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Author(s): Susan Fraiman

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Pussy Panic versus Liking Animals: Tracking Gender in Animal Studies

Susan Fraiman

In 1967 Jane Goodall published her first account of bonding with wild chimps, launching a career that would not only popularize primatology but also contribute to its reinvention. Following Goodall, the number of women doing fieldwork on primates would increase, as would attention to the role of females in primate societies (including, under the banner of women's liberation, our own).¹ In 1975, Peter Singer galvanized the modern animal rights movement with *Animal Liberation*, a work that would be heralded as one of its founding texts. That same year, *The Lesbian Reader* included an article by Carol Adams entitled "The Sexual Politics of Meat," inspiration for a book eventually published in 1990. Her scholarship contributed to a growing body of ecofeminist work, emergent in the early 1980s, on women, animals, and the environment. Adams alone would go on to write or edit more than half a dozen volumes theorizing the relation between feminist and vegetarian issues. Three more books bear mention in this quick sketch of innovative, formative work on animals appearing across the disciplines well before the new millennium: *Adam's Task* (1986), by animal trainer and philosopher Vicki Hearne; *The Animal Estate* (1989),

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1. On Goodall's various cultural and political meanings, see Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York, 1989), pp. 133–85; Marianne DeKoven, "Women, Animals, and Jane Goodall: Reason for Hope," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 25 (Spring 2006): 141–51; and Susan McHugh, "Sweet Jane," *Minnesota Review* 73–74 (Fall 2009–Spring 2010): 189–203. On the role of Goodall and other female scientists in the development of primatology, see *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society*, ed. Shirley C. Strum and Linda Marie Fedigan (Chicago, 2000).

by historian Harriet Ritvo; and *Primate Visions* (1989), by feminist historian of science Donna Haraway.²

And then there's Jacques Derrida, his very name being shorthand for theoretical sophistication even now, with the initial heyday of American poststructuralism well behind us. Though briefly indicating an interest in animality both in a 1989 work on Martin Heidegger and in a 1991 interview, Derrida's only sustained commentary on this topic came late in his career. "L'Animal que donc je suis (à suivre)" was the first in a series of talks given at C erisy-la-Salle in 1997. In 2002 it was published in *Critical Inquiry* as "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," and an English translation of the entire series came out in 2008.³ The sincerity, gravity, and acuity of his remarks on the subjection of animals are not in question. Nevertheless, given the relative slightness of these remarks—relative, that

2. See also Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York, 1975); another key text is Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley, 1983). Other references are to Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York, 2000), hereafter abbreviated SPM; Vicki Hearne, *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name* (New York, 1986); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); and Haraway, *Primate Visions*. For simplicity's sake, I will generally be using *animal* to mean "nonhuman animal." I will also use *animal studies* in its broadest, contemporary sense to mean the sprawling, multidisciplinary field known by some as animality studies or human-animal studies and not to be confused with the scientific usage meaning lab studies involving animals. My particular focus will be on animal studies within the purview of the humanities.

3. Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," trans. David Wills, *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2002): 369–418, hereafter abbreviated "A"; the collected lectures appeared as *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. Wills, ed. Marie Louise Mallet (New York, 2008). Derrida's remarks on Lacan's handling of animals are included in Derrida, "And Say the Animal Responded?" trans. Wills, in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis, 2003), pp. 121–46. For Derrida's early comments on animals, see *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, 1989) and "Eating Well"; or, the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," interview by Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, in *Who Comes after the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Connor, and Nancy (New York, 1991), pp. 96–119. For a list not of theoretical interventions but of the critters cropping up in Derrida's writing over the years, see the "200–auto-bio-bibliography" toward the end of "A," pp. 402–6. For further thoughts on where and how the question of animality has long informed his work, see Derrida and Elizabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow . . . : A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, Calif., 2004), pp. 62–76. Matthew Calarco, in *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York, 2008), pp. 103–6, concedes the oddness of Derrida's claim in "A" to have *always* regarded the question of the animal as paramount, but goes on to offer a helpful overview of Derridean texts bearing, at least implicitly, on this question.

SUSAN FRAIMAN is professor of English at the University of Virginia and the author of *Cool Men and the Second Sex* (2003). She is currently writing about marginal versions of domesticity (including queer, posttraumatic, feminist, and homeless).

is, both to his own corpus and to the immense body of in-depth animal scholarship—Derrida’s inclusion in this narrative might seem, at first glance, unwarranted. Why pause over a one-off talk by a thinker notably more concerned with words than flesh? I do so because of his nomination, early in the twenty-first century, as forefather of a dramatically renovated version of animal studies, extending across the disciplines and linked to the theoretical project of “posthumanism.” Once an obscure and idiosyncratic subfield, by 2009 animal studies had been remade as a newly legitimate, high-profile area of humanities research, its status evinced by burgeoning numbers of special issues, conferences, and publications at top presses. As I am not the first to note, this rapid increase in cultural capital appears closely correlated to the fact that several of those most publicly identified with the “new” animal studies look for authorization to Derrida.⁴

Chief among these is Cary Wolfe, whose oft-cited overview for the 2009 animal issue of *PMLA* gives some indication of his stature in the field. Taking its cue from *PMLA*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ran its own animal cluster not long after, including an introductory piece serving to confirm four things: the official arrival of animal studies, Wolfe’s prominence in the new formation, the tagging of Derrida as originary figure, and the interrelation among these. Introducing Wolfe as “one of the leading theorists in animal studies,” Jennifer Howard went on to quote his claim in *PMLA* that “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” is “arguably the single most important event in the brief history of animal studies.” Derrida’s primacy was reiterated by Matthew Calarco, author of *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (2008),

4. See Haraway, “Science Stories: An Interview with Donna J. Haraway,” interview by Jeffrey J. Williams, *Minnesota Review* 73–74 (Fall 2009–Spring 2010): 133–63; hereafter abbreviated “SS”: “Derrida did some wonderful stuff, but he doesn’t start animal studies. There’s no question that the big name theorists lend a certain cachet to a certain aspect of animal studies these days, which isn’t necessarily the fault of Jacques Derrida or Gilles Deleuze” (“SS,” p. 157). She continues with a warm defense of Cary Wolfe’s work, describing him as “a very committed, on-the-ground animal person. . . . In graduate school he was taking the lab dogs out for walks” (“SS,” p. 157). Elaborating on Haraway’s point about “cachet,” I will be offering a more critical view of Wolfe’s reliance on Derrida. Needless to say, my own discussion does not concern Wolfe as a *person*. Leaving aside his real-life relation to animals, I am interested in Wolfe’s theoretical project (including its formulation as, precisely, set apart from the dog-walking everyday). My topic is also the reception of his work—an aspect, as Haraway notes, exceeding the author’s control and responsibility. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Massumi et al. (Minneapolis, 1987) has played a cachet-bestowing role not unlike Derrida’s “A.” For Haraway’s scathing view of its section on “becoming-animal,” see pp. 27–30 of *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, 2008); hereafter abbreviated *W*. For another such view, see Xavier Vitamvor, “Unbecoming Animal Studies,” *Minnesota Review* 73–74 (Fall 2009–Spring 2010): 183–87.

who explained to Howard that Derrida “has almost single-handedly made the question [of animals] interesting for people in lots of disciplines.”⁵ In other contexts, Wolfe and Calarco allude, at least in passing, to important work in animal studies dating back to the eighties. Yet, as we see here, both emphatically *single out* Derrida as animal studies’ preeminent source and sponsor, and Calarco frankly credits the philosopher with attracting interest to an area of research just now emerging from the shadows. As I have suggested, the sexy subset of what might fairly be called Derridean animal studies is only part of a larger, longer standing, interdisciplinary whole. Increasingly, however, especially in the humanities, it is the subset called upon to speak for animal studies and accorded prestige by the profession.⁶

If Derridean animal studies seems poised to corner the contemporary market, I am troubled in part by its revisionary history—the way an origin story beginning in 2002 serves to eclipse the body of animal scholarship loosely referenced above, dozens of books going back some forty years, long before Derrida’s essay was brought to the attention of English speakers. Much of this pioneering work was by women and feminists—a significant portion under the rubric of ecofeminism—and all of it arose in dialogue with late-century liberation movements, including the second-wave women’s movement. No surprise, then, that Singer would introduce the term *speciesism* and that animal studies would frequently be likened to intellectual formations spearheaded by opponents of racism and sexism. As the *Chronicle* piece rightly notes, however, animal scholars today are divided in their willingness to affiliate openly with the animal rights movement. Those mobilizing Derrida typically distinguish their project not only from animal advocacy but also from gender studies and other areas animated by specific political commitments. As we will see, Wolfe does this primarily by locating his animal work under the broader, theoretical rubric of posthumanism. But his comments to the *Chronicle* and elsewhere suggest institutional as well as theoretical concerns. Matter-of-factly invoking the gendered logic of academic reception, Wolfe anticipates the case I will be making below. Howard quotes him as worried that the women’s studies model would lead to “ghettoization,” and Calarco admits that he,

5. Jennifer Howard, “Creature Consciousness,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 Oct. 2009, chronicle.com/article/Creature-Consciousness/48804/; hereafter abbreviated “CC.”

6. See Wolfe, “Human, All Too Human: ‘Animal Studies’ and the Humanities,” *PMLA* 124 (Mar. 2009): 564–75; hereafter abbreviated “H.” In addition to Wolfe and Calarco, see David Wood, *Thinking after Heidegger* (Malden, Mass., 2002), and Leonard Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York, 2007). Also relevant here is *Derridanimals*, ed. Neil Badmington, special issue of *Oxford Literary Review* 29 (2007). For additional animal works in dialogue with Derrida, see also various titles in the Posthumanities Series edited by Wolfe for the University of Minnesota Press.

too, is anxious lest animal studies become “another one of these minority studies” (“CC”).

Though animal studies is, of course, defined by its attention to species, this essay will explore its further saturation by notions about masculinity, femininity, and feminism—even (or especially) when not explicitly engaged with these categories. In the pages to come, I aim to unpack the troubling gender politics of two related tendencies: the installation of Derrida as founding father; and the framing of animal studies in opposition to emotionally and politically engaged work on gender, race, and sexuality. I begin by contrasting two animal anecdotes—one taken from Derrida, the other from primatologist Barbara Smuts. Instead of citing him as a hedge against minoritization, here I call on Derrida to help schematize the effects of gender. He and Smuts provide me with “primal scenes,” which I offer as allegories for “masculine” and “feminine” modes of encountering another species. The middle section of my essay considers Wolfe’s animal scholarship as a leading example of the Derridean turn. Together these readings elaborate a critique directed not only at Wolfe but also at academic protocols tending to devalue scholarship marked as feminine. I close with two more anecdotes that once again humorously mark divergent approaches to animals and animal studies. Juxtaposing texts by Adams and Haraway, this final section also models an alternative to Wolfe’s posthumanist idiom; despite their many disagreements, Adams and Haraway both exemplify an animal scholarship informed by feminism, open to emotion, and frankly invested in social change.

Why This Shame?

On the trail of gender in animal studies, let us now turn to Derrida’s memorable anecdote in “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow).” Derrida doesn’t, of course, proceed in linear fashion from beginning to end but prefers to tease us with multiple versions embedded in thickets of puns, repetitions, speculations, and asides. We are warned from the outset that there will be nudity. The gist of the anecdote, we learn soon enough, involves a cat who has occasion to look at our philosopher—indeed, to study him coolly as he stands there naked. Gazed upon so directly by this unabashed creature, Derrida’s reaction is embarrassment, compounded by shame at feeling so: “And why this shame that blushes for being ashamed? Especially, I should make clear, if the cat observes me frontally naked, face to face, and if I am naked faced with the cat’s eyes looking at me as it were from head to toe, just *to see*, not hesitating to concentrate its vision—in order to see, with a view to seeing—in the direction of my sex” (“A,” p. 373). The cat in question, he will soon stipulate,

“is a real cat, truly, believe me, *a little cat*. It isn’t the *figure* of a cat” (“A,” p. 374). The “sex” in this scene, we can only assume, is likewise “real” as well as densely symbolic—and it is, moreover, specifically male. It flinches just a little before the animal’s fixed gaze; while the cat looks without touching or biting, Derrida informs us “that threat remains on its lips or on the tip of the tongue” (“A,” p. 373). The cat’s look and man’s blush will recur as a kind of refrain for the essay as a whole—its burden, as it were. A subsequent account elaborates on what Derrida describes as a daily ritual: “The cat follows me when I wake up, into the bathroom, asking for her breakfast, but she demands to be let out of that very room as soon as it (or she) sees me naked” (“A,” p. 382). This passage leads directly to Derrida’s stinging taxonomy, classing together those philosophers unable to acknowledge an animal’s gaze. Later he will tie this refusal by post-Cartesian philosophers to be seen and addressed by animals to the Holocaust-like violence against them in the modern era (see “A,” pp. 394–95). Citing René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Heidegger, Jacques Lacan, and Emanuel Lévinas as examples of those belonging to this category, Derrida inserts a striking proviso: “(all those males but not all those females, and that difference is not insignificant here)” (“A,” pp. 382–83).

It is Derrida himself, then, who cues my efforts to articulate the “not insignificant” difference of gender as it functions in discussions of animality.⁷ As the essay winds down, Derrida’s concern with gender becomes more explicit; his final pages shift away from “Man” meaning “human” to “(s)he,” “man or woman,” “he or she,” “him- or herself” (“A,” pp. 416–17). In his closing paragraphs, he takes the further step of imagining an unashamed “I” capable of presenting himself “in his totally naked truth. And in the naked truth, if there is such a thing, of his or her sexual difference, of all their sexual differences” (“A,” p. 418). Maneuvering beyond binarized to pluralized sexual differences, the conclusion of “Animal” thus echoes the well-known reverie at the end of “Choreographies: “I would like to

7. I use *gender* to indicate a logic organizing “A” above and beyond Derrida’s characteristic play with the markers of sexual difference. For a full-blown discussion of Derrida’s failure in “A” to sustain a critique of sexual as well as species difference, see Lisa Guenther, “Who Follows Whom? Derrida, Animals, and Women,” *Derrida Today* 2 (Nov. 2009): 151–65. For examples of diverse feminist views on sexual difference in Derrida, see Leslie Wahl Rabine, “The Unhappy Hymen Between Feminism and Deconstruction,” in *The Other Perspective in Gender and Culture: Rewriting Women and the Symbolic*, ed. Juliet Flower MacCannell (New York, 1990), pp. 20–38; *Derrida and Feminism: Recasting the Question of Woman*, ed. Ellen K. Feder, Mary C. Rawlinson, and Emily Zakin (New York, 1997); *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida*, ed. Nancy J. Holland (University Park, Pa., 1997); and Anne-Emmanuelle Berger, “Sexing Differences,” *Differences* 16 (Fall 2005): 52–67. As these works demonstrate, a critique of particular texts does not preclude an appreciation for what Derridean concepts may have to offer feminist theorists.

believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices,” Derrida says there. “I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks.”⁸ I would like to believe in this, too—and yet, despite a number of such de-binarizing moves in “Animal,” I am riveted by the image of a self-consciously masculinized human, in his bathroom without a stitch, shamed by the gaze of a cat whose femaleness as well as realness is specified early on (see “A,” p. 375). Like the cat, I cannot help looking (“in order to see, with a view to seeing”) in the direction of the narrator’s “sex.”

To aid in this examination, let us juxtapose Derrida’s story with a kindred account by Smuts. Like Derrida, Smuts tells of an encounter between human and nonhuman animals in terms that are both highly personal and incipiently paradigmatic. One day, while living with and studying baboons in Kenya, Smuts finds herself fingertip to fingertip with a juvenile member of the troop. Her hand resting on a rock, she is surprised by a gentle touch before turning to recognize “a slight fellow named Damien.” As Smuts goes on to explain, “he looked intently into my eyes, as if to make sure that I was not disturbed by his touch, and then he proceeded to use his index finger to examine, in great detail, each one of my fingernails in turn. . . . After touching each nail, and without removing his finger, Damien glanced up at me for a few seconds. Each time our gaze met, I wondered if he, like I, was contemplating the implications of the realization that our fingers and fingernails were so alike.”⁹

As I need hardly observe, in Smuts’s story, proper names serve to denominate the narrating human *female* and the encountered animal *male*. It thus inverts what I have depicted as the relatively stable, normative gendering of Derrida’s couple—a gendering that means to bare and implicate the speaker’s masculinity along with his humanity but that also has the further effect of staging a seemingly primal confrontation between masculinized human and feminized animal.¹⁰ The two stories differ, moreover, in

8. Derrida, “Choreographies: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” interview by Christie V. McDonald, trans. MacDonald, *Diacritics* 12 (Summer 1982): 76.

9. Barbara Smuts, “Reflections,” in J. M. Coetzee et al., *The Lives of Animals*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J., 1999), p. 113; hereafter abbreviated “R.” Smuts’s is one of four “reflections” on Coetzee’s fictional staging of a debate about animal rights. Observing that “none of the characters ever mentions a personal encounter with an animal,” she proceeds to speak from her own experiences as scientist and pet owner (“R,” p. 107).

10. Derrida knows his anecdote has the ring of a primal scene but insists he doesn’t intend it as such; see “A,” p. 380. A further effect of Derrida’s masculine first-person is slippage between “man” in the precise sense and “Man” as a false generic meaning “human.” Uncertainty as to whether such slippage has occurred is a recurrent feature of “A” itself up until its last three pages, due in part to the discursive tradition Derrida engages; for an extended analysis of this equivocation, see Guenther, “Who Follows Whom?” The problem is worse in

depicting and ranking the senses. True that Derrida's cat is accorded the power of the gaze: the singular, discerning "point of view" traditionally tied to cognition and reserved for humans. Yet the bathroom transaction overall—explicitly visual (and visually explicit) but definitely not tactile—leaves intact the old rationalist hierarchy valuing vision/mind/cognition over touch/body/emotion. Illustrating a tendency common to animal rights advocacy, though also routinely criticized, Derrida's cat is granted provisional subject status in implicitly humanist terms—ones that continue to reflect the premium placed by our own upright species on the "higher" faculties. Smuts's account, on the other hand, effectively challenges this hierarchy—not only by prioritizing the meeting of fingertips but also by undoing the opposition between touch and vision, showing instead how these senses overlap and collaborate to bridge the distance between baboon and biologist. As Smuts carefully notes, Damien's gaze adds another level of contact but doesn't supersede his touch. He raises his eyes to check in visually without breaking the tactile bond. The intimacy thus sustained brings me, finally, to the most striking divergence between these two animal tales: their presiding affects.

As we have seen, Derrida's encounter is suffused with anxiety and, as he tells us repeatedly, a double dose of shame. This is certainly a reasonable response to our history of defining animals as killable, and Derrida's self-ironizing essay is superb in its wish to hold us accountable. The difference in the emotional and ethical emphasis of Smuts's story is nevertheless telling. The real-time pacing of her narrative, detailing each moment of tactile and visual contact, seems to replicate and reciprocate in formal terms the tentativeness, attentiveness, and tenderness of Damien's gestures toward her. The interaction it models is based on mutual care, in the sense of heightened awareness as well as solicitude. The emotional stance it describes is relaxed, wondering, receptive to animal overtures and meanings—this in contrast to Derrida's account of his nervous, sheepish impulse to cover himself. Indeed, as Haraway has pointed out, Derrida's worries about being exposed are such that the cat herself is soon all but forgotten (see *W*, p. 20).¹¹

the layers of commentary and metacommentary on Derrida's animal discourse, in which *Man* as representative human is all too easily renaturalized. See Fordham University Press's overview of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, touting Derrida's critique of the distinction "between man as thinking animal and every other living species." Lawlor's *This Is Not Sufficient* is frequently ambiguous in its usage; at still one more remove, David Wood's blurb on the back dustjacket cover of Lawlor's book is not; Wood praises the author for tracing Derrida's "indictment of man's violence to (other) animals." (By contrast, Calarco and Wolfe make a point of avoiding *man* as a false generic.)

11. Haraway adds that Derrida's apt criticism of Western philosophers fails to look for

This dynamic, whereby interest flips into incuriosity, would not surprise Silvan Tomkins, for whom retreat from another's gaze is the very definition of shameful response. As Tomkins explains, the shame response is marked by a lowering of the eyes that "calls a halt to looking." "Such a barrier," Tomkins continues, "might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange." Tomkins argues, moreover, that lowering one's eyes and bowing one's head in shame entails a loss of human dignity, since "man above all other animals insists on walking erect." All of this would seem to be applicable in Derrida's case, including Tomkins's observation that shame is frequently experienced as shameful, compounding the original effect.¹² As far as human-animal relations are concerned, Derrida's shame thus appears to cut both ways. It is triggered by the philosopher's *wish* to commune with a four-legged creature; moreover, by undermining his sense of human superiority, it would seem to put them both, as animals, on a par. At the same time, in registering animal "strangeness," shame abruptly calls a halt to their encounter. What then are we to make of the apparent shamelessness of Smuts's visual and tactile communion with a baboon? Given women's historically embattled relation to full human dignity and entitlement, is it possible she finds Damien less strange than Derrida finds his little cat? And might she not, for the same reason, be less susceptible to shame at being ashamed, the second-order humiliation brought about by compromised erectness?¹³

Derrida's French title plays on "je suis" in its double sense of "I am" and "I follow": "L'Animal que donc je suis (à suivre)." So saying, he names himself an animal while also questioning the putative precedence of human animals before all others. Smuts, meantime, spent years scrambling to keep up with a very mobile troop of baboons. Before leaving these two figures, I want briefly to differentiate their shared dedication to *following animals*. Derrida's riffs on following animals include tracking animals in

possible counterexamples in areas outside the humanities (see *W*, p. 21), and she precedes me in looking to Smuts for an antidote. Citing Smuts, *Sex and Friendship in Baboons* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), Haraway contrasts Derrida's limited curiosity about his cat to Smuts's innovative research method of socializing with baboons on their own terms; see *W*, pp. 23–26. Despite Haraway's renown as a feminist theorist, *W* is not ostensibly concerned with gender. It is, however, loaded with references affirming her identification with feminist politics and theory.

12. Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, N.C., 1995), pp. 134, 135, 136.

13. Derrida himself makes some suggestive remarks along these lines later in "A," when he contrasts the shame of mythical Greek hero Bellerophon with the shamelessness of women; see "A," pp. 413–14.

the philosophical record; acknowledging our historically predatory relations to animals; and challenging our temporal/ontological priority as humans. Citing the fact that Adam names “animals created before him” (“A,” p. 384), Derrida identifies our own animality as belated and derivative. Theoretically compelling, all this remains nonetheless at odds with the image of a cat following him into the bathroom, petitioning for breakfast, only to be left behind as he flies off in pursuit of more abstract game. The result is to keep Derrida, however unwillingly, in the position of alpha animal—putting the philosopher before the feline, the call of the mind before that of the body, and all at the expense of genuine mutuality.

Smuts has, of course, the perhaps too-easy advantage of immersion in fieldwork with actual animals. Notably, however, her work with baboons involves far more than literally tracking them across the savannah. As Smuts explains, she learned to keep physical pace with the baboons only by trusting them emotionally and deferring to them cognitively: “Abandoning myself to their far superior knowledge, I moved as a humble disciple, learning from masters about being an African anthropoid” (“R,” p. 109). Following the lead of animals on these multiple levels would come to characterize Smuts’s research method overall. Disregarding the protocol of maintaining a “neutral” distance from her subjects, she put herself in baboon hands, yielded to their expertise, and took her cues from them about baboon sociality as well as survival (“R,” p. 109). Back at the ranch, influenced by her work with primates, Smuts’s relationship with her dog, Safi, is similarly guided by principles of negotiation and mutual accommodation rather than ordinary human dominance. “Because I spent years following baboons around,” Smuts says, “I realized that nonhumans tend to have a superior grasp of wild places” (“R,” p. 119). It is therefore sometimes Safi who takes them for a walk, sniffing out their route while her person happily brings up the rear (see “R,” p. 119). In short, while “following” for Derrida quickly comes to mean chasing down the abjection of animals by Western philosophers, for Smuts it has meant letting go the lead, drawing closer, apprenticing herself to animal ways of being and knowing.

Real Men Don’t Like Animals

Clearly some of the variation in these animal stories by Derrida and Smuts may be chalked up to disciplinary training and disposition—no surprise, we might say, that a philosopher would be less in touch with real animals than an ethologist. Disciplinary paradigms also explain Smuts’s assumption (in her scholarship on baboons) that animal behaviors are naturally tied to reproductive expediency. For a feminist in the humanities

like myself, Smuts's evolutionary reasoning, fraught with sociobiological associations, has very little appeal; I get far more leverage from the constructionist views of gender (and identities in general) that Derrida's work has helped to formulate. Disciplinary factors aside, however, what I find interesting are the differences I would parse in terms of gender. Needless to say, I am not suggesting that Derrida's relation to animals is somehow inherently, inflexibly male—or, for that matter, seamlessly “masculine” in tenor. Nor, as I have said, do I see it as uniformly less feminist than Smuts's. I offer the examples of Derrida's anxious man and Smuts's interactive woman merely as tropes for differences between “masculine” and “feminine” approaches to animals and animal studies that are often but not always aligned with male and female morphology. I will also, before we are done, cite examples of divergences within these categories.

If they are not biological, how might we account for the frequent differences, referenced and in some ways illustrated by Derrida, between male and female narratives about humans in relation to other animals? We need not look very far (though many choose not to) for a sizeable body of scholarship responding to this question in highly theorized, historicized detail. As I began by mentioning, a cohort of ecofeminists—including Adams, Josephine Donovan, Brian Luke, Connie Salamone, Marti Kheel, Andrée Collard, Deane Curtin, Alice Walker, Deborah Slicer, Greta Gaard, Lori Gruen, Lynda Birke, and Karen Warren, among others—embarked several decades ago on the project of challenging deeply embedded humanist assumptions concerning gender and animality.¹⁴ Broadly speaking, these include the notions that women and animals are linked together as avatars of nature; that they are similarly debased by their shared association with body over mind, feeling over reason, object rather than subject status; that men are rational subjects, who therefore naturally dominate women and animals alike; that masculinity is produced in contradistinction to the feminine, animal, bodily, emotional, and acted upon; that degree of manliness is correlated to a degree of distance from these and other related categories—physicality, literalness, sentimentality, vulnerability, domesticity, and so on. None of this is news to seasoned feminists or

14. For a comprehensive overview of ecofeminism—its roots in 1980s activism, its broad range of scholars and diversity of approaches including materialist ones, its internal debates and development over the last thirty years—see Greta Gaard, “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism,” *Feminist Formations* 23 (Summer 2011): 26–53. Gaard shares my chagrin at the discrediting of ecofeminist scholarship, even as its contributions are appropriated and esteemed under other rubrics. Whereas my focus is the neglect of ecofeminism by Derridean animal studies, Gaard addresses its similar mischaracterization and dismissal as “essentialist” by the feminist academic establishment.

poststructuralists bent on troubling all such binary oppositions. It is therefore surprising that even someone like Derrida, known for his strategic identification with the feminized, animalized margins, should still in “Animal” flinch at the “threat” connoted by his little cat. Or perhaps it is not surprising, given Derrida’s own emphasis on our inability completely to escape this dualistic logic. As a result, men working in the area of contemporary animal studies—men siding with animals—may indeed feel threatened by “castration.” Proximity to this feminized realm may even induce a degree of gender/species anxiety I am tempted to call (with a nod to Eve Sedgwick) pussy panic.

A likely though not inevitable response to such panic is emphatic disavowal of all further, feminizing associations—emotionality in particular—along with the principled affirmation of masculinizing ones. In her incisive 1990 essay, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory,” Donovan identified this gender dynamic at work in two books foundational to the contemporary movement for animal rights as well as to animal studies: Singer’s aforementioned *Animal Liberation* and Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). Donovan begins by citing passages in which each writer explicitly sets off his own carefully reasoned, academically credible defense of animals from the emotionally motivated, easily dismissed concerns of “animal lovers.” Speaking for himself and his wife, Singer insists they have never been “inordinately fond of dogs, cats, or horses.” “We didn’t ‘love’ animals,” he repeats, noting that the presumed sentimentality of animal rights views has led to their exclusion from “serious political and moral discussion.” Regan is similarly anxious to counter “the tired charge of being ‘irrational,’ ‘sentimental,’ ‘emotional,’ or worse.” He doesn’t specify what could possibly be “worse,” though I have tried to suggest where his fears are likely to lie. Regan thus advises scholars defending animal rights to make “a concerted effort not to indulge our emotions or parade our sentiments. And that requires making a sustained commitment to rational inquiry.”¹⁵

As Donovan demonstrates, both men make a point of distancing themselves from inordinate feelings clearly coded as feminine, while allying themselves instead with a mode of “serious . . . discussion” and “rational inquiry” no less clearly marked as masculine. It is not that women are inherently kinder to animals, Donovan explains—many are not; nevertheless, those who take up the cause of animals are often more willing to

15. Quoted in Josephine Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory,” in *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals*, ed. Donovan and Adams (New York, 1996), pp. 34–35.

acknowledge the emotional aspect of their advocacy. Indeed, as designated outsiders to the realm of rationality, women (with less to lose) have often led the way in challenging rationalist frameworks altogether and recuperating their assemblage of subordinated terms—the feminine and affective along with the animal.¹⁶ Regan and Singer, by contrast, are driven by gender norms to make a show of demonizing feeling, thereby basing their defense of animals on the very rationalist schema that spurns animality in the first place. As Donovan concludes, “unfortunately, contemporary animal rights theorists, in their reliance on theory that derives from the mechanistic premises of Enlightenment epistemology (natural rights in the case of Regan and utilitarian calculation in the case of Singer) and in their suppression/denial of emotional knowledge, continue to employ Cartesian, or objectivist, modes even while they condemn the scientific practices enabled by them.”¹⁷ What I take from Donovan’s analysis is the following maxim: the more a male-identified scholar is devoted to animal liberation, the more pressure he is under to assert his nonlove for animals. Moving on to Wolfe, I want to explore what I see as traces of this logic—even in work that sets itself off from Singer and Regan and that sometimes invokes gender as an explicit category of analysis.

In addition to the *PMLA* overview, “Human, All Too Human: ‘Animal Studies’ and the Humanities,” Wolfe’s important contributions to animal studies include the edited volume *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (2003) and *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003).¹⁸ His central project in these texts is to

16. See *ibid.*, pp. 35–36. For a recent example, see Rosi Braidotti, “Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others,” *PMLA* 124 (Mar, 2009): 526–32. As Braidotti explains, “Becoming animal, minoritarian . . . speaks to my feminist self, partly because my sex, historically speaking, never made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is at best negotiable” (p. 531). See also Marianne DeKoven, “Guest Column: Why Animals Now?” *PMLA* 124 (Mar, 2009): 361–69. Like Braidotti, DeKoven is a feminist theorist who links her work on animals to her positioning by gender; noting that “women and animals go together,” she derives her attraction to animal studies “in part from that pervasive cultural linkage” (p. 366).

17. Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory,” p. 45. Though Singer’s reliance on Jeremy Bentham (whose criterion for animal rights is not reason but *suffering*) might seem to exempt him, Donovan argues that utilitarianism remains a pervasively rationalist framework. See also pp. 291–92 of Brian Luke, “Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation,” in *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, ed. Adams and Donovan (Durham, 1995), pp. 290–319.

18. See Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, 2003); hereafter abbreviated *AR*. In *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, 2010), Wolfe brings Derridean animal studies together with his longstanding interest in systems theory. See also Wolfe’s contributions to two multiauthored volumes: Wolfe, “Exposures,” in Stanley Cavell et al., *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York, 2008), pp. 1–41 and “Humanist and Posthumanist Antispecism,” Paola Cavalieri et al., *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue with Commentaries* (New York, 2009), pp. 45–58.

indicate the anthropocentrism on which Western thinking continues to depend, even in poststructuralist work theoretically committed to debunking humanism and even in “cultural studies” work politically committed to eliminating bias. Wolfe would have us grapple seriously with nonhuman subjects, adding that a discourse of species permitting cruelty to animals serves equally well to justify violence against animalized groups of humans (see *AR*, p. 7, and “H,” p. 567). It is ostensibly for this latter reason (our own, human stake in opposing speciesism) that Wolfe adduces his version of the familiar disclaimer. Italicized for emphasis in *Animal Rites*, reiterated in *PMLA*, and commonly pulled out for quotation in discussions of these texts, its wording is unconditional: “The ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a post-humanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like animals*” (*AR*, p. 7). Earlier in “Human, All Too Human,” Wolfe differentiates animal studies from scholarship reducing animals to “metaphor, analogy, representation, or sociological datum (in which, say, relations of class, or race, or gender get played out and negotiated through the symbolic currency of animality and species difference)” (“H,” p. 567). It is work of this latter kind, focused solely on the animalization of humans, that may proceed quite apart from caring about animals per se. By contrast, the work Wolfe champions would seem to be distinguished precisely by its two-part motive: social justice for humans but also, crucially, attention to the specificity of animals, an investment in animal welfare, and a sense of affiliation with animals for which liking is as good a word as any.

To repeat then, in Wolfe the declaration of nonlove is formulated as the insistence that liking animals (“strictly speaking,” the *PMLA* iteration adds) has *nothing* to do with the imperative to challenge speciesism. Recalling Singer and Regan, this move to rule out “liking” feels both overstated and disingenuous. Indeed, though offered as a narrowly drawn conclusion, it is logically extraneous to Wolfe’s pitch for animal studies, even a bit puzzling—unless we understand it in relation to the traditional gender dynamic described above. As we have seen, however superfluous in logical terms, not-needing-to-like-animals has obvious advantages in strategic terms, as long as one assumes the bundling of nonemotionality and nonfemininity with intellectual credibility. That this assumption continues to hold sway is suggested by several other strategies fending off not only affection for animals but also association with two intellectual formations marked as feminine: ecofeminism and contemporary gender studies.

While most ecofeminists receive no mention at all, Adams and Collard are listed in the *PMLA* piece, and Adams is credited exactly twice in *Animal Rites* for her point that women and animals frequently code one another

within semiotic systems rendering both consumable. In each case, however, Wolfe acknowledges Adams's argument but then proceeds to undercut or supplant her contribution. Thus, in their compelling chapter on Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*, Wolfe and coauthor Jonathan Elmer take Adams to stand for ecological feminism only to set it aside as inadequate: "We want to specify our differences with a critical discourse that at first seems promising for an analysis of Demme's film." Granting the gist of Adams's argument, they insist the film calls "for a more nuanced and complex analysis" (AR, pp. 104, 105). The other mention of Adams occurs in Wolfe's introduction, which offers an appreciative synopsis of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, before ending with a flourish of deference to Derrida. Adams's view, Wolfe concludes, is "all compressed in what Derrida's recent work calls 'carnophallogocentrism'" (AR, p. 8). With this closing swerve to poststructuralism, Wolfe permits a speculative coinage lifted from a single interview ("Eating Well") to "compress" and effectively trump what for Adams is the central concern of books and articles extending, as I have stressed, back to the mid-1970s. The substitution of Derrida for Adams, poststructuralism for ecofeminism is a move shaping *Animal Rites* as a whole and that, in general, subtends Wolfe's posthumanist approach to animal studies.¹⁹ In fact, notwithstanding his wish to downplay liking, much of the work Wolfe does under a Derridean rubric revisits arguments previously made by ecofeminists: their interrogation of dualistic thinking; their quarrel with arguments for animal "rights" that remain steeped in liberal humanism, especially those by Singer and Regan; their claim that women and animals are categories liable to trope one another in producing the dominant category of white, human masculinity.²⁰ Yet despite this continuity with Adams, Donovan, and others, *Animal Rites* effectively authorizes its critique of speciesism and model for contemporary animal studies by means of a revamped genealogy—one skewed to privilege Derrida and disregard the groundwork laid by ecofeminism. Rather

19. The failure to reference ecofeminist precedents is already, as Haraway suggests in a footnote, present in Derrida: "Unfortunately, philosophers like Derrida are unlikely to read, cite, or recognize as philosophy the large feminist literatures indicated in my notes above. . . . The feminist work was often both first and also less entrained in the traps of misrecognizing animals as singular, even if we have been just as caught in the nets of humanism" (W, p. 334).

20. In Wolfe's astute reading of Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, for example, the problem of Jake's injured masculinity is displaced from the realm of gender onto the realm of species; he can then repair his "manhood" by proving his mastery over animals (and superiority to mere carnality); see AR, pp. 138–39. Echoing but never citing Adams, this chapter once again invokes Derrida as shorthand for ecofeminist arguments: Jake's initial feminization and animalization are unsurprising, Wolfe explains, "when we remember the strictly homologous positions of the feminine and the animal in the cultural regime of 'carnophallogocentrism'" (AR, p. 132).

than engaging with feminist precursors, Wolfe builds his case, following Derrida, by contending with philosophical fathers from Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Wittgenstein to Jean-François Lyotard and Lévinas.

In addition to distancing itself from ecofeminism, *Animal Rites* opens by distinguishing its project from what is sweepingly disparaged as “cultural studies.” Its very first sentence singles out “what we call cultural studies” to illustrate “a fundamental repression that underlies most ethical and political discourse.” In other words, Wolfe continues, “well-intentioned critics of racism, (hetero)sexism, classism, and all other -isms that are the stock-in-trade of cultural studies almost always remain locked within an unexamined framework of *speciesism*” (AR, p. 1). There is no reason given here for launching a critique of widespread, deeply rooted speciesism over against this particular intellectual/political formation (especially since most of the book will focus elsewhere), though Wolfe would not be the first to relish finding an -ism guilty of an -ism of its own. But the wish to avoid contamination by “identity politics,” referenced somewhat euphemistically as “cultural studies,” comes through clearly enough. It is a wish that Wolfe reiterates and elaborates six years later in “Human, All Too Human,” at which point he devotes several pages to repudiating “the cultural studies template” (“H,” p. 568). The crux of his complaint is that, even when adding animals and speciesism to the list of objects studied, “cultural studies” remains essentially “humanist” in its premises and procedures. Equating cultural studies with a facile pluralism and investment in “rights,” Wolfe cites the standard poststructuralist critique of the “liberal humanist” tradition, stressing the human bias built into its presumption of unified, individual subjects. Without giving a single example, relying entirely on other scholars for a blanket indictment of cultural studies as incoherent and vague, Wolfe blames these qualities for helping to obscure what remains a normative conception of subjectivity, despite the rhetorical inclusion of animals (see “H,” p. 568). “In this light,” he says ominously, “animal studies, if taken seriously, would not so much extend or refine a certain mode of cultural studies as *bring it to an end*” (“H,” p. 568; emphasis added).

Wolfe closes his case against cultural studies by shifting abruptly from a catch-all, “liberal” notion of cultural studies to a specific, Marxist one. Underwritten by Antonio Gramsci’s notion of “critical consciousness,” cultural studies is said to privilege the distinctly human attributes of “critical introspection and self-reflection” (“H,” p. 570). It “thus reinstates the human/animal divide in a less visible but more fundamental way, while ostensibly gesturing beyond it” (“H,” p. 570). The *PMLA* piece concludes by touting an alternative template for animal studies, one that “intersects

with the larger problematic of posthumanism” (“H,” pp. 571–72). For as Wolfe explains, his ultimate goal is a posthumanism reaching beyond a thematic and ethical focus on animals to interrogate humanist ways of knowing: “Just because a historian or literary critic devotes attention to the topic or theme of nonhuman animals doesn’t mean that a familiar form of humanism isn’t being maintained through internal disciplinary practices that rely on a specific schema of the knowing subject and of the kind of knowledge he or she can have” (“H,” p. 572). In *What Is Posthumanism?* (2010), Wolfe will go on to argue still more forcefully for subordinating a critique of speciesism to the “larger” theoretical question posed by his title, reiterating that “the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist.”²¹

My responses to these several claims can be summed up as follows. To begin with, the targeting of Gramsci among countless purveyors of intellectualism seems arbitrary at best—and besides, does recognizing animal subjectivity necessarily mean demonizing our own capacity for critical introspection? Beyond this, I take serious issue with Wolfe’s dismissive and inaccurate characterization of “cultural studies.”²² Indeed, the vagueness and incoherence Wolfe attributes to “the cultural studies template” is arguably a function of his own overly broad and flexible use of it to reference everything from specific Marxist paradigms to any and all scholarship on gender, sexuality, or race produced since the 1970s. For example, in a passage echoing the “stock-in-trade” comment as well as mainstream attacks on Left scholarship, Wolfe sets “animal studies” apart from an “endless” list of like subfields beginning with “gender studies”: “If taken seriously, animal studies ought not be viewed as simply the latest flavor of the month of what James Chandler calls the ‘subdisciplinary field,’ one of ‘a whole array of academic fields and practices’ that since the 1970s ‘have come to be called *studies*: gender studies, race studies, and cultural studies, of course, but also film studies, media studies, jazz studies. . . .’—the list is virtually endless” (“H,” p. 569). Following Chandler, Wolfe casually conflates half a dozen, highly developed, discrete areas of scholarship (areas encompassing such theoretically diverse figures as Rita Felski, Sedgwick, Gayatri Spivak, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stuart Hall, Lauren Berlant, and Mary Ann Doane, among hundreds of others) in order to disparage them all as no more than faddish “flavors of the month.” As for Wolfe’s assimilation of “cultural studies” to “liberal humanism,” I need hardly point out that

21. Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* p. xvi.

22. For essays rebutting simplistic views of cultural studies, especially as supposedly inattentive to formal and theoretical concerns, see *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies*, ed. Michael Bérubé (Malden, Mass., 2005).

scholars working on gender, sexuality, and race have themselves been in the forefront of efforts to unseat the normative “liberal humanist” subject—poststructuralist feminists, for example, along with feminist legal theorists, postcolonial theorists, critical race theorists, not to mention anti-identitarian queer theorists.²³ Even more to the point, we will recall that it was actually ecofeminists like Donovan, Adams, and Luke who first interrogated rights approaches to animal advocacy precisely on the basis of their complicity with Enlightenment ways of knowing.

In short, the view of animal studies according to the “cultural studies template” as theoretically naïve—devoted only to the thematic inclusion of previously excluded identities and wholly unself-conscious with regard to its internal, disciplinary assumptions and procedures—is little more than a caricature. Yet there is, I would argue, a genuinely substantial difference between Wolfe’s preferred “posthumanist” template and those he disparages under the heading of “cultural studies”—a difference that is not epistemological so much as political. Both approaches protest the exclusion of animals and also, typically, deconstruct the tenets of humanist thinking. But while Wolfe does so to ends that are ostensibly theoretical, ecofeminists and their like do so to ends that are avowedly political. It is, indeed, because Wolfe regards the oppositional politics built into the gender studies model as inextricable from liberal notions of human rights that he accuses non-Derridean animal studies of being residually humanist. As feminists point out, however, claims to be apolitical in a “carnophallogocentric” world are themselves highly political. Wolfe’s very effort to be theoretically pure, beyond all taint of humanism, is undoubtedly well-intentioned but inescapably gendered nonetheless in both its tacit assumptions and institutional effects.

To recap briefly, what dismays me most is Wolfe’s emphatic framing of animal studies as discontinuous with and even antithetical to scholarship on women, African Americans, queers, and other marginalized groups. I attribute this framing, at least in part, to a fear of contamination by the flakey flavor-of-the-month crowd. As we know, Wolfe says as much in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* interview, repeating his hope that animal studies will not be viewed as “just another flavor of the month” (“CC”).

23. To name only a few among scores of possible examples, see Frances Olsen, “Statutory Rape: A Feminist Critique of Rights Analysis,” *Texas Law Review* 63 (Nov. 1984): 387–432; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (July 1991): 1241–99; and Wendy Brown, “Suffering Rights as Paradoxes,” *Constellations* 7 (June 2000): 230–41. For a recent account of animal studies juxtaposing rather than opposing feminist and postmodern theories, see Kari Weil, “A Report on the Animal Turn,” *Differences* 21, no. 2 (2010): 1–23.

The assertion that, “if taken seriously,” animal studies should not be likened to gender studies might therefore be more accurately worded as: if animal studies wishes to be taken seriously, it must run as fast as it can away from anything resembling gender studies. In his introduction to *Rites*, W. J. T. Mitchell notes the “combination of resistance and anxiety” raised by the topic of animal rights.²⁴ The strategies illustrated by Wolfe may address the gendered aspects of this anxiety, but they do so at a price: slighting ecofeminist precedents, reinforcing caricatures of Left academic work, overlooking complicity with gendered institutional dynamics, hampering our ability to braid “species” with other aspects of identity—all this in addition to trivializing our emotional attachments to animals.

Feminists That Therefore We Follow

Hoping to find some less anxious approaches to theorizing our relations and obligations to nonhuman creatures, I turn first to Adams. I will briefly recap her major arguments before coming to the oft-told story of how she came to conjoin her feminist and antiracist commitments with animal advocacy. In contrast to Wolfe, Adams shares with most ecofeminists an appreciation for emotional knowledge and a willingness to claim caring as the basis for her interest in animal issues. Along with Donovan, she edited a collection of essays, *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (1996), elaborating the care paradigm as an alternative to Singer’s and Regan’s. Like others in this volume, Adams’s essay counters rationalist arguments for animal “rights,” explaining that her own work on gender and species evolved “precisely because I cared about animals.” Rather than simply celebrate care, however, Adams aims to challenge the conventional dichotomization of feeling and reason. “Emotions and theory are related,” she insists. “One does not have to eviscerate theory of emotional content and reflection to present legitimate theory. Nor does the presence of emotional content and reflection eradicate or militate against thinking theoretically.” Adams is further concerned to denaturalize the tie between women and caring; if women’s nurturing role is a function of their historical subordination, so men’s self-sufficiency is actually a fiction, maintained by women’s emotional work. Once again, rather than simply recuperating care, Adams undoes the opposition between naturally caring women and men eligible for rights by virtue of their innate autonomy and rationality. Her advocacy of care—“because it is good, not because it constitutes women’s ‘difference’”—is thus emphatically constructionist, tied to her rejection of rights logic as

24. W. J. T. Mitchell, “The Rights of Things,” foreword to *AR*, p. ix.

extended to animals and couched within a broad critique of dualistic thinking.²⁵

In fact, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (which preceded Adams's involvement in the rights-care debate among feminist philosophers) neither theorizes care nor stages her own communion with animals. Instead, Adams's best-known book is a bold critique of the discursive basis for our violence against animals (especially those killed for food), and in this it would seem to anticipate Derrida or Wolfe more than it does Smuts. As we know, she also breaks new ground in showing that gender codes are used to denigrate animals, species codes to denigrate women, and that normative masculinity rests on an instrumental relation to both. Adams further examines how racialized groups are animalized and, conversely, how meat-eating—as the nutritional prerogative and status marker of “civilized” peoples—is raced as well as gendered.²⁶ Elaborating in *Neither Man nor Beast* (1994) on the need for intersectional thinking, Adams explains: “Just as identity is not additive but interlocking, so I am not interested as much in analogies between the status of oppressed humans and the status of animals as I am interested in intersections. . . . When white racism uses an animalizing discourse against black people, it demonstrates the way supremacist ideology inscribes intersecting forms of otherness (race and species).”²⁷

Adams's understanding of intersecting oppressions does not mean that a given text necessarily reinforces or resists all of these evenly. Indeed, one of her primary goals is to chide feminist analyses of women depicted as meat that fail to recognize the violence against animals intrinsic to this category. Moreover, “just as feminist theory needs to be informed by vegetarian insights,” Adams insists that “animal rights theory requires an incorporation of feminist principles.”²⁸ In *The Pornography of Meat* (2003), she debunks ad campaigns sponsored by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), which—for reasons that should be clear by now—make their case for animals using images of women calculated to shout heteronormativity.²⁹ As her criticism of PETA and Singer/Regan suggests,

25. Adams, “Caring about Suffering: A Feminist Exploration,” in *Beyond Animal Rights*, pp. 171, 173. Two decades after its original publication, an updated version of *Beyond Animal Rights* was published as *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York, 2007).

Care is also an ethical imperative in Haraway's recent animal writing, though she understands it very differently—to include, for example, a caring though instrumental relation to lab animals; see *W*, pp. 82–84.

26. See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp. 40–42.

27. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York, 1994), pp. 79–80.

28. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 26.

29. See Adams, *The Pornography of Meat* (New York, 2003), pp. 166–69. As a spokesman for

Adams shares my own concern not only with the gender politics of species discourse but also with animal activists and scholars prone to pussy panic. In a 2009 interview, Adams noted to the *Minnesota Review* her dismay at “the masculinization of the animal rights movement.” She speculated, too, about a similar bias within academia suggested by the emphasis on feral animals: “I often feel that when people glom onto animal issues, the one area they don’t want to glom onto is the domesticated, farmed animals, because they’re too ordinary, too low in status, because they’re female or equated with the female.”³⁰

Adams herself was drawn to feminist vegetarianism through her love and grief for a particular domestic animal. The story she recounts about coming to consciousness through the shooting of Jimmy the horse is threaded through her corpus, appearing with slight variations in at least three different contexts.³¹ Like Derrida’s watchful cat anecdote, it functions as a kind of origin story, emotional touchstone, and paradigm for her work on animals. As Adams tells it, the year 1973 found her already a feminist, alert to the politics of personal life, but still a consumer of meat.³² She had just returned to her small hometown after a year at Yale divinity school when, in the midst of unpacking, she is interrupted by loud knocking—a frantic neighbor has come to report that Adams’s beloved pony has been shot. Running to the back pasture, Adams finds Jimmy on the ground, blood trickling from his mouth. “Those barefoot steps through the thorns and manure of an old apple orchard took me face to face with death,” she recalls. “That evening, still distraught about my pony’s death, I bit into a hamburger and stopped in midbite. I was thinking about one dead animal yet eating another dead animal. What was the difference between this dead cow and the dead pony whom I would be burying the next day?”³³ From that moment on, her view of meat was fundamentally altered.

I have several observations to make about Adams’s story as a figure for

PETA boasted, “just because we are softhearted doesn’t mean we can’t be soft-core” (quoted in Adams, *The Pornography of Meat*, p. 166).

30. Adams, “Vegan Feminist: An Interview with Carol J. Adams,” by Heather Steffen, *Minnesota Review* 73–74 (Fall 2009–Spring 2010): 130, 124. For more on the gendered disdain for domestic animals by animal studies scholars, see *W*, p. 30; on gender codes at work in actual agricultural practices, see Erika Cudworth, “‘Most Farmers Prefer Blondes’: The Dynamics of Anthroparchy in Animals’ Becoming Meat,” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 6, no. 1 (2008): 32–45.

31. See Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, pp. 162–63; a brief mention in “Caring about Suffering,” p. 171; and the preface to *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp. 11–12.

32. See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 11.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

her overall project. Both confirming and troubling my earlier, gendered generalizations about Derrida versus Smuts, it also sets the stage for some closing thoughts about a rather different tale of feminist eating. Adams's epiphany comes, first of all, as both disruption and continuation of her theological training. Hers is a feminist theology, but as the blood, thorns, and martyred animal of this story imply, Adams rejects the patriarchal aspects of Christianity while retaining its iconography of suffering along with its ethic of neighborliness and care for the meek. Caught in spiritual transit, still unpacking the baggage of her year at Yale, she is brought home by this act of violence to her calling as an independent activist-scholar—one for whom the rites of academia will always be less compelling than the justice issues raised in her own backyard. Hailed in what we might be tempted to think of as an Althusserian manner, Adams is abruptly called into subjectivity not by a police officer but by a sympathetic neighbor, who effects her interpellation as a dissenting rather than obedient citizen. In contrast to Smuts, fingertip to fingertip with Damien, Adams's paradigmatic animal encounter brings her "face to face with death." And this is true across Adams's corpus; more often than not, the animals we encounter there are neither canny companions nor prurient pets but the decaying corpses we euphemistically call meat. Made suddenly aware, the night her horse is shot, that she is feasting on dead cow, her first response is similar to Derrida's; shrinking back in shame at the "strangeness" of animals, she dramatizes the nonrecognition allowing them to be killed for human use. Like Derrida, her subsequent work proceeds in a critical mode; instead of celebrating intimacy with animals, she, too, is more interested in tracing the discursive patterns authorizing human violence against them.

In contrast to Derrida, however, Adams does not respond to her shame by blushing to be ashamed. Instead, her shame yields quickly to a second impulse: "I also recognized my ability to change myself: realizing what flesh actually is, I also realized I need not be a corpse eater. Through a relational epistemology I underwent a metaphysical shift."³⁴ Exposed in her shame, she is moved not to cover but rather to examine and reimagine herself. It would be another year before Adams would actually convert to vegetarianism, some seventeen years before her feminist-vegetarian critical theory would be (as it were) fully cooked. But the basis for these have been laid in the "metaphysical shift" described here—a shift over to the side of animals, disavowing the identity of meat eater in order to identify, instead, with the eaten. It is, I would note, a shift inextricable from its occurrence in the early 1970s, underwritten by the civil rights, antiwar, and

34. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, p. 163.

women's liberation movements. Thanks to her formation as a radical feminist, Adams is primed to recognize the emotions of shame, grief, and sympathy as sources of knowledge; to imagine herself in relational rather than autonomous terms; and to bring a sophisticated analysis of patriarchal structures to bear upon human-animal relations.

For Adams, then, there is no preexisting, mystical alliance with animals on the basis of her womanhood. Instead, at a moment of crisis in 1973, she makes the conscious choice to be schooled by them and to reposition herself on their side, in keeping with an ecofeminist epistemology. As she will later put it: "I do not value animals because women are somehow 'closer' to them, but because we experience interdependent oppressions."³⁵ Smuts, by contrast, does not invoke feminist frameworks, and her emphasis on animal agency and interspecies mutuality might seem to be the inverse of Adams's focus on animal victimization and human grief at animal suffering. There are, however, resemblances as well as differences between the two women. Both affirm our "sentimental" ties to nonhuman animals; both claim our liking of and likeness to other animals (in some, though certainly not all, respects). For Smuts, the similarity of Damien's hand and hers reveals our shared ability to navigate our environments and foster friendship through touch. For Adams, the similarity of Jimmy's objectification and her own points to the way animals and women share the position of other within a specific discursive and political context.

Like Adams, Haraway makes good on the ecofeminist and deconstructionist critique of dualistic thinking through work that combines upfront feelings with forceful analysis, political commitments with scholarly ones, care for animals and animal lovers with theoretical contributions to animal studies. Though gender is not foregrounded in her most recent writing on animals—*The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008)—Haraway takes every opportunity to mention her own longstanding feminism and the pioneering, ongoing importance of feminist scholarship in thinking about species.³⁶ As she observes in a 2009 interview (appearing alongside Adams's in *Minnesota Review*), "people like Lynda Birke and Carol Adams and others have been for thirty years or more doing feminist theory in the mode of animal studies that gets at the levels of violence and destruction visited on working animals" ("SS," p. 159). And despite her reputation as a high-flying postmodernist, Haraway is another theorist who takes a hands-on approach, a thinker very much in touch

35. Adams, "Caring about Suffering," p. 173.

36. See Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, 2003).

with the material world. In the middle section of *When Species Meet*, we follow her and her canine partner Cayenne into the world of dog agility training, a sport in which most of the humans are women over forty, and “contact zone” refers not only to a technical aspect of the course but also, for Haraway, to agility training as a site of intense bodily and cultural exchange, mutual though not symmetrical, between people and dogs (see *W*, pp. 208–16). Her visceral and intellectual involvement with the female subcultures of dog trainers and breeders is, I would say, comparable to Adams’s with the subcultures of advocates for battered women and fair housing. For both feminist theorists, these women-centered, extra-academic communities with little cultural capital are identified as sources of inspiration and knowledge.

That said, Haraway and Adams have widely divergent views on two of the most vexed animal issues: meat eating and animal experimentation. Haraway is highly critical of factory farming, but she looks instead to humane husbandry rather than vegetarianism. More risky and uncomfortable still, as she herself acknowledges, Haraway makes a conditional case for the use and even killing of animals for scientific research (see *W*, pp. 68–93). Beyond their disagreements on these specific issues, Haraway and Adams are further discrepant in the general emphasis and affect of their animal texts. Broadly speaking, the emphasis for Adams is on animals as victims—disappeared as subjects, feminized and fragmented as objects, so that meat-eating humans are enabled to ignore the violence of their table. As we have seen, in keeping with this view, the emotional tenor of her writing is a mix of sorrow, anger, and compassion. Haraway’s emphasis, on the other hand, is on animals as workers and collaborators, creatures with imagination, agency, and influence, even in the context of unequal relations to humans. Like Smuts, her interaction with them is unashamed and fearlessly tactile. Full of wonder, scientific curiosity, and affection, her animal writing tends toward the celebratory, even ecstatic. “Ms Cayenne Pepper continues to colonize all my cells” (*W*, p. 15), she declares in the opening pages of *When Species Meet*. For Haraway, moreover, other “companion species” belie the boundaries of our humanness at a cellular as well as conceptual level. As she explains, “I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such” (*W*, p. 3). Haraway argues, too, that our humanist sense of mastery and autonomy is usefully undermined by technology as well as by animality—by our prosthetic as well as intra-organic ways of being. Challenging the tendency of most ecofeminists, including Adams, to indict science for crimes against nature,

Haraway distinguishes creative from destructive uses of science and places us in a companionate relation to the cyborg as well as to nonhuman animals (“SS,” p. 155).³⁷

And now for our final animal story, this one recounted by Haraway as a “parting bite” at the end of *When Species Meet* (*W*, p. 293). It is not a Smutsian tale of intimacy with a dog or baboon in a wild zone remote from other humans, but a story of sitting down to dinner with colleagues. The year is 1980, and Haraway has just given a job talk, clinching her appointment as a feminist theorist at University of California, Santa Cruz. As she tells it, two women arrive at the restaurant fresh from a birth celebration held in the “feminist, anarchist, pagan cyberwitch mountains” (*W*, p. 293). Led by a midwife, it had culminated in a feast, prepared by the husband, consisting of onions and . . . placenta. This second group of diners is soon entirely caught up by an intense but inconclusive debate about “who could, should, must, or must not eat the placenta” (*W*, p. 293). Conflicting anthropological, Marxist-feminist, historical, nutritional, philosophical, and vegetarian arguments are animatedly canvassed, and after many hours the only thing clear to Haraway is that she has “found [her] nourishing community at last” (*W*, p. 294).

How does Haraway’s story of feminist eating, ostensibly without reference to species other than our own, contribute to theorizing animal-human ties as well as to specifying the sexual politics of this project? There is, first of all, the placenta as a figure for what Haraway regards as a fundamental aspect of our creaturely lives: our dependence for nurturance, both before and after birth, on bodies other than our own; our need as animals to feed not only with but *on* one another; our interpenetration by organisms that tumble inside us regardless of whether we are pregnant or carnivorous; the phenomenon, in short, of overlapping ingestions, gestations, and embodiments. All of which is to say that, while for Adams, no one should be considered meat, one lesson to be drawn from Haraway’s story is that we are all somebody’s meat—even before we are food for worms.

Our two scenes of feminist eating may be contrasted in another way as well. Whereas for Adams eating a burger answers all questions, for Haraway eating a placenta does nothing but multiply uncertainties—chief among them, for my purposes, the conundrum of how gender figures in

37. As author of the influential “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” *Socialist Review* 80 (1985): 65–108, Haraway is often identified as a “posthumanist”; indeed, Wolfe includes her along with only a handful of figures representing thorough “posthumanist posthumanism” (Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* p. 125). But Haraway herself insists, “I am not a posthumanist” (*W*, p. 19); likewise, though interested in Derrida, she describes herself as “not a Derridean” (“SS,” p. 157).

this story. What do we make of the husband, standing (as I picture him) with spatula and grill—so like and unlike your average suburban dad? By ritualistically birthing/eating like a nonhuman animal, do we render ourselves more or less animalistic? Digesting placenta, we are made to consider our resemblance to other mammals—only, perhaps, to be reminded of our peculiarity as humans, hemmed in by culinary, familial, academic, and narrative protocols. In short, if the placenta as an organ confuses self and other, inside and outside, *eating* the placenta adds further confusion regarding the “biological” and “cultural,” along with our human relation to these categories. Haraway remarks that “kin relations blurred” (*W*, p. 293), and for me even the definitively “female” act of giving birth is defamiliarized and denaturalized by this narrative, transmuted into something less reliably gendered; if everyone was once inside a placenta, now every guest, male and female, has placenta inside them.

Despite their differences, and by no coincidence, both Adams and Haraway tell stories tracing their work on animals back to feminist conversations originating in the 1970s. One goal of this essay has been simply historiographical—to challenge Wolfe’s account of animal studies as Derridean in origin, describe a gendered pattern of reception, explore the sources of discomfort with ecofeminism, and acknowledge an intellectual debt to this body of work. Beyond this, I have wanted to question Wolfe’s strict definition of his posthumanist project, walling it off from the studies—women’s studies past and present, along with the many approaches lumped together as cultural studies. Having parsed what I see as the gender logic of this move, I want to close with a few further thoughts about what we stand to lose thereby.

Wolfe’s theoretical paradigm—in animal terms, a rather territorial one—categorically rules out what scholars working on such issues as gender, race, and sexuality have to offer a posthumanist discussion of species. Yet these scholars, as I see it, have made indispensable contributions in two particularly relevant areas. The first is thinking about identity, whether as the rhetorical basis for demanding “rights,” as a discursive category that is necessarily both intersectional and situational, or as a regime to be demystified and disavowed. Surely this work bears closely on inquiries into animal subjectivity, animality and its imbrication with other dominant discourses, as well as the deconstruction of humanist assumptions about identity. The second key contribution is to thinking about emotion. Studies of women, the subaltern, the disabled, and so on—originating, like animal studies, in movements for social justice—have led the way in owning the role of political and personal feeling in academic inquiry. As we know, feminists have been especially forceful in claiming their own passions, contesting the gendered split between feeling and reason, and

launching a full-blown critique of scientific “objectivity.” The wealth of recent scholarship on the nature and role of affect should make it even harder to ignore the affective register of scholarship itself. Wolfe nevertheless in his essay “The Very Idea” once again invokes Derrida to decry cultural studies’ commitment to “humane advocacy” as irredeemably tainted by humanism. Mentioning his off-campus animal activism, Wolfe admits the uses of such language in that specific context. At the same time, recalling his earlier concern with academic street cred, he warns that university audiences would likely mock overtly political appeals as a sign of theoretical naiveté.³⁸

Wolfe thus continues to police the border between “rigorous” theorizing and passionate activism, relegating them to separate spheres (which may explain why his posthumanist discourse eschews the kind of personal animal story included by all four of my other figures).³⁹ As Haraway and company might argue, however, bringing these spheres into dialogue can make for more effective animal activism as well as more honest animal scholarship—and, I would add, for human animals less anxiously dichotomized by gender. As a current example of work in this vein, refusing to bracket sentiment as a condition of academic legitimacy, I recommend Kathy Rudy’s *Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy* (2011).⁴⁰ Rudy’s exhortation to claim our everyday love for animals is both ethical and strategic: by tapping into people’s extravagant love for their pets, she hopes to broaden our awareness of how enmeshed we are with all animals. Keeping in mind Rudy’s vision, I suggest we work up to creaturely love by starting with something more modest—the admission that theorizing seriously about animals might have something to do with *liking* them.

38. See Wolfe, “The Very Idea,” in *Species Matters: Humane Advocacy and Cultural Theory*, ed. DeKoven and Michael Lundblad (New York, 2012), pp. 27–28.

39. See *ibid.* Here and elsewhere, Wolfe rationalizes this split by citing Niklas Luhmann on differentiated social systems, vocabularies, and so on. My point has been, however, that scrupulous theoretical consistency may actually be inconsistent with anti-Cartesian aims insofar as it stems from and reproduces the subordination of “feminine” emotion. As an unexpected counterexample, I think of Derrida’s interview with Elizabeth Roudinesco, in which he repudiates Cartesian rights discourse on philosophical grounds while also declaring his “sympathy” for activists seeking legal redress for nonhuman animals (Derrida, *For What Tomorrow . . .*, p. 67). Rather than setting aside his sympathy, Derrida reiterates the claims of both positions, theoretical and political/emotional (and does so all the more poignantly in the face of Roudinesco’s evident lack of sympathy for animal advocacy). In addition to Wolfe, *Species Matters* includes pieces by Adams, Haraway, and others with the goal, not unlike my own, of mediating between animal and cultural studies. While agreeing with Wolfe on the risk of humanism implicit in *humane*, DeKoven and Lundblad hope nevertheless to bring these two projects together under the rubric of “humane advocacy”; see Lundblad and DeKoven, “Animality and Advocacy,” introduction to *Species Matters*, pp. 5–6.

40. See Kathy Rudy, *Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy* (Minneapolis, 2011).