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Inquiries and Intersections: Queer Theory and Anti-Speciesist Praxis

Guest Editor: Jennifer Grubbs

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Queering the que(e)ry of Speciesism

It is inherently queer to disrupt the normative tropes of hierarchy that naturalize speciesism. Or is it? How queer is critical animal studies? If speciesism is the normative ideology, then anti-speciesist thought functions as a queer act within academia. Although a great deal has been written on queer thought and critical animal studies, these discussions primarily exist in isolation from one another. Thus, we, as critical animal studies scholars, should ask ourselves how critical thought itself is intercepted, co-opted, re-appropriated, and constrained to fit within a single-politic agenda. Further, we must interrogate the ways in which we are alienated from our colleagues and insurrectionary comrades who contribute to queer thought. The ability to collaborate *between* critical discourses and movements are impeded by the capital control of the Academy itself. Through a process of intellectual commodification, the ability to produce and consume critical thought is marked by privilege. The attributes used to demarcate critical thought from *academic* critical thought are marked by the capital value of thought itself. In the competition-driven neoliberal Academy, intellectual thought is constrained by a market-driven individualism.

The following issue advances the destabilization of species privilege within a discourse of queer thought. Each author interrupts hegemonic understandings of speciesism through a queer framework. This special issue of the journal provides a range of ways to think about the possibilities of a *queer* critical animal studies. The articles present intersectional praxis in a variety of ways; theoretical essays, a plenary address delivered at the Animal Rights 2011 National Conference in Los Angeles, a comic strip, and a film review. This issue attempts to queer academic understandings of praxis, and provide critical animal scholars the imaginary to envision an Academy not predicated on our commodified thought.

The Issue begins with four **Essays**. The first, "*From Beastly Perversions to the Zoological Closet: Animals, Nature, and Homosex*" is written by Jovian Parry. Parry examines the ways in which queer *other-than-human* animals are erased from scientific understandings of sexuality. He further argues that the homogenization of *other-than-human* animal sexuality into heteronormative pathologies is appropriated to naturalize human sexuality. Parry moves

the discussion of pathologized sexuality into a queer critique of anthropomorphic hetero-washing.

The second essay, "*Toward a Dark Animal Studies: On Vegetarian Vampires, Beautiful Souls, and Becoming- Vegan*," is written by James Stanescu. Stanescu integrates Dark Animal Studies into both queer thought and Critical Animal Studies (CAS). Stanescu utilizes Dark Animal Studies and the ways in which a queering of the human/vampire imaginary opens the possibilities of a CAS that challenges assumptions about rhetorical representations of 'fringe' cultures. There has been a surge in cinematic, literary, and television portrayals of vampiric and werewolf culture. Stanescu addresses the ways in which these representations challenge the discourse on vampnormativity in relation to the naturalization of speciesism. These challenges are evident in compulsory omnivorism and the rhetoric's of mortality

Rasmus Simonsen writes the third essay, *A Queer Vegan Manifesto*, and takes a closer look at the ways in which veganism is experienced. Simonsen examines the role of veganism in the process of identity (re)formation. Veganism, as a socio-cultural influence on identity, is influenced by intricacies of individual circumstance. Simonsen interrogates the ways in which veganism is constructed by subjectivities, and performed as an act of queer challenge to omnivore-normativity.

In the fourth essay, *Operation Splash Back!: Queering Animal Liberation Through the Contributions of Neo-Insurrectionist Queers*, Michael Loadenthal expands on the notion of normativity in relation to exclusionary politics within the queer liberation movement. Loadenthal utilizes the framework of total liberation in relation to the anarchist queer insurrectionary network, Bash Back!. The rhetorical analysis of Bash Back! moves the discussion outside of the Academy. Loadenthal asserts that an anti-speciesist framework must be integrated into the political analyses widely advocated by queer anarchists

Debra Erenberg's "*Strategies for Liberation*" is published in the **Strategy and Tactic** section. In this section, Debra Erenberg offers a historical trajectory of LGBTQ liberation movements throughout U.S. history. In her plenary address delivered at the Animal Rights 2011 National Conference in Los Angeles, Erenberg provides strategic insight into successful movement organizing. The assessment and overview of social movement organizing is astutely applied to the animal rights movement.

The solitary contribution in the **Comic** section comes from Nathan Stevens-Griffin. The comic titled, “*A Queer Approach to Speciesism*,” utilizes a comic frame to queer the assumed (and privileged) method of expressing theory in written text. Through both content and form, the comic provides an accessible overview of how queer thought and CAS complement each other within a total liberation discourse.

In the **Film Review** section, I examine the film “*Rise of the Planet of the Apes*” (2011) in relation to queering anthropocentric portrayals of liberation. The film, albeit a cinematized Hollywood rendering, captures the ideological tension within critical animal studies regarding anti-speciesist revolution. From the heroic Green Hill direct rescue in Italy to the cow named Cincinnati Freedom that hopped a slaughterhouse fence and resides at Farm Sanctuary, Watkins Glen, NY, animal liberations take many forms. Although the film portrays a primate-led uprising against systematized captivity, the anthropomorphized chimpanzee, Caesar, perpetuates speciesist logic. Caesar is only capable of leading the revolution in so far as he is manipulated through biotechnology and human enculturation. The revolution ultimately begins with Caesar’s defiant utterance, “NO.” Regardless of intention, the film manages to toggle multiple competing positions on what constitutes animal liberation.

This issue demonstrates a multitude of theoretically significant intersections between critical animal studies and queer thought. The authors utilize a variety of texts in order to apply an anti-speciesist analysis to hegemonic and compulsory anthropocentrism.

Jennifer D. Grubbs

Guest Editor

ESSAYS

From Beastly Perversions to the Zoological Closet: Animals, Nature, and Homosex

Jovian Parry¹

Abstract

"Nature" in general, and nonhuman animals more specifically, have long constituted a fertile repository from which to construct normative and deviant discourses of human sexuality, as illustrated by still-damning condemnation of non-heterosexual behavior in humans as "unnatural". However the converse discourse - that nonheterosexual behavior is "beastly" - has also long circulated. This essay explores this contradiction, arguing that, although nonhumans have long been implicated in the discursive construction of normative regimes of hetero-reproductivity, Classical and medieval thinkers retained an awareness of nonreproductive sexual behavior in other animals. It is in the modern period, with the rise of sexological discourses and the intensified exploitation of other animals under capitalism, that animal sexual diversity was most thoroughly closeted. I conclude by arguing against mobilizing the rhetoric of the "natural" in contemporary culture wars surrounding human sexuality, as such a strategy merely reinscribes new normative discourses of "natural" sexuality as well as reinforcing the theoretically untenable concept of culture-nature dualism.

Keywords

Sexuality, animality, Hetero-reproductivity, non-reproductive sexuality

Introduction

A wealth of recent scholarship in cultural and literary studies and the social sciences is concerned with the myriad relations, both material and semiotic, between human and non- (or

¹ Jovian Parry earned his MA in Cultural Studies from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and is currently a doctoral student in Science and Technology Studies at York University, Toronto. His research interests include science fiction studies, gender studies, and critical animal studies. Jovian can be contacted at feralkindling@gmail.com.

other than-) human animals². Social theorists such as Donna Haraway (2003, 2008), Giorgio Agamben (2004) and Jacques Derrida (2002) have argued that the human-animal divide, like so many other binary constructions before it (white/nonwhite, masculine/feminine, culture/nature, and straight/gay, to name a few) is historically and culturally nuanced, blurry and co-constructed rather than essential and fixed – in certain key ways, humans *become* humans through recourse to a discursively-constructed animal “other”. Ideas about gender and sexuality feature prominently in the construction of the human in relation to the animal: as biologist and historian of science Donna Haraway provocatively states in *When Species Meet*, “species reeks of race and sex” (2008: 18). Cultural theorist Jennifer Terry puts it another way: “Animals help us tell stories about ourselves, especially when it comes to matters of sexuality”, she writes (Terry, 2000: 151).

In considering how the sexual behavior of nonhuman animals becomes entangled in the stories we tell ourselves about our own sexual proclivities, “Nature” is a key and recurring term, and one with multiple, overlapping and historically contingent meanings. “Nature” and “the natural” have frequently been invoked throughout Western history³ as denoting something essentially good and moral; to say something is “natural” is to naturalize it, to hoist it above the petty realm of social and political machinations and crystallize it as something inherently, unquestionably good (Barthes, 1973). When used in this moralizing sense, the distinctions between ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and ‘divine’ are frequently all but erased

² I have chosen to avoid using the term “animal” to denote “animals other than human animals”, in order to emphasize that *Homo Sapiens* is, in fact, an animal (not, as Mary Midgley rather puckishly points out, “a machine, a god, or a fairy” [1996[1979]: 14]), and also to problematize the anthropocentrism inherent in singling out one animal species (human) while lumping all others under a single signifier (animal) (see Dunayer, 2001; Nibert, 2002: xv). Henceforth, I will use the terms “other animals” or “nonhuman animals” (except in direct quotes or in instances when I am describing “the animal” as a figurative or symbolic socio-historical construct).

³ For reasons of space and clarity, I will confine my analysis and critique to what is commonly (though not unproblematically) known as Western history and Western societies.

(Sturgeon, 2010: 107). To position a form of behavior in the category of “unnatural” can therefore stigmatize it as ungodly: hence it comes as little surprise that a even today a frequent recurrence in homophobic discourse is the allegation that homosexuality is “unnatural”. (In just one example of many, an Australian celebrity opponent of same-sex marriage recently characterized homosexuality as an “unnatural union” [qtd in Rothenberg, 2012]). Often this accusation has been made with recourse to the sexual behavior of nonhuman animals – animals don’t have sex with members of the same sex, the story goes, and therefore neither should humans – to do so would be to debase ourselves, to go “against nature” (Sturgeon, 2010: 107).

But the idea of “Nature” and its inhabitants as inherently good, innocent, or divine has long coexisted with the converse idea of “Nature” (and therefore animals) as inferior: as something to be overcome rather than something to aspire to (Alaimo, 2010: 55). Usually when “Nature” is invoked in this negative sense, the figure of the animal comes to fore. As psychologist and biologist James D. Weinrich once noted, “When animals do something that we like we call it natural. When they do something that we don’t like, we call it animalistic” (qtd. in Hird, 2008: 227).

It should therefore come as little surprise that (in the Western tradition) varying beliefs about other animals’ sex lives have (often simultaneously) been used to bolster claims of the “naturalness” and virtue of human reproductive heterosexuality, and also to denigrate human same-sex sexual behavior as “animalistic” or “beastly”. Narratives about other animals and sexuality become even more convoluted when the presence or absence of same-sex sexual behavior in nonhumans is used not to condemn, but to condone human homosexuality. The discourse can be thus broken down into four strands: 1) animal sex is strictly heterosexual

and reproductive, therefore nonreproductive and/or homosexual sex is ‘unnatural’; 2) animals engage in nonreproductive sex all the time, therefore humans having nonreproductive sex is disgusting and bestial; 3) animal sex is strictly reproductive, therefore non-reproductive human sexual behavior is "proof" of human superiority over dumb, instinct-driven brutes; and also, especially in contemporary times, 4) animals have “queer” sex all the time, therefore homosexuality is "natural".

Clearly, both “Nature” and nonhuman animals constitute a fertile repository of meaning from which to tell various, often conflicting, stories about human sexuality (Terry, 2000: 183). My aim in this essay to illustrate how discourses of animality and sexuality are both inextricably entangled and historically contingent. Following Foucault (1972: 49), I understand discourse to refer to “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” privileging, producing and disseminating certain forms of knowledge and “truth” within mobile networks of sociopolitical power relations (Foucault, 1972; Mills, 2004). In keeping with a Foucauldian framework, I also remain sensitive to how power, enacted and constructed through discourse, both “permits and produces forms of behavior as well as restricting them” (Mills, 2004: 17; Foucault, 1978). My analysis will examine the ways in which discourses of nonhuman animal sexuality have both formed, and been informed by, particular (human) sexual subjectivities, and interrogate whose interests are being served by these discourses. I will start by briefly sketching the premodern histories of ideas about animals and sexuality before focusing in more depth on the period of time stretching from late nineteenth through to the mid-to-late-twentieth centuries. I will then outline how the “repro-centrism” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 2010: 11) of the biological sciences has recently been challenged, in both the popular and the scientific realms, and conclude by examining some of theoretical problems with constructing queer sexualities as “natural”.

Pre-Modern Understandings of Animals and Sexuality

The discourse on nonhuman animal sexual behavior as strictly hetero has a long history. As far back as the first century BCE, the roman poet Ovid had a WSW⁴ character in the ninth book of his *Metamorphosis* lament the oddness of her own sexual proclivities through recourse to an unrelentingly “straight” nonhuman animal world. “Cows do not burn with love for cows, nor mares for mares”, she bemoans; “among all the animals / No female is seized with desire for a female” (qtd in Boswell, 1980: 152). Throughout the next two millennia, this argument would recur in Western societies, bolstered by the rising cultural authority of Christianity which condemned (male) homosexual behavior as “detestable” (Leviticus, 18:22). Some fourteen hundred years after Ovid’s tragic, unnatural women-loving-woman, for example, a religious tract condemning homosexual acts could claim as a truism that “No dumb animal is drawn to this evil... The rest of the animals mate according to nature’s law, [but] you are driven by a lust which all of nature abhors” (in Boswell, 1980: 399; see also Salisbury, 1994: 83).

However, this is only part of the story – for at least as long as people have looked to the “animal kingdom” as a paragon of heterosexual, reproductive virtue – as moral exemplars of “what to do” – they have looked at animals and seen the exact opposite, a seething morass of perverse, beastly sexual chaos providing a compelling example of “what *not* to do”. In the first century CE, for instance, the epistle of Barnabas (now seen as apocryphal, but accepted as scripture at the time) moralized against human sexual sins, including homosexual acts, through recourse to the “perverse” sexual behavior (both real and imagined) of nonhuman animals (Boswell, 1980: 144; Salisbury, 1994: 82). The moralized bestiary *Physiologus*,

⁴ WSW is an abbreviation denoting “women who have sex with women” – the term “lesbian” or even “Sapphic” would be anachronistic here, as neither term was applied to WSW in Ovid’s time.

widely translated and extremely popular throughout the Middle Ages, catalogued the sexual “deviances” of various animal species and urged its readers not to sink to such perverse and beastly depths themselves. These associations between animality and “deviant” nonreproductive sex “profoundly affected subsequent attitudes toward homosexual behavior” (Boswell, 1980: 144-6). From the earliest beginnings of Christianity to Victorian times and even beyond, homosexual behavior (particularly sodomy) has constituted a dangerous blurring of line supposedly separating humans and animals (Gilbert, 1981; Talley, 1996; Fudge, 2000).⁵

The question of *who* is empowered to construct and deploy the discourse of other animals’ sexual behavior is an important one. Class distinctions structuring premodern human/nonhuman animal relations were considerable; those who lived and worked most intimately and intensely with other animals (such as farmers) were likely to be of a less privileged (and less literate) socioeconomic class than, for instance, the aristocracy (whose interactions with nonhumans were mostly confined to sport hunting and feasts) (Thomas, 1984). Discourses of premodern nonhuman animal sexual behavior must therefore be situated in the context of specific sociopolitical power relations, and we must not assume that the textual record represents the opinion of society-at-large. However, we can safely say that Western ideas about animals and sexuality have long been contradictory and ambivalent, with discourses concerning presence or absence of nonreproductive sex in the animal world circulating through various political and religious webs of power, constructing and regulating ‘acceptable’ forms of human sexual behavior.

⁵ Indeed, as historian Arthur Gilbert notes, “Sodomy was inextricably linked in Western thought with bestiality” (1981: 65) – the two “crimes” were paired in Leviticus, and “in sodomy trials the imagery of animals and bestiality was always in evidence” (66). From the seventeenth century onwards, sodomy and bestiality were often even covered under the same legal statute, both in England and the US (Fudge, 2000; Talley, 1996).

Darwinism, Capitalism and the Reproductive Drive

The industrial revolution saw a profound shift in human/nonhuman animal relations. Certain kinds of discursively-constructed animals (such as ‘farmed’ animals) became increasingly absent in industrial modernity (Vialles, 1989), replaced by other kinds of ‘useful’ animals (‘pit ponies’ in mining, for example, or rat catching dogs or cats in factories), a proliferation of ‘useless’ animals like rats and other ‘vermin’ and an increase amongst the upper classes in the keeping of ‘pets’ (Franklin, 1999: 11-13, Thomas, 1984; Ritvo, 1987). The decreased visibility of other animals living together in large groups (such as “livestock”) meant that (aside from the sexual proclivities of “pets”) the typical modern urbanite had less opportunity to witness nonhuman sexual behavior firsthand than her pastoral, premodern counterpart. It was in this historical context that Darwinian evolutionary theory began its rise to prominence. Whether or not Darwin intended them to, *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) gave a new, powerful, scientific authority to older Christian ideas of animal sexual behavior as strictly reproductive; indeed, reproductive heterosex constituted a “master narrative in evolutionary discourse” (Terry, 2000: 154). But the impact of Darwinian theory was not limited to ideas about animals. By the end of the nineteenth century, Darwinian ideas about sexual selection and competition had attained a considerable degree of popular cultural authority, both in Britain and the US, under the rubric of social Darwinism. Cultural historian David Lundblad sums up this simplified view of Darwinian evolutionary theory rather pithily: “survival of the fittest. Kill or be killed. Fight for your mate and pass on your genes” (Lundblad, 2010: 749).⁶ Replete with violent and sexual imagery, the so-called “law of the jungle” naturalized the inclination towards both heterosexuality and violence, in both humans

⁶ As many scholars have noted, Darwinian evolutionary theory emphasized cooperation and mutual dependence as well as competition (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 2010: 11; Midgley, 1983: 24)

and animals, with the assumption being that “animals must be driven essentially, if not exclusively, by heterosexual and violent instincts” (Lundblad, 2010: 748).

With the rising cultural authority of evolutionary thinking (some of it only loosely related to Darwin), “Nature”, as Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson put it, “entered sex in powerful ways” (2010: 8) It is no coincidence that this period (the end of the nineteenth century) was also when the “species” of the homosexual was born, as Foucault famously asserts in his *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (1978). At this time, burgeoning sexological and scientific discourses shifted the boundaries of the playing field from an earlier focus on the regulation of same sex *acts* to a new, medicalized focus on the treatment of a dizzying array of discursively-constructed “deviant” *identities* (Foucault, 1978). As Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson summate:

In short, in the early twentieth century, sexuality became naturalized; an individual’s sexual desires were recoded as expressions of an inherent sexual condition, and that condition was understood in strongly biologized terms...heavily influenced by evolutionary thought. (2010: 7, 8)

For the most part, evolutionary thinking entered sexual discourses as a way of condemning sexual perversions (including homosexuality) as “a form of biosocial degeneracy” (ibid: 9). Heterosexuality here came to be understood as a “natural” not (only) in a religious sense, but in a scientific one as well – “Nature” was, at its fundamental core, characterized as the biological imperative to reproduce.

Unsurprisingly, twentieth century biologists steeped in this dominant scientific paradigm of reproductivism have had a hard time reconciling their interpretation of evolutionary theory with the undeniable presence of same sex behaviors in nonhuman species (see Bagemihl, 1999; Roughgarden, 2006; Alaimo, 2011; Terry, 2000). As cultural theorist Stacey Alaimo asserts,

the majority of scientists have ignored, refused to acknowledge, closeted or explained away their observations of same sex behavior in animals for fear of risking their reputations, scholarly credibility, academic positions, or heterosexual identity. (Alaimo, 2010: 54)

When animals' nonreproductive sexual behavior is too well-documented to be simply ignored or denied, it is often elided by denying that such behavior is not *really* sexual at all. Rather than being a pleasure-seeking activity, same-sex encounters are understood in rather joyless terms as being motivated primarily by some other social function (such as reciprocity, dominance or submission) (Terry, 2000: 154). In his research on wild sheep, for example, biologist Valerius Geist framed the same-sex sexual acts he observed in the language of dominance, as "aggrosexual" rather than homosexual behavior (Geist, in Bagemihl, 1999: 107). In an unusually frank quote taken from a publication several years later, Geist admits:

"I cringe at the memory of seeing old D-ram mount S-ram repeatedly... I called these actions of the rams aggrosexual behavior, for to state that the males had evolved homosexual society was emotionally beyond me. To conceive of those magnificent beasts as 'queers' – Oh God!" (ibid.)

This rare flash of candor from within the citadel of the natural sciences illustrates how the "black-boxing" of pleasure (Alaimo, 2010: 63), so endemic in scientific discussions of animal homosexual behavior, both reinforces homophobic sentiments and protects the heterosexual identity of the scientist conducting the research.⁷

This naturalizing of reproductive heterosex (human and nonhuman) under the combined aegis of science and religion had important economic and political dimensions. Marital and repro-

⁷ Another tactic used by modern biologists to explain away the nonreproductive sexual behavior of other animals puts a new twist on old ideas of homosexual behavior a sign of social degeneration (Foucault, 1978). Same-sex sexual behavior in animals has thus been pathologized, quite arbitrarily, as an effect of pollution: the supposed "effeminization" of bald eagles in the Great Lakes must be due to pollution, for example, or the presence of same-sex sexual behavior between female seagulls must point to some looming environmental catastrophe (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erikson, 2010: 11). In an interesting example of the convoluted feedback loop between repro-centric evolutionary theory and human bigotry, this "pollution" argument has also been used to pathologize human transgendered individuals (Lafazanos, 2011: 74-102).

centric discourses in the early twentieth century comprised a form of biopower through which the state could attain imperialist and expansionist goals, or achieve standards of racial purity. The subjugation of women under the reproductive imperative effectively enabled (and continues to enable) the production a new generation of workers (and consumers) (Davies, 1995; Wittig, 1996[1972]; Harrison & Mort, 1981). Sex and capital can thus be seen as two facets of the same economy (Davies, 1995), with the “compulsory reproduction of the 'species' by women [being] the system of exploitation on which heterosexuality is economically based” (Wittig, 1996[1972]). The state’s interest in reproductive heterosex was thrown into stark relief in early twentieth century Britain, as declining birthrates provoked panics regarding underpopulation, often articulated through the rubric of national or imperial decline and “race suicide” (Harrison and Mort, 1981; Rowbothom, 1972). Children were characterized in medical and political discourses of the period as “the capital of a country” (in Davin, 1978: 10), with women duty-bound to be “mothers of the race” (ibid, 13); lesbianism in particular was seen as threat to the state because it thwarted the production of babies (Lewis, 1999: 360). Across the Atlantic, US president Theodore Roosevelt publically exhorted middle-class white women to procreate, lest the US be swamped by “inferior” races, and prominent psychiatrist of sexuality George Henry rebuked homosexuals for their “lack of responsibility for the procreation of the species” (in Terry, 1999: 362). In the 1960s, nationalist pressures in postwar US led to the articulation of homosexuality as a non-procreative “waste”, a threat to the nation and “to the continuity of civilization itself” (Edelman, 1992: 278).⁸ These discourses continue to circulate in contemporary debates over homosexual marriage. In an academic article entitled “Multiply and Replenish: Considering

⁸ Nor have ostensibly anti-capitalist societies been exempt from these sorts of discourse: in 1930s Russia, “[n]on-reproductive sexuality came to be seen as a deviation from socialist reconstruction. Individual pleasure had to be subordinated to the needs of the state” (Rowbothom, 1972: 60). Nazi discourses encouraging German citizens of “Aryan stock” to procreate can be seen as another example of how reprocentric discourses are pressed into the service of nationalist and racist ideologies (Davin, 13)

Same-Sex Marriage in Light of State Interests in Marital Procreation” (Wardle, 2001), law professor Lynn Wardle asserts that “traditional male-female marriage best protects and significantly furthers the state's interest in responsible procreation” (771). A reiteration of early twentieth century fears of “race suicide” can similarly be discerned in Pope Benedict XVI’s recent denunciation of homosexual marriage as “threaten[ing]... the future of humanity itself” (qtd. in Pullella, 2012: no pagination).⁹

Just as discourses stressing the importance of human hetero-reproductivity have been implicated in the productivist paradigm of modern capitalism, so too have similar discourses regarding the sexual behavior of other animals. The encouragement (and sometimes, enforcement) of nonhuman reproductive sexual behavior has historically been crucial to the systematic exploitation of farmed animals (although this is the less the case in today’s heavily industrialized and biotechnologized animal-industrial complex, with its considerable reliance on artificial insemination technologies) (see Twine, 2010: 94). However, as recent US Department of Agriculture-funded studies into homosexual behavior in sheep demonstrate, the economic stakes involved in scientific research into other animals’ sexual behaviors remain high: the studies were (unsurprisingly) conducted with the explicit goal of *eliminating* nonreproductive sexual behavior in farmed animals by identifying and culling homosexually-inclined rams, in the interests of maximizing productivity and profits (McHugh, 2008: 154). As cultural theorist Susan McHugh points out,

these attempts to lend scientific precision to animal sexual profiling — or, more precisely, the scientists’ equations of sex behaviors with degenerate identities — raise an all-too-familiar specter conjoining genocidal histories of homosexuality with sacrificial histories of animality (ibid.).

Even when other animals’ nonreproductive sexual behavior is actually enlisted in the service

⁹ Two points are important to bear in mind here: firstly, that the explosion of discourses classifying sexual “deviance” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not simply repress, but instead played a key role in the proliferation of queer sexual subjectivities (Foucault, 1978); and secondly, that non-normative sexualities should not necessarily be positioned as anti-capitalist or anti-state in opposition to supposedly state-serving heterosexuality. Many theorists have argued that capitalism can be seen to provide the framework for the production and proliferation of homosexual identities, and that the capitalist system “has no investment in normalizing desire, only in identifying and exploiting the new markets that the multiplication of desiring economies produces” (Hurley, 1995: 169; D’Emilio, 1993; Davidson, 2001).

of productivity (such as the practice of encouraging bulls to mount other bulls for the purpose of semen collection for artificial insemination [Twine, 2010: 95], an undeniable sense of transgression lingers in the discourse. In the popular ‘meet-your-meat’ book *Portrait of a burger as a young calf* (2002), for example, writer Peter Lovenheim observes workers vitriolically abusing the penetrated bulls (known as ‘mounts’): “Come on, you fucking cocksucker!”, one man shouts as he kicks a ‘mount’ in the stomach (38). Lovenheim’s own response to these ‘mounts’ treads the line between sympathetic concern and outright homophobia: reflecting that these animals have “the lowest job in the world”, Lovenheim derisively labels them as “prison bitches” (ibid.). Although the discourse stressing the heterosexuality of other animals may be overridden in the material permutations of production and profit, such transgressions against the zoological gender norm must, it appears, be vigorously denounced.

Coming Out of the Zoological Closet

Recent scholarly and popular work has begun to collect and consolidate the myriad scientific studies on same-sex sexual behavior in other animals which have long remained buried in unpublished thesis or obscure footnotes. In the popular science book *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999), biologist Bruce Bagemihl collects and synthesizes hundreds of examples of nonreproductive sexual behavior in animals, arguing strongly and enthusiastically for the need for a new, more encompassing paradigm in the way we think about both animals and sexual plurality. From the “vibrant transsexualities” (Bagemihl, 1999: 6) of coral reef fish, to the elaborate gestural language used by bonobos to initiate both hetero-and homosexual encounters, Bagemihl’s book emphasizes that “the animal world – right now, here on earth – is brimming with countless gender variations and

shimmering sexual possibilities” (ibid.). Biologist Joan Roughgarden’s *Evolution’s Rainbow: Gender and Sexuality in Nature and People* (2004) similarly collects and celebrates examples of sexual diversity within the animal world. Like fellow transperson biologist Myra Hird (2008), Roughgarden calls attention to the grave oversimplifications that tend to get made in scientific discussions of “gay” animals, and urges scientists to be attentive to the multiplicities within animal genders. Animals like the bluegill sunfish, for example – which has three distinct male morphs, two of whom must engage in courtship behavior with each other in order for any to reproduce with females – can provide special challenges for scientific observers not open to the idea of radical sexual diversity (see McHugh, 2008: 158). Roughgarden gives a personal example to illustrate her point – back when she still identified as male and was studying lizards, Roughgarden’s own incuriosity about other animals’ genders led him to overlook some of their complicated sexual and gender interactions (ibid.).

As Foucault points out, medical and judicial discourses aimed at controlling the “species” of the homosexual (and other “perverts”)

made possible the formation of a ‘reverse’ discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its lefitimacy or “naturality” be acknowledged, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (1972: 101)

The increasing acknowledgement of other animal’s sexual diversity in scientific discourse has been an integral component in the mobilization of this reverse discourse of naturalized homosexuality. Both Bagemihl and Roughgarden’s book explicitly link their studies of nonhuman sexual behavior to a politics of tolerance towards human sexual diversity (Lazafanos, 2011), and a recent Norwegian exhibition of photographic and sculptural depictions of animal homosexual behavior, provocatively entitled “Against Nature?”, explicitly rejected the oft-repeated homophobic condemnation that homosexuality is “against nature” by outing the sexual plurality of various animal species (see Alaimo, 2010: 52). A

string of high-profile “gay” zoo animals has also firmly etched the existence of nonreproductive, homosexual behavior in nonhumans upon the popular consciousness – even as they incite righteous ire amongst the US’s homophobic religious right (Sturgeon, 2010). For some LGBT activists, however, “gay penguins” like Roy and Silo in New York’s Central Park Zoo, who were provided with a surrogate egg which they successfully raised into a healthy chick named Tango, are “proof” of the naturalness of gay marriage – social media network ‘facebook’ even features a group entitled “Homosexuality is Natural”, illustrating their point with numerous examples of homosexual behavior in other animals (<<<https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=122902215710>>>).

Conclusion: Natureculture Wars

The recent renaissance in popular and scientific awareness of animal sexual diversity represents a new chapter in the stories that animals help us tell about ourselves (Terry, 2000: 151). These stories are frequently used as ammunition in the culture wars surrounding human sexuality, with some activists arguing that the fact that homosexual behavior can be observed in animals validates human homosexuality as “natural”, and not at all the “unnatural” abomination that it has all too-often been labeled. This naturalizing of sexuality, however, sits rather uncomfortably with the staunchly anti-essentialist stance of queer and feminist theory and politics (Sturgeon, 2010: 139). Aside from the obviously problematic transfer of historically and culturally specific human identity categories (like “gay”, “lesbian” or “marriage”) onto nonhuman animals (McHugh, 2009), naturalization arguments also risk “simply creat[ing] alternative visions of universal, ahistorical nature to argue their positions” (Lafazan, 2011: 125). Whilst this ahistoricism is troubling in itself, the political implications are even more troubling: through process of naturalization, ideas about sex and

gender run the risk of becoming “rigid, fixed and unable to dynamically shift” in relation to queer cultures (ibid.). Small wonder that some cultural theorists have argued that animal behavior should not be allowed to tell us anything about human culture (see Chris, 2006). The troubling assumption underlying this assertion is that animal sexual behavior stems solely from genetic programming. As Alaimo (2010) points out, however,

the extent to which any sexual orientation could possibly be influenced by genetic factors is a question that is entirely separate from the sexual diversity of animals. Rather than assuming that the “genetic human” is the thing that is equivalent to animality, it would be much more accurate to think of animal sex as both cultural and material. (59)

Rather than building upon the foundation of a hard-and-fast nature/culture, human/animal divide, with animals relegated to realm of “nature” and humans enjoying sole occupancy of the “culture” side of the equation, cultural theorists must recognize that “nature” and “culture” are rarely (if ever) so easily compartmentalized (Haraway, 2003). Instead of nature/culture, Haraway argues for the need to think in terms of naturecultures, a term evoking the complex, sticky threads of materiality and meaning that inextricably weave together these two supposedly discrete realms (Haraway, 2003). Rather than moving queer sexuality over into the “nature” column of the familiar dualism, or ignoring any insights that might be gleaned from animals because they cannot have any relevance to the “culture” side of the equation, cultural theorists like Haraway, Alaimo (2010) Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson (2010), and Lafazanos (2011) stress the need to get beyond this sort of dualistic thinking and instead “directly challenge the split between nature and culture upon which charges of being against nature rely” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 2010: 31-2). Anthropocentric explanations that reduce animals to genetic automata patently fail to satisfactorily account for the dizzying array of sexual behaviors that scientists like Bagemihl (1999) and Roughgarden (2004) have so thoroughly documented. Whilst cultural studies scholars should rightly resist labeling sex and gender expressions as “natural”, or simply

equating animal sexual behavior with human sexual identity, neither should we ignore this wealth of ethological evidence for fear of inviting the specter of biological essentialism into the discourse of human sexuality – such a specter can only pose a threat within an outdated and rigid paradigm of human/animal and nature/culture dualism.

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Toward a Dark Animal Studies: On Vegetarian Vampires, Beautiful Souls, and Becoming- Vegan

James Stanescu¹

Abstract

This article sketches the outline of something called dark animal studies. Dark animal studies do not exist in opposition to a critical animal studies, but rather as a supplementary understanding of what critical animal studies can be. In order to understand dark animal studies, we must also explore various conceptual figures such as the vegetarian vampire, the beautiful soul, the Gothic monster, and the strange stranger. In so doing, we will explore how a dark animal studies can help us chart a becoming-vegan, a way of thinking veganism outside of consumerism and purity. In order to fully grasp this concept of veganism, we must come to terms with what Timothy Morton calls a queer ecology, and the comportment that William Haver calls “queer’s honour.” In so doing, we may be able to build a more powerful animal emancipation movement.

Keywords:

Becoming-vegan, beautiful soul, Timothy Morton, William Haver, queer animal studies, dark animal studies

Introduction

Introductions to articles serve a particular purpose: to orient the reader to what she is about to dive into. They provide overviews, glimpses of transcendence in relation to the material that is about to be covered. Like introductions at parties, they serve to orient people in such a way that productive conversations might take place. Just like a good handshake, an introduction should not be too firm or it will seem it is trying too hard; nor should an introduction be too

¹ James K. Stanescu is a Lecturer in Communication Studies and Philosophy at Mercer University, where he also serves as director of debate. His dissertation, "The Abattoir of Humanity: Philosophy in the Age of the Factory Farm," was the winner of the 2012 Institute of Critical Animal Studies Graduate Project/Thesis of the Year. He founded and maintains the blog, Critical Animal, at <http://criticalanimal.blogspot.com>.

weak, or it will fail to attract attention. However, this party is a little different from other parties, and you might want to be careful whose hand you shake.

There are vegetarian vampires, Gothic monsters, and strange strangers. There are beautiful souls and damaged souls. There are Nazis who turn out to be vegetarian vampires and animal activists who turn out to be Gothic monsters. And everyone, it seems, is a strange stranger. Moreover, the party itself is rather dark and opaque. If you are confused at what is happening at this party, it is because you are thoroughly a part of the party, thoroughly embedded in it. And to be embedded is to always be in bed with others.

This article sketches the outline of something called dark animal studies. Dark animal studies does not exist in opposition to a critical animal studies, but rather as a supplementary understanding of what critical animal studies can be. This animal studies is called “dark” because its mode is connected with the aesthetic of noir fiction, Victorian Gothic, and the opacity and strangeness of the other. As such, dark animal studies privileges the monstrous over the natural, the contingent over the essential, and transgression over purity. In order to understand dark animal studies, we must also explore various conceptual figures. We will, therefore, spend time with some literary tropes both high and low. The purpose will not be to advance our understanding of certain literary movements and figures, but rather to produce concepts through which to think through our relations to self and other, to think through the ethical and ontological imperatives demanded by the existence of other animals. If a critical animal studies is going to succeed, it will need to be able to think itself out of the impasse of the economy of the sacred and the profane, the pure and the polluted, and the innocent and the guilty. It is for this reason that critical animal studies must come to terms with what Timothy Morton calls a queer ecology in which he seeks to dismantle the split between Nature and self, and the compartment of existence in which we have to accept the irreducible difference of the other that William Haver calls queer’s honour. If critical animal studies

becomes a dark animal studies, it will, therefore, be a queer animal studies. And we will be all the richer for those connections.

Vegetarian Vampires

The term vegetarian vampire comes from the novels and movies of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*. Recently everywhere we look we can see references to vegetarian vampires—T-shirts reading 'I <3 vegetarian vampires,' bumper stickers proclaiming the drivers to be vegetarian vampires, and chapters of pop culture philosophy books. Despite the inherent silliness of the *Twilight* world, there is something evocative about this phrase *vegetarian vampire*: a thought of trying to reconcile the antinomies of predation and pacifism. However, such a thought could not be further from the use of the term.

Within *Twilight*, the term vegetarian vampire refers to the Cullens, a family of vampires that kill and drink the blood of non-human animals, but eschew feeding from human animals. Because of this relationship, the Cullens consider themselves akin to vegetarians. This 'vegetarianism' is advocated from a certain type of moralism, that human animals are not beings that should be killed. Moreover, pro-animal welfare philosopher Jean Kazez claims that the Cullens' claim to moral vegetarianism is consistent with the moral premises of certain articulations of vegetarianism (2009). However, the Cullens' vegetarianism is not just a question of morality, but also of self-control and separation. Indeed, much of the drama of the first installment of the *Twilight* series is based around tensions caused by the Cullens' vegetarianism. The Cullen family remains separated from the society of other vampires because of their refusal to hunt and kill humans. Furthermore, because of this separation they often end up in conflicts with other vampires. Moreover, the vegetarianism of the Cullens only comes from a great effort of self-control. Edward Cullen, the main love interest in *Twilight*, struggles constantly with his desire to feed upon his human

girlfriend, Bella. At one point in the novel he explains that it is dangerous for him to be around her alone, because he is not entirely sure he can remain in control. He argues that hunting animals is never quite enough, explaining: “I’d compare it to living on tofu and soy milk: we call ourselves vegetarians, our own little inside joke. It doesn’t completely satiate the hunger—or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist. Most of the time” (Meyer 2008, p. 188). Or, as the film more succulently puts it: “Drinking only animal blood is like a human only eating tofu. It’s filling but never quite satisfies” (*Twilight* 2008). In this way we can see that the vegetarianism of the Cullens serves two simultaneous purposes: To demarcate them from other vampires, and to also demarcate themselves from their own being. Thus, when Bella asks Edward why he kills only animals, he responds: “Because I do not want to be a monster” (Meyer 2008, p. 187). Edward hopes that his vegetarianism will make him pure, to change his essence of vampire. In this way Edward Cullen and the rest of his family join a lineage of other literary vampires that we can also call ‘vegetarian’, such as Louis from Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, Angel from Joss Whedon’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or Bill Compton from Charlaine Harris and Alan Ball’s *True Blood*. In all of these cases, the vampires control their appetites, often barely, in order to mark themselves as pure and moral.

The vegetarian is a trope of a fundamental split within vampiric being, for there always remains a yearning for human blood. This yearning is referred to again and again as ‘The Hunger’. The Hunger is the constant craving within vampiric being to drink the blood of humans. This desire is often played as being a fundamental, animal instinct within vampires. Thus, vampires who are shown to be able to overcome The Hunger are seen as being somehow more human and less animal. The vegetarian vampire is, fundamentally, about reaffirming the distinction between humans and other animals. Vegetarianism is presented as paralyzed being rather than becoming. The vegetarian vampire is never satisfied with her

vegetarianism. Rather, this vegetarianism is seen as denial of her true nature. Vegetarian vampires are supposed to be fun-filled blood-thirsty monsters, but they go around saying ‘woe is me, woe is me’ because they don’t kill humans. And the danger, the excitement of these vampires is that at any moment they may snap. Their vegetarianism is maintained only through the greatest will power. Instead of being a creature whose existence symbolizes an impure and con-fused nature, a transgressive nature in thrall of all that is perverse—which is what the vampire has classically been used to represent—this vegetarian vampire seeks after purity and redemption, a *Vampyr Sacer*. These sacred vampires are fundamentally brooding creatures, racked by guilt and shame. In this way vegetarianism enters into an economy of the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1995), the innocent and the guilty (Bataille 1986), and the pure and the polluted (Douglas 1966). In this case the word “vegetarianism” has obviously no real meaning, except for one—to demarcate that the present vampire is ‘good’. The concept of vegetarianism is wielded in such a style as to make the vampire not a vampire. Vampiric vegetarianism here seems to indicate nothing other than morality, but a morality of the most incoherent and sickly variety. It is an anemic morality of a demon who has found religion.

Beautiful Souls, Damaged Souls

Within the world of Joss Whedon’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, vampires are beings who do not even have souls. The character of Angel, another vampire that only kills non-human animals, is a vampire who has managed to regain his soul. Because Angel has regained his soul, he spends his time brooding and feeling guilt over the actions he committed as a soulless vampire. The Victorian Gothic vampire has no reflection, but all these vegetarian vampires are able to do is reflect upon their lives. These vegetarian vampires reassert reflection as the core of being, and, therefore, deny the intensity of existence whose

impure blood allows multiple becomings. In other words, the vegetarian vampire is libidinally invested in the purity of her soul. This reflective, guilt-ridden obsession with purity underlies what Hegel has called the beautiful soul.

The beautiful soul, for Hegel, was a being who resists the entanglement of her own existence with external reality. As Hegel explains:

It [the beautiful soul] lives in dread of besmirching the splendour of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence, or to transform its thought into being and put its trust in the absolute difference [between thought and being]. The hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore, with a sense of emptiness. [...] In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called 'beautiful soul', its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air (1977, p. 400).

The beautiful soul wishes to protect her purity by never engaging with the world around her. In other words, the beautiful soul hopes that by not affecting the world around herself, she will never have to soil her soul. Because decisions about the world and how to relate to others frequently are messy, the beautiful soul does as much as possible to refuse such decisions. She wants, desperately, to keep her innocence, even at the cost of being guilty of never changing and engaging the world.

Timothy Morton extends this understanding of the beautiful soul into the realm of the ecological. The beautiful soul, according to Morton, does not seek to withdraw from the world, but rather to distance the world. "The beautiful soul maintains a split between self and world, an irresolvable chasm created by the call of conscience—'consciousness raising,' as an activist might put it. Yet the beautiful soul also yearns to close the gap" (2007 p. 118). The beautiful soul, in this important reading, seeks to keep her purity not through a lack of engagement, but instead by introducing a fundamental split between self and other. For Morton, this has two conclusions for ecological thought. The first is that the idea that there is

a Nature out there, separate from us humans, that has to be helped, saved, maintained, protected, reconnected to, or otherwise preserved as an outgrowth of the beautiful soul. In the same way that the beautiful soul maintains her purity by creating ‘the absolute difference between thought and being,’ the ecological beautiful soul relies on the absolute difference between human self and other Nature, between subject and object. The second conclusion Morton draws is that beautiful soul environmentalism is fundamentally a mode of consumerism. If Nature is something that exists out there for the beautiful soul, then all the questions of environmentalism become fundamentally questions of how one consumes Nature—consuming becomes a model for how one brings something outside of oneself into one. Thus, how do we consume fossil fuels and energy? How do we deal with the waste of consumption? How do we consume Nature in terms of immersion, camping, aesthetics, and apperception of the natural? All of these consumptions, and more, mean we are dealing with something far beyond green consumerism, but rather an entire mode of relating to Nature. This mode of relating also includes all the modes of ethical consumerism, especially boycotting and abstention. One of the ways that Morton responds to what he calls the beautiful soul syndrome is to advocate a queer ecology (Morton, 2010b). As Morton explains:

Queer ecology requires a vocabulary envisioning this liquid life. I propose that life-forms constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment (2010b, pp. 275-276, emphasis in the original).

Against the beautiful soul syndrome—which performs a distancing between subject and object, between Self and Nature, between thought and being—Morton wants to purpose a queer ecology that problematizes every inside and outside, that refuses every easy essentialism, and that finds in the endless iterations of beings and their relations an infinite play of possibilities and potentialities.

If Morton's queer ecology seeks to break down the split introduced by the beautiful between Nature and self, than our queer animal studies must seek to break down the dualism between human and animal. At heart within the particular manifestation of the beautiful soul that is the vegetarian vampire is a desire to distance the human—read in terms of rationality, control, individualism, an escape from the body—from the animal—read in terms of finitude, desire, the merging of self and other. To be clear, the human in this context is never a real human, that is to say, never a real human animal, but rather a construction of the human that seeks to disavow all of its animal capacities and vulnerabilities. Just as a queer ecology follows the insights of queer theory to collapse the easy divisions of inside and outside in terms of Nature and Self, so that all we have left is a self that is a part of nature, we follow those insights in a queer animal studies to collapse the divisions between *the* human and *the* animal, so that all we have left are human animals as one of many animals. As shall be made clearer, it is this embeddedness of human and animal that is one of the links between a queer animal studies and a dark animal studies.

If we have tarried long with Hegel and Morton, it is only so we may begin to think the practices of veganism outside of consumerism and beautiful soul syndrome, a veganism that rejects the division between Nature and self, between human and animal. We have tarried so that we might be able to think veganism *queerly*.

Becoming-Vegan²

We are not done with souls, beautiful or damaged. We have not left behind vampires, vegetarian or otherwise. We are instead now turning our attention to the protocols and

² I use the term becoming-animal as an homage to the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. While it is outside the scope of this present article to fully explicate and engage with Deleuze and Guattari's sense of becoming, the idea of becoming-vegan can be understood outside of the reader's having knowledge of their work. If you are interested more in their theory of becoming, see their *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987, pp. 232-309).

processes that seek to overcome the split between self and other that is instituted by the beautiful soul. These concepts of souls and vampires are going to help us think through the practices of veganism.

As vegans, we must find ways to be neither a beautiful nor damaged soul. While the philosophical language of Hegel is not used, the charge of beautiful soulism is regularly leveled at vegetarians and vegans. Thus, to use but one famous and recent example, Michael Pollan presents this picture:

If I've learned anything about hunting and eating meat it's that it's even messier than the moralist thinks. Having killed a pig and looking at myself in that picture and now looking forward (if that's the word) to eating that pig, I have to say there is a part of me that envies the moral clarity of the vegetarian, the blamelessness of the tofu eater. Yet part of me pities him, too. Dreams of innocence are just that; they usually depend on a denial of reality that can be its own form of hubris. [Spanish philosopher Jose] Ortega [y Gasset] suggests that there is an immorality in failing to look clearly at reality, or in believing that the sheer force of human will can somehow overcome it (2006, pp. 361-362).

We can see easily enough the contours of Pollan's argument here. The vegetarian here is not presented as someone who has seen the world around her and wants to engage and change it, but rather a hollow moralist who seeks after "blamelessness." Or, as Pollan puts it elsewhere in his book, the only reason we would strive after a "vegan utopia," is if we are worried about "the condition of our souls" (2006, pp. 326-327). In other words, a vegetarian is just a beautiful soul who is withdrawing from the world, while the hunter is presented as the gritty realist who understands the importance of getting her soul dirty in order to live truly morally. Exactly how Pollan expunges his guilt is something we will return to later, but let us remain with this criticism of vegetarianism (and also, obviously, veganism) for the moment.

I have no doubt that if we try hard we would be able to find some vegans out there that take their veganism as a marker of innocence and a guarantee of blamelessness. However, most of the vegans I know are seldom Hegel's beautiful soul who faces the "silent fusion of

the pithless unsubstantial elements of evaporated life" (Hegel 1977, p.400), but are instead the other side of the dialectal coin—a damaged soul who has seen the face of the gorgon. Many vegans, rather than feeling a sense of innocence, are racked by guilt. This is the guilt that Theodor Adorno describes as “guilt of a life which purely as a fact will strangle other life” (1973, p. 364). We feel guilty by the actions we engaged in before we were vegans, we feel guilty by the inability of veganism to stop all cruelty toward animals, we feel guilty that we haven’t convinced more people to be vegans, and on and on. The economy of innocence and guilt traps many vegans into the beautiful soul syndrome, be they beautiful souls or damaged souls. As Timothy Morton argues about the Romantic inception of vegetarianism: “Percy Bysshe Shelley advocated abstaining from meat and from unfairly traded spices. Yet his vegetarian rhetoric is obsessed with obsession, equating madness with crime, crime with disease: longing for a society without a trace—a society without people” (2010b, p. 279. See also Morton 1994). We need an understanding of veganism that does not collapse into the same pitfalls of consumerism we discussed above.

Usually when we are convincing people to become vegans, we begin with trying to explain the various horrors that animals endure, particularly in factory farms. In this way, we assume that truth produces action, that first comes truth, and then comes change in our lives. This idea, that knowledge comes before change, is a relatively modern conception. It emerges out of what can be called the Cartesian moment of philosophy. As Michel Foucault explains in his lectures *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*:

To be capable of truth you only have to open your eyes and to reason soundly and honestly, always holding to the line of self-evidence and never letting it go. The subject, then, does not have to transform himself. The subject only has to be what he is for him to have access in knowledge to the truth that is open to him through his own structure as subject. It seems to that this is very clear in Descartes, with, if you like, the supplementary twist in Kant [...]. Consequently, the idea of a certain spiritual transformation of the subject, which finally gives him access to something to which precisely he does not have access at the moment, is chimerical and paradoxical (2005, p. 190).

This alternative to the Cartesian mode of knowledge, which Foucault indicates as a spiritual transformation of the subject, conforms to the mode of Classical philosophy. What we find, despite their differences, is that we need to change ourselves in order to be ready to receive the truth. Our subjectivity, that is to say, who we are, doesn't exist outside of our ability to understand and act on truth. Rather, who we are is completely bound up with our practices of subjecthood and our truths. The idea we have to prepare ourselves for truth is certainly a strikingly different way of looking at things. But this tradition isn't something completely foreign to our modern ears. If we look at the myths related to alchemy, particularly in Goethe's *Faust*, it was not uncommon to see individuals making deals to change their beings so that they would be capable of accessing the truth of alchemy. Also, if we look at psychoanalysis or certain types of Marxism, the idea that truth can be gained only by certain types of practices are central to those modern systems.

So, in the philosophy of Antiquity, what we find are several regimes of how we are supposed to act in order to be able to receive truth. We find mental tests, memory exercises, abstentions, trials of strength, statements about who we are to hang out with or whom we are not to hang out with, etc. And of course this advice is different if we get it from a Stoic than if we get it from a Cynic; an Epicurean will tell us something different than a Socratic, and on and on. At this point we're not interested in going into detail about the different systems of the self that these schools of thought argued for. What we are interested in is conceiving of veganism as a practice of the self, as a method that does not come from having the truth revealed, but is itself a practice of truth and of learning truth. Becoming-vegan is not an end, but a process, an always ongoing process.

These practices of the self were referred to by the thinkers of Antiquity as *askesis*. This term *askesis* became translated by the Christian monks into the idea of asceticism. Indeed, many of the practices one would find among the Stoics and Epicureans were

transposed with subtle but important differences by the early monks. To give one example, both the Stoics and the early monks were required to keep daily journals. The monks were to keep journals where they were to weigh each thought like a moneylender weighs gold. They were to find any thought of sin and do penance for it. However, the Stoics kept journals meant for reflection upon the thoughts of the day. A Stoic would record her thoughts about the day, jot down interesting quotations and advice she would hear. This record created a mental focus upon what happened during the day, not so much as a memory aid, but rather as something to help her work out her ideas and concentrate. It wasn't a way of denying the self, but rather a practice by which one could live all the more intensely in the world. Asceticism is rooted deeply in the denial of the self. We deny our human—read *animal*—nature in order to affirm our higher, divine nature. Therefore, Christian asceticism is a dualism, the same dualism we see in Cartesianism and the figure of the vegetarian vampire. And in all of these dualisms we see an extreme bias against the animal. *Askesis*, on the other hand, is not rooted in denying the self. It doesn't begin with the idea that we are inherently split, and indeed such a dualism would seem quite alien. Rather, *askesis* is conceived as a set of practices of self-production, of a form of metamorphosis. Veganism, or better, becoming-vegan, when conceived as a type of *askesis* is not about self-denial; it isn't about refusing some primal instinct that is essential to who we are. This is not to say that becoming-vegan isn't sometimes hard, or that it doesn't require work. However, it also has a great deal of pride and joy involved. Becoming-vegan is an *askesis*, a practice of changing our being.

In this way, becoming-vegan is a materialist ontology; that is to say, it is a practice about the production of beings. However, for all our reliance on the questions of Classical philosophy, this is where we begin to leave them behind. For Classical philosophers, the truth that *askesis* opened up was primarily a truth about the self. Indeed, so far we have talked about veganism in almost completely individualistic terms. But one does not enter a

becoming-vegan just for oneself. And the truth one learns is not truth just about the self. Becoming-vegan is not just an ontological practice, but an ethical practice at the same time. Here the ethical question is not the question of the bioethicist, in which we seek to create a system of hierarchical beings that must be saved in an order of finite resources. Instead, the ethical question is how do we transform ourselves and society to extend partial sympathies? The ethical question becomes properly ontological, and the ontological becomes properly ethical. Deleuze and Guattari explain how one might think the ethical and the ontological are co-constitutive: “The agony of the rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something of one passes into the other” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994 p. 109). Becoming-vegan, therefore, represents a cutting of the Gordian knot between ontology and ethics. The ethical comes to concern itself with a change in being. That is to say, the ethical gives up all abstractions and systems and returns instead to concrete praxis, to the practices and processes that can produce a transformation in being equal to our present situation. The ontological gives up the foundation of isolation, and founds itself on the always already relation between beings. The great debate waged between Heideggerians and Levinasians about if ontology or ethics is first philosophy is transformed from impasse to alliance in this permutation.

This idea of becoming-vegan as a practice that transforms the self and our relationship with others, that allows us access to truths about how to relate to the other, is different from the usual justifications for veganism. There are obviously many different justifications for veganism; however, perhaps the most common justification for veganism is that it represents an economic boycott. This is, for example, Peter Singer’s view from *Animal Liberation* (2002, pp. 159-164). From a strictly utilitarian principle, that makes a bit of sense. For most of us, there are plenty of times that we are vegans even when the economic rationality of boycott falls flat, for example, if there is food that is being given away for free, or if our food is

misprepared and we send it back, if we steal food, etc. There are any number of examples where not only does the concept of economic boycott make little sense, but also when economic boycott means we probably should eat animal flesh and products. In other words, there are plenty of times under this view when our veganism is little more than personal tic, a bizarre demand. But I don't believe that is true. When we refuse to eat animals we are engaging in a perpetual process of self-metamorphosis; we are constantly re-affirming our relationship to others. Moreover, we can see that veganism as economic boycott is a weak veganism. I don't mean weak in that the actions are weaker, but rather weak in its conception of veganism. When we speak of becoming-vegan as ontologically productive, as a practice and process of self and other, we are clearly seeing veganism as a major determination of subjectivity and identity. I do not want something so important translated into merely another negotiation over goods and services, translated into merely another point in neoliberal circuits of exchange. I am not simply, or even principally, a consumer in a capitalist society whose ethical project can be reduced to buying better. I am not, in the end, just another consumer with a beautiful soul syndrome. This assertion is not a condemnation of boycotts. Rather, it is a call to realize that if we want to think of veganism as productive of the self, then it becomes dangerous to think of it in terms of economic rationality. To put it in terms that the anarchists among us understand, veganism has as much relation to the economic boycott as the general strike does to the particular strike. The forms may be similar, but the stakes are entirely different.

There is a way that viewing becoming-vegan as an *askesis* and outside of things like modes of exchange seems to be justifying an even more severe form of purity. This is the opposite of what we hope to accomplish. Becoming-vegan is a recognition that veganism is always an on-going process, that we can never attain a pure state of being the vegan, but must always turn our practices to the concrete situations and material relations in front of us.

Becoming-vegan is crisscrossed with histories, cultures, places, and worlds that deny a pure state of veganism. After the last factory farm is shut down, after the last abattoir is dismantled, after the last burnt animal carcass is sold for the last time, we will still be becoming-vegan, because the relationship of our selves and animal others will always continue. Veganism is always going to be bound up with multiple becomings, multiple relationships, multiple calls and answers.

The Myth of Consent and the Liminal Figure

Earlier we discussed Michael Pollan's condemnation of vegetarianism as a utopian dream of innocence. Pollan doesn't just condemn vegetarianism, but also defends particular practices for eating and killing other animals. Pollan's defenses for eating animals have already been demonstrated to be incoherent and contradictory (Stanescu 2010), but in particular in his justifications, Pollan argues we should have a "respect for what is."

This "respect for what is" does point us in a direction. That direction just happens to be the direction from which we came—to that place and time, I mean, where humans looked at the animals they killed, regarded them with reverence, and never ate them except with gratitude (2006, p. 362).

Pollan is by no means the first to justify killing and eating animals as being primarily about sacredness, communal relationships, and respect. Indeed, the idea that we are justified to kill and eat animals because we respect them and treat them with gratitude goes back to some of the oldest traditions with animals. Complicated rituals were used in various cultures to produce what Jean Kazez refers to as the "myth of consent" (Kazez 2010, pp. 9-18). Thus we have rituals in which animals' consent is requested before being killed. An example of one such ritual, from the Greco-Roman world, is when a sacrificial animal had water sprinkled in her eyes in a form of blessing. The animal would shake her head to clear the water from her

head, and the observers would take the nodding from the animal as sign of consent before slaughter (Gilhus 2006, p.135). Despite Pollan's claim of vegetarians having utopian dreams of innocence, it is really Pollan who seeks to expunge his guilt through forms of blessings, gratitude, and respect. Pollan brings the killing and eating of other animals deeply into the economies of innocence and guilt, purity and pollution, and the sacred and the profane. The very rituals that Pollan hopes will expunge his own guilt, are at the root of the history of sacrifice, killing, and eating other animals. As Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss explain in their study about the history and uses of sacrifice, "beneath the diverse forms it [sacrifice] takes, it always consists in one same procedure, which may be used for the most widely differing purposes. This procedure consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed" (1964, p. 97). Pollan hopes that if he can more thoroughly re-inscribe the killing and eating of animals into logic of sacrifice and the realm of the sacred, he can gain his innocence. In other words, Pollan is as desirous after purity as those he criticizes. Pollan is as much a beautiful soul as any vegetarian, or vegan, he condemns.

The purpose here is not simply to switch or invert the dialectic—to prefer guilt over innocence, to prefer pollution over purity, to prefer the profane over the sacred—but rather to find ways to exit from such economies all together, to find ways to be neither a beautiful nor damaged soul. To begin to think of a way of exiting, let us return to those vegetarian vampires from earlier.

The vegetarian vampire is the liminal figure that exists on both sides: both beautiful soul and damaged soul. On the one hand, the vegetarian vampire uses vegetarianism as a marker of innocence. As we remarked before, the vegetarian vampire still eats and kills nonhuman animals. In this case the word *vegetarianism* has obviously no real semantic

meaning, except for one: To demarcate that the present vampire as 'good'. In this way vegetarianism is used as a signifier for innocence and purity. This is perhaps one way to answer the famous charge that Hitler was a vegetarian. Let us, for now, bracket the question of if Hitler were actually a vegetarian or if the Nazis ever cared about nonhuman animals. We know that the Nazi party passed a number of laws surrounding the protection of animals—even if these were seldom, if ever, enforced. And there is a reason that so many people believe that Hitler was a vegetarian, because there was a significant propaganda push on the part of the Nazis that Hitler was a vegetarian (Payne 1973, p. 346). Indeed, it is quite obvious that the Nazi party was very interested to be seen on the side of the animals, even if they were not actually. This leads to the question: Why? One answer is given by Boria Sax. Sax argues that the Nazis were very interested in turning everything into questions of biology, in which the animal trope served them well. In this way, certain predatory animals remained privileged, while the vermin to be exterminated and the sheep to be slaughtered did not change. (Sax 2000). However, just as Sax partially answers the question, he really deepens the question of why was it important to see Hitler as a vegetarian. The answer is the same as with the vegetarian vampires. At the same time that the Nazis wanted to be predatory beasts, they also wanted to be innocent and pure. They wanted people not to worry because they were on the side of Nature; they wanted people not to worry because they were vegetarians. As a liminal figure, the vegetarian vampire is also a brooding, reflective creature; a guilt-ridden being. A vegetarian vampire is a being fundamentally trapped by her own guilt. Now, most of the vegetarians I know in the animal emancipation movement do not believe they are innocent. But, and this is important, they too are seeking redemption.

Dark Animal Studies

Perhaps what critical animal studies most needs now is a dark animal studies.

Timothy Morton, in response to the beautiful soul discourse within the environmental movement, and with the promotion of green environmentalism or bright environmentalism, has proposed a new environmental aesthetic: dark ecology.

Dark ecology puts hesitation, uncertainty, irony, and thoughtfulness back into ecological thinking. The form of dark ecology is that of noir film. The noir narrator begins investigating a supposedly external situation, from a supposedly neutral point of view, only to discover that she or he is implicated in it. The point of view of the narrator herself becomes stained with desire. There is no metaposition from which we can make ecological pronouncements” (Morton 2010a, pp. 16-17).

While Morton explicitly connects dark ecology with noir, and we can certainly affirm those connections within a dark animal studies, we are going to push the connection to the Gothic.

The vegetarian vampire, filled with guilt, caught up in constant reflection, and even able to exist in daylight, seems so far from the Victorian Gothic vampire of Bram Stoker. As Judith Halberstam points out, “Gothic [...] is the breakdown of genre and the crisis occasioned by the inability to ‘tell,’ meaning both the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize. Gothic, I argue, marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse” (1995, p. 23). Within the Gothic, domestication and horror mutually interrupt and interpret each other. So the horrific is everyday, and the everyday is horrific. The monsters of the Gothic represent all the anxieties of modernity. “Gothic monsters in particular produce monstrosity as never unitary but always an aggregate of race, class, and gender” (Halberstam 1995, p. 88). The disruption of the Gothic monster into domesticity collapses anxious distinctions between self and other. For example, Frankenstein’s monster learns rejection and hatred from the domestic De Lacey. The distancing of the beautiful soul has no place within the Gothic.

A dark animal studies is a Gothic animal studies, and Gothic animal studies is fundamentally a queer animal studies. As Sue-Ellen Case explains, “queer rebels constitute a kind of activism that attacks the dominate notion of the natural. The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny” (1991, p. 3). Moreover, Gothic monstrosity, like the queer, challenges the easy boundaries between inside and outside, between self and other, between ontology and ethics. The Gothic monster exists beyond dialectics of modernity—beyond the dead and the living, beyond good and evil, beyond artificial and natural. It is, perhaps, the Gothic’s resistance to the natural order that should most attract it to a critical animal studies.

Do we need to cover, one more time, how the concept of the natural order serves as a tool to justify our domination, administration, exploitation, and murder of other animals?³ Any vegan will no doubt be aware of the long list of excuses for eating other animals’ flesh that comes from claims of naturalness. For example, pointing to our canine teeth, the claims that we needed to eat animal protein for our evolutionary purposes, the pointing out of predation among other animals, the charges about the lack of nutritional sustenance from a vegan diet, and so many other justifications. The embrace of the natural order is just an extension of the myth of consent. The myth of consent allowed people to eat other animals because they believed the other animals or God consented for humans to eat them. The appeals to Nature function the same way: We don’t have to examine the ethical implications of eating animals because Nature has intended it this way. There are plenty of good rhetorical reasons to fight back against the idea that veganism is unnatural, but a dark animal studies needs to dissociate itself from the tyranny of the natural order. The vegetarian vampire may be supernatural, but she is always completely a creature of the natural order. When vegetarian

³ For those that need a fuller explanation of the critique of naturalism, I highly suggest beginning with Greta Gaard’s “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” (1997).

vampires struggle with *The Hunger*, they present themselves as being able to, at least briefly, transcend their natural inclinations. But just because they have escaped the hold of Nature, they still feel acutely the lack of not being in tune with the natural order. They are still very much trapped within the dialectic of the natural and the unnatural. And within that dialectic, what they have is deprivation, lack, a hole within their being. However, the Gothic vampire, unlike her later vegetarian vampire counterpart, exists entirely outside of the natural order. As Halberstam explains about Dracula: “He is monster and man, feminine and powerful, parasitical and wealthy; he is repulsive and fascinating, he exerts the consummate gaze but is scrutinized in all things, he lives forever but can be killed. Dracula is indeed not simply a monster but a technology of monstrosity” (1995, p. 88). The Gothic vampire explodes the dialectics that trap and produce the vegetarian vampire. When we seek to constitute ourselves as becoming-vegan, we need to understand ourselves not through the moral denialism of the vegetarian vampire, but rather through the queer revelry of the Gothic vampire. Becoming-vegan is a set of practices of self and other; becoming-vegan is a pact we make to packs. It is within that relational nature of the pact we make to packs that we have another reason to speak of a dark animal studies.

There exists within animal studies a desire to know and understand other animals. This desire can take the rather benign form of books on communicating with animals, or books that try to explain animals and the worlds they inhabit. On the other end of the spectrum, the desire to know and understand animals often leads to vivisections, experiments on animals that result in physical and/or psychological harm, and contemplating more efficient systems for breeding and slaughtering animals. For many, there seems to be an imperative that any truly ethical relation has to mean knowing and understanding the other. In such a view there is no room for, as Eduardo Glissant (1997) put it, a right to opacity. Thus, a dark animal studies is dark because it seeks relations that preserve opacity for others. It is

dark because we do not have a transcendent view of all others, but an embedded relations of often murky others. Timothy Morton understands this as a part of queer ecology, in his notion of the strange stranger. “To us other life-forms are strangers whose strangeness is irreducible: *arrivants*, whose arrival cannot be predicted or accounted for” (2010b, p. 277). To respect the opacity of the other is not a refusal of relation, but rather grounds the relation as a guarantor of irreducible difference. This relation of irreducible difference is what William Haver calls “queer’s honour:”

Queer’s honour is a comportment, an attention, that is something quite other than interpretation; it is a seeing irreducible to looking, a hearing irreducible to listening; it is the perversity of the singularity at stake when, in Jean-Luc Nancy’s phrase, ‘touch touches touching,’ when the word withdraws from signification—or when body fluids no longer bear the glad tidings of intersubjective recognition. Queer’s honour is thus a comportment toward, an attention to, the unsublatable contingency and historicity of what is; more radically, it is an astonished affirmation of what is as its contingency and historicity (Haver 1999, pp.11-12).

A respect for opacity is a respect for irreducible difference, and a respect for irreducible difference is a respect to the absolute singularity of the other. Queer’s honour, in Haver’s formulation, means an attunement to that absolute singularity of any other. But queer’s honour takes us one step further. In affirming the absolute singularity of the other, we also affirm that it didn’t have to be this way; we have to affirm that everything could always be different than what it is. We are now about as far away from Pollan’s notion of having ‘a respect for what is’ as we can be. The refusal of the natural order goes hand in hand with the ‘astonished affirmation of what is as its contingency and historicity.’ Queer’s honour brings us into the finitude of relations with opaque others.

A dark animal studies takes seriously these shifts in our fundamental existential compartments. And it is within this darkness that we must take seriously that our project is non-transcendent. As William Haver further explains, a position of non-transcendence means we also have to take a position of non-neutrality (1997, 2004). A beautiful soul always wants

to make sure her actions are perfect and clean before any are taken. A beautiful soul must always seek to maintain her neutrality, because she will never have enough information to know if her commitments will be correct beforehand. However, neutrality is not an option. Every time you eat, every time you choose if you are going to consume other animals, or not, is an action that commits you to entire histories of struggles, ontological scars and walls, and political realities. Becoming-vegan is never a neutrality, but always a process that forms alliances, gives commitments, and creates relations. The world can be otherwise, and our practices and protocols of relations give us a chance to change the iterations of what is. As Haver reminds us:

In asking these questions, I am not calling for yet one more sociology of knowledge, or yet one more—really boring—phenomenology of ourselves. I am saying that without the queer's honour of an attention to here, now, this; without an absolute devotion to the flesh, its pleasures and possibilities, there is nothing gay or lesbian about our studies, nothing queer about our theory, precisely because it is in that attention, that devotion alone, that we stand a chance of hearing the voice of the utter fools we ourselves are; here, now, this is the only chance we have to make the political happen (1999, p.20)

A dark animal studies is not about the future, but rather about the very possibility of futurity. A dark animal studies does not depend on history, but on the reality of historicity. A dark animal studies cannot wait for tomorrow, but always must take place now. It is about a decision we must constantly, and presently, be making about the relations and worlds we want to inhabit, a decision made in darkness, upon which so many possibilities can hinge.

We need a way of becoming-vegan that means both that we are never innocent while also meaning that we don't have to be trapped by guilt or rituals of purity. However, those of us in the animal emancipation movement see these rituals of purity everywhere we go—welfarists versus abolitionists, pacifists versus militants—a movement that has trouble moving because of all its fractures, a movement that has trouble moving because the question of tactics is always raised to the economy of the pure and the polluted. As Freud would put it,

it is a movement that suffers from the “narcissism of minor differences” (1961, p. 72). Vegetarianism, and also therefore veganism, has become a symbol for putting the vampire back into the play of the sacred and the profane; however, we desperately have to reverse this process. If the animal emancipation movement is to have a chance at changing both our relationships with other animals, and our relationship with the animal that we are, we are going to have to find ways to escape these protocols of guilt and innocence. We are going to need a dark animal studies. We are going to need less vegetarian vampires and more vampiric vegans.

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A Queer Vegan Manifesto

Rasmus Rahbek Simonsen¹

Abstract

What does it mean for a person to declare her or his veganism to the world? How does the transition from one diet to another impact one's sense of self? Veganism challenges the foundational character of how we "act out" our selves—not least of all in the context of sexuality and gender. In my paper, I am thus interested in the potential of veganism to disrupt the "natural" bond between gender formations and the consumption of animal products, as this relates to social and cultural genealogies. Consequently, I will explore a queer form of veganism that affirms the radical impact of what Sara Ahmed calls "shared deviation."

Keywords: Veganism, Queer Theory, Gender, Sexuality, Ethics of Eating, Food and Normalization

A Queer Vegan Manifesto

[Sexual object choice] is more like vegetarianism than homosexuality.
—David Halperin

In his article "History of Male Homosexuality," David Halperin proposes that simple sexual object choice—what he sees as an "exercise in erotic connoisseurship" (2000: 98)—in late antiquity and medieval contexts did not correspond to an expression of sexuality as such, at least not in the way we understand it today; indeed, "it [was] more like vegetarianism than homosexuality" (98). In this circumstance, we can deduce that, by way of comparison,

¹ Rasmus Rahbek Simonsen (rsimonse@uwo.ca) is a PhD Candidate in the English Department at the University of Western Ontario. His dissertation deals with the queer aspects of the American Renaissance. His publication record includes essays on queer zombies and the fiction of Paul Auster. Additionally, he has presented papers at several conferences on topics ranging from contemporary queer fiction to the intellectual kinship between Heidegger and Thoreau.

vegetarianism can have ethical or aesthetic provenance, but it does not “necessarily function...as a marker of difference” (98). Now, Halperin’s immediate focus is not vegetarianism, and I do not wish to enlist him as a straw man for my argument; rather, my aim is to promote vegetarianism as a viable topic of inquiry for Queer Studies. Since, historically, deviating from eating meat has carefully been tied to the discursive production of masculinity—and not simply in terms of aberration or one’s momentary preference for a certain food object—vegetarianism (and more apposite my essay, veganism) comes to constitute a set of gendered acts that are linked to the whole of what signifies as male (and female), which certainly includes sexuality. In other words, vegetarianism and veganism are much more complex than what Halperin’s casual simile would otherwise indicate.

In this essay, I will thus ask the following: What does it mean for a person to declare their veganism to the world? How does the transition from one diet to another impact one’s sense of self? While it is true that, as Lorna Piatti-Farnell writes, “[f]ood is dynamic, malleable and subject to interpretation” (2011: 1), there are certain, long-established traditions and conventions that govern how and what we eat. In this regard, veganism calls into question preconceived notions of what a “proper” diet consists of and, hence, how life is properly lived in contemporary Western liberal societies. Additionally, veganism challenges the foundational character of how we “act out” our selves—not least of all in the context of sexuality and gender—when we consider the performative aspect involved in eating different foods. It cannot be denied that, time and time again, the tenets of veganism are rendered suspect in relation to sexuality and reproduction.

Famously, in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* ([1990] 2010), Carol Adams traces how different ways of eating have been employed to maintain clear gender boundaries in the Western world and elsewhere.¹ Erika Cudworth affirms this fact in a recent article, “‘The Recipe for Love’? Continuities and Changes in the Sexual Politics of Meat,” where she

identifies a “food hierarchy in which red meats have been associated with masculinity and white meats, fish and dairy products associated with femininity” (2010: 81). As a consequence, meat consumption has become a powerful way of asserting or performing one’s masculinity. Even the mode by which meat is prepared is gendered. Cudworth highlights how “roasting,” for men, has become the favored way of cooking meat, as it leaves the meat with a raw, bloody appearance that draws on “mythologies of masculine strength and virility deriving from animal blood” (2010: 89); on the other hand, “boiling” meat is “associated with frugality,” and “stewing” is considered “mundane,” and therefore domestic, feminine (81). This appears to be in line with Adams’ conclusion that, in the main, “[r]efusing meat means a man is effeminate” (2010: 63); effeminacy, however, cannot unequivocally be grouped with homosexuality, as Halperin reminds us.ⁱⁱ Nevertheless, vegans—and most noticeably so, male vegans—are stigmatized by general society to the extent that, borrowing from Lee Edelman, they fail “to comply with heteronormative mandates” (2004: 17) of eating, which, in reality, as Carmen Dell’Aversano puts it in her radical assessment of the “normal” Western diet, is “[l]earning to eat [in a way that] implies being indoctrinated in an attitude of callousness towards physical and psychological torture, pain, fear and ultimately murder” of nonhuman animals (2010: 82). Despite this, from the position of dominant meat-eating society, veganism is considered odd, or indeed queer. Becoming vegan is a direct response to the discursive mechanisms of “anthronormative” society, and, in this way, veganism shares a bond with recent developments (or reconfigurations) in queer theory.

The queering of veganism entails, in Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird’s words, “the continual unhinging of certainties and the systematic disturbing of the familiar” (2008: 4). Etymologically speaking, “queer,” as Eve Sedgwick has pointed out, “means *across*,” and the term itself has spun “outward along dimensions that can’t be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all” (1993: xii, 9). In line with this, we can say that veganism’s “affective

involvement” (Parisi, 2008: 290) with species other than the human directly expresses a desire to transverse not to say disrupt the boundaries that uphold and police the categories that separate the human from the nonhuman. In my treatment of veganism I will thus appropriate Dell’Aversano’s view that “queer” is a “subversive enterprise,” aimed at “denaturalization” (2010: 74)ⁱⁱⁱ *in general*, and not merely, strictly speaking, in relation to questions of sexuality. In this way, veganism, due to the connotations that attach to different dietary habits, involves a critical consideration of the gendering of food and how identities are shaped around what we eat. As a result, my concern in this text is not so much “the queering of the human-animal barrier” (Dell’Aversano, 2010: 100), but rather I aim to examine the socio-cultural aspect of veganism as a marker of identity and the discursive tug-of-war that follows. For this reason, I will neither linger with the question of animal exploitation nor that of inter-species affect long; I defer instead to other more proficient studies on this point.^{iv}

I am interested in the potential of veganism to disrupt the firmly ensconced view that meat-eating and masculinity are naturally linked—even in a genealogical sense. As Adams states, “meat represents [one’s male] ancestors’ food and provides a sense of continuity” (2010: 200), and, further, since taste is connected to memory and positive or negative affect we generally have a tendency to seek out that which, according to Elsebeth Probyn, “tastes of memories, and activates aspiration, gratitude, desire or recognition” (2000: 147); following this, it becomes apparent that food consumption is inscribed with a certain sense of teleology: “The sensorial perception of food,” Piatti-Farnell writes, serves as “a starting point for future perceptions, in which past and present become embodied through consumption”(Piatti-Farnell, 2011: 8-9). We might say, then, that eating attaches to a certain wish or expectation for the future—the furthering of familial bonds, for example. But the kind of meat consumed today does not belong to the same category as that of yesteryear, and neither have the animals

of the modern agricultural system been treated in a similar manner. Meat-eating culture merely presumes “the normativeness and centrality of their activity” (Adams, 2010: 201). We can expect, therefore, that as a minority, (especially male) vegans will be rendered deviant by normative society. In response to the ordering of society according to a male perspective, Adams, in her historical survey, suggests that vegetarianism became a way for marginalized women to silently oppose their oppression (2010: 213). However, refusing meat, I will argue, does not only involve taking a stance against patriarchal culture, as Adams suggests; it is also, specifically, a way of resisting heteronormativity, since meat-eating for men and, perhaps to a lesser degree, women is tied to the rhetorical as well as the actual reproduction of heterosexual norms and practices. We might then appropriate Sara Ahmed’s central question in her discussion of “the affective potential of queer” as a category of anti-normative being: “Do queer moments happen when this failure to reproduce norms as forms of life is embraced or affirmed as a political and ethical alternative?” (2004: 146).

As is well known, according to Judith Butler, different “acts, gestures, enactments,” specific to each gender, combine to produce “a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain” ([1990] 1999: 173, 172). As a man, in this manner, refusing to partake in the proscribed consumption of meat disrupts the discourse on male sexuality and gender. In the way that different food items carry specifically gendered connotations (i.e. meat: masculine), we see how male vegans become a problem within heterosexual discourse. We are not far here from viewing the “vegan” as a sub-species of the “pervert” (read: homosexual) in Michel Foucault’s analysis from the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1998; see especially 42-3 on this point). In this manner, declaring one’s veganism to the world can almost be compared to the act of coming out for queer-identified individuals. For example, when I told my parents that I was adopting the vegan diet my mother broke into tears with the

words, “how will I ever be able to cook for you again?!” The unintended disruption that my veganism caused in my childhood home felt very queer to say the least: my mother’s role as nurturer was put in jeopardy—in her own view—and each meal that I would henceforth share with my family had the potential to serve as a challenge to anthropocentric dietary habits; more to the point, I would become a “killjoy” at the family table—as the one “who gets in the way of [the] organic solidarity” centered around eating (Ahmed, 2010: 213)—by implicitly disavowing not only animal-based foods but, more importantly, the form of togetherness that the traditional family dinner represents. The function of the dinner table as what Ahmed refers to as a “kinship object” (46)—the locus of familial coherence—came in danger of being undermined by my decision to go vegan; fellow-feeling as an affective force could no longer pass unhindered between me and the other members of my family. In this manner, by disaffirming the killing of other species, vegans might actually, and ironically, come to “kill” “the joy of the family” (49). No more “happy” meals. And not only that, the heterocentrist ordering of the family space was called into question, as, the implication ran, my mother might not in future be able to continue the same level of feminine “service work” (Cudworth, 2010: 82) that she had been used to performing for me and the rest of my family in the past. All things considered, we should be careful not to equate the stigma of veganism with homosexuality, since we all know who figure more frequently as victims of hate-crimes (although, to be fair, to my knowledge, no statistics on violence against vegans exist—certainly not queer-identified vegans). Nevertheless, sharing concerns raised by queer theorists, it is precisely by insisting on its disruptive qualities and—although not my immediate focus here—“improper” concern for other species that I read veganism as queer.

I do not wish to hide the fact that the view on veganism I will present in the following is anything but polemical. This is why I have opted to include “manifesto” in the title of my essay. As most other authors writing in the tradition of the manifesto style, I wish to make

“manifest” a certain grievance in relation to society at large. However, my contribution to this particular genre is decidedly not steeped in the language of progress, which seems to have been the core ingredient of previous manifestos (see Latour, 2010: 3); nor do I rush to support José Esteban Muñoz’ assertion that a manifesto must necessarily be “a call to a doing in and for the future” (2009: 26).^v And my text ought perhaps not be called a manifesto proper at all. Rather than defining a program for future action, my manifesto (in implied quotation marks) seeks to call attention to the problematic act of framing the future according to present discontents, however radical it might appear on the page. The veganism that I present in the following is not concerned with imagining a utopic future without meat—where veganism itself would become a moot concept. Instead, I am interested in thinking about veganism as a form of what Ahmed calls “shared deviation” (2010: 196). What is so radically uncomfortable about queer veganism is the willingness to “cause unhappiness by revealing the causes of unhappiness” (196). By saying no to animal products we make it harder for other people to disregard what their culinary contentment is predicated on: the brutality of the animal product industry and their own complicity in the death of millions. Certainly, happiness is difficult to sustain in the face of overwhelming suffering. Becoming vegan is learning—everywhere and always—to challenge and negate the inherited norm of anthropocentrism. Queer veganism affirms deviation; queer veganism institutes a gap in the communal bond inherent to sharing and feasting on the flesh of nonhuman animals. The motto of queer veganism might then read: share negativity! Share in becoming the deviant cause of unhappiness in a system of animal exploitation. Deviance, in other words, is the *manifest* linchpin of my text—that which ensures the *interlocking* of “queer” and “vegan.”

Veganism is still considered a rogue topic for many scholars in the humanities and social sciences,^{vi} and I don’t presume that the queer bent of my approach will change this. By drawing on a number of examples from both mass media and from within the ranks of

veganism/animal rights, I will show how veganism invariably is filtered through a normative lens. What follows is my queer intervention in the debate on veganism. At the same time, for reasons that will become apparent, I don't advocate for what would amount to a paradigm shift in the discourse on Western food consumption. While on a fundamental level I agree with Marc Bekoff that the status quo of "what we buy, where we live, who we eat, who we wear, and even family planning"—the latter being of particular interest to me—"has wreaked havoc on animals and Earth" (2010: 2), I will refrain from couching my argument in the language of revolution.^{vii} History has shown us that the romantic ideal of revolution is poorly equipped to accept or adequately deal with the surprises and unexpected occurrences of what postcolonial scholar David Scott has referred to as "worldly life," which namely acknowledges "that we cannot make ourselves entirely immune to the vagaries of misfortune, to calamities, say, or loss or bodily desire" (2004: 182). This specifically "tragic" view of history fits well with queer veganism, as it is here recognized that the emphasis on liberation and revolution in establishing the vegan identity puts us on a slippery slope towards totalitarianism—even as this is rarely accepted by the "movement." Employing Edelmanian phraseology, queer veganism should be thought of not in terms of identity, then, but rather as a radically unassimilable force, which will always oppose the oppositional insistence of the social order; rather than disavowing the "meat-eater" as constituting a certain identity—although I recognize the importance of doing so to an extent—it appears much more crucial, and dare I say *productive*, to critique the very structuring and mobilization of subjectivities *as such*, since it is the same binarizing—or "othering"—impetus behind this operation that is ultimately responsible for the construction of the human/animal divide. Dell'Aversano sums up well the primary focus of the queer critique of identity:

Queer does not aim at consolidating or stabilizing any identity, least of all its own, but has as its ultimate purpose a critique of identity, which should not lead to the hegemony of a new or alternative identity, but to the demise of the category of

identity as such, by making conscious and calling into question the performance that makes us and others what we “are.” (2010: 103)

The queer polemics of Lee Edelman’s book *No Future* will thus be adopted as a way of reading veganism as the figural and literal resistance to the dominant social order, which is predicated on a discursive formation that stresses the superiority of human life and legitimizes the means by which we make use of other species to sustain ourselves. At the same time, sexual norms and expectations of gender roles blend with the anthropocentric drive of the Western discourse on life; in other words, certain subject positions must be produced over and over, in order to maintain the image of the body politic as a coherent whole. This affects not only male sexuality, of course. We should not be surprised to learn that female subjectivity, for example, has been inflected by the consumption of specific animal products, such as eggs and dairy, which, according to Cudworth, are considered “‘feminized foods’, not only because they are associated with female consumption, but because they are by-products of the reproductive systems of female animals” (2010: 79). Consequently, in the following section I will examine a number of different ways in which male and female vegan bodies come into contact with heterocentrist, normalizing processes.

Veganism, Pathology, and “Normification”

[V]egetarianism is best seen as a method for complicating the normalization of eating.

—Simon M. Gilbody, et al.

The shape that “life” takes in Western societies is the controversial issue that I will contend with here. That a certain way of life has become the norm in the West is, according to Michel Foucault, “the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life” ([1976] 1998:

144). In his by now famous phrasing, Foucault traces the formation of “*a biopolitics of the population*,” a series of “*regulatory controls*” that frame the body according to “the mechanics of life,” in order to have it serve “as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” (139). In normalizing society the body is at the centre of attention, and, as we saw with Butler, the “right” body must conform to very specific performances that are intimately linked to gender.^{viii} In regard to veganism, a news story will pop up every so often that tells about “bad” vegans, who—from lack of sufficient dietary knowledge—have caused the death of their infants by not feeding them properly.^{ix} It would therefore seem that the very premise of veganism becomes flawed by association, in that—as a generalized marker of a certain way of living—the habits and behaviors of *all* vegans can be explained by making reference to their particular choice of food. Essentially, the vegan comes to figure as nothing less than the antithesis to society: vegans subvert the possibility of a future by literally killing “our” children, as any child born into society becomes part of the collective potential to reproduce the foundation of that communality, however imaginary. Nina Planck’s 2007 op-ed piece for the *New York Times* with the ominous title “Death by Veganism” makes clear how veganism is not only nutritionally inadequate but fails on the level of community as well. She states: “There are no vegan societies for a simple reason: a vegan diet is not adequate in the long run.” As a consequence, veganism is viewed as a “dangerous” diet in dire need of supplementation. A recent counter-response to this attitude is “vegansexuality,” and I will show later how “disgust” figures as an important means by which a specifically vegan scheme of community and reproduction is produced in opposition to the omnivorous identity according to the same “expulsion-repulsion” dynamic that frames the vegan as “other” in anthronormative discourse.

Vegan bodies regularly come to comprise socially and culturally contested sites of nourishment. The vegan diet is thought to be inherently inferior, and, no matter the degree to which it is supplemented, will never completely live up to the nutritional value of animal-based products. This notion is primarily due to consistent misinformation by the mainstream news media. For example, in a news story from *The Sunday Times* detailing the hospitalization of a twelve-year-old Scottish girl with a severe form of rickets, veganism is quickly identified as the culprit (Macaskill, 2008). Rickets—which can lead to permanent bone deformity—primarily affects the spine, and is brought about by vitamin D deficiency. So much is clear. The reporter then continues to list the main sources of vitamin D: “liver, oily fish and diary produce.” However, the article fails to specify that the main source of vitamin D is direct sunlight.^x Actually, this essential vitamin is produced, photochemically, in the skin. If, in this case, veganism is considered to provoke a certain nutritional deficiency, once identified, the young vegan girl is made susceptible to stigmatization on the basis of her lacking, “harmful” diet. With reference to Erving Goffman’s classic study *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, we can then say that veganism becomes a “trait that can obtrude itself upon attention” ([1963] 1986: 5); it has the potential to discredit the individual vegan, depending on the specific social setting. The stigma of veganism, therefore, goes beyond mere dietary deficiencies: one’s diet can actually break social bonds (5).

The potential dangers of vegetarian or vegan diets are further emphasized in an article released by *ABC News* in 2009 titled “Vegetarian Teens May Face Higher Eating Disorder Risk.” The journalist paraphrases Dr. Neal Barnard from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine as saying that “it [is] likely that some teens simply use[] vegetarianism as a cover for their unhealthy eating habits.” The title itself insures that the reader is instilled with a bias against vegetarian diets on the very threshold of the article. Towards the end of the article, parents of vegetarian teens are encouraged to exert greater control over their

children. We are led to believe that the decision to abstain from eating animal products is, in some cases, likely to be derived from the teen's own personal pathology; and, thus, the reasoning goes, young vegetarians would benefit from a higher level of parental surveillance. As Dr. Barnard further warns, "parents should make an effort to spend time with their teens at mealtime to ensure that they are eating a healthy diet." In this light, vegetarianism can be viewed as a symptom of the "sick" child's obsessive compulsion to lose weight.

Eating disorders are typically—if mistakenly—associated with young women, and, as such, vegetarianism is once more linked to the specificities of gender. Indeed, the issue of gender always seems to linger in close proximity to any discussion of vegetarianism or veganism. Anorexia is one example of this, and some studies suggest that vegetarianism might function as a veil to hide a person's underlying disorder, thus adding to the "mystique" of the female constitution.^{xi} Ritualism is seen to be the connecting link between vegetarianism and so-called disordered eating, but what constitutes ritualistic behavior in this instance, and why does meat-eating usually not qualify? Is it perhaps because the consumption of meat is a foundational element in the teleology of society and the ideology of reproduction? According to Probyn, anorexia produces an "aesthetic and controlled" body (2000: 7), the image of which, we should remind ourselves, has strong ties to the tradition of the "hysterization of women's bodies" (Foucault, [1976] 1998: 104). As Foucault has pointed out, the pathologizing of women's bodies, of course, has traditionally served a very specific social function. The female anorexic, in the tradition of the bourgeoisie that Foucault outlines, becomes classified under the rubric of "the 'idle' woman" (121), and, hence, the young woman who refuses "normal" nourishment radically swerves from the path leading to the proper emergence of adulthood. Her "destiny charged with conjugal and parental obligations" (121) is violently jeopardized by her inadequate way of eating. Additionally, as Adams has demonstrated, in the nineteenth century female vegetarianism was associated with

“chlorosis,” which was a medical condition closely related to anemia (2010: 210). Since anemia disrupts the menstrual flow, not eating meat, medical professionals and laypeople alike believed, thus impacted female sexuality in a negative way.

Concerns over female consumption have a substantial history in the West. Even today, female children’s vegetarianism should therefore, we are told, be carefully scrutinized—if not outright condemned—by the responsible parent, in order to guarantee the proper growth of the child, who in turn will come to fulfill her filial duty as a productive, fertile, and thus “happy” citizen. Consequently, *ABC News* implicitly propagates the view that vegetarianism can somehow be coupled with a phobic relation to food, if not a psychological disorder. This corresponds to Adams’ assertion that dominant society “distort[s] the radical cultural critique of vegetarianism” (2010: 197) by obscuring the harm that the animal agriculture industry inflicts on the natural world. Moreover, this distortion spreads to and influences the vegan’s self-understanding, which is further harmed by how omnivores have reacted to the question of veganism and sexuality. As Annie Potts and Jovian Parry demonstrate in their survey of online responses to the phenomenon of so-called vegansexuality: “Vegans...are [often] portrayed as joyless pleasure-deniers, many of whom secretly long to sate their carnal appetites by indulging in both meat-eating and sex with meat-eaters” (2010: 60). The connection to Ahmed’s notion of the queer “killjoy” is here obvious. The charge of austerity or prudishness has the effect that vegans themselves often attempt to normalize or simplify the requirements of a vegan lifestyle, thus circumventing the accusation of asceticism or self-abnegation that is so prevalent in the popular discourse on veganism.

As sociologists Petra Snejder and Hedwig te Molder show in their analysis of an online discussion forum devoted to the topic of veganism, vegans use certain discursive devices “to build vegan eating practices as simple and ordinary, thereby rebutting the rhetorical alternative of veganism as a complicated lifestyle” (2009: 626). The members of

the particular forum that Sneijder and Molder examine tend to draw upon a number of performative speech-acts regarding their diet that the authors label “doing being ordinary” (627). “‘Ordinariness’ is normatively invoked here as the rhetorical alternative for ‘complicatedness’, such that someone who is ‘a vegan but still an ordinary person’ cannot be reproached” (627). This corresponds to Erving Goffman’s (awkward) term “normification,” which, “namely [is] the effort on the part of a stigmatized individual to present himself [sic] as an ordinary person, although not necessarily making a secret of his [so-called] failing” ([1963] 1986: 31). In this manner, vegans (at least so far as we can generalize the findings of Sneijder and Molder) will endeavor, to a marked degree, to present their mode of living as being in line with the expectations of social norms.^{xii}

Such normalizing tendencies are not restricted to the fairly “localized” narratives of vegan Internet fora. Despite their ostensibly radical framework and devotion to reducing the level of distortion that veganism is filtered through, popular vegan/animal rights organizations are not isolated from the impetus that drives the production of the norm in general society. The *Cruelty Doesn’t Fly* video with Pamela Anderson produced by PETA will serve as a case in point here. In this video the TV-star/model turned animal rights spokes-person plays a customs officer in an airport. Instead of the usual regulations on liquids, sharp objects, etc., this particular airport does not allow passengers to wear any kind of clothing derived from animals such as leather and fur on their flights. The first person to approach the security check is a shirt-less, young male, who Anderson manhandles and then proceeds to crouch in front of suggestively in her skimpy outfit, ripping the leather belt from his pants. Only a naked heterosexual couple is allowed to pass security without arousing Anderson’s vigilant suspicions. In other words, they are able to “pass” for “good” vegans; naked as they came, this proto-Adam/Eve couple is welcomed into PETA’s normative paradise. With no critical attention to the values they reproduce, PETA presents the viewer

with a clear image of the desirable vegan body today: physically fit, very carefully gendered, and, perhaps most problematic of all, white; thus optimized for propagation, there is no doubt as to who will populate PETA's utopian vegan nation. Veganism has been made as sexy as any other product that corporate America wants us to buy (An entire archive of "sexy" print ads populate PETA's website). From its position of "otherness," the vegan body is brought into the limelight of spectacular heterosexuality; PETA has succeeded in normalizing veganism. Of course, in the process they *have* managed to get rid of the historically constructed assumption that veganism for males spells effeminacy or gender "inversion." We must ask ourselves nonetheless: at what cost? Is PETA's program desirable in the end? How will we be able to oppose the oppressive mechanisms of society if we blindly reproduce the very logic we, as vegans, supposedly fight against?

Rather than insisting on a "norm" of veganism, I want to emphasize the queerness of veganism, as that which, to employ a phrase from Edelman, "chafes against 'normalization'" (2004: 6). This is done in order to problematize the "privilege of heteronormativity"—which at the same time is the privilege of anthronormativity—as the "organizing principle of communal relations" (2). Becoming vegan is therefore also becoming queer in all its "abjectified difference" (26), to quote from Edelman once more. If we wish to effectively and forcefully challenge the system behind animal exploitation it becomes crucial to examine and expose all the various discourses that make up that system. At the same time, this means abandoning the idea that veganism can exist in the mainstream without being "hailed" by the project of normalization. We should not refer to veganism as a lifestyle. Veganism shares the "hopeless" queer ethics of Edelman, as both positions subscribe to a refusal to carry on, or reproduce, the social order of anthro/heteronormativity. Assimilation is not an option.

By drawing on a number of examples, my focus in this text so far has been to provide a basis for how we can begin to approach the subject of a vegan queer ethics, predicated on

the potential involved in embracing deviation. It is by negating the idea of identity as teleology that we might learn how to share our “selves” across species boundaries. Effectively, the only way of thinking communion with nonhumans is simply to recognize that we, as a species, are not separated from “them” as such: to invoke Luciana Parisi, our lived “experience extends outside the living towards the entire nature—including the smallest parts, atoms, electrons, and so on” (2008: 302). The relation is the becoming. To be sure, as Cary Wolfe puts it, “the only way to the ‘there’ in which the animals reside is to find them ‘here,’ in us and of us” (2003: 207). In other words, the abject is localizable within the human body-self. Largely, however, in the Western world the vegan body is viewed as deficient, and its very presence disturbs the social order. But the human body is always in a state of lack—it is never stable, nor ever perfectly healthy or “at rest.” Nonetheless, by embracing the queer position of radical otherness—which translates to the “refusal to be optimistic about ‘the right things’ in the right kind of way” (Ahmed, 2010: 162)—we are at the same time able to think relations that are not marked by a human specificity. The human condition itself is constantly exposed to “contamination” from the outside, veganism merely foregrounds this fact. We might like to pretend that biological life is under the domain of the human—indeed most of us continue to eat as if it were—and, yet, this is unequivocally not so. In the end, it is not contradictory—in the anthronormative view—to take the meaning of life to include the death of other animals. It is life such as this that the vegan—blatantly queer or not—must refuse.

A Question of Life and/or Death?

Perhaps the reason that veganism is despised or at the very least rendered suspicious by dominant meat-eating culture is namely because it does not shy away from the fact of death. Be it in the shape of actual images of violence in the animal agriculture industry or textual

and oral evidence, veganism as a discourse is suffused with the tenets of death and suffering; some may even call the language of animal activism morbid. This is ironic when we consider that veganism, as I have shown, is often considered an irresponsible diet, or even a source of mortal harm. I bring up this issue because I think it is important to think about how we invoke the life/death binary when we theorize veganism or advocate for animal rights.

As a way of approaching my conclusion, I would thus like to return to Adams' analysis of the sexual politics of meat. Adams of course aims to reverse the various negative stereotypes of vegetarians and vegans, and she proceeds by pointing to a slew of statistics which indicate that adhering to a vegetable-based diet is significantly healthier than eating meat. There is nothing wrong with making this claim (the different health benefits of a vegan diet seem difficult to deny)—given the context it is even admirable. However, I am apprehensive of the fact that she continues by saying that, “[t]hey [vegetarians as a collective whole] see meat as causing death because of the effects of high-fat diets on one’s susceptibility to cancer and heart disease,” and that, therefore, meat eating is “not consonant with the *human* body” ([1990] 2010: 196, 204). By drawing on different anthropological and medical sources, Adams further asserts that the human body is essentially vegetarian (194-95). This view seems untenable (humans are widely considered to be omnivorous, which is why we can *choose* not to consume other animals), and, in my opinion, it hardly helps matters to simply reverse the life/death binary (meat consumption/veganism → veganism/meat consumption). Similarly, the fact that humans prepare meat in ways that are radically distinct from other animals (“the use of implements to kill and butcher the animal, the cooking and seasoning of meat” [197-98]) is not a good objection to eating meat in the first place, since human beings vary from other animals in myriad ways: no other animal participates in wage labor or religious and political practices and structures either, to name but a few examples. Furthermore, simply because humans use tools to process and prepare

the dead animal for consumption does not prove that eating meat is basically unnatural in a human context (many different species surely eat in many different ways, and, yet, we do not consider any of these unnatural). Adams' text, in effect, suffers greatly from her choice of logic on this point: if A (human) does X differently from B (nonhuman animal) she takes it to mean that the practice of X absolutely separates A from C (nature), the domain of B. Actually, by posing the question, "*If meat eating is natural, why do we not do it naturally, like the animals?* [my emphasis]" (198). Adams, quite inadvertently, I am sure, comes to reiterate one of the central philosophical justifications for the exploitation of animals. I am here referring to the so-called "tool argument"—the ability of humans to utilize that which is "present-at-hand," in Heideggerian parlance. She is suggesting that by using tools to prepare meat or other animal ingredients for consumption, we will have demonstrated an "unnatural" relation to our surroundings. This argument appears obviously problematic and inherently flawed when we consider that, as Peter H. Steeves points out, "[s]ome monkeys use stones to smash open nuts and seeds" (2002: 234), and species other than humans have thus clearly demonstrated a propensity for using tools.

The above might read as a petty critique of a body of work that has unquestionably been widely influential and important for scholars and activists alike (myself included); Adams clearly wants to show that eating meat, to a large extent, is a social and cultural construction, and that the origins of vegetarianism have been subverted by a recent tradition of meat-eating. I am with her so far—and I respect her overall contribution to the field (it would, in fact, not be untoward to argue that she has more or less invented the area of study that I find myself working within)—but some elements of her argument trouble me. She suggests that the inherent essence of human nature has been silenced by the "carnophallogocentric" (a term she borrows from Jacques Derrida) impetus of modern, Western society, since, in fact, "the word the human body speaks is vegetarian" (197). This is an

obviously hyperbolic claim to make, but, aside from the audacity of her statement, I find the essentializing thrust of her language the more striking still. To all intents and purposes, veganism, for Adams, is no longer simply an ethical choice; it corresponds to a biological fact of the human body. In Adams' discourse, the human consumption of meat is thus rendered not only immoral but also unnatural, while the vegan body comes to resemble something like the spirit of proper, primordial humanity incarnate. But when is the vegan body vegan enough? Is it ever possible to cleanse oneself of the spiritual pollutants that would have formed in the modern "soul" prior to one's going vegan? In fact, as Adams herself gestures towards, the problem is not that the essence of the human is separated from its actual, current reality by a field of distortion produced by dominant culture, it is virtually physically impossible to become 100% vegan. Moreover, not only is animal exploitation firmly embedded within Western culture, simply being in the world is intertwined with violence: nonhuman life must necessarily be sacrificed in order for human existence to emerge and thrive. No matter how ethical we may endeavor to be or become, we cannot help the fact that plant and insect life, as a bare minimum, will perish in the wake of every single human birth. Contrary to popular vegan belief, none of us are "deathless," and regardless of how many evocative t-shirt designs we choose to purchase we should never delude ourselves into thinking otherwise.^{xiii}

Deathlessness as a trope indeed seems to be crucial to veganism as a formation of identity. Following a 2006 New Zealand study on the experiences of vegetarians and vegans conducted by the Centre for Human-Animal Studies, two new terms entered the vocabulary: vegansexuality and vegansexuals—the pervasiveness and dissemination of both words mostly came about not surprisingly due to the responses of sensationalist news media, but, in turn, it was quickly picked up by online vegan communities around the world (Potts and Parry, 2010: 56). Vegansexuality refers to the preference of some vegans to only enter into sexual and/or

romantic relationships with other vegans—they are vegansexuals. In Annie Potts and Jovian Parry’s article, “Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity through Meat-free Sex,” they quote a number of vegans who participated in the study, and the consensus seems to be that bodies sustained on meat and other animal products are at best considered unappetizing to the vegansexual, if not downright disgusting. As a 49-year old woman puts it: “I couldn’t think of kissing lips that allow dead animal pieces to pass between them,” and yet another: “I believe we are what we consume so I really struggle with bodily fluids, especially sexually” (Potts and Parry, 2010: 54). This organically motivated attitude is not new to the vegan world, of course, as Potts and Parry also make clear (56). I believe that this form of reaction is caused by two things: the nostalgic belief that—similar to what Adams outlines in her text—through a vegan diet, it is possible to reverse the (damaging) impact that the advent of industrialized food production has had on the human body; and, secondly, the operation of what the father of affect theory, Silvan Tomkins, has called “counter-contempt” (1995: 138).

In effect, the New Zealand study reports on a crisis in communal relations between vegans and omnivores. Indeed, the notion of community will necessarily be brought to a point of crisis if we react with disgust towards what the other habitually consumes. Not only is a specific food object rejected—as in Tomkins’ description of how one’s response to disgust, or contempt (he conflates the two), “intends to maximize the distance between the face and the object which disgusts the self” (1995: 135)—but the other actually becomes identical to the initial object of disgust, meat in this case. Evidently, any display of disgust/contempt will more than likely function as an “impediment[] to intimacy and communion,” as Tomkins makes clear (139). Vegansexuality may very well then be the deferred or even displaced response to the contempt that meat-eating culture has been directing against vegans. Certainly, as Tomkins notes, “[i]t is not difficult for one who is treated with contempt to respond with anger” (158), or, in this instance, counter-contempt,

which would be the vegan's way of challenging or rejecting the socializing impetus to internalize claims of inferiority directed at one's person. Vegansexuality, however, comes to perpetuate the same processes of "othering" that "vegan" as a discursively founded category has been suffused with: the rejection of "meat-bodies"—sexually and ideologically—only strengthens and further solidifies the binary vegan/meat-eater. Furthermore, as any good Foucauldian would have been able to predict, as a classificatory term, vegansexuality inevitably and almost immediately became yet another means of categorizing those others who fail to reproduce the heterosexual norm, and, subsequently, the vegansexual developed as a site of etiological inscription (Potts and Parry, 2010: 55-56).

In addition to this, there is a major irony at work here. Dead animal bodies daily pass by vegan "lips"—understood as a figure for the threshold of the self—as it is by internalizing the loss of animal lives that a crucial component of vegan ethics and identity is established. Vegans habitually devour and, in turn, regurgitate the spectral remainder of animal carcasses, as it were, since the daily and constant loss of nonhuman lives that the meat industry is responsible for must continually be remembered and re-articulated in order to sustain one's motivation for being and remaining vegan; the loss cannot (or must not) adequately be worked through. And perhaps it is even this "morbid" and "stubborn" preoccupation with the death of nonhuman others that renders veganism so markedly queer. The anxious disavowal of death itself by some vegans appears, to my mind, namely to prove this point. Do we, then, fundamentally and continually run the risk of fetishizing the loss of the nonhuman? Veganism itself relies on the sacrifice of animals in order to sustain itself as an identity-defining project, since the goal of veganism—dismantling the animal agriculture industry—would make veganism redundant as a consequence.^{xiv}

A Hope for the Future? Or, Towards an Ethics of Unforeseeability

That's what makes queerness intolerable, even to those who call themselves queer: a nonteleological negativity that refuses the leavening of piety and with it the dollop of sweetness afforded by messianic hope.
—Lee Edelman in Dinshaw et al. (2007)

There can be no vegan future without meat consumption, and, hence, veganism, paradoxically, implies the very suffering that it opposes. In other words, the concept of veganism supports and preserves meat-eating in a discursive system of difference. As difficult or counterintuitive as it may appear, for veganism to be effective—and this returns us to the queer impetus of my argument—at the very point of its articulation it must turn back on the oppositional position of its social and linguistic structuring. In so far as veganism anticipates a future without meat and other animal products, it carries with it the promise of an impossible “realization of meaning that [would nonetheless] suture” (Edelman, 2004: 24) the vegan identity by closing the gap between what we *know* to be the “truth” of “our anatomical makeup” (Adams, [1990] 2010: 195) and the flawed—not to say harmful—representation of veganism as engendered by society. In Adams’ view, this would mean filtering out the disruptive waves of discursive distortion that normative culture projects at the vegan self. Notwithstanding the important cultural analysis of her work, Adams’ vegan-feminism finally offers dominant culture nothing but a “reassuringly symmetrical, if inverted depiction of its own ostensibly coherent identity” (Edelman, 2004: 24). Once more I unashamedly appropriate Edelman’s rhetoric to make the point that veganism in its current formation (and I am of course speaking very generally here), by insisting that abstaining from nonhuman animal consumption of any kind, can connect us to a more “authentic” relation with our presumably vegetarian past is aggressively nostalgic. Pining for a lost bond with ourselves—as well as nature and other animals—produces a desire for community, which, in

Jean-Luc Nancy's phrasing, merely corresponds to a "belated invention that trie[s] to respond to the harsh reality of modern experience" (1991: 10). But, not only that, no matter how dynamic or inclusive we may believe a certain theory of vegan community to be, it will always have to define itself against an outside (meat-eating society, in this instance), which will then be internalized, or devoured rather. And, as such, veganism might very well end up becoming as static and reactionary as the normative structures of society that we oppose.

In response to this, I strongly propose that we approach veganism as something that can always only be "to-come," in the sense that it does not represent a *telos* but rather one ethical position among many. Veganism is not an umbrella term for ethical behavior in general; it does not correspond to an all-encompassing morality (*the Moral position par excellence*—that which all other moralities can be measured against). It appears to me invaluable to bear in mind that coming to veganism, or becoming vegan, happens as a response to universalism in general, and it is therefore fitting that veganism as a *pure* concept is always impossible to sustain or even arrive at. On the one hand, I can articulate the wish to become a more compassionate vegan in general, but, on the other, I will never be able to live up to any ideal concept of compassion thus expressed, for, following Derrida: "I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another, without sacrificing the other other, the other others" (1995: 68). Even so, responsibility in the Derridean sense denotes "a respect for otherness," and as Derek Attridge comments in his introduction to Derrida's *Acts of Literature*: "This responsibility toward the other is also a responsibility toward the *future*, since it involves the struggle to create openings within which the other can appear beyond any of our programs and predictions" (1993: 5).

We must here distinguish sharply between futurity as it appears in the Derridean optic and that which Edelman refers to as "reproductive futurity"—the furthering of the body politic through the re-articulation of conservative values pertaining to a heterocentrist

ordering of social relations. The responsibility towards the to-come—which Derrida describes as “the experience of a promise engaged, that is always an endless promise” (1993: 38)—disengages from the naïveté of liberal politics. Consequently, if veganism can be said to have or allude to a future promise at all it might best be described in terms of what, in reference to Derrida, Marius Timmann Mjaaland calls the structure of “unforeseeability,” which “contains the possibility of a *confirmation*, an opening in the direction of a confirmation which surpasses all one’s expectations, goals, and calculations” (2008: 77); in our present circumstance, this would entail the confirmation of a veganism that—by queering its own sense of a future—we can depend on to “always contain[] something *other* than one had expected” (77). We should here hear an echo of Scott’s “tragic historicism” and his openness to the vagaries of life that we encountered earlier. Such an ethic surely involves risk and a level of audaciousness. And what would veganism be without deviance—the unforeseeable relations and outcomes that might come from refusing to participate in the oppression and consumption of nonhuman others? Rather than shying away from the radical potential of veganism through norm-seeking behavior, as according to the tenets of “doing-being-ordinary,” we should acknowledge that daring to be deviant is exhilarating because of the unexpected elements involved—even if this might cause a degree of “unhappiness” around us. This is why unforeseeability thus denotes affirmation rather than anxiety—and that without the stifling clause of reproductive futurity; this is also why—far from being joyless or dully ascetic—veganism is a quite titillating approach to life.

Liberalism views the future as the realization of a hope that is nevertheless firmly rooted in a structure of hopeless nostalgia. Veganism is clearly (queerly) disconcerting to liberal futurism—“intolerable” even, in Edelmanian parlance (2007: 195)—as it disaffirms the structure that the latter is predicated upon: the survival of the social order, which is—metaphorically and physically—nourished on the death of nonhuman others. While it is not

unlikely that Edelman off-hand might want to group veganism with “pious” and naïve utopianism, I believe that I have managed to present it in terms that could be agreeable to even the most “negatively” inclined of queer theorists. Indeed, the promise of becoming vegan—which has not yet been realized in quite the manner that I imagine it in this text—is to challenge, or queer, always and everywhere, the normative demands that are placed upon our genders, sexualities, and diets; from the persistent assumptions about masculinity and meat-eating to the hetero-graphic images of PETA’s activist campaigns, veganism must appear as the fundamental “*troublant*” of dominant society (Sedgwick, 1993: xii). Troubling, yes, because of its unforeseeable impact.

Notes

ⁱ Looking at Britain in the nineteenth century, for example, Adams cites “the first national food survey of...dietary habits [conducted] in 1863, which revealed that the major difference in the diet of men and women in the same family was the amount of meat consumed” (2010: 51). Moreover, by drawing on the work of Peggy Sanday, Adams is led to state that there is “a correlation between plant-based economies and women’s power and animal-based economies and male power” (59).

ⁱⁱ According to Halperin, effeminacy should be treated as a category unto itself, since the designation “soft” or “unmasculine,” in a number of different European cultural traditions, could mean either “*womanly*, or transgendered,” or, on the other hand, that one was a womanizer (2000: 93).

ⁱⁱⁱ It is unfortunate that Dell’Aversano’s otherwise “radical,” queer endeavor— seeing as it is so heavily influenced by Lee Edelman’s work—is marred by her insistence on “rights” as a viable term in relation to the “animal question.” Were we to extend the right of bodily integrity to nonhuman animals, we would have to construct a set of legal rights to administer this moral right. Already we subject other animals to disciplinary practices (in the modern-day factory farm, through pet training, in circuses, etc.), and it is my concern that we in our efforts to treat animals fairly instead wind up perpetrating new acts of “violence” against them by insisting that they be incorporated into yet more human structures. Since nonhumans cannot properly engage in human discourse, her/his inclusion in a system of rights would always have to be decided by us. Put simply, it will never be possible for an animal to take a stance on the issue of rights, and the rights approach is for this reason insufficient when it comes to determining how to guide our interactions with other animals. Dell’Aversano does implicitly acknowledge this when she emphasizes the “radical unknowability of animals” (2010: 102), and thus affirms how animals are barred from becoming subjects in any “real” sense (both in structural and psychoanalytic terms).

^{iv} On the issue of affect see the aforementioned article, “The Love Whose Name Cannot be Spoken: Queering the Human-Animal Bond” by Carmen Dell’Aversano, as well as Alice A. Kuzniar,

Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on our Animal Kinship, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*, and Marc Bekoff, *Animal Manifesto*. For the exploitation of nonhuman animals refer to, e.g., Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, and, of course, the work of Peter Singer and Tom Regan.

^v As will become clear, I *am* sympathetic to Muñoz' placing emphasis on that which is "not-yet-conscious" and the future potential for "being" and "doing" things opposite "reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality" (2009: 22), but I don't see how or why a "romance" of hope and optimism rather than one of negativity (1) would be better equipped to show us the way to a future that would finally be queer enough for Muñoz and the rest of us (22); further, if we do not yet know it, how will we finally recognize true queerness when we see it?

^{vi} I have many times in conversation with other academics had to contend with the accusation that veganism is just another "lifestyle" that has been elevated to a scholarly topic, the implication being, I take it, that vegan scholars are similar to those "others" who have made their own minority status an object of study. This is of course an extremely offensive argument, as the tenets of veganism and various other "deviant" identifications cannot comfortably be subsumed under the "lifestyle" heading, since doing so would ignore the political consequences of one's position.

^{vii} In this context, I find it invaluable to keep in mind David Scott's cautioning words from his book *Conscripts of Modernity*: "In a moral-political world in which all other values exist only to be overcome or subordinated to a single overarching principle, while we may gain much from the vision and certainty, we also impoverish our readiness for accommodation, for reception, for openness, for yielding" (2004: 206).

^{viii} The basic biopolitical processes outlined here are also found in the farm industry. As Cudworth points out, "Animals' sexuality and reproductive capacity is appropriated in order to ensure continuity, efficiency and consistency in the production of milk and meat" (2008: 42).

^{ix} Recall, for example, how an Atlanta couple was convicted of murder for having failed to meet their infant's dietary needs, by feeding him mainly juice and soymilk. On the basis of this and a few similar cases, an article by Nina Planck (2007) in the *New York Times* argues that, "a vegan diet is not adequate in the long run."

^x Naturally, for one reason or another (for example during those months of the year when sunlight is scarce) it can become necessary to supplement one's diet with other sources of vitamin D, which never have to be derived from animals, we should add.

^{xi} For example, see Sheree A. Klopp and Heather S. Smith "Self-reported Vegetarianism May Be a Marker for College Women at Risk for Disordered Eating" (in which only 33% of the "vegetarians" studied did not eat any form of meat!), and Simon M. Gilbody, et al., "Vegetarianism in Young Women: Another Means of Weight Control?", the latter of which states that "[a]dopting a vegetarian diet may...offer the individual with an eating disorder a legitimate means of restricting their intake and an apparently perfect *weapon* for resisting nutritional rehabilitation [my emphasis]" (88).

^{xii} If we are to believe a recent "lifestyle" article in the *Boston Globe*, "hegans" are the newest species of vegans to crop up in our culture (Pierce, 2010). This group encompasses middle-aged males who seem to have turned to veganism as a means of combating obesity or other health-related issues. Not incidentally, the term shares a prefix with "he-man," signifying quintessential, brawny masculinity. Hegan, then, mainly refers to the tautologically inflected phrase, "a real man's man;" and yet we find included on the list of hegans Thom Yorke of Radiohead fame and actor Tobey Maguire, who—it is fair to say—are not usually linked to images of rugged masculinity. It is thus not quite clear just how

masculine one is required to be in order to qualify as a proper hegan; the term is fundamentally ill-defined. However, veteran firefighter and triathlete Rip Esseltyn obviously represents the type of hegan the reporter has in mind. Esseltyn anxiously seeks to counter the stereotype that veganism is for “tree-hugging, emaciated weaklings,” and he goes on to ardently insist that “real men eat plants.”

^{xiii} See <http://store.veganessentials.com/deathless-unisex-v-neck-t-shirt-by-herbivore-clothing-p3131.aspx>.

^{xiv} The otherwise intentionally silly novel *The Vegan Revolution...With Zombies* (in an obvious homage to George Romero’s classic horror film, *Dawn of the Dead*, the tagline of the book reads: “When there’s no more meat in hell, the vegans will walk the earth...”) by David Agranoff ends on a poignant note as the author considers what the world would look like after the vegan revolution has run its course. In Agranoff’s book, the revolution only happens as a result of a regular zombie apocalypse, induced by the human consumption of a new drug used in the meat industry that would make animals immune to suffering—thereby creating what in the novel becomes known as Stress Free Food; vegans are the only ones not affected by this, and they are left to fend off the hordes of undead who are now looking to consume more than animal flesh. At the end of the book, the aged protagonist, Dani—being the last person alive to have lived through what effectively became the dismantling of civilization as we know it—asks a group of school children if they “‘know the word vegan?’” (2010: 153). As they have never lived in a world of animal exploitation or factory farming, consequently, veganism is an obscure term to them: “They [the children] looked at each other confused. Dani smiled. ‘I suppose you wouldn’t know that word, would you.’ Dani closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. ‘Good for you.’” (154).

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Operation Splash Back!: Queering Animal Liberation Through the Contributions of Neo-Insurrectionist Queers

Michael Loadenthal¹

Abstract

The neo-insurrectionist network known as Bash Back! has contributed to the queering of the animal liberation discourse through the publication of their 2010 communiqué entitled, “Bash Back!ers in Support of Autonomous Animal Action Call For Trans-Species Solidarity With Tillikum.” The politic developed by the larger movement of neo-insurrectionist Queers, as exemplified by Bash Back!, has served to disrupt anthropocentric notions of human-liberator, animal-captive that form the centerpiece of the animal liberation discourse. Through their appropriation of an attack wherein an orca whale killed its trainer at SeaWorld, Bash Back! problematizes not only the normalized domestication of non-human animals for entertainment, but also the discourse used to critique such enslavement. Through satirical posturing and a liberatory framework, Bash Back! attempts to draw intersectional connection between the systems of domination that enslave both non-human animals and non-heterosexual Queers. Through a queering of this understanding of liberation, Bash Back! serves to shift the animal liberation discourse away from the human centric “total liberation” framework, and towards an anti-speciest framework proposed herein, termed “total solidarity.”

Keywords: Bash Back!, insurrectionist, anarchism, orca, SeaWorld, intersectionality

Introduction

The examination of political rhetoric is instructive in the development of a progressively revolutionary politic aimed at expanding a sphere of liberatory inclusivity outwards. The following essay explores how the politics of the insurrectionist Queer network known as Bash Back! have served to contribute to this expansion, via the fields of critical animal

¹ Michael Loadenthal (Michael.Loadenthal@gmail.com) is an anarchist organizer, excited father and academic insurgent based in Washington, DC, and involved with a number of anti-authoritarian projects in the US and abroad. In 2010, he completed a Master’s degree at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (University of St. Andrews, Scotland) focusing his Dissertation on the Animal/Earth Liberation Front. He has authored numerous works under a variety of pseudonyms, teaches “Terrorism and Political Violence” at Georgetown University, and is currently a doctoral Fellow at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (George Mason University, Virginia).

studies as well as Queer studies. Moreover, this essay will inquire as to how the broader insurrectionary anarchist and Queer movements possess anti-speciest tendencies that have relevance for the advancement of radical scholarship seeking to unveil and confront systems of domination and oppression. As a prefigurative site of inquiry, this essay will examine a communiqué issued by ‘an anonymous cell of Bash Back!’ in response to an incident that occurred at SeaWorld in 2010. From this single event, one can begin an examination of the rhetorical contributions offered by Bash Back! and other Queer insurrectionists, asking the question: Does contemporary Queer theory provide the tools necessary to deconstruct the anthropocentric understanding of themes such as “aggression,” “retaliation,” and finally, “liberation?” This essay seeks to inquire: How does Queer theory and neo- insurrectionism inform an anti-speciest critique of domination, resistance and liberation?

The Lives of Captive Orcas

In February 2010, at SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida, Tilikum, a 12,330 pound bull orca whale, said to be the largest in captivity, attacked and killed its trainer, forty year old Dawn Brancheau. Media accounts hoping to contextualize Brancheau’s relationship with Tilikum described the two as ‘close.’ Images circulated after the attack show, amongst other poses, Brancheau smiling while standing atop Tilikum—a smile from ear to ear.^{xv, xvi, xvii} According to an ABC News report:

The 40-year-old trainer was at ease with the killer whale and had just petted him on the nose. However, in a scene that horrified SeaWorld visitors, Tilikum grabbed her long ponytail when she turned her back, pulled her into the pool and began swinging her around in its mouth (Mooney, 2010).

After pulling the trainer into the water, Tilikum swam from pool to pool with Brancheau’s body in his mouth, before finally relenting after being lured into a more confined space. In the autopsy, it was revealed that the trainer died of blunt force trauma, sustaining massive damage to the head, ribs and vertebrae. She was also drowned. Thirteen months later, in March 2011, Tilikum returned to SeaWorld and was made to preform again, often alongside his grandson and daughter. Nineteen years earlier, on February 21, 1991, the very same whale was involved in the death of another trainer, this time at SeaLand of the Pacific, in Victoria, British Columbia. Tilikum was also found to be “involved” but not “responsible” for a third death in 1999 when a trespasser to SeaWorld was found dead atop Tilikum’s back in the morning when workers arrived to open the park.

Tilikum's life in captivity began when he was taken (along with two other whales) from the waters off of Iceland's east coast in 1983 and brought to Western Canada to replace another orca that had recently died. At SeaLand Victoria, his first site of captivity, Tilikum shared a small pool with two other orcas and would regularly scar himself within the tiny space. After fathering his first calf in captivity, Tilikum was prevented from ever interacting with his offspring. Tilikum is the parent or grandparent of sixteen offspring in captivity. While being "trained" at SeaLand, Tilikum and other whales were the victims of "food deprivation training" in which the animals were denied food when they refused to respond to trainers' commands. During the park's business hours, the whales were housed in a pen adjacent to the ocean, separated from the vast waters by a net. At night, fearing the animals' release (through their own actions or that of an activist), the orcas were moved to holding pens measuring only 6m (20 feet) deep and 8m (26 feet) in diameter (Williams, 2001: 47). The tanks provided barely enough room for the large whales to turn around. Often times the orcas displayed resistance while being moved to these small pens and were sanctioned with the denial of up to 100% of their daily food allotment (*ibid.*).

Because Tilikum entered SeaLand's possession later than other captive orcas, he existed at the bottom of an inter-species social hierarchy and was regularly bitten and scraped by the two whales he was housed with, Haida II (the mother of Tilikum's first calf) and Nootka IV. Without a separate pool to live in, Tilikum was forced to absorb the attacks from the higher ranking, 'veteran' orcas. After the death of the first trainer in 1991, Tilikum was moved to Florida, placed in a larger tank, and no longer trained with food deprivation. Apparently these changes were not sufficient to quell additional acts of violence. Tilikum's existence at SeaWorld Orlando consisted of periods of isolation punctuated by his performance in the Believe show. Show organizers would train Tilikum to use his large tail to splash water, dousing the first fifteen rows of onlookers.

Mainstream animal welfare organizations including the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals, have fought against the keeping of orcas, citing recurrent health problems relating to captive living. For example, 60-90% of captive male orca experience dorsal fin collapse, and Tilikum is no exception, with his dorsal fin completely collapsed to his left side. This condition is thought to be caused by chemical additives in the water, dietary changes, lowered blood pressure from decreased activity, and increased temperatures due to constant sun expose during performances (NMFS, 2005: 38). The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society argues that such collapse is due to the whales swimming repeatedly in small circles in tanks offering

inadequate space (Williams, 2001: 52). Critics of keeping captive whales and other sea animals have received increasing attention following the release of the 2009 film The Cove, wherein Ric O'Barry, the former trainer responsible for the dolphin actors used in the 1960s TV series "Flipper," began to publicly campaign against his former field of work. Since leaving the show in the early 1970s, O'Barry has been involved in the clandestine liberation of several captive dolphins (Monroe, 2009).

Killer Whales & Insurrectionist Queers

The conditions that predicated Tilikum's 2010 attack are well documented and can only be read as a warning sign towards more retaliatory attacks in the future. Orcas like Tilikum are forced to perform in shows such as *Believe*^{xviii}, put on three times a day for thirty minutes, to an audience of more than 5,000, as part of SeaWorld Park's \$1.2 billion a year business (Garcia, 2011: "SeaWorld...") profiting from the exploitation of whales, dolphins and other non-human animals. The *Believe* show, which in the past featured Tilikum, was discontinued in April 2011 (Bevil, 2011), and replaced by *One Ocean*, a show meant to "connect with thrilling sea creatures and realize we are all part of one world, one ocean...you realize that we all have the power to make a difference in this planet we share" (SeaWorld, 2011). SeaWorld's head trainer stated to news media that the *One Ocean* show is "designed to create the interconnectedness with the whales without having to be in the water," and to "emphasize the individual personalities of each of the roughly two-dozen killer whales in SeaWorld's corporate collection" (Garcia, 2011: "Killer...").

Tilikum's 2010 attack may not be atypical. In the wild, there are at least three incidents, none fatal, where orcas have attacked humans. This stands in strong contrast to the record of orcas in captivity which have been involved in at least forty attacks, including four fatalities. Thus it appears as if captive living increases an orca's likelihood of carrying out a lethal attack. This may be a coincidence prompted by proximity, or a product of mistreatment in captivity. It also appears as if an orca involved in an attack is more likely to be involved in a second attack, as at least nine orcas are considered to be 'repeat offenders,' involving themselves in multiple attacks on humans. This observation has not escaped the notice of media, as one article cavalierly states, "wild killer whales are not generally seen as a threat to humans, however captive killer whales have been known to attack their handlers at theme parks" (Gardner and Tweedy, 2010). Accordingly, Tilikum's deadly streak was

common knowledge amongst SeaWorld staff, as they would comment that, “[Tilikum] was considered so dangerous that new workers were routinely warned that anyone who entered his pool would ‘come out a corpse’ (Kennedy, 2010).

Because of captive orcas’ propensity to lash out, the new One Ocean show was designed with the safety of the *trainers* in mind. According to SeaWorld, the One Ocean trainers work “exclusively from the stage,” and maneuvers such as a the “rocket hop,” where a trainer is thrown through the air, propelled via the orca’s nose, have been replaced with “multiple orcas performing in unison...amid giant fountains” (Garcia, 2011: “Killer...”). Following Tilikum’s 2010 attack, SeaWorld trainers began “re-training” the orcas, disciplining them to “swim around the perimeter of their pools while ignoring progressively greater distractions” (Garcia, 2011: “SeaWorld...”). According to SeaWorld, this training technique, known as “water desensitization training,” will be used to discipline all of the orcas in their “corporate collection,” though it has been announced that Tilikum will be excluded from this process.

The media accounts following the 2010 killing of Brancheau predictably avoided discussions of domestication, speciesism and domination of non-human animals for entertainment dollars. The images released show the human trainer, and the orca performer (enslaved worker) as buddies, similar to the way in which one would poise with a companion animal living in their home. The recipient of these harmonious images is led to feel that what occurred that February afternoon was a rare accident with an *unpredictable animal*. We are led to attribute the orca’s actions to fear or confusion, not anger and frustration. In discussions and news reports, the observer is reminded of the joy the orca received from the trainer’s efforts prior to the attack; the intention being to frame the human-animal relationship as one of symbiotic cooperation, not master-slave dominance. The subjugated animal, like a pet, is expected to find solace in its trainer, to “churn out unconditional love...[to be an] affectional slave” (Haraway, 2008: 206) as the result of being fed and kept. Some would argue that it is *possible* for mutually beneficial, human-animal relationships, where “purpose[less] and functionless” play is used to enrich both parties’ lives (*ibid.*: 223, 237). Despite this *possibility*, such approaching-egalitarian, multispecies play does not occur when one party is held and bred in captivity, and forced to perform for the entertainment of its oppressors.

What followed next in the media was a rhetorical exercise to properly reframe Tilikum’s actions—to explain them in terms of accidental unpredictability not domination provoking rebellion. It is clear to anti-speciesists that Tilikum was not at play while

imprisoned at SeaWorld. He was not living as a companion animal. He was the imprisoned subject, the victim of systematized violence inherent in incarceration and coerced performance. This bodily reality intersects with contemporary, anarchist, insurrectionist, Queer theory, to be explored in the pages to follow. This analysis begins with the assertion that both non-human animals and Queers experience non-abstracted, *actualized violence* as the product of their subjugation. To quote one such anarcho-(neo-)insurrectionist Queer publication:

Queers experience, directly with our bodies, the violence and domination of this world. Class, Race, Gender, Sexuality, Ability; while often these interrelated and overlapping categories of oppression are lost to abstraction, queers are forced to physically understand each. (Towards, 2008: VI)

Here we can begin to see the intersectionality of a political framework that would reject violent domination based on species, as well as force used to discipline the bodies of so-called sexual deviants and gender outliers.

Days following Tilikum's 2010 attack, on March 4, a communiqué was authored and distributed by the Queer anarcho-insurrectionist network known as Bash Back! (BB!). The communiqué, titled "*Bash Back!ers In Support of Autonomous Animal Action Call for Trans-Species Solidarity With Tilikum*,"^{xix} satirically declared "solidarity with all trainer killers," and announced that "the nonhuman political prisoners at Sea World Orlando have organized the first chapter of Splash Back!, an insurrectionary tendency of sea animals dedicated to destroying all forms of oppression" (Bash Back! News, 2010). Furthermore, the anonymous authors called for, "solidarity actions with Tilikum across the country to support animal autonomy and resistance."

Fags, Trannies, Dykes & Networks of Affiliated Queers

The anonymous authors of the Splash Back communiqué are activists self-identifying under the BB! moniker. BB! has emerged in North America as a militant force that is serving to redefine political praxis while offering an emergent identity politics challenging the dismissive tendencies located in reformist, and often assimilationist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) movements embodied in organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)^{xx}. Throughout this discussion, it is important to understand that BB! is a single networked web within the larger insurrectionary, and Queer insurrectionary movements, and within this specific web, the Splash Back! Communiqué is but a single piece

of text. Whenever possible, this analysis has sought to make generalizable observations and thus the discussion should be thought of as a discussion of insurrectionary contributions to critical animal and queer theory, not simply the contributions of a single piece of political text.

BB! Should be understood as a *tendency*—a form of thought and action—positioned within the larger insurrectionary milieu, not as a static group or movement. In its short time in self-identified existence (2007-2011), BB! became an extremely active presence within North American insurrectionary action. Through transparent internet-based discussion boards, semi-regular regional gatherings, and the publishing of political communiqués, BB! has developed a rhetoric that seeks to expand the sphere of inclusivity beyond a gay/straight, male/female binary, offering an intersectional, transformative model of revolutionary struggle, informed by not only Queer theory, gender studies, and feminist studies, but also by anti-authoritarian insurrectionist movements challenging State power. This expanded model offered by BB! seeks to advance a fight for *Queer liberation*, not "gay rights." The autonomous cells affiliated with BB! have spoken critically of the LGBT movement's campaign to repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell," as well as campaigns to advance gay marriage. BB! activists have claimed that Queer persons should not seek State recognition through such legalistic reforms, and instead should work to challenge the heteronormativity of State-sanctioned marriage, and the connections between military policy, structural violence, and the regimenting of Queer bodies.

The BB! network of projects, chapters and cells^{xxi} was founded in Chicago in 2007 and is closely linked to the anarchist milieu of North America. The moniker has been used in acts of property destruction targeting assimilationist LGBT groups (i.e. HRC), Pridefest events, as well as other institutions seen to be contributing to the oppression of Queers. BB! has also been involved in protests confronting white supremacists, the Republican National Convention, police brutality, and violence against transfolk. Through acts of political violence and the production of a revolutionary discourse, BB! has served to redefine struggle, asserting that the liberation of Queers is an act of anti-assimilationist, "social war," positioned as an opposition to not only the State, but the larger discourse of binaries, sexes, genders, and the Foucauldian disciplining of bodies.

Similarly fashioned to other horizontalist movements of the left, the BB! network has no centralized, hierarchical direction, and no way to officiate actions and statements written in its name. Despite this obstacle, a concise description can be taken from the "About me" section of the Denver and Philadelphia cells' webpages which both describe BB! as:

A network of radical, anti-authoritarian queer projects within the United States. Bash Back! seeks to critique the ideology of mainstream GLBTQ movement, which we see as dedicated to obtaining straight privilege by assimilation into the dominant institutions of a heteronormative society. Bash Back! chapters employ direct action to confront capitalism and all interrelated forms of oppression, especially focusing on exposing the gay mainstream and the dangers of gay assimilationism and homonormativity. Bash Back! is noticeably influenced by the anarchist movement and other radical queer groups, such as ACT UP and Gay Shame. We are inspired by events like the Stonewall Riots and the White Night Riots (Bash Back Denver, n.d.; Bash Back! Philly, n.d.).

The Chicago cell similarly describes itself as:

...an anti-assimilation, sex-positive, anti-racist, radical group of queers, transfolk, and anarcha-feministas dedicated to eradicating heteronormativity, subverting binary gender norms, capitalism, and attacking all intersecting oppressions including but not limited to white supremacy, patriarchy, classism, ableism, fatphobia, transphobia, lookism... (Bash Back! Chicago, n.d.).

The Fort Wayne, Texas group describes itself as:

A group of radical queers, transfolk and feminists dedicated to building strong communities and militant opposition to heterosexism and transphobia and all forms of oppression including white supremacy, patriarchy, fascism, ageism, classism, capitalism, fatphobia, femmephobia, ableism, poverty, and borders (Bash Back! Fort Wayne, n.d.).

Note that in the preceding descriptions listing systems of oppression, the cells make no mention of the human-animal species binary. While the cells consistently cite their opposition to “white supremacy, patriarchy [and]...classism,” (Bash Back! Chicago, n.d.; Bash Back! Fort Wayne, n.d.), these brief manifestos lack explicit acknowledgement of a politic opposing speciesism.

Despite the nuanced ways in which divergent cells describe themselves, all BB! cells must adhere to the network’s four Points of Unity, which state:

1.) Fight for liberation. Nothing more, nothing less. State recognition in the form of oppressive institutions such as marriage and militarism are not steps toward liberation but rather towards heteronormative assimilation.

2.) A rejection of Capitalism, Imperialism, and all forms of State power.

3.) Actively oppose oppression both in and out of the "movement." White Supremacy, Patriarchy, Heterosexism, Ableism, Racism, Homophobia, Sexism, Speciesism, Transphobia, Ageism, Adultism, Xenophobia and all oppressive behavior is not to be tolerated.

4.) Respect a diversity of tactics in the struggle for liberation. Do not solely condemn an action on the grounds that the State deems it to be illegal (Bash Back! Memphis, 2008).

Within this discussion, it is important to note that within such network-wide Points of Unity, speciesism *is* mentioned as an oppression to be ‘actively opposed,’ following the 2008 revisions made by BB! Memphis. Thus while the larger network must by design accept this position, an anti-speciest politic is not mentioned in the individual cell manifestos surveyed. More importantly than static, network-wide guidelines adopted by cells, are the individual communiqués signed with the BB! name and circulated after a cell has claimed an action. Between its founding in 2007 and its declared “death” in January 2011 (Bash Back! News, 2011), the BB! moniker was used to sign numerous communiqués elaborating on the network’s ideology, as well as to claim movement acts. The Splash Back communiqué, authored in March 2010, is one example.

This communiqué, despite being linguistically playful and a clearly demarcated piece of satire, offers important theoretical contributions to both Queer studies and critical animal studies. The Splash Back communiqué serves as a rare nexus between the emergent politics of contemporary anti-authoritarian and insurrectionary anarchism, animal liberation, and anti-assimilationist Queerdom. It is at this crossroads that BB! chooses to engage the reader, to challenge the audience in stating that *all oppressions* are deserving of resistance. This includes the oppression of heteronormativity and heterosexism confronted by Queer theory, as well as the oppression of anthropocentrism and the human-animal, speciesist binary confronted by critical animal studies scholars and animal liberationists.

Queering Matrices & Opposing Assimilationist Reform

The anonymously authored political tracts under analysis serves to redefine and extend Queer theory’s sphere of influence to tackle additional systemic binaries beyond those situated in race, class, sex, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc.. The examination of the intersectionality of oppressions is well situated in the academic literature through the work of such authors as Patricia Hill Collins, who coined the term “matrix of domination” (2000: 227-28) to refer to the overlapping taxonomies in which “domination is organized.” Collins (2000) states, “all contexts of domination incorporate some combination of intersecting oppressions...the concept of a matrix of domination encapsulates the universality of intersecting oppressions as

organized through diverse local realities” (228). The concept of interrelated systems of oppression occurs throughout the (non-BB! specific) insurrectionist Queer literature generally. In once such foundational essay, such an intersectional location is termed the “Totality,” and is defined as:

As queers we understand Normalcy. Normal, is the tyranny of our condition; reproduced in all of our relationships. Normalcy is violently reiterated in every minute of every day. We understand this Normalcy as the Totality. The Totality being the interconnection and overlapping of all oppression and misery. The Totality is the state. It is capitalism. It is civilization and empire. The totality is fence-post crucifixion. It is rape and murder at the hands of police. It is ‘Str8 Acting’ and ‘No Fatties or Femmes.’ (Towards, 2008: II)

Here one can see the similarity between Collins’ “matrix of domination” and the insurrectionists’ “Totality,” as both are meant to label the condition of existing through the collective force of intersectional systems of oppression.

The intersectional work of Collins mirrors the theoretical, praxis-based contributions of the BB! network. It is through the campaigns of BB! that one can examine their advancements to the theoretical discourse surrounding Queer theory, and eventually, critical animal studies. For example, in the network’s actions dealing with gay marriage, BB! communiqués have served to argue for the dissolution of the institution itself, and expanding on traditional Marxism, they accuse marriage of serving to order society for the regulation of monogamous heteronormativity, consumption, and capital accumulation. Instead of arguing for *equal rights* for Queers (that are seeking marriage), BB! advocates for the total abandonment of marriage for *all* people. The Splash Back communiqué authored by the “anonymous cell of Bash Back!” serves to further extend an anti-oppression matrix towards ever expanding arenas of domination—interrogating system hierarchies and challenging the anthropocentric view offered by traditional anti-authoritarian movements. The Splash Back! communiqué attempts to move beyond the “total liberation” framework offered by contemporary liberationists such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF)^{xxiii}, and instead, urges what this author is terming “total solidarity.” The “total liberation” framework, while having no formally decreed definition, is the attempted articulation of a holistic liberatory politic where intersecting forms of domination are challenged by radical *human* actors. It is a struggle against “domination of all kinds” (Best, 2009: 199). It is an attempt to reach a point, through human action, where one exists at a point of post-liberation, as “prior to being liberated, individuals are oppressed, subjugated, and unduly restricted” (Bernstein, 2004: 93).

An example of this “total liberation” standpoint can be seen in the Mexican website “Liberación Total” (Total Liberation) which reports on animal liberation, earth liberation and anti-Statist acts of political violence (e.g. human liberation via First Nations struggles, prison issues). The site’s banner bears a tagline that reads, “humana, animal y de la tierra,” (human, animal and the land.)^{xxiii} For the website’s creators, “total liberation” is the campaign of humans to *liberate* non-human animals, human animals, and the Earth from destruction, commodification and domestication. This is accomplished through human actors attacking property owned by other human actors. In a second articulation of the “total liberation” framework, consider the September 21, 2011 communiqué issued by a Chilean cell of the ALF. In the anonymously authored message, the author(s) conclude their claim of responsibility for the arson of a rodeo by writing, “There will be no peace while animals are enslaved, while we are slaves, and as long as the Earth has a master! For Total Liberation (human, animal and Earth) - Animal Liberation Front” (Frente de Liberación Animal, 2011). In the Chilean statement the “we” challenging slavery is a human “we,” and the subjected “animal” slave is a *non-human* animal. Thus in these two examples, in the context of ALF/ELF attacks, as well as others reported by “Liberation Total,” the battleground is squarely between human saboteurs and the human owners of capital targeted in the attacks.

From “Liberation” to “Solidarity”: Reexamining the Passivity of Victimhood

This “total solidarity,” articulated in the Splash Back communiqué, serves as a new, further development of the “total liberation” framework by interrogating the perceived passivity of the *subject* being liberated. In the case of Tilikum’s “orca-strike”, BB! queers the (oppressed) subject by taking the passivity away from enslavement, and lending agency to the orca’s act of violence. Within the “total liberation” framework, radical humans serve in defense of the Earth and animals, presenting these subjects as inert victims. Thus to offer *solidarity* and not *liberation* is to extend an anti-speciest analysis urging action from both the *subject* and its *liberator*—not simply a charity of the strong wherein *humans* save non-human animals (and the Earth) from actions carried out by other humans. This shift from the strong (human) saving the weak (animal) serves to problematize *liberation* by acknowledging that in this case, the ‘strong’ actors (humans) are the primary oppressors of the ‘weak’ actors (animals) through their breeding, capture, and exploitation for use in food, “research,” entertainment and so on.

The Splash Back communiqué provides a level of agency to the enslaved orca that the larger animal liberation discourse does not. It *queers* the act of liberation by showing the non-passivity of the oppressed subject. This *agency* that is given to the orca whale, wherein the non-human animal is seen as actively attacking as an act of insurrection, serves to articulate the “concept of the attack” as explained by contemporary insurrectionist theorist Joe Black. In his essay “Anarchism, Insurrection and Insurrectionalism,” Black writes:

The concept of 'attack' is at the heart of the insurrectionist ideology, this was explained as follows: ‘Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise in struggle. It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although analysis and discussion have a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act’ (Black, 2006: n.p.).

In the case of Tilikum, the communiqué’s authors are praising the orca for precisely this tendency, namely the “refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise in struggle” (*ibid.*). This positive appraisal of the non-mediated, non-pacified subject exists at the heart of the modernist, insurrectionary tendency, and is central to the BB! framework. This urging for radical actors to resist pacification and mediation can be seen in militant linguistic phrasing, for example BB!’s March 2009 communiqué, “Solidarity With All Cop Killers,” wherein the “unknowable cell of Bash Back” writes:

On March 21st, Lovelle Mixon shot five police officers, killing four before dying in the gunfire To bash back, is to reverse the flows of power and violence, to explode the hyper-normal into situations of previously-unthinkable revolt. We thus find the deepest affinity with all who fight back against the affective poverty and oppression of this world...As the police and media work to defame and slander Lovelle Mixon, we express our total solidarity. Until every queerbasher is beaten to a pulp and police are but a memory (Bash Back! News, 2009).

In this communiqué we can see a similar sense of solidarity as was shown in the case of Tilikum. The BB! cell praises the action of the oppressed (e.g. Tilikum, Lovelle Mixon) against the oppressor (e.g. animal trainer, police officer) and offers solidarity on the basis of siding with “all who fight back against...oppression” (*ibid.*). BB!’s Splash Back communiqué adds a great deal to the queering of the animal liberation discourse, borrowing some of the tendencies from insurrectionists, but also serving to create new realms of theoretical contributions such as redefining the victimized subject as a newly radicalized actor in the social war against domination.

Resisting Appropriation: Challenging Notions of “Fight Back,” “Payback” & “Reprisal”

This praise for actors that “fight back,” which occurs with frequency in the generalized insurrectionary literature, requires additional interrogation if one wishes to approach a liberatory framework that avoids appropriation. While one examines the *Splash Back* communiqué, it is important to consider if the reinterpretation of Tilikum’s actions constitute human ideologues appropriating the orca’s violence for its own ends. Are BB!’s politics concerning Tilikum self-serving? Are they further contributing to the exploitation of an already oppressed being? Although these are concerns, one could argue that BB! is avoiding the trap of appropriation and instead, playing with the notion that animals act to harm their oppressors through a rejection on domination, not simply to avoid pain. Expanding this cautionary caveat outwards towards the Earth, scholars such as Jean Baudrillard have suggested that natural disasters can serve a similar function, namely, as the lived experience of ‘nature’s insurrection.’ In *The Agony of Power*, (2010) Baudrillard writes:

The violence of natural disorders increases with the intensification of technological violence...It is as if Nature were enacting revenge...respond[ing] in the ‘terrorist’ form of earthquakes and eruptions. In the insurrection of natural elements, there is a hint of reprisal (101).

Here Baudrillard suggests a connection between ecocide and natural disasters constructing a connection between “the intensification of technological violence” and the “revenge,” “insurrection” and “reprisal” of earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes.

Another example of this difficult distinction can be found in an advertising campaign created by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in 2008, and used annually during “Shark Week.” In the PETA advertisement, a severed, bloody leg is shown protruding from the mouth of a shark.^{xxiv} The caption reads, “Payback Is Hell. Go Vegan.” The advertisement was created following the injury of Charles Wickersham, 21, attacked by a shark while spear fishing in the Gulf of Mexico in late September 2011 (Marta, 2008). The not-too-subtle message in the advertisement is that the fisherman was attacked because his actions angered the shark, which chose to enact ‘revenge’ by attacking Wickersham. In examining these incidents, it is important to examine the potentiality of anthropomorphizing the orca or shark’s aggression. Through BB!’s rhetoric, the notions of aggression and liberation are queered, but one must ask: If the whale is assumed to show anger in solidarity with those resisting oppression, how does this appropriated anger serve to queer the notion of

animal agency? Furthermore, is it possible to theorize about non-human animal aggression without adopting an anthropocentric framework?

The rhetorical contributions of the Splash Back communiqué serve to redefine the victimized orca as a newly radicalized actor said to be “transforming his commodified body into an organ of the war-machine” (Bash Back! News, 2010). Queer theory allows us to reflexively interrogate such inter-movement assumptions (i.e. animals as passive actors to be liberated) and consistently advance towards a liberatory future as new oppressions are understood. This follows a trend in justice-centric social movements, wherein one constantly advances a sphere of inclusion within liberation struggles. This tradition is evident through the departmental name change within universities of many women’s studies departments to gender studies and sexuality studies. These departments began to include discussions of masculinity and gender variance, and again when gender studies gave way to Queer studies, further problematizing issues of sex, gender and sexuality. For the anonymous theorists authoring the communiqués of BB!, the movement further extends this inclusionary tradition and begins to confront the binary of species, leading to a non-anthropocentric Queer theory that subverts notions of appropriation. It can be said that the insurrectionists of BB! are serving to *queer* the field of Queer studies, as well as the social movement theories that inform both animal and earth liberationists.

Queering Victimhood Through Insurrection & Social War

This idea of expanding “total liberation” towards “total solidarity” is rooted in the neo-insurrectionist milieu that has seen resurgence in North American anarchist thought within the last decade. This movement is consciously termed *neo-insurrectionary* throughout this analysis as it refers to a period of political development within revolutionary anarchism occurring after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. This point of historical taxonomy is intentionally vague as pinpointing ideological tendencies is inherently subjective and fluid. Within this analysis, *neo-insurrectionary* anarchism is marked as reemerging *after* the armed Marxist-inspired movements of the 1960s and 1970s such as the Red Army Faction in Germany and the George Jackson Brigade and the Black Liberation Army in the United States. This post-Marxist resurgence of illegalism within anarchism is marked by thinkers such as Alfredo Bonanno (b. 1937) and organizations such as the Informal Anarchist Federation (2003-present) and the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire in Greece (2008-present). This

is historically marked as constituting a separate time frame from the likes of the insurrectionary, illegalist predecessors such as Johann Most (1846-1906), Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) and La Bande à Bonnot (1911-1912) known pejoratively as the Bonnot Gang.

Within this neo-insurrectionary time, a number of pseudonym-laden individuals and collectives have emerged as formative thinkers. Once such foundational neo-insurrectionary venue has been the 1999-2001 French philosophical journal, known as Tiqqun. As articulated within the pages of Tiqqun, as well as more widely-known publications such as The Coming Insurrection^{xxv}, these contemporary anarcho-insurrectionists have offered up the notion of “social war” which broadly seeks to confront and destroy all observed forms of domination. While the anonymous contributors to Tiqqun and other publications have written book-length treaties on what constitutes such “social war,” (or Civil War) once can look to the contemporary, anarcho-insurrectionist, Queer theory publication “Towards the Queerest Insurrection,” which offers the following explanation of “social war” writing: “Simply put, we want to make ruins of domination in all its varied and interlacing forms. This struggle inhibiting every social relationship is what we know as social war. It is both the process and the condition of a conflict with this totality” (Towards, 2008: III).

In a sense, the authors of “Towards the Queerest Insurrection” queer the notion of “attack.” In this newly queered attack, all forms of domination exist collaboratively to form cross-movement solidarity. Thus as Queers, one must be on the side of the dominated subject—Queer personhood places the subject in a position wherein to attack domination is to contribute to one’s own liberation as a non-hetero “victim.” To return to “Towards the Queerest Insurrection,” the authors make this point stating:

Queer is a position from which to attack the normative – more, a position from which to understand and attack the ways in which normal is reproduced and reiterated. In destabilizing and problematizing normalcy, we can destabilize and become a problem for this Totality... It was once that to be queer was to be in direct conflict with then forces of control and domination. (Towards, 2008: VII-VIII)

For the pamphlet’s authors, Queerness places the subject on the side of the oppressed, and thus to “attack the normative” can only be to the benefit of those existing outside of the heteronormative, anthropocentric, “Totality.” The authors of the Splash Back! communiqué, clearly align themselves within this vein of insurrectionist analysis writing:

We consider the attack on Dawn Brancheau to be an act of social war, as Tilikum gave new breadth to the waves he monotonously created through his awe-inspiring splashes. Tilikum destroyed what destroyed him by transforming his commodified body into an organ of the war-machine; thus, enacting an orcan-strike. (Bash Back! News, 2010)

This expressed support and desire to enact “social war,” to ‘destroy what destroys you’ is seen throughout BB!’s writings as well as those in the more generalized anarcho-Queer, insurrectionist milieu. BB! has made such reappropriated, violent posturing its modus operandi, even arranging Black Panther-style photo shoots showing masked members of the group brandishing bats, clubs, pipes, pick axes and other weapons.^{xxvi, xxvii} Insurrectionary Queer networks such as BB! have regularly produced propaganda involving images of firearms^{xxviii, xxix, xxx, xxxi}, thematically mirroring imagery adopted by social movements engaged in armed insurrectionary violence such as the killing of State security forces and the bombing of banks. The question of whether these images were playful posturing, the projection of an idealist position or political theatre is unanswered but BB! actions such as the distribution of pepper spray and advocating of street fighting would urge a guess in one direction.

This adoption and redirection of violence, this *queering of victimhood*, (by self-identified Queers) can also be seen in an April 2011 communiqué authored by activists associated with the similarly styled, direct action network, Anti-Racist Action (ARA).^{xxxii} The ARA communiqué, written by “a bitch ass faggot,” and titled “The rejection of the identity of victimization through cracking a Nazi’s skull,” praises the activists’ efforts that contributed to the hospitalization of six “Nazis,” as well as numerous additional injuries and damages to property. The communiqué proudly proclaims that the ARA activists were “people of color, working class, immigrants, women, queer, transgendered, and/or people on parole or probation.” In the communiqué, the authors queer the dichotomous victim/victimizer binary, appropriating the “ideological violence” (Zizek, 2008: 10) of racism/fascism/Nazism and reproducing it as physical violence brought by the “victimized” Queers. The authors write:

The logic of the victim is constantly thrust upon us. We are said to be 'at risk' and must be protected and pandered to. It is said that we need others, usually the State, to protect and stand up for us. But, through the action of splitting Nazis' heads open, we rejected the logic of victimization...When we are attacked, we will find each other and counterattack, so hard and so fierce that we will surprise even ourselves. If the Nazis call us bitch ass faggots, they might not be that far off the mark. But if they conflate those slurs with weakness, the six hospital visits they faced would prove otherwise. (Bitch Ass Faggot, 2011)

Here we can see a similar rhetorical trend as articulated in the Splash Back! communiqué. In one sense they both are “violent” calls to arms written by traditionally oppressed classes: incarcerated animals, Queers, immigrants, transgendered folks and so on. Secondly, both the

BB! and ARA communiqués queer ownership of the production of violence, presenting the traditional victim as a newly re-inscribed Queered subject, a subject who will strike back when oppressed—a subject that interprets their oppression as representative of the totality of all oppressions requiring challenge.

Queering Movement Boundaries & Why Aren't All Anarchists Vegan?

The Splash Back! communiqué engages the reader in an anti-speciest discourse through the use of *presumptive* rhetorical language. The communiqué presents an unstated presumption that Queers, anarcho-insurrectionists, anti-authoritarians, and whomever else the movement perceive as their constituency, are open to queering the species binary and acting in favor of animal liberation. This presumption that those confronting the straight/Queer binary would hold a similar challenge to the animal/human binary is contrary to the actual history of the LGBT movement, as well as the history of the larger, more generalized left. These movements remain anthropocentric in their practice and rhetoric, concerned largely with myopic, single-issue, disconnected struggles, such as those concerned with *human* rights, *women's* rights, *gay* rights, *environmental* rights, *Third World* rights, etc. (Best, 2009: 189). These movements, while liberatory in ideology, regularly disregard the intersectionality of an anti-speciest analysis; thus they resist the queering of binaries wherein they (the human activist) fall on the side of oppressor. The insurrectionist Queer movement that BB! speaks to serves to queer binary analyses by focusing the critique on hierarchical domination as it exists in all its forms, including species. The actions and rhetoric embodied in the BB! communiqué serve to challenge and reconstruct Queer theory, expanding its construction of Collins's "matrix of domination," and asserting that all binaries are equal challenges waiting to be met.

This social movement observation forces the question: Why is the anarchist/anti-authoritarian left not inherently anti-speciest and pro-liberationist when a radical Queer network like BB! unflinchingly positions itself within the liberationist milieu? The assumption made by BB!, through refusing to offer an argument against speciesism, *assumes* that its constituency of Queers would be in solidarity against speciesism. It is difficult to discern if an activist challenging speciesism via attacks claimed under the ALF/ELF moniker would also be in support of Queer insurrectionary tendencies, but one could extend the same argument thus ward: If one opposes speciesism, one must oppose other violently enacted binaries such as those that maintain systems of homophobia, heterosexism, Queer

assimilation and transphobia. Thus the radical posturing of the ALF/ELF via its praxis and rhetoric presumes that its movement participants are ‘pro-queer’ (or at the very least not homophobic), but this logic fails to explain why the LGBT and/or anarchist movements are not presumed to be anti-speciest?

In the contemporary, leftist milieu, it is permissible to be an anarchist meat-eater but it remains taboo to be an animal liberationist and simultaneous racist, homophobe or sexist. It is permissible to be an LGBT activist with HRC and also be a classist, ablest, transphobe. This anthropological social movement observation represents a double standard wherein ‘*animal issues*’ are relegated to a single issue politic, not a further articulation of the liberatory, anarchist trend towards horizontalism, solidarity, non-violence and fostering non-coercive behaviors. Through the matter-of-fact wording presented by BB!, the communiqué queers the animal liberationist agenda by stating that to be in solidarity with BB! *is* to be in support of a firmly anti-speciesist standpoint. BB! attempts to queer contemporary anarchist/leftist discourse to see the (presumed) connection between the anti-coercive, anti-authoritarian and anti-commodification politics of anarchism, and anti-speciesism. This queering is new in its articulation. If this queering had already taken place, all anti-authoritarians would be vegan in practice, in the same way that every anarchist is *presumed* to be (in practice) a feminist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, Queer positive individual.

BB! queers Queer theory itself by challenging the single-issue nature of an analysis based around identity politics. By not only struggling for the interests of non-human animals, BB! acts in solidarity, rejecting a self-serving agenda. If BB! were to disregard non-human animals because they are deemed incapable of embodying Queerdom and gender variance, then the movement would be falling into the trap of all other movements described above. Instead, by making the *single issue* of Queer into the larger issue of liberation, BB! is anti-single issue and against the “let’s get mine” school of thought seen in many factions throughout the left.

The framing of Tilikum’s actions in the Splash Back! communiqué, is certainly divergent from the traditionally leftist mobilizations which include anthropocentric politics within their construction of “justice.” In addition, such praise for an “orcan-strike” is also unfamiliar to the more centrist animal rights and animal liberation discourses. The discourses labeled as animal *rights* and animal *welfare* attempt to establish a protective sphere around non-human animals, while animal liberationists seek the removal of such creatures from human use. Despite these animal-centric positions, none of the three frameworks approach an understanding of animal action as constituting agency and a sense of self-awareness of

one's own domination. Even at its most liberatory ends, (take for example liberationists such as those affiliated with the ALF), the occurrence of an animal killing a human is rarely read as the oppressed victim attacking its oppressor to resist subjugation. While both the animal rights and animal liberationist would likely oppose the enslavement of Tilikum for the purpose of human entertainment, neither would likely reinscribe the orca's actions with a radically insurrectionist politic in an attempt at developing a cross-movement, inclusively revolutionary critique. Even in the PETA shark attack example, the advertisement focuses on 'revenge,' rather than an articulated resistance to domination enacted by a non-human animal.

Queer theory informs not only this reinterpretation of subject agency, but also a subversion of the liberatory binary of animal as oppressed, human as oppressor. This equation ultimately leads one to the conclusion that if animal equals oppressed, and human equals oppressor, then perpetually a vocal human oppressor liberates the silenced, oppressed animal. This would stand true in the case of liberationists like the ALF where human (oppressors) seek to liberate (oppressed) animals from sites of exploitation. To cite but one example, Peter Young, a prominent pro-ALF activist and former ALF political prisoner chose to name his website and newsletter "Voice of the Voiceless" (2009-2011), a rhetorical posturing which illustrates the liberator/oppressed subject's dichotomous binary. The newly queered Queer theory advocated by BB! offers the question: How does this performance of Tilikum's liberation queer the species hierarchy adopted by the animal liberation discourse—a discourse that privileges humans through the maintenance of human as liberator and animal as passive victim. In sum, the theoretical contributions of BB!, as shown in the *Splash Back!* communiqué, can be understood as the queering of the boundaries of *liberator* and *liberated subject*, as well as expanding the realm of binaries to include species.

Conclusion

Though this essay centers around a *single* piece of political theatrics in order to discuss the larger insurrectionary contemporary tendencies, further analysis should examine popularized texts such as the 2011 movie Rise of the Planet of the Apes, or as yet unreleased book, Death at Sea World. Subsequent explorations within a newly queered study of animal subjugation must beg the question: Do these cinematic and written texts anthropomorphize animal liberation in a similar way, presenting non-human animals as 'striking back?' Further inquiry into such texts is necessary to understand these interpretations and their impact on our understanding of "violence" carried out by non-human animals. The queering of the

liberation discourse should be understood as a freeing and positive step in our pursuits of expanding the sphere of inclusivity to non-human animals, thus it would benefit the field of both critical animal studies and Queer studies for increased cross-pollination and collaborative analysis between the two fields of study.

A holistic, anti-authoritarian framework must include a rejection of speciesism in order to truly approach the potentiality of challenging domination and hierarchy in the hopes of ushering in a more liberatory world. Parochial, sectarian and other single-issue-based agendas will never offer revolutionary potential as they will always be mired in contradiction and the leveraging of the desires of one (oppressed class) over the rights of another. The LGBT, anarchist, and animal rights movements are examples of efforts that have fallen short of developing an analysis that is truly intersectional and inclusive. While the LGBT movement fails to challenge hierarchies including those found in class and race, other movements, such as those identified with the anarchist left, fail to challenge species. The neo-insurrectionist critique offered by Bash Back! will also likely leave some by the wayside, though at its foundation, it contains a tendency to expand an analysis outward, analyzing additional caveats of known oppressions amongst its ideologues as time passes. This political understanding, one in which species hierarchies are understood as similar to those seen in race and class, is a centerpiece of a profoundly unique liberatory politic.

ENDNOTES

^{xv} **SOURCE:** http://i.i.com.com/cnwk.1d/i/tim//2010/02/25/10_2011.jpg



^{xvi} **SOURCE:** http://assets.nydailynews.com/img/2010/04/02/alg_seaworld_dawn-brancheau.jpg



^{xvii} For a collection of additional images of Brancheau “training” and performing with orcas, including Tilikum, one can visit the “Tribute to Dawn Brancheau” Flickr group (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/1320694@N25/>). This collection, when viewed on January 23, 2012, contains 149 images (and 1 video) of Brancheau. These images include 39% (59/150) displaying Brancheau standing atop, launching off of, or riding atop an orca and 8% (12/150) wherein the trainer is seen kissing or hugging an orca.

^{xviii} For an example of SeeWorld's Believe show, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttq2ou8XuSU>

^{xix} **Bash Back!ers In Support of Autonomous Animal Action Call for Trans-Species Solidarity With Tilikum**

An autonomous cell of Bash Back! is calling for solidarity with sea criminal Tilikum, the orca responsible for killing a trainer at Sea World Orlando at the end of February. We consider the attack on Dawn Brancheau to be an act of social war, as Tilikum gave new breadth to the waves he monotonously created through his awe-inspiring splashes. Tilikum destroyed what destroyed him by transforming his commodified body into an organ of the war-machine; thus, enacting an orcan-strike. For too long he had been confined as a spectacle for the American populus to consume. The affect of his bodily revolt has aided in helping us all realize the potentiality of reifying our underlying desires. Members of the American Family Association have come out in favor of stoning Tilikum to death for this strike against systems of domination. In response, the nonhuman political prisoners at Sea World Orlando have organized the first chapter of Splash Back!, an insurrectionary tendency of sea animals dedicated to destroying all forms of oppression. Bash Back! must be allies in the struggle for animal liberation, as well as against the religious right which has sought to criminalize the bodies of queers and orcas for so long. We are calling for solidarity actions with Tilikum across the country to support animal autonomy and resistance. Orcas have been criminalized for too long; the time for sea animal liberation is now. Solidarity with all Trainer Killers!



(March 4, 2010)

^{xx} HRC is infamous within a Queer critique for, amongst other things, acting counter to the interests of transgendered persons. Despite this history, they remain labeled as a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender rights group. HRC is often critiqued for solely representing the interests of homosexual, white, upper-class, male-bodied persons despite presenting themselves in a more inclusive light. For an example of the blasé, matter-of-fact nature in which one can cast such a critique, one can view "A Critique of Anti-Assimilation Part I," included in the Works Cited. Despite these commonly cited shortcomings, for the sake of decipherable acronym-based language, HRC will be included within the LGBT grouping.

^{xxi} For a more detailed description of the structuring and organization of the Bash Back network, see the article "Reflections on the Demise of Bash Back!", contained in the zine Pink and Black Attack #6. The zine is available in full at: <http://zinelibrary.info/files/PABA6.pdf> (Accessed 01 August 2011) and the article reposted at <http://sketchythoughts.blogspot.com/2010/09/reflections-on-demise-of-bash-back.html> (Accessed 01 August 2011).

^{xxii} The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Earth Liberation Front (ELF) are adoptable monikers chosen by clandestine actors who carry out acts of property destruction, sabotage and theft targeting business seen as harming the Earth and non-human animals. They are similarly styled to the Bash Back! (BB!) network in that there is no central leadership but rather cells operating in a loosely-linked network. The network shares Points of Unity, but movement strategy and campaigns are developed by attackers' actions and inter-movement debate via print and electronic publications. The ALF/ELF are responsible for thousands of attacks globally, and in the United States, have been consistently termed the 'number one domestic terrorist threat' by the FBI for over ten years.



^{xxiii} <http://www.liberaciontotal.lahaine.org/> (as of 01 August 2011) The banner for the Mexican website, Total Liberation as seen on August 1, 2011. As of January 2012, the banner image has since been modified. It now appears without inlaid text, and sits about the words, "Against all forms of domination!" (Contra toda forma de domnacion!)

^{xxiv}



SOURCE: http://blog.peta2.com/payback_is_hell.JPG

^{xxv} Other contemporary examples of insurrectionist thought include publications by The Institute for Experimental Freedom (authors of "Politics is Not a Banana: The Journal of Vulgar Discourse"), the zines/websites [Fire to the Prisons](http://firetotheprisons.com) (firetotheprisons.com), [Modesto Anarcho](http://modestonanarcho.org) (modestonanarcho.org), [325](http://325.nostate.net) (325.nostate.net), blogs/news sites including <http://waronsociety.noblogs.org/>, <http://sysiphus-angrynewsfromaroundtheworld.blogspot.com/>, <http://actforfreedomnow.wordpress.com/>, <http://thisisourjob.wordpress.com/>, <http://socialrupture.tumblr.com/>, the communiqués of the Greek network known as Conspiracy of Fire Cells, and the writings of Italian theorist and militant Alfredo M. Bonanno.



xxvii

A propaganda poster produced by an anonymous cell of Bash Back! to advertise the groups' plans to attending the Milwaukee, WI Pridefest held in June, 2008 with the purpose of confronting the neo-Nazi, National Socialist Movement (NSM). The NSM had previously announced their intention to hold a march in opposition to Pride, which they claimed was the "promotion of homosexuality in our community"



xxvii

An image produced during a photo shoot with Bash Back! Lansing, MI



xxviii

An image circulated to advertise for Bash Back!'s 2010 convergence in Denver, CO. Notice the handgun, brass knuckles and the insurrectionist-styled publication, "Becoming, Riot."

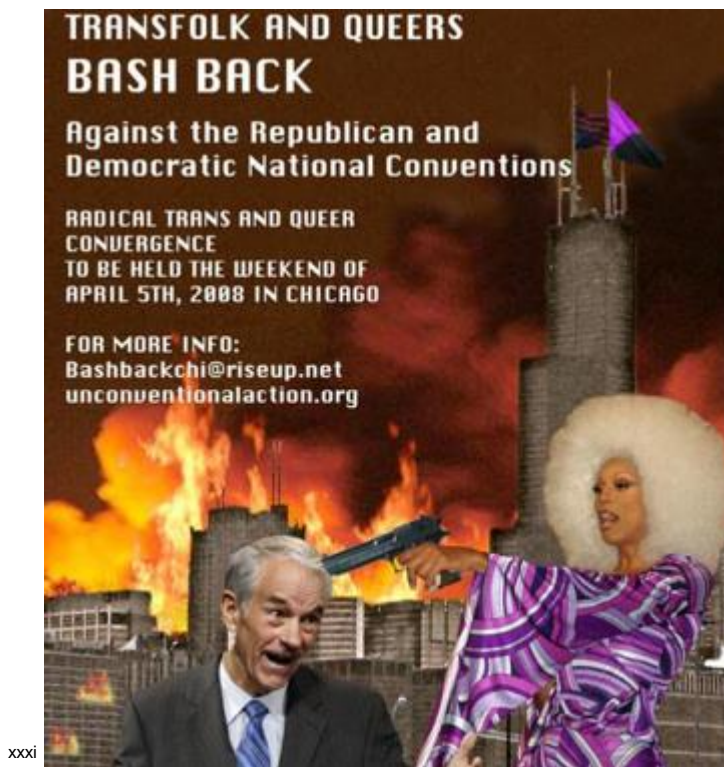


xxix

An image appearing in "Towards the Queerest Insurrection" as well as reprinted in ideologically aligned insurrectionary Queer publications.



Advertisement for April 2008 Bash Back! action convergences coinciding with the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. The purpose of the convergence is “to facilitate radical Queer and Trans organizing against the Party Conventions.” (Bash Back! Chicago, 2008)



Advertisement for April 2008 Bash Back! action convergences coinciding with the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. The purpose of the convergence is “to facilitate radical Queer and Trans organizing against the Party Conventions.” (Bash Back! Chicago, 2008) Pictured in the ad is drag queen Ru Paul shooting Presidential candidate Ron Paul while the city burns in the background.

^{xxxii} Anti-Racist Action (ARA) is a network of activists who assemble for ad hoc actions opposing white supremacist, neo-Nazi, anti-abortion and affiliated movements. ARA believes in directly confronting those they oppose through force and attempting to prevent the movements they target from carryout public functions. For example, ARA will regularly attempt to prevent Aryan Nations recruiting drives or KKK regional gatherings. The national network shares Points of Unity and actions are organized by cell-type chapter that function on a quasi-clandestine level. They are different from the ALF/ELF/BB! in that ARA’s

focus is *not* on carryout our clandestine acts of property destruction, but rather on hosting public marches and counter-protests in reaction to the organizing plans of white supremacists, neo-Nazis, etc.

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STRATEGY AND TACTIC ANALYSIS

Strategies for Liberation

Debra Erenberg¹

Abstract

This article is based on a plenary address delivered at the Animal Rights 2011 National Conference in Los Angeles, July 24, 2011. The talk looks at what the animal rights movement can learn from other liberation movements in the United States, with a particular emphasis on the struggle for equal rights for GLBTQ people as exemplary of the trajectory of a successful social movement.

Key words: animal rights, social movement organization, GLBTQ inclusion

Introduction

For those of us who have been involved in the Animal Rights movement over many years, it sometimes feels like change will never happen. We see other social justice movements making huge strides, and we wonder “What about us?”

Sometimes when you’re caught up in the day to day struggle, it can be hard to see the bigger picture. And if you can’t see the bigger picture, it’s hard to chart a successful strategy.

So I’d like to take this time to zoom out and take the long view. Let’s look at animal rights within the context of other successful movements for social change in this country and see what we can learn.

¹ Debra Erenberg is an organizer and activist for the environment, animal rights, human rights, and social justice in general. Born in Brooklyn, NY, she currently lives in Chicago and works as Midwest Regional Director for Amnesty International-USA (AIUSA derenberg@aiusa.org). Previously, she served as Organizing Director for Rainforest Action Network and as Director of Affiliate Development at NARAL Pro-Choice America. An animal rights activist for almost two decades, Erenberg has worked with PETA, In Defense of Animals, and the Great Ape Project. She holds a J.D. from George Washington University National Law Center, a Master’s degree in Public Policy from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science also from the University of Michigan.

All successful movements follow remarkably similar trajectories²:

1) Status Quo – Oppression exists, but there is low awareness in general public.

In this early stage, even those affected by the issue may see status quo as normal. They may feel too isolated to challenge that status quo, they may feel it's too risky, or they may have internalized the messages from society that tell them they don't deserve the same rights that everybody else enjoys. This internalized oppression takes many forms: gays and lesbians who are ashamed of their sexual orientation; women who feel there was something wrong with them because they didn't find their role as full-time homemakers fulfilling among others; and workers resigned to long hours in dangerous circumstances as the trade-off for putting food on the table.

2) Trigger events politicize activists and start to attract public attention.

Typically, a catalyzing event politicizes group members and sparks widespread action. Those individual events don't result in a movement, however, unless they also result in organizations being formed or stepping up to address the issue on an on-going basis.

For example, in 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory caught fire. The doors were locked, and the only escape was to jump through the third story windows. One hundred forty-six people died, mostly young, immigrant women. It was at the time (and remains to this day) the deadliest industrial disaster in New York history. The fire called public attention to sweatshop working conditions for first time. It led to a stronger union movement and quickly resulted in worker protection regulations.

Another example of a triggering event occurred in New York City a half-century later. At the time, gay men who sought to enjoy the city's nightlife had long endured routine police harassment and bar raids with little resistance. That all changed in 1969, when gay men (led

² The stages of change discussed in this article draw on the writings of Bill Moyer and George Lakey, particularly "The Eight Stages of Successful Social Movements" (Moyer, <http://paceebene.org/nonviolent-change-101/building-nonviolent-world/methods/eight-stages-successful-social-movements>) and "Globalize Liberation: 5 Stages for Social Movements" (Lakey, <http://www.trainingforchange.org/node/181>).

largely by drag queens) at the Stonewall bar got fed up and fought back, sparking three days of riots.

The riots spurred the creation of the infrastructure necessary to move from a series of disconnected actions to a full-fledged social movement, including organizations and newspapers dedicated to advancing gay rights.

3) As public awareness grows, a second trigger event politicizes a broader segment of the population and takes the movement to a new level.

The anti-war movement was well underway when, in 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on students at Kent State, firing 67 rounds over a period of 13 seconds, killing four students and wounding nine others. Most of the students were demonstrating against the US invasion of Cambodia, but some were just walking to class. Images of young Americans being shot down by National Guardsmen brought the war home to a complacent nation, exposing the often-hidden violence necessary to maintain the status quo and horrifying ordinary citizens who had been able to ignore similar brutality taking place thousands of miles away. Days later, 100,000 people gathered in Washington, DC, to protest the War and the shootings.

While triggering events often seem to occur in a single instant, sometimes they are unveiled over a longer period. Such was the situation within the movement for LGBTQ rights after Stonewall. Vibrant gay communities thrived in major cities, but in “mainstream” America, gays and lesbians were largely still in the closet, and many Americans would tell you that they didn’t personally know any gay people. That all changed with the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Although AIDS activism by groups such as ACT UP is often considered separate from the gay rights movement, the crisis politicized a new generation of activists and encouraged people to come out of the closet like never before. As AIDS activists made clear, Silence = death. In the course of fighting for their very lives, gay men in particular, reinvigorated a movement and gave new voice to demands for full equality in our society.

4) Stories about strategic movements are co-opted and sanitized, real lessons are hidden.

As social movements succeed to the point of mainstream acceptance, we see an almost instantaneous effort by institutions protecting the status quo to co-opt those movements and deny the revolutionary nature of their successes. We lose the lessons about movement strategy in exchange for children's stories in which one heroic individual changes the world. We cheer for the heroes, grateful that a champion has always emerged to save us from injustice, relieving us from the burden of playing any part in the upheaval.

For example, I learned in school that Rosa Parks decided to sit in the front of the bus in 1955 because she was tired after working a long day. In truth, Parks worked for the NAACP and was trained at the Highlander Folk School for social justice leadership. Her act of defiance was part of a successful strategy to launch the Montgomery Bus Boycott with a burst of public indignation. As Parks has said, she was tired alright, "tired of giving in."³

We're given the Disney version of this story where wide-scale social change comes about through one woman impulsively acting alone, rather than the real lesson that change comes when movements strategically plot out campaigns that directly challenge the status quo and choose their moment for confrontation.

Another example of true lessons being lost occurred around the so-called Battle in Seattle at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings. The sanitized story is that anti-globalization activists semi-spontaneously decided to shut down the WTO meeting and cause widespread disorder in the city. The truth is that this was an example of labor unions, environmentalists, and other anti-globalization advocates working together strategically with great success. Labor shut down much of the city via strikes by longshoremen and bus drivers. A spokescouncil of various groups met throughout the demonstrations to coordinate activities and messaging.⁴ The Seattle police responded with unanticipated violence, shocking the nation and leading a majority of the viewing public to support the protesters. At a time when

³ See, eg., Loeb, Paul, "The Real Rosa Parks" (The Housing Journal, Winter 2001) at http://housingforall.org/real_rosa_parks.htm.

⁴ See, eg., Zeltzer, Steve, "Global Victory in Seattle: Workers, Students, Activists Defeat World Trade Organisation" (Workers' Democracy', Vol.1, No. 2, December 1999) available at <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv6n1/wto.html> and "The Real Battle in Seattle: A Seattle WTO People's History Project" at <http://www.realbattleinseattle.org/>.

there was little mainstream media coverage of the downside of globalization, a convergence of movements worked in solidarity to firmly entrench the issue in the public debate.

There's nothing more powerful than movements coming together and acting strategically. That's why those working to change the status quo have so much at stake in making sure the true story is told, and that's why corporate and other interests immediately stepped up efforts to drive a wedge between labor and the environmental movement and to confuse the story of Seattle.

Other lessons learned from successful social movements

Along with a common trajectory, there are a few key lessons that we learn again and again looking at the history of social movements.

Organizations are important, but organizations aren't the movement.

The only way to go from a small, isolated series of actions to a larger, strategic movement is to form organizations. Unfortunately, as movements mature those organizations often develop more of a stake in their own continuity and their own "expert" views than in the interests of the group they supposedly represent.

For example, the larger gay rights groups didn't want to work on marriage equality. They felt like it was a non-starter and preferred to work for issues they saw as more winnable like workplace protections. But many gay families felt like they would not be accepted as an equal part of society if they were denied this fundamental right and recognition. Against the wishes of strategists, they pursued lawsuits and legislative efforts. Now, marriage equality is the law of the land in 6 states and the District of Columbia, and, those same organizations have jumped on board.

Vision is everything

Every successful movement has articulated its vision for the world it is working to create. It's simply not enough to be against something, you need to paint a picture for what you're moving *towards*.

A clearly articulated vision means you're less likely to be co-opted, you're more likely to stay on course, and you're more motivated to get where you're going, because you know how great it'll be when you arrive.

Our vision needs to persuade the public, not power holders, because we all know that people in power will not take steps to change the status quo until they feel compelled to do so by broad public pressure. That means we in the animal rights movement need to articulate our vision in a way that positions our movement as being core to society's values and sensibilities. To quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a chief purpose of social movements is "to fulfill the American Dream, not to destroy it."

The vision of the civil rights movement was to achieve full equality for all people in society, regardless of race. That vision leaves no space for "separate but equal" schools. That vision doesn't say "we'll stop once we have access to the ballot." It's a vision that sustained a movement through on-going, violent repression and convinced the public that the forces working to protect the status quo were the actual extremists.

Where does the Animal Rights movement fit in with all of this?

I believe that our movement's catalyzing event was the Silver Spring monkey case, beginning in 1981. It was the first time that animals in labs, and the concept that animals might be entitled to rights, really entered the public consciousness. It led to the transformation of PETA from a group of friends into a national movement, the creation of the first North

American Animal Liberation Front cell, and the first animal research case to reach the United States Supreme Court.⁵

Since that time, the movement has grown exponentially. Groups have sprouted addressing a wide range of animal-related issues. And the public is much more aware of what those issues are.

In a 2003 Gallup poll, 25% of Americans surveyed said animals deserve “the exact same rights as people to be free from harm and exploitation.”⁶ For such a sweeping question about what used to be considered a fringe issue, that’s tremendous! And in the eight years since that poll, public awareness about these issues has only increased. For example, the Vegetarian Resource group reported that 3% of the population was vegetarian in 2009 with about 1/3 to ¼ of these vegan.⁷ By 2011, that figure increased to 5% vegetarian, fully half of them vegan.⁸

I feel like we’re due for a re-triggering event that will serve to politicize a greater number of people around this issue and expose the too-often hidden violence underlying the present system. But we can’t just wait around for the moment to happen, we need to learn from other movements and create our own.

Lessons around vision are the most important to absorb

With the proliferation of groups working on individual pieces of the animal rights puzzle, I feel like we haven’t done as good a job as we could in showing people our vision of the world we want to create, a world where people treat all animals with compassion and respect.

⁵ See Guillermo, Kathy Snow, *Monkey Business: The Disturbing Case That Launched the Animal Rights Movement*

⁶ Moore, David, “Public Lukewarm on Animal Rights,” May 21, 2003 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/8461/public-lukewarm-animal-rights.aspx>)

⁷ Vegetarian Resource Group, “How Many Vegetarians Are There” (<http://www.vrg.org/press/2009poll.htm>, accessed January 14, 2012).

⁸ Stahler, Charles, “How Often Do Americans Eat Vegetarian Meals? And How Many Adults in the U.S. Are Vegan?” Vegetarian Resource Group (<http://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2011issue4/vj2011issue4poll.php>, accessed January 14, 2012).

As a movement for animal rights, we must clearly articulate a vision of the American dream that makes room for all sentient beings. We need to show why compassion is patriotic, why it fits with the core values on which this country was founded. We need to show that “liberty and justice for all” isn’t limited to human beings and that our strength as a nation is bound up in how we treat the least among us, whether human or not.

As I mentioned earlier, *a clear vision cannot be co-opted*. In recent years, so many of the resources of this movement have been diverted to so-called “humane farming practices.” To my mind, this is the “Separate but equal” of the animal rights movement.

The civil rights movement, with its clear vision of equality, wasn’t fooled for a minute into seeing separate but equal schools as progress, even though such schools would theoretically have improved the quality of segregated education. In the animal rights movement, we need to express in no uncertain terms that our vision does not include a world where animals are treated as commodities to be killed for our benefit.

This brings me back to another earlier point. Organizations are not the movement. **WE ARE THE MOVEMENT**. When organizations lose sight of their movement’s vision, it’s time to move forward without them. They can catch up later.

The time has come to take this movement to the next level. Let’s be clear-sighted about our vision and let that vision guide every effort we undertake. Let it be a beacon that inspires us and keeps us going in hard times.

Let’s learn from the real histories of other movements and come up with a powerful, unifying strategy to move forward.

Let’s plan our own Rosa Parks moment, and follow it up with a bold campaign that grows our movement and wins lasting change.

And let’s support each other and thank each other for being brave and committed enough to be demand compassion in a world that thrives on cruelty.

With a clear vision and a strategically mapped out course, we can – and we will – make tremendous strides towards a society that respects and values all living beings. To once again quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “*There is a creative force in the universe working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long but it tends toward justice.*”⁹

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⁹ King, Martin Luther, Jr., Address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (16 August 1967).

COMIC

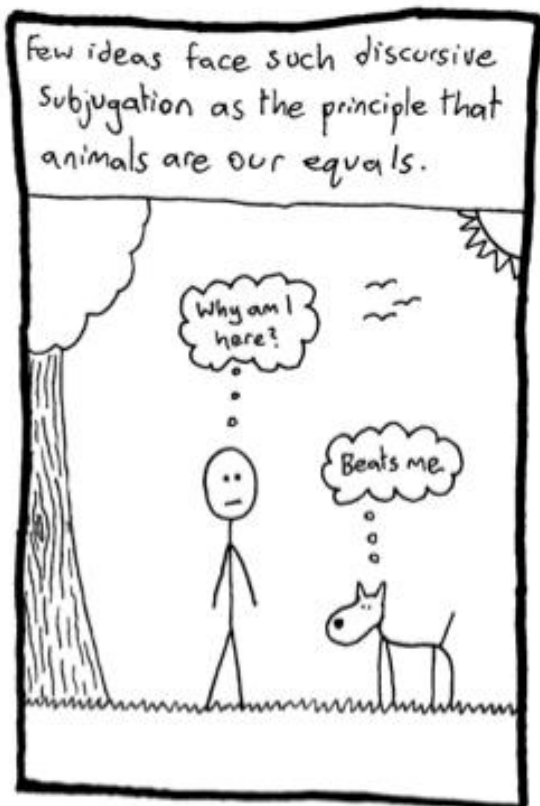
A Queer Approach to Speciesism

Nathan Stephens Griffin¹

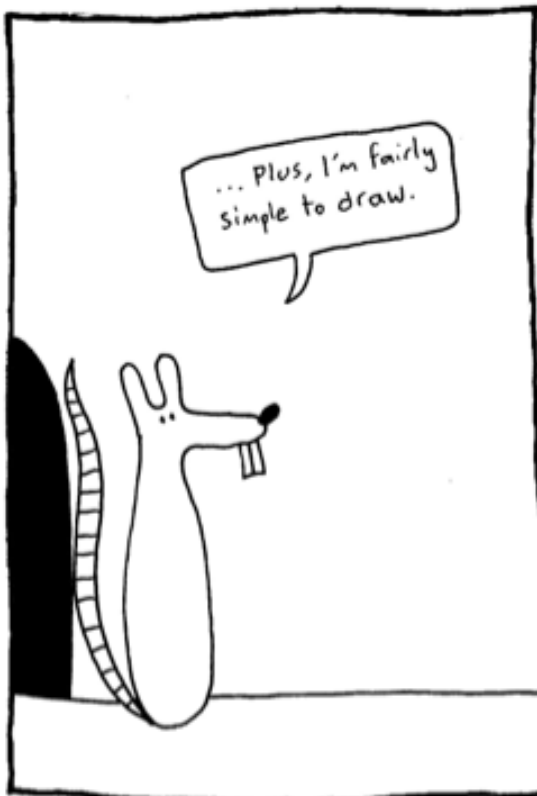
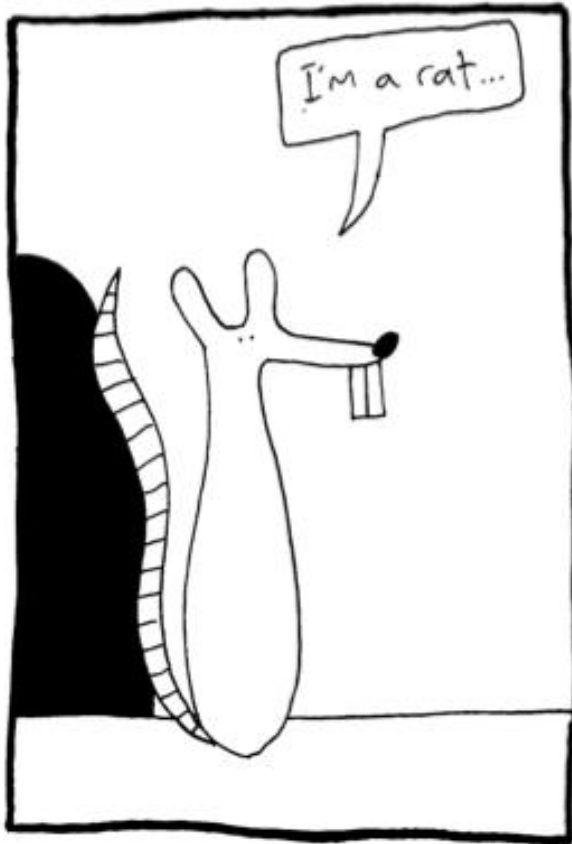
This comic is an experiment and a provocation. We have seen the effective use of visual methods and visual modes of representation in academia, but there are many avenues we have yet to fully explore. As Critical Animal Studies scholars, it is vital we scrutinise the assumptions and entrenched practices of our own discipline and the methods we use to communicate our ideas and represent our findings. We must engage in an ongoing process of reflexivity. Hopefully this piece gives some indication of the potential of comics in an academic context, particularly within the field of Critical Animal Studies.

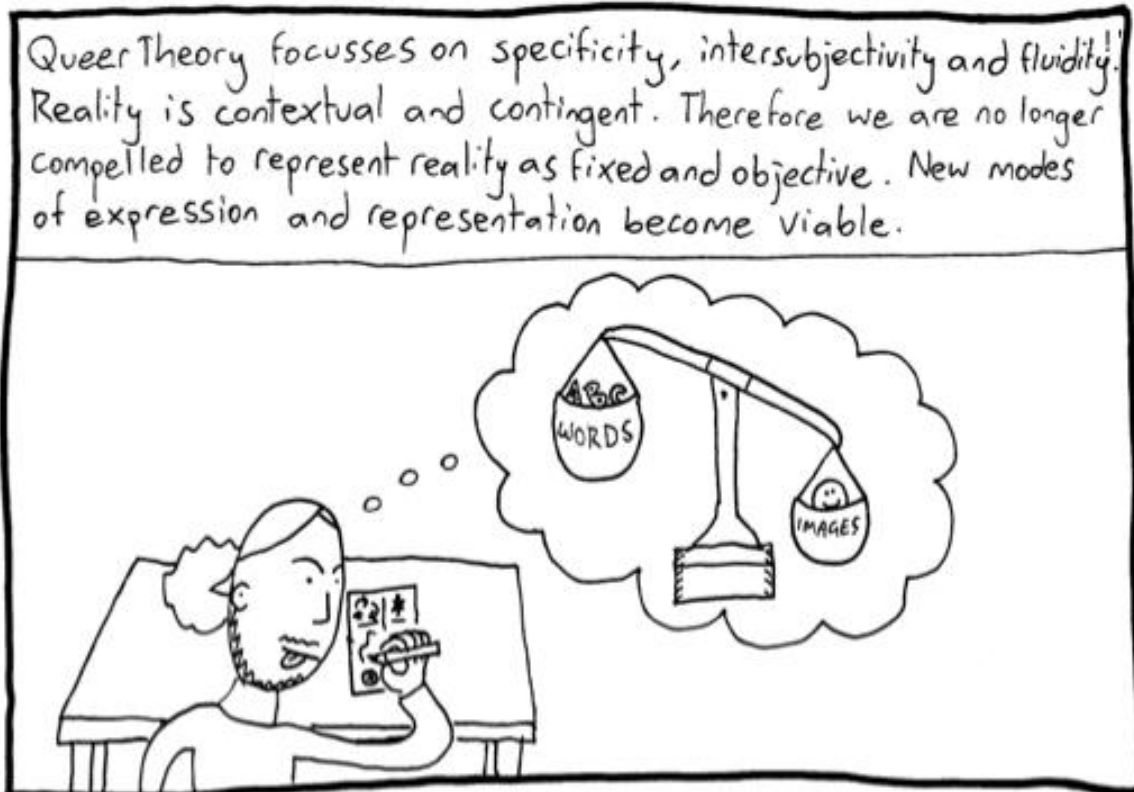


¹ Nathan Stephens Griffin is a second year PhD student based at Durham university. His research interests include animal rights activism, veganism, queer theory, autoethnography, critical animal studies, critical pedagogy, intersectionality and comics in social research. E-mail n.d.s.griffin@durham.ac.uk .









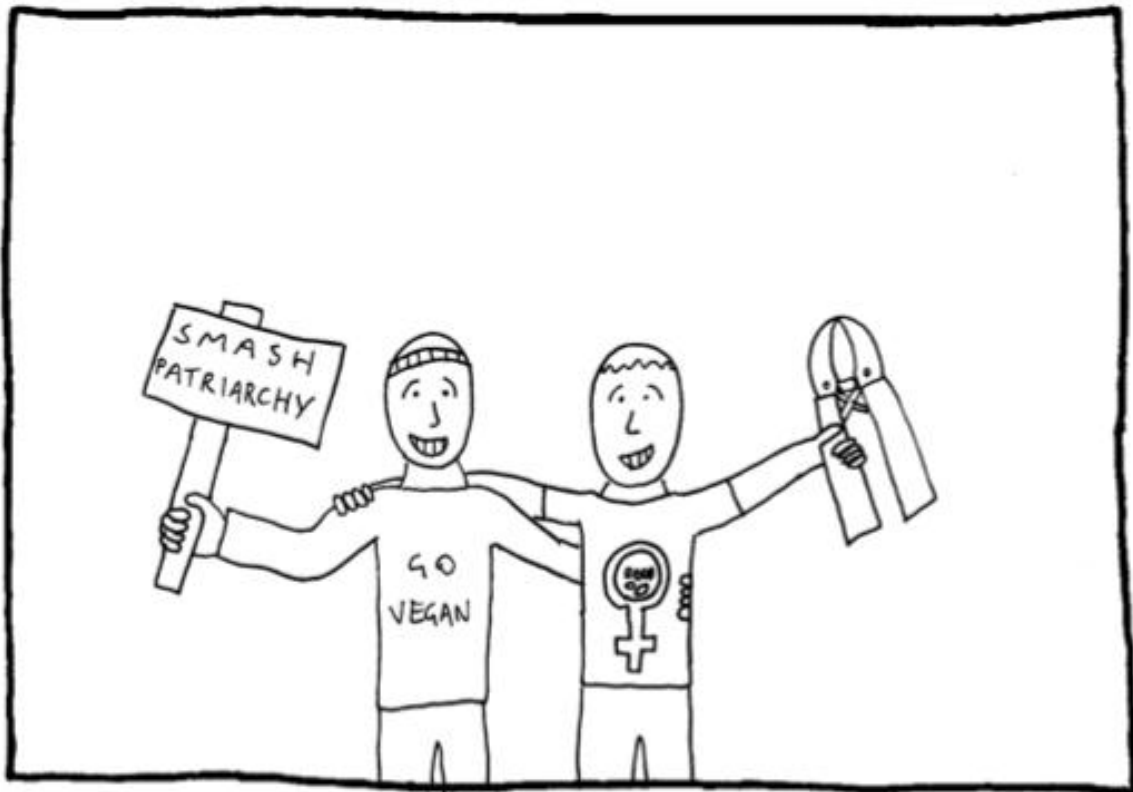
Consequently, many Queer theorists deal in abstraction. Their work is regarded as being too far from 'reality'. Thus, tension has arisen between Queer Theory and more praxis focussed critical movements, who see it as irrelevant waffle... sometimes.

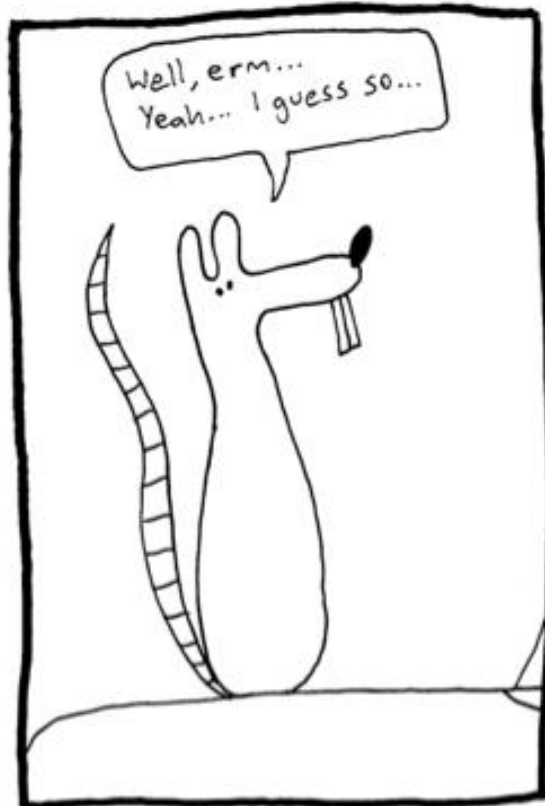
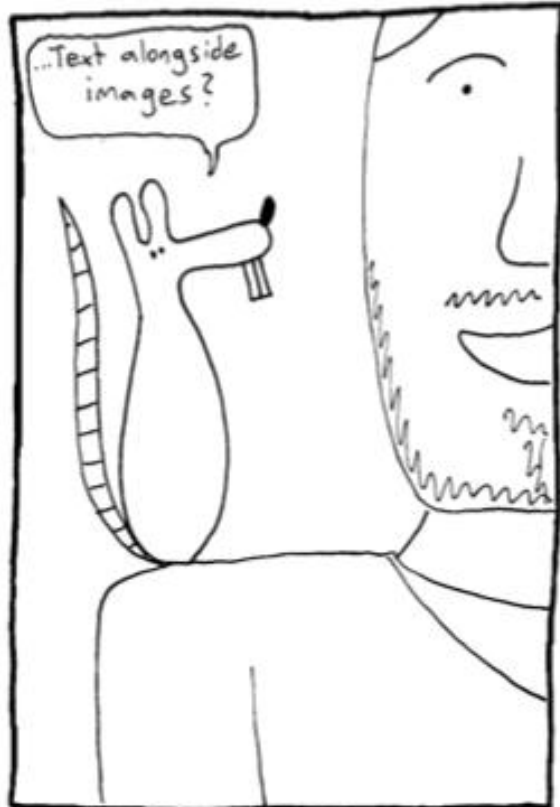


But abstract conceptual work creates new knowledge and ways of thinking. Radical activism benefits from the critical interrogation which a Queer analysis can provide.



Grassroots activists are often skeptical about the relevance of other struggles to their own. But an intersectional approach requires us to recognize the interconnectedness of differing forms of oppression, and to unify against them.







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FILM REVIEWS

The Rise of the Planet of the Apes (2011)¹

Reviewed by Jennifer Grubbs²

The radicalization of Caesar as a queer text of liberation

The 2011 film, “Rise of the Planet of the Apes” dramatizes the plight of primates in captivity. Specifically, the film focuses on the vivisection industry and its conflation with tropes of heroism and the ability to induce, monitor, and treat illness in *other-than-human* animals. Regardless of the intention of the filmmakers, the film utilizes an ecofeminist care ethic to queer anthropocentric constructs of revolution and animal liberation. The following analysis will interrogate the ways in which the film portrays Caesar’s (Andy Serkis) radicalization from the newborn offspring of a chimpanzee murdered by her vivisectors to the leader of a nonviolent primate revolution.

The film opens with the violent capture of primates by poachers in the Congo. The scene relies on emotion, focusing on the scared primates as they attempt to flee. The filmmakers take the audience on the journey of the primates, from the jungle to the vivisectors. We are introduced to a female chimpanzee as she is transported from her cage to the presentation room where researcher, Will Rodman (James Franco), is going to discuss medical advances from his clinical study. Rodman, the lead researcher in a clinical trial for Alzheimer’s disease medication, has been working with the chimpanzees for several years. While being

¹ 20th Century Fox Film Corporation, 105min

² Jennifer Grubbs can be contacted at jennygrubbs@gmail.com

transported from the cage to the presentation room the chimpanzee begins to show aggression. After a brief confrontation between the building employees and chimpanzee, she is brutally shot dead by the security guards. Rodman discovers that the chimpanzee had birthed a baby and was hiding it in her cage. The aggression was actually protection, and the mother feared she would be separated from her infant.

Rodman feels an obligation to this particular chimpanzee, which he names Caesar, and commits to raise him at home. The film focuses Caesar as he ages through childhood and bonds with Rodman and his father, Charles (John Lithgow). Caesar's growth is depicted as an anthropomorphic transformation. Caesar is dressed in pants, and as the years progress, he also wears a sweater. His bedroom is decorated as a child's playroom with artwork and toys. He eats meals at the table with the family and communicates through sign language. As a tactic of empathy, the film successfully develops Caesar's character into a human-like figure that we are to identify with. Empathy, as articulated by ecofeminists such as Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan (2007) and Marti Kheel (2008), are emotions we are to trust. Thus, the emotions elicited when we see Caesar struggle, or feel pain, remains central throughout his radicalization. The seemingly hegemonic narrative of Caesar's transformation is challenged however with a trip to the Redwoods. Caesar notices a dog being led on a leash similar to the one Caesar is required to wear in public. After he refuses to put on the leash, Caesar asks, "What is Caesar?" Rodman takes Caesar to the laboratory and tells him about his past, including the murder of his mother. Rodman also explains that the facility Caesar was born in houses thousands of primates that are experimented on. In response, Caesar turns away in pain.

The second turning point in Caesar's radicalization relies on an emotional response to Charles being harassed in the street. Caesar, enraged by the abusive neighbor screaming at Rodman's father, breaks out of the house and bites off the neighbor's finger. Caesar is shaken by the encounter and appears embarrassed when he looks up and notices fearful onlookers. Charles embraces Caesar and the two retreat toward home. In the following scene, Caesar is violently locked in an animal control center. The film pays detailed attention to the ways in which animal control centers manipulate public perception through performance. The facility disguises its abuse through the presentation of a playroom for the primates. Behind the doors however, are hundreds of cages and severely abused primates. Caesar is skeptical during his interaction with the painted landscapes in the communal room, and is led through a ceiling tunnel to his isolated cage. The audience is cued into the manipulative public performance of the animal control center and shown the violent reality. The reality includes hundreds of caged primates, abusive handlers that use electrocution rods, and brief sessions where animals can interact. Caesar's imprisonment in the animal control center is ultimately the central part of his radicalization.

While Caesar is being held, Rodman's clinical study and vivisection are reinstated. We are shown how primates are tranquilized and taken from the animal control center and used in Rodman's vivisection lab. Caesar is exposed to the grim reality for primates in animal control: eventual exportation to the vivisection lab. The film utilizes anthropocentric communication when displaying Caesar's friendship with an orangutan who speaks sign language. Caesar is developing trusting relationships with primates while simultaneously realizing the oppression inflicted through speciesist relations with humans. This shift in allegiance becomes clear when Caesar erases the chalked window he drew on the wall of his cage that had resembled his bedroom.

Caesar denounces his anthropomorphized behaviors, abandoning his clothing, sign language, and turning away from Rodman after he attempts to pay off the control center for his release. The radicalization of Caesar is complete when he utters “no” in response to the abusive workers at the facility. It is not until Caesar speaks that we are to realize his rise to leadership. This is a departure from the film’s queering of species privilege. Until this point, the audience is presented the moral dilemmas of suffering, loss, and moral obligations to stop primate abuse. When Caesar speaks, he becomes the animal *exception*. No other primate is shown to speak, but we are to assume they suffer nonetheless. However, the film concentrates on Caesar’s ability to motivate, inspire, and organize an uprising of primates held in various oppressive industries.

He is only able to lead the revolution because he has been injected with human drugs. Thus, it was human intervention that allowed him the potential to revolt. It is his advanced cognitive capacity, facilitated by the Alzheimer’s disease medication that allows him to inspire and mobilize primates enslaved in various industries. This reliance however, is challenged when the revolt moves beyond the animal control center. As an anti-speciesist scholar, I have taken many liberties in research papers to explain the commodified cruelty of animals. Whether it is lengthy descriptions of industrialized rape or the violent dismembering factories, I always make space to create those absent windows into animal industries. The film, in a similar way, spans the primate revolution to include scenes from zoos, research labs, toxicity testing facilities, and so on. In this sense, the film supports an anti-speciesist politic that goes beyond Caesar, Rodman’s laboratory, and the animal control center.

The film does several key things. It provides a counter text to the often-romanticized relationships between humans and animals in research laboratories. Films like “*Congo*”

(1995) that propagate primatology as “compassionate science” strategically erase the actual lived experiences (and murder thereof) primates in captivity. “*The Rise of the Planet of the Apes*,” on the other hand, does not serve as an apologist text. The audience is permitted to feel fear while viewing the animal capture during the opening scene. We are expected to experience empathy while watching Caesar’s mother protectively hide her baby from vivisectionists. It is expected that we feel anger toward Rodman as he abandons Caesar in animal control. Lastly, we are meant to feel excitement when we watch the primates revolt against their oppressor. These key emotions serve as a queer text within a trajectory of propagandist media that serves to naturalize vivisection and animal exploitation.

Lastly, the notion of animal liberation is challenged through the portrayal of primate-led revolution. The *rise* of these apes appears to be a queer rendering of animal liberation that does not rely on humans. Rather than portray direct rescues as human-animal altruism or anti-oppression organizing as an anthropocentric concept, this film does something different. Regardless of intention, the film provides a queer reading of animal liberation as human-facilitated-animal-liberation. In this sense, the Hollywood film does for anti-vivisectionists what *Charlotte’s Web* does for many vegans- it reaffirms our disgust with speciesism.

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JCAS: AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established for the purpose of fostering academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies are increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker take a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy.

JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. This journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists to address the important topic of animal liberation. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal for the purpose of facilitating communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal rights movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

Suggested Topics

Papers are welcomed on any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Because a major goal of the *Institute for Critical Animal Studies* is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytic thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminist, activism and academia, Continental philosophy or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention. The following are a few topic suggestions:

The reviewing process

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication. All submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

Manuscript requirements

The manuscript should be in MS WORD format, in 1.5 line spacing and 12 point Times New Roman. Good electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should be run through an American English spell check prior to submission.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words, and have limited endnotes. In exceptional circumstances JCAS will consider publishing extended essays (up to 15,000 words). Authors should supply a brief **abstract** of the paper (of no more than 250 words).

A brief **autobiographical** note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation, e-mail address, and full contact details.

References to other publications must be in Harvard style and carefully checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency.

You should cite publications in the text: (Best, 2006) using the first named author's name or (Best and Nocella, 2006) citing

both names of two, or (Best et al., 2006), when there are three or more authors. At the end of the paper a reference list in alphabetical order should be supplied:

For books: Surname, Initials (year), Title of Book, Publisher, Place of publication. e.g. Gray, J. (2002), *Straw Dogs*, Granta Books: London

For book chapters: Surname, Initials (year), "Chapter title", Editor's Surname, Initials (Ed.), Title of Book, Publisher, Place of publication, pages. E.g. Greenbrier, T. (2006) "Against Civilization, For Reconnection to Life!", in Best, S. and Nocella, A.J. (Eds) *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, AK Press, Oakland, pp. 198-203.

For journals: Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", Journal Name, volume, number, pages. e.g. Cudworth, E. (2008), "'Most Farmers Prefer Blondes': The dynamics of anthroparchy in Animas' becoming meat", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, pp. 32-45.

For published conference proceedings: Surname, Initials (year of publication), "Title of paper", in Surname, Initials (Ed.), Title of published proceeding which may include place and date(s) held, Publisher, Place of publication, Page numbers.

For unpublished conference proceedings: Surname, Initials (year), "Title of paper", paper presented at Name of Conference, date of conference, place of conference, available at: URL if freely available on the internet (accessed date).

For working papers: Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", working paper [number if available], Institution or organization, Place of organization, date.

For encyclopedia entries (with no author or editor): Title of Encyclopedia (year) "Title of entry", volume, edition, Title of Encyclopedia, Publisher, Place of publication, pages.

For newspaper articles (authored): Surname, Initials (year), "Article title", Newspaper, date, pages.

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