human, or women, in its attention to the animal, and if so, what might that scholarship look like? Toward this end, my argument is this: feminism as a field and mode of inquiry and being is constitutively and strategically suited to work on speciesism, but this interrelation should be implicit rather than explicit. The condition of "women" and the condition of animals needs to be decoupled. Feminist work on speciesism and within animal studies should be done regardless of humans and regardless of issues of sex/gender. Essentially, feminism needs to detach itself from two "isms": humanism, and to a certain extent, feminism itself.

Feminism and in particular feminist animal scholarship needs to incorporate a more sustained critique of the human and humanism. It is not sufficient to add a concern for animals to a concern for humans, or to justify work on animals by showing how such work bears on humans. Failing to question feminism's own humanism reinforces speciesism and rehearses a well-worn political strategy in which disenfranchised others are allotted some small stake in a constitutively oppressive, hierarchical system, rather than challenging the system itself. We need to be able to pursue and produce scholarship that takes an ethical and political commitment to animals and to combating speciesism as goods in their own right, regardless of the human, and in some cases in spite of the human. This kind of scholarship would begin (and sometimes end) with the question: "what's in it for the animal?" Such a move requires a rejection or at the least radical critique of humanism and a decentering of the human figure within feminism. This is happening in some intellectual and geographical spaces, but it needs to be more thoroughly and constitutively incorporated into mainstream feminism as well as feminist animal scholarship.

Along with humanism, feminism needs to be decentered within feminist animal studies. I would like to distinguish here between taking a feminist approach to animal studies (which I strongly advocate) and feminist animal studies that takes feminism itself as an explicit point of analysis. This became clear to me when I participated in the Sex, Gender, Species Conference held at Wesleyan University in late February 2011. The overwhelming majority of the work presented was excellent, and very much in line with what I imagine feminist animal scholarship might look like with a greater attention to speciesism informing it. There were, however, a number of presentations that either took as their main argument or offered as a secondary argument perceived slights to or rejections of feminism itself. A number of presenters mentioned Cary Wolfe's oft-reiterated claim that contesting speciesism "*has nothing to do with whether you like animals*" (Wolfe 2003, 7), suggesting that it is indicative of his attempt to distance himself from the feminine and feminism. Gaard's historiography of ecofeminism was a particular case in point; the larger, important point that Gaard made was that ecofeminists have been silenced by other disciplines and by feminism, and that, problematically, "human-centered (anthropocentric) feminism . . . has come to dominate feminist thinking in the new millennium" (Gaard 2011, 32). This point, however, is rather ancillary to much of the rest of Gaard's analysis, which seems most concerned with asking whether the silencing of ecofeminism, and the recent success of other fields in articulating many of the same insights as ecofeminists, without citing them as such, is "a form of antifeminism, a feat of prestidigitation that simultaneously appropriates and erases feminist scholarship? Is it intellectual dishonesty? Is it simple ignorance of the work that has been done?" (42). Although she does not spend much time addressing these questions, it appears that she leans toward the first point. I do not find this argument particularly productive, in that justifying the usefulness and value of feminism or documenting the ways in which it continues to be slighted becomes both an end in itself and a kind of conceptual albatross. "The animal" in feminist animal scholarship is here obscured, or made irrelevant by attention to feminism itself.

The question of feminism's role within feminism extends beyond feminist animal scholarship; in *Becoming Undone*, Elizabeth Grosz critiques the pervasive force of intersectionality within feminist studies, arguing that it is now functioning to dilute scholarship. She argues for a future of feminist theory in which "the reign of the 'I'" be displaced, the "I" being that of the subject, but also of identity politics, including the identity of feminism. As such, feminism "cages itself in the reign of the 'I': who am I, who recognizes me, what can I become?" (Grosz 2011, 84). Essentially, Grosz argues for a feminism that freely creates rather than confining itself to feminism for both its inspiration and its research. This is not groundbreaking work; Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, calls for a similar move: not that women abandon their sexual difference, but that they make use of it to open up new forms. Grosz asks: "What is feminist theory at its best?"

What is its continuing radical promise? How is it to be located relative to the other disciplinary forms, other fields of knowledge?" (75) I maintain that feminist animal scholarship "at its best" would affirm the value of studying species and critiquing speciesism on its own terms and not as necessarily connected to the status of women. Feminists would work on species not (only) because they are women or feminists and therefore invested in the implications of species for issues of sex and gender, but because as feminist scholars they are uniquely and strategically positioned to do this work. This work would not be bound by "the human" or "the feminist" but rather make use of them at will, and would also be free to detach from them.

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## Speaking of Animal Bodies

GRETA GAARD

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Has the growth of animal studies been good for animals?

The capacity to ask this question—indeed, to make it central to one's intellectual, scholarly, and pedagogical work—is the hallmark of feminism. Not merely an academic endeavor or a "way of seeing," feminism emerged through women who recognized their own lived experiences of marginalization, oppression, and inequality (whether via race, gender, class, sexuality, age, ability—and usually some nexus thereof) not as personal deficits or biological necessities to be accepted and endured, but rather as socially produced political problems to be challenged. As political and material circumstances allowed (and often when they didn't), feminist women stepped forward to work with other women and feminist men to challenge social hierarchies and create social change. From the start, feminism has been a movement for justice: at its heart is the centrality of praxis, the necessary linkage of intellectual, political, and activist work. Feminist methodology

puts the lives of the oppressed at the center of the research question, and undertakes studies, gathers data, and interrogates material contexts with the primary aim of improving the lives and the material conditions of the oppressed.

When feminists attend to “the question of the animal,” they do so from a standpoint that centers other animals, makes connections among diverse forms of oppression, and seeks to put an end to animal suffering—in other words, to benefit the subject of the research. Nineteenth-century women’s advocacy for animals challenged vivisection, “plumage” (the practice of wearing birds’ feathers or even body parts in women’s hats), fur-wearing and meat-eating alike. Using standard feminist methodology, twentieth-century vegan feminists and animal ecofeminists sought to end animal suffering in its many manifestations (in scientific research, and specifically in the feminized beauty and cleaning products industries; in dairy, egg, and animal food production; in “pet” keeping and breeding, zoos, rodeos, hunting, fur, and clothing) by developing a feminist theoretical perspective on the intersections of species, gender, race, class, sexuality, and nature. Motivated by an intellectual and experiential understanding of the mutually reinforcing interconnections among diverse forms of oppression, as well as by many women’s interconnected sense of self-identity, a self-in-relationship to other animals (including humans) and environments (specific trees, rivers, plants, as well as places), twentieth- and twenty-first-century animal ecofeminists and vegan feminists see their own liberation and well-being as fundamentally connected to the well-being of other animal species; in short, we insist on moving forward together (Harper 2010; Kemmerer 2011). This commitment to an intersectional approach permeates the *praxis* of animal ecofeminists and vegan feminists because, in the words of Martin Luther King, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

So, for example, when Feminists for Animal Rights (FAR) activists learned that many battered women refused to leave situations of domestic violence, aware that there was no place that would shelter both their children and their companion animals, and fearful that leaving the animals behind would almost ensure the animals’ torture, abuse, and death at the hands of the batterer, FAR activists began building coalitions between animal rescue groups and battered women’s shelters (Adams 1995). When animal ecofeminists criticized the harms produced by injecting rBGH into cows, they acknowledged the suffering this growth hormone caused to lactating cows already grieving the separation from their own offspring (calves who would drink the mother cow’s milk, preventing it from being sold to humans)—but ecofeminists also framed the issue as an opportunity to build coalitions among animal advocates, feminists, small farmers, consumer advocates, and environmentalists (Gaard 1994). There are other examples of such *praxis* that exemplify feminist animal studies.

Yet *feminist* empathy for animal suffering was soon *feminized*, and women’s activism for animal rights was mocked as a movement of “emotional little old

ladies in tennis shoes”: in male-supremacist (patriarchal) cultures, the association of women and animals reinforces their subordinate status. Indeed, the animal rights movement itself was catapulted to respectability, insofar as it has been, only when white male philosophers distanced themselves from kindness, empathy, or care, and theorized about the motives for animal liberation as legitimated either by recourse to animal rights (Regan 1983) or attention to animal suffering (Singer 1975). Nearly thirty years later, Cary Wolfe echoes the Singer/Regan era in his claim that “taking animal studies seriously thus has nothing to do, strictly speaking, with whether or not you like animals” (Wolfe 2009, 567). Between these two eras of animal rights/posthumanist studies prominence, feminist animal scholarship flourished.

Building on three decades of praxis by second-wave feminist animal advocates, feminists theorizing about species, gender, nature, and race offered more nuanced and sophisticated corrections to the theories of Singer and Regan (for history, see Gaard 2002). Beginning in the 1990s, vegan feminists and animal ecofeminists began developing animal ethics of care (Adams and Donovan 1995; 1996), contextual moral vegetarianism (Curtin 1991), challenging the gendered dualisms at the foundation of Western culture, redefining human self-identity as political animals, and strategically situating humans within realms of both culture and nature—a location supporting feminist activism for ecology, democracy, and interspecies and environmental justice.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite the theoretical scholarship and political activism of animal ecofeminists and vegan feminists, the visibility of animals within the academy did not take hold. Perhaps attending to anthro(andro)centrism, sexism, and speciesism was just too burdensome for animal ecofeminism’s potential allies. Mainstream feminists of the 1990s seemed adamantly anthropocentric (see discussions by Gruen 1993; Birke 2002; Gaard 2011), with even ecological feminists misrepresenting animal ecofeminists as issuing universalizing mandates for veganism, and thereby evading their own responsibility for attending to animals for at least another decade (Plumwood 2000; Seager 2003). A second group of potential allies, environmental studies scholars and activists, resisted analysis of both gender and species; race and class gained attention within environmental circles after the 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Conference, but familiar patterns persisted there as well, with women doing the bulk of the grass-roots activism, and men doing the majority of speaking and theorizing, excluding the question of the animal from most definitions of “environment.” No one should have been surprised, then, when the confluence of Derrida’s discovery of himself as an animal (Derrida 2002), Wolfe’s coinage of the term “posthumanism” (Wolfe 2003), and Haraway’s exploration of dog training (Haraway 2003) together catapulted the field of animal studies into academic respectability.

Such surprise could be possible only if one forgot the foundational scholarship of feminist communication studies that exposed the gendered patterns of

communication (Lakoff 1975; Spender 1980; Kramarae 1981). Women's talk is subordinated through the use of tag questions ("it seems women are being excluded, doesn't it?"), hedges ("sort of" or "kind of unscholarly to do that"), apologies ("I'm sorry, but it seems vegan feminist scholarship isn't being read"), and frequent interruptions. Women's gendered role in conversation requires linguistic support for and stylistic accommodation to dominant speakers, rather than conversational innovation. The norm dictates that women and men continue topics introduced by men, but when women introduce new topics, these topics are rarely taken up (conversational "uptake" in mixed-power groups is less likely for topics introduced by women and other nondominant groups). Consider the well-known phenomenon of the department or staff meeting, where a woman introduces a new idea that receives no response; later, a man introduces substantially the same idea, which is welcomed with acclaim! Perhaps something similar has occurred in this field of knowledge about animals, where feminists have been developing theory around species, identity, oppression, relationality, society, and ecology for at least three decades, but the topic itself only punctures the glass ceiling and surfaces as an academically respectable field when articulated by the dominant group of scholars—Singer and Regan in the 1970s and 1980s, and now Derrida, Wolfe, and Haraway by 2010.<sup>2</sup>

Feminist communication scholarship has looked not only at whose speech merits attention, but also at who listens; speaking is associated with power, knowledge, and dominance, whereas listening is associated with subordination. If animal ecofeminists and vegan feminists have been speaking and acting in ways that articulate a feminist animal studies approach, the absence of their scholarship from the foundation and development of animal studies indicates that the academic elite have not been listening. Not surprisingly, feminist methodology emphasizes listening as a hallmark of good scholarship—listening to one's research subjects, to the oppressed, to one's activist and scholarly community—and creating structures for collaboration whereby the research subjects can themselves set the agenda, express needs, and benefit from the scholarly endeavor. These "listening failures" in animal studies scholarship are not merely a bibliographical matter of failing to cite feminists, but signify a more profound conceptual failure to grapple with the issues being raised by feminist scholarship, a failure made more egregious when similar ideas are later celebrated if presented via nonfeminist sources. For example, consider how Carol Adams (Adams 2010) helpfully augments Cary Wolfe's (Wolfe 2003) complication of the human/animal binary with categories not just of Wolfe's humanized human, animalized human, humanized animal, and animalized animal, but also animalized *woman* and *feminized* animal, terms that foreground the gender/species/ecology connections that are so relevant to ecological feminism—and, one might hope, to animal studies as well.

Reproduction and consumption are explored within animal studies, but these topics are feminist issues as well: across animal species, female bodies do the

majority of labor in reproduction, and in most human cultures female bodies both serve and are served as the food. Feminist concerns about reproductive freedom apply not only to elite white women but to poor women, indigenous women, women of the global south, and females in factory farming operations as well; from an animal ecofeminist standpoint, the reproductive and sexual enslavement of female animal bodies always raises ethical concerns (Gaard 2010). This practice benefits the few at the expense and suffering of the many: the female animals, their mates and offspring, the workers paid to slaughter them, the subsistence farmers driven out of work by industrial agribusiness, the land clear-cut or polluted with excrement, the water contaminated with antibiotics and growth hormones, the air polluted with excesses of flatulence and carbon dioxide, and the consumers who contract heart disease, obesity, and a variety of cancers and infectious diseases.

What are the benefits of making connections between the insights produced through animal studies and those of a larger ecocultural critique such as a post-colonial, ecological animal feminism? Clearly, such connections extend theory from the realm of the purely intellectual to that of the political. They expose the broader implications and deeper roots of animal studies insights, making the theory more relevant. In many cases, such connections expose our own role in oppressive structures—as consumers of suffering, as contributors to climate change, as sponsors of global food scarcity—and such exposure is not flattering. Moreover, these connections uncover the historical role human–animal relations have played in perpetuating colonization (Huggan and Tiffin 2010)—making it paradoxical for postcolonial scholars and animal studies scholars alike to continue patronizing institutions of species imprisonment, enslavement, and slaughter. In sum, making these broader connections requires restoring what Adams calls “the absent referent” (Adams 1990/2010), the fragmented bodies of animals, and in the face of such suffering, it requires action. In the words of Josephine Donovan, “We should not kill, eat, torture, and exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that. If we listen, we can hear them” (Donovan 1990).

Let’s start listening.

## NOTES

1. Posthumanism also reconceives human identity, adopting the strategy of interrogating the norm (used productively in queer theory to interrogate heteronormativity, for example, and in antiracist studies to interrogate whiteness)—but its theory seems to stop after reconceiving what it means to be human, requiring no particular action after linguistic deconstruction. As Kari Weil concludes, “In the wake of poststructuralist and postmodern decenterings that have displaced the human as a standard for knowledge,

[posthumanist] theory finds itself in a similar predicament. It cannot avoid seeing the animal suffering around us, but has contradictory foundations on which to judge the good or the right thing to do about it" (Weil 2010, 20).

2. Haraway's inclusion in the elite of animal studies can perhaps be explained by her accommodation of a dominant discursive style that shapes not only diction and syntax but also topics. As Haraway has admitted, her interests in dog training do not lead her to refrain from eating other animals (Potts and Haraway 2010), and she is committed to killing other animals, but hopes we can kill responsibly.

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