

the changing profession

## Human, All Too Human: “Animal Studies” and the Humanities

CARY WOLFE

CARY WOLFE is Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English at Rice University. His books include *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (U of Chicago P, 2003), the edited collection *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (U of Minnesota P, 2003), and the forthcoming volume *What Is Posthumanism?* (U of Minnesota P, 2009). He is founding editor of the series *Posthumanities* at the University of Minnesota Press.

TRYING TO GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE BURGEONING AREA KNOWN AS ANIMAL STUDIES IS, IF YOU’LL PERMIT ME THE EXPRESSION, A BIT LIKE herding cats.<sup>1</sup> My recourse to that analogy is meant to suggest that “the animal,” when you think about it, is everywhere (including in the metaphors, similes, proverbs, and narratives we have relied on for centuries—millennia, even). Teach a course or write an article on the subject, and well-intentioned suggestions about interesting material pour in from all quarters. In my field alone, there’s not just, say, the starring role of bear, deer, and dog at the heart of William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* and the futility of trying to imagine Ernest Hemingway without his fraternity of bulls, lions, and fish or Marianne Moore without her menagerie of pangolins and jellyfish. There’s also *King Kong*, *Babe*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Seabiscuit*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *The Horse Whisperer*, and *The Fly*. There’s the art of Damien Hirst, Joseph Beuys, Sue Coe, William Wegman, Bill Viola, Carolee Schneeman, Lynn Randolph, and Patricia Piccinini. And all those bird poems, from Percy Shelley’s skylark and John Keats’s nightingale to Edgar Allan Poe’s raven and Wallace Stevens’s black-bird. As any medievalist or early modern scholar will tell you, the question of the animal assumes, if anything, even more centrality in earlier periods; indeed, recent and emerging scholarship suggests a picture in which the idea of the animal that we have inherited from the Enlightenment and thinkers such as Descartes and Kant is better seen as marking a brief period (if the formative one for our prevailing intellectual, political, and juridical institutions) bookended by a pre- and posthumanism that think the human/animal distinction quite otherwise. So there’s also William Hogarth and Hieronymus Bosch, *The Faerie Queene* and *Beowulf*. And, of course, there is the central place of the animal in non-Western literature and culture, written and oral, which would require another essay altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond literature, art, and culture, the Western philosophical canon and its thinking of the animal/human difference are being reconfigured and reinterpreted not just on the strength of Conti-

mental philosophy but also in certain wings of the analytic tradition. And there's plenty of crossover (mainly from the analytic side) between philosophy and the legal sphere in the burgeoning area of animal rights law, led by scholars such as Gary Francione and Steven M. Wise. (According to the Animal Legal Defense Fund, more than eighty law schools in the United States offer courses in animal law.) There's animal television, and lots of it, including the flood of animal-related factoids, portraits, field studies, vignettes, and exposés that is the Animal Planet channel. And, last but certainly not least, there's food, with all its ritualistic, sacrificial, psychological, ethical, and ecological dimensions, made plain in immensely popular texts such as Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.<sup>3</sup>

My litany is meant to suggest some of the challenges involved in writing about animal studies, not the least of which is a daunting interdisciplinarity that is inseparable from its very genesis (one that makes the interdisciplinarity that obtains between, say, literary studies and history look like a fairly tidy affair by comparison). One might think that much of the material I have mentioned so far could be safely set aside by scholars focused on literary and even, more broadly, cultural interpretation, but specialization is no more justifiable for animal studies at the moment than it was for feminist scholarship or queer theory in the heady days of their emergence. Animal studies, as a branch of cultural studies (I will eventually want to question their association), would probably not exist, at least not in its current form, without the work done in field ecology and cognitive ethology over the past twenty to thirty years (Allen and Bekoff; Bekoff; Griffin; Pepperberg; Savage-Rumbaugh, Shanker, and Taylor)—work brought vividly before the popular imagination by films such as the story of Dian Fossey, *Gorillas in the Mist*, and Jane Goodall's documentary *The People of the Forest: The Chimps of Gombe* and by television documentaries such as *The Animal Mind*, in

the PBS series *Nature*. Similarly, it owes its existence in no small part to the emergence of the animal rights movement in the 1970s and to that movement's foundational philosophical works, Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* and, later, Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (works that animal studies, signaling its recent critical turn, has sought to revisit and question).

To be sure, scattered work on the animal was being carried out in various fields in the humanities and social sciences as far back as the 1980s; one thinks of the historian Harriet Ritvo's important book *The Animal Estate* and its investigation of "breeding" in Victorian culture across lines of class and species, James Serpell's *In the Company of Animals*, Marc Shell's analysis of the psychic and symbolic economy of the pet, the diverse and important work done in and around ecofeminism by Carol Adams, Andrée Collard, and others, and, in literary studies in the United States, texts such as Margot Norris's *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*. And the landmark publication of Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions* opened the 1990s with a remarkable interdisciplinary synthesis that in effect defined a new, resolutely cultural studies era in what would come to be called animal studies. Scattered but similarly important discussions were taking place in the theoretical literature—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's musings on "becoming-animal" in *A Thousand Plateaus* (and also, in a different register, in their book on Kafka), Jacques Derrida's discussion of Heidegger's thesis on the animal as "poor in world" in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Georges Bataille's *Theory of Religion*, and Julia Kristeva's work on abjection.

But what appears different about the emergence of animal studies in our moment is the gradual opening up of a theoretical and critical space of its own. A sure sign of the emergence and consolidation of animal studies is the growing number of conferences, symposia, publication venues, and special

journal issues devoted to the topic in North America and abroad. There has been a spate of conferences on the topic, beginning roughly with *Millennial Animals*, at the University of Sheffield in 2000, and extending to what promises to be the largest academic gathering on the topic ever, *Minding Animals*, to be held in Australia in 2009. In between have been events at York University; Vanderbilt University; the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Harvard University; the University of Texas, Austin; and many other institutions; an ongoing panel stream at the last few conferences (both national and international) of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts; and growing interest at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. Two of the earliest book series were Harriet Ritvo's *Animals, History, Culture*, at Johns Hopkins University Press, and *Animal*, edited by Jonathan Burt and handsomely published by Reaktion Books, which takes the unique approach of devoting each volume to a single animal (so far, entrants include dog, oyster, ant, rat, and more than a score of others). Other presses have an ongoing if not dedicated relation to work in animal studies, such as the University of Illinois Press (*Animal Studies Group*; Baker, *Picturing*; Fudge, *Renaissance Beasts*; Linzey), the University of Chicago Press (Wolfe, *Animal Rites*; Kuzniar; Grenier), Routledge (Haraway, *Primate Visions*; Tester; Fuss), the State University of New York Press (Steeves; Scapp and Seitz; Mitchell, Thompson, and Miles), and MIT Press (Thompson; Burghardt; Diamond, *Realistic Spirit*; Kac, *Signs of Life*).

Of particular note is the series *Posthumanities*, at the University of Minnesota Press (which has published Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* and reprinted Michel Serres's *The Parasite* and plans forthcoming titles devoted to the topic by younger scholars such as Nicole Shukin and Tom Tyler). Columbia University Press, under the leadership of Wendy Lochner (senior executive editor for religion, philosophy, and animal studies), has

published important titles by Leonard Lawlor, Gary Francione (*Animals as Persons*), Stanley Cavell and cocontributors, and Matthew Calarco, among others. Equally striking is the number of special journal issues over the past few years, including *Animal Beings*, a special issue of *Parallax* edited by Tom Tyler; *DerridAnimals*, for the *Oxford Literary Review*, edited by Neil Badmington; recently published special issues of *Configurations* titled *Thinking with Animals* and edited by Richard Nash and Ron Broglio; and not one but two special issues of *Mosaic* devoted to the topic (*The Animal*). And there is the new online journal *Humanimalia* ([www.depauw.edu/humanimalia](http://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia)), the robust H-Animal corner of the H-Net humanities online forum ([www.h-net.org/~animal](http://www.h-net.org/~animal)), the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, published by the Institute for Critical Animal Studies ([www.criticalanimalstudies.org/JCAS](http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/JCAS)), and *Society and Animals*, published by the Animals and Society Institute, which operates under the rubric of "human-animal studies" (a label whose stakes I will revisit in a moment). And, if this reading list isn't long enough for you, a massive bibliography on animal studies is available online (Kalof et al.).

Across the board, it is certainly true, as Erica Fudge (a leading British historian of animal studies) has noted of her discipline, that new work on animals such as Nigel Rothfels's moves "away from an earlier form of history which focused on human ideas about and attitudes towards animals in which animals were mere blank pages onto which humans wrote meaning" and instead "traces the many ways in which humans construct *and are constructed* by animals in the past" ("History"). But the larger question—and it is perhaps marked by the use of the cultural studies template, associated with ethically and politically attuned scholarship, to assimilate animal studies—is how the internal disciplinarity of history or literary studies or philosophy is unsettled when the animal is taken seriously not

just as another topic or object of study among many but as one with unique demands. Rather than treat the animal as primarily a theme, trope, 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), scholars in animal studies, whatever their home disciplines, now appear to be challenged not only by the discourses and conceptual schemata that have shaped our understanding of and relations to animals but also by the specificity of nonhuman animals, their nongeneric nature (which is why, as Derrida puts it, it is “asinine” to talk about “*the Animal*” in the singular [*Animal* 31]). And that irreducibility of the question of the animal is linked complexly to the problem of animals’ ethical standing as direct or indirect subjects of justice<sup>4</sup>—a problem that invites a critical and not just descriptive practice of disciplinarity to assess how this newly robust entity called the animal is plumbed, repressed, or braided with other forms of identity, other discourses (race, gender, class, sexual difference), in works of literature and culture.

In other words, as the philosopher Cora Diamond puts it, the difference between human and nonhuman animals “may indeed start out as a biological difference, but it becomes something for human thought through being taken up and made something *of*—by generations of human beings, in their practices, their art, their literature, their religion” (*Realistic Spirit* 351). The problem for students of literature and culture is how to avoid the thoroughgoing ethnocentrism that such a realization invites, how to articulate what a critical view of such “makings” might look like—a question that becomes all the more pressing in the light of the persistent comparison (by Diamond, by Derrida, by J. M. Coetzee in *The Lives of Animals*, and by Charles Patterson in an entire book called *Eternal Treblinka*) of our systematic abuse and killing of animals

on a massive scale and the Holocaust of World War II. (In reality, the scale is not remotely comparable, since ten *billion* land animals are killed each year in the United States alone for food, the vast majority of them—about eighty percent—under the deplorable conditions of factory farming [Center for Food Safety].) We might have thought that we, as students of literature and culture, could safely leave to the side the massive amount we have learned from fields such as cognitive ethology over the past twenty or thirty years about animals and their remarkable capacities, but doesn’t our assessment of the meaning and stakes of a novel or a film change, animal studies asks, after (at least some of) the animals treated in it undergo an ontological shift from things to, in some sense, persons—a shift recently registered with seismic force in the decision by the Spanish parliament in June 2008 to extend fundamental human rights to great apes, protecting them from painful experimentation and other forms of exploitation. Indeed, as Étienne Balibar, Giorgio Agamben, Marjorie Spiegel, and others have pointed out, violence against human others (and particularly racially marked others) has often operated by means of a double movement that animalizes them for the purposes of domination, oppression, or even genocide—a maneuver that is effective because we take for granted the prior assumption that violence against the animal is ethically permissible.

As I have argued elsewhere, this suggests two important things about animal studies: first, that it studies both a material entity (nonhuman beings) and a discourse of species difference that need not be limited to its application to nonhumans alone and, second, that taking animal studies seriously thus has nothing to do, strictly speaking, with whether or not you like animals. Given what we have learned in recent decades about many nonhuman animals—the richness of their mental and emotional lives, the complexity of their forms of communication and interaction—

many scholars now think that we are forced to make the same kind of shift in the ethics of reading and interpretation that attended taking sexual difference seriously in the 1990s (in the form of queer theory) or race and gender seriously in the 1970s and 1980s. In such a genealogy, animal studies is only the latest permutation of a socially and ethically responsive cultural studies working to stay abreast of new social movements (in this case, the social movement often called "animal rights"), which is itself an academic expression of a larger democratic impulse toward greater inclusiveness of every gender, or race, or sexual orientation, or—now—species.

Such a genealogy, appealing as it is, ought to give us pause, however, for at least a couple of reasons that have to do with the overly rapid adoption of the cultural studies template for animal studies. The rubrics *animal studies* and *human-animal studies* are both problematic, I think, in the light of the fundamental challenge that animal studies poses to the disciplinarity of the humanities and cultural studies. In my view, the questions that occupy animal studies can be addressed adequately only if we confront them on two levels: not just the level of content, thematics, and the object of knowledge (the animal studied by animal studies) but also the level of theoretical and methodological approach (*how* animal studies studies the animal). To put it bluntly, just because we study nonhuman animals does not mean that we are not continuing to be humanist—and therefore, by definition, anthropocentric. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of humanism—and more specifically of the kind of humanism called liberalism—is precisely its penchant for the sort of "pluralism" that extends the sphere of consideration (intellectual or ethical) to previously marginalized groups without in the least destabilizing or throwing into question the schema of the human who undertakes such pluralization. And in that event pluralism becomes incorporation, and the projects of humanism (intellectually) and

liberalism (politically) are extended—indeed, extended in a rather classic sort of way.

In piggybacking on the cultural studies template (if you'll allow the phrase in this context), animal studies too readily takes on itself some of the problems that have made cultural studies a matter of diminishing returns for many scholars. Ellen Rooney, for example, has observed that cultural studies is "perhaps even more intractably caught than literary criticism in the dilemma of defining its own proper form"; it is "a welter of competing (and even incompatible) methods, and a (quasi-)disciplinary form increasingly difficult to defend, intellectually or politically" (21). Even more pointedly, Tilottama Rajan has argued that this "dereferentialization" and "inclusive vagueness" has allowed much of cultural studies to be appropriated for the ideological work of the neoliberal order, in which capitalist globalization gets repackaged as pluralism and attention to difference (69). As "a soft-sell for, and a personalization of, the social sciences" (74), she writes, the effect if not the aim of cultural studies in the humanities "is to simulate the preservation of civil society after the permutation of the classical public sphere" into an essentially market and consumerist logic of "representation" (69–70). For my purposes here, the problem, in other words, is not just the disciplinary incoherence or vagueness of current modes of cultural studies; the problem is that that incoherence or vagueness serves to maintain a certain historically, ideologically, and intellectually specific form of subjectivity while masking it as pluralism—including (in this case) pluralism extended to nonhuman animals. In this light, animal studies, if taken seriously, would not so much extend or refine a certain mode of cultural studies as bring it to an end.<sup>5</sup>

This is so because animal studies, if it is to be something other than a mere thematics, fundamentally challenges the schema of the knowing subject and its anthropocentric underpinnings sustained and reproduced in

the current disciplinary protocols of cultural studies (not to mention literary studies). (Indeed, as Susan McHugh notes in her overview of literary scholarship on animals, “a systematic approach to reading animals in literature necessarily involves coming to terms with a discipline that in many ways appears organized by the studied avoidance of just such questioning.”) For Rooney and Rajan—many others could be added to the list—the problem with cultural studies, at least in its hegemonic modes of practice in North America, is that despite its apparent oppositional, materialist, and multicultural commitments, it ends up reproducing an ideologically familiar mode of subjectivity based, philosophically and politically, on the canons of liberal humanism (whose most familiar expression would be the extension of the juridical subject of “rights” from the human to the animal sphere).<sup>6</sup> The full force of animal studies, then, resides in its power to remind us that it is not enough to re-read and reinterpret—from a safe ontological distance, as it were—the relation of metaphor and species difference, the cross-pollination of speciesist, sexist, and racist discursive structures in literature, and so on. That undertaking is no doubt praiseworthy and long overdue, but as long as it leaves unquestioned the humanist schema of the knowing subject who undertakes such a reading, then it sustains the very humanism and anthropocentrism that animal studies sets out to question. And this is why, if taken seriously, animal studies ought not to 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 (358).<sup>7</sup>

My point here is rather different from McHugh’s observation that animal studies is “an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that

coalesces around questions of agency and the social.” McHugh is no doubt right to agree with Fudge that the distinction between “subjectivity” and “agency” is a useful one in this connection, enabling us to understand (on the model of actor network theory, for example) how animals and our interactions with them have historically shaped our world quite apart from questions of the intentionality or understanding of the animals concerned (one might say the same about humans, of course). But such an explanation has little to tell us about the ethical differences that attend our interactions with inanimate and sentient agents. The literary and philosophical end of animal studies has been interested in precisely those differences, for a range of obvious reasons, including the mobilization in literary texts of identification and sympathetic imagination regarding animals and how they experience the world, the intensity of our emotional attachments to them, and, in philosophy, the critical assessment of just those sorts of phenomenological, ethical, and ontological questions and why they matter.

But my point here is also different from the essentially Gramscian notion of critical consciousness that underpins even very diverse approaches in cultural studies, a notion voiced, for example, in the assertion that disciplinary practice “becomes a productive rather than a reproductive environment” when, “in the spirit of critical reflection . . . the intersubjectivity of meaning can be exposed, and educational institutions, the classroom, the discipline, and the university can be seen to construct and condition knowledge,” so that “literary study, as the study of textuality . . . reveals the epistemological structures that organize how we know, how our knowledge gets transmitted and accepted” (Peck 51)—with the animal studies rider just noted: that animals, on the cultural studies model, are now recognized to be partners (as agents) in that enterprise. Such a picture of critical consciousness—commonsensical and

attractive as it may be—actually closes off the human from the animal of animal studies and thus reinstates the human/animal divide in a less visible but more fundamental way, while ostensibly gesturing beyond it. And it is the tacitly assumed schema of subjectivity underwriting such a disciplinary practice (the picture of the human as constituted, for example, by critical introspection and self-reflection that is, after all, a hallmark of humanism) and not just the range of its interests (however putatively progressive, multicultural, or antianthropocentric) that must be fully examined. It is a question, as Derrida has put it, of the nature of the "auto-" of the human as the "autobiographical animal," of "what calls itself man," the concept of the human that "man" "recounts to himself" to then enable his recognition of the nonhuman other in a gesture of "benevolence" wholly characteristic of liberal humanism (*Animal* 29–30).

I invoke Derrida here in part because his late essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" (and the recently published book that shares its title) is arguably the single most important event in the brief history of animal studies. In that essay, the force of Jeremy Bentham's famous question about the standing of animals—the question is not, can they talk? or can they reason? but can they suffer?—is that

the word *can* [*pouvoir*] changes sense and sign here once one asks "can they suffer?" The word wavers henceforth. As soon as such a question is posed what counts is not only the idea of a transitivity or activity (being able to speak, to reason, and so on); *the important thing is rather what impels it towards self-contradiction, something we will later relate back to autobiography.* (*Animal* 27–28; emphasis mine)

For Derrida, putting the question in this way "changes everything" because "from Aristotle to Descartes, from Descartes, especially, to Heidegger, Levinas and Lacan," posing the

question of the animal in terms of the capacity for thought or language "determines so many others concerning *power* or *capability* [*pouvoirs*], and *attributes* [*avoirs*]: being able, having the power to give, to die, to bury one's dead, to dress, to work, to invent a technique" (27). What makes Bentham's reframing of the problem so powerful is that now "[t]he question is disturbed by a certain *passivity*. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able." "What of the vulnerability felt on the basis of this inability?" he continues; "what is this non-power at the heart of power? . . . What right should be accorded it? To what extent does it concern us?" It concerns us very directly, in fact, for "mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion" (28). Instead of recognizing the moral standing of animals because of the agency or capabilities they share with us (which has been the dominant strategy, most obviously in the animal rights philosophy of Singer or Regan), Derrida fundamentally questions the structure of the "auto-" (as autonomy, as agency, as authority over one's autobiography) of humanist subjectivity by riveting our attention on the embodied finitude that we share with nonhuman animals, a finitude that it has been the business of humanism largely to disavow. (And in this Derrida has been joined by other important philosophers, such as Agamben, Cavell, and Diamond, to name just three.)

But equally important for the matter at hand (and this point is often overlooked in Derrida's later work on "the question of the animal") is that there are *two* kinds of finitude here under which the "man" of the "*humanities*" labors; and the first type (physical vulnerability, embodiment, and eventually mortality) is paradoxically made unavailable to us, inappropriable by us, by the very thing that makes it available and appropriable—a

second type of “not being able,” which is the finitude we experience in our subjection to the radically ahuman technicity and mechanicity of language (understood in the broadest sense as a semiotic system through which creatures “respond” to each other). This fact has profound consequences for what we too hastily think of as “our” concepts, “our” readings, “our” histories, which are in an important sense not ours at all. Derrida’s work on the animal enables us to address the problem of ethnocentrism raised earlier in Diamond’s observation about what we have made of our relations to animals, but without leaving us impaled on the other horn of the dilemma—either Gramscian critical consciousness or the search for ethical universals, endemic to rights philosophy, that is calculated to meet such ethnocentrism.

Derrida’s point is that, yes, it is true that what we think of as personhood, knowledge, and so on are inseparable from who “we” are, from our discourses and disciplines, but at the same time “we” are not “we”; we are not the “auto-” of the “auto-biography” that humanism gives to itself. Rather, “we” are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being—not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, which we share, as animals, with animals, but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a radically ahuman precondition for our subjectivity, for what makes us human. And this means, as Derrida puts it, that “what calls *itself* man,” what “we” call “we,” always covers over a more radical not being able that makes our conceptual life possible (*Animal* 30). It is precisely here, in this second aspect of radical finitude, that we can locate the difference between the schema of the knowing subject relied on by humanism (or Gramscian cultural studies) and the rethinking of that schema forced on us, I am arguing, by an animal studies taken seriously.

This is not to say that most of the work done thus far in animal studies is not in the cultural studies mode (it is); nor is it to say that there is not valuable work to be done in the cultural studies vein in animal studies. It is simply to point out that one would think animal studies would be more invested than any other kind of “studies” in fundamentally rethinking the question of what knowledge is, how it is limited by the overdeterminations and partialities of our “species-being” (to use Marx’s famous phrase [77]); in excavating and examining our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be; and in embodying that confrontation in its own disciplinary practices and protocols (so that, for example, the place of literature is radically reframed in a larger universe of communication, response, and exchange, which now includes manifold other species).

Equally important for animal studies is that this second type of finitude, Derrida argues, is shared by humans and nonhumans the moment they begin to interact and communicate—to “respond,” as he puts it—by means of any semiotic system, even the most rudimentary. As Derrida puts it in a famous passage from the interview “Eating Well”:

[I]f one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say? But if one reinscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. I am thinking in particular of the mark in general, of the trace, of iterability, of *différance*. These possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language, *are themselves not only human*. . . . And what I am proposing here should allow us to take into account scientific knowledge about the complexity of “animal languages,” genetic coding, all forms of marking within which so-called human language, as original as it might be, does not allow us to “cut” once and for all where we would in general like to cut. (116–17)

Here, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, animal studies intersects with the larger

problematic of posthumanism, not in the sense of some fantasy of transcending human embodiment (as Katherine Hayles rightly worries in *How We Became Posthuman*) but rather in the sense of returning us precisely to the thickness and finitude of human embodiment and to human evolution as itself a specific form of animality, one that is unique and different from other forms but no more different, perhaps, than an orangutan is from a starfish. The implications of this fact for the first half of the term *animal studies* are bracing indeed, because if we pay serious attention to the diversity of animal forms and of ways of being in the world, then we are forced to conclude, as Matthew Calarco puts it, that "the human/animal distinction is, strictly speaking, nonsensical. How could a simple (or even highly refined) binary distinction approach doing justice to the complex ethical and ontological matters at stake here?" (143). On the strength of that weakness, that breakdown, we are returned to a new sense of the materiality and particularity not just of the animal and its multitude of forms but also of that animal called the human.

As for the second half of the rubric *animal studies*, I want to emphasize that one can engage in a humanist or a posthumanist practice of a discipline. That point is papered over by the generic moniker *studies*, which obscures how the double finitude just discussed uniquely determines animal studies. 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. So even though your external disciplinarity is posthumanist in taking seriously the existence and ethical stakes of nonhuman beings (in that sense, it questions anthropocentrism), your internal disciplinarity may remain humanist to the core. (Indeed, such is the stan-

dard charge leveled against the animal rights philosophy of Singer and Regan: that it tacitly extends a model of human subjectivity to animals, who possess our kind of personhood in diminished form).<sup>8</sup> This is not to repudiate humanism but merely to articulate how many of its admirable ambitions and values (kindness and charity toward the weak, the innocent, and the oppressed, for example) are undermined by the conceptual frameworks used to make good on them. It is a matter, then, of locating the animal of animal studies and its challenge to humanist modes of reading, interpretation, and critical thought not just "out there," among the birds and beasts, but "in here" as well, at the heart of this thing we call human.

---

## NOTES

1. My title refers to Nietzsche, of course, and, more locally, to the important collection *Human, All Too Human*, in particular its introduction and first section, entitled "Animal" (Fuss). For reasons that will become clear, the term *animal studies* should be taken throughout as fully marked by "scare" quotation marks; similarly, *animal* should be understood as shorthand for *nonhuman animal*, again for reasons that will become clear in due course.

2. Works on the animal have appeared in all the areas just listed: literary modernism (Norris; Rohman), American literature (Allen; Mason), British Romanticism (Kenyon-Jones), metaphor and poetics (Malamud), film and mass culture (Burt; Lippit; Wolfe, *Animal Rites* and *What*; Shukin; Clarke), art and display (Lippit; Baker, *Picturing* and *Postmodern Animal*; Kac, *Signs* and *Telepresence*; Thompson; Wolfe, *What*; Rothfels), early modern and medieval culture and theology (Salisbury; Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, *Perceiving*, and *Renaissance Beasts*; Tester; Daston and Mitman; Shannon; Boehrer; Agamben; Linzey). This list is representative but not exhaustive.

3. In Continental philosophy, representative discussions include Lawlor; Calarco; Steeves; Acampora; Wolfe, *Animal Rites* and "Thinking"; in analytic philosophy, Mack; DeGrazia; Rachels; Regan; Singer; Cavalieri; Steiner; Cavell et al.; Nussbaum; in law, Francione, *Animals as Person* and *Animals, Property*; Wise; on food, Pollan; Marcus; Scapp and Seitz.

4. For a range of views on this question, see Cavell et al.; Francione, *Animals, Property*; Wise.

5. I say “a certain mode” here because, as has been duly noted by many scholars, it is difficult to make the same generalizations about the various kinds of cultural studies that have gained widespread currency in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (to name just three).

6. This is not to say that using existing legal and juridical means to protect animals is not to be applauded in the absence of other viable options. It is simply to observe, as Calarco (among many others) has noted, that “the difficulty concerns the tacit *anthropocentric* constraints at work in political and legal institutions and how animal rights discourse ends up acceding to and reproducing the constraints that found and sustain these institutions” (8).

7. I discuss the question and theory of disciplinarity in this light in much more detail in “‘Animal Studies,’ Disciplinarity, and the (Post)Humanities,” in *What Is Posthumanism?*

8. Many critics have articulated this charge. See in particular ch. 1 of my *Animal Rites* (21–43); Calarco 6–10; Diamond, “Difficulty.” For a detailed exposition of how these internal disciplinary differences in approaches to the animal play out on the terrain of contemporary philosophy, see my “Exposures.”

## WORKS CITED

- Acampora, Ralph R. *Corporal Compassion: Animal Ethics and Philosophy of Body*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2006. Print.
- Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1989. Print.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.
- Allen, Colin, and Marc Bekoff. *Species of Mind: The Philosophy and Biology of Cognitive Ethology*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1999. Print.
- Allen, Mary. *Animals in American Literature*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983. Print.
- Animal Legal Defense Fund. “Where Should You Go to Law School?” *Animal Legal Defense Fund: Winning the Case against Cruelty*. Animal Legal Defense Fund, n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2009.
- The Animal—Part 1*. Spec. issue of *Mosaic* 39.4 (2006): 1–213. Print.
- The Animal—Part 2*. Spec. issue of *Mosaic* 40.1 (2007): 1–213. Print.
- Animal Studies Group. *Killing Animals*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2006. Print.
- Badmington, Neil, ed. *DerridAnimals*. Spec. issue of *Oxford Literary Review* 29.1 (2007): v–vii, 1–125. Print.
- Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001. Print.
- . *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion, 2001. Print.
- Balibar, Étienne. “Racism and Nationalism.” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. By Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein. London: Verso, 1991. 37–67. Print.
- Bataille, Georges. *Theory of Religion*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Cambridge: Zone, 1992. Print.
- Bekoff, Marc. *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.
- Boehrer, Bruce. *Shakespeare among the Animals*. London: Palgrave, 2002. Print.
- Burghardt, Gordon M. *The Genesis of Animal Play*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2005. Print.
- Burt, Jonathan. *Animals in Film*. London: Reaktion, 2003. Print.
- Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- Cavalieri, Paola. *The Animal Question: Why Nonhuman Animals Deserve Human Rights*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.
- Cavell, Stanley, et al. *Philosophy and Animal Life*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- Center for Food Safety. *What’s Wrong with Factory Farming?* Center for Food Safety, n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2009.
- Chandler, James. “Critical Disciplinarity.” *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004): 355–60. Print.
- Clarke, Bruce. *Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems*. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.
- Coetzee, J. M. *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. and introd. Amy Gutman. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.
- Collard, Andrée, with Joyce Contrucci. *Rape of the Wild: Man’s Violence against Animals and the Earth*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. Print.
- Daston, Lorraine, and Gregg Mitman, eds. *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. Print.
- DeGrazia, David. *Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. Print.
- . *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Ed. Marie-Louise Mallet. Trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.
- . “‘Eating Well’; or, The Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida.” *Who Comes after the Subject?* Ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy. New York: Routledge, 1991. 96–119. Print.
- . *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. Print.

- Diamond, Cora. "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy." Cavell et al. 43–89.
- . *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1991. Print.
- Francione, Gary. *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- . *Animals, Property, and the Law*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995. Print.
- Fudge, Erica. *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern Thought*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006. Print.
- . "The History of Animals." *H-Animal*. H-Net, 25 May 2006. Web. 20 Mar. 2009.
- . *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.
- , ed. *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. Print.
- Fuss, Diana, ed. *Human, All Too Human*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Grenier, Roger. *The Difficulty of Being a Dog*. Trans. Alice Kaplan. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002. Print.
- Griffin, Donald. *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness*. Rev. ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001. Print.
- Haraway, Donna J. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003. Print.
- . *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- . *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. Print.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999. Print.
- Kac, Eduardo, ed. *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2007. Print.
- . *Telepresence and Bio Art: Networking Humans, Rabbits, and Robots*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. Print.
- Kalof, Linda, et al., comps. "Animal Studies Bibliography." *Ecological and Cultural Change Studies Group*. Ecological and Cultural Change Studies Group, n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2009.
- Kenyon-Jones, Christine. *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2001. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Kuzniar, Alice A. *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on Our Animal Kinship*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006. Print.
- Lawlor, Leonard. *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. Print.
- Linzey, Andrew. *Animal Theology*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995. Print.
- Lippit, Akira. *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000. Print.
- Mack, Arien, ed. *Humans and Other Animals*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1999. Print.
- Malamud, Randy. *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls*. New York: Palgrave, 2003. Print.
- Marcus, Erik. *Meat Market: Animals, Ethics, and Money*. Boston: Brio, 2005. Print.
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 66–125. Print.
- Mason, Jennifer. *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850–1900*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005. Print.
- McHugh, Susan. "One or Several Literary Animal Studies?" *H-Animal*. H-Net, 17 July 2006. Web. 20 Mar. 2009.
- Mitchell, Robert W., Nicholas S. Thompson, and H. Lyn Miles. *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997. Print.
- Nash, Richard, and Ron Broglio, eds. *Thinking with Animals*. Spec. issues of *Configurations* 14.1–2 (2006): 1–192. Print.
- Norris, Margot. *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst, and Lawrence*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. Print.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006. Print.
- Patterson, Charles. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern, 2002. Print.
- Peck, Jeffrey M. "Advanced Literary Study as Cultural Study: A Redefinition of the Discipline." *Profession* (1985): 49–54. Print.
- Pepperberg, Irene. *The Alex Studies: Cognitive and Communicative Abilities of Grey Parrots*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.
- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Rachels, James. *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.
- Rajan, Tilottama. "In the Wake of Cultural Studies: Globalization, Theory, and the University." *Diacritics* 31.3 (2001): 67–88. Print.
- Regan, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983. Print.
- Ritvo, Harriet. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989. Print.
- Rohman, Carrie L. *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.

- Rooney, Ellen. "Form and Contentment." *MLQ* 61.1 (2000): 17–40. Print.
- Rothfels, Nigel, ed. *Representing Animals*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002. Print.
- Salisbury, Joyce E. *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Savage-Rumbaugh, Sue, Stuart G. Shanker, and Talbot J. Taylor. *Apes, Language, and the Human Mind*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.
- Scapp, Ron, and Brian Seitz, eds. *Eating Culture*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1998. Print.
- Serpell, James. *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence Schehr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. Print.
- Shannon, Laurie. "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of *King Lear*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* (2009): forthcoming. Print.
- Shell, Marc. "The Family Pet." *Representations* 15 (1986): 121–53. Print.
- Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. Print.
- Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Avon, 1975. Print.
- Spiegel, Marjorie. *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*. Expanded ed. New York: Mirror, 1997. Print.
- Steeves, H. Peter, ed. *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1999. Print.
- Steiner, Gary. *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005. Print.
- Tester, Keith. *Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Thompson, Nato, ed. *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2005. Print.
- Tyler, Tom, ed. *Animal Beings*. Spec. issue of *Parallax* 12.1 (2006): 1–128. Print.
- . *Ciferae: 101 Wild Animals: A Bestiary for Today in Five Fingers*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, forthcoming 2009. Print.
- Wise, Steven M. *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals*. Cambridge: Perseus, 2000. Print.
- Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.
- . "Exposures." Cavell et al. 1–41.
- . "Thinking Other-wise: Cognitive Science, Deconstruction and the (Non)Speaking (Non)Human Animal Subject." *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*. Ed. Jodey Castricano. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2008. 125–43. Print.
- . *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, forthcoming 2009. Print.