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Species Panic: Interspecies Erotics in Post-1900 American Literature

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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Abstract

This project elaborates a concept of “species panic,” a severe and often violently-charged reaction to the notion that one’s privileged species status as a human being is under threat. In this project’s post-1900 American literary archive, species panic is often provoked by nonhuman *eros*, which provokes and threatens the fantasy of human exceptionalism. Theoretically, this project yokes animal studies and posthumanism (Donna Haraway, Dominic Pettman, Kathy Rudy) with queer theory and critical race studies (Mel Y. Chen, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Alexander Weheliye) as its central driving forces. This theoretical backdrop informs my reading of American authors Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Philip K. Dick, Toni Morrison, Linda Hogan, and Joy Harjo. *Species Panic* is divided into five chapters, each of which organizes around a particular species of nonhuman animal: dogs, bulls, androids, cows, and horses. While this project’s first three chapters deal with the yoked constructions of masculinity and (straight white male) humanity, the fourth and fifth chapter dramatize the unique and different experiences of female authors depicting human-animal erotic relations. What I add to the analysis of animal studies thinkers such as Donna Haraway is a sustained focus on interspecies erotics as a cultural driving force, manifested in the panicked literary case studies I explore.

Cumulatively, the texts I analyze show an American literature still threatened by Darwin’s radical intervention in the history of science. In its conclusions, *Species Panic* reveals a threatened human clinging to the husk of species exceptionalism as the closet of animality looms loudly in the backdrop. What my research reveals is that interspecies *eros* is a central and under-analyzed component of thinking around nonhuman animals. I

do not, however, suggest that rejuvenated attention to interspecies and nonhuman *eros* will rehabilitate human-nonhuman relations. Instead, I simply suggest that interspecies *eros*—in all its prickly complexity—must become a central factor in how we think about nonhuman animals. The erotic, this study insists, is a central component of how we interact with, conceive, and construct nonhuman life. But that *eros* is not an intrinsic source of redemption; interspecies erotics remains complex, multifaceted, and mired in panic.

Keywords: American literature; Animal studies; posthumanism; ecocriticism; queer theory; the novel; poetics; Jack London; Ernest Hemingway; Philip K. Dick; Toni Morrison; Linda Hogan; Joy Harjo.

Acknowledgements

My first and biggest thank you goes to my supervisor, Dr. Joshua Schuster. Josh is a dazzling thinker and an energizing intellectual mentor. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive, generous guide through the process of thinking and writing this project.

To my parents and first teachers, Ron Huebert and Elizabeth Edwards: thank you for the crucial advice and unwavering support you've offered throughout my entire intellectual life, including throughout the completion of this PhD. I'd also like to another early teacher: my sister, Rachel Huebert, along with her lovely family.

To my family: Natasha and Rose—thanks for listening, humouring, inspiring, laughing, wrestling for covers, rejuvenating and sustaining me with daily love.

Parts of Chapter Three and Chapter Five of this project were published as articles in *Transgender Studies Quarterly* and *International Studies in Literature and Environment*, respectively. Thanks to the editors, staff, and volunteers.

No dissertation is an island, and this one's just one humble node of an archipelago. So thanks to all my colleagues, peers, and advisers.

Thanks, finally, I'd like to thank my committee members. I've known Dr. Pauline Wakeham and Dr. Matthew Rowlinson since my first term at Western, and they've both been thoughtful readers, tactful advisers, and generally kind human beings through all stages of this degree. University examiner Dr. Servanne Woodward and External Examiner Dr. Molly Wallace have both offered robust and generous readings of this dissertation, and I am deeply grateful to both for their sensitive and generative feedback.

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Introduction: Species of Panic

Nonhuman *eros* is a cross-cultural imaginative force that is central to human psychic and sexual self-understanding. At least as far back as the cave paintings in Chauvet, France (31,000 BP),¹ animals have throbbled hotly through the human imaginary.² Interspecies eroticism has also been a longstanding driver of human literary and symbolic *poesis*. If, as John Berger claims, “the first metaphor was animal” (253), that first animal metaphor was surely encoded with *eros*. Sex and desire have long been species-transgressive urges, siren songs beckoning from the far side of the human. Just as love, in Dominic Pettman’s words, “makes us both more and less than human” (*Creaturely Love* xi), so too have sex and desire long been species-transgressive.

In addition to serving as actual sex and relationship partners (bestiality and zoophilia will be discussed in detail shortly), animals have historically provided a way for many cultures to understand human sexuality. Ancient Greek myth is rife with sexy sirens and centaurs and lecherous fauns, riddled with swans and Ledas, bulls and Europas. The menagerie of Greek myth already tells us that nonhuman *eros* is both violent and enticing, fearful and compelling. But this is not a uniquely Western phenomenon. According to Hani Miletski, interspecies erotics is important to Hindu tradition and “portrayals of human-animal sexual contacts frequently appear in temple sculptures all over India” (*Understanding* 10). Likewise, “Tantrism often portrays man

¹ In their 1996 book *Dawn of Art: The Chauvet Cave*, Jean-Marie Chauvet, Eliette Brunel Deschamps, and Christian Hillaire explain that “statistical estimates” based on radiocarbon dating of the Chauvet paintings identify a “timespan of 1300 years, centered on 31,000 years ago” (122). Almost twice as old as the famous Lascaux caves, this discovery was enormously surprising when it was made in 1993.

² In this study I generally use the term “animal” as a shorthand for “nonhuman animal.” I tend to use the clunkier “nonhuman animal” only when it is necessary for highly technical distinctions.

as a rabbit, bull, or horse, and the woman as a doe, or mare, or female elephant” (Miletski, *Understanding* 10). The Ancient Chinese story of the silkworm horse describes a girl who marries a stallion before turning into a silkworm after her father skins the horse (Birrell 199). A cautionary tale, this story simultaneously indulges the fantasy of and prohibits the act of interspecies coupling—this doubleness turns out to be endemic to the species panic genre. The Indigenous traditions of Turtle Island are also rife with interspecies *eros*. Take, for example, the Tlingit story of “The Woman Who Married the Bear” or the Skidi Pawnee story of a man who marries and reproduces with a “deer-maiden” (Snyder 171; Dorsey 280).³ One need not dig too deep through the weeds of contemporary popular culture to locate the pulse and throb of nonhuman *eros*: think *King Kong*, *Grizzly Man*, *Twilight*, *The Little Mermaid*. Still not satisfied? If you dare, behold the thousands and thousands of examples at your fingertips in the great collective sexual unconscious of websites like Pornhub and Xvideos. There you’ll find vast menageries of toon porn, tentacle porn, monster porn, creature porn, robot porn—enough interspecies erotics to fuel millennia of panic. Start looking across human culture for examples of interspecies *eros* and you’ll find it everywhere.

Human ideas of love and sex have long been negotiated through encounters with, and fantasies about, the nonhuman. But the suggestion of nonhuman sexuality tends to make people uncomfortable. Midas Dekkers phrases this tension as an iteration of what Gary Francione calls the general “moral schizophrenia” of human relations to animals (68): “The high regard in which love for animals is held is matched only by the

³ Acknowledging that this overview is problematic—particularly in its deployment of extra-traditional historians and anthropologists such as Snyder and Dorsey—I mobilize such research here only to provide some schematic evidence for my central point about the cross-cultural ubiquity of interspecies *eros*.

fierceness of the taboo of having sex with them” (Dekker 1).⁴ While it is useful as a limit condition of panic, zoophilia is only one node on the broader spectrum of interspecies erotics I examine throughout this study. Dekker’s succinct paradox opens the broad chasm between animal lovers and animal *lovers*. Much as we might openly love animals in the sense of affection, the shadow of animal sexuality remains a closeted and panic-provoking underside of that love. Interspecies erotics, broadly defined as a spectrum of intimacy from coitus to care, is a howling repression at the heart of modern American culture, and this dissertation seeks to unpack some of the phobias that have buried animal sexuality in the darkest closets of the literary psyche.

The primary term of this study, “species panic,” describes the common literary trope of a severe and often violently charged reaction to the notion that one’s privileged species status as a human being is under threat. If you’ve ever tried to explain why you’re vegetarian to a table of anxious carnivores, you’ve probably witnessed their species panic. If you’ve accused someone of treating you like an animal, you know species panic. If you’ve laughed uncomfortably at what a farmer might do with his chicken or his sheep, you’ve known species panic. If you’ve let a dog lick your face and blushed or trembled at the suggestion behind a vigorous crotch-sniff, you’ve known species panic. If you shift in your chair when I tell you that as of 2016 bestiality is legal in Canada as long as it’s non-penetrative or that as of 2018 zoophilia porn is legal in every American state except Oregon (Garcia np; Wisch np), you’ve known species

⁴ Dekker is far from the only person to have noted this paradox around the bestiality taboo. Kathy Rudy explores this tension in her article “LGBTQ...Z?”, and in his book *Human Error* Dominic Pettman notes that “the prevalence of human-animal ‘husbandry’ in Greek myths, Indian sculptures, Japanese woodcuts, surrealist literature, or the fantasies of American housewives has not made bestiality any less of a universal taboo” (79).

panic. Recently, species panic has rocked American public discourse most memorably through sites such as zoonotic diseases like HIV-AIDS, Ebola, and SARS (Shukin 205), and the question of gay marriage. In large part, *Species Panic* will tell you what you already know: that animal *eros* is all around us, that we live alongside animal sex, and that we would prefer nonhuman sexuality to remain unmentioned.

In his foundational text *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida offers a case study of species panic through the oral/literary form of the anecdote. Meditating on what it might mean for a human and a cat to confront each other's nakedness, Derrida describes a latently erotic and overtly panicked encounter; a man stands naked in front of a cat, wondering about his potential "perversity" and feeling "a shame that is ashamed of itself" (7, 9). The coupling of bare animal bodies in an enclosed space and a profound resultant shame suggests that Derrida's discomfort arises from the possibility of a transgression of the bestiality taboo.⁵ Although Derrida's thinking attempts to traverse the apparently unbridgeable gap between feline and human perceptual experience, he confronts the "abyssal limit of the human" at the suggestion of interspecies desire (12). Derrida's "malaise" (4), then, insofar as it emerges from the anxious interface between sexual and species identification, offers a clear diagnosis of species panic.

The central argument of this study is that erotics broadly defined—a spectrum including pleasure, affection, sexuality, intimacy, desire, romance, love, care, empathy, and friendship among other affective and physical manifestations—characterizes relationships with nonhuman animals in American literature after 1900, and that these erotic interspecies bonds tend to be saturated by panic. Examining American literature

⁵ For an insightful analysis and critique of the bestiality taboo from the perspective of queer theory, see Kathy Rudy's article "LGBTQ...Z?"

that emerges in the context of the post-Darwinian shift in the United States' cultural understanding of species existence, I show how American fiction and poetry throughout the twentieth century and beyond dramatizes a panicked and fascinated response to the new, malleable concept of species being. When human exceptionalism under siege, literature bucks, squirms, and bolts through the stages of species panic.

One of the primary functions of species panic—and how it became an interest for me as a literary phenomenon—is its ubiquity as a narrative trope, particularly in twentieth-century American literature. H.P. Lovecraft's evolutionist horror story "Arthur Jermyn," first published in 1921, offers a prototypical literary exemplar of species panic. After learning that he is descended from a race of "strange hybrid creatures" who live in the depth of the Congolese jungle (50), the story's eponymous protagonist kills himself via self-immolation (47). Lovecraft's "exaltation of supreme horror" derives from Arthur Jermyn's recognition of his relation to a "mummified white ape of some unknown species, less hairy than any recorded variety, and infinitely nearer mankind" (55). Species panic, here, emerges not from the sexual threat of radical animal alterity but from the proximity of animality signalled by an evolutionary fringe figure. This "stuffed goddess" is also crucially female (55), and the story's suggestion is that Jermyn's great-grandfather reproduced with her, making Jermyn's abject horror into a kind of trans-generational sexual regret. Part of the racial/species horror of the story is, of course, sexual and reproductive: the fearful primal scene of human-animal copulation that links human and apes through a common ancestor. During the Darwinian hangover of the early twentieth century, many writers, including Lovecraft, articulated a panicked and

horrified, while curious and amazed, negotiation with the “beast within.”⁶ In the study to follow, Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* offers the clearest parallel to Lovecraft in his reckonings with an ancient humanoid primate who appears hauntingly and thrillingly in the psyche of London’s canine protagonist, Buck. Lovecraft’s tale as a whole grapples with Darwin’s fearful revelation that animals are much more closely related to humans than we’d previously thought, exacerbating that anxiety through the suggestion that the bridge between humans and animals is sexual and erotic. Lovecraft’s tale demonstrates an exemplary case of the species panic pattern: species-transgressive desire leading to sex causing monstrous procreation that eventually leads to horror at the latent animality of the human, culminating in violent self-destruction.

What I will not do in this dissertation, though it would be entirely possible,⁷ is offer a litany of literary cases that follow this basic pattern. Instead, this study will show how various formations of interspecies erotics—from Jack London’s jubilant but racially problematic dog love to the question of android erotic agency in Philip K. Dick and the fraught erotics of dairy in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*—provoke unique and nuanced iterations of species panic. The diverse case studies I explore also demonstrate moments when interspecies *eros* is not horrific or violent. Friendship, companionship, loyalty, affinity, mutual respect—these are just a few of the more nonthreatening facets of interspecies love explored in this study. Chapter 5, in particular, offers a quieter vision of

⁶ The “beast within” is the common English translation of the title of Emile Zola’s 1890 naturalist novel *La bête humaine*. In America, writers who explored this theme between 1890 and 1950 include Frank Norris (*McTeague*), Jack London (*The Seawolf*), Edgar Rice Burroughs (*Tarzan*), as well as Lovecraft. For a more detailed account of the “discourse of the jungle” in this era (Lundblad 1), see Michael Lundblad’s 2013 book *The Birth of a Jungle* (Oxford University Press).

⁷ Such a study of the rote iterations of species panic could perhaps work through Mary Rowlandson’s *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson*, Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Black Cat,” Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood*, and Dennis Johnson’s 2011 novella *Train Dreams*.

interspecies compassion and care, particularly in the poetry of Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan. Though panic is the general focus of this study, there is genuine and edifying compassion and care in species-transgressive erotic relations, and panic can be softer, gentler, and more complex than the extreme instance Lovecraft offers. Species panic, moreover, does not need to emerge from explicit trans-species sex. One of the assets of literature is its affinity with the suggested, the unsaid; part of the power of the species panic complex emerges from the shadows and closets. Animals, as literary generators, often denote an urgent, visceral, and crucially embodied symbolic presence—a metaphorical presence so powerful, as in Hemingway’s bulls, that the unspoken *eros* bleeds and drips off the page.

By now it should be clear what this study assumes: that there is no such thing as an autonomous species, therefore no such thing as a coherent humanness. Following Anat Pick, I do “not set out to show what is after all by now accepted wisdom, that the distinctions between humans and animals are conceptually and materially indecisive” (1). Rather than arguing that “man descended from animals and remains still animal” (Grosz, *Becoming Undone* 13), I take this premise as a starting point.⁸ Humanity is a status claimed by those with the power and privilege to claim it. This study derives its theoretical foundations from Charles Darwin’s claim, in *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), that “species are not immutable” (98). Like Darwin,

⁸ In his 2008 book *Zoographies*, Mathew Calarco still feels the need to “defend” the claim that “*the human-animal distinction can no longer and ought no longer to be maintained*” (3). By 2011, when Anat Pick publishes *Creaturely Poetics*, such a claim seems to be self-evident, at least within animal studies. Pick asserts as “accepted wisdom” the fact that “the distinctions between humans and animals are conceptually and materially indecisive” (1).

who marvelled in mutation and was far more interested in fringes than cores,⁹ I tend to look at the slippery membranes and interstices of species being. An equally germane fertilizer for the soil of my own thinking is Donna Haraway's more recent formulation, riffing on Bruno Latour: "we have never been human" (*When Species Meet* 165). What I add to the flourish of theory and scholarship inspired by Darwin and Haraway is a protracted focus on *eros*. I maintain that species definition is erotically negotiated, and that our relations to nonhuman animals, particularly companion animals, are permeated by *eros*.

My turn to nonhuman *eros* as a generative site for thinking is not entirely new. Writers like Donna Haraway (*When Species Meet*), Marjorie Garber (*Dog Love*), Kathy Rudy (*Loving Animals*), Michael Lundblad (*The Birth of a Jungle*), and Dominic Pettman (*Creaturely Love*), have already done excellent work towards liberating human sexuality from the dominion of homospecies norms. Riding on the wings and haunches of these excellent thinkers, I aim to show 1) that interspecies *eros* has been much more present in the biozoopolitics of human/nonhuman society and sexuality than is usually thought, and 2) that this already-widespread system of interspecies *eros* need not be radical or liberating. Like any formation of *eros*, interspecies erotics is by turns complex and problematic, beautiful and energizing, prickly and panicked, banal and sublime.

⁹ As Timothy Morton notes, the reader can "detect Darwin's amazement" as he describes the deep-time intersecting and overlapping of all forms of life (28), what Morton characterizes as "[t]he mesh" (30). Morton, here, is referring specifically to Darwin's bombastic explanation of the "truly wonderful fact" that "all animals and all plants throughout all time and all space should be related to each other" (Darwin, *Origins* 176).

Lexical Specimens

The term “species” is a slippery fish. Deriving from the Latin “*specere*”, meaning “to look” and “to behold” (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 17), the word’s most familiar meaning is “[a] class composed of individuals having some common qualities or characteristics, frequently as a subdivision of a larger class or genus” (“species,” def 8). First and foremost, species is the basic unit or rank of biological taxonomy. As John S. Wilkins explains in his 2009 book *Species: The History of the Idea*,¹⁰ the concept began, in Aristotle’s *History of Animals*, as a unit of “*universal taxonomy*” before developing “a uniquely biological flavor around the seventeenth century” (9).¹¹ Riding the coattails of zoologists like Comte de Buffon and Carl Linnaeus, Charles Darwin shaped the modern concept of speciation in his ground-breaking 1859 study *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Although Wilkins asserts that “Darwin and his followers” (5), surprisingly enough, “did not add much to the species debate” (5), he affirms that Darwin’s main contribution was to “raise in sharp relief problems brought about by the notion of speciation and the subsequent mutability of classifications” (5). The first modern species panic came in the virulent response of creationists to Darwin’s work, on which subject Thomas Henry Huxley wryly noted that “if a general council of the church scientific had been held” in 1860 (624), Darwin “would have been condemned by an overwhelming majority” (624). Darwin himself struggled to define precisely what he meant by the term “species,” eventually conceding that while no definition “has as yet

¹⁰ Wilkins’ book provides a dense and rigid overview of the history of the concept “species” from Aristotle to the present.

¹¹ In his 2014 book *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science*, Armand Marie Leroi notes that “many of Aristotle’s kinds can be convincingly identified with modern species, among them: dogs *in toto*, horses, two cicadas, four woodpeckers, six sea urchins and humans” (104).

satisfied all naturalists” nonetheless “every naturalist knows vaguely what he means when he speaks of a species” (*Origin* 122). Intrinsically slippery, the term “species” is a placeholder, a murky lexical terrain, its own entangled bank.

Practically speaking, Darwin does deploy a coherent understanding of the term “species,” and that definition has everything to do with sex. What defines members of one species is “aversion to interbreeding” while what creates species difference is “mutual sterility” (Wilkins 158; Darwin, *Variation* 172). Darwin’s shifting understanding of species culminated towards the end of his life in a “‘snowflake’ theory of species” according to which “all members are alike in some ways, but they are also unique individuals” (Wilkins 158). However, “there is a difference between denying that the *rank* of species has a definition and denying that the *term species* has one. Darwin denies the former, but not the latter” (Wilkins 158). Darwin was what Wilkins calls a “species realist” (158); though he denied the “absolute rank of Linnaean classification” in theory, he nonetheless “used it in practise” (Wilkins 158). Contemporary scientists still have trouble defining the term “species,” and most prefer “speciation” (Howard and Berlocher v), a late-Darwinian term that emphasizes the plastic and procedural nature of biological interaction as commonly understood according to the widely accepted Modern Synthesis theory.¹² Like Darwin, I regard the term “species” as a messy approximation. *Species Panic* takes for granted, and depends on, the fluidity of species being. So I proceed from an innate terminological tension: while this study will maintain an intentionally slippery notion of the term “species,” this term’s primary meaning will be

¹² The term “Modern Synthesis” was coined and disseminated by Ernst Mayr in his 1963 work *Animal Species and Evolution*. Modern Synthesis theory links evolutionary theory with genomics and the study of DNA, integrating the work of “specialized disciplines” such as “natural history, systematics, paleontology, ecology, and other areas” (Carroll 54-55).

understood as the basic unit of biological taxonomization, as impermanent and multi-faceted “kinds.”

My sense of “species” as an intrinsically self-transgressive and entangled field of embodiment hums and thrums with queerness and *eros*. It is far from incidental that Foucauldian “*bio-power*” emerges when humanity or “Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world” (Foucault 143, 142), evolving in terms of self-conceptualization from an Aristotelean political animal to “an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being into question” (Foucault 143). The question of speciation is an under-remarked aspect of Foucault’s famous declaration that as of 1870—11 years after the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*—“the homosexual was now a species” (43). It is no coincidence that among Foucault’s more “minor perverts” he names “Krafft-Ebing’s zoophiles” (43). Alongside Foucault’s homosexuals, zoophilia emerges from the shadows of speciation.

But—though I do explore the subject—*Species Panic* is not a project about zoophilia. Rather, my sense of interspecies erotics hinges on a broad understanding of the terms “eros” and “erotics,” drawing on the Ancient Greek sense of *eros* as “love” (“Eros,” n., def 1). Far from limited to genital acts, “eros” here reflects a semantic continuum including intimacies, desires, loves, and sex of all types. The erotic, as I use this term, is a force of connection and desire through which we strive to enter, empathize with, and affectively inhabit others, both in sex and the libidinal complex that surrounds and enfolds the sex-love continuum.

A foundational theoretical premise of this project is that interspecies erotics is on some level queer, that is non-normative. Using the sense of “across” that underpins Eve

Sedgwick’s sense of the word “queer” (*Tendencies* xii) and the prefix “trans-” (Hayward 258) as a motif, this study undertakes a series of theoretical crossings, reading across and between animals, humans, species, fictions, poetics, methodologies, bodies, organisms, sexualities, and machines. I use the word “queer,” then, in these two primary senses: 1) to refer to humans and animals who practise, embody, or self-identify through non-normative sexualities, and 2) as a crosswise pulse running through texts and objects, artifacts and people, that renders things peculiar.¹³

One of the reasons interspecies erotics are definitively queer is that the obverse side of the bestiality taboo is an often unspoken regulatory ideal that human sexuality should be enforced through a norm I call “homospecies sexuality.” Within the species, heterosexuality is enforced as a rigid norm that insists on sleeping with someone with different genitals. Hence what is deemed by Freud and others to be pathological about homosexuality—the sexual desire for the same (Freud, *Three Essays* 2)¹⁴—is a normative requirement at the level of species sexuality, which militates against the desire to sleep with what is different. With its obvious sonic resonance of “homo,” the term “homospecies sexuality” also demonstrates the shiftiness and fragility of sexual norms and codes. Although Western and other cultures enforce heterosexual sex within the

¹³ These senses, the political and the theoretical, both owe much to Mel Y. Chen’s rigorous genealogy of the word “queer” in *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012). In this book, Chen offers a robust historicization of the term “queer,” thinking deep and critically about its “masterly slipperiness, its aporetic quandaries” (59). Ultimately, Chen asks “what might remain of today’s *queer*’s enduring potencies” (59), a question this project gathers and carries as it travels through the variously potent and impotent queer aesthetics of interspecies erotics through, alongside, and against dominant discourses of species normativity.

¹⁴ While Freud notes that the sexual objects of what he calls “*absolute* inverts” are “exclusively of their own sex” (*Three Essays* 2), he later hypothesizes that “the sexual object is not someone of the same sex but someone who combines the characters of both sexes” (*Three Essays* 10). Throughout his discussion of “inversion” in the first of the *Three Essays*, Freud repeatedly affirms that homosexuality can play out through various, complex psychological figurations. Inversion remains, though, a pathological condition rooted in some aberration from the development of a “normal” heterosexual compartment.

species, they simultaneously enforce homospecies sex and in so doing covertly define the human as, at least partly, a sexually-constituted subject.

Though this is the socio-political backdrop into which it enters, *Species Panic* is not a sexological study but a literary one, dealing not with actual sex but with the fantasies, analogues, diversions, and suggestions of literary psycho-sexual exploration. In narrative and poetry, this vision of the sexual subject gets defined with and against nonhuman *eros*. In the literary archive I analyze, the grapplings of *eros* sometimes take place through direct literary representations of zoophilia. More often—partly because species panic is an outgrowth of the suggested, the closet, the unsaid—animal *eros* forms and informs human sexual self-understanding through its role as accoutrement and dressage in the realm of literary fantasy. One of the notable traits of literary animal *eros* is that it is an enormously suggestive force; the less directly nonhuman sexuality is actually spoken in literature, the more prominent and forceful that *eros* becomes as a literary device.

My final point about interspecies erotics is that simply reaching out to animals in the Frankensteinian animation of writing is often an act of love. Though nonhuman-oriented writing wanders a plurality of possible affective-generic paths from panic to mourning to curiosity, we often begin to write about animals because we love them. Of course human love of nonhuman animals includes many of the complexities of human-human *eros* as well as many unique aspects and matrices. The erotic impetus to write the animal need not be an edifying form of love—it can be fraught, anxious, confused, jealous, and any of the other less charismatic facets of *eros*. Nonetheless, one of the reasons why animal studies and queer theory have made steady bedfellows is that there is

also an *eros* driving animal studies and animal-friendly thinking more generally. In *The Descent of Man*, Charles Darwin writes that “disinterested love for all living creatures” is “the most noble attribute of man” (151), and since Darwin the disciplines of ethology, biology, naturalism, and more recently animal studies in the humanities have been driven by intimacy and *eros*.¹⁵ Darwin defined the human as a creature-loving animal. Isn't it pretty to think so?

The Flesh-Out: Forms of Panic

“I tried to imagine frog-love, its possible pleasures, its oozy raptures, but I turned my mind violently away, for in the imagining I felt something petty and cruel, something in the nature of violation.”

—Stephen Millhauser, “A Visit” 39

In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), novelist Amitav Ghosh wonders how the nonhuman and the human ever came to be thought of as separate: “the real mystery in relation to the agency of nonhumans lies not in the

¹⁵ Jane Goodall writes that “there have been Gombe chimpanzees whom I have most truly loved” and that she has “deeply loved several dogs” (439, 438). John Berger describes Comte de Buffon’s shift from Cartesian dualism to modern zoology as “tenderness” (255). Edward O. Wilson speaks of the naturalist as a “romantic voyager” and defines the biologist’s vocation as grounded in “biophilia” (13, 1). Timothy Morton bases his framework for “the ecological thought” on an imperative towards “intimacy” with “the strange stranger [nonhuman beings]” (135), concluding that the ecological thought is “like true love” (135). Helen Macdonald opens her bestselling 2014 falconing memoir, *H is for Hawk*, by discussing “a landscape [she’s] come to love very much indeed” (3). Examples proliferate, as do fascinating overlaps between the genres of naturalism and the literary romance plot, such as Alyssa York’s *The Naturalist* (Random House 2016) and Andrea Barrett’s story “Wonders of the Shore,” anthologized in *Best American Stories 2016*.

renewed recognition of it, but rather in how this awareness came to be suppressed in the first place (65). Ghosh proceeds to argue that “Literary forms have clearly played an important, perhaps critical, part in the process” (65). For Ghosh, the development of the human-nonhuman schism—one symptom of a larger scientific tendency towards the “partitioning” of nature from culture (71)—has roots in the tradition of the bourgeois-realist novel, a form whose mimetic impulse reflected the gradualism (vs. catastrophism) touted by the architects of capitalist imperialism.¹⁶ The realistic novel, its focus turned inward to reflect the human moral struggle, emerged in tandem with geology, probability, and other modern sciences and worked alongside the technoscientific worldview to create the metahistorical fiction of a human experience lived apart from nonhuman, inert nature.¹⁷ The novel, in other words, has been paramount to the creation of a worldview that sees the human as an exemplary creature—a worldview that has also brought human civilization into peril through the accelerated processes of anthropogenic climate change.¹⁸ One of the things *Species Panic* demonstrates, though, is that even as the novel was, throughout the twentieth century, busily building a façade of human

¹⁶ While I am generally on the same page as Ghosh, his book has a tendency to sensationalize and oversimplify. Take, for example, his well-intentioned but overstated claim that all fiction involving nonhuman life is ghettoized as science fiction or climate fiction: “Inasmuch as the nonhuman was written about at all, it was not within the mansion of serious fiction but rather in the outhouses to which science fiction and fantasy” (66). Such a claim suggests a willful ignorance regarding an American canon (Ghosh elsewhere references *Moby-Dick*) that is a veritable parade of fauna, from Poe’s cats and Raven’s to Hemingway’s bulls and marlins to Melville’s iconic literary whale. I would argue, actually, that a profusion of nonhuman life is one of the presences that links almost all the most famous works of American literature.

¹⁷ Ghosh summarizes this fascinating history on pages 16-22 of *The Great Derangement*, writing, for instance, that this correlation “is why *Time’s Arrow*, *Time’s Cycle*, Stephen Jay Gould’s brilliant study of the geological theories of gradualism and catastrophism, is, in essence, a study of narrative” (19).

¹⁸ Ghosh’s point, here, is forceful and troubling: “I have come to recognize that the challenges that climate change poses for the contemporary writer, although specific in some respects, are also broader and older; that they derive ultimately from the grid of literary forms and conventions that came to shape the narrative imagination in precisely that period when the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere was rewriting the destiny of the earth” (7).

exceptionalism, it was also grappling with the fissures in that façade, opening peep holes through which to glimpse the puny, naked animal behind the curtain. Literature has long been a tale of the fraught, messy, ecstatic, and panicked romance of human-nonhuman erotic encounter.

The five chapters to follow explore literary archives of interspecies erotics and species panic. My methodological turn to literature is largely motivated by the fact that interspecies erotics is one of the most prominent and least acknowledged undercurrents in American literature. As Mary Allen notes, “*An astonishing number of actual animals play impressive roles in American literature. No other national literature makes them so important*” (10). As long as there have been animals in American literature, there has also been interspecies erotics—from William Bradford’s seventeenth-century reports of animal buggery to Edgar Allen Poe’s panicked cat-lovers and eroticized ravens to Melville’s great male whale hunt to William Faulkner’s late-night tristes between boys and mares to the “wild love” between a woman and a stallion in Robinson Jeffers’ “Roan Stallion” to Edward Albee’s bestiality play *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* (Jeffers 15). In most of the above examples, the thematic of interspecies erotics wends, at moments of climax, into memorable instances of species panic. Given the wealth of examples of species panic, it is not farfetched to say that species panic is itself a recognizable literary device.

Critics in animal studies have done important work towards establishing the connection between narrative, poetics, and animality. Proposing a notion of “narrative ethology” (19), Susan McHugh links fictional texts by Jack London and Charles Dickens to popular scientific nonfiction books by Jane Goodall and Franz de Wall to ground her

call for an “ongoing systematic analysis of how forms of species remain embedded in storytelling practise” (5). In his 2014 book *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry*, Aaron Moe takes up this challenge. Using whale song, horse flesh, snake motion, octopus mimicry,¹⁹ and elephant social organization as part of his copious animal archive, Moe demonstrates that “animals are makers. They make texts. They gesture. They vocalize” (11).²⁰ In the Introduction to their 2018 essay collection *What is Zoopoetics?: Texts, Bodies, Entanglement*, Kári Driscoll and Eva Hoffman elaborate on Jacques Derrida’s apparent throwaway identification of “Kafka’s vast zoopoetics” (Derrida, *The Animal* 6), explaining how, far from being “texts *about* animals” (Driscoll and Hoffman 4), “zoopoetic texts” are texts whose “poetic thinking” unravels through “an engagement with animals and animality” (4)—animals are constitutive of literary form and body. Anat Pick extends zoopoesis to the inherent animality of language itself. Recalling Derrida’s claim that in Plato’s *Phaedrus* “*Logos* is a *zōon*” (*Dissemination* 84), Pick argues that the constitutive “foreignness” of language “fissures the identity and self-presence of the human” (4). For Pick, language is inherently “creaturely” (6)—embodied, organic, irrational, enfleshed. Just as animals and words are embodied narratives and poetics, so words and stories are fleshly and animate.

While such theoretical ground has been well trod, what has not been surveyed in detail is the manifestly erotic nature of human representations of animals. The eroticism, a version of E.O. Wilson’s “biophilia” (2), implicit in the artistic impulse *towards* animals—the manifold modern attempts to touch animals via art—comes across vigorously and viscerally in the literary archive, which has long been one of the great

¹⁹ “They are zoopoetic to the extreme” (Moe 33).

²⁰ Crucially, Moe also maintains that animals have “agency” in their making (11).

collective human vocalizations of love. When we run animal stories through the interpretive lens of *eros*, we see the tense dialectic of attraction and disgust driving the human endeavour to reach the animal via literature. In the following pages, though this is sometimes more explicit and sometimes more subterranean, *eros* and aesthetics are necessarily conjoined. Just as each chapter has its own totem animal (dog, bull, android, cow, horse), each tries to develop its own kind of creaturely aesthetic. Chapter One follows the fierce narrative pangs and pantings of Jack London's deep time human-canine romance, Chapter Two traces Ernest Hemingway's foray through the voids of the anal-animal aesthetic, and Chapter Three watches panic scream across the spectrum of the human continuum—perhaps the clearest image for the aesthetics of this project as a whole. Chapter Four takes the slippery murk of dairy as its aesthetic focalizer while Chapter Five ponders the artistry of the equine body. These readings situate the individual animals under discussion through readings in biology, ethology, ecology, and history, grounding the study's theoretical approach with more tangible archives, discourses, and data sets.

The reader may note that, apart from the final chapter which focuses on two contemporary American poets, *Species Panic* offers close examinations of four canonical American authors—Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Philip K. Dick, and Toni Morrison. Furthermore, this project strategically analyzes what are probably the four most canonical texts by these authors: *The Call of the Wild*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *Beloved*, and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* This turn to four urtexts of American fiction is not arbitrary—it is symptomatic of a profundity that needs highlighting: these mainstays of the twentieth-century American canon are heady with the pulse of

interspecies erotics. What does it mean for the twentieth-century American psyche that its literary production is so hot for animals? Many diverse answers to this question will emerge, along with a closet full of fresh questions.

This study does fall victim to the temptation to organize around charismatic megafauna, but with what I believe is a legitimate reason: the discourse of animality in American literature, which as I argue is pervasively concerned with erotic exploration of animal bodies as an index of species being, tends to explore larger animals like dogs and horses rather than, say, plankton, microfauna, or molecular life. If part of my project is to read the American canon against itself and to unveil surprises therein, then I must to some extent read the canon on its own terms. As much as anything, *Species Panic* is about the threats and perils of (always already failed) attempts to define and self-categorize as human. Because my focus is on a human-produced archive of literature, I don't have the ability, like recent work in multispecies studies, to fully remove the human element, examining, say the interspecies *eros* between crocodiles and plovers. All studies need their limitations, and one of mine is that the nonhuman animals I read are those that have troubled, unsettled, and revealed fissures in the human through the anxious biophilic drama of canonical American literature. In its focus on a selection of large animals (and the more radical inclusion of the android—a decidedly humanoid nonhuman carbon-silicone hybrid organism), my methodology draws on Driscoll and Hayward's claim that "[a]nimals, moreso than other forms of life such as plants, are obviously agential beings that operate at roughly the same scale and speed of humans (5). It is because of this affinity that larger animals are generally easier to write and think alongside, and certainly easier to love. Animals, furthermore, "have always served as

both a mirror and a screen for the human” (Driscoll and Hayward 5); accepting Berger’s claim that the first metaphor was animal means re-reading the history of human sign-making as an ancient interspecies romance.

Acknowledging the problems involved in focusing on charismatic megafauna, my first chapter, “Homo-Canine Exceptionalism on Jack London’s Great White Male Frontier,” critically focalizes around the most charismatic and human-proximate animal in Western culture: the dog. Reading Jack London’s enormously popular 1903 novella *The Call of the Wild* as a frontier-shaping colonialist venture into the great, white, and increasingly threatened north, this chapter hinges on the dog Buck’s troubling slaughter of Indigenous peoples at the tale’s end, reading that murderous moment as a finale of a parable of man-dog hybrid colonialism. Heeding calls by scholars such as Zakiyyah Iman Jackson who have recently signalled the need for animal studies and posthumanist critics to attend to the overlapping membranes at work in the discursive categories of race, species, and animality, this chapter reads London’s man-dog romance as a colonialist endeavour and seeks to offer a bulwark against unproblematic readings of liberatory interspecies *eros* in London’s oft-praised novella.

Chapter Two, “Anal-Animal Eroticism in Hemingway’s *Corrida*,” reads Hemingway’s fighting bulls in *The Sun Also Rises* as dark avatars of a fearful and threatening anal-animality. Using early sexological theory with which Hemingway would have been familiar, I show how sexologists and psychoanalysts such as Freud linked anality and animality as fearful, creaturely voids that threatened the drive to heteronormative erotic self-determination. In the novel, the bull becomes an avatar for a threatening form of queerness that Hemingway and his protagonist Jake Barnes are

anxious to overcome. But the novel's melancholic denouement suggests the kind of agony and ennui that remains after the death of animality and anality, signaling a loss of erotic potentialities that haunt the narrative with tragic resignation. Here animal death is at its most forceful and spectacular, as Hemingway uses animal *eros* as a sacrifice on the altar of his aesthete's agenda.

Chapter Three, "Human Continuums, Trans Andys, and Cyberotic Triangles in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*", is in many ways the theoretical core of this project. This chapter couples Dominic Pettman's thinking on human-animal-machine conglomeration with Eve Sedgwick's theorization of erotic triangles in *Between Men* to address an issue which has been largely overlooked in scholarship on Dick's novel: the interplay of human, animal, and android sexuality. Dick's exploration of species panic pushes engrained notions of "the human" from a stable category into something more like what Pettman calls the "*humanimalchine*" (*Human Error* 6), a shifting position on a spectrum of species being. This chapter analyzes the queerness of interspecies desire as it plays out in the novel and suggests that Dick's androids offer exemplary paradigms of trans embodiment before concluding that while interspecies desire can offer productive reconceptualizations of sexuality, the queerness at the heart of Deckard's sexual explorations is not *a priori* radical, thus reiterating Chapter One's caution regarding too-optimistic embraces of interspecies eroticism.

Chapter Three is also the final chapter in this project's first section, "Manimalities and Animaladies," which centres around particularly masculine formations of species panic. The project's second and final part, "The Anxious Interface," focuses on specifically female and feminine archives as it moves towards a

more sustained consideration of the interactions and intersectionalities of race, species, and gender construction and power. To this end, Chapter Four, “Lactic Panic and the Erotics of Dairy in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*,” presents a milkier, murkier vision of the possibilities of interspecies erotics than any previously seen. This chapter delineates these arguments through an exploration of the “fraught erotics” of dairy, arguing that one of the novel’s governing tensions is Sethe’s panic about becoming human dairy. Despite the library shelves brimming with *Beloved* scholarship, few critics have paid much attention to the primal scene of bestiality at the novel’s core. *Beloved* has usually been read, understandably, as a text about cultural (re)memory and the hauntology of slavery, with analyses focusing on the novel’s devastating scene of infanticide. But I show how the apparently-minor presence of nonhuman animals can be read as providing a crucial counterpoint to, and point of overlap between, nonhuman animal and enslaved human life. In the novel, this relation is typically hostile, anxious, and fraught with tension. The project’s only chapter to home in on scenes of explicit bestiality, human-animal sex, here, becomes a pivotal tipping point on a hierarchy of torture and dehumanization against which the privileged white male human is defined.

Chapter Five, “The Equine Erotopoetics of Linda Hogan and Joy Harjo,” represents a shift in the terms of my analysis, as panic recedes somewhat from the scene. This chapter reads Hogan and Harjo’s poetic vision of human- and specifically female-equine romance. While I frame my argument through scholars such as Qwo-Li Driskill and Mark Rifkin, who expose and critique the overlaps between settler-colonialism and heteropatriarchy, my own contribution, characteristically, is to emphasize the prevalence of nonhuman *eros* in Hogan and Harjo’s poetry, thus establishing a triangular dialogue

between queer theory, Indigenous studies, and animal studies. Reading affinity between humans and horses (Hogan) as well as the equine-erotic-ecstatic (Harjo) as simultaneous forces of decolonial and anti-heteronormative subversion, I show how both poets use a poetics of equine eroticism to elaborate decolonial agendas and challenge the institutionalized heteronormativity that is both a foundation of the settler colonial state and a cornerstone of the ongoing attempt to define the human—racially, sexually, politically—as *the one with the right to dominate*. I hope to have demonstrated adequately by this point how murky and messy and problematic interspecies *eros* can be and by taking, here, a step to the periphery of Western thinking I hope to show how many of the problems of species panic derive from a specifically Western, instrumental way of thinking about human-animal interactions.

I would like to conclude this Introduction by offering a final word on the way I read literature in this study, by way of the emergent field of multispecies studies. In their field-defining 2016 article “Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness,” Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster position multispecies studies “[i]n contrast to animal studies” through a shift of focus away from the human and towards encounters among nonhuman creatures (3). Inspired by the work of Donna Haraway, multispecies studies seeks a “broader taxonomic scope of inquiry” and “focuses on the multitudes of lively agents that bring one another into being through entangled relations” (Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 3). But the field is also constituted by a commitment towards reparative storytelling. Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster situate the field as a possible antidote to the “[o]nly-human stories” that have helped to create “a period shaped by escalating and mutually reinforcing processes of biosocial destruction—from

mass extinction to climate change” (3). Elsewhere, van Dooren and Deborah Bird Rose suggest their desire to “restory the relationships that constitute and nourish” diverse “forms of human and nonhuman life” (77). While I support the multispecies studies project in general, I also think it offers a limited understanding of what story can and should do.²¹ Asking for “better stories” can only get us so far, and to sluice human poetics and narrative into the stream of salvational storytelling can strike a literary critic as potentially reductive. Much as I would like to, I don’t believe we can effectively mobilize story in pursuit of specific political purposes. Another term for Good Stories is bad literature. I take a different approach to narrative, poetics, and storytelling. Rather than seeking to rehabilitate story, I seek to track the fluctuations and movements of the narrative organism. Rather than reading for, I seek to read as is, tracking the struggles and panics that have constituted the American navigation of the human-animal relations and seeing what we might learn by attending to stories and poetics.

I opened this section with a quotation from a Stephen Millhauser story, “A Visit,” in which the unnamed narrator visits his friend who has married a frog—a fairy tale premise told in absurdly realist style. The moment I’ve quoted takes place when the friend and his frog-wife proceed upstairs to bed and what the moment of my epigraph dramatizes is a psychological refusal. The rhetorical technique is *apophasis*: the narrator invokes frog-love by *not talking about frog-love* (except maybe a little bit). The sense that something has been violated “in the imagining” suggests and invokes the momentary

²¹ While van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster insist that their project overcomes the human focus of “*human-animal studies*” (3), the focus on reparative storytelling also seems to re-introduce the human into the equation as the architect of salvation-by-narrative. Their insistence on the value of story also seems to wilfully ignore the archives of narratology, semiotics, and literary criticism, when surely some dialogue with these fields could re-nuance and enrich their understanding of story.

horror of this (non)contemplation. The narrator's decision not to imagine frog-love is of course one way to imagine frog love and to invite the reader into a kind of pact of the unspoken, signalling the by-now familiar figuration of bestiality as envoidedness, the unspeakable. The refusal of disclosure also generates a pulse of narrative tension, drawing the reader into the repulsive-compulsive fantasy of the would-be voyeur. And what is this but the domain of story, of narrative, of panic. Species panic wriggles and writhes in the mesh of story.

Don't panic. Which means, of course: do.

The Last Taboo? A Brief History of American Zoophilia

In February 2015 Ontario's openly gay premier, Kathleen Wynne,²² came under pressure when the Ontario Liberal Party proposed updating the health and physical education curriculum to include discussions of anal sex, same-sex partnership, trans persons, and masturbation. In response, protestors rallied at Ontario's provincial house of parliament in Queens Park, Toronto.

²² In a notable twist, Wynne herself has since become a fount of conservative panic, conceding the 2018 provincial election more than a week early after receiving full-scale vitriol from the electorate.

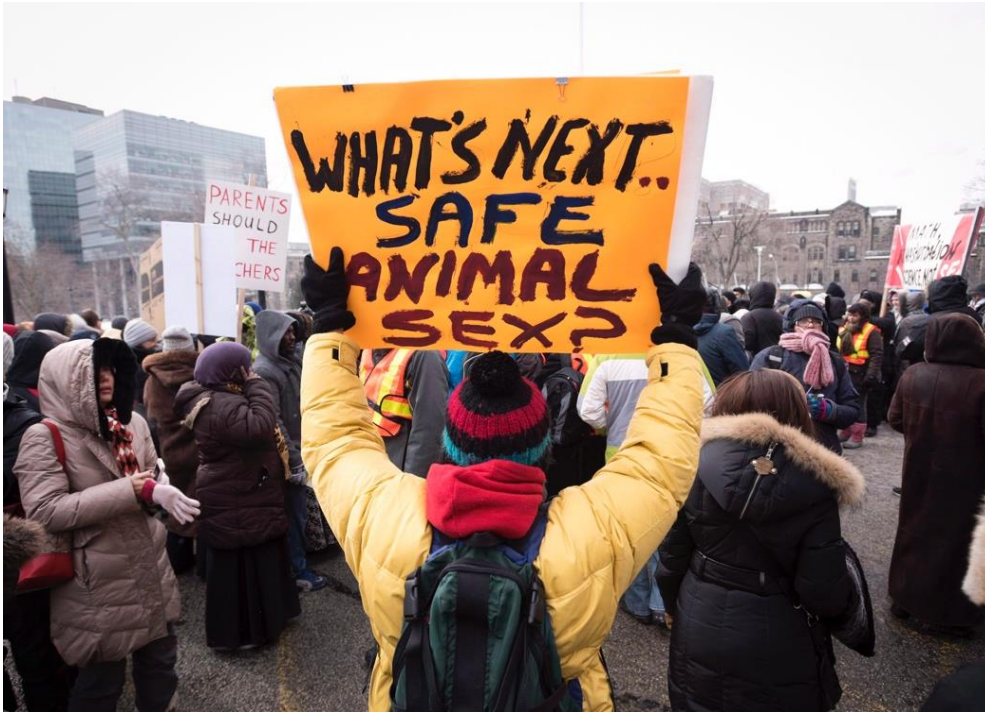


Figure 1: Protesters rally against the newly announced sex-ed curriculum at Ontario's parliament in February 2015. Reprinted with permission of The Canadian Press

Clearly, the crowd sees education about malleable gender identity and non-normative sex acts such as anal sex as deeply threatening. More interesting, though, is that the holder of this sign obviously sees non-normative sexualities and sex acts on a continuum with interspecies sex—teaching children about safe non-vaginal intercourse is one small step away from encouraging them to have sex with animals. As a rhetorical move, this slogan—“WHAT’S NEXT, SAFE ANIMAL SEX?”—seeks to mobilize panics surrounding interspecies sex to galvanize an age-old slippery-slope argument about the depravity of pathologized queer sexualities.

One need not look far to find parallel scenarios in the United States. In 2013, U.S. Senator Rand Paul publicly declared his concern that legalizing gay marriage may

lead to marriages between humans and nonhuman animals (Amira np).²³ While such a comparison doubtlessly draws on the rhetoric of human exceptionalism in an attempt to provoke disgust regarding human-animal coupling and refract that disgust onto gay humans, the response from the queer and anti-homophobic community also demonstrates a profound species panic. Writing for *New York Magazine*, Dan Amira asserts that Rand's rhetorical gesture is "*literally* the world's most insulting, ignorant, and nonsensical argument against gay marriage" (np). Species panic operates here both through Rand's provocative inclusion of bestiality on the spectrum of queerness and the resultant disgust response from a voice sympathetic to gay rights activism. Paul uses animal marriage as a rhetorical lynchpin, a limit case of queerness that makes gay marriage seem one step further along a slippery slope of perversion. Amira's response indicates the understandably righteous attempt to differentiate gay marriage from animal marriage and, implicitly, a reaction against the sodomy-recalling accusation that homosexual coupling is more animalistic than heterosexual coupling. Of course, the gay marriage debate has nothing to do with interspecies *eros* except in the habitual attempts of conservative pundits to semantically link these issues. While interspecies erotics is necessarily queer, human queerness need not be species transgressive. Paradoxically, the suggestion that one form of non-normative sexuality leads to another in a kind of queer snowball effect allows conservative rhetoricians to mobilize animal sexuality and to deploy interspecies *eros* as ammunition for policing the emancipatory sexual claims of queer human beings. What we get here, then, is the panicked excitement of the right

²³ As Amira notes in his article, Rand subsequently backpedalled from this argument, no doubt in response to pressure from an outraged queer and queer-friendly community (np).

wing reaching to prohibit and police transgressive sexualities emerging as its own form of interspecies *eros*, the dialectical charge of Foucauldian circuits of power and pleasure. The subject of my research—interspecies erotics—casts a broad net; interspecies erotics need not involve traditional penetrative or oral sex acts, and it need not occur between a human and a nonhuman animal. But zoophilia—the preferred term of practitioners of human-animal sex—also clearly occupy one end of the spectrum of interspecies erotics that *Species Panic* explores. Human-animal sex is the threatening *telos* of interspecies desire, the revulsive umbra that makes other manifestations of human-animal love fraught and delicate, panicky and threatened. It’s okay to love your cat, but to love *just* your cat—to blur the line between animal lover and animal *lover*—makes you a cat lady, a madwoman. Because the suggestion of zoophilia is the extreme end of the spectrum of interspecies *eros*, and because bestiality has a penchant to provoke panic, a brief foray into the nature of bestiality will help to ground the broader cultural-affective atmosphere of species panic that this study explores.

Human-animal sex seems to be about as old as the human species. Midas Dekkers notes that “[c]opulating with animals is probably as old as humanity. Depictions of it are found in the very oldest cultures” (15). Surveying a robust array of research, Miletski traces the origins still earlier, stating that “the practise of human-animal sex began at least in the Fourth Glacial Age, between 40,000 and 25,000 years ago” (“a history” 1).²⁴ Pottery by the Chimu and Mochica peoples are elaborately decorated with scenes of human-animal intercourse, and Bronze Age rock paintings in Sweden clearly

²⁴ Drawing the link between bestiality and agrarian cultures, Joyce E. Salisbury considers it “likely that intercourse with animals had been one expression of human sexuality for as long as people lived closely with their animals” (84).

show a human male penetrating a herd animal, most likely a goat (Dekkers 15).

According to Miletski, zoophilia has been a central part of the development of human sexuality and the practice has been documented in Ancient Egypt, China, Asia, Africa, Inca, The Middle East, Greece, Rome, and various North American Indigenous cultures (“a history” 2-15).²⁵

The cross-cultural and trans-historical presence of what Dominic Pettman calls the “universal taboo” against zoophilia reinforces the sense of just how common the practice has been throughout the ages (*Human Error* 79).²⁶ The prevalence of bestiality taboos suggests the prevalence of bestiality—why else would there be a need to prohibit it? Looking at the history of its taboo, then, has much to suggest about zoophilia. The crime was punishable by torture and death in Ancient Egypt, and under Islamic law sodomy with animals is a capital crime (Miletski, “a history” 3, 25). Cultures such as the proto-Hebrew Hittites had strict regulations about which nonhuman creatures were

²⁵ Miletski’s survey offers a striking overview of the pan-cultural prevalence of bestiality. The Egyptians are fabled to have had sex with crocodiles (Miletski, “a history” 3). Prince Chien of the Han dynasty is said to have forced women to copulate with dogs (Miletski, *Understanding* 23). In Ancient Rome, “Bestiality was widespread among shepherds” (recalling Pan and anticipating Havelock Ellis) while “Roman women were known to keep snakes which they trained to coil around their thighs and slide past the lips of their vaginas” (Miletski, “a history” 4). Miletski also notes that “bestiality flourished as a public spectacle” in Roman “sex circuses” where “[w]omen copulated with bears, snakes, and crocodiles” (*Understanding* 13). Though Miletski’s research may sound farfetched—research around zoophilia often does—it is for the most part supported by Midas Dekkers, Joyce E. Salisbury, and others who have worked on this fraught subject. Though extensive, Miletski’s research draws primarily from the tradition of Eurocentric ethnography—she refers to the “Eskimo” and primarily quotes from Western male anthropologists (“a history” 16). It is hard not to read Miletski’s account as problematically racialized given the insensitive delivery of claims such as this one: “Arabs practise bestiality primarily with goats, mares, sheep, sows, and camels, if the latter cooperate. Arab women reportedly have oral sex and intercourse with dogs whenever men are not available to please them (*Understanding* 25). Miletski’s “A history of bestiality and zoophilia,” originally published in the peer-reviewed journal *Anthrozoös*, seems to be a more reliable source than the self-published *Understanding Bestiality and Zoophila* [sic].

²⁶ Taboo can be a turn on in itself. According to Marjorie Garber’s reading of a selection of bestiality-confessional memoirs, one of the more common appeals of zoophilia is precisely in transgression of the taboo (158).²⁶ Beyond the question of the arousal of the taboo itself, what interests me in Garber’s analysis is the conclusion that even for the zoophile sex with animals is not an act of pure attraction but one caught up in the doubled circuit of desire/disgust. This dualism—the very heart of species panic—is itself the zoophiles’ kink.

permissible to have sex with and which weren't (Miletski, *Understanding* 2). The Book of Leviticus named bestiality punishable by death: "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast" (20.15), a notable punishment because here it is not only the human violator but also the violated animal that must be put to death. According to John M. Murrin, the murder of the animal was necessary because bestiality both "lowered a man to the level of a beast" and "left something of the human in the animal" (117). Part of the bestiality taboo seems to originate in a fear of contamination—the worry that "humans could, if provoked by bestial lust, join themselves to the animal kingdom in a horrifyingly literal sense" (Canup 120). The Leviticus taboo is also notable as a Western frame of the taboo because it establishes bestiality as a particularly phallic and potentially reproductive sin, anticipating the ongoing association of bestiality with sodomy and buggery. This taboo, with its focus on "man," thus leaves open the possibilities of women having sex with animals and men acting as receptive partners, along with a whole host of other potential sex acts.²⁷

Zoophilic sex did not become a scientific object of study until the emergence of sexology in the late nineteenth century when the "scientific term *zoophilia* was given its

²⁷ Despite heavy prohibitions, bestiality continued to linger in the legal fringes of society. Miletski notes that "[b]estiality was most widespread and accepted in Western society during the Middle Ages—from the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. to the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492" (*Understanding* 14). Throughout "the Middle Ages," Miletski continues, "bestiality was practised by farmers, priests, and nuns; many people were doing it, but nobody was talking about it" (*Understanding* 14). The rationale Miletski provides is simple proximity: because most people in agrarian cultures live in close range with animals, sexual encounters would have been common, if secretive. In her 1994 book *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, Salisbury offers a rigorous history of the complex and shifting legal and ecclesiastical regulations pertaining to bestiality in medieval Christian Europe, where it was variously seen as equivalent to masturbation and homosexuality (90, 91). While medieval standards such as the eleventh-century Council of Ancyra had seen bestiality as a crime meriting a penance ranging from forty days to twenty years (Salisbury 90, 91), in 1534 both England and Sweden made bestiality a capital crime (Salisbury 100). This dramatic shift in the legislation of bestiality, occurring at the very of the birth of Renaissance humanism, indicates that animal *eros* had become a source of panic.

official baptism by Krafft-Ebing in his landmark study *Psycopathia Sexualis* (1886)” (Pettman, *Human Error* 79).²⁸ Zoophilia and bestiality remain something of a legal grey area in the modern world, with the legal status of human-animal sex acts often nebulous or unknown. Many nations are only lately catching up on archaic and outdated laws, with a flourish of revamped legislation in the last decade or so. As of 2005, bestiality had not officially appeared in the legal codes of France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Belgium, or the Netherlands (Miletski, “a history” 8). Reports of “bestiality brothels” and “erotic zoos” spreading through Germany, where bestiality had been legal since 1969 (Mortimer np), led to 2012 Bundestag legislation banning any sex acts which would “force an animal” into “unnatural behaviour” (Mortimer np), opening the doors for murky conversations about consent and self-determination. In 2015, Denmark outlawed bestiality shortly after Norway, Sweden, and Britain had done the same (Tange np). Michigan State University’s Animal Legal and Historical Center’s “Table of State Animal Sexual Assault Laws” contains the best summary of current legal data surrounding bestiality in the U.S., but even this well-documented resource can only affirm that “about 45” states have “some provision that criminalizes engaging in sexual

²⁸ Following the 1886 publication of Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psycopathia Sexualis*, zoophilia and bestiality began to attract some attention in sexological study. In his 1906 book *Erotic Symbolism*, Havelock Ellis had suggested that “[b]estiality is very rarely found in towns” (81), practised among shepherds and goatherds with “great frequency” (83). Pathologizing the practice by asserting that it is “the sexual perversion of dull, insensitive, and unfastidious persons” (79), Ellis notes that bestiality does sometimes occur “among women in civilization” and that in such instances “the animal is nearly always a pet dog” (83), a fact that Krafft-Ebing corroborates (578): “[t]he intercourse of females with beasts is limited to dogs” (578). Ellis and Krafft-Ebing do not provide many figures; instead they provide stories—sensational, provocative tales in which it is hard not to read a certain erotic pleasure in the exuberance of narration, a feature common to the literature around bestiality and zoophilia. Following Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, veterinarian and sexologist Alfred Kinsey became infamous for making bestiality the ultimate open secret of twentieth century America and beyond. In his 1948 study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey and his colleagues estimate that 40-50% of American males living in rural areas had had sex with animals (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 671), a number that has been questioned by many and quoted by more in its own kind of gasping statistical *eros*.

conduct with animals” (Wisch np), with human-animal sex being variously a misdemeanor or felony. The five states that have no law prohibiting human-animal sex are Hawai‘i, Kentucky, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Wyoming (Wisch np). South Carolina is the only state that still legally refers to bestiality as “buggery” (Wisch np). Currently Texas, Nevada, and California are among states that include convicted zoophiles on registered sex offender lists (Wisch np). The range of possible punishments varies widely from state to state; in some states bestiality is a misdemeanor while in Rhode Island offenders can receive prison sentences of up to 20 years. As with Europe, many of America’s bestiality laws have been recently updated, with Alaska, Texas, Kansas, California, Nevada, and Michigan updating legislation since 2008. Bestiality became illegal in Texas in 2017 through Section 2 of Senate Bill 1232, instituting a “comprehensive bestiality law” following significant public outcry and media shaming (Wisch np, Saputo np). The spate of bestiality legislation in the border-tightening political spheres of America and Europe in the past decade invites the question of whether this is symptomatic of an era increasing its security against the invasive threat of species panic?²⁹

The slew of bestiality legislation also suggests that zoophilic sex remains common enough to call for law-making. Perhaps the best archive of human-animal erotic fixation is the widespread interest in bestiality porn. In her 2010 article “When Species Meet: Confronting Bestiality Pornography,” Margaret Grebowicz canvases a large array of internet bestiality pornography that she summarizes as a “proliferation of zoo porn”

²⁹ For an excellent analysis of the relation between species and border panic, see Melissa Autumn White’s article “Viral/Species/Crossing: Border Panics and Zoonotic Vulnerabilities” (*Women’s Studies Quarterly* 40.1/2 [2012]).

(2). The sheer amount of bestiality porn on the internet certainly suggests a widespread erotic interest in nonhuman animals, as does Miletski's account of secret zoophilia societies like the "sophisticated sexualists" and "Advent Partners, Ltd" (*Understanding* 31, 35), highly-circulated publications like *Wild Animal Revue* and the Pet Book series, or "Color Climax"[s] 8mm animal films, such as *Dog Fuckers*, *Horse Lovers*, and *Horse Power*" (*Understanding* 31). Grebowicz's nuanced account is concerned not with numbers but with a "post-Foucauldian" inquiry into the "subjective and intersubjective effects of the circulation of this discourse" (3). Her analysis of a wide range of striking and provocative pornographic archive, however, certainly presents an image of pornographic variety and plenitude. What is clear is that the desire-construct Grebowicz analyzes is enormously complex: bestiality porn reveals an "internally inconsistent kaleidoscope of constructs and norms" that "tells us little about the practice of bestiality" (2). Grebowicz's wide-ranging examples, from women "penetrating themselves with snakes, eels, and other fish" to a gorilla looking up a cartoon woman's skirt (3), demonstrate that there are myriad ways for humans to have sex with nonhuman animals.

The central difference between the terms "bestiality" and "zoophilia" is that bestiality is usually used pejoratively to connote a monstrous perversion while zoophilia is the preferred term of self-identifying animal lovers.³⁰ Zoophiles often think of themselves as a "persecuted subculture" (Grebowicz 6), a claim that seems warranted by

³⁰ Though the terms "zoophilia" and "bestiality" are not quite interchangeable, I tend to gravitate towards the former when possible. According to Gieri Bolliger and Antoine F. Goetschel, the "scientifically correct" term "zoophilia" simply means "love" or "affection" for animals (24). The term "zoophilia" is generally preferred by practitioners of human-animal sex to the pejorative "bestiality," with its connection to religious notions of sodomy and perversion. According to Andrea M. Beetz, "the main difference between bestiality and zoophilia" according to "zoophiles" themselves is "that zoophilia, besides involving sexual contact with animals, also includes an emotional involvement" (113). Zoophilia, of course, is also a claimed sexual identity, and not just a designate of disgust.

the general societal distaste for their sexual choices. Analyzing Robinson Devor's 2007 film *Zoo*, a documentary about a horse-sex mortality incident in Enumclaw, Washington, Pettman notes that the discourse around the case often draw on the oft-invoked "parallel between zoophiles and pedophiles" (*Human Error* 81).³¹ Attempting to slip such stigma, zoophiles insist that the animals they have sex with receive sexual pleasure (Grebowicz 14), a fascinating and rare appeal to the value of nonhuman sexuality. Likewise, as films like Christopher Spencer's documentary *Animal Passions* make clear, zoophiles insist that their choice of animals as emotional, romantic, and sexual partners is not the result of human rejection.³² For them, animals do not substitute for inaccessible human sexual contact. Rather, zoophiles insist that they simply have more "affinity" with nonhuman animals than the average human being (Pettman, *Human Error* 79). Intimacy with, and proximity to, animals becomes a psychological bridge between animal lovers and animal *lovers*.

Despite the wide range of practices and desires demonstrated by Grebowicz's research and films like *Animal Passions*, the legal discourse around zoophilia has tended towards definitions that focus narrowly on male-centric, phallic, and penetrative sex-acts.³³ A 2016 Canadian Supreme Court ruling in a case involving a serial sexual abuser

³¹ Such comparisons abound in the discourse around zoophilia. Take, for example, Mark Anthony Conditt, suspected architect of a deadly bombing in Austin, Texas, who compared homosexuality with zoophilia and pedophilia in a blog post (Rosenberg and Berman np). Such discourse reiterates the pathologization of zoophilia as part of a cluster of deviant queerness.

³² *Animal Passions* is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p19DdB75d2E>.

³³ Noting that "the sheer amount of bestiality porn on the internet is disproportionately large in comparison to the number of bestiality cases which make the daily or weekly news" (8), Grebowicz points out that "the cases which do make the news rarely describe the kind of sex that makes up the majority of the porn. Women receiving cunnilingus from dogs (and occasionally cats), women penetrated by dogs and horses, and occasionally pigs and goats, women performing fellatio on dogs, horses, goats, even camels—these acts are almost never prosecuted" (8). In the massive closets of internet bestiality porn, animals are usually "masculinized" (Grebowicz 9), contra the usual presumption of the feminization of animals and their association with human female bodies. It turns out, furthermore, that the fantasy—as well as the material reality of the porn—is often non-penetrative.

declared a wide range of acts of bestiality legal in Canada. One of the ways the defendant assaulted his stepdaughters was by using peanut butter to entice the family dog towards oral sex. Part of the problem for the court was that there is no stable legal definition of the term, and one of the trial's outcomes was the judge's suggestion that Canadian government should better define the term "bestiality" (Garcia np). The case declared that bestiality as a legal category in Canada had since 1892 been "linked to 'buggery' – or sodomy – with animals" and ultimately ruled that only penetration of animals should be illegal (Garcia np). I deploy this disturbing study not just as a precursor of Chapter One, which focuses on the darker side of dog love, but also to demonstrate the legal and ethical murk around bestiality and nonhuman *eros* more broadly. While the details of the case show just one way in which nonhuman bodies can be deployed erotically as instruments of torture,³⁴ the court's emphasis on the single, fetishized act of penetration also dismisses a whole range of human and nonhuman sexual possibilities. One of the recurring anxieties surrounding interspecies *eros* is that it resists many of our categories and challenges so many of our boundaries; to a great extent, we simply don't know what to make of it. The juridical tendency to define bestiality through phallic, penetrative sexuality not only focuses on one human sex and one organ—it also overwrites the possibility of nonhuman animal sexual agency and consent.³⁵ Occupying one extreme of the spectrum of interspecies erotics, zoophilia is a

³⁴ A disturbingly similar practice, Colleen Glenney Boggs shows in *Animalia Americana*, occurred in the American "abuse of prisoners" at Abu Ghraib in March 2006 (41).

³⁵ Consent is a controversial subject surrounding bestiality and zoophilia, and the issue of whether animals can provide meaningful consent seems largely unresolvable. (The cast of *Animal Passions* insist that their animal partners consent—that a dog can take agency with its tongue and a horse could easily say no through violence). In "Heavy Petting," the oft-cited 2001 essay in which he frames his utilitarian approach to bestiality, Peter Singer suggests, radically, that "sex with animals does not have to involve cruelty" (np). For Singer, the evidence is in part physiological: "the fact that the vagina of a calf can be sexually

livid and thriving undercurrent of human sexual cultures, one that can be deployed, variously, as a force of erotic stimulation, coercion, and prohibition, among other things. But zoophilia is just one node of the broad and variegated aesthetics of interspecies erotics with which I engage in the work to follow.

From Pan to Panic

Before proceeding through my literary analysis, it will be useful to contextualize this study's central affect. Panic is a concept born in the Arcadian wilderness, where *eros* meets animality in the figure of Pan, the etymological progenitor of the word "panic" ("Panic," adj., def. 1). A Grecian deity with the face and torso of a human and the legs and horns of a goat (Figure 1, below; *OED*, "Pan" def. 1), Pan was a minor and peripheral figure in Ancient Greek theology: the patron of shepherds and the god of the dark fringes of the wilderness. From the outset a symbol of species transgression (as

satisfying to a man shows how similar these organs are" (np). Even assuming that Singer means "complementary" rather than "similar," it remains striking that Singer uses pleasure as his barometer of ethics. Margaret Grebowicz disagrees with Singer's assessment of relative cruelty, classing the animal, along with children and the mentally ill, as "the being that never consents" (10). The paradigm of consent, though, may not be the right lens through which to approach zoophilia/bestiality. I discuss this further in Chapter Four, which asks how sex between domesticated animals and human slaves complicates the issue of consent. One clear point about bestiality is that it would be very rare and gruesome without animal domestication. The foundation of industrial animal domestication (what Marjorie Spiegel in *The Dreaded Comparison* names as its own form of slavery) calls the ethical framework of consent into question. Did animals consent to domestication in the first place? Do they consent to artificial insemination or enforced sex with one another for breeding purposes? Why is mating cattle and other animals using "rape racks" and other techniques of bondage not a question of consent? In other words, if we really cared about what animals consented to sexually and otherwise, we would probably not sterilize, confine, and kill them with impunity. Though stallions do clearly enjoy being relieved by human-held prosthetic vaginas, the varied and complex sexual interactions between human and nonhuman animals often blur clear understandings of "no means no" or "yes means yes." Instead of trying to resolve the thorny question of consent in bestiality and zoophilia,³⁵ I will simply say that concerns and debates over nonhuman sexual consent often involve manifestations of species panic. Part of the reason people turn to arguments like "if a child can't consent then a dog can't consent" (reiterating the bestiality-pedophilia parallel) is because they want to police or prohibit human sex with animals. In the feedback loop of sexuality, though, prohibition often produces desire.

were many Ancient Greek gods and demi-gods), Pan was “the last and youngest of the Olympian gods, guardian of shepherds and flocks, of wild natural spaces, and of rustic music” (De Cicco 49). Patricia Merivale, author of *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (1969), notes that Pan was “first worshipped in Arcadia” (1), where he was known for “pastoral activities” such as “music-making and dancing” and seen as a “comic-grotesque godling” (1). Central to Pan’s identity is his physical embodiment as a god-animal hybrid: “The paradox of being half goat and half god is at the very core of his nature” (Merivale 1). Pan’s body represents the join of human (humanoid torso and hands), god (he is a deity), and animal (horned, with the legs of a goat).

There is also a fierce and tortured sexuality about Pan. Never a god of sex, love, or desire, Pan was the symbol of a dark, threatening, uncharismatic sexuality. The Ancient Greeks, as Pierre Borgeaud explains in his 1979 book *The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece*, associated Pan with “systematic sexual frustration” (108). Pan “lives among the nymphs, but is unlucky in love” (Borgeaud 108), and perhaps it is his pent-up sex drive that leads him to copulate with the goat in the most famous lasting image of Pan/Faunus (figure 1). Or perhaps it is not so abnormal for Pan, as the god of shepherds, to explore his flock sexually—shepherds have “tended” to their flocks erotically across many cultures and civilizations. Pan also commands a magic power, “panolepsy” (Borgeaud 108), a precursor of the familiar modern panic response that leads to fits in its “epileptic form” (108). Panolepsy, in other words, is a form of seizure that arrests its victim. Panolepsy derives from “Pan’s confusion and ultimate rage when he finds himself seduced by an object who escapes his passion” (Borgeaud 120), but its precise meaning, origin, and contours remain elusive. Panolepsy, though clearly rooted in

sexuality and desire, remains crucially ambiguous—an ancient precursor of the many-headed malaise of panic.

Pan, reborn as Faunus, was seen by the Romans, as “old, shaggy, and lecherous” (Merivale 3). Figure 1, a sculpture uncovered among the erotic artworks of Pompeii, demonstrates the way Roman civilization viewed the sexuality of Faunus:



Figure 2: “Pan Copulating with Goat.” Unknown artist. Marble sculpture, Naples National Archaeological Museum. Photo credit: Marie Lan-Nguyen.

Pan, using his characteristically human hands to restrain the goat, pins the animal, the reflection of his bestial half, down in a sex act that may or may not be consensual—is the goat braying in torment or licking in pleasure? Pan’s head, raised above the goat’s in a gesture of feral dominance, suggests that the establishment of power takes place through this negotiation—that species status is navigated through sex. While Pan’s human face stares into the eyes of the goat with fierce intimacy, the coil of their embrace hums with

the tension of beating hearts and bleating mouths. Perhaps most telling: Pan's genitals come to function as a literal hinge between species. A smooth-skinned torso tops a furry, hircine lower body, and the penis sprouts out from the very cusp of species being.

The goat itself is a noteworthy avatar, one that will surface again in Chapter Three of this study. As Servanne Woodward notes, in terms of literary history the goat "belongs to the pastoral genre" (181). Among the oldest agricultural animals, the goat is also known to be crotchety, curmudgeonly—more ornery than the docile sheep or cow. The goat, furthermore, is a literally "horny" creature, in possession of an unrestrained, unrefined, and unwelcome sexuality; it is no accident that the word "hircine" carries the secondary meaning of "lustful" ("hircine, adj."). Though Pan is, like Derrida's centaurs, the crucial emblem of a "double—human and animal—nature" (*Beast* 85), he is much more debased than these charismatic hybrids who serve as "civilizing heroes, masters, pedagogues" (*Beast* 85). By contrast to the regal equine beauty of centaurs, Pan appears ugly and deformed, frustrated and bestial, more creaturely than divine.

Pan's meaning has "varied widely" over two and a half millennia of literary representations (Merivale 1). At some point during the Middle Ages, Pan's symbology fused with the iconography of the Christian devil, who sprouted horns and hircine legs alongside a ravenous sexuality and an alluring, oft-fetishized penis.³⁶ This goatish, seductive devil was a dangerous link to paganism who was believed to seduce women into witchcraft, causing many innocents to be burned on the altar of fantasy. The clear aesthetic link between Pan and the Christian devil is especially interesting given Pan's

³⁶ Jack Fritscher notes that the goat "is consistently associated with the devil" (23). Celia R. Daileader reads the fascination with the devil's penis in the middle ages as a racialized phenomenon, anticipating "the modern myth of the hyper-sexual black male" (1).

associations with Jesus in Romantic literature (he was, after all, the patron of shepherds and flocks).³⁷ Furthermore, as the next section will elaborate, Pan's devilish sexuality suggests the way witchcraft and bestiality become conjoined under the umbrella of deviance and demonism.

Pan was a minor literary figure throughout the Renaissance, after which he disappears from the literary imagination only to experience what Ronald Hutton calls a "sudden re-emergence as a major god in the verses of Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelly" (44).³⁸ For the Romantics, Pan was an "Orphic, or pastoral" figure (Merivale 74), a convenient secular avatar for their poetics of biophilia. The late nineteenth century saw an "astonishing proliferation" of Pan-figures and the repurposing of this deity as part of a transatlantic paganist revival that came to America in "Emerson's designation of Thoreau in 1842 as 'young Pan under another name'" (Merivale 74, 130).³⁹ Pan figured prominently in the poetry of Algernon Swinburne, the writings of Aleister Crowley, and the fiction of D.H. Lawrence. The Victorian Pan was a shapeshifter, figuring alternately as "beneficent" and "terrifying" (Merivale 134). Although Pan could be many things, there were consistent threads in his representation: his shaggy beard and furry hircine legs remained constant.

Unlike the benevolent, Romantic Pan, Victorian Pan was clearly an emissary of a threatening, excessive, wild sexuality. Mark De Cicco describes the "nineteenth century Pan" as a hallmark of Victorian "literature and popular culture" (49), characterized as

³⁷ For links between Pan and Christ, see Merivale 128-29. Merivale herself points to the "dialectic of Pan and Christ" (128).

³⁸ The fascinating question of why Pan re-emerged so forcefully at this time is not the subject of the present inquiry. For more on that issue, see Hutton's chapter "Finding a God" and Merivale's book *Pan the Goat-God*.

³⁹ As Merivale notes, Walt Whitman was also compared to Pan by his contemporaries and Hart Crane wrote of a "Panis angelicus" (130, 264n.75).

“dark, vengeful, disruptive being: a monstrous prophet of apocalypse and queer embodiment” (49). Reading Pan’s role in the work of Algernon Swinburne, Elizabeth Barret Browning, and Arthur Machen, De Cicco identifies what he calls “the queer Gothic Pan” (53), a “monster of an increasingly anxious age” and an avatar of a manic (53), unrestrained sexuality bubbling beneath the skin of Victorian sexual prudence. Pan became an “animalistic, horned—and horny—goat-god, a being utterly lacking in empathy and driven by an untamed, hyper-sexualized id” (57). It seems that the most constant characteristic of the idea of Pan is the fluctuation between opposites. From the Greeks to the Victorians, Pan remains “double in his essence” (Borgeaud 121), embodying “contrasting twin aspects” such as “longing and animality” (Borgeaud 121). De Cicco details how the queer Gothic Pan could instigate “a maelstrom of conflicting emotions, hovering between horror and desire, panic fear and exultation” (50)—a modern incarnation of panolepsy. It is the experience of just this maelstrom—of poles of feeling held in fierce magnetic tension—that provides the aesthetic groundwork of my project. And it is here, in the flickering field of tension, that we leap from Pan to panic.

The term “panic,” as I use it throughout this project, is intentionally slippery, frenetic, disjointed. The panicked aesthetics explored in this study draw on Sianne Ngai’s work in texts such as *Ugly Feelings* (2005) and *Our Aesthetic Categories* (2012). Panic, here, is a cousin of Ngai’s “minor” and “generally unprestigious” feelings (6), which, as Ngai points out, are certainly capable of producing “‘major’ works” of literature and are no less deserving of “canonical distinction” than traditional, charismatic emotions like love (11). Panic can mean “fear,” it can refer to panic disorder, and it can mean the kind of aesthetic pleasure you take skiing a steep slope or turning the

pages of a thriller. Wild animal encounters make us panic. One thing that is clear about panic is that it is bestial. There is a vitality and animality to panic: it is a biological state, an occasion, like sex, when we feel our own animality most vividly. Panic, like Pan, is creaturely and curmudgeonly, finicky and frazzled. Panic fizzles unpredictable. It will catch you by the tail.

One of the affective foundations of America was the panic fear that linked dark magic and the Pan-like Christian devil with the conjoined threats of the wilderness, savagery, animality, and unbridled sexuality. Though American Studies has in recent years focused on national-security affects such as terror and paranoia, it is clear that panic is central to the nation's affective genesis. From Cotton Mathers' gothic nightmare of the invisible world to Mary Rowlandson's fearful encounter with a "vast and desolate wilderness" (312), panic has been a structuring principal in the American zeitgeist. Mark Stein, author of *American Panic* (2014), notes that national panic "dates back to the 1692 Salem witch hunt" (1), a trauma involving twenty-one executions—nineteen human and two canine. Stein continues to trace the history of genealogy in America, tracing the thread of panic through the "ethnic cleansing" of Indigenous peoples (7), slavery and the Civil War, anti-Chinese racism, homophobia, and twenty-first century Islamophobia. Far from an aberration, panic seems to be a fairly normal occurrence across American history, worthy of a position alongside Richard Hofstadter's famous declaration of the "paranoid style" of American political discourse (4).

It seems no coincidence that in the panicked postmodern mood of the nineteen eighties, when Jean Baudrillard was writing about the "[p]anic-stricken production of the real" (7), the authors of the *Panic Encyclopedia* saw "Donald Trump" as an ambassador

of “[p]anic patriotism” and one of the “self-nominated American heroes of the marketplace” (Kroker, Kroker, and Cook 14). The spectacular 2016 election of Donald Trump demonstrates, among other things, the movement from a culture of terror to a culture of panic. Wall panic, carcereal panic, state-sanctioned murder panic, black lives and deaths panic, fake news panic, climate change panic, nuclear panic, misogyny panic, cyber panic, Putin panic, fraud panic, coal panic, job panic, gun control panic, Stormy Daniels panic. These are just a few of the panics Trump has seemed, with his uniquely asinine brilliance, to engineer.

Modern scientists know relatively little about panic. Researching “the PANIC circuit” (261), a system that causes “psychic pain” to humans and other animals in conditions of “emotional distress” (261), neuroscientist Jaak Panskepp explains that “[n]euroscience is struggling” to articulate and analyze the emotional experiences that humans generally accept as given (261). The confusion around panic carries over into more recent neurobiology as well; studying panic attacks in humans and rodents, neurobiologist N.K. Leibold and his team conclude that the “underlying pathophysiology” of panic attacks and panic disorder “is not well understood” (58). The medical history of panic disorder is complex enough that Jackie Orr has addressed it in her book-length study, *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (2006). Traditionally characterized by “dizzy spells, breathing difficulty, chest pains, and heart palpitations” (Orr 216), panic disorder, Orr shows, is also enmeshed in a larger system of “human manipulations” and “drug-disease couplings” such as the “multi-million-dollar circuiting of panic with Xanax in the 1980s” (254). Taken in its entirety, what Orr’s

book suggests is that there is no one clear physiological root of panic disorder. This debilitating condition is slick and slippery, tricky to pin down.

As with many emotions, there is also a storied relationship between panic and art. Panskepp gives voice to the enigmatic nature of his discipline: “One of the great mysteries of psychology is the nature of the ‘something’ that Walt Whitman extols in his masterpiece ‘I Sing the Body Electric’” (261).⁴⁰ It is significant for this study that not only does panic remain a site of scientific opacity for neuroscientists, but that this particular scientist would turn to literature as his spokesperson for the mysterious inner lives of emotions.⁴¹ In a gesture familiar to readers of popular scientific texts,⁴² Panskepp suggests here that literature continues to offer one of the best realms for the exploration of psychological and emotional experience.

What, then, is the literary form of panic? It is certainly a cousin of “conflict,” that central keyword in creative writing pedagogy. There is also a uniquely American poetics and narratology of panic. In her book *Panic Fiction: Women and Antebellum Economic Crisis* (2014),⁴³ Mary Templin details the genre of economic panic fiction in early American literature. Characterizing her specifically economic antebellum panic fictions, Templin notes astutely how carefully “panic authors” navigate “the affective states most commonly associated with panic—fear apprehension, frenzy” (12). Panic is also a generative force in American captivity narratives and gothic stories by the likes of Mary

⁴⁰ Despite the lapse of time since 1998, Panskepp’s more recent works, such as *The Archaeology of Mind* (2012) do not indicate that the mysteries of emotional life have been resolved or fully mapped.

⁴¹ Later on in his chapter on panic, Panskepp uses Homer’s *Odyssey* to elucidate his analysis (263-4).

⁴² For example, in *Biophilia*, E.O. Wilson invokes Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and Edgar Allen Poe (11).

⁴³ Focusing specifically on antebellum women’s writings in response to economic crises, Templin notes the way “[p]anic texts tread carefully around the representation and production of emotional response” (13), a comment that certainly holds for the narratives and poetics of species panic I analyze here.

Rowlandson, Harriet Jacobs, and Edgar Allen Poe. In the twentieth century, panic characterizes the subdued angst of Elizabeth Bishop's poetry and the raunchy queer phantasmagoria of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* before colouring more recent works of manic overdrive such as Mark Leyner's *My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist* to the masculine and class structure narrative hysterias of George Saunders.⁴⁴ Panic is certainly a central and longstanding American literary mood.

One thing that conjoins all the senses of panic I've discussed is its doubleness. Panic is the force that arrests you even as it sets the body into high alert, and as an emotive literary phenomenon it is characterized by poise, tension, and frenzy. Haraway has noted that "Freud is our great theorist of panics of the Western psyche" (11), and one of the insights Freud gives us—in method if not in content—is how naturally narrative and animality come together in the psychic-literary corpus. Freud's *oeuvre*, as Dana Seitler notes in her analysis of "Freud's Menagerie" (31), is almost as rich with animals as it is with sexuality and neuroses. In addition to being a psychoanalyst, Freud was an expert literary critic and creator, turning the psychic anecdotes of his patients into dazzling speculative fictions. With Freud as one of its guides, the project to follow threads narrative and animality together in the aesthetic clutch of panic. If, as I have argued, panic is an originary American affect, one of the central ways it manifests is through the threatening *eros* of nonhuman animals. What makes Americans panic? The threat of the wild, the creaturely, and the savage—the wail in the cornfields and the beast within.

⁴⁴ For Bishop's relation to panic, see Lionel Kelly's edited collection *Poetry and the Sense of Panic: Critical Essays on Elizabeth Bishop and John Ashbery* (Editions Rodopi B.V., 2000).

Panic, like *eros*, can be many things. In what follows, I don't want to be explicitly pro- or anti-panic. Rather I want to watch and track the squirms and twitches of panic and *eros* as they struggle and merge in the American literary corpus. What I want to focus on, following thinkers like Dominic Pettman and Donna Haraway, is the inherent animality of sex and the way animal bodies work their way into human erotic entanglements. Sex and desire are mired in the earthly, the creaturely, the filthy, the murky, and the milky, and the literature I examine works through the meanings of erotic impurity. Literature, in a fascinating twist, can be one of the safest realms of exploration of nonhuman *eros*, a place where it's permissible to fantasize and to cultivate compassion and care through the porous membranes of interspecies encounters. *Species Panic* is primarily a study of interspecies erotics in American literature; it just so happens that one of the recurring effects of such *eros* is the species panic complex, which becomes, in my archive, its own genera—an identifiable, if variegated, species of literary form.

Part I: Manimalities, Animaladies

Chapter One:

Homo-Canine Exceptionalism on Jack London's Great White Male Frontier

Interspecies eroticism is not always sexy. Though many recent critics have celebrated the queer and liberating potential of literary representations of human-animal love and desire, this chapter examines the more sinister possibilities of such *eros* and urges researchers to proceed with caution into the plains and caverns of trans-species erotics. Through a reading of Jack London's 1903 novella *The Call of the Wild*, this chapter shows how interspecies erotics can serve as a vehicle for racial, colonial, and gender hegemony. While critics such as Michael Lundblad and Lillian Carswell have made important headway in reading the productive possibilities of interspecies erotics in *The Call*, I emphasize some of the more nefarious outcomes of human-canine intimacy on the trans-species, masculine frontiers of London's wild. Heeding Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's call for increased attention to "categories of race, colonialism, and slavery" in animal studies and posthumanism ("Animal" 671), this chapter stresses the conjoined racial and sexual problematics looming in this story of human-dog love.

London's most famous dog tale, situated at the heart of the adventure mythos of America, *The Call* simultaneously tells a story of human-dog love and of rampant, human-enabled canine violence. Here male humans and dogs become the privileged subjects of a narrative of vigorous education, permissible "boys will be boys" carnage, and a pulsating, eroticized, wild life accessible to certain males of certain species. Ultimately, this saga of species drift allows the tale's canine protagonist,⁴⁵ a St.

⁴⁵ My concept of species drift is an augmentation of Arthur Kroker's notion of "body drift" (3), a Butlerian vision of the body as essentially multiple and incoherent: "we no longer inhabit *a* body in any meaningful sense of the term but rather occupy a multiplicity of bodies—imaginary, sexualized, disciplined, gendered,

Bernard/Scotch shepherd named Buck, to gain temporary access into the purview of a very particular and privileged figuration of humanity: London's ideal human—white, Nordic, imperialist, and male, personified here by the story's human protagonist, John Thornton, a gruff and roaming frontiersman who gladly accepts Buck into the fold of the human. Once he gains access to the cradle of human privilege through a protracted tryst with Thornton, Buck becomes a prosthetic extension of white colonial violence. Granted access into the sphere of what I call “homo-canine exceptionalism,” this kingly animal comes to serve as an avatar for London's white, male fantasy of conquering the wild north. Insofar as his queerness is admitted into the homonormative fold of homo-canine exceptionalism, Buck becomes a kind of avatar for a particular formation of *human* species identity. Running Carla Freccero's vision of the symbiogenetic “transspecies becoming” through the concepts of American exceptionalism and human exceptionalism (178), the term “homo-canine exceptionalism” suggests the way that dogs and humans join together in an (often hegemonic) interspecies field of power. The concept of homo-canine exceptionalism is central to the concerns of this article insofar as the term assumes what dogs reveal: that human power is not only human power, that it also operates through the organization of nonhuman life, the privileging of some species at the detriment of others, and the extension of human power to certain favoured animals. In what follows, I navigate some recent movements in dog-friendly and dog-critical literature and criticism before demonstrating, via *The Call*, one particular iteration of the

laboring, technologically augmented bodies” (2). Kroker draws on the genomic concept of “genetic drift” in order to theorize this drifting corpus (3), a body that moves “episodically, randomly, between the pull of social networking technologies and the always constraining push of individual autobiography” (2). This posthumanist understanding of the body as “circulating, fluid, borderless” lends itself easily to the larger body of the species (3).

more sinister side of dog love: London's attempt to establish, through Buck, the proliferation of Euro-canine blood in the north. Proceeding through a roughly linear reading of *The Call*, I home in on key moments—the death of the novel's single prominent female character, the mobilization of Buck's violent urges through an athleticized practicum involving non-human animal murder, and Buck's final slaughter of a group of Indigenous humans—that show how London leaves his readers with a string of sacrificial victims of the man-dog bond to enable his male colonialist dream of Nordic conquest of the frontier. In its theoretical burrowings, this chapter explores the overlapping tunnels of animal studies, queer theory, and Americanist literary studies in order to emphasize the sinister side of human-canine *eros*. Dog love can enrich and edify, and the anti-normative elements of interspecies *eros* can certainly ruffle hetero- and homonormative feathers; but human-animal *eros* can also serve the more nefarious agendas of the planet's most murderous, territorial animal: humankind.

As a species, humans tend to love dogs; literary critics and creators are no exception.⁴⁶

Animal studies critics often claim love of dogs as a radical point of entry towards new ways of engaging, erotically, politically, and affectively, with “the animal.” Kathy Rudy

⁴⁶ As Harriet Ritvo points out, prior to “the nineteenth century, books about dogs were few and far between” (86), but as dog-fancying grew in popularity throughout that century publishers sought to meet the demands of “the increasing audience of middle-class dog fanciers” (Ritvo 86). After 1900, the profusion of dog literature did not slow down. Leaders of the twentieth-century literary dog pack include Jack London stories such as *The Call of the Wild* (1903), “Bâtard” (1904), and *White Fang* (1906), Virginia Woolf's *Flush: A Biography* (1933), and J.R. Ackerley's *My Dog Tulip* (1956). In the last two decades or so, a rich and fruitful array of nonhuman-oriented scholarship in the field that has become known as animal studies has set out to greet this flourish of literary representations. Works such as Marjorie Garber's *Dog Love* (1996), Alice Kuzniar's *Melancholia's Dog* (2006), Kathy Rudy's *Loving Animals* (2011), David L. Clark's “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’” (1997), and Michael Lundblad's *The Birth of a Jungle* (2013) have used dogs as catalysts for studies that probe, trouble, and transgress inherited understandings of species categories.

uses her personal history with dogs—“dogs have been the most vibrant, colorful, and important players in the landscape of my life” (604)—as a catalyst for her argument that “intense connections between humans and animals could be seen as revolutionary, in a queer frame” (605). Donna Haraway begins a book about “the myriad of entangled, coshaping species of the earth” with the guiding question “[w]hom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?” (*When Species Meet* 5, 3). Elisabeth Arnould-Bloomfield begins a 2015 *PMLA* article by asking “[w]hat happens when I watch a creature suffer or when I share in my dog’s joy” (1467).⁴⁷ Garber provocatively claims that “it is the dog that makes us human” (42). The dog, theoretically animated by such thinking, becomes the paragon of the animal *par excellence*. It is safe to say that animal studies is preoccupied with dogs, and that scholars in this field consistently invoke their own relationships with canine pets as grounds for a larger interspecies compassion. In recent animal studies research, the fetishization of the dog as a redemptory emblem has often been coupled with a radical anti-normativity critics locate in interspecies erotics. In his discussion of *The Call*, Lundblad asks, “how might interspecies pleasure relate to better ways of thinking about relationships between human and nonhuman animals?” (63). Lundblad concludes that such pleasure “allows us to see how these texts can model alternative possibilities” (71). Likewise, Kuzniar writes that “dog love has the potential to question the regulating strictures and categories by which we define sexuality, eroticism, and love” (*Melancholia’s Dog* 109). Similarly, Susan McHugh notes that the “queer spectrum of interspecies intimacies” between humans and dogs “might lead to an entirely different ethics of intercorporeal relations” (117). Such claims can be productively

⁴⁷ Arnould-Bloomfield also repeats this question verbatim at the outset of her concluding paragraph (1474).

complicated through the guiding question of the present inquiry: how radical, really, is dog love?

It is important to question the prevalent claim that interspecies erotics—and in particular dog love—is a radical, liberating, or edifying force. In the past few years a flurry of intersectional thinking has opened animal studies up to generative dialogue with fields such as queer theory,⁴⁸ gender studies,⁴⁹ critical race studies,⁵⁰ Indigenous studies,⁵¹ and disability studies.⁵² What such work as a whole has demonstrated is that nonhuman animals cannot be considered beyond or apart from the human power structures that mediate and structure their lives, deaths, ecologies, interspecies social networks, and planetary living conditions.

There are many reasons to think critically about species-transgressive intimacy, love, and desire. First, interspecies erotics, in its vast and storied varieties, can look from a certain vantage like an intrinsically violent relation. In order for humans to engage physically with nonhuman animals, we must first domesticate them, and domestication is

⁴⁸ There is, of course, a ready and productive overlap between queer theory and animal studies; see, for example, *GLQ* 21.2-3, an enormously stimulating special issue on “Queer Inhumanisms,” edited by Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Donna Haraway’s *When Species Meet* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), Carol J. Adams’ *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum, 1990), and Stacy Alaimo’s *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

⁵⁰ Important texts in this field include Mel Chen’s *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Duke 2012), Claire Jean Kim’s *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (Cambridge 2015), and Michael Lundblad’s *The Birth of a Jungle: Animality in Progressive-Era U.S. Literature and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ See Kim TallBear’s essay “An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human” in *GLQ* 21.2-3 as well as the essay collection *Intimate Nature*, edited by Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, and Brenda Peterson.

⁵² The major work at the intersection of animal studies and disability studies is Sunaura Taylor’s *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (The New Press, 2016), a book that shows how dominant visions of ableism “not only affect disabled individuals and the able-bodied population, but also the nonhuman animals with whom we share this planet” (21).

certainly a close cousin of exploitation.⁵³ This relates to the second most obvious problem, the always-loaded question of consent at work in human-animal love. Finally, consideration of the human-canine bond in particular leads to the question this chapter will examine at length: what species and people do certain human-nonhuman love relationships exclude and harm? How does inviting certain animals into the privileged fold of the human—a category that is always already raced, gendered, and ableized—reinforce the troublesome Orwellian maxim that some species, some types, are more equal than others? Beyond these general concerns raised by interspecies erotics, there is the more specific problem of the privileged position of dogs, our “partners in the crime of the human evolution” (Haraway, *Companion* 5). According to ecologist Kelsey E. Witt, although the “exact origin of domestic dogs is uncertain” DNA evidence suggests that canine “domestication could have taken place in excess of 33, 000 years BP [before present]” (105). Certainly, “dogs were domesticated before the advent of agriculture” (Witt et al, 106), meaning that humans have lived alongside canines longer than goats, cattle, or chickens. As Haraway evocatively details in *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Human-dog affection is perhaps the oldest and most familiar form of

⁵³ Darwin himself compared domestication to slavery: “[a]nimals—whom we have made our slaves we do not like to consider out equals” (*Notebooks* 228). More recently, Marjorie Spiegel has made a similarly provocative argument through the image and text in her 1988 book *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (36-7). Gary L. Francione’s book-length debate with Robert Garner, *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation* (Columbia 2010) offers a useful summary of the two major positions on animal domestication: abolitionism and welfarism. Francione, who takes a radical abolitionist approach, is perhaps the most virulent critic of animal domestication writing today, demanding that humans “cease bringing domesticated nonhumans into existence” (1). In *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have offered a rigorous and nuanced analysis of this topic, advancing a “citizenship model for domesticated animals” and analyzing a group called “liminal animals” (101, 210)—rats, squirrels, raccoons, so-called “wild animals” that “live, and have always lived, amongst us” (210). The robust and ongoing debate around the highly contentious topic of animal domestication lies, however, beyond the purview of my own research and expertise.

interspecies intimacy. No wonder, then, that humans love dogs: the rewards of this love are writ deeply on many of our genetic and ancestral narratives and traditions.

Recent scholarship probing the intersections of racialization and human-canine relationships informs my own critical approach to what I see as a traditional over-emphasis on the role of dogs and dog love in animal studies. Recent works by scholars such as Claire Jean Kim, Carla Freccero, and Harlan Weaver have helped to temper this trend by examining the links and overlapping oppressions of racialized humans and canines. As Kim demonstrates in her analysis of star NFL quarterback Michael Vick's dogfighting notoriety, dogs can become racialized: "The pit bull is now raced Black in the American imagination" (272). On the flip side, as Weaver notes, in the media coverage Vick also became subject to "racialization by animalization" through his association with pit bulls (Weaver 347).⁵⁴ While certain dog breeds such as pit bulls and Presa Canarios can become aligned with racial otherness in the white cultural imaginary (Freccero 189), Tyler Wall demonstrates how dogs can also be brought into the privileged fold of whiteness. Wall notes that in the United States the "breed problematically known as 'German Shepherd' and 'Alsatian'" has become aligned with racism and systemic police brutality "against black people" through its service in the American K-9 unit (865, 863). Following the trail of Wall's analysis of the K-9 as an enforcer of racial terror, I add a specifically literary focus on dogs as aides to a project of Nordic-Anglo dominance in *The Call*.

⁵⁴ The incident as a whole is a case study in the often conjoined and overlapping oppressions of racism and speciesism, circulating through the vortex of the bestial. The popular media's association of Vick's behaviour, as a black athlete, with barbarism, hip-hop culture, and animality lead Megan H. Glick to argue that during this case Vick became an ambassador of "the specter of imagined black male violence that haunts US public culture" (640).

The remainder of this chapter shows how *The Call of the Wild* serves as a literary exemplar of the sinister side of dog love, a textual site of homo-canine violence as it plays out on the rugged manscape of London's northern American frontier. By making this argument, I do not mean to situate London's tale as a literary boogeyman, to be culled from libraries and university course outlines. *The Call* certainly has its merits; the tale's attendance to species drift, exploration of interspecies *eros*, and advocacy of the value of nonhuman animal life are all commendable and ahead of their time. Ethologist Konrad Lorenz praised the text for its scientific veracity and realistic portrayal of canine behaviour (McHugh 214). As Carswell notes, "London's dramatization of animal minds" in *The Call* and his other dog stories "challenged deeply entrenched views about the mental capacities of animals" (307).⁵⁵ Furthermore, *The Call* is a truly post-Darwinian text insofar as it dramatizes, in John Bruni's words, a "fluid model of evolution that destabilizes identity" (61), particularly species categorization. This tale welds a join between the human and canine species, to some extent debunking human exceptionalism by opening a space for species flux built on the crucial "ongoing co-evolution of humans and their companion species, dogs" (Bruni 62). Nor is *The Call*'s achievement limited to its function as a visionary text vis-à-vis animal consciousness and evolution. It is also a commendable aesthetic achievement. The tale is, in the words of Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, "unique in its appeal to readers of all ages, social classes and civilizations" (20); there is good reason why since its publication *The Call* has been "the most widely

⁵⁵ Bruni tempers this claim, noting that London "denies his canine actors the power of abstract thinking and evidence of complex reasoning" (61). Yet, crucially, "London remains suspicious of claims about human superiority" (Bruni 61).

read American novel in the world” (Tavernier-Courbin 20). It is a “an exhilarating tale of adventure” (Tavernier-Courbin 20)—a dense, evocative, propulsive tale of struggle and might in harsh climes coupled with profound, melancholy explorations of the primal mnemonics of deep time. What I add to evaluations of *The Call* offered by the likes of Carswell, Bruni, and Tavernier-Courbin is an emphasis on the (homo)erotic bond between Thornton and Buck, the sense in which the dog becomes an avatar for the mastery of a particular and troubling vision of the human. The dog, in London’s hands, becomes, via erotic connection, a dangerous prosthetic extension of the human body. *The Call*, so appealing to the American popular reader, also advocates Nordic supremacy and a particular vision of the privileged (white, male) human, defended through canine violence. The text’s popularity, therefore, renders its message of white male homo-canine conquest all the more nefarious.

Steeped as he was in the ideology of social Darwinism,⁵⁶ instances of London’s racism are not difficult to locate.⁵⁷ Some of his most racist works, such as the 1917 social tract against on immigration, “The Human Drift,” are basically unreadable in their bigotry. But London’s unsettling social Darwinism emerges most clearly in “The Salt of the Earth,” an essay written in 1902, the same year he started work on *The Call*. Here London refers to “breeds and breeds of men” (103), emphasizing that “superior races” are justified in their execution of the will to dominate “the weak breeds” (106).

⁵⁶ See Métraux (46) and Tavernier-Courbin (9).

⁵⁷ Disparaging remarks about Asians in the 1904 dispatch “Beware the Monkey Cage” cause John R. Eperjesi to argue that London “fixed the idea of yellow peril in the minds of turn-of-the-century Americans” (108). Yet, as an astute reader of Darwin, London was not a card-carrying humanist. He acknowledges the arbitrary and anti-teleological forces governing Darwinian evolution, and refers to humanity as “pigmy man” (“Salt” 102). What London does show, through *The Call*, is the way animals can be enfolded into human visions of exemplarity. Buck becomes a paragon of what might be usefully termed “American animal exceptionalism,” demonstrating how certain animals—German shepherds, American eagles, Canadian beavers—become cornerstones of nationalist ideologies.

Acknowledging that evolution would eventually shift the terms of the game, London deemed that the fittest breed from the vantage of the early twentieth century was “the Anglo-Saxon race” (“Salt” 104), which consists of “the English-speaking people of the world” (“Salt” 104). Clearly, London’s mind at the time of writing *The Call* was brimming with notions of white Anglophone superiority, a worldview that the text itself certainly bears out.

The first stage of *The Call*’s voyage into darkness is Buck’s gradual process of growing into violent mastery. *The Call* is a paean of homo-canine intimacy, a story of “passionate love” that crooningly yokes a man (Tavernier-Courbin 100), Thornton, with his canine companion, Buck. Before the lovers meet, though, Buck must endure a period of protracted suffering in which he develops from a regal Californian loafer into a brutal avatar of the North. The tale’s action begins when the racialized laborer Manuel steals Buck from his indolent life in the “sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley” (3), to be sold into the Arctic. After this, Buck’s affiliation with human violence begins to develop through the cruel handling of his first, vicious tamer: “his madness knew no caution. A dozen times he charged, and as often the club broke the charge and smashed him down” (8). Soon after arriving in the harsh wilderness of the Klondike to work as a sled dog for the mail carriers François and Perrault, Buck witnesses the gory death of his canine friend Curly at the jaws of a pack of “wolfish creatures” (12). For Buck, the Klondike involves an ongoing struggle against starvation, and, after being sold, the wretched agonies of hauling the sled for the naïve, reckless, and feminized American gold seekers Mercedes, Hal, and Charles. After Thornton rescues Buck from the cruel and incompetent

Americans, the novel's racy thematic of interspecies *eros* begins to burn through the harsh ice of the Klondike.

The bond that develops between Thornton and Buck is resoundingly, shudderingly erotic—Lundblad memorably describes their relationship as one where “erotic fireworks . . . light up the wild” (7). After Thornton rescues Buck from the incompetent, feminized American trio, their interspecies courtship builds through anthropo-sexualized foreplay involving dirty talk and love bites before Thornton purrs (London 52, 60), at the pivotal moment, “[a]s you love me, Buck. As you love me” (60). Although this relationship is clearly thick with the froth of *eros*, we should nonetheless be cautious about concluding, with Scott Derrick, that “London employs a narrative teleology aimed at the construction of heterosexual masculinity to repress and marginalize a finally unacceptable and disruptive homoeroticism” (111). One weakness of reading *The Call* in this way is that it mutes the potential valences of the interspecies homosocial. It presumes that Thornton and Buck’s love affair would culminate in sexual fulfilment or the frustrated lack thereof, rather than accepting, with Lundblad, that *The Call* suggests “that a whole range of erotic pleasures and behaviors between humans and animals are possible” and that “interspecies erotics” should not “be seen only as a substitution for intrahuman desires” (67). Though Lundblad does not actually name any of the myriad “pleasures and behaviours” to which he alludes, I agree with his warning against the panic response that too-quickly reduces interspecies erotics to a pathologized

bestiality or a sublimated human-human desire.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, as I stress here, there is a clear sinister underside to the interspecies eroticism at work in *The Call*.

If animal studies scholars have tended to overlook the sinister side of dog love, Americanist critics such as Mark Seltzer, Jonathan Auerbach, and most recently John Bruni take a more level approach to London's complex, multifaceted, and at times problematic portrayal of the privileged canine. The traditional critical view reads Buck as primarily a metonymical tool, a canine literary prosthesis. Tavernier-Courbin typifies this line of thinking: "London's use of a fur-coated hero allows him to say much more about the human situation than would otherwise have been acceptable" (21). The use of a canine protagonist, in other words, allows London to more covertly express his philosophical and socio-political agendas. Notably, this ventriloquism adds a meta-fictional level to the dynamic of homo-canine exceptionalism—the literary canine becomes a puppet designed to achieve mastery for the human author.

More recent critics have tempered such claims, tending to read Buck, at least partly, as a genuinely canine character rather than a placeholder. Although Mark Seltzer's memorable identification of London's wolf-dogs as "men in furs" suggests a kink-shaded story-world where man-dog love becomes a "displacement of sexual desire between human males" (Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* 167; Lundblad 63), the recent critical consensus wisely steers away from reading London's dogs or wolves as bare allegories. In fact, the allegorical reading has become something of a straw target. Lundblad, for example, claims that "readings of *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White*

⁵⁸ Lundblad calls "bestiality" the "only available signifier" of interspecies erotics (67), ignoring the term "zoophilia." Most humans who have sex with nonhuman animals today self-identify as "zoophiles" or "zoos."

Fang (1906) tend to choose between either an emphasis on human sexuality dressed up as animal representation or an assertion of ‘realistic’ animal stories devoid of interspecies sexuality” (48). What Lundblad’s critique seems to miss, though, is Seltzer’s crucial point that London’s “men in furs” demonstrate “the redrawing of the uncertain line between the human and the animal” (Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* 170). Likewise, Auerbach, who certainly does not ignore the wolfish eroticisms of London’s fiction, notes that “*The Call of The Wild*’s very resistance to transparent allegory . . . is remarkable insofar as we continue to imagine London’s hero as a dog despite all his complex mental attributes” (91). Auerbach and Seltzer’s analyses of the plasticity of species boundaries in *The Call* prefigure Lundblad’s analysis as well as my own. *The Call* does not offer an easy allegory; rather, it dramatizes a complex, if at times phenomenologically problematic, canine character immersed in a literary tapestry interwoven with complex and myriad symbols and propelled by the fluttering winds of species drift.

The Call is above all a eugenic tale of Nordic man-dog conquest. London explores the thematics of genetic/breed superiority through Buck, whom the author presents in regal terms from the outset of the novel: “For he was king” (5). The nobility in Buck’s blood runs deeper than traceable pedigree; it is an atavistic, Nietzschean predisposition to dominance. Unlike Toots, the diminutive purebred Japanese Pug who lives alongside Buck in California, Buck achieves royal status from his large size, his innate nobility, and his very hybridity. London’s primary “fascination” was the “the figure of the wolf-dog hybrid” (Carswell 323), a uniquely versatile being at the fringe of civilization and the wild. Buck thus embodies the curious admixture present in many of

London's idealized characters; he is genetically virtuous but not over-civilized, well-bred but prepared to tackle and mount the sublime adversity of nature.⁵⁹

Buck thus comes to demonstrate the complex ways in which animals correspond to and trouble human categories of race. Harriet Ritvo points to the intersection between animal companions and human class identity in nineteenth-century Britain, where “keeping a well-bred dog metonymically allied its owner with the upper ranges of society” (96). The right pet, in other words, served as a racial-social prosthesis, enabling a person to transcend barriers of class and blood. Just as animals could elevate human social status, so they could take on undesirable human racial baggage. Jackson speaks to the historical distinction between the “black ‘savage’” and “white humans *and* animals” (678), demonstrating how racialized people may not be granted full entry into the fold of “the human” while certain nonhuman animals (Buck) may be permitted to enter the sanitized purview of whiteness. To what extent did ideologies such as London's help to create such a hauntology of animalization-racialization? Certainly, London's text demonstrates the way certain racially sanctioned forms of queerness—Buck and Thornton's exemplary love—are permitted to exist within bubbles of racial privilege while certain others—Michael Vick's relation to his “queer kin” (Weaver 349)—become the subjects of phobic racial scrutiny, paranoia, and fear-mongering.

In *The Call*, gender triangulates the complex and contested race-species taxonomic continuum. One of the primary agendas of *The Call*'s homo-canine

⁵⁹ Tavernier-Courbin correctly notes that London remained fascinated “by the clash between conflicting concepts” (9). Hence he was “at once a racist, a Nietzschean, a fascist, a humanist, an animal lover, an animal hater, a socialist, an elitist, a spiritualist, a materialist” (9). It is this highly Nietzschean tendency to revel in tension rather than advancing a clear philosophical program that makes London both frustrating and enormously rewarding as an object of analysis. Nonetheless, the first three leanings Tavernier-Courbin identifies—a “racist, a Nietzschean, a fascist”—are perhaps the most prominent.

exceptionalist conquest is the purgation of the feminine from the North. London's dramatization of the homo-canine conquest of the vast and harsh northland is certainly far removed from the view of "nature" as traditionally "female" (Merchant 10), widely held at the time of London's writing.⁶⁰ Buck's newfound habitat is neither the "female earth and virgin earth spirit" nor the "nurturing mother" (Merchant 11, 10); it is on the contrary aggressively, relentlessly, and tenderly male. It is no secret that London, at least in his depictions of "the great white male north" (Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* 167), was not a particular fan of women and femininity. Jennifer Mason notes that *The Call* "contains few female characters of any species" and that the "novel's most prominent female dog, Curly, dies on her first day in the Yukon" (161).⁶¹ Likewise, Scott Derrick suggests that London distinguishes between a "homosocial love of men and an eroticism phobically rejected as lower class filth and feminization" (110). London's mythos, then, destabilizes the traditional nexus of class/gender, casting a femininity traditionally

⁶⁰ Carolyn Merchant is writing critically, here, about the notion, prevalent throughout the nineteenth century, that nature and the wilderness were feminine spaces in need of masculine conquest. Such a view appears in Frederick Jackson Turner's touchstone 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In Anette Kolodny's words, for Turner, "the West was a woman" (136), ready to be conquered and fertilized by male colonialist endeavour. It is just such a view that Merchant, author of *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper & Row, 1980), sets out to expose and correct. London, however, approaches the gendering of nature from a different angle, evincing clear disdain for the feminizing influence of civilization and a desire to return to the primal masculinity of the imaginary, primordial wild. As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson point out in their Introduction to their incisive volume *Queer Ecologies*, London's turn to the masculine wild, is, in fact, symptomatic of a larger cultural shift: In "the late nineteenth century" North American cities became, increasingly, "emasculating spaces of domesticity" (3), creating "a huge amount of social anxiety, particularly for elite white men" who sought solace in the outdoors, "a new space for elite enactments of white male superiority" (3).

⁶¹ In a similar vein, Bruni writes of London's "masculine drive for power and mastery" and *The Call's* "erasure of female animal bodies" (69).

marked as civilized as instead scornfully plebeian. The feminine, here, represents only chaos, decadence, and confusion.⁶²

London's attempt to purge the domestic feminine from his vision of the north emerges most clearly through the death of Mercedes, *The Call*'s only female character of note. Mercedes is "pretty and soft" (46), demands superfluous "chivalrous treatment" (46), slows her party down by refusing to walk and weighing down the sled (46), and near her final moments succumbs to a bout of "hysteria" (50). A tone of severe heterosexual panic colors Mercedes' brief and fatal sojourn in the Klondike. This woman has made an unwarranted approach on the male body of the north—her insistence that she bring an overloaded tent with her onto the dangerous thin ice of the Klondike trails may even be the novel's only allusion to heterosexual sex between humans (41)—perhaps she wants the tent so she can copulate with her husband in private. London's hetero-masculine panic activates here, mirroring the familiar patterns of homosexual panic, in a moment of heated violence when he sends Mercedes and her feminized cronies to a humiliating and gratuitous death: "Mercedes' scream came to their ears . . . and the whole section of ice gave way and dogs and humans disappear. [sic] A yawning hole was all that was to be seen. The bottom had dropped out of the trail" (50). London constructs his narrative so that Mercedes' scream comes as a delight—she has been nothing but an irritant and a tyrant to the heroic Buck. Nonetheless, Mercedes' dying wail reverberates hauntingly as the last cry of the single notable human female in the

⁶² London's phobic response to femininity is at least in part a panic regarding the erosion of the frontier. Amy Kaplan argues that in the nineteenth century "the discourse of domesticity was intimately intertwined with the discourse of Manifest Destiny" and that "'woman's true sphere' was in fact a mobile and mobilizing outpost that transformed conquered foreign lands into the domestic sphere of the family and the nation" (24, 25). Kaplan's argument is that the process of nation-building was in fact a movement of domestication—London's masculinized wilderness could never survive long-term against the encroaching march of the feminized domestic.

story. Homo-canine exceptionalism, as London articulates it in *The Call*, is not only a space of racial exclusivity; it also offers no place for the human female. In the tale, Mercedes' hubristic death—the Americans carried far too much equipment over the thinning spring ice—also comes just after the *deus ex machina* when Buck meets Thornton, his “ideal master” (52), emphasizing the sense that this sudden and decisive amputation of the novel's feminine appendages lays the ground for the subsequent flourishing of the novel's main male-male interspecies romance.

Death—human and animal—is central to London's mythology of the North. London developed his ideal of the homo-canine exceptionalist northland during his own stay in the Yukon.⁶³ Among the most powerful encounters with nonhuman life during this period surely took place during the passage over Chilkoot Pass, from Dyea towards the Yukon, which London and his companions hazarded in August 1897. Here they encountered a “morbid tragedy of dying horses” (Walker, *Jack London and the Klondike* 69), a standard experience when heading to the Yukon, where routes were usually “permeated with the stench of rotting horseflesh” (Labor 101). Hundreds of equines had been imported as pack animals but could not travel the treacherous slopes. They perished ignominiously, “almost to an animal” (Walker, *Jack London and the Klondike* 69), their enormous bodies rotting in the mudholes that lined the trail. This early glimpse of animal life in the Klondike confirmed the hardline “survival of the fittest” stance London would

⁶³ In contrast to the mythos he successfully created, London may not have known much about dogs or dog-sleds after surviving one unprofitable winter in the north. The question of London's affiliation with sled-dogs during his time in the Klondike remains, as Franklin Walker notes, “a matter for conjecture” (147). Whatever his own personal involvement, the culture of human-canine relations in the northland had a profound influence on London's literary development.

subsequently mine in his fiction. Further, it must have instilled in him the sense that life in the northland depended on the covenant between men and dogs.

Learning to enact the homo-canine colonization of the wild, Buck must begin to compete and kill. It is during Buck's first hunt, a harried chase after a snowshoe rabbit while he is still living with the couriers François and Perrault, that Buck encounters and defeats his sled-team rival, Spitz. While Lundblad rightly notes that this passage evokes "an erotics of the animal body expressed through the thrill of the hunt" (Lundblad 65), what is perhaps most striking about the passage is London's choice of the word "intimate." Much like sex, killing in the primal sense involves oral contact with a variety of body parts, the exchange of body fluids, and a state of exhilaration and heightened stimulation. Further, as philosophical ethologist Dominique Lestel notes, in the act of eating the flesh of another creature one initiates a "metabolic relationship" between bodies (165), suggesting an intimacy at work in the digestive process. Buck's hunt, though, veers away from the erotics of eating and towards a different kind of intimacy: an athletic contest. When Spitz and Buck finally turn on one another, they meet in a clutching scramble of "passion" and "bitter rage" while the onlooking pack sings "a hell's chorus of delight" (29). The scene has the feel of orgiastic ritual, where flesh meets flesh and body fluids converge. After his victory, Buck becomes "the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good" (30). In the original structure of the wolf pack, such a contest would have been social/sexual, two males competing to become the "breeding male" and gain access to the "breeding female" (Marvin, *Wolf* 33). But there are no canine females in this picture, nor even any canine homosexuality. Mastery, here, becomes an end in itself. Buck's prize is receiving "the duties of

leadership” on the sled team (33), and the lesson stitched into this novel of love is that Buck will be rewarded for violence and domination.⁶⁴

As if training to dominate the wild,⁶⁵ Buck’s journey requires him to complete feats of athletic prowess involving varying degrees of violence. When a rich troublemaker offers to bet Thornton that Buck can’t pull a thousand pounds, Thornton agrees to bet a thousand dollars he doesn’t have on Buck’s physical prowess. The narrator’s statement that Thornton makes this foolish bet because his “fighting spirit” is “aroused” underlines the more general sense that the athletic competition is a sublimated version of more corporeal instincts (59). Symptomatic of ancient traditions of men watching and wagering as animal bodies compete, eroticism pervades this moment of athletic intimacy. Buck’s ultimate victory is spurred on by Thornton’s “soft love curses” and the famous whisper (60): “[a]s you love me, Buck” (60). Lundblad has pointed to the erotics between Thornton and Buck in this scene (64), so palpable that they make the spectators retreat “to a respectful distance” (*The Call* 61). But what has not been

⁶⁴ Human-canine athletic intimacy is also one of the fundamentals of the frontier-making project. In *A Dog’s History of America*, Mark Derr details a late-nineteenth-century American hunting trip in which five men and a retinue of pointers slaughtered 1, 262 animals, including “127 bison, 2 red deer, 11 antelope, 154 turkeys, 5 geese, 223 teal, 45 mallards, . . . and 11 rattlesnakes” (175). The dog, as the companion and handmaid of eager sportsmen, was a crucial part of the massive-scale eradication of wildlife on the Great Plains in the latter half of the nineteenth century, of which the bison has become the most potent exemplar.

⁶⁵ The wild and the wilderness are tricky and slippery concepts, which ecocriticism has for some decades sought to dismantle. In his 1995 essay “The Trouble with Wilderness,” William Cronon reveals the physical and imaginative constructions underlying common ideas of the wilderness and suggests that the troublesome and illusory concept of the wilderness contributes to “our culture’s problematic relationships with the nonhuman world” (102). Such work demonstrates, crucially, that there is no pure point of demarcation between the wild and civilization. Another spin on the wild has emerged recently at the nexus of queer theory and critical race studies. Tavia Nyong’o offers a helpful articulation of the emerging consensus: “wildness has emerged as a motif in a coalescing intellectual project interested in moving beyond humanist and state-centered politics and theories” (258). Seeking to reinvigorate the concept, Jack Halberstam’s essay “Go Gaga” couples Fred Moten’s black anarchism with José Esteban Muñoz’s vision of “queer potentiality” (125), finding the best exemplars of the wild in “[p]erformative excess” (128) such as the howls of punk diva Rhoda Dakar. My own use of the term the “wild” in this article is grounded in the way London used it in 1903: as something primitive, violent, and enormously compelling, a “transcendent nature” free of “the contaminating taint of civilization” (Cronon 102).

emphasized is the way in which Buck's body becomes a prosthetic vehicle for Thornton's success. Buck's muscles, "hard as iron" (59), evoke both a state of phallic excitement and a sense of the mechanical. This is, notably, a particularly technological feat of strength—Buck is fastened into a sled normally pulled by ten dogs. Spurred on by Thornton's voice, man and dog become yoked here by a litany of human technologies—sled, collar, voice, text. The author occupies the canine point of view as the human character both mechanically restrains his lover and spurs him on with vocal commands. As much as this is an erotic moment, it is also a moment about bodies and technologies coming together in the push and pull of prosthetic species drift.

As the novel moves towards its climax of Anglo-Saxon wish fulfillment, Buck's athletic trials become increasingly violent. Affirming his place as a representative of a "superior" species, yoked into the fold of homo-canine exceptionalism, Buck partakes in the all-too-human custom of killing for sport. Catherine Bates notes that "[t]he hunt has been associated with heroic masculinity from very early in the literary tradition of the west" (1), and it is in this recognizably human theatre—ritualistically slaughtering nonhuman animals—that Buck finally earns his canine manhood. After killing a large black bear and two wolverines (67), Buck initiates an extended, sensational confrontation with a bull moose. Although the narrator claims that Buck kills only "to eat" (68), his impulse to take down a bull moose emerges clearly as an impulse to prove mastery, a Nietzschean "will to power" (*Genealogy* 77).⁶⁶ He becomes, in other words, a fetishized Anglo-Saxon incarnation of the kind of predatory, masculinized animality

⁶⁶ It is well known that London was a great admirer of Friedrich Nietzsche; Auerbach writes, for example, of London's "preoccupation with Nietzschean supermen" (95).

Freccero, building on Jacques Derrida's notion of carno-phallogocentrism, characterizes as "carnivorous virility" (183). Here Buck becomes the nonhuman prosthesis of a racist, white, human will to dominate non-white humans and the vast majority of species deemed to be killable. Buck, who has no problem murdering snakes, ptarmigans, chipmunks, rabbits, beaver, and fish (68), goes after this moose not just for sustenance but also for sport: "he wished strongly for larger and more formidable quarry" (69). What Buck is developing, then, is not a taste for meat but a thirst for an unpleasantly human-like brand of mastery and domination. Recent evidence on the social organization of *Canis lupus* has been moving away from the traditional understanding of "a strictly hierarchical structure of dominance and submission" in favor of viewing wolf packs as "quasi-democratic" societies (Marvin, *Wolf* 31, 34). Seen in this light, Buck's escalating bloodlust makes him not more wolfish but more violent, aggressive, wasteful, and greedy. In short, more human. In his violent rampages, Buck leaves Thornton behind but maintains his metonymic connection to a violent, imperialist human exceptionalism.

If London's campaign of Nordic bestial imperialism—Buck loosed on the wild and devouring creature after creature for food and sport—is not already troublesome enough, a responsible conclusion of this analysis demands sustained attention to his final feat of carnal ferocity. Buck's last sportive victory serves as a racially charged apex of canine virility's triumph over the frontier. After defeating the moose, Buck returns to John Thornton to find that the camp has been pillaged by a group of fictional Indigenous "Yeehats." The Yeehats have killed John Thornton, and Buck responds in the novel's climax of species panic, becoming "a live hurricane of fury" (72), tearing several throats open before driving off the tribe, thus gaining their respect. One way to read Buck's

ultimate slaughter is as a psychoanalytic self-overcoming, a “kind of parody of the primal horde of sons whom Freud imagines as slaying the father in *Totem and Taboo* Having tasted men’s blood . . . the dog-hero is finally free to become Top Wolf” (Auerbach 110). But this Freudian reading too simply differentiates between species, dividing canine and human into isolated spheres and eliding racial, ethnic, and gender particularities that persistently complicate species identity. The other, more explicit way to read the climactic flurry of canine-human murder is as a twisted act of love. The narrator is explicit: this outburst of violence occurs “because of [Buck’s] great love for John Thornton” (72). Buck, here, does not simply slaughter any old human. He massacres a swarm of Indigenous rivals, serving as a posthumous prosthesis for the white masculinist dream of homo-canine exceptionalist conquest. Buck, after deciding to return from the wild to his human lover, loses his point of entry into the covenant of homo-canine exceptionalism, leading to a carnal frenzy of species panic against the racialized outsiders who have removed Buck’s prosthetic connection to human power.

Thornton, the human part of the prosthetic-erotic equation, dies in the end, and Buck permanently enters the wild. But is this a complete, unproblematic return to innate wildness? Three central pieces of textual evidence suggest otherwise. The first is the one I’ve lingered on above—Buck’s vengeful slaughter of the Indigenous marauders in the name of white human-canine exceptionalist mastery. Even after the death of his human lover, Buck continues to enact violence in the name of a Nordic exceptionalism from which the Indigenous peoples are excluded. He is, in other words, the blond and Nordic-coded representative of London’s literary project of purification. Second, Buck’s entrance into the wild is one of reproductive colonization. After a few years, “the

Yeehats” take note of “a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and *with a rift of white* centering down the chest” (74, emphasis mine).⁶⁷ Buck has dominated the pack enough to become the breeding male, spreading his seed among the females and permanently marking the wild with his genetic signature—the unmistakable mark of whiteness spreading through the north. This final, crucial gesture relocates Buck from the realm of male-male interspecies erotics into a more repronormative vision of fertilization and colonization of the wild. Crucially, though, dogs and wolves are distinct species. So, while sex between *Canis lupus* and *Canis familiaris* is relatively commonplace, it remains a species-transgressive act. In his colonization of the wild, Buck makes the wolves of the future less wolfish, marking the denizens of the wild with his innate prowess, coded through his dubious affiliation with London’s vision of Anglo-Saxon “nobility,” emphasized here through the genetic signature of whiteness. In the wild, Buck quickly becomes a leader of wolves, “running at the head of the pack” and “leaping gigantic among his fellows” (75). Rather than becoming-wolf, Buck is an overcoming-wolf, a Nietzschean übercanine shimmering under the “glimmering borealis” (75), a Nordic halo beaming through the murk of the wild.

Ultimately, Buck is able to subdue the wild because he is not of the wild. Said to move “imperiously” and to “carry himself in right royal fashion” (4), Buck has from the beginning been naturalized as a leader. And even as he returns to his primitive

⁶⁷ Lundblad reads this moment as demonstrating the “mark of Buck’s heterosexual ‘success’ at propagation” (64), and certainly this analytic is present. One way to read Buck’s sexual development is according to the familiar “it’s just a stage” framework of homoeroticism, which Jeff Nunokawa describes in the context of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*: “a developmental model of male sexuality . . . establishes the homoerotic as an early phase that enables and defines the heterosexual” (428). Buck, then, having moved through his queer phase of privileged interspecies queerness, enters the fold of intraspecies heteronormativity after Thornton’s death.

animalism, Buck retains an aura of a European-coded human exceptionalism. In the end, London describes Buck as a kind of superwolf: “a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves” (74). Though he has access to the terrain, purview, prey, and claim to “wildness,” Buck remains importantly distinct from the native timber wolves. It is crucial to recall Buck’s pedigree: he is half St. Bernard and half Scotch shepherd. According to the American Kennel Club’s *The New Complete Dog Book*, the St. Bernard originated in Europe between 1660 and 1670 (400). Currently the national dog of Switzerland, the breed received its official name in 1880 and was recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC) in 1885. The Scotch shepherd is not an AKC-recognized breed but is presumably related to the Border Collie, a breed of sheep dogs from the England-Scotland border region. Purebred or not, Buck is unmistakably European. As John Grier Varner and Jeanette Johnson Varner note in *Dogs of the Conquest*, European dogs have long been instruments of colonial violence. Playing “a significant part in the conquest” of Spain (xiii), dogs were often involved in “brutality” and “‘man’s best friend’ functioned in the conquest as a lethal weapon of war” (xiv). While a European-descended dog such as Buck is a transplant on the continent and a descendent of colonialist violence,⁶⁸ wolves are indigenous to the Americas. Buck’s mastery over the Klondike timber wolves, then, serves as an unsavoury reflection of the dog-aided European subjugation of Indigenous peoples across the Americas.

An astute reader might ask, here, whether I am overstating the extent to which a dog can be complicit in the project of human colonialism. The question of Buck’s

⁶⁸ Some Indigenous groups did keep domestic dogs before European contact, but this was relatively rare (Varner and Varner xiv).

relative agency and autonomy is a crucial one for animal studies, and, as I noted previously, London is a progressive writer of animal minds.⁶⁹ Certainly, there is room to sympathize with Buck on the grounds that he has little choice regarding his master, whether that master be Thornton or London himself. Furthermore, a dog's nature is to be obedient and subservient to human mastery, therefore Buck's complicity is limited; Buck is simply attempting to make the best of his own situation by serving a beloved master and following his instincts. My own analysis, though, reads Buck as a product of London's literary project of homo-canine exceptionalist myth-making. I am reading Buck primarily as a literary artifact, but it's important to recall "the indelible link between an animal signifier and its referents, as well as the purity of the natural 'real'" (Chen 101). I am reading Buck, here, primarily as a symbolic animal. But I also believe, as a literary scholar, that symbols matter, and matter enormously—that symbols, indeed, are one of the most fundamental ways we make, shape, and navigate our psychological worlds. Buck, as literary technology, becomes a tool in the service of a human ideological project—one that has come to look, given more than a hundred years of hindsight, nefarious in its celebration of human-enabled Euro-canine mastery over the Indigenous people and animals of the north.

If Buck, as literary artifact, remains fixed to his authorial human creator, as character he also retains a genuine emotional attachment to his sometime human master/lover. Even after Buck has left human civilization behind for good, human-canine love haunts the story's denouement. Buck's melancholic return to the site of Thornton's death to howl, "long and mournfully" (75), after his departed bosom buddy suggests a

⁶⁹ For a thoughtful and thorough analysis of the role of choice in *The Call* see Carswell 314-16.

continuation of Buck's attachment to the human. Rather than fully turning away from humanity and entering the anonymity of the wild, Buck remains a champion of the human-canine bond. Significantly, the book ends with a flash-forward summary of Yeehat glimpses of Buck travelling among the wild wolves: a "gloriously coated" creature running "at the head of the pack" and habitually "slaying" the Yeehat hunters as well as their dogs (74). In addition to his reproductive triumph, Buck also continues to freely kill "the noblest game of all," clearly killing Yeehat men for sport. Even as he calls out over heath and knoll for his lost white companion, Buck continues to people canine world with white-coated wolf babies while murdering the Indigenous denizens of the Klondike for pleasure. He comes to embody, in other words, a menacing fantasy of white frontier conquest and Indian killing—a great white wolf howling across the disappearing frontier.

Jack London was born in San Francisco in 1876, just a few years after the end of the California Gold Rush. Clifford E. Trafzer and Joel R. Hyer characterize California in the mid-nineteenth century thus: "Holocaust is an excellent word to use to describe the terror, death, and destruction brought to Native Americans in California during the era of the Gold Rush. One might also use the words extermination, debasement, or genocide to depict Indian-white relations from 1848-68" (1). Mexico ceded California to the U.S. in 1848, after which white violence against Indigenous peoples steadily escalated. In the 1860s, the native peoples were routinely terrorized by volunteer militia groups and more organized military campaigns and "[b]y 1870, the native population had declined to 20,000 people from 40,000" (Trafzer and Hyer 30). Prominent among the Californian Indigenous groups were the Yahi people, a name London presumably had in mind when

he invented his fictional “Yeehats.” Born into a world of frontier conquest and self-educated into social Darwinist ideology, London situates his most famous and memorable book around a climactic scene of Indigenous people being killed by the mouth of a European-descended canine. This troubling vision of the colonization of the wild by white men and their Nordic canine prostheses serves as a cautionary exemplar of the dangerous undercurrents of dog love. In spite of the temptation to celebrate dog love as a point of entry into “the animal,” London’s fantasy of human-canine colonial mastery remains a dream we would do well to enter with caution.

Chapter Two:

Anal-Animal Eroticism in Hemingway's *Corrida*

Athletic confrontations between bulls and men have long presented spectacles of male-male interspecies erotics. The Spanish bullfight is, according to James Serpell, the “nearest modern equivalent” of “Roman orgies of animal abuse” (219). In his 1988 study *Bullfight*, social anthropologist Garry Marvin notes that the entire drama of the “*corrida de toros*” (“the running of the bulls”) rides on the notion of “*compenetrado*” (85, 159), meaning “the closeness of the body of the man with that of the bull” (159). The matador, accompanied by a ceremonial coterie of men and ritualistically clothed in a dazzling “suit of lights” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 160), flirts with the deadly bovine body, gracefully working as close as he can to the massive bulk of the bull without succumbing to the deadly passivity of violent receptive penetration. The interspecies sexuality of this exchange is so palpable that, according to cultural lore, bullfighters “are believed occasionally to ejaculate during a particularly exhilarating and intense performance” (Pink 57). The drama of the bullfight hinges on the success of one male animal attempting to feminize and emasculate the other in an eroticized staging of species domination.⁷⁰ The athleticized male champion of the human species battles a powerful, dangerous, hyper-male and hyper-sexualized perfect physical specimen of the wild.⁷¹ If, as I will argue here, the bull is a symbol of a threatening anal eroticism that must be subdued to ensure the conquest of a phallic order, then the bullfight enacts a bizarrely

⁷⁰ The Spanish bullfight is about simultaneously diminishing the opponent’s wildness and masculinity: “In the *corrida*, the bull’s essential wild nature is gradually removed and the animal is, on a behavioural level, emasculated because the man refuses to allow it to exercise its wilful maleness” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 161).

⁷¹ Marvin notes that it is crucial for *aficionados* that the fighting bull or “*toro bravo*” is “regarded by Spaniards as a wild animal” (*Bullfight* 87).

queer spectacle of hetero-assertion. Here each male animal desperately attempts to dominate and penetrate the other precisely so that the threat of male-male *eros* may be eliminated via death, enabling a return to the heteronormative order. Bullfighting, strangely, becomes a queer moment of interspecies *eros* designed to nullify human queerness through the performative sacrifice of the threat of anal eroticism.

Jake Barnes, the protagonist of Ernest Hemingway's major 1926 bullfighting novel *The Sun Also Rises*, enters the novel having been queered by a permanent genital disability: his penis has presumably been amputated by a war wound and he is therefore rendered incapable of traditional forms of heteronormative sex.⁷² Agonizingly, he retains his lust for women such as his tragic paramour Brett Ashley. Jake's sexual affliction, then, takes place in the umbra where enforced sexual passivity overshadows desire. It has been routinely noted that like much of Hemingway's work *The Sun Also Rises* demonstrates the fragility and vulnerability of the hetero-masculine ideal Hemingway ostensibly championed.⁷³ Jake Barnes' homoerotic desire for Pedro Romero and Brett Ashley's masculinization through assertiveness and risqué, boyish hairstyle certainly invite such a reading.⁷⁴ What has not been explored is the way Hemingway develops Jake Barnes' masculine vulnerability through a remarkably queer bovine *eros*. While queer studies and disability studies have been cozy theoretical bedfellows for some time

⁷² Though the precise nature of Jake's genital dysfunction remains ambiguous throughout the novel, what is clear is that he cannot have sex. In an interview with George Plimpton, Hemingway provides the clearest hint to the nature of Jake's dysfunction, stating that Jake's "testicles were intact and not damaged. Thus he was capable of all normal feelings as a *man* but incapable of consummating them" (Brucoli 120).

⁷³ See, for example, John S. Bak's *Homo americanus* (2010), Debra A. Modellmog's *Reading Desire* (1999), and Scott St. Pierre's article "Bent Hemingway: Straightness, Sexuality, Style" (2010). For a comprehensive overview of the history of otherwise-than-straight readings of Hemingway, see Bak, 53-57.

⁷⁴ In spite of her gender-bending boyishness, Brett's body is clearly feminized: she is "built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht" (22). She is a bent figure, troubling between rigid 1920s notions of prescribed gender performance.

now, this chapter's methodological supposition is that the nonhuman focus of animal studies can productively triangulate this dialogue. Reading *The Sun Also Rises* in the wake of Leo Bersani's attempt to reformulate the anus as a productively negative queer space apart from the gay and straight dangers of "phallocentrism" suggests that this novel dramatizes the process of Jake Barnes coming to terms with the non-phallic sexuality inherent in his disabled body (Bersani 28).⁷⁵ Significantly, Jake's process of becoming queerly heterosexual entails a protracted tryst with nonhuman animals. In Pamplona, Jake hungrily watches a beautiful boy performing violently and erotically with a series of bulls. Jake's role as a spectator of human-bovine eros in Pamplona resembles what Kathryn Bond Stockton calls "an interval of animal" (94), a passing stage wherein Stockton's "queer child" negotiates early homoerotic desire through exchanges of intimacy and affection with domestic animals (106). Although critics generally read the bulls in *The Sun Also Rises* as avatars for phallic male sexuality—prosthetic testicles and penis extensions—this chapter reads the bull as a symbol of anal eroticism, arguing that Hemingway uses Jake Barnes to explore the (tragic) possibilities of a non-phallic sexuality through the athleticized and eroticized bovine body. The bull, here, takes on the baggage of the threat of anal sexuality—a sexuality Hemingway pathologizes as both animalistic and disabled, but a sexuality he also explores tenderly and genuinely in the novel's searching melancholy.

⁷⁵ In his queer-canonical 1987 essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?," Leo Bersani critiques the "idolatry of the cock" and suggests that the "rectum" may be "the grave in which the masculine ideal" can and should be "buried" (28, 29).

Jake Barnes as Queerly Disabled Heterosexual

Throughout his oeuvre, Ernest Hemingway weaves a complex tapestry of masculine scar tissue.⁷⁶ Writing in the shadow of World War I, Hemingway was perhaps one of the first and most articulate voices describing what Mark Seltzer would later call America's "wound culture" (*Serial Killers* 21). Mirroring Jake's absent penis, the shadow of World War I lurks hauntingly over the action of *The Sun Also Rises*. One extraordinary thing about Parisian life in the early 1920s would have been an astonishing increase in disabled bodies.⁷⁷ The world Hemingway encountered in the years leading up to writing this text was a world newly strewn with disability, and in *The Sun Also Rises* Hemingway explored questions of masculinity and disability through the spectacle of the *corrida*. The chapter to follow reads Jake Barnes' wound through the confluence of queer theory, disability studies, and the threatening presence of anal-animality.

Thanks, largely, to Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes' groundbreaking work *Hemingway's Genders* (1994), the past two decades have witnessed a flourish of scholarly work questioning the traditional image of Hemingway as a hyper-hetero author. If, as Bak writes, the "marriage of Hemingway and queer theory" once seemed "[u]nlikely" (53), this emergent critical conversation provides a clear indication of the

⁷⁶ As Thomas Strychacz notes, "[w]ounded and traumatized male characters fill the pages of [Hemingway's] fiction" ("Masculinity" 279). Moddelmog surveys the proliferation of male wounds in Hemingway's canon, a robust list ranging from Harry Morgan's amputated arm in *To Have and Have Not* to Santiago's skin cancer in *The Old Man and The Sea* (121-2). John S. Bak takes note of an entire sub-category of "sexual dysfunction novels" (58), including *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and the posthumously published *The Garden of Eden*. If not a repetition compulsion, wounds and disability are clearly a recurring interest for Hemingway.

⁷⁷ As Clancy Sigal notes, "In the actual Paris where the novel takes place you always saw *mutiles de guerre* on the streets, war-mutilated men on crutches or wearing eye patches, or hopping along on one leg or, in the case of double amputees, moving on rollers" (54).

relevance and potential of reading Hemingway beyond his self-styled legacy as a poster-boy of a white American hunter-ravager mythos.⁷⁸ Such research has opened the door to the closet of Hemingway's work, demonstrating that exciting, provocative, and important readings of Hemingway's writing are available beyond familiar forms of sex and gender normativity.

One of the places where the queer approach can merge with disability studies is in Hemingway's clear obsession with "the male wound" (Strychacz, "Masculinity" 280). As Dana Fore notes, Hemingway's work offers compelling terrain for analysis from the perspective of disability studies.⁷⁹ Examining the particulars of Jake Barnes' queerly disabled heterosexuality also helps to establish the parameters of the dynamics of anal-animal eroticism in Hemingway's novel. In its inherent resistance to normative notions of human bodily coherence, disability studies shares commonalities with the fields of posthumanism and animal studies.⁸⁰ As Cary Wolfe's work shows, liberal humanism has constructed an imperialistic paragon of subjectivity—the human body—built on the backs of an army of the subjugated others against which it defines itself (women, queers,

⁷⁸ At the biographical level, critics have taken varied stances on the question of Hemingway's relative queerness. Travelling an astonishing distance from biographer Jeffrey Meyers' panicked assertion that "there is not a shred of real evidence to suggest that Hemingway ever had any covert homosexual desires or overt homosexual relations" (202), Comley and Scholes conclude their book thus: "Have we been trying to show that Hemingway was gay? No. If anything, we have been trying to show that such a question is too simple" (143-44). Modellmog follows Comley and Scholes' deliberately inconclusive stance, not arguing that "Hemingway himself was homosexual" but insisting that "homosexual desire was among the desires he felt and depicted in his fiction, and we do a disservice to him and ourselves by not coming out and naming this desire for what it is" (85). These queer-friendly works endeavour to read Hemingway as more than the masculinist caricature he became, and to unveil the anxieties that undergirded this construction.

⁷⁹ "*The Sun Also Rises* articulates ideas currently debated within the field of disability studies An examination of these new concepts, in turn, allows a re-evaluation of Hemingway's attitudes towards wounds and masculinity" (33).

⁸⁰ Cary Wolfe argues that animal studies and disability studies are "two of the most philosophically ambitious and ethically challenging" field of cultural studies to emerge in recent years because they "pose fundamental challenges" to the liberal-humanist tradition and its model of subjectivity ("Learning From Temple Grandin" 110). For a forceful critique of Wolfe and Grandin's turn to disability, see Anat Pick's *Creaturely Poetics*, 204n10.

racialized peoples, disabled people, nonhuman animals and everyone else not welcomed into the purview of full humanity). Both animal studies and disability studies attempt to corrode this violently normalizing vision of the human body.

Lennard J. Davis emphasizes the importance of temporality in the cultural machinery of disability: “When one speaks of disability, one always associates it with a story, places it in a narrative. A person became deaf, became blind, was born blind, became quadriplegic. The disability immediately becomes part of a chronotope, a time-sequenced narrative, embedded in a story” (Davis 3). In the context of *The Sun Also Rises*, this urge to chronologize disability takes on another important valence; there is a ubiquitous fantasy of *recovery* at work in this novel and the discourse around it. A representative critic, Fore suggests that Jake’s story is about a “journey towards psychological wholeness” (339), as if he needs to find a way to compensate for his disability. Critics generally presume that part of Jake’s psychological journey is the attempt to regenerate his missing penis. I would like to suggest that one of the things Jake must relinquish is the fantasy of recovery, an impulse leading to an imaginary and always unattainable wholeness. Instead of overcoming his disability, he needs to learn to inhabit what Davis calls the “disabled moment” (4).

Jake Barnes embodies a radical conjunction of queerness and disability. His queerness first emerges at the end of the novel’s first chapter, when he announces his “rotten habit of picturing the bedroom scenes of [his] friends” (13). Here Jake signals that his own sexuality is both voyeuristic and abnormal, implying that sexual identity will be one of the novel’s thematics. The word “rotten”—which will reappear in a later, crucial moment of self-diagnosis—is a vital index of Jake’s understanding of his own

sexuality as something perverted by disability. When he solicits the attentions of the snaggletoothed prostitute, Georgette, the odd nature of his sexuality manifests physically for the first time: “She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away” (15). Jake recoils from Georgette’s touch, presumably directed towards the genitals. When she asks about his reaction, he admits that he is “sick” (15), or sexually abnormal. What is perhaps queerest about this is not that Jake is sexually ‘dysfunctional’ but that he initiates a dalliance with a prostitute in spite of his dysfunction. Whether or not he is capable of making love to Georgette, he wants to perform heterosexuality with her, theatrically introducing her to Robert Cohn and other friends as his “fiancée” (18). Jake lampoons heterosexuality in a fashion reminiscent of the closeted man, enacting public displays of sexual normalcy without having to actually perform in the bedroom.

The Sun Also Rises is, among other things, a novel about homosexual panic. This is characteristic of a writer who, in the words of biographer James R. Mellow, “despised male homosexuals throughout his life” (168).⁸¹ The literary exploration of panic more generally is also germane for a writer whose oeuvre was affectively characterized by a recurring fixation on “the almost sensual arousal-state of fear” (Mellow 307). In Hemingway’s work, confrontations with fear—often in the form of a formidable animal foe—tests and measures and ultimately determines manhood. Early in *The Sun Also Rises* when Brett arrives at the *bal musette* accompanied by an entourage of young gay men, Jake’s jealousy boils over into homophobic rage: “I was very angry. Somehow they always made me angry. I know they are supposed to be amusing, and you should be tolerant, but I wanted to swing on one, any one, anything to shatter that superior,

⁸¹ The distinction “male” is crucial here, as Hemingway was a friend and great admirer of the literary icon Gertrude Stein, a known lesbian.

simpering composure” (20). As a prototypical homosexual panic response, Jake’s violent loathing towards these men seems to be shot through with pangs of anxious desire. He wants to “swing on” one, suggesting not just a need for bodily intimacy in the only hetero-acceptable fashion but also prefiguring the idea of the “swinger” which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, would come to mean both a “homosexual” and someone who is “sexually promiscuous” by the mid-twentieth century (“swinger,” def. 3c). His rage when confronted with these homosexual men bespeaks a desire to connect with them in violent passion, an experience he fantasizes about as a kind of shattering—a shattering, perhaps, of the mandates of a phallic heterosexuality he is unable to properly enact. Jake’s desire to shatter the composure of these young gay men in this early moment of panic offers an early sign of a tendency that can be characterized as a *shattering into* anal eroticism. One of the major things Jake fears about these gay men is what they represent in terms of himself: the potential *jouissance* available to him in the form of the non-phallic erotic life he both loathes and longs for.

It is not the relatively transparent presence of same sex desire that is the root of Jake’s queerness; it is his disability.⁸² The novel retains crucial ambiguity regarding the

⁸² Jake’s queer desires surface prominently during his homosocial fishing fling with Bill Gorton in Burguete. Here Bill and Jake flirt with the limits of acceptable homosociality as Bill offers a testimony to their intimacy—“I’m fonder of you than anybody on earth” (116)—that would mean he was a “faggot” in New York but is utterable in Spain (116). Modellmog affirms that this moment “indicates Bill’s awareness of the instability of the line separating homosocial and homosexual behavior and desire” (97). However, Jake does not admire Bill’s body the way he does those of other men such as Robert Cohn: “He was nice to watch on the tennis court, he had a good body, and he kept it in shape” (45). In this instance, it seems that the male body is an appropriate object for interest so long as it is athleticized. Later, as J. Gerald Kennedy notes, Jake becomes enchanted with another man: “homosexual attraction underlies – and intensifies – Jake Barnes’s later admiration for the bullfighter Pedro Romero” (155). When he meets Romero, Jake is taken aback by a youthful vision of the male sublime: “He was the best-looking boy I have ever seen” (163). This encounter anticipates the bullfighting scenes, where Jake’s descriptive voice hones in and lingers on Romero’s body in rare, dynamic lyricism. While Jake clearly experiences a legitimate, if frustrating, desire for women such as Brett Ashley, as narrator he actually spends more time describing beautiful male bodies than female.

precise nature of Jake's sexual disability, offering Jake's cryptic self-assessment ("a rotten way to be wounded" [31]) and a colonel's assertion that he has lost "more than [his] life" in the war as its clearest hints on the matter (31). While Wolfe incorrectly asserts that Jake "is a steer" (*Animal Rites* 135)—a bull without testicles—the main line of Hemingway criticism disputes such claims on the grounds of Hemingway's comments during the Plimpton interview.⁸³ While it is common for critics such as Nina Schwartz to speak of Jake's "castration" (49), according to Hemingway's remarks in the Plimpton interview Jake is not in the technical sense castrated (though he is castrated in the Freudian sense).⁸⁴ Whether or not we accept Hemingway's meta-commentary as unfalsifiable, it is crucial to establish what the text does make explicit: Jake has a genital wound and is incapable of having a mutually satisfying sexual relationship with Brett; Jake cries thinking about Brett (31); Brett claims she is in love with Jake and vice versa (33, 183); they are aroused by each other (26); they kiss (25, 34). Far from precluding such an interpretation, this textual evidence coupled with Hemingway's commentary suggests that anal eroticism might be the most satisfying form of sex available to Jake.

⁸³ Stoneback, for example, insists that "there is absolutely not one word or implication or gesture that in any way associates Jake with a steer" (234). Though there clearly are links, such as Jake's role as a herder of Brett's lovers paralleling the steer's task in the bullfighting arena, Hemingway's comments do suggest an important technical distinction between Jake's condition and the steer's. Drawing elaborate parallels between the characters in the novel and the specific roles played by various animals in the bullfight, Dewey Ganzel argues that Jake is not a generic steer but a "*cabestro*" (27), the specific type of steer that manages the bulls in the arena.

⁸⁴ In his authoritative study, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (2000), Gary Taylor notes that Freud, in the twentieth century, began to interpret castration in relation to the penis rather than the testicles: "castration—in humanist Europe, as in previous societies—attacked the scrotum. In twentieth-century psychoanalysis, by contrast, castration has been redefined as an attack on the penis" (91). Critical of the psychoanalytical tendency to simply follow Freud while overlooking the nature of "castration as a changing historical practise" (92), Taylor himself sets out to track the "history of the transformations of the male genitalia in the centuries between Middleton and Freud" (92). While psychoanalysis marked a shift in emphasis from the testicles to the penis, casting the concept of castration more loosely as a generalized threat to make genitals, I would like to emphasize that Jake Barnes is not technically castrated.

Further, it suggests that the male anus is a place one or both of them is unwilling to go in their erotic travels together.

If Jake is not capable of phallic intercourse, what is he capable of sexually? Such physical possibilities remain relatively unexamined in Hemingway criticism. While Stoneback makes a quick and dismissive reference to critics who suggest that “some form of oral or manual sex” may be possible for Jake (64), this is just the tip. Most obviously, Jake is capable of using sex toys with Brett. This need not mean that he will augment his lack, simply that he can complement it. Considering Breanne Fahs and Eric Swank’s assertion that “people have used dildos . . . since at least 3rd century Greece, and that modern rubber dildos first appeared in the nineteenth century” (667), Brett and Jake would have more than likely had some familiarity with sexual tools. In spite of Jake’s absent penis, the pair would have been able to practise their heterosexuality with prosthetic aids, which as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner point out would “from most point of views count as queer sex practices” (564). By augmenting Jake’s disabled penis with prosthetics, in other words, they would be able to enact a kind of queer heterosexuality.

While it is clear that Jake would be able to use some combination of sex toys and oral/manual stimulation to help Brett reach orgasm, there remains the functional question of Jake’s orgasmic potential. Anatomically speaking, his best nexus of sexual pleasure most likely lies in the anus. In *Gay Men and Anal Eroticism*, Steven G. Underwood seeks to destigmatize “the anal taboo” (5). For Underwood, hetero-masculine identity requires a panicked denial of the fact that a man’s anus can be entered: “In an attempt at uncompromising manliness, he’s banished one of his most sensitive erogenous zones to

where, sadly, no one will ever touch or acknowledge it” (5). In language saturated in profound and striking melancholy, Underwood takes a remarkably different tack to Freud, suggesting that the normative dismissal or repression of male anal pleasure is itself tragic. Underwood also notes that anal sex is highly stigmatized in Western society: “The message that anal sex is repulsive, unnatural, and unlawful is deliberately and subliminally hammered into us all of our lives” (6). Recent research, however, suggests that this claim requires reconsideration. Heterosexual anal intercourse, in fact, has a long and storied history. Kimberly R. McBride and J. Dennis Fortenberry note that Peruvian ceramics dating back to 300 AD depict “heterosexual anal intercourse . . . more than any other sexual act” (123). They also point out that “attention to heterosexual anal sex in the popular culture has risen over the past decade” and that “images of heterosexual anal sex are . . . highly prevalent in pornographic films and Web sites” (123-4). Donald Calsyn et al conservatively estimate that “among US adults . . . 5% of women” have engaged in receptive anal intercourse (2451). Despite this pervasive cultural interest in and widespread practice of heterosexual anal sex, the erogenous potential of the male anus—“loaded with nerve endings and . . . extremely sensitive to erotic stimulation” (Underwood 8)—remains largely ignored. As far as the reader knows, Jake, like most straight-identified men, has lived his life without exploring such erotic possibilities.

The subject of anal eroticism occupies a conspicuous void in Hemingway studies.⁸⁵ If, as Susan Fraiman has suggested, there is a “pussy panic” at work in animal studies (100), there is certainly also a “butt panic” at work in the criticism on

⁸⁵ Beyond Hemingway’s obvious discomfort with male homosexuals, he also seems to have had an anxious interest in anal sex—around 1924 he wrote a short story, “Summer People,” which featured a graphic anal sex scene apparently intended to humiliate an acquaintance, Katy Smith (Mellow 278).

Hemingway's novel. Wolfe, in an extended analysis of Jake's anxiety about being "stuffed" (*Animal Rites* 132-5), does not consider the possibility of anal phobia even as he suggests that Jake feels feminized, animalized, and castrated by his wound. Fore, who laments the fact that "[c]ritics have barely considered the idea that Jake could achieve sexual satisfaction in nontraditional ways" (338), retreats at the threshold of the anus. While Dana Fore rightly notes that "it is possible for severely disabled people to achieve sexual satisfaction by re-training their bodies to feel erotic pleasure in different ways, through different erogenous zones" (338), he neither names the implied erogenous zone—the anal-prostate circuit—nor considers the possibility that both disabled and non-disabled people might simply choose to practise and enjoy anal eroticism without being compelled to do so.

An anal-positive reading may help to shed new light on Jake's plaintive question:

"Don't you love me?"

'Love you? I simply turn all to jelly when you touch me.'

'Isn't there anything we can do about it?'" (26)

Jake's query is not driven by mere curiosity; it may be a direct request for Brett to get creative with their sexual life. Brett's ensuing silence offers a direct challenge to Nahal's claim that the pair later engages in some "perverse" sex act (44). Jake infers from her body language that "there's not a damn thing we could do" (26), though Brett's panicked response—"I don't want to go through that hell again" (26)—suggests that they have tried, unsuccessfully, to experiment sexually. Though there are clearly possibilities for Jake and Brett to have a mutually beneficial sex life, Brett is unwilling to pursue non-phallic sex with Jake. This does not necessarily indict Brett—she's not at fault for what

she may or may not be into—but it does suggest that she retreats, panicked, from the threatening threshold of the male anus, that untapped reservoir of pleasure. Perhaps what she finds threatening is the animality lurking within that cavity.

The Beast in the Anus: Anal-Animal *Eros* and Sexological Theory

Situating Hemingway's novel in its 1920s context invites a foray into the contemporary discourses of sexological and psychoanalytic theory, and such an excavation reveals a clear and vital link between anal eroticism and animality. The bullfight, therefore, comes to stand for the male coterie Jake joins in Pamplona as a ritual of literal animal death that represents the symbolic death of anal-animal sexuality—slaughtering the bull purifies the masculine bullfighter and spectator from the threat of the perverse, sexual, anally-oriented beast within.

Psychoanalysis and sexology, two of the most prominent theoretical paradigms emerging in the early twentieth century, were from their beginnings driven by a conjoined and panicked fascination with animal bodies and human sexual “perversions.” More specifically, these disciplines demonstrated a poignant double-fascination with animals and anal eroticism. Extrapolating from the emergent scientific paradigm of Darwinian evolution, psychoanalysis and early sexology sought to bury animality and non-normative eroticism together in the closets of humanity's primitive, bestial past. Of course, doctors such as Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Richard Von Krafft-Ebing were radical thinkers for their time and often demonstrated progressive views about sexuality. For example, Freud makes it clear in his *Three Essays on the Theory of*

Sexuality (1905) that he should “not be accused of partisanship” with respect to his analysis of anal eroticism (18). Freud does not mean to propagate the “disgust” that surrounds this sex act (*Three Essays* 18), merely to note it. In spite of this ostensible neutrality, however, Freud and his colleagues understood the tendency to enjoy anal eroticism as a resolvable pathology that held one back from achieving normal adult sexuality. Furthermore, sexology and psychoanalysis drew a link between anal eroticism and humanity’s primitive animal past. The psychoanalytic attempt to establish penile-vaginal intercourse as the normative mode of human sexuality also ended up situating the beast in the anus.

Sexology was from its inception driven by species panic, here iterating as the pronounced anxiety that surfaces when human exemplarity is challenged by external and interior “animal” sexuality—the beast in the closet, the sexual primitivity of the human species. On the first page of his discipline-formative 1886 work *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Richard Von Krafft-Ebing distinguishes between human and animal sexuality: “Man puts himself at once on a level with the beast if he seeks to gratify lust alone, but he elevates his superior position when by curbing the animal desire he combines with the sexual functions ideas of morality, of the sublime, and the beautiful” (29). In his attempt to establish normative human sexuality, Krafft-Ebing makes the anti-Darwinian move of placing humans above other animals in the hierarchy of being. More importantly, he identifies sexuality as a specifically animalistic impulse, an inner bestiality that must be augmented with more refined aesthetic and moral functions to create a scenario where humans can both have sex and transcend the animality of sexual urges. Krafft-Ebing’s attempt to assert the superiority of the human species was, of course, linked to an

anxious desire to treat and normalize “pathologies” including “pederasty,” “inversion,” and “zoophilia,” (309, 406, 305).⁸⁶ Krafft-Ebing places homosexuality on a spectrum of sexual disorders that includes sex with animals, militating to ensure that a correct human sexuality is also a homospecies sexuality.

The development of the science of sexual pathology emerged alongside the newly minted scientific definition of human species status. Strangely, the significance of the word “species” typically goes unnoted in examinations of Foucault’s famous claim that after the year 1870 “the homosexual was now a species” (*Sexuality* 43). In order for the homosexual to become a species, the concept of “species” in its modern scientific incarnation had to come into being. Foucault uses the year 1870, precisely 11 years after the publication of Darwin’s *Origins*, as his index for the emergence of the homosexual species. The concept of the species itself therefore takes hold alongside the medical diagnosis of sexual perversion in an attempt to simultaneously identify the human and, in spite of Darwin’s recognition that the human animal occupies an unexceptional position on the organic continuum of life,⁸⁷ to renounce the animality of certain human sexual drives. Given the Darwinian framework’s emphasis on reproduction, it is strange, if by now familiar, that the human sexuality that came to be privileged was reproductive—the exact type of sex animals practice freely and rigorously in phantasmagoric states of nature.

⁸⁶ Mel Y. Chen notes that “since the beginning of European and American sexuality in the nineteenth century” (102), sexologists have used homosexuality as a “limit case” for a conception of “natural” human sexuality (102). In much of this work, “the animal itself *becomes* sexuality” (Chen 103).

⁸⁷ In the *Descent of Man*, Darwin writes that “the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind” (151).

Like Krafft-Ebing, Freud wanted to distinguish refined, normative human sexual behavior from its animal origins. In his early case studies and later in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, it becomes clear that Freud shares Krafft-Ebing's view of modern human sexuality as an edified version of a primitive animal instinct. Certainly, Freud often used animals as a key to understanding the sexual neuroses he analyzed.⁸⁸ Freud's later case studies are replete with the importance of animals as symbols of human sexuality, and his hypothesis about the "Wolf Man" learning sexual lessons from watching an "animal coitus" involving "large white dogs . . . copulating" illuminates the ways in which animals—the proverbial birds and the bees—often serve as primary didactic metaphors for human sexuality (215).⁸⁹

Freud's work dramatizes a sustained link between animality and anal eroticism; both the "Wolf Man," and the "Rat Man" exhibit sexual neuroses rooted in primal scenes where animals and anality mingle. The Rat Man's neurosis derives from a tale of military torture whereby a soldier is forced to have rats crawl into his anus and the Wolf Man's disorder originates in a dream involving wolves apparently threatening to "devour" him (*Three Case Histories* 13, 187). In both instances, Freud's diagnosis is the same: the patient's neurosis originates in an "unconscious homosexuality" that leads to a sublimated "anal eroticism" (*Three Case Histories* 274, 52, 230). Freud's analysis of the "Wolf Man" reveals, further, that the "anal-erotic disposition" is distinguished by "archaic traits" such as the desire for rear-entry intercourse (which Freud viscerally

⁸⁸Dana Seitler notes that the relation "between animals and sexuality" becomes "one of psychoanalysis's most operative metaphors" (38).

⁸⁹Havelock Ellis likewise takes note of the primacy of what he calls "Mixoscopic Zoophilia" (*Erotic Symbolism* 71), wherein "young persons" receive "sexual pleasure" from "the sight of copulating animals" (*Erotic Symbolism* 71).

describes as featuring “the woman bent down like an animal” [199, 196]). Pairing this moment with Freud’s well-known analysis in *Civilization and Its Discontents*—wherein the human moves beyond its “earlier animal nature” by rising up on the hind legs and transcending its erotic-olfactory relation to “urine and faeces” (55)—demonstrates that the psychoanalytic claim of normative human sexuality involves a movement away from the conjoined threats of animal sexuality, primitivism, and the eroticized anus.⁹⁰

Freud’s work was hugely influential both in the America of Hemingway’s youth and in the mid-1920s France where he conceived *The Sun Also Rises*. In *Hemingway: The Paris Years*, biographer Michael S. Reynolds traces the connection between Hemingway and Sylvia Beach, best known as the publisher of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and a formidable force on the 1920s Parisian literary scene (11-14). Reynolds notes that from 1921-1925 Hemingway frequently visited Beach’s “bookshop and lending library” (*The Paris Years* 12), a trove containing many sexological books, including Havelock Ellis’ *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* and *Erotic Symbolism*. Kenneth S. Lynn notes that in 1919 Hemingway “immersed himself” in Ellis’ *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (132), which includes an entire volume on sexual inversion. While it remains unclear whether Hemingway ever read Freud, he certainly was familiar with—and interested in—sexological theory during the years leading up to the composition of *The Sun Also Rises*.⁹¹ Reading *Erotic Symbolism*, Hemingway would have encountered Ellis’ analysis of the “great importance” Freud located in the anus as an “erogenous zone” (133). In an

⁹⁰ Crucially, Freud doesn’t see the movement away from the animal past as necessarily a good thing. It is, for him, the very source of “repression” and “nervous disease” (*Civilization* 55, *Three Case Histories* 80). The human drive towards refinement is a major source of human neuroses for Freud. Nonetheless, the association of anal eroticism with primitive animality remains.

⁹¹ Freud’s potential influence on Hemingway has mostly remained unmentioned by critics, a striking omission considering Kenneth G. Johnston’s illumination of the clear similarity between Hemingway’s “iceberg analogy” model for fiction writing and the Freudian schema of the unconscious (69).

earlier chapter of the same text, Ellis details a veritable menagerie of “animal perversions” ranging from the tickling of dogs to sex between humans and crocodiles (83, 72, 87).⁹² In *Erotic Symbolism*, Ellis merges animal *eros* with the Freudian view of anal eroticism in a single sexological study that Hemingway apparently read eagerly.

Reading *The Sun Also Rises* in light of Freudian theory also unearths a clear connection between Hemingway’s text and Freud’s considerations of anal eroticism: Jake Barnes’ relation to money. Freud writes that “[a]nalysts have long been agreed” that “the treatment of money” is “among the most important manifestations” of “anal eroticism” (*Three Case Histories* 230). Money, for Freud, takes on “the physical interest which was originally proper to faeces, the product of the anal zone” and thereby becomes a substitute for anal stimulation (*Three Case Histories* 230). Read in this light, Hemingway’s repeated elaborations of Jake’s attitude towards money take on increased significance. Early on in the novel, Jake takes stock of his accounts: “The letters were from the United States. One was a bank statement. It showed a balance of \$2432.60. I got out my check-book and deducted four cheques drawn since the first of the month, and discovered I had a balance of \$1832.60” (30). Why does the reader need this much information about his finances? This passage, firstly, informs the reader that Jake is quite well off—rent in Paris at this time was about ten dollars per month (Stoneback 63). Coming at the pivotal moment just after a failed sexual liaison with Brett and just before Jake’s melancholy genital self-examination in the mirror, though, this account-taking takes on a deeper narrative weight. Not only does it reveal the amount of money Jake

⁹² Ellis also notes that bestiality is most common among “dull, insensitive, and unfastidious persons” such as “primitive peoples” and “peasants” (*Erotic Symbolism* 79). Although Ellis is in fact quite sensitive regarding the question of whether human-animal sex merits punishment (*Erotic Symbolism* 88), he nonetheless associates this act with a primitive, regressive human sexuality.

has, it also offers the first inclination of Jake's almost neurotic fastidiousness with money, a theme that Hemingway threads loudly through the novel (Reynolds, "The *Sun in its Time*" 47). Read in the Freudian context, Jake's decision to count his money as soon as he has turned away from his unrealizable desire for Brett sets up a poignant correlation between Jake's obsessive monetary fastidiousness and his emerging anal eroticism.

Another contemporary of Hemingway's who explores the link between animality, the anus, and the sun is French philosopher Georges Bataille. Bataille, who has received less than his due credit in recent work by the "antisocial thesis" school of queer theory,⁹³ is key for Bersani as a precursor of his own notion of "the self which the sexual shatters" (25). Echoing Bersani, Bataille's writings from 1927-1929, collected under the title *Visions of Excess*, use the anus as an emblem of a life-affirming nihilism beyond prevailing social orders. Conjuring Freud's narrative of mankind's rise up from four legs, Bataille notes that with the development of erect posture the "human anus secluded itself deep within flesh" (*Visions* 77). This is a regrettable obfuscation for Bataille, who sees the anus as a site of "ecstatic brutishness" (*Visions* 78). Though he retains the correlation between animality and animality, in "The Solar Anus" Bataille wishes to redeem the anus, reclaiming it as an "erotic revolutionary" force through a fusion of an ecstatic animality and a "torrid and blinding sun" (*Visions* 8, 9). The sun, of course, bears considerable significance for Hemingway's novel, which Bataille would later praise as a testament to

⁹³ Lee Edelman does not reference Bataille in *No Future* or in his more recent book with Lauren Berlant, *Sex, or The Unbearable*. Another leader of the antisocial thesis school, Jack Halberstam, does not cite Bataille in *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke 2011), a book that takes "the dark heart of negativity" as its explicit theoretical methodology (23). Significantly, both Edelman (*Sex, Or The Unbearable* 16-17), and Halberstam (21), turn to animal representations as ways to push beyond the confines of normative thinking.

the author's "profound honesty and passion for truth and excellence" ("Hemingway" 7). Stoneback notes that Jake Barnes exhibits "[h]eliophilia—love of the sun and sunbathing" (280, 281), a trend that was growing in popularity in the 1920s. The most prominent moment of heliophilia occurs in San Sebastian, after Jake has left Pamplona and the claim of *afición* behind him. Jake's complete submission to the sun, in other words, takes place after he has relinquished the promise of phallic virility he hoped the bullfight might offer. In the narrative temporality of the novel, the sun comes after the penis. Significantly, Freud's analysis of Dr. Schreber hinges on the signification of the sun as "a sublimated symbol for the father" (*Three Case Histories* 130). The sun, in Freud's analysis, symbolizes Dr. Schreber's desire for the father, linking it back to anal eroticism. Reading Hemingway's sun in the Freudian-Bataillean nexus, then, might offer a revisionary interpretation of Hemingway's title—if Jake's penis is no longer capable of erection it is the sun-as-anus that will "also rise" in its stead.

Bataille not only ties the erotic power of the sun to the anus, he also excavates the palpable sexuality at work in the bullfighting spectacle. In his 1928 novel *Story of the Eye*, published under the pseudonym Lord Auch, Bataille describes the bullfight as an inexorably erotic performance:

When the bull makes its quick, brutal, thrusts over and over again into the matador's cape, barely grazing the erect line of the body, any spectator has that feeling of total and repeated lunging typical of the game of coitus. The utter nearness of death is also felt in the same way It is well known that at such thrilling instants the women jerk off by merely rubbing their thighs together.

(56-7)

Shortly after the publication of *The Sun Also Rises*, then, Bataille saw the spectacle of the bullfight as an overwhelmingly pornographic event where death, athleticism, and the animal body served to arouse the human—notably female—spectator. The deadly contest between men of different species becomes, here, an erotic performance to be pleurably consumed by the female viewer. Bataille was at the time also profoundly interested in the animal anus: “There is no child who has not at one time or another admired, in zoos, these filthy protuberances” (*Visions* 75). The nonhuman animal body, displayed in the zoo, becomes in Bataille’s schematic reading little more than an anus designed to satisfy human erotic curiosity. Setting aside the ethics of this, what is clear is that Bataille offers the crystallization of a theoretical moment when a changing human sexual paradigm—one that was highly curious about anal eroticism—could be explored through the bullfight and other venues of interspecies erotics.

Given his reading of sexology and his heavy handling of Jake’s economic fastidiousness and love for the sun, Hemingway may well have been setting Jake up as a character study in anal eroticism. Certainly, he did endeavour to explore in Jake the (tragic) possibilities of a non-phallic sexuality through the athleticized and eroticized animal body. Hemingway’s composition refracts the sexological fascination with animals and the anus, suggesting that on some level these two threats—the “beast within” and the eroticism lurking in that most hidden, private orifice—need to be worked through in conjunction. Placing Hemingway’s work in the context of sexology and psychoanalysis reveals the remarkable generation in the 1920s of this strange moment when theory passes, via the solar anus, through the development of anal-animal pathology and into the bull’s ring.

The Bull's Ring

Though the history of bovine-human interaction is long and multi-faceted, the bull has long held an erotic symbolic significance for agrarian cultures. Domestic cattle have been intricately linked with human civilization for thousands of years: “The bovine—idolized, eulogized, and sometimes denigrated in the art, music, religion, literature, and drama of man—is more closely interwoven with the fabric of man’s culture than any other animal” (Sims and Johnson 16). Likewise, agrarian cultures have almost ubiquitously understood the bull as “the supreme example of masculine strength and ferocity in nature, the epitome of fertility and virility” (Velten 31). For as long as the bull has operated as a central symbol in human society, it has been a manifestly erotic signifier.

In contemporary Western culture, bovine erotics are endemic not only to the type of drug-fueled rodeo high jinks represented by the 2013 film *Dallas Buyers Club* but also in the bizarre and widespread practice of riding mechanical bulls. Comedian Amy Schumer parodies the latter ritual in the episode “80s Ladies” of her controversial feminist television series *Inside Amy Schumer*. While competing for male attention at a bar, Amy asks her female friend why a woman would ride the mechanical bull and the friend earnestly replies, “So people can see what you look like when you fuck, that’s the point. My cousin got married from that.” The woman who rides the bull becomes, like female bullfighters (Pink 52), both sexy and “tough,” capable of mastering the simulated ferocity of the male animal body. This makes her, as Schumer’s friend emphasizes,

“marriage material,” and makes riding the mechanical bull into an animal-mediated stage in the modern mating ritual of the heterosexual bar scene. In the episode Amy’s friend goes first, providing an eager sexual performance aboard the electronic bovine body amid encouragement from an announcer and a crowd of whooping men. Amy’s subsequent attempt and total failure aboard the bull suggests the fundamental ludicrousness of this rite of passage, but the role of the animal presence remains implicit in Schumer’s feminist commentary. The male announcer’s plaid shirt and cowboy hat, coupled with his emphasis on saddles and “cowgirls” makes this rodeo simulacrum into a campy performance of stylized, animal-themed innuendo. Bovine erotics offer a crucial window into the contemporary American zeitgeist, the bull’s body intervening in the pick-up bar—the sphere of human courtship—in order to lubricate human courtship with eroticized performance.

More subtly, *The Sun Also Rises* explores a comparable nexus of interspecies erotics in its focus on the Spanish bullfight. If, as Joshua Schuster argues, “[t]here are very few animals in modernist literature” (22), Hemingway provides a striking exception to the rule. Nonhuman animals are a pervasive, violent, and erotically charged force in Hemingway from the bull “*roaring blood*” in the early short story collection *In Our Time* through the “bloody-headed lion” of “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” to Santiago’s aquatic tormentor (105, 140), “the fish” of *The Old Man and the Sea* (83). Hemingway’s bulls have often been read as sacrifices on the altars of male human (hetero)sexuality.⁹⁴ In *The Sun Also Rises* bulls becomes a prosthetic of a different sort

⁹⁴ Arnold E. Davidson and Cathy N. Davidson note that in *The Sun Also Rises* “love of the bullfight confers masculinity by association” (94). Similarly, Wolfe affirms that Jake’s expertise in boxing and bullfighting render him “*culturally* the quintessential man’s man” (*Animal Rites* 125). Strychacz likewise

from that which Buck became in *The Call of The Wild*. Rather than avatars of white human eugenic-imperialist conquest, Hemingway's bulls become augmentations of the male genital prowess Jake has lost; they become prosthetic penises, indicators of the fantasy of phallic regeneration at work in this novel.

The bullfight is a decidedly queer spectacle. There are several levels of radical queerness at work in this drama. First, the clearly erotic interactions between man and bull in the arena suggests a queerness insofar as interspecies erotics is a non-normative sexual event. Second, there is the fact that both bull and bullfighter are male. Whatever symbolic structures might play out here, at the literal level the bullfight offers an intimate physical encounter between males. Finally, in terms of male-male erotics—human male penetrating a vagina-less animal body—the most likely inference is that the bull represents non-phallic eroticism, with anal eroticism being the most likely candidate. The bull is a definitively male creature whose ceremonial role is to be penetrated by a man. The slaughter of the bull, therefore, enacts a fantasy of the death of the eroticized anal orifice and the threat it poses to male sexuality and human species identity. Human male heterosexuality is thus established at the cost of animal life. Bovine genitals and sexuality are paramount to the ritual of the Spanish bullfight. Functioning genitals are, in fact, precisely what defines the bull as bull. While the steer has a penis but not testicles, the bull is, in technical language, an “entire male” (Velten 9); it is an adult male with intact testicles and a functioning penis. Beyond the bullfight, the triumph of athletic human masculinity over nonhuman wildness often requires the

argues that in Hemingway's “bullring, men are made or unmanned” (*Theaters* 53). Sociologist Linda Kalof supports such arguments when she writes that sport in general involves “a ritualized display of masculinity achieved by feminizing the opponent” and includes bullfighting among “displays that validate masculinity and heterosexual virility” (439).

animal body to publicize its virile sexuality. As Marjorie Spiegel points out, deer hunters “try to kill the most ‘virile’ of the males, those with the biggest antlers. If they are successful at ending this life, they have proven their own manhood” (61). Just as hunters measure their manliness by the length of their buck’s antlers, so bullfighters and aficionados require the bull’s horns and *cajones* to be visible—and visibly formidable⁹⁵—to signify the wild masculinity they subdue. The apparent “possession of testicles” is so important for the fighting bull’s appearance that “if it is seen to have only one properly formed testicle” its value will vastly decrease (Marvin, *Bullfight* 91). The bull’s testicles—evidence of its virile masculine sexuality—must provide ocular proof of physical perfection to properly enact the foreplay of sauntering, genitals exposed and fiercely penetrable, before the consumptive eyes of appraisers and spectators who, among other things, want to look at bovine testicles.

Another way humans control the sexuality of fighting bulls is through enforced chastity; fighting bulls are rarely allowed to have sex with cows and for the most part they are “sexually intact males . . . forced into a life of virginity” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 92). Apart from demonstrating the extraordinary biopolitics at work in the human regulation of bovine sexuality, the human handling of bovine sexuality demonstrates the heady ooze of sexuality lathering the bullfighting scene itself. The *toro bravo* must have formidable testicles and a vigorous, wild libido, but this libido is reserved for encounters with the matador. Intraspecies eroticism, in the bull’s case, is actually forbidden to create a more exciting scene of interspecies *eros*. The entire life of the fighting bull thus requires the human manipulation of bovine sexuality, from management of the breeding

⁹⁵ “The horns in particular should be well formed and undamaged” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 101).

processes to the examinations of the bull and the assurance that it not ejaculate before the match to the final cathartic moment of public man-bull confrontation.

The male bullfighter is a strangely queer champion of normative masculinity. Marvin's analysis of the bullfighter's dress and behaviour shows that the matador demonstrates both the epitome of masculinity and a queer transgression of "normal" maleness. When preparing for a contest, the bullfighter is joined in his bedroom by a coterie of men who help him dress, attend his "toilet," and make sure there are no "wrinkles in his silk stockings" (Marvin, *Bullfight* 147). The bullfighter's clothes are not "part of normal men's clothing" and his manner in the ring (Marvin, *Bullfight* 147), particularly "the gyrating in front of the bull and the thrusting of the pelvis towards it to encourage it to charge" (Marvin, *Bullfight* 146), are not "the normal movements of a man towards another male" (Marvin, *Bullfight* 146). Matadors have been publicly homosexual (Pink 56-7), a fact which, strangely, does not inhibit their hyper-masculine persona.⁹⁶ It turns out that the matador occupies an orientational grey zone, blurring the gay/straight binary which in its present form is no doubt much younger than the *corrida*. Part of what makes the bullfighter hyper-masculine in Spanish culture is the fact that in the bullfighting arena the matador must paradoxically "behave 'like a woman' to prove that he is a man" (Schwartz 66). The matador offers his own masculinity to his bovine partner, knowing that his performance may allow the audience to accuse him of having "no *cajones*" (Marvin, *Bullfight* 162). And so he puts on silk stockings, a pony tail, and an elaborately gilded blazer and readies himself to penetrate or be penetrated. Not unlike

⁹⁶ Comley and Scholes argue that "Hemingway's notion of decadence in bullfighting" should be considered alongside his "interest in homosexual bullfighters" (122).

the performance of a modern leather queen, the matador's parodic enactment of masculinity unsettles normative body codes precisely in its excessive activation of them.

The role of women in bullfighting is a fraught issue that circles around the queerness of the spectacle. As Sarah Pink notes, the role of women in the bullfight has been largely occluded from a myth that constructs the bullfight as a specifically masculine endeavour (47). Historically, women were allowed no part in the bullfight except for serving occasionally as *rejoneadoras*, bullfighters who attack bulls on horseback in order to weaken the animal before it faces the matador (Marvin, *Bullfight* 160). Pink traces a history of female bullfighters from the 1930s to the 1990s, using the famous *torera* Christina Sánchez to attempt to shift the traditional anthropological framework of the bullfight. Though the numbers of female bullfighters remain miniscule compared to the amount of *toreras* (Fener xvii), the success and prominence of *matadoras* have steadily increased in recent decades. This rise in popularity shifts the matrix of possible erotic performances in the arena, but it does not straighten the queerness of the *corida*. To the average *aficionado*, women entering the bullfight are likely to be considered “lesbians” or “*marimachas* (a masculine woman)” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 164). Significantly, Pink points out that “Christina Sánchez claims to have metaphorical balls” (51) and thus calls the “masculine/feminine” distinction into question (52).⁹⁷ The female bullfighter, then, does not so much destabilize the masculine ideal of the bullfighter so much as she claims that identity in a queer performance, highlighting the extent to which the bullfight has long been a queer spectacle where

⁹⁷ Marvin points out that this phenomenon works both ways: “Just as the man who performs badly is liable to lose his *cojones*, so the woman who attempts to perform at all is liable to gain them, at least in the eyes of the public” (*Bullfight* 163).

bodies that do not appear traditionally male gain access to masculinity by demonstrating courage and athletic prowess.

However queer the bullfighting spectacle may be, the interspecies eros at work here does not enact a liberatory queerness. Instead, interspecies *eros* here depends on a violent and cruel treatment of nonhuman animals in the name of art and tradition. While bulls have been routinely loved, worshipped, and eroticized, they have also been slaughtered, tortured, and maimed in the name of athletic contests between men. Unlike cattle and steer, bulls have generally been killed and tortured not for meat but for sport and spectacle. Nor has the bovine anus been immune from human athletic cruelty. As James Serpell points out, modern rodeo “performances hinge on the violent subjugation of living animals, some of which are deliberately incited to frenzied violence by raking them with spurs, constricting the genital region with leather straps, or by thrusting an electric prod into the rectal area” (225). The shadow of the bull’s anus, here, becomes a site of torturous, non-consensual penetration.

Existing in its current form since the eighteenth century with a history dating back to the year 1090 (Velten 59), the Spanish bullfight offers a more explicit display of public violence against animals. As Marvin notes, fighting bulls may be tortured before the spectacle: “It has been known for bulls to be weakened by the administration of drugs such as laxatives, by having sandbags dropped on their backs, or by having their horns meddled with” (*Bullfight* 5). While researchers have estimated the number of bulls killed per year in the Spanish bullfight at 4, 500 and 17,000 (Preece and Chamberlain 486), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) puts the figure at approximately 40,000 (“Bullfighting”). Hemingway saw the bullfight as a spectacle of

art rather than cruelty or violence, insisting in his nonfiction account of bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, that the bullfight is not a “sport” but a “tragedy” (16). Although when it is done badly the bullfight can become a theatre of violence (*Death* 22-3), in its ideal form it depicts the death of the bull as a beautiful tragedy rather than a sadistic spectacle (*Death* 16). It is worth noting that Hemingway did not think that a true animal lover could stomach the spectacle of the bullfight, thus suggesting that he does not think of himself as among the “animalarians” (*Death* 9). For Hemingway, the bullfight is a symbol of the primal possibilities of *human* art, and the capacity to stylistically ornament the very conditions of life and death.

Whether it is a sport or an art, however, the bullfight remains an athletic spectacle; the matador must move gracefully and be in peak physical condition, and as Hemingway remarks, the bull must be a near-perfect physical specimen. In addition to having two visible and formidable testicles, fighting “bulls by law are required to be from four to five years old, free from physical defects, and well-armed with sharp-pointed horns” (*Death* 26). The bulls, then, recall a prototypical element of athletic discourse insofar as they initiate an understanding of the normative or even super-normative body. The athleticized animal, here, is either suitable or physically “defective,” contributing to McRuer’s ideological paradigm of “compulsory able-bodiedness” by distinguishing between normal and abnormal rather than among various possible ways of being embodied.

Hemingway’s early career—from *In Our Time* (1925) to *Death in the Afternoon* (1932)—demonstrates a profound and recurring fascination with the aesthetic possibilities enacted by the ritualized meeting of man and bull in the Spanish bullfight.

Strychacz affirms that *Death in the Afternoon* is also Hemingway's "most important aesthetic manifesto" (*Theaters* 125), with vivid bullfighting descriptions doubling as "displaced accounts of writing, and vice versa" (125). Bullfighting, for Hemingway, becomes the very paradigm of creativity and writerly masculinity. What seems to fascinate Hemingway most in the bullfight is the climactic moment when the sword of the bullfighter enters the body of the bull. Hemingway offers his first lyrical evocation of fatal man-bull entry in chapter 12 of *In Our Time*:

When he started to kill it was all in the same rush. The bull looking at him straight in front, hating. He drew out the sword from the folds of the muleta and sighted with the same movement and called the bull, Toro! Toro! and the bull charged and Villalta charged and just for a moment they became one. Villalta became one with the bull and then it was over. (105)

The primal unity of this encounter reels with the orgasmic, little-deathly feel with which Hemingway in later works would continue to evoke the primordial interspecies intimacy he found in bullfighting. This recurring evocation of bovine-human oneness reads as a translation of Freud's definition of *eros* in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "[a]t the height of erotic passion the borderline between ego and object is in danger of becoming blurred. Against all the evidence of the senses, the person in love asserts that 'I' and 'you' are one" (3). Just as sex and death are, for Freud, parallel circuits in the human psychological mechanism, both seeking the dull warmth of passivity and the cessation of want, so the erotic and the thanatological become linked for Hemingway in the overdetermined scene of the matador's deadly penetration of the bull.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, bullfighting reaches its pinnacle as a glorified spectacle of queer and fatal interspecies erotics during Romero's spectacular performance on the day after he has been pommelled by the jealous boxer Robert Cohn. With a rhetoric of hypnotic rapture, Jake describes watching Romero dance with the bull in search of the perfect opening for penetration:

The bull's tail went up and he charged, and Romero moved his arms ahead of the bull, wheeling, his feet firmed At the end of the pass they were facing each other again. Romero smiled. The bull wanted it again, and Romero's cape filled again, this time on the other side Romero had to make the bull consent with his body. He had to get so close that the bull saw his body, and would start for it.

(218)

The raised tail of the bull signals the prominence of the nonhuman anus, that shamelessly displayed orifice which, when exposed by the naked animal, incites human panic about our own most anxiously hidden orifice.⁹⁸ The tail, of course, is raised in aggression, signalling the way in which the bull comes to function as a charging, raging anus offering the bullfighter two options: to kill and penetrate or be entered and die. The preferred choice is clear, and the erotic climax of the novel occurs as Romero finally "woos a bull to death" (Moddelmog 96):

The bull charged as Romero charged. Romero's left hand dropped the muleta over the bull's muzzle to blind him, his left shoulder went forward between the horns as the sword went in, and for just an instant he and the bull were one, Romero way out over the bull, the right arm extended high up to where the hilt of

⁹⁸ Bataille notes the human fascination with exposed animal anuses: "There is no child who has not at one time or another admired, in zoos . . . the anal orifice" (*Visions* 75).

the sword had gone in between the bull's shoulders. Then the figure was broken. There was a little jolt as Romero came clear, and then he was standing, one hand up, facing the bull, his shirt ripped out from under his sleeve. (218)

After a vigorous post-coital shudder, Romero withdraws from the animal and stands in shredded garb before the adoring crowd. The bull lies down to die and Bill offers a whispered elegy: "There he goes" (219). The dazed finality about this moment hums of sex and vulnerability. Critics have often read this moment as manifestly sexual. Dewey Ganzel, for example, argues that Hemingway's use of the word "consent" emphasizes the "sexuality of the relation between bullfighter and bull" (40). What is most useful for this analysis, however, is not the claim that the bullfight is erotic but the way that the particular anal-animal eroticism implied by this meeting of males becomes conjoined to inevitable death.⁹⁹ Mortality is central to the burlesque of the bullfighting arena, where the bullfighter must either kill or be killed.

While most critics are savvy to the obvious eroticism of Hemingway's bullfighting scenes, scholars generally render male sexual identity in phallic terms. The predictable penile signifier of the bullfighter's sword becomes crucial in such readings.¹⁰⁰ But if the bull is coded masculine and the bullfighter is a man in drag, what exactly is the bullfighter penetrating when he delivers the fatal thrust? Coupling Bersani's diagnosis of "the heterosexual association of anal sex with a [feminizing] self-annihilation" with the fact that the primary eroticism remaining to Jake is non phallic (29), it seems reasonable to suggest that the slaughter of the bull becomes an attempt to

⁹⁹ Reading this same moment, Davidson and Davidson tellingly remark that "[t]he final erotic embrace of man and beast is about annihilation" (96).

¹⁰⁰ For example, Thomas Strychacz suggests that Romero's deadly "gesture demands the crowd's attention and respect while reminding it of the stylized (phallic) thrust that dispatched the bull" (*Theaters* 54).

annihilate the threatening dark matter of anal eroticism. While the bullfighter gets to have his cake and eat it too, destroying the offending orifice as he triumphantly enters it, Jake, the passive spectator, is left to imagine himself into the fantasy as either ravaged bull or self-annihilating penetrator. If he sees himself as the bullfighter, then he's a man in drag simultaneously entering and destroying his own erotic future. If he fancies himself a bull, then in the bullfight he is fucked to death.

What the bullfight clearly does not do for Jake is allow him to regenerate his penis. If the bullfight offers Jake a vicarious phallic masculinity, that masculinity is an inevitable failure—its promise fading as quickly as the hopes and dreams invested in the male orgasm. If it offers him a place to imagine the future of his own anal eroticism, then that fantasy ends in his own death. By dangling the carrot of a vicarious bovine penis and offering only anal death, the bullfight becomes what Lauren Berlant calls a “cruel optimism” (1)—a “relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be *impossible*, sheer fantasy, or *too* possible, and toxic” (24). In Jake's case, the fantasy clearly fails through the former mechanism. If, as many critiques have argued, he invests in the hope that the bullfight will temporarily or permanently regenerate his penis, what he instead finds is a ritual that sets out to sacrifice the non-phallic eroticism to which he does have access in the name of the penis he lacks. If Jake wants to grow a penis, he will have to get comfortable with prosthetics.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ As Elizabeth Grosz points out in *Volatile Bodies*, it is possible for prosthetics to become part of one's concept of one's own body: “External objects, implements, and instruments with which the subject continually interacts become, while they are being used, intimate, vital, even libidinally cathected parts of the body image” (80). Margot Weiss extends this argument to the sexual arena, arguing that sex toys such as SM tools “become a part of the body” and “transform one's body in the image of one's desire”

Although the bullfight plays out the recurrent shattering of Jake's psycho-sexual fantasy of regeneration, the spectacle augurs more than just the death of sex. It also initiates the heady heterosexual affair between Brett and Romero. It is here that bovine eros begins to emerge as a tangible presence beyond its symbolic role as a stand-in for regenerative phallocentrism or anal eroticism. From the outset, Hemingway establishes the affair as an interspecies love triangle: "Pedro Romero had the greatness. He loved bull-fighting, and I think he loved the bulls, and I think he loved Brett" (216). Because Hemingway's definition of *afición*—"[a]fición means passion An aficionado is one who is passionate about the bullfights" (131)—does not require a love of bulls, it is strange that Romero has an affective attachment to the animals he must kill. He need not love these bulls, he need only love the ritual of their slaughter.¹⁰² This superfluous love, then, complicates the charged erotics of the man-bull encounter. Further, the connective tissue of the comma yokes Romero's interspecies attraction to bulls to his more normative homospecies interest in Brett. There is some clear seepage between Romero's love of bulls and his desire for Brett, but the flow of interspecies *eros* is not unidirectional. Along with Romero and the rest of the bull-fanciers, Brett demonstrates a highly eroticized interest in the bovine body. The first time she sets eyes on a bull in Pamplona, Brett remarks, "My God, isn't he beautiful?" (139). Later on, Mike calls the bulls "lovely" (141), the same word Brett will use to describe Romero when she first sees him (165). Finally, after watching Romero's first bullfight, Brett announces that she's "limp as a rag" (168), suggesting via post-coital language the vicarious sexuality at

(133). Criticism that reads Jake's missing penis as a fundamental or irrevocable lack, then, exemplifies a masculinist-organicist fetish of the natural penis which Jake could variously and virtuosically leave behind through prosthetic play.

¹⁰² As someone whose vocation is bull murder, it might be wiser if he didn't love the animals.

work in witnessing the dance of bull and bullfighter. Brett finds something arousing in the primal power of the bovine body, so much so that her desire for Romero begins to appear as a sublimation of her lust for bulls.

The function of the bull's corpus as the lubricant of Brett and Romero's erotic connection becomes most explicit when, after he has most triumphantly 'become one' with his final bull, Romero approaches Brett and hands her the animal's severed ear (221). What does it mean that he gives Brett the bull's ear instead of, say, a horn? In *The Ear of the Other* (first published in French in 1982), Jacques Derrida—no doubt the twentieth century's most insightful theorist of the ear—describes that organ as “uncanny” (33). This remark surely refers to Freud's characterization of the vagina as uncanny (*The Uncanny* 151),¹⁰³ a referent again emphasized when Derrida describes the ear's “invaginated folds” (36). According to such an understanding, the slaughtered bull's ear, an externalized and highly visible orifice, comes to serve as the sign of the defeated animal—the beast reduced, feminized, invaginated. “Don't get bloody” Romero quips (221), grinning as he hands Brett the ear, and what can he intend but a reference to menstruation? Rather than offering the horn, synecdoche of phallic domination, he proffers the invaginated ear. Romero's bestowal of this bloody, disembodied orifice associates Brett's body with the vanquished bull's, calibrating her as the new target of masculine conquest. After the gift of the bovine ear, Romero and Brett abscond for Madrid, suggesting that with his dazzling performance of masculine heroism, Romero has successfully overcome the threat of animal-anal eroticism; having brilliantly defeated

¹⁰³ Freud writes, specifically: “there is something uncanny about the female genitals” (*The Uncanny* 151)

the anus in its bovine guise and reducing the virile, deadly beast to the lifeless flesh of the invaginated ear, Romero is free to pursue a normalized vision of heterosexuality.

It turns out, however, that the affair collapses altogether in lieu of the bull. In Madrid, detached from the sacrificial bovine bodies that initiated and sustained their relationship, the romance quickly deteriorates. Romero demands that Brett grow her hair out to make her “more womanly” (242), requiring a more vigorous performance of femininity to make the post-anal, post-animal heterosexual coupling more legitimate. Brett refuses, explaining herself in a pivotal discussion with Jake: “I’m thirty-four, you know. I’m not going to be one of these bitches that ruins children” (243). Considering that Romero is nineteen years old, it is tempting to read this moment in light of an earlier reference to older American women who seduce young bullfighters away from their vocation (172), meaning that Brett is acting benevolently on Romero’s behalf.¹⁰⁴ There is also a resounding sense in which Brett seems to have simply lost interest in Romero now that they are removed from his glory in the bullring. Crucially, though, Brett’s refusal of the hyper-normative hetero role Romero constructs for her also reflects a genuine resistance to the bourgeois ideal of marriage. When Brett discovers that Romero wants to marry her and create a situation where she can “never go away from him” (242), she recoils. Her remark about not wanting to destroy children, then, may also speak to her desire not to bear children. Not wanting to be “a bitch who ruins children” means both not wanting to sacrifice Romero’s career on the altar of domesticity and refusing to produce a litter of her own.

¹⁰⁴ For more detail on this claim, see Stoneback 289. For a defense of Brett’s character in the context of the question of her relative “bitchiness,” see Roger Whitlow’s essay, “Bitches and Other Simplistic Assumptions” in *Brett Ashley* (ed. Harold Bloom, Chelsea House, 1991).

This ultimate refusal of repronormative domesticity is a crucial part of Jake's reconciliation with Brett in the end. Earlier in the novel, Brett affirms that she "can't stand it" when Jake touches her. Likewise, Jake is tormented in her presence, feeling "like hell" when he's near her and at ease after she leaves town (34). In the end, after she has had her affair with Romero and rejected him, Brett and Jake are finally able to encounter each other without anxiety: "Brett moved close to me. We sat close against each other. I put my arm around her and she rested against me comfortably" (247). This easy physical proximity may not seem to suggest a particularly harmonious connection but, in light of the toxic jealousy and rampant sex panic that characterizes Brett and Jake's previous encounters, it resonates with remarkable calm. What unites Brett and Jake in this moment is their final, mutual rejection of the fantasy life Romero represents: the sacrifice of anal eroticism in the service of a repronormative domestic order.

In the end, as he sits in the taxi with Brett, comfortably rubbing shoulders, he sees through the empty dream of anal-animal slaughter and hetero-phallic supremacy. In contrast to most critics,¹⁰⁵ I think the end of this novel is not about frustration or disappointment but about relief and refusal. Jake does not ultimately accept the status quo of medical and sexological pathologizations of disability, queerness, and the animality that was thought to exist alongside sexual abnormality. Jake may be resigned in this final moment, and he certainly is cynical, but he is also alone with Brett and touching her, for the first time in the novel, without panicking. In this sense, Jake and Brett are coming together at last to engage in a kind of intimacy beyond optimism. If he can't ultimately "be with" Brett, Jake can at last be alongside her now without being

¹⁰⁵ Fore, for example, discusses the novel's "downbeat ending" while Ganzel sees the action of the novel as a paradigm of spiritual failure, and its characters as anguished creatures of a perverse fate" (333, 26).

tormented by the false hope that some day they will be together as ‘normal’ heterosexuals. Shattering the fantasies of *The Sun Also Rises* demands a relieved acknowledgment that Jake’s penis is not going to grow back and that the heaving, panting terror of anal eroticism will arise from the scene of its slaughter.

While it may be tempting to read the end of Jake Barnes’ story for its queer failures or resolutions, it is important to recall that animal life is at stake in the bullfight. While people might advocate for the queer redemptive possibilities of dog love and other seemingly benign forms of interspecies erotics, no one is likely to argue that the interspecies eroticism at work in the bullfight is anything but violent. In the story of the bull fight, the bull is sexed to death. While Jake Barnes ultimately walks away from this scene of ritualistic slaughter and may walk towards his own anal-erotic future, a litany of sexually used and discarded bovine corpses smears the trail of his narrative arc. Whether or not there is some beat-down consolation in the end of *The Sun Also Rises*, the aesthetic spectacle of the bullfight as a conjoined testament to human and hetero supremacy lingers hauntingly over Hemingway’s foray into the dark corridors of anal-animality. The Spanish bullfight is an ancient tradition, a primal residue of the attempt to dramatize human species supremacy. Here many animals die needlessly, and animal life itself becomes encoded into a zoopolitical power-over-life in which humans manipulate animal sexuality on a massive scale for their own aesthetic and erotic pleasure. By enacting the victory of human “intelligence” over “animal force” (Marvin, *Bullfight* 104), the matador overcomes the threatening wild and subdues the beast in the anus—resolving species panic through an act of erotic domination. The bullfight seeks to defeat the conjoined threats of animality and anal eroticism in its repeated, stylized

performance of athletic human exceptionalism. Animal death itself becomes a human erotic pleasure in the bullfight—a moment of *jouissance* condensing larger desires for anal-animal eroticism into a brief and explosive sublimation. What this strange spectacle reveals above all is the way the spectacular queerness of man-bull interspecies erotics folds backwards into the linked regimes of heteronormativity and human exceptionalism, securing the beast and the anus as the proper targets of a highly elaborate mechanism of ritual death. The queerness of interspecies erotics is, in this instance, not something that threatens the dominant orders as a genuine challenge; it is merely a temporary aberration permitted precisely so that the order can be continually recharted and reclaimed in a zoopolitical repetition compulsion. Precisely because of the slipperiness of species difference and because of the plasticity of the human notion of proper heterosexuality, regimes of heterosexual and homospecies normativities can proleptically counter real menace by unsettling and exceeding themselves in the governed and crucially temporary aberration of the festival, a phantasmagoria where queer interspecies eroticism blooms and flourishes and gets resolved, allowing the spectators to return to their husbands, their day jobs, their siestas. In the bullfight the queer possibilities of interspecies erotics rise up brilliantly, passionately, radically. And die.

Chapter Three: Human Continuums, Trans Andys, and Cyberotic Triangles in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* envisions a fantasia of species panic. There are three main sites of panic in the novel: 1) the threat the android represents to the perceived autonomy of the human, 2) anxiety regarding extinction and depletion of nonhuman animals, and 3) the approaching death of the human species. These realms of anxiety swirl around the question of what it means to be a human animal in a world of depleting organic life and rapid technological proliferation. This chapter argues that humans, androids, and electric and 'genuine' animals do not exist in isolation in *Do Androids Dream*.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, they occupy shifting positions on a series of spectrums the novel sets up, where human, animal, and machine bleed into one another in a network similar to what Donna Haraway has called "interspecies biotechnosocial relations" ("Reconfiguring Kinship" 366). Posthumanist thinker Dominic Pettman situates contemporary human existence in the midst of what he calls the "cybernetic triangle" (7), an "unholy trinity of human, animal, and machine" (5). In what follows, I couple Pettman's terminology with Sedgwick's theorization of erotic triangles in *Between Men* in order to address an issue which has been largely overlooked in scholarship on Dick's novel: the interplay of human, animal, and android sexuality.

¹⁰⁶The distinction between real and electric animals in this novel is at best tenuous, as Sherryl Vint points out when she describes the "unstable boundary in the novel between real and artificial animals" (119). As in the cases of Deckard's toad and the Rosens' owl (60, 241), it is often difficult to differentiate between organic and artificial animals. Because electric animals can so effectively simulate the 'real,' Dick invites the reader to speculate that there are no longer any real animals on Earth.

If one accepts the novel's invitation to think of the androids as a species, then the plot becomes in large part a dramatization of interspecies desire. In *Do Androids Dream*, Pettman's 'cybernetic triangle' is also an erotic triangle—a network of desire passing between humans, animals, and androids which I will call a “cyberotic triangle.” This cyberotic triangle embodies the larger anxiety of the novel as its protagonist, bounty hunter Rick Deckard, struggles to balance a human sexuality caught between animals and androids. Deckard's sexualized species panic parallels the more general crisis of human identity after “World War Terminus” (15), an identity challenged by animals and machines and pushed from a naturalized category into something more like what Pettman calls the “*humanimalchine*” (6), a shifting position on a spectrum of species being. This chapter argues that animals persistently mediate Deckard's various sexual relationships with androids, thickening the already heady froth of interspecies desire. After arguing that interspecies desire is queer and that Dick's androids offer exemplary paradigms of trans embodiment, I conclude that while interspecies desire can offer productive reconceptualizations of sexuality beyond the reductive category of the human, the queerness at the heart of Deckard's sexual explorations is not *a priori* radical. To elaborate the concept of species panic and its intrinsic relation to interspecies desire, this chapter couples the concerns of animal studies and posthumanism with those of queer and transgender theory, synthesizing these positions through their shared commitment to unstable frameworks of gender, sexuality, and embodied identity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷Outside the context of this analysis, transgender theory, posthumanism, and queer theory already form a methodological cluster. This connection plays out clearly in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (Ed. Stryker and Whittle), which includes Donna Haraway's proto-posthumanist “Cyborg Manifesto,” Jack (then Judith) Halberstam's article on “posthuman gender” in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Halberstam, “Skinflick” 582), as well as an essay by Jay Prosser—“Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the

Brought to bear on the subject of species being, queer and transgender theory help to situate the human animal within a malleable framework of species being, what I term the “human continuum.” Using the sense of “across” that underpins both the word “queer” (Sedgwick, *Tendencies* xii) and the prefix “trans-” (Hayward 258) as a motif, this chapter undertakes a series of theoretical crossings, reading across and between animals, humans, species, fictions, methodologies, bodies, organisms, sexualities, and machines.

Critics have historically read *Do Androids Dream* as a characteristic, if particularly masterful, example of Dick’s “authentic” science fiction oeuvre (Huntington 152).¹⁰⁸ Of course, Dick’s astonishing body of fiction, consisting of 44 published novels and over a hundred short stories, is far from thematically or generically reductive. In addition to a career-long commitment to traditional science fictional themes such as space exploration, artificial intelligence, and extraterrestrial life, Dick’s work experiments with the alternate history genre (*The Man in the High Castle*), draws on the hard-boiled detective tradition (*Do Androids Dream*),¹⁰⁹ and explores diverse themes such as mental illness (*Martian Time-Slip*), psychedelic drugs (*A Scanner Darkly*), and postmodern scepticism about the ‘real’ (*The Simulacra*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer*

Transubstantiation of Sex”—which traces the ubiquitous, if often unacknowledged, presence of transgender concerns and motifs in early queer theory. Likewise, *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (Ed. Stryker and Aizura) offers a section on “Transsexing Humankind,” where researchers such as Myra J. Hird, Mel Y. Chen, and Joan Roughgarden mine the rich theoretical territory at the junctures of animal studies and transgender theory. Natalie Corrine Hansen points out that “animal studies and feminist and queer analyses partner productively in thinking about material and semiotic relations across differences and about related questions of embodiment, subjectivity, and agency” (Hansen 87). I venture that it is safe to add posthumanism and transgender theory to Hansen’s list. I do not mean to elide the differences between these importantly distinct disciplines, only to identify their points of confluence and their shared concerns with notions of bodily malleability, a crucial concept for this chapter.

¹⁰⁸ For a comprehensive overview of criticism up until 1998, see Carl Freedman’s “Editorial Introduction” to the special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* focusing on Dick’s work (15.2).

¹⁰⁹ Although *Do Androids Dream* straddles the generic boundary between science fiction and the hard-boiled detective novel, to my knowledge no critic has offered a sustained reading of this novel in the context of the latter theme.

Eldritch).¹¹⁰ Dick's highly imaginative oeuvre engages with a virtuosic breadth of literary schools and subject matter. Nonetheless, above all else Dick's literary career demonstrates a sustained fascination with imagined technological futures. N. Katherine Hayles suggests that Dick's central theme is the tenuous relationship between "cybernetic technologies" and "the fabric of the world" (160). Hayles shows how several of Dick's novels imagine androids as the representatives of this uneasy borderline: "Consistently in his fictions, androids are associated with unstable boundaries between self and world" (160). The android, in Dick's work, comes to stand in for the various ethical grey zones brought about by technological progress.

As an exemplar of Dick's continued thematic engagement with an increasingly technological human existence, *Do Androids Dream* has often been interpreted as a cautionary tale. Sheryl Vint describes the conventional response: "There is a general critical consensus that the novel's major concern is with alienated, modern, technologized life rendering humans increasingly cold and android-like" (112). While the novel certainly legitimates such readings, Vint seeks to push the discussion in a different direction: "I want to focus attention on an aspect of the original text neglected in both the film adaptation and criticism: the importance of animals, electric and real" (111).¹¹¹ Despite her avowed commitment to Dick's under-analyzed animals, Vint's essay soon reveals that conscientious analysis of *Do Androids Dream* cannot dissociate

¹¹⁰ These, of course, are only a few of Dick's manifold thematic interests. Others include conspiracy, surrealism, religion, all of which are manifest in *Do Androids Dream*. For a comprehensive overview of Dick's thematics, see Eric Karl Link's chapter "The Themes of Philip K. Dick" in his book, *Understanding Philip K. Dick* (U of South Carolina P, 2010).

¹¹¹ Vint does not credit Simon A. Cole, whose article "Do Androids Pulverize Tiger Bones to Use as Aphrodisiacs?" (*Social Text* 42) places *Do Androids Dream* directly into the fray of animal studies through a concern with extinction.

the question of the animal from the question of the android.¹¹² To talk about animals in any depth, here, necessarily requires some discussion of androids. Vint herself, along with many other critics, has acknowledged this necessity (115). What has not been acknowledged, however, is the inversion of this equation: just as discussions of animals in *Do Androids Dream* require analysis of androids, so critical concern for animals in this novel may require attention to android life. For *Do Androids Dream* does not offer discrete categories for analysis but a complex web of continuums and triangles.

To be clear, the cyberotic triangle is not equilateral. This is no democratic three-way. Rather, as with most erotic triangles, some parties get left out. In this case it is Deckard who does all the desiring. The android Rachael Rosen does a convincing, if pushy, job of seducing Deckard: “*Go to bed with me and I’ll retire Stratton*” (195, emphasis in original). But Deckard in fact initiates the liaison (182), and shortly afterwards it becomes clear that Rachael only has sex with him to mitigate his ability to kill androids (199). While Deckard lusts after androids, Rachael apparently has sex for

¹¹² The line Vint draws between animals and androids has a valuable place in the criticism on this novel. The point was first made by Ursula Heise in 2003: “the distinction between humans and androids is not exactly symmetrical in the novel to the one between real and electric animals” (“From Extinction to Electronics” 74). Because androids are “organic” (198), they do not map seamlessly onto the electric-real dichotomy which the novel sets up and gradually deconstructs. Heise’s analysis, however, overlooks some important evidence from Dick’s text: “The electric animal, he pondered, could be considered a subform of the other, a kind of vastly inferior robot. Or, conversely, the android could be regarded as a highly developed, evolved version of the ersatz animal” (42). Androids and electric animals do exist on a spectrum in Dick’s novel. Deckard wants to keep this spectrum fundamentally distinct from the organic human-animal continuum, but ultimately all of these distinctions become plastic. Because of the malleability of the tentative lines between life-forms in this novel, is at best tricky and at worst counterproductive to conceive Dick’s animals and androids as discrete subjects of analysis. Vint’s own essay quickly acknowledges the “homologous situations of androids and animals” (114), before troubling the apparent “human/android distinction” and advancing an argument that largely depends on Deckard’s relationship to the android Luba Luft (115, 120). To demonstrate Vint’s dependence on androids for a project about animals is not to devalue her work. On the contrary, this demonstrates her point that Dick’s novel probes “the ethics and ambiguities of what it means to be human” (115). Animals and androids become inseparable components of this project insofar as they both crucially inform Deckard’s understanding of his nature as a human animal.

rational reasons. She expresses a curiosity about Deckard's wife and the possibility of living as his concubine (197, 198), but she does not demonstrate lust or passion. As he does throughout the novel, Deckard, here, drives the plot's erotic movement. Following René Girard, Sedgwick becomes the great thinker of erotic triangles in the late twentieth century. Sedgwick argues against the dubious hermeneutic tendency to treat erotic triangles from the perspective of a "deadly symmetry" (*Between Men* 27). The responsible thinker, Sedgwick suggests, should attend to the "thorough asymmetries between the sexual continuums of men and women" as well as the marginalized "status of women" in traditionally male-driven erotic triangles (*Between Men* 25). Shifting this focus to include the nonhuman, I would like to maintain Sedgwick's language and insist that there is a vital asymmetry at work in the cyberotic triangle of *Do Androids Dream*. This novel does not offer a straightforward triangle of animals, humans, and androids. Rather, there are triangles within triangles here, hierarchies within hierarchies, spectrums within spectrums. Human, android, and animal are neither entirely distinguishable nor readily definable as such. But the straight white human male, Deckard, lies at the centre of this complex network of sexual and species being. Should the reader, then, sympathize with Deckard's species panic or celebrate the fact that his multiple entrenched positions of privilege are under threat? This is a question towards which my analysis will drive.

The sexual relationship between Deckard and Rachael propels the psychological drama of this novel, but android-human erotics are not the only form of interspecies desire at work here. Rather, android-human romance takes place alongside a peripheral erotically charged relationship between human and nonhuman animals which persists throughout the narrative, most palpably in Deckard's desperate "need for a real animal"

(42). To include animals in the cyberotic triangle is not to suggest that Deckard is explicitly interested in having sex with nonhuman animals. My purpose, instead, is to highlight the various ways in which animals facilitate and augment Deckard's sexually charged relationship with female androids, particularly his romance with Rachael Rosen.

One prominent force flowing through the cyberotic triangle is menace; human existence threatens animal existence, android existence threatens human and animal life, animal existence threatens android self-identity. To exist within the cyberotic triangle, then, is to occupy the uneasy interstice of erotic desire and existential menace. Not only do these three species variously threaten one another, the distinction between them is also under threat. To be human on Earth, in this novel, is to belong to a species status in perpetual peril: "Loitering on Earth potentially meant finding oneself abruptly classed as biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race. Once pegged as special, a citizen, even if accepting sterilization, dropped out of history. He ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind" (16). In the ruthlessly eugenic world Dick imagines,¹¹³ quantifiable reproductive potential becomes the primary indicator of inclusion in the human species. Here the punishment for abortion is lifetime imprisonment and men wear "radiation-proof lead codpiece[s]" to protect against the always-encroaching threat of infertility (50, 19). The codpieces point to a technological augmentation of the human body which paradoxically allows that body to *remain human*. This paradox recalls the posthumanist understanding of the body as Hayles defines it: "the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that

¹¹³ Adam Pottle offers a salient reading of *Do Androids Dream* in the context of the "American eugenics movement" (np).

began before we were born” (3). This posthuman model of the body grafts easily onto *Do Androids Dream*, where, much like the current world, physical augmentation is so common that it is bad manners to “inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair, or internal organs would test out authentic” (8). For Hayles the posthuman condition necessarily involves a kind of panic: “the prospect of becoming posthuman both evokes terror and excites pleasure” (283). Perhaps, then, the species panic Deckard deals with throughout the novel derives from a refusal to accept the transition from human to posthuman being. Yet the organic ‘core’ of the human male—protected by a lead codpiece—remains intact. In light of this analysis, it is significant that the definitional threshold of male humanity occupies the site of the sexual organ. Reproductive capability defines the human as human, and the potential to reproduce subsists at the genital level, in the very organs where the android female assaults the frontier of human being.

Reproductive capacity alone does not qualify one as human; one must be able to reproduce genetic material of a certain calibre. Those who can “reproduce within the tolerances set by law” retain the privilege of potential emigration to the extra-Terran colonies (8), while biologically inferior individuals—called “specials” in the novel (24)—must remain on Earth and face further degeneration beneath the radioactive layer of “omnipresent dust” (8). One such special is John Isidore, a delivery driver for the “Van Ness Pet Hospital” (19), a business which restores mechanical animals and, like all such businesses, poses as a service for genuine pets. At the time of his introduction to the novel, Isidore, having “failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test” (19), has become “in popular parlance a chickenhead” (19). When Isidore’s boss Hannibal Sloot uses the word “chickenhead” for the first time (77), Isidore responds with dejection: “I d-

d-don't like to be c-c-called a chickenhead" (79). Until this moment, Isidore had valued the fact that Sloat "accepted him as human" (19). Now, he faces a moment of species panic; his very humanity is in jeopardy. The pejorative connotation of the word "chickenhead" strikes the reader as strange in a novel where association with animals is a clear social benefit. Yet the meaning is clear: Isidore's brain is subhuman. This assessment becomes problematic insofar as it posits a scale of humanity where less intelligent equals less human and, presumably, more intelligent means more human. If Isidore's brain renders him subhuman, the synthetic brain can potentially make androids more human than many humans: "the new Nexus-6 brain unit had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major—but inferior—segment of mankind" (30). The rhetoric of the subhuman has led Adam Pottle to argue that this novel criticizes the "American eugenics movement" (np), but here it also shows that intelligence inadequately defines the human. If intelligence measures humanity, Isidore is less human than the androids. Isidore's subhuman brain reveals that the category 'human' is not a naturalized status but a tenuous position of privilege which the so-called human subject may easily lose.

This is where empathy enters the slippery equation of the novel. Because androids can become more intelligent than humans, bounty hunters such as Deckard use the criterion of empathy to police the species boundary through the "Voigt-Kampff scale" (58). Deckard begins by believing that humans experience empathy while androids do not (30), but the novel gradually corrodes this demarcation. When Deckard realizes that he feels more empathy for Luba than fellow bounty hunter Phil Resch

(142),¹¹⁴ the criterion of empathy breaks down and the reader comes to understand that the boundary between human and android life is “constructed rather than natural” (Vint 115). Sexuality, it turns out, lies at the heart of Deckard’s species panic: “it’s sex. Wake up and face yourself, Deckard. You wanted to go to bed with a female type of android” (143). As Resch diagnosis it, sexual desire is the cause of Deckard’s species panic. He has met the female android Luba Luft, who is all too convincing in her humanness. Her prowess as an opera singer compels Deckard’s sympathy: “I don’t get it; how can a talent like that be a liability to our society?” (137). Luba, significantly, self-identifies as a kind of human parody: “Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating the human, doing what she would do, acting as if I had the thoughts and impulses a human would have. Imitating, as far as I’m concerned, a superior life-form” (134). Luba, here, raises the question of to what extent we are all mimicking humanness, and implies that perhaps she should earn human status by acting humanity convincingly enough. She is, at the very least, an expert imitator of the human condition. She seems to genuinely appreciate art (131), and although Deckard himself remains unaware of his attraction until Resch identifies it, Luba seems to have an empathic ability lacked by many humans—that of intuitively sensing when someone exhibits unconscious sexual attraction (105). As Deckard forces question after question onto Luba, the dialogue develops the feel of an unwelcome sexual advance. The specter of the animal also

¹¹⁴ Although Resch passes the Voigt-Kampff test, the novel invites speculation that the test may be inadequate and that Resch may therefore be an android. According to Rachael, Resch is the only ‘human’ able to keep retiring androids after sleeping with one (198). He also appears inhuman insofar as he enjoys the act of killing (137). Of course, the vocation of bounty hunter itself seems to suggest an affinity with androids. Luba identifies both Resch and Deckard as androids (132, 101), reinforcing the general sense in which Deckard and Resch, those charged with the task of killing androids, are also the most android-like ‘humans’ in the novel.

permeates the sexually charged encounter between Deckard and Luba. Dick describes the concert hall itself as a “whale belly of steel and stone” (97), and Deckard’s questions involve a wasp, a stag, and a dish of boiled dog (103-4). Finally, when Luba calls her friends to intervene, Dick repeatedly describes an android posing as a police officer as a “harness bull” (107). The imagery surrounding this moment reflects the sense in which animals come to facilitate and ornament interspecies sexual relationships between Deckard and female androids.

The cyberotic triangle emerges more explicitly in the relationship between Deckard and Rachael. For their romance is not a two-way affair. Rather, this is a threesome involving a male human, a female android, and a “black Nubian goat” (169). During Deckard and Rachael’s liaison, the dynamics of the cyberotic triangle come to the fore:

‘Take off your coat.’

‘Why?’

‘So we can go to bed,’ Rachael said.

‘I bought a black Nubian goat,’ he said. (191)

Here Deckard draws an explicit link between his desire to sleep with an android and his need for a ‘real’ animal. Rachael invites him to have sex with her and he responds by telling her about his new goat—the originary symbol of species transgression that gave legs and horns to Pan—which they have already discussed over the phone (181).

Speaking to Iran, Deckard explains that he bought the goat because he had “begun to empathize with androids” (174): “Something went wrong today; something about retiring them. It wouldn’t have been possible for me to go on without getting an animal”

(171). Apparently, the purchase of the goat serves to offset the threat to his humanity represented by his empathic connection with female androids. Since this empathy tends to involve female androids Deckard wants to have sex with, it is fair to presume that it derives from sexual desire. Lust for female androids, then, leads directly to his purchase of the goat. The animal enters the erotic triangle in order to re-establish a balance Deckard has lost. The ‘black Nubian goat’ completes the cyberotic circuit.

The novel’s rhetoric signals a fetishistic focus on the goat’s body. The phrase “black Nubian goat” recurs several times, spoken by the animal salesman and by Iran (169, 171), as well as Deckard himself. The goat’s African heritage invites the connection which Marjorie Spiegel examines in *The Dreaded Comparison*: the parallel between the historical “enslavement of black people” in the United States and the “enslavement of animals which continues [. . .] today” (35). The goat is a “superb contender in this year’s market” (169), an assertion which demonstrates the bizarre correlation between the animal’s status as property and the “ethic of care for precious living beings” (Vint 119). In a strange twist, the fact that “caring for an animal is the best and perhaps the *only* sign of one’s humanity” makes humans want to own/enslave animals so that they can care for them (Toth 65).¹¹⁵ The female gender of the ‘black Nubian goat’ also recalls the fate of women during American slavery as Jessica Millward describes it: “‘marriage’ for enslaved people often meant breeding more bondpeople for the ruling class” and female slaves “lived in constant fear of sexual exploitation by both

¹¹⁵This double function of animals as both commodities and objects of care recalls contemporary human-animal relations where humans keep and ‘love’ pets that are also their property. Heise states that “the destruction of animals [. . .] outside the novel may or may not be part of Dick’s implicit social critique” (“The Android and the Animal” 506). Here, though, Dick certainly seems to question the strange paradoxes inherent in human treatment of our ‘beloved’ animal property.

white and black men” (23). The ‘black Nubian goat’ thus evokes the threat of eugenic ‘breeding’ and the historical travesty of slavemasters’ sexual exploitation of their ‘property.’ Dick has already, of course, foregrounded the question of slavery through the enslavement of androids: “Do androids dream? Rick asked himself. Evidently; that’s why they occasionally kill their employers and flee here. A better life, without servitude” (184).¹¹⁶ Deckard invites the android into the human psychological continuum by concluding that they dream of a better life. As the novel moves forward Deckard apparently forgets this concession, reverting to an understanding of androids as ‘cold’ machines that seems, increasingly, to be a defense mechanism. Throughout the novel he demonstrates a deeply conflicted stance towards androids, sympathizing with them one moment and ruthlessly slaughtering them the next. Deckard’s panicked and paradoxical relationship to androids parallels the contemporary relationship between many humans and nonhuman animals—we admire them in parks and the countryside, devour their flesh when it’s laid out beneath fluorescent supermarket light.

Upon first examining his future property, Deckard is astonished: “The goat, it seemed to Rick, was beautiful” (169). Deckard probes the goat with the proprietary male gaze—at once sexualizing and commodifying. Unlike Derrida’s cat, however, the goat does not look back. The goat has no agency. Rather, it is the obedient object of male

¹¹⁶The novel offers a clear parallel between androids and African-American slaves, opening clear links between racialization, speciecism, and sexual exploitation. The manufacture of androids is crucial “to the colonization effort” and in their lives on Mars the androids are “slaves, forced to perform tasks of manual labor and sex” (Dick 45; Abdul np). The relationship between the sexualized android’s species and racial status supports Mel Y Chen’s claim that “categories of animality are not innocent of race” (Chen 2012, 104). Deckard’s species panic – raised by his attraction to various androids – recalls the bestiality prohibition as well as familiar patterns of the miscegenation taboo. The historical tendency to animalize African descendants during slavery shows us that there is fundamental line between race and species. Pris Stratton confirms this in *Do Androids Dream* when she tells Isidore he is “a credit to [his] race” (164). Species panic and racial panic thus bleed into each other at the site of interspecies desire.

desire. The goat, in all its passivity, is valuable insofar as it can be owned and controlled. It is the perfect icon of what Deckard wants—an object of desire which cannot, like his wife, talk back. The body of the goat, like many female animals in this novel, becomes a site of admiration and desire that borders on the erotic. Furthermore, the female animal body figures here and throughout the narrative as a reproductive vessel for the project of imposed breeding. Like Barbour's horse and Eldon Rosen's supposedly real owl (9, 57), the goat's primary value lies in its reproductive organs. Before considering the purchase, Deckard makes sure that the goat is female (169), and when he describes the animal to Iran he excitedly explains that "maybe later on we can mate her. And we'll get milk out of which we can make cheese" (170). The value of the animal is not an intrinsic worth; rather, it is the promise of future food and babies embodied in the goat's teats and womb. Reproductive promise saturates the reader's first encounter with a female animal: "'My horse,' Barbour declared beamingly, 'is pregnant'" (9). Barbour explains that he has impregnated his horse with "some of the highest quality fertilizing plasma available in California" (9), foregrounding a concern with animal bloodlines that is familiar to denizens of a world where racing horses and purebred dogs garner economic worth based on carefully tracked genealogies. Nicole Shukin describes the contemporary world as one in which "animal life ceases to mean and matter in ways capable of challenging its symbolic and carnal currency as capital" (225). This assessment certainly extends to *Do Androids Dream*, where the "*Sidney's Animal & Fowl Catalogue*" determines the value of animal life (10, emphasis in original). In Deckard's world, animal care is the measure of human worth, but the cared-for animal equates to a figure in a directory. No

more or less than its price, the animal loses its individuality as it becomes a generic economic value.

According to Vint, the fundamental problem of Deckard's world is that "animals are treated as commodities" (119). Vint's Marxist critique is true to the novel's message, but inasmuch as the animal is commodified, here, that commodification is explicitly sexual. The sexualisation of animals has been largely overlooked in the criticism on a novel where dealers display their wares on "animal row" (167). This flesh-market of "big-time animal dealers with their huge glass windows and lurid signs" operates somewhere in the semiotic continuum between red light districts and fashion district manikins (167). Aside from Bill the Raccoon (41), most of the larger animals in the novel are gendered female. But more significant is the fact that they are gendered at all. In Deckard's psychological world, gendering is a privilege. When he is anxious to set up a distinction between 'genuine' and 'inauthentic' life, Deckard thinks of artificial beings without gendering them. Speaking of his electric sheep, he laments that "[I]ike the androids, it had no ability to appreciate the existence of another" (42). Genuine animals, along with genuine humans, have a naturalized access to privileged gender pronouns while androids and artificial animals—like the pathologized transgender in contemporary society—must often suffer the pejorative 'it.'

Not only sexualized through their reproductive potential and the fact of gendering, animals also play a more palpable role in the erotics of the novel. When he first sets eyes on the Rosens' private collection of animals, Deckard feels "a sort of yearning" followed by a kind of sensory revelry: "Already he could smell them, the several scents of the creatures standing or sitting" (40). The scent of the animal amidst

the drab post-atomic world must be potent, perhaps reminding Deckard of pungent bodily smells produced during sex. Deckard's encounter with the Rosens' animals has something of the feel of an adolescent boy stumbling across a stash of illicit pornography: "'I'd like too—' He broke off. Because, all at once, he had seen their animals" (40). This opulent collection of animals sets Deckard off guard and gives the Rosens the upper hand. Shortly thereafter, Deckard begins his game of cat and mouse with Rachael Rosen, and from then on animals mediate the novel's human-android erotics.

When Deckard gives Rachael the Voigt-Kampff test, the cyberotic triangle emerges in full force. The test's purpose is to assuage species panic—definitively differentiating human from inhuman—but the testing process also dramatizes this panic as subjects display acute anxiety when Deckard challenges their species status. All of Deckard's questions involve animals, and many of them probe the meeting place between animal life and human/android sexuality; one scenario involves a picture of a naked girl "lying facedown on a large and beautiful bearskin rug" (51); another describes an intimate bedroom scene where a wall is "attractively decorated with bullfight posters" (51). These scenarios explicitly pair animals and sexuality, but even the non-sexual questions bring animal presence into the erotically charged exchange between Deckard and Rachael. The test itself measures for "the so-called 'shame' or 'blushing' reaction" (46). Blushing, of course, goes hand in hand with sexual panic and shame, often accompanying sexual desires that risk rejection, reprimand, or prohibition. In *The Expression of The Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin notes that "[b]lushing is the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions" (309). Consciously or not, Dick

draws on a Darwinian framework in his construction of the definitional threshold of humanity. Darwin's account of blush is sexualized and racialized. He writes that "women blush much more than men" and that (310), while "all the races of man blush" it is most clearly visible in the "Aryan" complexion (315). In other words, Caucasians more than dark-skinned people clearly display this tell-tale sign of humanness. Yet this is an odd demarcation of the human because, as Melanie Dawson points out, "the blush is also strangely indeterminate as an object of analysis" (207). It is difficult to know precisely why a person is blushing. Most often, though, the blush is a physiological response to a sense of shame (Darwin, *Expression* 315). And shame, as Darwin describes it, is not too far from panic: "When a person is much ashamed or very shy, and blushes intensely, his heart beats rapidly and his breathing is disturbed" (*Expression* 323). According to psychologists Terri L. Berrera, Kathryn P. Wilson, and Peter J. Norton, facial flushing, irregular breathing, and a "racing heart" are among the most common symptoms of panic (876). Physiologically, then, shame and panic form part of a continuum of similar physiological responses to emotional or mental states. And panic, like shame, often results in a flushing of the face.

Do androids blush? Perhaps not well enough, yet. But they certainly do panic. The drama of the test leads to the only moment of explicit homosexual panic in the novel: "'Is this testing whether I'm an android,' Rachael asked tartly, 'or whether I'm homosexual'" (49). The moment in its entirety hums and whirs with erotic tension, as Deckard barrages Rachael with probing questions about animals and sexuality. The testing process works to a coital rhythm that connotes an unsavoury resonance of sexual assault. Deckard maintains complete control of the questions, firing them off at his own

preferred pace, until he reaches a climax, announcing: ““You’re an android”” (51). While Deckard’s desire for Luba leads him to purchase his goat, here the play of animals and sexuality allows Deckard to reach a cathartic conclusion. Because Rachael is not sufficiently aroused by the process of the test, he renders her nonhuman.

Rachael herself is an archetype of species panic. Her species status is constantly under threat throughout a novel which implies that to be an android is to exist in many respects between modes of being. As Stryker, Currah, and Moore articulate it, the notion of ‘trans-’ offers a helpful framework for conceiving this essential in-betweenness:

‘Trans-’ thus becomes the capillary space of connection and circulation between the macro- and micro-political registers through which the lives of bodies become enmeshed in the lives of nations, states, and capital-formations, while ‘-gender’ becomes one of several set [sic] of variable techniques or temporal practises (such as race or class) through which bodies are made to live. (14)

Assuming species status sits alongside race and class as one of the conditions under which bodies exist, the android body becomes paradigmatically trans. The organic yet technological android exists at the definitional threshold of species plasticity, occupying a nebulous interstice between organism and machine, real and electric, genuine and inauthentic, alive and undead.

The android body, further, serves as a model through which to think all bodies as nothing more than archipelagos of organism and machine. In “Lessons from a Starfish,” Eva Hayward states the matter explicitly: “the body (trans or not) is not a clear, coherent, and positive integrity” (256). Here a clear link between transgender theory and the posthuman understanding of the body as prosthetic assemblage begins to emerge. Nikki

Sullivan argues that all body modifications, insofar as they “explicitly transform bodily being,” are “‘trans’ practices” (552). But what, precisely, is “bodily being,” if not a perpetual process of transformation—cells multiplying, skin shedding, hair growing, teeth falling out? Likewise, nearly all human bodies in the contemporary world are modified—by surgery, dentistry, glasses, wedding bands, hearing aids. Dick’s android, like Hayward’s transsexual, simply offers a limit condition that exposes the radical incoherence of all bodies. Of course, in neither case is it easy to live at the limit. Beyond the “liveable ‘gender trouble’” of the “transsexual body” (Hayward 257), to be a trans android in *Do Androids Dream* is to occupy a perpetual state of species panic. The very nature of the android as species is to exist as a species under threat—of replacement by the next upgrade, of the inability to self-replicate, of species enslavement, of being highly human-like and yet fundamentally inhuman.

When he first meets Rachael, Deckard does not know whether she is an android or a human. Rachael herself, her brain supposedly furnished with “false memories” (59), allegedly believes herself to be human. When she reveals that she has slept with a string of bounty hunters and knows the other escaped androids intimately (198-99), her purported species confusion emerges as a seduction tactic. Nonetheless, species panic characterizes Rachael’s existence and android existence more generally. More than Deckard’s manic need to maintain some sense of what it means to be human, the androids embody a radical uncertainty about what it means to be android. Many of the androids the reader meets demonstrate deep awareness of their trans nature. This concern culminates in the question of whether the android qualifies as a living being. Rachael repeatedly laments that she is “not alive” (198): “It’s an illusion that I—I personally—

really exist” (189). This concern preoccupies most of the androids in the novel. In a moment of existential speculation, Pris probes the parameters of life: ““even animals are protected by law. All life. Everything organic that wriggles or squirms or burrows or flies or swarms or lays eggs or— ’ She broke off, because Roy Baty had appeared [. . . .] ‘Insects,’ he said, showing no embarrassment at overhearing them, ‘are especially sacrosanct’” (161). In this powerful scene, Roy demonstrates the penchant for wry wit which renders him magnetic, if threatening. He is a unique and captivating individual who, despite Rachael’s claim that “androids have no loyalty to one another” (191), draws his companions together as their “natural leader” (158).

When Roy and Irmgard enter the scene, the novel begins to throw serious doubt on whether the androids are non-empathic. Pris tells Isidore that the androids on Mars “are lonely” (150), and Deckard finds out that Roy has organized experiments with “mind-fusing drugs” (185), hoping to give the androids “a group experience similar to that of Mercerism” (185). Rachael herself, after confessing that she feels “[s]omething like” empathy towards Pris (189), refers to Roy as a “wonderful, spiritual man” (198). Perhaps most significant, though, is Rick’s acceptance that Roy loved his wife Irmgard (223). Moments such as these lead Hayles to an astute conclusion: “If some humans can be as unfeeling as androids, some androids turn out to be more feeling than humans, a confusion that gives *Do Androids Dream* its extraordinary depth and complexity” (162). Hayles’ insight demonstrates the extent to which androids and humans are not readily distinguishable in the novel. Rather, android and human both exist, here, on a sliding scale; some androids are more intelligent than some humans, and some humans are less empathic than some androids. While Deckard wants to uphold a fundamental distinction

between androids and humans, the novel repeatedly undermines this endeavour. Roy's charisma, passion, and dynamism cause the reader to wonder whether humanity as such should be a value. Shouldn't we esteem the androids for their so-called human values—loyalty, creativity, capacity to love—rather than troubling ourselves wondering whether the beings who embody these values count as human?

Pris and Roy's exchange concerns the question of what counts as life. The agony of android existence remains unspoken in Pris' caesura. Presumably, what she means to say is: 'even animals are protected by law. All life. Everything organic that wriggles or squirms or burrows or flies or swarms or lays eggs or breeds. But not androids.' Androids, though endlessly more sophisticated than some animals, are not 'technically' alive. They are disposable, and even on some level repulsive to humans. Roy's exaggerated claim that insects 'are especially sacrosanct' highlights the absurdity at work in the elevation of all 'living' beings above androids in this society's ethical system. If the reader permits the android a place on the continuum of life, surely the android sits somewhere closer to the human than the insect. However, because of an apparently arbitrary definition of 'life,' the androids fall off the continuum altogether. My addition to Pris' catalogue of animal qualities—reproductive capacity—is of course not arbitrary. Likewise, it is presumably no accident that the last item on Pris' list is 'laying eggs.' In this novel, both intellect and empathy prove dubious as qualifiers of the human, but the capacity to reproduce may well hold as the definitive characteristic of 'life.' In a telling moment, just before she and Deckard have sex, Rachael draws the connection between reproductive capacity and life: "Androids can't bear children," she said then. "Is that a loss?" (193). Ignoring the question, Deckard simply continues his

sexual conquest: “He finished undressing her. Exposed her pale, cold loins” (193). The frigidity of Rachael’s genitals serves to underscore her infertility. Deckard’s desire for Rachael is a queer desire; though he remains ‘straight’ in his attraction to this simulacrum of a human woman, by having sex with her he enters the sphere of the non-reproductive. Lee Edelman forcefully articulates a critique of the “compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism” at work in heteronormative society (21). Contemporary culture, Edelman argues, associates practitioners of potentially reproductive sex with the “collective fantasy” of “futurism” (28), while those queer subjects who practise non-reproductive sex embody the “death drive” of the “Symbolic order” (27): “there are no *queers* in the future as there can be no future for queers” (30). For Edelman, then, non-reproductive subjects stand in direct opposition to the heteronormative injunction to procreate. In this framework, Dick’s non-reproductive androids become figuratively queer.

While animals signify heteronormativity insofar as their primary function is breeding, androids occupy the opposite symbolic pole alongside the “future-negating queer” (Edelman 26). Rachael’s persistent appeal to her own barrenness at this pivotal moment underscores the sense in which it is precisely her infertility which excites Deckard. After he disrobes her, she continues: “‘Is it a loss?’ Rachael repeated. I really don’t know. I have no way to tell. How does it feel to have a child? How does it feel to be born, for that matter? We’re not born; we don’t grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age, we wear out like ants” (194). Here, the animal once again mediates the sexual encounter between Rachael and Deckard. Only this time Rachael appeals to the Cartesian model of the animal-as-machine in order to include herself in the animal

world. Furthermore, Rachael's monologue invites Deckard into the space of queer sexuality, an invitation he eagerly accepts. While she remains physically passive—just the way he apparently likes it—she also arouses him with a peculiar kind of dirty talk: 'I am a non-reproductive being.' Not only is the sex between Deckard and Rachael queer insofar as it is non-reproductive, interspecies desire is, of course, queer by definition. In her article "LGBTQ . . . Z?," Kathy Rudy argues that the umbrella term "queer" should subsume various non-normative sexualities, including zoophilia (612). Insofar as sex between humans and animals is not sex between a man and a woman it cannot quite be heteronormative. The fact that Rachael is a highly developed replica of a human female complicates this issue, but Deckard and Rachael's sex remains, in at least two senses, queer.

Rachael's main point is a lament at her exclusion from the world of 'reproductive futurism' that includes animals and humans but not androids. After they have sex, Rachael's animosity towards animals re-emerges as she gruffly dismisses Deckard: "go on home to your goat" (201). Rachael, here, re-establishes the triangular connection between her sexual relationship with Deckard and his connection to his new goat. Further reinforcing the goat's place in Deckard's heart, she adds, "[y]ou love the goat more than me. More than you love your wife, probably" (202). Rachael's accusation offers a glimpse of a parallel erotic triangle between Rick, Iran, and the goat. Significantly, the subject of sex between Rick and his wife comes up just once in the novel, when Iran jokes about setting her mood organ for "ecstatic sexual bliss" (7); "I feel so bad I'll even endure that" (7). Iran's remark implies that she and Deckard have a less than voracious sex life. Furthermore, her sexual disinterestedness symbolically

associates her with android-like ‘coldness,’ a correlation Deckard explicitly reinforces: “Most androids I’ve known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife” (94). Iran’s sexual apathy and lack of vivacity suggest that she is an unappealing partner for Deckard. To what extent, then, does this novel dramatize the fantasy of a man wishing to ‘upgrade’ from a sexless, distant, depressed wife to a newer, more appealing model? Certainly, Deckard’s choice to set Iran’s emotions to “pleased acknowledgment of husband’s superior wisdom in all matters” demonstrates his apparent wish to program his romantic partners into patriarchal subservience (7). His admission that he would marry Rachael if it were legal (97), along with his wish that he had “gotten rid of” Iran two years before (94), paints his ultimate return to his wife as a reluctant concession to what we might term “compulsory intraspecies sexuality”—the obligatory and unexciting conditions of human-human love. Finished with his excursions in the queer realm of interspecies desire, Deckard returns home to his beard.

Consideration of Deckard and Iran’s sex life also invites speculation as to whether they can reproduce, an enquiry that is exacerbated by the fact that they have no children. In a world where abortion is illegal, birth control may well be out of the question, which would suggest that Deckard and Iran either never have sex, practise non-reproductive sex acts, or are infertile. There are, of course, no children at all in this novel. Presumably, in a civilization which uses reproductive capacity to measure human status, a child would merit as much social credibility as an animal. But there are no children here, and as much as he craves an animal Deckard never dreams of a human child. For Edelman, the “figure of the Child” becomes the very *telos* of the heteronormative commitment to futurity (25). But in Deckard’s barren, childless world,

the only representative of the future is a fertile, Nubian goat. The animal, in *Do Androids Dream*, thus remains the paradigmatic symbol of heteronormative futurity. In Sedgwick's classic "male-male-female" erotic triangles (*Between Men* 25), one man's desire for another veers away from its original object and finds cathexis in the more 'appropriate' target, woman. Mirroring this vector, here the goat takes the woman's place as the socially acceptable target of Deckard's transgressive desire for androids. The heteronormative goat, then, signifies Rachael's exclusion from human erotic life. What better target for android rage?

When Deckard returns from his arduous mission, Iran informs him that Rachael has murdered his goat: "someone came here, got the goat out of its cage, and dragged it to the edge of the roof" (226). Rachael puts an end to the erotic triangle, at once extinguishing her relationship with Deckard and executing the hircine companion that mediated their romance. This is one of two moments in the novel when androids act viciously towards animals. The other is Pris' mutilation of the spider, which for Heise demonstrates that androids are "incapable of understanding and feeling with other living beings" and for Vint shows a "disinterested [. . .] lack of concern" ("Extinction" 74; Vint 113). Both Vint and Heise use this moment to suggest that cruelty towards animals reflects the mechanical coldness of androids. But is this coldness objective curiosity or calculated rage? Rather than inhuman coldness, this violence against the spider may signify a recognizably human sense of species entitlement. Watching Pris' violent pseudo-scientific experiment, Dick invites the reader to recall human cruelty against animals in the name of science. Further, Rachael's murder of the goat signifies the opposite of mechanical indifference; here Rachael submits to raw, irrational emotion.

Perhaps androids simply loathe their fetishized animal counterparts. Although no sane human in the world of *Do Androids Dream* would intentionally kill a living animal, thousands of years of animal slaughter and sacrifice suggest that Rachael's action is, from a contemporary standpoint, remarkably human. Although Deckard dismissively reflects that she must have an "android reason" for her actions (227), this senseless goat-murder seems to be motivated by naked jealousy and wild anger. Further, it suggests that there is truth to her claim to love Deckard (194), or at least to an emotional register beyond rational self-interest. Rachael's apparently impulsive action is difficult to square with the irrational coldness both Vint and Heise attribute to androids. Just as they can dream, it seems that androids can love and rage. The novel, then, not only suggests that androids should be thought of on the spectrum of being that includes humans and animals, it also implies that their more human-like qualities might be their most ethically dubious traits. The anthropophilia Rachael demonstrates thus emerges as among the most dangerous elements in this complex and volatile network of interspecies desire.

Seeking to recover from his traumatic adventure and the death of his goat, Deckard travels into the desert, cultivates a relationship with the 'fraudulent' prophet Mercer, and finds an apparently genuine toad. Upon realizing his precious toad is mechanical, Deckard offers a concession: "The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are" (241). Here, Deckard includes electric animals in the spectrum of life. All the various continuums of the novel bleed together in this gesture. The heretofore distinct spectrums—between organic animals and humans, electric animals and android—collapse into each other. Vint reads this moment as a step in the direction of redemption, suggesting that the novel gestures towards a future "in which humans might be fully

human again” (125). But is this return to a naturalized humanity really what the novel advocates?

When Mercer first tells him that “[t]here is no salvation” (178, emphasis in original), Deckard responds with outrage, furious at the audacity of a faith which offers no redemption. Ultimately, though, he forms a genuine belief in this counterfeit prophet: “The only one who was right is Mercer” (234). For Deckard, Mercer becomes more real in his very inauthenticity. The fact that Mercer represents a uniquely human experience, then, implies that the threshold of humanness comes to exist for Deckard only as a necessary fiction, a defense mechanism which allows him to subsist. The human itself, then, becomes a sham, and Deckard—consciously or otherwise—comes to realize that his commitment to a naturalized humanity is just as artificial, and just as psychologically necessary, as Mercer. Rather than a return to a naturalized idea of the ‘fully human,’ then, the novel reminds us that species definitions are essentially malleable. But even if we accept a provisional category of humanity, what does it mean, here, to be human? In this novel, to be human is to all but destroy the world you live on, to eradicate millions of species, to flatten the diversity of the planet, and then to create convincing artificial versions of yourself only to torture, fuck, threaten, enslave, and kill them. What kind of rational being, in these circumstances, would want to be human?

In light of the evolutionary panic permeating this novel—where all humans on Earth face the threat of devolving into ‘specials’—it may be helpful by way of conclusion to turn to Darwin’s understanding of the concept of species: “the view which most naturalists entertain, and which I formerly entertained—namely, that each species has been independently created—is erroneous. I am fully convinced that species are not

immutable” (98). My conclusion, then, is not original. It belongs to Dick, and it belonged to Darwin before him: species being is a lie we tell ourselves in order to hold our world together. It is a tentative, transitive category, and what we call a ‘species’ exists only under the constant threat of extinction and change. To self-identify as human or any other species is to exist in a perpetual space of species panic. No species remains exactly the same from one decade, year, or day to the next. Defending one’s species through violence, as Deckard does throughout the novel, thus emerges as a fool’s errand.

In the final analysis, then, what becomes of desire between species? Does it provide a liberating bridge across the perceived species gap? Rudy argues that interspecies desire can offer a productive disruption of “the stability and superiority of human identity” (611). Setting out to destigmatize erotic connections between species and expose the bestiality taboo as a bulwark of “human exceptionalism” (605), Rudy writes that “intense connections between humans and animals could be seen as revolutionary, in a queer frame” (605). Indeed, interspecies desire can pose productive challenges to prevailing structures of sexual, political, and ideological hegemony. Interspecies desire can shift matrices of sexual and species domination, offering affective and biological bridges across species lines and challenging the reified category of the autonomous human and its troublesome attendant notions of species privilege, naturalized reproductive sexuality, and normative bodies.

Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, like Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, sheds a more cautionary light on interspecies *eros*. Dick’s novel demonstrates that interspecies desire, like queer sexuality more generally, is not necessarily politically radical and is certainly not

inherently edifying, redemptive, or laudable. Deckard wants no part of this liberatory rearticulation of human sexual being. Instead, he wants to have illegal sexual relationships with technological beings that arguably can't consent because he is bored by, can't handle, or simply doesn't want sex with his wife. Interspecies sex, in this case, emerges not as a site of radical or liberating sexuality but as a remarkably conservative manifestation of a culture of male human privilege that wants to extend itself through technological augmentation. Queer as his sex with Rachael may be, it is also exploitative and ethically dubious. *Do Androids Dream* demonstrates that interspecies desire, while theoretically radical, can also be profoundly conservative. Deckard does not attempt a genuine 'crossing' through sex with androids. Rather, he belittles Rachael to the end: "I wish I could do to you what you did to me, he wished. But it can't be done to an android because they don't care" (234). Despite the passion, love, and rage she has demonstrated, Deckard upholds his panicked fiction that Rachael remains a 'cold' machine. The consolation the novel offers is that the reader may not—indeed should not—think like Deckard. Beyond Deckard's conservative, panicked point of view, *Do Androids Dream* offers a world of triangles and continuums in flux, where humanity occupies a transitory, drifting space in a miasmatic network of species and sexual being. Among the many vital challenges this novel sets for its readers in an age when the majority of laptop users have a technological sex life with internet porn, is to recall that all sex—straight and queer, within and across species, between animals, media, and machines—requires thoughtful negotiation and conscientious care.

Part II: The Anxious Interface

Chapter Four:

Lactic Panic and the Erotics of Dairy in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

An enslaved young woman arrives at the Sweet Home plantation: Sethe, a thirteen-year-old girl with bold “iron” eyes (10). The five “Sweet Home men” (9), all enslaved men in their twenties, swell with desire. They have not lived near a potentially sexually available woman for years. Though the temptation burns so hotly that “rape seem[s] the solitary gift of life” (10), they do not make advances. They wait for an agonizing year as Sethe chooses a partner. Attending her decision, they fantasize about this young woman as they fornicate with calves (11). What is the function of this graphic, disturbing, and loaded human-nonhuman sexual encounter at the heart of Toni Morrison's haunting 1987 slave narrative *Beloved*?

One of the things that is significant about it is that it is often forgotten. Readers rarely recall that nonhuman animals figure prominently in the book, let alone the way those animals figure as sexualized conduits of torture. In conversations about my research, colleagues who've read, studied, and taught *Beloved* often need to be reminded about what I mean when I tell them I'm examining interspecies erotics in the novel. Understandably, most readings of *Beloved* do not focus on animals or questions of species identity;¹¹⁷ instead, readers tend to examine the novel's central themes of dehumanization, infanticide, memory, and trauma. One of the things that I'm arguing here, though, is that examination of nonhuman animals in *Beloved* adds crucial insight and context to the established and flourishing critical conversation about this novel. In

¹¹⁷ As Jennifer McWeeny notes, “*Beloved* is rarely recognized for its critical portrayal of our various abuses of nonhuman animals” (272).

what follows, I examine how nonhuman animal *eros* in *Beloved* both serves as a mechanism of torture (corroding righteous struggles for what Christina Sharpe calls “black humanity” [12]) and destabilizes the claim of species autonomy.

Attendance to the profusion of nonhuman animals in the novel reveals that this primal scene sets the stage for a series of moments in which slaveholders such as the tyrannical—and, crucially, bestial Schoolteacher—seek to degrade the enslaved black body to subhuman/animal status: Paul D is “collared like a beast” (273), works with a bit in his mouth (69), and feels his self-worth descend below that of the farm’s rooster (72). Sethe’s husband Halle has a psychotic episode, smearing butter over his face in a lactophobic/lactophilic spectacle after witnessing two white men pin Sethe down and drink the milk from her breasts (16). Schoolteacher’s nephews steal Sethe’s breastmilk “back behind the stable” (200), reducing her to a producer of human dairy. Such moments of degradation via animal bodies serve to indicate a familiar and painful rhetoric of dehumanization. These enslaved subjects become animalized in scenes meant to register the horrific degradation of slavery.

Beyond the crucial points about black dehumanization, though, there is also the more slippery and nebulous role of nonhuman *eros* and dairy. Dairy connotes a realm of connective tissue where humans regularly imbibe the mother’s milk of a nonhuman animal—a maternal-erotic discharge only produced after reproduction. Dairy, in other words, offers an ideal physiological site for a study of species malleability and interspecies erotics—it quite literally serves as a kind of living membrane joining species together in a metabolic union. Milk, of course, is produced by the female bodies of all mammals, thus offering a site of affinity between females at the level of class, beyond

species bonds. But there is also a dark side of dairy—contemporary dairy practices are rife with sites of animal exploitation, where cattle live in dystopian conditions of constant enforced reproduction, tragic familial separation, and perpetual bodily consumption. Enslaved women in antebellum America, as Morrison demonstrates through Sethe’s pained lactic panic, saw their species status as tenuous and faced a very real threat of being reduced, “like cattle,” to human livestock, subject to perpetual breeding and, through the institution of the wet nurse, as purveyors of human dairy.

Most of the criticism on the role of animals in *Beloved* does not look beyond the way “*Beloved*’s animal imagery” demonstrates “the horrors of chattel slavery” by challenging the “inherent human dignity” of Morrison’s enslaved characters (Valkeakari 167). The available criticism, in other words, tends not to think critically about the idea of “inherent human dignity” itself, and how such an ideology might contribute to the crucially linked bondage of human slaves and domesticated nonhuman animals. In his article “Animal Liberation or Human Redemption: Racism and Speciesism in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*,” Tadd Ruetenik offers a sustained analysis of the complex function of animals in the novel, arguing that “Morrison’s masterpiece . . . can be read as a justification of animal exploitation as a condition for the liberation of human slaves” (318). Jennifer McWeeny, by contrast, maintains that *Beloved* is a novel that critically engages “our various abuses of nonhuman animals” (272). Although both arguments have solid ground in *Beloved* and throughout Morrison’s oeuvre, it is not my intention to determine whether Morrison is an anti- or pro-animal writer. What Morrison is, as Ruetenik acknowledges, is a gifted and virtuosic artist who, in *Beloved*, dramatizes the fact that “the issue of human wellbeing cannot be cleanly separated from the

consideration of animal exploitation” (318)—that the sonic link between chattel and cattle is more than coincidence. *Beloved* is a novel that takes for granted the radical contingency of species taxonomy and acknowledges that the right to name and claim “the human” in nineteenth-century America belonged to forces of white supremacy. What I explore throughout this chapter, and what critics have thus far overlooked, is the way in which animal eroticism and the prevalence of human and nonhuman milk serves to emphasize the contingency and malleability of species classifications in *Beloved*.¹¹⁸ This dynamic plays out first and most jarringly through Paul D’s erotic encounters with animals and then more subtly through Sethe’s panicked and traumatized fixation on breastmilk. Breastmilk is a crucial thematic throughout Morrison’s *oeuvre*,¹¹⁹ and in *Beloved* the motif of lactic panic plays out powerfully alongside a series of dark and threatening encounters with nonhuman bodies. Beyond the problematic and overly

¹¹⁹ The most extensive analysis of the role of animals is Tadd Ruetenik’s article “Animal Liberation or Human Redemption: Racism and Speciesism in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” (*ISLE* 17.2 [2010]). See also Kristen Lillvis’ article “Becoming Self and Mother: Posthuman Liminality in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” (*Critique* 54.4 [2014]), Karla Armbruster’s essay “‘What There Was Before Language’: Animals and the Challenges of Being Human in the Novels of Toni Morrison” (*Comparative Critical Studies* 2.3 [2004]), and Jennifer McWeeney’s article “Topographies of Flesh: Women, Nonhuman Animals, and the Embodiment of Connection and Difference” (*Hypatia* 29.2 [2014]). Much of this research will be addressed in more depth later in this chapter. For an analysis of breastmilk in *Beloved* see Heather Duerre Humann’s article “Bigotry, Breast Milk, Bric-a-Brac, a Baby, and a Bit in *Beloved*: Toni Morrison’s Portrayal of Racism and Hegemony” (*Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 6.1 [2004]) and Michele Mock’s article “Spitting Out the Seed: Ownership of Mother, Child, Breasts, Milk, and Voice in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” (*College Literature* 23.3 [1996]). See also Reginald Watson’s article “The Power of the ‘Milk’ and Motherhood: Images of Deconstruction and Reconstruction in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Alice Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*” (*CLA Journal* 48.2 [2004]). Of the latter three writers, none seriously consider the enormous animality signaled by the importance of breastmilk, an especially odd oversight considering the obvious way Morrison pairs human milk with an abundance of animal images. Mock argues passionately that breastmilk is the “ultimate expression of maternal love” but never pushes this beyond the level of human maternity to consider the broader mammalian thematic of maternal love that hangs darkly over the setting of Sweet Home (118), a farm that includes a dairy and various ominous scenes involving cows and cow’s milk. Lynda Koolish notes that the scene when Sethe’s milk is stolen demonstrates “the refusal of whites to perceive a slave woman as other than a cow to be milked, a breeder of livestock” (425). But, in the fashion typical of the criticism on this novel, Koolish does not note that this scene of horror takes place on a dairy farm, where the exploitation of cow’s milk looms darkly and suggestively throughout Morrison’s narrative.

simplistic comparison of the slave plantation with concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), what does Morrison's layering of human and animal suffering and exploitation tell us about the larger system of racist and speciesist hegemony? This chapter attends to the pandemic eroticism of nonhuman animals in the novel, and to the backdrop of bovine dairy lurking ominously behind the lactic exploitation of the novel's protagonist, Sethe. One of the novel's ongoing and doubled dramas is that on the one hand the ideology of slavery tortured slaves by dehumanizing them—rendering them animal—and on the other hand this ideology removes the possibility of love from slaves' relations with animals. One of the great tensions of *Beloved*, when read with an eye for species identity and nonhuman animals, is that even as it makes its legitimate argument for black humanity as a political category, it dramatizes a plethora of species malleabilities that expose and dissolve the human as a biological category.

I register that rending the bio from the political may seem counterintuitive, and I do not mean to imply that biological and political humanity are discrete—they are mutually imbricated and constitutive. I follow Alexander G. Weheliye's conception of "racializing assemblages" (4), a framework that acknowledges the centrality of "layered interconnectedness of political violence, racialization, and the human" (1). The popular discourses of "bare life and biopolitics" (4), Weheliye stresses, do not acknowledge "how deeply anchored racialization is in the somatic field of the human" (4). There is, in other words, no concept of the human or the human-animal binary that is not always already implicated in racialization. As I mobilize it, the political concept of "humanity" corresponds to Weheliye's notion of "Man" (135)—a concept that has value for analysis, if only as the object of criticism. Like Weheliye, I believe that the political category of

Man or “the human” is the patriarch at the core of many overlapping and intersecting systems of oppression. Weheliye’s project in his riveting book *Habeas Viscus* is, at least partly, to destabilize “the false universality of western humanity” (135). Weheliye offers an eloquent diagnosis of the superstructure of exploitation, where

humans are exploited as part of the *Homo sapiens* species for the benefit of other humans, which at the same time yields a surplus version of the human: Man. Man represents the western configuration of the human as synonymous with the heteromasculine, white, propertied, and liberal subject that renders all those who do not conform to these characteristics as exploitable nonhumans, literal legal no-bodies. (135)

I can only gesture to *Habeas Viscus* for readers who seek a full account of Weheliye’s sophisticated marriage of biopolitics and black feminist studies and the theoretical union of flesh and corpse he finds in the phrase “*habeas viscus*—‘you shall have the flesh’” (2). Of course it is natural and for post-emancipation black communities to seek to reclaim themselves as human. But, complexly, even as emancipated slaves take back the mantra of the “human” they destabilize and disintegrate the Western claim of huManity—demonstrating the vulnerability and fragility inherent within that political construct. Drawing on Weheliye’s attempt to unite “flesh and habeas corpus in the compound *habeas viscus*” (11), I offer the milk that flows from mammalian species as a liquid exemplar of interspecies connections—connections that are not pleasant to address, but that remain important for thinking through species being and the past and future of conceptualizations of the human. While Weheliye attempts a radical reconceptualization of the human—“a version of the human unburdened by shackles of

man” (92)—I turn to specific formations of animal-human interactions and cross-species leakages to ask questions about the claim of species supremacy and the real formations of bodies and discourse underlying the fiction of the human.

This chapter elaborates the parallel between *Beloved*'s profusion of threatening animal eroticism and Sethe's panic about becoming human dairy. Sethe demonstrates a profound and righteous species panic about being made into an animal through the tyrant overseer Schoolteacher's anthropological writing. This phobia takes on a more evocative physical dimension in Sethe's sexual violation by Schoolteacher's nephews, when the milk she produces for her children becomes rendered and coded as dairy for white consumption. Sethe's alternately phobic and frantic obsession with body fluid emphasizes the animality of the human body and its link to other mammal species while also demonstrating the radical contingency of the species hierarchy through Sethe's fear that if her lactological connection with her children is lost she will become a milk-producing animal. I argue that the novel's focus on human milk draws attention to the bovine bodies that lurk in the shadows of the novel as purveyors of dairy and receptacles of violent human desire. Through two coupled moments of humiliation and degradation via the bovine body—Paul D's bestiality and Sethe's lactic sexual abuse—Morrison dramatizes the troubling connection between bovine life and the conditions of human slavery. Offering a series of vivid moments where the machinery of slavery deploys the animal body as a mechanism for sexualized torture of the enslaved black body, Morrison demonstrates the way slavery operates as a version of what Dominic Pettman calls the “humanimalchine” (6). The nonhuman animal body, here, persistently appears as a force of degradation and dehumanization via sexualized torture. In the dark erotics of its

interspecies explorations, *Beloved* repeatedly demonstrates the way animal *eros* threatens the tenuous and contingent political species status of slaves. While animality is a troublesome and controversial lens through which to discuss slavery, it also offers some illuminating insights into the conjoined structures of political, ideological, and biological oppression that have left us, 150 years after emancipation, living in a dystopia of massive-scale black carceral labour, casual racialized murders, and overtly racist heads of state. Asking questions about the ways we oppress bodies, asking about the linkages between the subjugation of human and nonhuman bodies, offers one way to confront the many-armed machine of race/species oppression.

The Anxious Interface

When is species panic necessary, desirable, or ameliorative? When do situations of human oppression require an assertion of species status, an affirmation of humanity in the face of being rendered subhuman or animal? In historical circumstances such as the Holocaust, chattel slavery in America, and the widespread extermination of indigenous life and culture in the Americas, regimes of oppression consistently designated certain racialized peoples “bestial” and “subhuman.”¹²⁰ The residues of such racist-speciesist

¹²⁰ Elie Wiesel’s *Night* (1958) offers a prime example of the drive to claim human status in Holocaust survivor literature. Repeatedly brought into situations where humans become “[beasts] of prey” with “animal hate in their eyes” (101), Wiesel bespeaks a compulsive desire to assert that despite the challenges posed to human dignity, the victims “were men after all” (84). Holocaust testimony is rife with similar examples, including Primo Levi’s *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986) and Jean Améry’s *At The Mind’s Limits* (1980). Such works also demonstrate a recurring need to show the savagery and bestiality of the oppressors, a thematic that is also prevalent in slave narratives such as Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative* (1845). For a cogent analysis of species taxonomies and the “battle over the human being” in the Holocaust (25), see Anat Pick’s *Creaturely Poetics* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 23-51. Here Pick argues that “animals permeate the Holocaust” and that “anxiety over species identity”—species panic—“determines the ways the Holocaust is and is not represented” (24). There is of course a long history of

definitional thresholds are of course still rampant in contemporary Western culture. Indeed, the claim to the species status “human” is always motivated by logics—most often racially driven—of exclusion. In this chapter and the one to follow, I take up these concerns through what I call the “anxious interface” where racial categories, species taxonomies, and gender identifications meet. The human, as discourses of slavery reveal, is nothing more than a panicked process of negotiating who has the power to declare themselves as such. Colleen Glenn Boggs stresses the need to be “cautious of the current embrace—my own included—of posthumanist theories that see species boundary crossing as part of a liberating narrative” (33). Heeding Boggs’ warning, it is crucial to note that in the case of the history of slavery species categorization emerges as an essential part of the institutionalized practice of racism: the self-reproducing machine of white power repeatedly contrived ways to take human populations and pseudo-scientifically slur them into the semantic and legal category of the subhuman.¹²¹ To be clear, I am not trying to level the difference between species and races or conflate various overlapping modes of oppression. I merely wish to insist that species, like race, is a malleable and historically determined category. It is not that race and species are the same thing but that racist discourse is inextricably intertwined with species panic.¹²² Furthermore, as Anat Pick notes regarding the Holocaust, while “[d]ehumanization as a strategy of oppression has a long and iniquitous history” (6), it is nonetheless crucial to

settler connotations of indigenous peoples with animals and “savagery.” In *Taxidermic Signs*, Pauline Wakeham notes the troubling connection between “animality and aboriginality” in modern portrayals of indigenous life in which the animal and the indigenous body come together, dubiously, as signs of a fetishized atavism (3). I will treat this different formulation of the “anxious interface” as it applies to indigenous peoples more thoroughly in the next chapter of this study.

¹²¹ In *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), Saidiya V. Hartman offers a profound analysis of the legal conditions under which “blacks” came to be “considered less than human” in antebellum America and beyond (117).

¹²² In the words of Christopher Peterson, “speciesism and racism” are “logically and historically enmeshed” (2).

recover the “disavowed animality” of such institutional traumas “as central to the ethics of memory” (6). What were the discursive dialogues between humanity, animality, and flesh in the torture-regime of slavery, and how was the bio-zoological spectrum linking human and animal, creature and beast, free agent and chattel, navigated through an erotics of torture via animalization?

The very possibility that a group of people could be degraded below human status and into the humiliating realm of the subhuman/animal—the fact that becoming “less than” human would always be panic inducing—depended on a system of white, European, enlightenment thinking that had already denigrated the animal as an inferior being. The foundation underlying the entire nexus of species/race oppression is the originary assumption of human exceptionalism. It is this initial claim of the superiority of the human, as Marjorie Spiegel demonstrates in *The Dreaded Comparison* (1988), that creates the very conditions under which dehumanization becomes a degrading and humiliating threat. Spiegel asks, “[w]hy is it an insult for anyone to be compared to an animal?” and concludes thus (15):

With the exception of those who still cling—either overtly or subtly—to racist thought, most members of our society have reached the conclusion that it was wrong to treat blacks ‘like animals.’ But with regard to the animals themselves, most still feel that it is acceptable to treat them, to some degree or another, in exactly the same manner; to treat them, as we say, ‘like animals.’ (19)

Spiegel exhumes a haunting litany of “similarities between [slaves’] treatment at the hands of white people in the United States and the treatment of animals at the hands of a large sector on the American population” (29), offering an extensive archive of textual

evidence as well as eerily juxtaposed images of human and animal branding (28-9), bondage (36-7), and—most crucially for the arguments to follow—milk production (46-7). Spiegel’s deliberately provocative approach takes the direct opposite tack to someone like Saidiya Hartman, who focuses on the “routinized violence” of slavery rather than indulging in the temptation to “exploit the shocking spectacle” (4).¹²³ Legal scholar Angela Harris outlines a number of problems with the “dreaded comparison.” Harris notes that the “comparison implicitly constructs a gaze under which slaves and animals appear alike” to the sentimentalizing gaze of the privileged, white, *soi-disant* liberator (26). Furthermore, “dreaded comparison(s) erase the specificity—and the seriousness—of each rights struggle” and “ignores the dynamic relationship between people of color and animals given their historic linkage in the white western mind” (25, 27). Similarly, Weheliye accuses animal studies critics of using this comparison irresponsibly, examining “how the (not so) dreaded comparison between human and animal slavery is brandished about in the field of animal studies and how black liberation struggles serve as both the positive and negative foil for making a case for the sentience and therefore emancipation of nonhuman beings” (10). Anticipating just such a (valid) criticism, I’d like to clarify my own position; although I do offer some heavy critiques of the contemporary industrial meat and dairy complexes, I won’t be attempting to make the case for animal liberation in this chapter. I am not an advocating abolitionism or veganism so much as attempting to illuminate the entanglements of overlapping systems of oppression, domination, and subjugation. I do not equate human slavery and animal captivity; my argument does not depend on a conflation of these two categorically

¹²³ Certainly, Morrison herself does not follow Hartman’s approach—piling violence and traumas on top of one another in a novel that flirts with the gratuitous.

different, though often aesthetically similar, forms of bondage and subjection. Rather, I try to probe the dynamics of human-animal interactions during slavery and its aftermath as Morrison dramatizes it in *Beloved*. Heeding Harris and Weheliye's warnings about the dangers of sensationalism, insensitivity, and the irresponsible erasure of nuance at risk in comparing human slavery and nonhuman captivity leads me to modify Spiegel's terminology.

With such dangers in mind, I move from the "dreaded comparison" to what I call the "anxious interface" in order to convert the deliberately provocative equation of enslaved human and nonhuman subjugation towards an emphasis on an overlapping nexus of racist/speciesist oppression. Animal and enslaved human suffering are not equivocal or reducible to each other, but they are essentially related and interconnected. I am not interested in levelling histories but in exposing their complex and nuanced connective tissues. What I do intend is to follow the path set out by recent and important work at the intersection of critical race studies and animal studies that has stressed the need to critically examine the long and complex co-implication of race and species categories as part of a yoked nexus of oppression against those—both human and nonhuman—wrongly deemed subhuman.¹²⁴ The first problem, as Spiegel insinuates, is

¹²⁴ The discursive interconnection of race and species is by this point well established. The first major work to connect race and species as part of a conjoined nexus of white-male-human exceptionalism was Marjorie Spiegel's groundbreaking book *The Dreaded Comparison* (1988). Before Spiegel, Michel Foucault had already laid the groundwork for such thinking—the connection between race and species was from the beginning inscribed in his concept of biopolitics: "power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (137). A prominent recent theorization of the race-species continuum is Zakiyah Iman Jackson's article "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism" (*Feminist Studies* 39.2), a review of three crucial recent books—Mel Chen's *Animacies* (2012), Michael Lundblad's *The Birth of the Jungle* (2013), Kalpana Seshadri's *HumAnimal* (2012), Christopher Peterson's *Bestial Traces* (2013), and Alexander G. Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus* (2014)—that deal with this topic at length. For an overlapping and more robust list of explorations of this topic, see Weheliye, 141n14. See also the excellent 2013 special issue of *American Quarterly* on the theme of "Species/Race/Sex" (65.3), edited by Claire Jean Kim and Carla

the very idea of human supremacy, an idea that must be posited before the designation “subhuman” can be doled out. Furthermore, my particular intervention is to examine the way eroticism both binds and unsettles notions of species exceptionalism—a dynamic closely joined to racial supremacy. In reference to the 2005 PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) ad campaign juxtaposing images of human slavery and animal slaughter, Harris notes that such a strategy presumes “a comfort in associating oneself with animals and animal issues that people of color can only assume with difficulty” (27).¹²⁵ While the sentimentalizing or sensationalizing gaze of the presumed-to-be-white animal rights activist too-readily equates the sufferings of slaves and nonhuman animals, for the person of colour such a juxtaposition causes “difficulty.” This difficulty—a form of species panic—is symptomatic of the anxious interface. And it is precisely this anxiety, with all its complexity, that provides a productive theoretical tool for the exploration of the highly erotic human-animal relations saturating Morrison’s depiction of slavery in *Beloved*.

Paul D: Bestiality, Bestialization, and the Erotics of Torture

Freccero. The 2015 special issue of *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* on the theme of *Queer Inhumanisms* (21.2-3), edited by Mel Y. Chen and Dana Luciano, also contains several robust articles probing the intersections of race, species, and sexuality. In a short article in *GLQ* 65.3, entitled “Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement Beyond the Human,” Jackson forcefully states her own position that “*blackness conditions and constitutes the very nonhuman disruption and/or displacement*” that posthumanist thinkers advocate (216). For Jackson, then, it is crucial that “slavery and colonialism” are inseparable from the “Enlightenment humanism” that posthumanist thinking tries to displace (“Animal” 681). Posthumanist thinking, in other words, must confront the history of slavery, colonialism, and racism (and, I would add, heteronormativity) in order to productively trouble human exceptionalism.

¹²⁵ Referring to the similarly thorny theoretical area of the Holocaust, Anat Pick notes that “[c]omparing the fate of animals to that of Jews is considered ethically repugnant” (24).

Beloved's copious portrayals of nonhuman *eros* persistently unsettle the presumed rigidity of species taxonomies. Here scenes of degradation-by-bestialization—and the politics of species being in the novel as a whole—play out through a series of torturously erotic exchanges between animals and humans, versions of what Christina Sharpe calls “monstrous intimacies” between human and nonhuman beings (3).¹²⁶ Morrison depicts sexuality as something of a species grey zone, a realm where humans and animals can ascend and descend the species echelon—thus proving that this hierarchy is not fixed but negotiable. Sexual desire is, like hunger, one of the clearest indicators that humans and animals exist in a world of shared biological needs. While Cora Diamond has emphasized the importance of “vulnerability to death” as a *locus* of the “sheer animal vulnerability” humans share with nonhuman animals (74), sex is perhaps a more obvious space of affinity; not only do humans and nonhuman animals both experience sex, humans can and often do literally cross the species divide and enter the animal’s bodily experience through sex and other forms of physical integration. In *Beloved*, human sexuality often unfolds through a rhetoric of animality. The first sex act Morrison describes is Sethe “rutting” with an engraver in order to purchase *Beloved*’s epitaph through sex (5); when Sethe is pregnant and fleeing Sweet Home, her *deus ex machina*, Amy, asks whether she plans to “just lay there and foal” (33); in the same scene Sethe repeatedly thinks of her gestating child as an “antelope” (30, 31); when she encounters her spectrally re-embodied daughter *Beloved* for the first time, Sethe finds herself discharging an endless flow of water “like a horse” (51); *Beloved* herself learns about

¹²⁶ Although Sharpe’s powerful analysis in *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (2010) stops short at the threshold of the animal, much of what she has to say can be productively augmented by considering her notion of monstrous intimacy through human-animal relations and the race-species nexus.

sex by watching turtles mate (105), engaging in the familiar human experience of encountering animals as sexual pedagogues. This persistent animalization of sex and reproduction first of all suggests Morrison's investment in an emergent 1970s and 1980s feminist tradition that criticized the cultural construction of women's physiologies as embodying an "animality" seen to be "more manifest" than that of men (268).¹²⁷ The accumulation of animal imagery to refer to copulation and the reproductive human body also highlights Morrison's engagement with the way in which, as Margaret Grebowicz notes, "we imagine that sex is where humans are at their most animal" (11).¹²⁸ Though modern Western culture ubiquitously associates sex with animality, that same culture most often considers the successfully adjusted sexual being to be one who can appropriately "rein in" the animal impulses while still discharging them in a healthy manner. While there is something intrinsically animalistic about sex, those who have sex best in our civilized post-Freudian world are those who do it least "like animals."

The sexuality of animals and the animalization of human sexuality is most palpable in the character of Paul D. Throughout the novel, Morrison constructs Paul D through striking and highly eroticized encounters with animals and technologies of livestock. Beyond the quickly dispatched information that Paul D frequently copulates with calves at Sweet Home, the reader later learns that after an escape attempt Schoolteacher tortures Paul D by placing a bit in his mouth (69), one of several critical

¹²⁷ Near the beginning of *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir offers a litany of destructive animal metaphors—praying mantis, spider, "splendid wildcats, the tigress, lioness, and panther" (21)—used to subdue the perceived animality of women. Sherry B. Ortner's 1972 article "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture" takes a similar tack, arguing that "[w]oman's physiology" is "more involved more of the time with 'species life'" and "animal-like infants" (22). Similar sentiments can also be found across much feminist thought, specifically in works such as Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément's *The Newly Born Woman* (1975) and Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is not One* (1977).

¹²⁸ This line of thinking is deeply ingrained in the human psyche, indicated artfully in Shakespeare's *Othello* when Iago describes interracial sex as "making the beast with two backs" (1.1.115-16).

scenes in which Morrison “likens black people to barnyard animals” (McWeeny 272). Sethe, who witnesses this foul torment, commiserates: “how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it The wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back” (71). Significant about such technologies of bondage is both the fact that they are highly routine forms of animal confinement—horses spend the better part of their outdoor lives sporting such postanimal prosthetics—and that they are manifestly erotic appendages. The subjugation of the tongue and the yanking of the lips suggests an erotics of domination and torture fixated on the oral orifice. Significantly, bits and “bit gags,” like floggers, riding crops, harnesses, and chains have become part of the arsenal of BDSM sex play. In Mel Y. Chen’s words, “BDSM practices” often “deploy accoutrements of animalness” (105). BDSM, in fact, in its stylized eroticization of torture, borrows heavily from the bondage materials used for both animals and slaves, demonstrating the ongoing eroticization of these mechanisms of subjection.¹²⁹ If, as Frantz Fanon states, “[w]e know how

¹²⁹ A quick perusal of the website extremerestraints.com reveals items such as “Pony Bit Gags,” “Crops,” “Floggers,” “Collars,” “Wrist and Ankle Restraints,” and a subcategory called “Pony and Puppy Play”—the main two referents of the BDSM fantasy are clearly slavery and animal subjugation. Slavery, of course, contributes much to the aesthetics of domination and subjection on which sadomasochists thrive. As Margot Weiss notes in *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality* (2011), “the shackle, slave auction, [and] flogging” are among the most common tools of BDSM (151). BDSM culture routinely stages eroticized scenes of domination, regularly re-enacting “rape, torture, slavery, or Nazi concentration camps” (Weiss 148). Weiss argues that such dramatization “simultaneously incites and denies the *realness* of these historical or socially meaningful scenes of power” (151), but the relation of BDSM to historical slavery remains fraught. This is, as Weiss notes, a highly touchy subject in BDSM communities: “SM play with social power, especially cultural—and national—trauma like slavery and the Holocaust, is contested and politically complex” (188). In fact, entire monographs—most notably the 1982 book *Against Sadomasochism*—have been written arguing that “SM is the product of internalized oppression” (149). Most SM practitioners—and the community is, significantly, “overwhelmingly white” (Weiss 192)—contest this claim, arguing that BDSM is “about abstract or neutral, not racialized, power” (Weiss 194). Beyond these debates, what is clear, and what matters for my argument, is that the technologies of fetishism—indeed the very word “kink”—trade on the legacy and aesthetics of chattel slavery. The way in which BDSM incorporates both posthuman prostheses and animal appendages such as riding crops, floggers, and dog collars suggests a palpable species-transgressive erotic force underlying this realm of fetish and desire. The contemporary eroticization of technologies of bondage such as whips and chains

sexualized torture, abuse, and ill-treatment can be” (123), then the casual and constant subjection of nonhuman animals offers a dark fantasia of unacknowledged interspecies erotics. For Sethe, though, the fact that horses routinely take the bit in their mouth, their eyes filling with that same fierce and frenzied wildness, is of little concern. What matters in the emotional world of the novel is that a human being should not be subjected to a horrific torture designed for animals.

Of Paul D’s experiences of torture at Sweet Home, the one he finds most degrading is his encounter with the rooster, Mister. As Paul D roams the yard with the bit in his mouth, Mister watches from a washtub. Heather Duerre Humann notes that through this encounter the overseer Schoolteacher “not only causes him extreme pain and humiliation, he destroys Paul D.’s sense of humanity” (66). Indeed, Paul D confirms such an interpretation in his anguished reflection that in this moment he had become “less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub” (72). Paul D not only feels dehumanized, here, he also feels sub-animal, demonstrating a more complex hierarchy of species being than simply human > animal. Furthermore, Mister’s humiliation of Paul D is palpably erotic. From the rooster sitting on the washtub “like a throne” to Paul D’s description of himself “licking iron” (72), every detail in the encounter feeds into Paul D’s general feeling of sexual powerlessness. When Paul D describes the moment, he gives the rooster a hefty sadistic agency: “he was hateful all right. Bloody, too, and evil He sat right there on the tub looking at me. I swear he smiled” (72). The tragedy of the scene, for Paul D, is not only that the rooster witnesses his degradation but that Mister

demonstrate the way the history of human domination over both slaves and animals has become part of a widespread eroticization of power and domination.

takes pleasure in his subjection. The rooster, is, of course, an intact male with his choice of the hens.¹³⁰ The spectacle of chickens mating, furthermore, appears to the human eye as a vicious spectacle of primal violence and vicious masculine domination. Mister, then, leering over Paul D's debasement, does so as a prolifically sexual being while Paul D has spent his young years "sick with the absence of women" (10). Justine Tally notes that Morrison's story-world is one where "[p]rocreation . . . is highly valued" (72), and Paul D's agonized reproductive ineptitude serves, here, as a stark contrast to the rooster's plentitude of copulation and generation.

The clearest indicator of the way animal *eros* serves to dehumanize Paul D is the novel's central scene of human-bovine intercourse—Paul D and the other Sweet Home men engaging in habitual sex with Sweet Home's calves. The most obvious reading of this scene understands it as an instance of the species degradation brought about by slavery, part of the mechanism that makes the Sweet Home men feel like "trespassers among the human race" (126). The phobia of bestiality, traditionally, is that on some level the human who has sex with an animal becomes beast, at least in the moment of copulation—that, via sex with a calf, Paul D would become bestialized. What is most surprising, in a text that generally presents dehumanization through vivid spectacles of species panic, is that Morrison treats this most explicit example of interspecies sexual exchange in a largely casual manner. The sheer volume and cavalier delivery of Morrison's repeated invocations of bestiality—"taken to calves," "fucking cows,"

¹³⁰ The reproductive masculinity of the rooster leads Trudier Harris to argue that "Mister . . . is an objectification of freedom and a metaphor for manhood" and that the rooster eventually becomes "more of a 'man' than Paul D, more human" (181). I find a domestic chicken—bred through thousands of years of coevolution to be all-but-incapable of surviving without human aid—to be a strange symbol of freedom. I tend to interpret this scene as being more about domination, and Mister is certainly the "alpha" male to Paul D's submissive position.

“abused cows,” “fucked cows” (10, 11, 11, 20)—suggest that this is not a particularly delicate subject. It is something repulsive, perhaps, but not something that needs to be handled with sensitive literary artistry. Morrison does not depict human-bovine intercourse indirectly or obliquely, the way she delivers Sethe’s infanticide or Cholly Breedlove’s rape of his daughter Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* (1970). As a writer who generally handles trauma and violence with great care, Morrison renders the interspecies sex acts of the Sweet Home men in a surprisingly cavalier manner.

Paul D himself, the only Sweet Home man whose perspective the reader glimpses, does not see species-transgressive intercourse as a particularly shocking form of sex. In one startling moment, after he has had sex with Sethe and realizes that the experience could not possibly live up to twenty-five years of fantasy, Paul D reflects that “[t]he jump . . . from a calf to a girl wasn’t all that mighty” (26). “A vagina is a vagina,” Paul D seems to think here, demonstrating a remarkable indifference to the bestiality taboo. There may, in fact, be a sense in which bestiality is empowering for the Sweet Home men; bestiality is an assertion of human dominance via sexuality. These men, in peril of being reduced to human livestock, prove their place in the hierarchy of species via sexual domination of nonhuman animals.

Morrison portrays sex between men and calves as expected and natural given the absence of human females. Interspecies sex, here, works primarily as a substitute for human eroticism.¹³¹ Morrison’s syntax when describing the sexual predicament of the Sweet Home men—“minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape” (11)—suggests a clear hierarchy of appropriate outlets for sexual needs; these men would prefer women,

¹³¹ Robinson Devors’ film *Zoo* makes clear that many zoophiles resent the general assumption that they are attracted to animals as substitutes for the human partners they secretly want but are unable to attain.

but they will sleep with calves. Furthermore, these men, “paralyzed by yearning for Sethe” (25), fantasize about “the new girl they fucked cows for at dawn while waiting for her to choose” (20). Morrison’s narration transforms the nonhuman animal body into a prosthetic sex toy for human masturbation. The emotions the descriptions conjure, though, is not so much a sense of the degradation wrought via bestiality as the abjection of lacking women, the agonizing emptiness of these men’s sexual and romantic lives. Recalling his sense of dehumanization at the hands of the tyrannical overseer Schoolteacher, Paul D describes the Sweet Home men as “[w]atchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses” (125). In this remarkable menagerie, Paul D conflates emasculation and impotence with animality. Morrison does not present the Sweet Home men primarily as violators of cows but as men afflicted by the lack of available female bodies. One slave, Sixo, walks for thirty miles and forgoes sleep in order to see his lover who thereby earns the nickname “Thirty-Mile Woman” (25, 24). Women, here, are clearly the “correct” object of male sexuality.

If Paul D’s bovine romance is queer insofar as it is species-transgressive, it is also crucially hetero. Significantly, then, Morrison’s narrative seems to suggest that interspecies sex between humans and juvenile calves would be preferable, for sex-deprived men, to sex with one another. Charles Nero takes Morrison to task for the heteronormative presumption underlying her text.¹³² Noting the “homophobia” at work in Morrison’s creation of the “five heroic black men of the Sweet Home plantation” (232), Nero suggests that the fact that, in the absence of women, these men “either masturbated or engaged in sex with farm animals . . . does a great disservice to the

¹³² Nero also notes that Morrison’s novels *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Tar Baby* (1981) similarly pathologized homosexuality (232).

complexity of men's lives" (232). Certainly, the fact that the sex-deprived Sweet Home men apparently never consider male-male intimacy a legitimate option suggests a deep-seated aversion to homosexuality shaping the erotic world of Sweet Home. While Sethe's relationship with her ghost-daughter, Beloved, resonates with a music of incestuous *eros*—"she felt Beloved touch her. A touch no heavier than a feather but loaded, nevertheless, with desire" (58)¹³³—male-male intrahuman erotics become coded, here, as perversion.

Homosexuality looms as a strange specter of perversion overshadowing the novel, a more degrading and emasculating force than bestiality. When Sethe has finally chosen her partner, Halle, the rest of the Sweet Home Men watch as the newlyweds make love for the first time in a cornfield. The narrator notes that the four men sit together, "erect as dogs, watching corn stalks dance at noon" (27). The presence of other animal spectators at the event—"[e]ven the crows knew and came to look" (26)—emphasizes the way these men with erections become animalized observers of human sexuality. It is a tragic and painful scene, emphasizing the sexual and emotional abjection of life as a male slave with no available partners. It is also, though, a moment of screaming sexual tension as these four men huddle together, "erect as dogs" but not, as dogs surely would, humping one another. Morrison, here, places these erect males in dangerous proximity to one another and leaves them there, agonizingly, tantalizingly, amplifying the novel's general thrust of homo- and other sexual panics. This act of

¹³³ Another example: "Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes" (57). Juda Bennett argues that Beloved is, as a ghost, an essentially queer character, "a compelling symbol of lesbian and black invisibility" (33). Furthermore, Bennett rightly notes that there is a "queer aspect" suffusing Sethe's "relationship with Beloved" (30). Bennett, however, does not address Morrison's pathologization of male-male sexuality.

withholding suggests a fierce and determined restraint of a bubbling homosexual impulse; while homosexual desire seems to—and presumably often did—course between these fit, young, erect, and lonely men, they choose to sublimate their desires, instead, into calves. If some animals function, here, as eroticized menace, cows function as a sexual safety net—an acceptable receptacle of male desire. The male human body, on the other hand, is a site of disgust and perversion for the Sweet Home men—confined to the firmly sealed closets of the enslaved agrarian psyche.

In the novel's most explicit scene of homosexuality, a routinized sex act between male slaves and their overseers emerges starkly as a repulsive form of torture. Working on a chain gang in Alfred, Georgia, Paul D finds himself at the mercy of "overseers who force [the slaves] to perform fellatio" (Raynaud 54). The enslaved men react with horror to this institutionalized sexual cruelty: "Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot in his head as the price, maybe, of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus. . . . Convinced he was next, Paul D retched, vomiting up nothing at all" (108). Oral sex among men, in *Beloved*, figures as a form of heinous torture, an act meriting vomit and even potential suicide and instilling in the enforced receptive partner the desire to bite off the penis of his assaulter. This sexual degradation is also a racialized emasculation, as the black men perform the highly symbolic role of servicing the white phallus—a sordid extension of the more general debasement of their bodies, minds, and labour. Certainly, in *Beloved* giving a blowjob is a far more degrading act than having intercourse with a calf. Insofar as the novel figures sexuality through access to power and species status, Paul D here experiences the ultimate degradation. If bestiality allows Paul D to attain a certain prominence in the sexual echelon of Sweet Home, all of that eroticized species power

has been lost to him in Alfred, Georgia, where he ends up “[g]rateful for the daylight spent doing mule work in a quarry” (41). Of the degradations available to him, the status of laboring animal finally comes to appear to Paul D as a relief.

One rarely considered spinoff of the species panic running throughout both sides of the fabricated human-slave-animal continuum is the proximity of slaves to working animals in the agrarian culture of the antebellum American south. Slavery brought animals and slaves into contact on a regular basis, leading Frederick Douglass to argue that the institution of slavery caused farmers to treat their animals more brutally than they ever had before (qtd in Spiegel, 107). In a discussion of agrarian slave narratives, Kimberly Smith points out that despite persistent “complaints that slaves were treated like animals, the slave narrators seldom stopped to consider whether it was appropriate to treat *animals* so badly” (286). Among many thefts, one thing enslaved peoples may have been robbed of was the ability to coexist harmoniously alongside animals. *Beloved* likewise portrays animals primarily through a phobic lens, offering almost no empathetic connections between humans and animals, despite frequent contact across species lines. As most pet owners know, domestic animals can be a great source of comfort in difficult times. Rather than seeing animals as purveyors of fondness and love, though, Douglass and others suggest that slaves often saw animals as competitors for privileges such as food and freedom.

What, exactly, were the emotional and erotic connections between slaves and animals? The lived historical conditions of enslaved life on farms also populated by animals can be contextualized through the larger history of interspecies erotics in rural areas and agrarian cultures. Historically, bestiality was thought to be common among

peasants and other occupants of rural areas. For example, sexologist Havelock Ellis notes “the great frequency of bestiality among shepherds, goatherds, and others whose occupation is exclusively the care of animals.” (82).¹³⁴ It is tempting to speculate, then, that the central scene of bestiality in *Beloved* has grounds in historical precedent. Slaves often dwelt alongside animals and domestic livestock, and the practice of bestiality may have been fairly common. Presumably, given the panicked definition of the self as anti-animal in the discourse of slavery, such sexual encounters would have only increased the slaves’ sense of humiliation regarding their tenuous species status. (I do not say this to out anyone in particular, but to try to illuminate the larger overlapping system and the panicked negotiation of species status that the anxious interface of species/race illuminates.) Morrison uses zoophilia and interspecies erotics to variously degrade and empower her enslaved characters, she also invites consideration of the enormous complexities of zoophilia in relation to consent and species-wide bondage. The question of consent—a live and thorny issue in discussions of bestiality and zoophilia—becomes further complicated by the novel’s immersion in the history of slavery. Debates about consent surrounding the modern animal rights movement may have no place in discussions of slavery, where the paradigm of consent is radically alien. Slaves do not consent to being enslaved, or to being animalized. Therefore their actions, whether those actions are an attempt to reclaim power and species status by penetrating/dominating the animal or simply a more physical quest for pleasure and satisfaction, are not

¹³⁴ Likewise, Midas Dekkers states that according to Alfred Kinsey’s survey results, recorded in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), 50% of “young men in the countryside” of 1940s America had “had sex with animals” (Dekkers 133). Even if such numbers look rather “far-fetched” (Pettman, *Human Error* 79), they still suggest that bestiality may have been far more normal and less panic-inducing than homosexual sex or interracial sex (Dekkers 39). Perhaps, then, Morrison is right and Nero is wrong—the Sweet Home Men may really have been more willing to turn to calves than each other for erotic solace.

commensurable with consent as a criterion of ethics. This is murkier territory, with slippages of sex and species at every turn. In the two sections to follow—and in a logic Morrison’s novel invites—milk complicates the already fraught question of consent in interspecies erotics. The production of cow’s milk—the perpetual theft of the milk a cow produces to feed her babies—offers an example of a continual and non-consensual erotic exploitation of the bovine body that nonetheless complicates and blurs the meat-focused framework of animal studies.

Meat and Mammaries

Dairy is a strange and nebulous substance; it is not meat and does not require death to produce but it is a consumable product of the mammalian body. Taking dairy from an animal is, furthermore, manifestly erotic—it requires the animal to continually reproduce (often through artificial insemination or other human technological enforcements) so that human beings can then drain maternal fluid from the animal’s breasts. Dairy production is a lifelong non-consensual interspecies erotic relationship, one self-styled technological parasite feeding off the biomass of another species. Institutionalized dairy production offers the very paradigm of Michel Foucault’s definition of biopolitics as a “power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death” (147). The agricultural production of dairy requires the careful manipulation of animal sexuality, reproduction, and the mammalian maternal body.

When animal studies veers towards advocacy, it often focuses on meat and animal slaughter. In her books *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) and *The Pornography of Meat* (2003), Carol J. Adams offers ready examples of this paradigm, drawing an

instructive and striking litany of connections between gender exploitation and the iconography and politics of meat-eating.¹³⁵ Meat is a rich signifier of the exploitability of the nonhuman body, offering a clear line of demarcation between the traditional categories of “human” and “animal.” As Jacques Derrida notes in a 1991 interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, nonhuman animals are largely subject to a “noncriminal putting to death” for the purposes of human consumption (112). Humans, on the other hand, should not be killed or eaten according to the laws of most cultures. In *Eroticism*, Georges Bataille writes that although humans are at times sacrificed or ritualistically cannibalized, “[m]an is never looked upon as butcher’s meat” (71). In modern Western civilization this is perhaps the best legal/political definition of the human—the animal who should not be killed or eaten.

When Derrida turns consider animal life and bodies in “Eating Well,” he shifts his previous delineation of modern “phallogocentric” society to make room for meat, diagnosing what he calls the “carnivorous virility” of a modern culture he deems “*carnophallogocentric*” (“Eating Well” 113). Here, in an interview contemporary with Adams’ *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), at an identifiable moment of conception for animal studies, Derrida takes issue with the fact that “our cultures are carnivorous” (“Eating Well” 112). Through the highly influential work of Adams and Derrida, meat achieves a central valuation in this emergent discourse of animal studies. While Derrida and Adams

¹³⁵ Significantly, both books also locate race as part of the oppressive politics of meat-eating. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams argues that “meat eating” is “an index of racism” (52). In *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams also draws race into the nexus of animalized portrayals of human sexuality. Noting “[p]ornographic book and magazine titles such as *A Cocksucking Slave*, *Soul Slave*, or *Slave Stud*” (45), Adams suggests that [a] prevalent theme in pornography is portraying African American women in the South during slavery, thus eroticizing the master-slave relationship and recalling a time when the Constitution excluded them. Titles such as *Black Bitch* and *Bound, Gagged, and Loving It* make the racism more, not less, dangerous. They posit that black women have an animalistic sexuality that must be controlled, otherwise they are dangerous. (45)

are both specifically theorizing eating practices, a broader view of human-animal relations can benefit from looking beyond meat, the most obvious gastronomic rendering of the nonhuman animal body. The underlying presumption of Adams' work is that modern "carnophallogocentric" culture turns women into 1) meat, and 2) animals, and that such a presentation of human women is degrading, even monstrous. While such thinking offers a crucial bulwark against the exploitation of women in contemporary heterocentric society, following too quickly behind the animalism=degradation presumption risks missing Marjorie Spiegel's point, which serves as the theoretical heart of this chapter: that the very idea that being dehumanized/animalized should be insulting stems from the underlying problem of humanity's hugely problematic and violent relation to animals. The initial valuation of animals as (symbolically) profane, debased, and hyper-erotic—and as commodities to be bred, killed, and consumed—is precisely what leads to the eroticized power relations that allow humans to be degraded by rendering them bestial.

While recent thinking with and around animals has done much work towards theorizing meat, far less theoretical labour has attended to milk. The fixation on meat risks occluding other forms of animal exploitation beyond slaughter for meat, missing in particular the flood of violent eroticism at work in dairy production processes.¹³⁶ More recent thinking, such as Mel Chen's *Animacies*, troubles the presumed binary makeup of the life-death distinction, probing the "richly affective territory of mediation between life

¹³⁶ Despite her emphasis on meat, Adams herself clearly acknowledges the pandemic violence of dairy. Adams, a militant vegan who advocates for the cause at regular public lectures, has elsewhere spoken of her larger project as a "feminist-vegan theory" ("Foreword" x). She has also recently co-authored, with Patti Breitman and Virginia Messina, *Never Too Late To Go Vegan: The Over-50 Guide to Adopting and Thriving on a Plant-Based Diet* (New York: The Experiment, 2014).

and death” to examine theoretical possibilities such as “the ‘affect’ of a vegetable” (4). When Derrida states that “[t]he difference between ‘animal’ and ‘vegetal’ also remains problematic” (“Eating Well” 106), he prefigures such thinking and gestures towards nebulas that blur the distinction between life and death, meat and flesh.

Flesh is central in Weheliye’s recent theorization of the “enfleshed modalities of humanity” (132), a project derived from Hortense Spillers’ distinction between “body” and “flesh” (67).¹³⁷ Weheliye hopes that it might be possible “to claim the monstrosity of the flesh as a site for freedom beyond the world of Man” (125); his vision of “the hieroglyphics of the flesh” (127), though, also entails a crucially liminal and malleable understanding of “humanity as a relational ontological totality” (32). Such thinking opens a slippage between body, flesh, and the inanimate—a fissure into which dairy can squelch and leak. Milk, though it is part of the living body, is decidedly not flesh; it is the liquefied rendering of human embodiment. Milk is a fluid that is itself full of potential life and yet stripped of the traditional category of life, a substance that affronts death insofar as it demands its animal producers to be kept alive for the sake of perpetual and protracted corporeal extraction, rather than killed and eaten. Milk sustains life, allowing human and nonhuman babies to live only if they can properly latch onto their mothers’ bodies. But milk itself is not an organism, not properly “alive.” Yet it is more lively than meat, occupying a space between food/flesh and living animal on the animacy hierarchy. Milk, then, dances through various positions on Mel Y. Chen’s animacy hierarchy, demonstrating the radical malleability of the body, walking archive of fluid

¹³⁷ Although Weheliye offers robust accounts of many of Spillers’ essays, Spillers herself made this distinction most clearly and famously in her 1987 essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.” For Weheliye’s most extended engagement with Spillers, see “Bare Life: The Flesh,” the second chapter of *Habeas Viscus*.

and flesh. Milk also represents a transitional substance between food and fluid, hunger and thirst. Human babies often live for up to six months on milk alone—it is high in caloric value, a kind of superfood that generates in women a kind of superhuman feeling of body-transcendence, and yet it is not masticated, it is not solid. In these ways and more, milk is a nebula, a ready conduit for thinking the transitory nature of bodily and species being.

Dairy is also profoundly and multiply erotic. In our contemporary world, dairy offers a more clearly eroticized vision of human-animal exploitation than the more familiar and sensational scene of the abattoir. The dairy industry produces repeated and long-lasting degradations of the animal body that may be more suggestive of how the modern biopolitical apparatus works than the institutionalization of animal death. The crucial fact is not that beef cows and veal calves die to give humans meat but that dairy cows are walking, zombified sacks of fluid waiting to be joined to the ever-expanding human species. In an appendix to the chapter collection *Sister Species: Women, Animals, and Social Justice*, Lisa Kemmerer offers a stark description of the twisted erotics of dairy production:

milking machines are attached to the cow's teats morning and evening. Dairy cows endure mechanized milking for ten out of twelve months per year (including seven months of their nine-month pregnancies) . . . Genetic manipulation and dietary controls cause extraordinary and unnatural milk output. Cows naturally produce just over two tons of milk per year, but Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH/BST) has increased milk flow so that cows now provide as much as thirty tons of milk annually, enough for ten calves. (174)

After being artificially impregnated and then having their calves taken away to be slaughtered as veal at four months old, hormonally-enhanced milking cows spend the majority of their lives with their nipples attached to tirelessly thirsty machines, nothing less than endlessly greedy prosthetic extensions of the collective human body. This shockingly banal spectacle of the technofuturist postanimal serves as a haunting incarnation of Dominic Pettman's "*humanimalchine*." The notion of the cow as posthuman prosthesis also extends to consideration of the selective breeding practices that have on some level created cattle as itself a kind of milk-machine designed by a dark strand of symbiosis for perpetual human exploitation. Insofar as the life of a dairy cow consists of being "sent to slaughter after just four or five years of repeated impregnation, giving birth, and constant milking" (Kemmerer 174),¹³⁸ the modern dairy system in countries such as the United States begins to register as nothing less than dystopia.¹³⁹

There is also an interspecies erotics and intimacy at work in the very act of drinking milk and eating dairy products. This intimacy used to be more obvious when milking was done by hand, requiring a physical connection between human and bovine bodies. Despite the alienation of modern CAFO dairy practices, though, consuming dairy still at root consists of putting a cow's breastmilk into the human mouth or body—a system of mechanically augmented human-bovine suckling.

¹³⁸ The natural lifespan of cattle is over twenty years (Kemmerer 174).

¹³⁹ In the dystopian strand of his book *Cloud Atlas*, David Mitchell heavily draws on the imagery of the slaughterhouse and dairy industries to add a gothic twist to the end of the lives of his waitress-clone "fabricants" (326), who believe they are going to reach "Xultation" after death but end up perishing *en masse* in a kind of floating death factory (340). Mitchell's fabricants are raised in "wombtanks" and live on "Soap" (343), which turns out to be a kind of milk made out of the "reclaimed proteins" of their own species (343). The 1973 film *Soylent Green* explores similar themes, depicting massive industrial cannibalism as the eerily foreseeable solution to feeding a starving human population. Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse Five* suggests that the panic induced by pairing the technology of the slaughterhouse with human life—as in the industrial death-machine of the Nazi concentration camps—is the ground zero of dystopian literature.

Consideration of the erotics of dairy consumption takes on a strange twist, too, when we think about the way that milk is marketed, by the Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) and similar organizations, specifically for human children, with cartoonish images of benevolent, cows or human-cow hybrids. For example, the crimson avatar of The Laughing Cow brand, wearing hoop earrings and abundant eyeliner, looks clearly and unsettlingly simultaneously racialized and sexualized (“The Laughing Cow”). The push to get kids to drink cow’s milk looks, from a distance, a little like a nation of bovine wet nurses feeding America’s children. Pair this with the erotics of ad campaigns such as the California Milk Processor Board’s “Got Milk?” endeavour or Coca Cola’s pin-up-girl branding (itself a bovine metaphor) of their new milk product in partnership with Fairlife,¹⁴⁰ and what emerges is a strange mixture of bovine and female human sexuality coalescing through the murk of lactose.

Another quasi-dystopian and eerily familiar element of the contemporary dairy industry is the way it treats the bovine family unit. A necessary facet of extracting milk intended for calves from dairy cows is the separation of families. Behaviourist Temple Grandin sums up the deep emotional bond between cows and calves: “Cows are herd animals that need to be with their buddies and family members. They have close relationships, especially between sisters and between mothers and daughters” (137). In modern dairy practice, though, “the calf is usually removed from the cow within a few hours of birth” (Keyserlingk and Weary 106). This means that both calf and cow are highly distressed, shown by the fact that calves “bawl and scream and pace for three to five days trying to get back to their moms” (Grandin 158). The complete obliteration of

¹⁴⁰ See Ylva Johannesson’s article “The Fairlife ‘Coke-Milk’ adverts: Do we really need pin-up girls to sell us drinks?”

the family structure in the dairy industry, with little care taken for the emotional lives of this living property, bears an ominous resemblance to the treatment of slave families in antebellum America.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently stated that as of 2013 there were almost 1.5 billion cattle in the world (“Statistical Pocketbook” 30), taking up an enormous amount of land mass and draining environmental resources at a level that makes livestock the single greatest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. These creatures are generally so hidden from the human eye that most people don’t even know that cows have to reproduce in order to provide milk (Velten 8), or that such reproduction is habitually forced upon them. For the most part the dairy industry looms darkly in the subterranean closets of human society, providing a product marketed as healthy and rustic that in fact depends on a bio/zoopolitics of massive-scale human manipulation of bovine sexual and reproductive anatomy. Humans habitually using machines to impregnate cattle. Human-made milk machines suckling greedily at the bovine teat. Hormones given so cattle will produce highly unnatural amounts of milk. Offspring—the very reason for this milk—taken at birth and killed soon thereafter. What is this if not a twisted interspecies erotics of torture?

Lactic Panic

Breastmilk lies at the deepest core of Sethe’s traumatic memory; she is a character defined by lactic panic. Sethe’s central, anxiously emphatic ethic in *Beloved* is that she

should be able to nurse her own children, a concern wrought through her manically repeated mantra that she would have “milk enough for all” (198). Fleeing Sweet Home, her imperative is not her own freedom but the drive to deliver her milk to her baby girl on the far side of the Ohio river: “I had milk . . . I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl. I hadn’t stopped nursing her when I sent her on ahead . . . All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me” (16). Here Sethe emphasizes the primacy of the mother-daughter connection, a bond encapsulated in her maternal body fluid. Through repeated vocalizations of Sethe’s searing desperation regarding the transference of milk to her child, Morrison conjures the voices of legion slave women who felt this urge to deliver breastmilk to their children and were unable to do so. This baby girl later becomes Beloved, named after the first words given at her own funeral, “Dearly Beloved” (5), after she was murdered by her mother in order to save the family from being forcibly returned to slavery under the Fugitive Bill. Sethe’s obsession with breastmilk says many things about her fierce and tortured maternal instinct, but one suggestion here is that something was lost during the period where mother and nursing child were separated—something irrecoverable, something that made Beloved so thirsty for love she would return from the grave and cause Sethe’s body to abject an “endless” stream of urine (51).¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Though child-bearing does involve abjections such as the passage of the placenta and the amniotic fluid, breastmilk would not be considered an abject in Julia Kristeva’s sense. Kristeva’s examples of the abject are “waste and dung” (2), as well as “the corpse” (3). The abject, then, is a wasteful or decaying substance, while breastmilk is crucially nourishing. Slavery and colonialism have, however, often been seen as analogous to abjection (Koopman 304). Emy Koopman, however, insists that “using the discourse of abjection to illustrate processes of colonization” is “questionable” (304).

Sethe's preoccupation with the lactic connection between mother and child derives from two central scenes of lactic trauma. The first main scene of lactic trauma is Sethe's lactic sexual abuse at the hands of schoolteacher's nephews.¹⁴² This is the memory by which Sethe is most aggressively haunted: "As for the rest, she worked hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe. Unfortunately, her brain was devious. She might be hurrying across a field, running practically Nothing else would be in her mind. The picture of the men coming to nurse her was as lifeless as the nerves in her back" (6). In spite of her efforts to suppress this particular memory, it haunts her more viscerally and stubbornly than even the memory of putting her own child to death. Justine Tally notes that Freud's idea of the repetition compulsion is clearly at play in Morrison's depiction of Sethe, and this obsessive *revenant* is nowhere more clear than in the protagonist's anxiously habitual recollection of the nephews' theft. Sethe is clearly obsessed with, and haunted by, this scene of her own reduction to human dairy—the exploitation of her milk for sustenance under the lips and hideous teeth of these boys. If, as critics such as Claudine Raynaud suggest, the "tragic core" of *Beloved* is Sethe's "infanticide" (43),¹⁴³ Sethe's own primal scene is the moment of having her milk stolen by Schoolteacher's nephews.¹⁴⁴ This scene is torturous for Sethe on two levels: first, it deprives her of the milk intended for her own child, and second, it places her in the terrain of livestock—a human dairy animal being drained of the liquid essence of her reproductive labour.

¹⁴² McWeeny calls this scene "the moment of violation" that Sethe "returns to again and again throughout the text" (272).

¹⁴³ Karla Armbruster argues, similarly, that *Beloved* "revolves around" this "central act" (365). In fact, the critical consensus on the novel places much more emphasis on this moment than the lactic theft, which receives much more textual attention.

¹⁴⁴ Humann notes that Sethe "seems to have minded being milked . . . more than she minded being whipped" (67).

The second deep-seated lactic trauma is Sethe's experience as an infant, having to share a wet nurse, Nan, with the white children who always got the first feed: "Nan had to nurse whitebabies and me too because Ma'am was in the rice. The little whitebabies got it first and I got what was left. Or none. There was no nursing milk to call my own" (200). Sethe's mother suckles her for only a "week or two" because her labour is more useful in the fields (203). The forces of white power deprive the infant Sethe of essential nourishment and maternal intimacy, laying the psychological foundations which will cause her fierce focus on delivering her own milk to her children. Furthermore, this recollection situates the politics of breastmilk in the novel in light of the widespread white exploitation of enslaved black wet nurses in antebellum America. In *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (1988), Valerie Fildes notes that "in all regions in the Americas where slavery was instituted Negroes were used to suckle the privileged infants of their white overlords" (141). The black female breast in antebellum America, then, serves a strange double-function, at once the object of pandemic sexual exploitation of the black body by white overlords, and as the object of nutrition for white children—an entrance into enforced interracial eroticism at a formative age of infantile sexuality for these white children who learn, early on, to exploit the black female body. When Sethe has her breast milk stolen by Schoolteacher's nephews, these two roles collapse into one another; Sethe's bosom becomes at once an object of male sexual pleasure and a source of sustenance and nourishment—a hybrid vessel of dairy and desire.

The primacy of milk in *Beloved* influences the novel's ethical thrust in three major ways. First, and most obviously, it makes the novel into a story about motherhood

and, more specifically, mother-daughter relationships during slavery and its aftermath. Second, it suggests that Morrison wishes to at least invite consideration that this breastmilk-related violence could be more degrading and horrific than Sethe's murder of her own child. This notion finds support in the fact that though Sethe laments the necessity of what she did, she steadfastly stands by her actions, insisting that she was justified insofar as "she stopped him" (164)—preventing Schoolteacher from stealing herself and her children back into slavery.¹⁴⁵ Third, it mobilizes the thematic of stolen human breastmilk as a lens through which to view the larger history of slavery and particularly the enslaved female reproductive body. Because slaves were legal property, infants belonged not to their mothers but to their owners. Families were therefore routinely torn apart, causing what Morrison calls the "emotional disfigurement" at the heart of this novel of tormented motherhood ("Foreword" xvi). Morrison's major focus is, of course, the unique tortures of motherhood during slavery.¹⁴⁶ In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison voices the dominant conception during antebellum slavery: "that slave women are not mothers; they are 'naturally dead,' with no obligations to their offspring or their own parents" (21). The rhetoric of "natal death"—one formation of Orlando Patterson's broader notion of "social death" (6)—is particularly striking if read in the context of *Beloved*; one of the tasks of the novel is to exhume, through the undead Beloved, this deceased natality.

The exploration of the particular traumas of motherhood during slavery is a crucial imperative and one which Morrison's novel undertakes brilliantly. However, the

¹⁴⁵ Significantly, Sethe ultimately finds a notably lactic solace that justifies her decision: "Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children" (200).

¹⁴⁶ *Beloved* voices what Andrea O'Reilly calls "the hitherto silenced maternal narrative of slave women" (127).

prominence of milk in Morrison's novel takes on a different and underexplored resonance if read in the context of dairy; the nephews' theft renders Sethe a milk-producing animal. Morrison offers a haunting abundance of dairy cows in the backdrop of the novel alongside the calves whom the Sweet Home men repeatedly violate in order to create an atmosphere saturated with dairy milk and render Sethe's fear of becoming dairy a highly proximate concern. Dairy, in fact, seems to provide an analogue for the "slow violence" of the slavery institution (Nixon 8). The torture of slavery in fact works much like the extraction of dairy from cattle; this is not the sudden slaughter that kills to make meat, it is the gradual agony of extracting labour and physical sustenance in an ongoing attrition. This is not the "right to kill" but a "life-administering power" (Foucault 136), a life where the body of one species (*Bos taurus*) is converted into a pure and ongoing state of sustenance for another species (*Homo sapiens*). As a substance painfully and protractedly stolen from cattle and women alike, milk clearly serves as a vessel of macabre fascination in Morrison's writing. The comparison between women, particularly racialized women, and cows is troubling and unsettling; but to compare is not to equate. Beneath the panic, anxiety, and outrage such comparisons justifiably provokes, and after the important affirmation of black humanity and dignity, questions remain at the interstice between species—questions about intimacies, linkages, and overlaps. Questions that, in Morrison's work, often ooze forth through an aesthetics of dairy.

Morrison's *oeuvre* demonstrates a sustained and at times anxious artistic interest in milk. In her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison uses milk to form a palate of saccharine 1950s whiteness which she epitomizes through the face of Shirley Temple,

the ambassador of “little white girls whose socks never slid down under their heels” (19). In *Tar Baby* (1981), Thérèse, a onetime wet nurse for white infants, has “magic breasts” that produce milk long after there is “nobody to nurse them” (289). In *Paradise* (1997), the final book of the loose trilogy that begins with *Beloved*, Lone reprimands the younger women who don’t care for her maternal advice, including “how to comb their breasts to set the milk flowing” (271).¹⁴⁷ *Song of Solomon* (1977) presents milk as the purveyor of a quasi-incestuous bond between a mother and her son, earning the novel’s protagonist the appellation “Milkman” after the town drunk witnesses a scene of belated nursing (15). Morrison’s depiction of Ruth Dead feeding her son froths with the intrafamilial erotics of lactic transference:

he was old enough to be bored by the flat taste of mother’s milk, so he came reluctantly, as to a chore, and lay as he had at least once each day of his life in his mother’s arms, and tried to pull the thin, faintly sweet milk from her flesh without hurting her with his teeth. She felt him. His restraint, his courtesy, his indifference, all of which pushed her into fantasy. She had the distinct impression that his lips were pulling from her a thread of light. It was as though she were a cauldron issuing spinning gold. (13)

Mother’s milk, here, serves to edify the female maternal body and launch a woman into a triumphant reverie organized around her own bodily beatification and plenitude. This scene, though, also augurs a lactic panic response. Macon Dead—Milkman’s father, the economic leader of the town, and the ambassador of a decaying erotic order—finds Milkman’s name “dirty, intimate, and hot” (15). Although he doesn’t know how his son

¹⁴⁷ Significantly, Morrison’s description of the midwife Lone also explicitly pairs human and bovine dairy, raising the maternal concern “about the quality of cow’s milk as well as her own” (271).

came about this moniker, Macon has the sense that there is some “filthy connection” between the name and the “unsettling” force of Ruth’s “steady beam of love” for her son (17, 23). For the reader, though, it is hard to blame Ruth; she and Macon no longer have a sex life and this act of primal nourishment sustains her erotic needs in the face of daily domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. Despite concerns about the child’s erotic development, it is difficult to deny Ruth this passageway into bodily phantasmagoria. Breastmilk serves here as a site of erotic female subversion of enforced male sexual norms. Not only is human breastmilk clearly something that interests Morrison from early in her writing career, it is a thematic humming with an erotic current that figures clearly as potentially transgressive of the established sexual order.¹⁴⁸

Morrison’s interest in milk also serves as a membrane where Morrison’s narratives quite explicitly align themselves with the project of 1970s and 1980s psychoanalytic feminism, where milk was a central concern. It is well known that Morrison was deeply influenced, when researching and writing *Beloved*, by the work of Sigmund Freud and French Feminists, such as Hélène Cixous, who responded to and revised Freud’s thinking.¹⁴⁹ Considering that Morrison was clearly steeped in Freud,¹⁵⁰ it seems appropriate to read both *Sethe* and *Beloved* as victims of an unresolved fixation on what Freud calls “the so-called ‘cannibalistic’ or ‘oral’ phase, during which the original attachment of sexual excitation to the nutritional instinct still dominates the

¹⁴⁸ In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison crystalizes the dominance of the hetero-phallic order through the figure of Macon Dead, and that order figures as expressly barren and shrivelled; during the main action of the novel, Macon has not had sex with his wife in “almost twenty years” (16).

¹⁴⁹ Tally’s book *Toni Morrison’s Beloved: Origins* (2009) offers the most substantive analysis of Morrison’s many influences, with Freud and Cixous figuring centrally. Tally notes that “in re-examining Cixous, Freud, and Hoffman, Morrison’s novel penetrates the myths that dominate the twentieth century’s obsession with sex, thus signifying on the ‘primitive’ concerns with procreation and regeneration” (84).

¹⁵⁰ Tally notes that “Freud’s work . . . ‘haunts’ *Beloved*” (69).

scene” (265). Freud, here, sets the stage for a thinking of the inherent erotics at work in breastfeeding, something thinkers such as Adrienne Rich, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Hélène Cixous, and Morrison take up and explore at length.¹⁵¹ Insofar as they were both insufficiently weaned by their mothers, *Sethe* and *Beloved* both have ready causes for the traumas that afflict them and lead to what can easily be read as a pathological and quasi-incestuous lesbianish relationship.¹⁵²

Part of Morrison’s project, though, hinges on the attempt to depathologize, or at least to bring the focus onto the tragedy of, *Sethe*’s fixation on the lactic maternal body. *Beloved*, therefore, can be read as channeling Cixous’ attempt to mythologize milk as a vestigial universal of female human experience. In *The Newly Born Woman* (1975), Cixous articulates her project of feminist lactophilia: “The Voice sings from a time before law Voice: milk that could go on forever. Found again. The lost mother/bitter-lost. Eternity: is voice mixed with milk . . . woman is never far from the

¹⁵¹ In her groundbreaking feminist study *Women and Economics* (1898), Charlotte Perkins Gilman chose to foreground the strange eroticism at work in human manipulation of cattle as part of her more general indictment against the “excessive sex attraction” she diagnosed in modern humans (16). Here is Gilman’s striking description of bovine sexuality: “The cow is oversexed. Turn her loose in natural conditions and, if she survive the change, she would revert in a very few generations to the plain cow, with her energies used in the general activities of her race, and not at all running to milk. Physically, woman belongs to a tall, vigorous, beautiful animal species” (23). Gilman’s willingness to compare the human female to the cow is brave and surprising, as is her invocation of bovine sexuality. Adrienne Rich, like most modern feminists, was more focused on human breastfeeding. In her landmark essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), Rich writes: “If we consider the possibility that all women—from the infant suckling her mother’s breast, to the grown woman experiencing orgasmic sensations while suckling her own child, perhaps recalling her mother’s milk-smell on her own . . .—exist on a lesbian continuum, we can see ourselves as moving in and out of this continuum, whether we identify ourselves as lesbian or not” (650-51). Rich, here, delves into the eroticism of the primal scene of mammalian nourishment, iterating it as a frame of female erotic transference that joyfully threatens to exceed the incest taboo. Rich’s lesbian continuum offers a ready model through which to read the quasi-incestuous relationships between *Sethe* and her daughter Denver with their ghostly and spectrally eroticized kin, *Beloved*. This, certainly, is how Juda Bennett reads the household dynamic at 124 Bluestone Road in *Toni Morrison and the Queer Pleasure of Ghosts*. Rich’s focus on breastmilk transference between women as a central configuration of the lesbian continuum as well as the date of the essay’s publication (1980) make it plausible that Morrison had read this essay and was thinking of it in the crafting of *Beloved*.

¹⁵² Paul D uses notably milky rhetoric to diagnose *Sethe*’s pathologically cloying love for her daughters when he says, after learning of *Sethe*’s infanticide, “your love is too thick” (164).

‘mother’ There is always at least a little good mother milk left in her. She writes with white ink” (93-4). Here Cixous positions the primordial mother-daughter relationship as ubiquitously foundational of the female psyche. Furthermore, she names female existence itself as a practice of writing, of voicing via milk. Morrison’s *Beloved* is one of the best exemplars of this project of lactic *écriture*; it would not be an exaggeration to say that the form of the novel itself—fluid, circular, pulsing with mnemonic heave and swell and recoil—is itself an attempt to write the affective structure of lactation. But, while Cixous’ analysis focuses on the primacy of the relation between human females, Morrison takes a step backwards in order to place the politics of human breastmilk against its backdrop of mammality through bovine dairy. Morrison demonstrates that there is something creaturely in *écriture*.

In *Beloved*, Morrison’s thematic of milk and human dairy is at its most suggestive, visceral, and vigorous. Here the textual prevalence of human breastmilk joins with a protracted exploration of the erotic presence of nonhuman animals. Sethe’s torturous recollections of human lactic trauma gesture to the milk-producing bovine bodies that lurk in the backdrop of the agrarian world of Sweet Home. The Sweet Home plantation is a farm with a working dairy—hence the plenitude of sexually available calves with which the Sweet Home men copulate. The very fact that the Sweet Home men have sex with juvenile cows speaks to the enforcement of bovine reproductive labour in Sweet Home’s dairy, an undercurrent of mammalian maternal exploitation that spasms darkly beneath this novel’s preoccupation with human milk. Aside from the Sweet Home men regularly sexually abusing calves as they fantasize about her body—linking her with bovine *eros* through the male erotic imaginary—Sethe also works

closely with dairy-producing cattle. A working dairy in the 1850s would of course look very different from the massive industrial machines sketched above, and the relation between bovine udder and human hand would likely be manifestly intimate in this context. On her deathbed, the benevolent mistress Mrs. Garner instructs Sethe to “[k]eep Billy away from Red Cora. Mr. Garner never let her calve every other year” (195). This moment not only suggests that Mr. Garner was a generous handler of his livestock, it also emphasizes the larger human control over the sexual lives of cattle—the unquestioned interspecies erotics that drives the dairy industry. Further, Mrs. Garner’s instructions situate Sethe as a kind of steward of the cattle and suggest that Sethe has dealings with the cows as part of her day-to-day duties at Sweet Home. The cow—threatening emissary of her own ultimate degradation—is also a creature Sethe tends to daily, a being that Sethe smells and touches, that she certainly cares for and perhaps loves. Whatever intimacy exists between Sethe and the Garners’ cattle, though, takes place in the novel’s background—the animals that Morrison does bring into the novel’s direct action tends to figure as menace. The fact that it is Sethe who tends to the cows also complicates the sex taking place between men and calves. If Sethe is linked to the female bovine body at the intimate level of milk production and cultivation, perhaps these men fornicating with calves—baby cows—are on some level violating her, even as they are more explicitly “damaging the goods” of the Garner household. To think Sethe and the cattle side by side in this way is by no means to animalize or bestialize her or to indict the Sweet Home men for their actions; rather, such a juxtaposition seeks to draw attention to the complex web of sexuality and intimacy—the complex of degradation that

plays out on the Sweet Home plantation through the regulation and management of sexuality and species identity.

The bovine body figures directly in Sethe's experience of torture. When Paul D asks Sethe for the details about her violation by Schoolteacher's nephews and the subsequent lashing she received, he focuses on a telling detail to which she seems oblivious:

‘Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still.’

‘They used cowhide on you?’

‘And they took my milk.’

‘They beat you and you was pregnant?’

‘And they took my milk!’ (17)

While Sethe retains, here, her characteristic focus on her lactic violation, Paul D draws attention to the “cowhide,” the euphemistic name for the slaver's whip which was traditionally constructed out of leather. Significant, here, is that the animalizing politics of torture during slavery regularly brought the slave's body into violent contact with the flesh of a dead and rendered animal through the act of whipping. Sethe's body, subjected to punishment, comes into agonizing contact with the bovine animal that serves throughout as a threat to her species status.

Nowhere are Morrison's traumatic lactic dynamics more resonant than in the recurring scene where Schoolteacher's nephews steal her milk: “I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up” (70). The nephews pin Sethe down as

they steal her precious maternal bodily fluid for their own erotic and gestational pleasures. Sethe's description of this scene, coupled with her insistent focus on the imperative to get her milk to her children throughout the novel, not only implies that the theft of Sethe's milk by these boys is a kind of sexual assault,¹⁵³ it suggests that the coupling of sexual trauma and maternal violation renders this act even more horrific. This is a theft of the very connective tissue of the black family, a metaphorical appropriation of the family tie itself. It is, in Karla Armbruster's words, "a violation which symbolizes slavery's larger violation and deformation of the mother-child relationship" (365). Of course, this "deformation" or perversion of the maternal bond is something humans do regularly with cattle—a fact Sethe knows first-hand. Clearly, Sethe's horror during this scene also contains a panic about being reduced to a human dairy animal.

The parallel between the female slave body and the female bovine body has a dark and agonized history. Frederick Douglass relates a familiarly dreadful account when he describes a woman named Caroline whom the overseer Covey had purchased for a "breeder" (70)—a stark reality of the treatment of women during slavery. McWeeny argues that Sethe's agony regarding the central scene of lactic violation is driven by a fear of being "farmable" (274), that is, of having "your reproductive system exploited again and again in the service of others" (274). In other words, Sethe's torment has its roots in a thundering lactic panic—fear in the face of a future of perpetual lactic exploitation (which would, as with dairy cows, also require perpetual reproduction and

¹⁵³ The word "boys" may be misleading, though the precise age of Schoolteacher's nephews remains unclear. They are young enough to be in school, but old enough to restrain Sethe against her will with relative ease.

childbirth). Recalling her own lactically traumatized infancy (how she knows about it remains an open question), Sethe links her sense of primal maternal malnourishment to her own abjection at being violated by the nephews: “I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you I’ll tell Beloved about that She my daughter. The one I managed to have milk for and get it to even after they stole it; after they handled me like I was the cow, no the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses” (200). Here Sethe offers the most explicit example of her feeling of being reduced to livestock by the nephews’ violation. Her panic is not only that they should steal her breastmilk but also that in the process she had been handled like a cow or a goat in the banal torture of mammalian barnyard erotics—that in having her breastmilk stolen she should become a purveyor of dairy. Sethe’s horror at becoming dairy, then, is not so much the panic of becoming animal as it is the panic of becoming a very particular type of creature: the domestic milk-producing mammal, forced into a perpetual cycle of maternal labour. A milk-producing animalchine.

When Paul D later reveals that Sethe’s husband, Halle, watched this scene of lactic theft from the loft of the barn and did not intervene, Sethe’s panic reaches a new pitch. Paul D explains that witnessing this moment “broke” Halle (69), and that he responded with insane behavior: “Last time I saw him he was sitting by the churn. He had butter all over his face” (69). Witnessing the complete subjection and humiliation of his wife and the theft of the breastmilk of his own child and being unable to help drives Halle into an animalistic state of madness. This is the last time any of the characters in the novel see him, and so it is the reader’s parting and lingering vision of Halle—a bizarrely bestial entry into a maddening swirl of dairy, a strange and deranged

lactophilia. The smearing of butter onto his face may be an attempt to whiten the skin or a willing entry into the creaturely world of dairy, visceral leakage of the nonhuman animal body. Sethe—who has held out hope for eighteen years that her husband might return to her—indulges in a curious fantasy after she learns of Halle’s plunge into this maddened underworld of dairy:

There is also my husband squatting by the churn smearing the butter as well as its clabber all over his face because the milk they took is on his mind And how sweet that would have been: the two of them back by the milk shed, squatting by the churn, smashing cold, lumpy butter into their faces with not a care in the world. Feeling it slippery, sticky—rubbing it in their hair, watching it squeeze through their fingers. (70)

How else to read this tortured reverie but as a description of lactic erotics, a stylized sexual performance of what the narrator calls “butter play” (71). Both clabber and untreated butter, being white and viscous, also bear a visual resemblance to human sexual/reproductive fluids, further emphasizing the sexuality of this scene. Sethe, tormented throughout the novel by her own lactic panic, has learned that her husband was similarly afflicted. She interprets his crazed nosedive into the butter churn as directly connected to the theft of her breastmilk, as if it were an attempt to steal back her lost body fluid, to imbibe it into himself. Here the latent animality of the human body emerges in full force; Sethe ceases to worry about her own species status and imagines succumbing to the animality of full immersion in dairy. Such a descent figures here and throughout *Beloved* as a threatening degradation, but it also suggests the inherent slipperiness of species categories as something madness and torture can alter.

Sethe's panic regarding her tenuous species status also emerges in the context of racist science and species taxonomies—an engagement through which Morrison ultimately foregrounds the contingency of species being. Shortly before the incident of lactic violation, Sethe discovers that Schoolteacher has been using her as the object of an ethnological study. After having her body measured regularly without understanding why (191), she overhears Schoolteacher talking to his nephews: “I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right” (193). Here Schoolteacher becomes an avatar of the nineteenth-century racist pseudo-biology that sought to prove the animality of black people, raising larger questions about an American education system that has long been designed to prolong racial subjugation. Schoolteacher's remark turns out to be precisely the reason Sethe flees Sweet Home,¹⁵⁴ as Sethe ensures that “no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper” (251). Sethe rightly reacts against Schoolteacher's attempts to pseudoscientifically dehumanize her and her family. While she manages to escape Schoolteacher, though, she remains subjected to his flawed epistemology. It is Schoolteacher's thinking, inevitably, that controls the ontology of Sweet Home, where slaves believe that to be “animalistic” means being subject to perpetual domination and exploitation. Here the political definition of the human masquerades as a biological truth. This is a view of species being that is always already hegemonic and a view of power, politics, and social relations that feeds naturally into the will to dominate and the construction of racist systems such as the institution of antebellum slavery. The root problem, here, is not the association of black people with

¹⁵⁴ Armbruster notes that “it is not the nephew's beating but rather schoolteacher's classification of her as animal that ultimately makes slavery unbearable” (365).

animals—black people are, like all humans, animals. The fundamental problem is the idea that a lesser being—and the definition of “lesser” will always of course be arbitrary—deserves to be subjugated and exploited. Inadvertently, Schoolteacher teaches all of this to Sethe insofar as she internalizes his praxis, coming to believe, based on how he organizes power, that “definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined.” Along with the belief that “humans” are better than other species and subspecies, Sethe internalizes the knowledge that human status is something that can be granted and taken away, that “humanity” is not an essence but a shifting point on a spectrum of species being. While definitions may belong to the definer, however, the defined must suffer their consequences. In slavery, and in modern politics, it happens that there are two definitions that matter more than any other; on the one hand there are humans, the sole beings not considered property, the sole beings with access to “rights.” On the other hand there is the nonhuman world—raw material subject to endless exploitation. In such a schema, who would not panic at the threat of losing human status?

Ultimately, Sethe’s struggle against the threat of animality reveals *Beloved’s* radical warning against the danger of constructing hierarchical species and racial taxonomies. When Schoolteacher comes to collect Sethe and her family and Sethe responds by murdering her child, Morrison offers the reader a rare glimpse into the slave driver’s psyche: “now she’d gone wild, due to the mishandling of a nephew who’d overbeat her . . . just think—what would his own horse do if you beat it beyond the point of education . . . the animal would revert . . . you just can’t mishandle creatures and expect success” (150). Addicted to his game of pseudoscience, Schoolteacher witnesses a tormented slave mother driven to infanticide and proceeds to compulsively measure her

against nonhuman animals. He watches a child being murdered and thinks about how to refine his own techniques of mastery and domination over those he deems, collectively and equally, less-than-human “creatures.” His investment in racist pseudoscience and species taxonomies seems to have nullified all capacity for compassion, empathy, and affective connection. All that is left to Schoolteacher is a logic of mastery and subordination, and it is precisely such thinking against which *Beloved* offers its most forceful reprimand. In Schoolteacher’s morbid calculus, Morrison highlights the larger dangers of species/racial taxonomies and the risks of delineating forms of life into hierarchical echelons. It is not animality itself but Schoolteacher’s designation of animals and black people as beings destined to be dominated that suffuses the novel’s racialized subjects with horror regarding their species status; because schoolteacher (who stands in, here, for the powers of white supremacy), has named animality something loathsome, detestable, and exploitable, animality is indeed something to be feared, and species status is something that should be defended with all the resources available.

Ruetenik concludes his reading of *Beloved* by suggesting that “not until racially motivated inequalities among humans are remedied can speciesist-motivated inequalities between human and nonhuman animals be remedied” (325). This is problematic, first and foremost, because Ruetenik’s argument assumes a stable definition of race and species that Morrison’s novel undercuts. This misunderstanding leads Ruetenik to argue that racial conflict must be solved before species conflict can be addressed, a presumption which will lead nowhere barring the highly unlikely scenario that racial strife will one day reach a cathartic and identifiable terminus. The idea that we can’t act on animal abuse until the “resolution” of racial inequality is detrimental to racially

subjugated peoples as well as animals. Such a logic ignores the essentially yoked oppressions of speciesism and racism and occludes the fact that the dehumanization of non-white peoples is made possible by a logic of human supremacy that grants certain (white, male, heteronormative) people the power to pronounce themselves “human” and thereby deem all the other links on the chain of being “subhuman” and thereby subject to domination. Speciesism and racism are part of the same nexus of oppression, and the matrix itself must be tackled from multiple angles and viewed as a complex site of intertwining oppressions. The imperative, the starting place, is to realize that racial violence has long been complicated with violence against human animals and that violence against nonhuman animals has long been racialized.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), greenhouse gas emissions from livestock account for 14.5 % of all human-induced emissions (Gerber et al, 15). Beef and dairy cattle emissions are the leading contributors to livestock emissions (Gerber et al, 15), and the two industries are so deeply intertwined that consuming dairy makes one complicit in beef and veal production, as does mere participation in the current economic machine of late capitalism. In a world threatened by climate disaster and environmental degradation, the question of human and nonhuman milk production has never been so urgent. Adding to this the sexual, erotic, and reproductive complexities of the dairy industry illuminates the fact that the human species is basically involved in a massive-scale perpetual sexual manipulation of cattle in order to drain their biological resources for our own nourishment and gustatory pleasure. Cows spend their lives being fertilized by artificial insemination, wrenched away from their beloved offspring on the first day, and hooked

up to machines that harvest their breastmilk for human consumption. Apart from the dystopian non-consensual erotics at work in this pandemic “humanimalchine,” there is also the emotional lives of cattle to think about. While Temple Grandin notes that many people “still don’t believe animals have emotions” (5), neuroscience tells us that “animals and people have the same core emotion systems in the brain” (Grandin 5). This means that a cow stripped of her children and robbed of her breastmilk will react psychologically in much the same manner as Sethe does in *Beloved*—with a screaming, visceral torment. Take this dark calculus of torture and apply it to the hundreds of millions of cattle producing dairy worldwide and observe the dark erotic underworld of dairy feeding the human species as it expands ceaselessly, far beyond any utopia of sustainability.

Beloved’s Appetite

But what of *Beloved*? How has this chapter been haunted by the unconjured ghost at the centre of the story? When *Beloved* returns to Sethe—walking fully clothed out of the river to arrive at 124 Bluestone Road—she is thirsty, drinking “cup after cup of water” as if “she had crossed a desert” (51). After she drinks, she takes to eating “as though sweet things were what she was born for” (55). Having satisfied these cravings, she seeks erotic sustenance, first from Sethe—“Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by *Beloved*’s eyes” (58)—and then Paul D, compelling him to have “involuntary” sex in the “cold room” while he stares “at the silver of the lard can” (116, 117). Paul D himself remembers the atrocity of slavery as being largely about hunger, recalls having “hidden in caves and fought owls for food” as well as stealing “from pigs” who “like him, had buried

themselves in slop” (66). Paul D, clearly animalized by his hunger, eats among the pigs and feels all the symbolic baseness of the act, knowing that nearby white families dine at tables. In situations of extreme suffering, little room remains for the ethics of eating, and the fear of bestialization looms in the roil of the ravenous stomach. Towards the end of the novel, Beloved begins to gnaw away at Sethe’s very being; Beloved “laps devotion like cream” while Sethe sits immobile, “limp and starving” (243), “licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life” (250). Beloved’s appetite—fierce, insatiable—figures as the response to the deprivations of slavery, a time when eating was precarious and often animalistic. The *revenant* of the hunger of slavery returns to devour post-emancipation life.

The question of the ethics of animal consumption is certainly tweaked by the specter of slavery. One of the general and lasting responses to the deprivation of slavery was to eat—to eat well and richly. After the Civil War, barbecue, a tradition deriving from slave communities during plantation life (Moss 95), became a central feature of the celebration of black culture, crucially associated with emancipation: “Emancipation Day barbecues were held by African Americans throughout the country in the nineteenth century” (Moss 100). These barbecues were often large public events including speeches by prominent community members and clearly symbolizing freedom and community solidarity—all of this centered around the custom of meat-eating. Given the atrocities of slavery and the need to assert black humanity and build black community in its aftermath, such celebrations seem excusable—life affirming and politically powerful, if also speciesist.

Beloved takes place between the 1850s and 1870s. Sethe lives in the agrarian world of mid-nineteenth century ante- and post-bellum America, not in the contemporary world of CAFOs, milking machines, and artificial insemination. In Sethe's time, milking would have been done exclusively by hand—a sensual and sensory practice that would have involved a regular intimacy with and connection to the bovine body. Sethe would have spent her time at Sweet Home milking cattle, and she would have been privy to their reproductive behaviour, to their sadness, their torments, their joys. But, crucially, there is not even a suggestion of human-bovine love in the novel. This absence, I would like to suggest at this chapter's denouement, is a sadness at the heart of the novel: slavery creates a situation where enslaved humans have a damaged relation to nonhuman animals, and are largely incapable of nonhuman love. When *Beloved*, the spectral incarnation of slavery's memory, returns to 124, Sethe's dog, Here Boy, runs away, not to return as long as *Beloved* stays (51). This suggests the dark shadow cast by slavery on amicable human-nonhuman relations. While Union General William T. Sherman's promise of "forty acres and a mule" offers a fanciful vision of emancipated black agrarian life and human-animal harmony,¹⁵⁵ Morrison's novel suggests a much more troubled view. In Morrison's vision, the hunger of slavery continues to haunt human-nonhuman relations after emancipation, and the domesticated animal flees from the troubling *revenant* of the subjugated and animalized antebellum black body.

While it may be tempting to conclude this chapter by arguing (rightly) that speciesism and racism are part of one larger nexus of oppression and therefore

¹⁵⁵ For more on Sherman's Field Order No. 15, see the New Georgia Encyclopedia (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/shermans-field-order-no-15>) and Henry Louis Gates Junior's essay "The Truth Behind '40 Acres and a Mule'" (*The Root* Jan 7 2013: <http://www.theroot.com/the-truth-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule-1790894780>).

consuming milk and dairy are wrong, such an ethical standpoint seems too rigid. What I'm after, here, is something murkier, milkier. So, as we approach the haunted afterlife of the chapter, a final question: given what we've worked through, how might milk and dairy help us to theorize race, species, and the human? In his chapter, "Deprivation: Hunger," Weheliye tells a story about the detainment of Trinidadian socialist and writer C.L.R. James (113), who was kept under police supervision for two months in a Staten Island hospital as part of a failed deportation effort resulting from James' categorization as a "subversive" (Weheliye 114). Unable to stomach the local cuisine, James "subsisted" for four weeks "on milk and the inside of rolls with a bit of butter" (Weheliye 115). For James, Milk was a gift, the gift of pained survival.

What if we conceived milk not as threat or commodity, not the gleaming-white carton on the supermarket shelf but a gift, a donation, a passage between human bodies and across species bounds? A fluid that yokes the human drinker—not negatively or pejoratively but with all the responsibility entailed—to the producer, whether human or nonhuman. Sethe hurts profoundly because her milk is stolen by Schoolteacher's white nephews and that as a child she was denied lactic nourishment from her own mother. Sometimes we eat to survive. Sometimes we need to claim a little bit of the power that travels under the name of humanity. Sometimes some speciesism is necessary, just as other forms of selfishness are necessary. Veganism, surely, is the most efficient and painless way to feed humanity. But veganism is also about power and privilege, and enslaved peoples can't be blamed for wanting to eat, or for being disgusted by the animals that were used as tools of humiliation and torture by animalization. One of the hopes that *Beloved* leaves unmentioned is the possibility of less troubled, less panicked

human-animal relations. If milk can serve as a force of degradation-by-animalization, can it also serve as a productive nexus for thinking the dissolution of the human, both as individual body and ideological construct (Man)? Part of the craving of *Beloved*, part of what *Beloved*'s appetite calls out for, is a world beyond panic, beyond the agony of degradation-by-animalization, towards a world where genuine interspecies intimacies might be possible beyond the pall of (de)humanization. Maybe that place would be creamier, messier, more lactic—a place where hierarchies of bodies could dissolve into “hieroglyphics of the flesh,” where atrocity could melt into viscosity.

Chapter Five:
The Equine Erotopoetics of Linda Hogan and Joy Harjo

This chapter aims to unearth the potentialities of equine *eros* in the poetry of Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan and Muscogee Creek author Joy Harjo, arguing that these two poets engage with the eroticism of horses as part of their larger decolonial projects of attendance to the nonhuman world. Attuned to Cherokee scholar-poet Qwo-Li Driskill's call for an "alliance between queer studies and Native studies" in the drive to expose "ongoing settler-colonialism's relationship to heteropatriarchy" (29, 22),¹⁵⁶ I advocate a queer approach, where "queer" means the sense of that which bends or otherwise contorts the straightness mandated by familiar, Western regimes of sexuality—institutions that simultaneously enforce heterosexual and intraspecies compartments of desire.¹⁵⁷ What I add to analyses by Driskill, Mark Rifkin, Andrea Smith,¹⁵⁸ and other critics working at the intersections of queer studies and Indigenous studies—and what I examine throughout my broader research project—is a focus on the queerness of

¹⁵⁶ Being Canadian, I use the term "Indigenous Studies" rather than the American Native Studies. Though it is not the subject of this chapter, I would like to point out that I am also attuned to Driskill's point that "Native people have largely been ignored" in queer studies and that challenges to "settler-colonialism's relationship to heteropatriarchy" problematically "remain contained within work that focuses on Indigenous peoples" rather than acknowledging that all writing and scholarship and discourse and life in settler-colonial states takes place on "occupied Indigenous lands" (32, 22). Rather than addressing this concern, all I can do here is recommend Driskill's book *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory* as required reading for the settler-colonial world.

¹⁵⁷ My sense of the concept "queer," as I use it here, owes much to the work of Indigenous studies scholar Mark Rifkin, who, in his 2011 book *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, analyzes the co-implication of settler colonialism and heteronormativity. As Rifkin notes, the Western institution of marriage is "always-already bound up in racializing and imperial projects" (6); marriage is an important part of a larger machinery of socio-sexual (hetero)normativity contributing to the "U.S. assault on indigenous social formations" (7).

¹⁵⁸ While remaining wary of Andrea Smith's dubious claimed Cherokee ancestry, called out by several prominent female scholars in a 2015 open letter published in *Indian Country Today*, I nonetheless agree with Smith's argument that "Native studies" and "queer studies" should work together in the important task of "unsettling settler colonialism" (42).

nonhuman *eros* and sexuality. Part of my agenda, then, is to show how reading Hogan and Harjo's equine erotopoetics can open a productive membrane of intersection between queer theory, Indigenous studies, and animal studies.

Harjo's 1983 poetry collection *She Had Some Horses* and Hogan's 2008 volume *Rounding the Human Corners* both explore equine eroticism,¹⁵⁹ an unmistakably queer *eros*, from the vantage of traditional Creek (Harjo) and Chickasaw (Hogan) thinking.¹⁶⁰ The speaker of Harjo's poem "She Had Some Horses" imagines eroticized mares replete with "full, brown thighs" and "long, pointed breasts" (*Horses* [1983] 63). In Hogan's "Affinity: Mustang," a woman attends to a horse whose foal has died: "Tonight I sit on straw / and watch milk stream from her nipples" (*Rounding* 66). Such moments of trans-species intimacy are common in the work of two poets who differently explore the decolonial potential of equine eroticism. Hogan and Harjo's equine erotopoetics enact Sisseton Wahpete Oyate scholar Kim TallBear's statement that "Indigenous peoples have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives" (234),¹⁶¹ resulting in powerfully feminist and queer poetics of decolonial animal love.

¹⁵⁹ Harjo's 2008 volume of selected poems, *How We Became Human*, may have been titled as a response to N. Katherine Hayles' groundbreaking work *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). Whether or not Harjo's title is an intentional retort, the juxtaposition raises interesting questions about how much of the teachings of posthumanism have long been known by the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

¹⁶⁰Significantly, neither author comes from what Thomas King calls a "horse culture" (70); both Muscogee (Creek) and Chickasaw are Southeastern woodland peoples.

¹⁶¹ TallBear is, of course, speaking here on behalf of a widespread belief and ethic held throughout many discrete Indigenous cultures and commonly voiced in Indigenous literature and criticism. For example, in his 2006 book *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, Indigenous studies scholar Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) describes Cherokee poet Marilou Awiakta's advocacy of an "ecosystemic understanding that rejects human supremacism" (165). Likewise, Cree scholar Alex Wilson writes that the Idle No More Movement reinvigorates the "very old" traditional knowledge "that we, the land, the water, and all living creatures, are related and, as relatives, we are meant to love and care for each other" (256). Wilson's final turn to an ethic of care and love for the nonhuman world certainly frames and foregrounds my own discussion of the poetics of Hogan and Harjo.

This chapter follows the broad sense of *eros* I deploy throughout *Species Panic* and finds a broad range of extra-genital interspecies intimacies directed at, refracted through, or riding alongside, the equine body in Hogan and Harjo’s poetics. Both Hogan and Harjo rejuvenate Audre Lorde’s understanding of the erotic as “a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane” (53),¹⁶² extending this conceptualization beyond the threshold of species being to create a space for human-nonhuman affinity and intimacy. Their work, furthermore, adds to Lorde’s thinking by queering settler colonial erotic regimes wherein “the familiar status of Native bodies (often those of women) as submissive victims of the colonial erotic” (Justice, Schneider, and Rifkin 1). If, as Creek-Cherokee scholar and novelist Craig Womack argues, “[a]ny tribal poet . . . is a queer, anomalous creature” (245), and if—as Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen suggest with the provocative title of their 2015 chapter “Has the Queer Ever Been Human?” (183)—the definitional threshold of the human has never been a place of welcome for queer bodies and minds, what kind of theoretical conduits might emerge from an openness to the queer force of nonhuman eroticism conceived beyond traditional humanist and settler colonial anxieties about bestiality and miscegenation, as discussed in this project’s Introduction.

The Creek and Chickasaw backgrounds of the poets discussed here grounds their discrete visions of human-nonhuman relations. Such a worldview also enacts a queer subversion of the settler colonial machinery that has depended on the construction and enforcement of conjoined taxonomies of species and race in order to exceptionalize and

¹⁶² Harjo herself lists Lorde as one of her crucial feminist influences (*Spiral* 31).

grant power to a particular vision of the (white, straight, male) human.¹⁶³ While the equine body serves here as my favoured explorative nexus of nonhuman *eros*, this is just one node of a larger network of *eros* formations that are simultaneously hetero-subversive and decolonial. Ultimately, I argue that while Hogan proffers a more straightforward vision of horse-love as an edifying force leading to an ethic of care for the nonhuman world grounded in interspecies *eros*, Harjo's sometimes darker horse poetry uses the equine body as poetic image to enact her vision of what I call the equine-erotic-ecstatic. I conclude that both poets use equine eroticism to advance decolonial agendas, offering challenges to the institutionalized heteronormativity that is both a crucial part of the machinery of the settler colonial state and a central element in the ongoing attempt to define the human—racially, sexually, politically—as *the one with the right to dominate*. Seeking to encounter the erotic valences of the poeticized equine body with an open mind and heart, this chapter reads affinity between humans and horses (Hogan) as well as the equine-erotic-ecstatic (Harjo) as simultaneous forces of decolonial and anti-heteronormative subversion.

¹⁶³ Both Rifkin and Smith comment on the ways in which heteronormative institutions also connect to the co-implicated membranes of race and species. Rifkin notes that heteronormative “*marriage* . . . remains haunted by the vexed history of efforts to define which kinds of persons, practices, and principles get to count as paradigmatically ‘human’” (4). Similarly, Smith writes that “the project of aspiring to ‘humanity’ is always already a racial project” (42). The race-species taxonomic continuum is most clearly visible in claims of the “savagery,” “primitivism,” and “subhumanity” of non-white peoples, charges often leveraged in the attempt to exceptionalize Euroamerican Caucasians as the ideal type of the human

Straddling Species: A Human-Equine Romance

A brief sketch of the erotic role of the horse in human life will help to ground the arguments to follow. Interspecies erotics is, of course, a queer realm insofar as the mandates of human heteronormative-homospecies sexuality do not apply here. Hence Alice Kuzniar's claim that "dog love" is "queer beyond queer!" and Kathy Rudy's argument that "Z" (for "zoophile") ought to be included along with "LGBTQ" in the acronym rainbow of all things queer ("I Married My Dog" 206; "LGBTQ...Z?" 612). While animal sexuality and interspecies erotics are queer others to the forces of human hetero/sexual normalization, equine sexuality has its own particularly queer history. Beginning in the nineteenth century, when "riding astride became respectable for women" (112), a special relationship between women and horses began to emerge. In her book *Dark Horses and Black Beauties: Animals, Women, A Passion* (2000), Melissa Holbrook Pierson draws on the work of Margaret Cabell Self to argue that March 1942, when the U.S. cavalry was disbanded, inaugurated the era of "equine romance" (13). No longer utilitarian creatures, useful for war or hunting or "horsepower," the horse becomes technologically obsolete and takes on a new primary function as provider of love. Pierson's account suggests that this is a fundamental experience for the human female, that most women will at some point or another experience a transformative moment of horse-love that troubles the enforced norms of homospecies desire. The act of riding itself is, according to Marilyn B. Skinner, "a standard ancient metaphor for sexual intercourse" (51). The equine body, furthermore, offers an often orgasmic platform for what Donna Landry names an "ecstatic transference between woman and horse" (468).

Horse and female rider meet in the queer join of collective kinesis, an at-times orgasmic process Elspeth Probyn calls “becoming-horse-becoming-lesbian” (61-2)—horse and human connecting in the transitive membranes of *eros* and affect.¹⁶⁴ This Western canon of girl-horse love suggests that there is a vigorous, persistent, and often unspoken queer eroticism at work in the woman-horse bond, a kind of underground of interspecies erotics, a circuit of *eros* that unsettles the reductively pat rubrics of species, sex, and desire.

This history, though is complicated by the fact that, traditionally, the horse was a male symbol—an icon of war, power, and masculinity. Susan McHugh, in a chapter on girl-horse intimacy, rhetorically quips: “[g]irls and horses have a natural affinity, right?” (65).¹⁶⁵ Although our contemporary world sees equestrianism as primarily a woman’s domain, this was not the case in relatively recent history when the horse was still a technology and icon of power. As Elaine Walker notes, horse riding was historically a “male preserve” in “equestrian cultures” of the “Western world” (112). In European military history, the bond between horse and (male) soldier was a union of enormous affection and interdependence, and, as Dekkers notes, one that may have lent itself readily to interspecies sex.¹⁶⁶ Despite the eurocentrism and heteronormativity of Dekkers’ historic gloss—where zoophilia, rather than homosexuality, would be the presumed non-hetero erotic formation of choice—there is no doubt some truth to his

¹⁶⁴ In her racy and instructive article “Horsy and persistently queer: imperialism, feminism, and bestiality” (2001), Donna Landry provides a rich genealogy of women writers and feminists from Freya Stark to Elspeth Probyn to Germaine Greer, all of whom have figured the bond between woman rider and ridden horse in strikingly erotic terms.

¹⁶⁵ In the third chapter of her book *Animal Stories* (Minnesota 2011), McHugh outlines this history of queer girl-horse love and intimacy.

¹⁶⁶ “With such an intimate bond between horse and rider it is understandable that men should sometimes wish to mount their steed. In the army especially, with many horses and few women available, it must have happened often” (18).

narrative. Historically, horses were often male-coded animals in the masculine arena of war, and in male-only militaries it was no doubt common for queer sex to occur both within and beyond the level of the species.

In addition to the important role of the horse in the above history of queer girl-horse erotics, another important context for this chapter is the complex colonial history of the horse's reintroduction to the ecosystems and Indigenous peoples of North America. Horses, extinct on this continent for 8,000 years, were reintroduced by Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century (Walker, *Horse* 26). Horses were key players in the project of colonization as Spanish, French, British, and finally American settlers roamed and claimed Indigenous lands. Horses were important to the machinery of colonization insofar as they allowed settlers to travel quickly and transport goods in addition to giving the settler a military advantage over non-equestrian cultures; the horse, as a technology, yielded power. Later, horses also became symbols of Indigenous resistance; according to historian Herman J. Viola, for the warriors of many plains tribes, “[c]apturing an enemy’s horse was a coup, a great achievement” (9). During the American colonial wars, slaughtering horses was a common military tactic, and in one story Elaine Walker narrates about nineteenth-century Montana, 400 Appaloosas—a “symbol of resistance” after the martial successes of the fleeing Nez Perce people (81)—were “driven into a canyon and shot” by the U.S. Army (81).¹⁶⁷ In the equine-human history of U.S. colonialism, horses were both engines and casualties of war.

Soon after their reintroduction to the continent, horses became crucial to the culture and livelihood of many Western nations including the Northwestern Nez Perce

¹⁶⁷ For a more detailed account of the tragedy of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce people, see Kent Nerburn’s *Chief Joseph & The Flight of the Nez Perce* (Harper 2005).

and Blackfeet and plains peoples such as the Kiowa, Comanche, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapho, and Sioux (Viola 9).¹⁶⁸ After their arrival in North America, horses gained a place in the epistemologies of many North American Indigenous peoples, entering a complex fabric of story-worlds that had long been rich with animals, metamorphosis, and a deep-seated love for the land and its creatures that, in the words of Cree scholar Alex Wilson, Indigenous peoples “have stewarded for millennia (257). In a striking Skidi Pawnee story, a woman grows fond of a horse who “assumes human shape and becomes her lover” (Dorsey 294). The woman eventually gives birth to a “spotted pony” and transforms into a human-equine hybrid (Dorsey 294): “When the pony was born the woman found she had a tail like that of a horse; she also had long hair. When the colt sucked, the woman stood up” (294). This story depicts a world where a woman and a horse can copulate and reproduce, can give birth to something other than a monster, where that woman can sprout a tail and nurse a pony in an interspecies exchange of maternal fluid. Such stories are drenched in a queer *eros* unhampered by normative intraspecies eroticism, challenging the fragile fabric of alleged human autonomy. Such stories also demonstrate ways of thinking interspecies erotics beyond violence, panic, and pathology, a conceptual practice Hogan and Harjo take up and elaborate to great effect in their equine erotopoetics.

Gradually, the relationship between horses and Indigenous peoples began to be fetishized in various Western art forms, culminating in the genre of the Hollywood

¹⁶⁸ As historian Peter Mitchell demonstrates in his book *Horse Nations: The Worldwide Impact of the Horse on Indigenous Societies Post-1492* (Oxford University Press, 2015), horses were crucial to the success and resilience of many Indigenous nations in the centuries following European contact. For example, horses helped the Comanche people to gain a “hegemony over the Southern Plains [. . .] from the 1770s into the 1840s” (Mitchell 121).

western. Significantly, Cherokee novelist and critic Thomas King frames Hollywood's interest in Indigenous motifs in baldly erotic terms: "Hollywood has a longstanding love affair with Indians" (33). For King, this romance simultaneously fetishizes equine and indigenous bodies, blending the two in the spectacle of exotic wildness: "Indians were exotic and erotic. All those feathers, all that face paint, the breast plates, the bone chokers, the skimpy loincloths . . . the galloping horses" (34). Horses, here, form part of the animal-erotic equipage of the Indigenous body, a stereotype Spokane/Coeur d'Alene poet and novelist Sherman Alexie lampoons in his poem "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel." Alexie writes that "[w]hite women dream about half breed Indian men from horse cultures. / Indian men are horses, smelling wild and gamey" (95). Clearly, there are gender issues here; what Alexie and King are both talking about is a colonial fetish of Indigenous masculinity and the way that the equine body features as a part of that circuit of commodified desire. Hogan and Harjo, by contrast, speak from Indigenous female perspectives, examining how the horse figures in genuine spaces of female love and desire. Both poets also place their poetic explorations of equine bodies, blending traditional knowledge and storytelling techniques with the broader concerns of feminism and ecological thought.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ As Norma C. Wilson notes, Hogan writes "from a traditionally minded Chickasaw perspective" that extends to "universal consideration of human relationships" (76). Similarly, Laura Coltelli notes that Harjo's work is both crucially rooted in her Creek "cultural background" and a broader "Anglo-American" literary tradition as well as jazz and country music ("Introduction" 11, 10).

A Poetics of Affinity: Linda Hogan

If male American writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, and Philip K. Dick dramatize a palpable species panic in their fictions, a poet such as Linda Hogan assuages such anxiety through a remarkably calm resistance to human autonomy and supremacy. Linda Hogan's poetry, like her essays, presents a heartfelt ethic of care for the biotic world. At the heart of Hogan's worldview is "an ecological spirituality in a world both sentient and aware" ("The Call" xiii). This view of the land as animate inflects her poetry in *Rounding the Human Corners* through a profoundly rendered love for animals. With section titles such as "Unlayering the Human" and "Rounding the Human Corners" and poem titles such as "Gentling the Human," Hogan's project is—more obviously than Harjo's—a posthumanist, unhumanist, or perhaps pre-humanist endeavour.¹⁷⁰ The poems in *Rounding the Human Corners* are primarily about biophilia, human love for the nonhuman world, and they are tender in their contemplation of animal life: "Oh / he has loved our horses" (88), "when I see it I have to love and hate it / because its body is my cat, / my neighbour's cat" (79), "oh world I love you" (62). These poems also cast a dubious eye on the human.¹⁷¹ In Janet McAdams' words, the collection "argues for the shedding of the many layers that stand between us and the rest of the world, between the human and all from which we have estranged ourselves" (226). While Eurocentric thinking from the Holy Bible on situates the human as the centre of existence, holding

¹⁷⁰ By arguing that Hogan is a pre-humanist thinker, I mean that the traditional Chickasaw knowledge she espouses and reinvigorates has long held that humanity is just one unexceptional species among many, a conclusion the tradition of Judaeo-Christian European knowledge structures is still grappling to find and that posthumanism and animal studies often claim as new.

¹⁷¹ After describing a series of divine transformations, Hogan explains that none of the changed "wanted to go back / to being human" (70).

dominion over land and animals, Hogan challenges this taxonomy of life with a poesis of nonhuman-oriented *eros*, humbling the human by situating the species as just one strand in the complex web of being.

Hogan's practice as a writer is deeply grounded in a traditional Chickasaw perspective. Recently, Hogan has laboured on behalf of the Chickasaw nation as an editor for the *Journal of Chickasaw History* and a contributor for the educational volume *Chickasaw: Unconquered and Unconquerable* (Chickasaw Press, 2006). As Norma C. Wilson notes, the Chickasaw element is most clearly present in Hogan's 1978 collection, *Calling Myself Home*, which explicitly ruminates on questions of homeland and displacement and prominently features the turtle shells that rattled on women's legs during traditional Chickasaw ceremony (76). The Chickasaw are a southeastern nation who were forcibly removed from their homelands during the Andrew Jackson administration. As historian Richard Green explains, they were "among the last of the Southeastern tribes to travel the Trail of Tears to Indian territory, emigrating in both large and small groups by steamship and overland between 1837 and 1850" (4). The traces of this dislocation are present throughout Hogan's *oeuvre*, which explores themes of travel, migration, transformation, and the search for a spiritual homeland amidst what Patrick Wolfe calls the ongoing "land-centered project" of settler colonialism that dispossesses Indigenous people of their rightful territory (393). Hogan's search for home and spiritual sustenance plays out in her poetry through love—of land, of a world "made by songs, by dreams" (*Human* 67), and of nonhuman animal bodies.

While, as Norma C. Wilson notes, the turtle has been "the animal that appears most frequently in her early poems" (76), Hogan's more recent work in *Rounding the*

Human Corners—which features a horse’s eye peering out from the front cover—explores a wide range of animals and ecosystems. This book shows Hogan’s career-long biophilia channelled through the bodies and feelings of animals such as deer, foxes, whales, earthworms, slugs, spiders, and, most prominently, the horse. One of the most powerful considerations of equine being comes in the poem “Affinity: Mustang.” The mustang is a breed inextricably intertwined with Indigenous versatility and revitalization, a breed that has been slaughtered and demonized by stockowners, sportsmen, and profiteers, and a breed which has been morphed into the namesake of a flagship muscle-car for the American automotive company Ford Motors.¹⁷²

When we walk together
 in the tall grasses I feel her
 as if I am walking with mystery,
 with beauty and fierce powers,
 as if for a while we are the same animal
 and remember each other from before. (*Human* 65)

Hogan uses an understated, serene poetic voice to seek to engage the horse, to inhabit the equine body as “the same animal.” The poet deploys simple adjectives like “tall” and lines that end on natural pauses and begin with prepositions (“in,” “as,” “as,” “and”) to invite the reader into a new phrase. The phrasing and diction is deft but simple—Hogan’s poetics do not use thesaurus words or poetic techniques that would unsettle the

¹⁷² The proliferation of vehicles named after animals—Dodge Ram, Volkswagen Rabbit, Chevrolet Impala—provide a striking instance of Pettman’s “humanimalchine” and the broader commodification of animal attributes (*Human Error* 6). Names such as “Jeep Grand Cherokee” show the American cultural impulse to fetishize Indigenous life in the same semantic realm as commodified animals. Significantly, the Ford Motor Company’s “Mustang Division” has helped to fund the plight of mustangs in America (Ryden 11).

reader or demand the interruption of a Google search. The overall effect is one of simplicity and calm, a plainspoken poetics that invites the reader to experience the poem in open, loafing cadences—to walk calmly alongside the poet as she walks astride the horse. This plainspoken approach—where an unobtrusive poetic form serves to emphasize content—characterizes the formal approach to Hogan’s project of trans-species affinity.

“Affinity” is a key word for Hogan—the title of the final section in the collection and an appropriate term for the kind of interspecies empathetic connection Hogan cultivates in her poetics. “Affinity” is also a word often used to express a special bond felt towards animals; in Robinson Devors’ 2007 film *Zoo*, for example, the self-identified zoophile Coyote suggests that zoophiles have a “lot more affinity with nonhuman animals than their own kind.” According to the *OED*, the word “affinity” derives from the Latin word for marriage (“affinity,” def. 1a), a relationship that—much like the management of human livestock (or “husbandry”)—simultaneously encompasses love and property/economics. But marriage and the idea of animals as property are both Eurocentric concepts that do not adequately embody Hogan’s notion of affinity. Hogan’s concept of affinity can be thought of rather as a kind of species sisterhood, a notion Hogan encourages when she writes of a horse-like poem that “calls out for its sister” and “is wild with its herd” (*Corners* 59). Hogan’s poetic treatment of the horse offers a clear departure from thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, who famously records his own humiliation—a “shame ashamed of itself” (4)—as he stands naked before his cat. There is no shame in Hogan’s contemplation of the horse as the “beloved partner of a woman” (*Human* 59). In contrast to Derrida’s emotionally fraught

engagement with the feline body, Hogan offers an engagement more akin to the way Donna Haraway describes species companionship: “We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental inflection called love” (16). Like Haraway, Hogan explores the queer love of a nonhuman animal in an attempt to challenge the norms of a society committed to the pretense of human exceptionalism.

Hogan’s poetics of multispecies affinity also seeks to fuse equine experience and human consciousness in the space of the poem. The author signals her interest in collapsing the boundary between horse and verse in the metapoetic reflection that opens “Wild,” a poem that once again contemplates mustangs: “This is not the horse. It is the poem” (*Corners* 59). By explicitly stating that the poem is not the horse, Hogan encourages the reader to intuit the opposite. The horse and the poem nestle closely, here, paired by the caesura that joins as much as separates them. “Wild” goes on to describe the poem as horse-like, fully undermining its opening assertion:

it walks across the land
 loving tall grasses and alfalfa
 and is wild with its herd
 speaking in ways the human mind
 can’t hear. (59)

Here, Hogan claims her own horse poem as a voice beyond human understanding. Language and form remain simple; Hogan again uses the adjective “tall” to describe the noun “grasses” and keeps the lines rolling in the uninterrupted syntax of a single sentence. Hogan does not attempt to mimic the language the human mind can’t hear, but

the reader may take pause to wonder whether not being able to “hear” with the “mind” fully excludes the possibility of communing with the horse-poem. Are there other ways to encounter the horse? Part of what Hogan’s poetics teaches is that the process of encountering the nonhuman animal might be better achieved through feeling, through love. Significantly, the erotic here provides the central node through which the reader can encounter the equine perspective—Hogan invites the reader to inhabit the horse’s experience of vegetal love, to roam as horse and poem through a differently energized, horsy appreciation of the animate landscape.

Of the poems in *Rounding The Human Corners*, “Affinity: Mustang,” offers the most resonant and visceral exploration of human-equine intimacy. The poem presents a series of dream-like walks where the speaker and the mustang amble side by side—moving as lateral companions rather than traveling in the hierarchical horse-rider relation. Towards the end, the poem takes a turn into an especially evocative female-female interspecies intimacy:

Last night it was her infant that died
 after the kinship and movement
 of so many months.
 Tonight I sit on straw
 and watch milk stream from her nipples
 to the ground. I clean her face.
 I’ve come such a long way through time
 to find her and
 it is the first time

I have ever seen a horse cry. (*Corners* 66)

Hogan here extends her figuration of human-equine sisterhood through the languages of the reproductive body and body fluids such as milk and tears. This visual emphasis on the equine tear, alongside the focalizing presence of the human witness, creates a sense of resonant interspecies intimacy. This movement culminates when the speaker cleans the horse's face, an act of grooming and bodily proximity rich with a sense of interspecies empathy and care. Hogan's mustang is crucially female and maternal—a mother who has lost her child, whose milk streams mournfully from her teats. Norma C. Wilson notes that the “mother-child, particularly the mother-daughter relationship is central to Hogan's poetry” (79).¹⁷³ Motherhood for Hogan is a metaphorical concept that can travel beyond the human, linking females of different species through the embodied bond of the maternal journey. The horse of “Affinity: Mustang” reads as an “ancient mother” (*Corners* 41), an emissary of “the earth / the way it used to be” (*Corners* 64). The speaker tends to the grieving horse, cleansing her face of emotional fluids in a shared space of female-female intimacy and solidarity. The horse and the human thus come together to participate in what Rich calls “survival relationships” (652), common between women in oppressive patriarchal societies. Such an intimate interspecies connection offers an instructive ethic for species/gender relations in a world where to be “human” means to claim human status and where such status is habitually claimed by white, hetero males.

“Affinity: Mustang” crystalizes the female interspecies maternal *eros* that runs throughout Hogan's collection and her thinking more generally, but the horses of “Wild”

¹⁷³ Wilson also points out that in an earlier poem, “Celebration: Birth of a Colt,” Hogan extends this exploration of motherhood to the equine realm (79).

and “Affinity: Mustang” are not simply horses; they are mustangs, and the complex history of the mustang clearly poises in the background of these poems. Elsewhere in the collection, Hogan references the “mustang’s changed history” (59), suggesting that the historical context of this particular breed—brought to the Americas by Spanish conquistadors, they broke free and thrived for centuries as wild horses on the Great Plains before being demonized and slaughtered *en masse*—self-consciously textures Hogan’s horse poems. As Hope Ryden notes in her authoritative and politically influential study *America’s Last Wild Horses* (first published in 1970), the mustang is technically feral (descended from domestic ancestors) and not wild (16), a fact that rendered this animal ineligible for national protection and thereby available for mass slaughter. In the mid nineteenth century, wild horses in America had reached an estimated population of between five and seven million (Ryden 18). By 1971 their numbers had shrunk to an estimated 16,000, largely because of widespread human slaughter. The horses were competing with cattle and other grazing animals for public land, resulting in prejudice against them. This animosity, of course, was largely rooted in the mustangs’ affiliation with Indigenous peoples; “It was the Plains horse, more than any other single asset, that enabled the Indians to perpetuate their nomadic hunting style of life at the expense of a farming culture being imported to the West by the whites” (Ryden 17). The reason people didn’t like the mustang, this history suggests, had much to do with “the American conscience” (Ryden 17); horses were lumped in with Indigenous peoples as a clear and unsettling example of the race-species continuum, where Indigenous peoples became racialized through their association with horses and vice versa. After the surge of activism that followed the publication of Ryden’s book in

1971, mustangs achieved a national victory: “On December 15, 1971, President Nixon signed PL 92-195, designating the wild horse a national heritage species” and thereby liberating this animal from the threat of perpetual slaughter (Ryden 284). Along with the eagle and the buffalo, America’s national mammal as of May 9th 2016, the wild horse thus became a symbol of national power by being tenuously and perhaps tokenistically saved by national legislation.

It is crucial that in *Rounding the Human Corners* the poet’s main equine companion is the mustang, a breed that arrived on these lands as an emissary of Spanish colonial conquest but then escaped to roam the plains and love “tall grasses.” The breed’s very existence queers the mandates of settler colonial domesticity, and Harjo’s exploration of female-female interspecies love offers a window of the erotic that persists within and against the rubrics of settler heteropatriarchy. Ultimately, *Rounding the Human Corners* uses the erotic connective tissue where human poet meets horse to emphasize the primacy of female experience and affective connection over species identity, replacing prescribed Western circuits of love and desire (heterosexual, intraspecies) with the more queer-conducive concept of affinity.

The Poem, Galloping: Joy Harjo

Joy Harjo’s 1983 poetry collection *She Had Some Horses* helped to establish Harjo as a central figure in American poetry.¹⁷⁴ Harjo is, in Womack’s words, “[o]ne of the

¹⁷⁴ In critic Laura Coltelli’s words, Harjo is “one of the more powerful voices among the second generation of the so-called Native American Renaissance” (“Introduction” 1). In 2015, Harjo received the \$100,000 Wallace Stevens Award for Poetry from the Academy of American Poets, a lifetime achievement award that confirms her place among the most prominent contemporary American poets.

strongest voices in contemporary poetry” (223). Harjo is also a crucial figure in the critical and literary re-discovery of the Indigenous power of the erotic.¹⁷⁵ In his essay “Your Skin is the Map: The Theoretical Challenge of Joy Harjo’s Erotic Poetics” (2008), Robert Warrior (Osage) argues that Harjo’s work sheds light on the debilitating lack of attention to eroticism in most Indigenous scholarly discourse.¹⁷⁶ Love is clearly the driving force behind Harjo’s poetic project; as Womack notes, the word “love” “appears in almost all the poems” of Harjo’s 1994 collection *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky* (258). Womack, further, describes the political power of Harjo’s notion of love: “When Harjo talks about love, then, it is not trivially universalizing but fully contextualized with an awareness of the colonization process. Love, in Harjo’s work, is also an act of resistance” (259). While there has been significant critical attention paid to the role of the erotic in Harjo’s poetry, relatively little of it deals at length with the prominent theme of horses. Here I argue that Harjo’s horses are crucially connected to her erotic vision and that the horse, particularly in the collection *She Had Some Horses*, often mobilizes her vision of love as “part of the spirit of resistance that has kept Indian people alive these last five hundred years” (Womack 259).¹⁷⁷ The horse is also, to borrow Andrew Wiget’s phrase, a crucial conduit through which Harjo’s speakers aim to “recover an

¹⁷⁵ For an instructive overview of the move towards *eros* in Indigenous scholarship, see the introduction to Lisa Tatonetti’s *The Queerness of Native American Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

¹⁷⁶ A critical consensus supports Warrior’s claim that *eros* was long occluded from scholarship on Indigenous literature. As Tatonetti notes, “analyses of Indigenous texts precluded considerations of sexuality until the late 1990s” (xxi). Deborah A. Miranda’s 2002 essay “Dildos, Hummingbirds, and Driving Her Crazy: Searching for American Indian Women’s Love Poetry and Erotics” was an initial important early step in revealing the “systematic exclusion” of Indigenous women’s poetry from the academy (136).

¹⁷⁷ The most prominent exploration of this theme is Andrew Wiget’s essay “Nightriding with Noni Daylight: The Many Horse Songs of Joy Harjo.” Harjo also fields some questions about the role of horses in her work in the interviews collected in *The Spiral of Memory* (Ed. Laura Coltelli, University of Michigan Press, 1996).

ecstatic union” (192). In *She Had Some Horses*, Harjo’s larger vision of the erotic works through the poeticized bodies of horses in order to enact what I call the equine-erotic-ecstatic. It is crucial, here, that the ecstatic contains a darkness; it is a condition of “frenzy” deriving from “astonishment, fear, or passion” (“ecstasy,” def. 1a)—the rapture of torment as well as the gallop of joy. As Womack notes, everything in Harjo’s poetics strives after balance, a key condition of Creek cosmology in its negotiations of the “Upper World,” the “Lower World,” and “This World” (239). Hence Harjo’s vision of the equine-erotic-ecstatic is at times dark and at times jubilant; but it is also transformative and rapturous as it gallops through the restless swirl and dash of *eros*.

Horses are everywhere in Harjo’s work—a governing metaphor cantering over the terrain of her oeuvre. Further, they are often paired with erotic explorations of love and sexual desire: “what the horses mean, a kind of love, brought together despite an opposition of culture, of place and time” (“Introduction” xxiii). Engaging with the “removal of the Muscogee people from Alabama to Oklahoma” (*Spiral* 75), Harjo writes from a historically-inflected position where “[d]isplacement is a spiritual condition” (*Spiral* 75). The thematic of movement and travel figures in Harjo’s poetics as at once a recollection of the trauma of displacement, a response to the anguish of confinement, and the cultivation of an ecstatic *eros* that often mobilizes through a recurring vision of horses. Harjo, I will argue here, uses the poeticized horse to enact an experience of the equine-erotic-ecstatic, an invitation for the reader to explode the boundaries of sexual and species embodiment in the encounter of the poem, galloping.

The main focus of my analysis is the widely taught and anthologized title poem of *She Had Some Horses*. Here Harjo crafts a Muscogee-centered vision of the complex intertwined histories of horses and humans:

She had some horses.

She had horses who were bodies of sand.

She had horses who were maps drawn of blood.

She had horses who were skins of ocean water.

She had horses who were the blue air of sky.

She had horses who were fur and teeth.

She had horses who were clay and would break.

She had horses who were splintered red cliff. (*Horses* [1983] 63)

Harjo's vision is at times macabre, with "horses who licked razor blades" and "threw rocks at glass houses" (61). But Harjo's horses are also radically new and different in each line—they are a shattering explosion of referents, yoked through the harness of the poetic refrain. Repetition, one of Harjo's characteristic techniques, works here as elsewhere in her poetry to engage with Creek traditional storytelling through her use of what critic Laura Coltelli calls "the tonal effects of ritual chanting" ("Joy Harjo's Poetry" 289).¹⁷⁸ The refrain—"She had some horses"—creates what Harjo, in an interview with Sharyn Stever, calls "a sense of ceremony" (*Spiral* 84).¹⁷⁹ The repetition

¹⁷⁸ This technique is used also to great effect in poems such as "I Give You Back," with its repetitions of the line "I release you" and the refrain "I am not afraid" (*Horses* [1983] 73). These repetitions, as Indigenous studies scholar Jennifer Andrews points out, are resonant of "Navajo night chants" (108).

¹⁷⁹ Transformation—a theme with a clear connection to *eros*—is key to Harjo's writing generally. Harjo's thematic of transformation is evident in many poems, including "Transformations," "Promise of Blue

of the poetic refrain also serves to aurally enact the equine-erotic-ecstatic at the level of the line. The refrain—“she had horses who were”—centers around the governing trochee, “horses,” making the stressed syllable “horse” the primary sonic element in each line. The lines then spill outwards, into a gallop of trochaic phrases ending in iambic inversions: “bodies of sound,” “maps drawn of blood,” “splintered red cliffs.” Each line ends with a spondee followed by an iamb, creating the sound pattern *thump thump-a-thump*. While the lineation varies, the establishment of this sonic pattern frames the rhythmic expectation of the poem, where trochee spills into iamb and grounds the aural experience of poem, galloping.

In spite of the poem’s technique of paratactic image-barrage, some lines carry more semantic weight than others. One of the most telling images is Harjo’s reference to sanguine cartography: “She had some horses who were maps drawn in blood.” This line situates the equine body in the history of colonial exploration, where the horse was a primary vehicle for surveying and military imposition. Harjo’s critique of American colonialism both emerges from a Creek perspective—these are horses “who liked Creek Stomp Dance songs” (*Horses* 62)—and gestures outwards, towards what Womack calls “pan-tribal experience” (226). Harjo’s “use of pan-tribalism” allows her “to recast Creek history in the larger context of the violence that created America” (Womack 228), a violence in which the horse was clearly implicated but nonetheless blameless. While it might have patrolled the “maps drawn of blood” and terrified people who travelled on

Horses,” and “The Woman Who Fell From the Sky,” among many others. Womack points to the “specifically Creek concerns” of Harjo’s interest in transformation stories (230), citing traditional stories where people enter animal worlds, leaving their “human existence” a “vague blur” (230). Patricia Haseltine has written an article—“Becoming Bear: Transposing The Animal Other in N. Scott Momaday and Joy Harjo” (*Concentric* 32.1 [2006])—on the “traditional motif of human-to-bear transformation” in Harjo’s poetry and Momaday’s 1999 novel *In The Bear’s House* (81). Harjo herself also states that transformation is key to her work (*Spiral* 43).

foot, the horse could not actually be complicit in an anthrocolonial project of domination and subjugation. The horse, furthermore, would soon become an object of interspecies love, an asset to many Indigenous nations, and a symbol of decolonial resistance.

The role of the horse in American settler colonialism clearly backdrops Harjo's horse poems; but these are not history poems—they are visceral, immediate, intensely female, and species-transgressive. The equine eroticism of "She Had Some Horses" emerges clearly in the poem's fourth stanza through a libidinal exploration of species transgression: "She had horses with long, pointed breasts. / She had horses with full brown thighs" (*Horses* [1983], 63). The prominent bosoms and thighs of the horses can be read as a humanization of the equine body, an equinization of the human body, or (my preferred reading) an unsettling synthesis of human and equine bodies—a species-transgressive vision of human and horse collapsing in the poem's ecstatic event. But they also suggest a particularly female node of connection, gesturing to the kind of trans-species female solidarity Hogan explores.¹⁸⁰ Given that traditional Creek culture was matrilineal and that "gender violence is a primary tool of colonialism and white supremacy" (Womack 42; Smith 61), the importance of feminine power and connection in Harjo's work cannot be overstated. But femaleness, for Harjo, is never stable: "I firmly believe we are all varying degrees of male-female" (*Spiral* 81). Harjo, here, recognizes the complexity of erotic life and refuses to reduce that into the Western heteronormative bathroom-stall visions of Male and Female. Here, Harjo reaffirms Mark Rifkin's salient arguments connecting heteronormativity to settler colonialism and using

¹⁸⁰ Harjo's horses, notably, are also voices of female anger: "She had horses who spit at male queens who made / them afraid of themselves" (*Horses* 62).

“kinship” as “a lens” with which to map and ultimately unsettle these connections (Rifkin 34).¹⁸¹ But much as she queers gender norms, Harjo also unsettles normative ideas of species classification. Harjo’s poetics, which seeks to connect the spiritual world to the lived world of daily life,¹⁸² resists stable boundaries such as species and gender classifications. As Womack notes, the “Muskogean world” of Harjo’s poetry “lets queerness in rather than driving it out” (245). Part of this queerness, certainly, is a transgression of species being, with the human and equine body flickering back and forth in an erotics at times traumatic and at times joyful but always ecstatic, transgressing familiar Western boundaries of embodiment.

Harjo’s poetry is replete with horses, but also invites the reader to ask—what is a horse? These horses lick razor blades and weep into beer (*Horses* [1983] 63), actions that clearly render them human-like. Harjo’s poetry destabilizes pat, Western human/animal distinctions. Harjo’s poetry embraces a different vision of species being, where “human” and “animal” are not stable categories but different body parts in the corpus of *poesis*—parts that seamlessly bleed into one another. Kim TallBear writes that “traditional stories portray nonhuman persons in ways that do not adhere to another meaningful modern category, the ‘animal.’ [. . .] Our stories avoid the hierarchical nature-culture and animal-human split” (235). Harjo’s horses follow TallBear’s model in resisting firm and final species classifications. Harjo’s horses are not “animals” in the Western sense of

¹⁸¹ Rifkin also criticizes what he sees as the too-easy association of queerness and kinship insofar as these approaches do not go deep enough, challenging neither the settler-based ideology of kinship nor “queer scholarships own imbrications in ongoing projects of settlement” (26). In other words, when looked at from the perspective of settler colonial critique, queerness starts to seem a lot less subversive than it might otherwise appear.

¹⁸² “what I’m trying to do is make the spiritual realm more manifest, obvious” (*Spiral* 79).

“inferior,” nor is their animality a permanent position. They are, instead, complex agential beings, shifting between human and animal in the *anima* of Harjo’s poem.

In addition to offering a species-blurring vision of female embodiment, the horse also serves in Harjo’s poetics as a more seemingly familiar conduit for human eroticism. Take, for example, the poem “Two Horses”:

My heart is taken by you
 and these mornings since I am a horse running towards
 a cracked sky where there are countless dawns
 breaking simultaneously. (*Horses* 64)

Here the horse is, at the most basic level, a symbol of human desire, a metaphor for the wildness of sexual passion. This is, of course, a common way to deploy animals in literature—as avatars for unbridled “animal” sexuality. But the horse, here, is also, crucially, a force of fracture; the horse-as-*eros* charges towards a shattered sky, itself multiplying into myriad shattering dawns. The erotic, here, becomes a force of uncontrollable movement and constant transformation, the ceaseless charge towards a multiply fracturing horizon. What the speaker of the poem becomes is, in fact, neither human nor horse but the gallop of the equine-ecstatic-erotic, a force that can never be complete or whole or stably embodied, a force that, like desire, is never sated, that must keep running, keep exploding, fracturing Western claims to autonomy such as species and self.

Equine erotics, in Harjo’s work, is not always joyful. There is also, at times, a dark violence at work in Harjo’s consideration of equine *eros*. Towards the conclusion of the original 1983 edition of “She Had Some Horses,” the speaker relates an experience

of equine-human sexual assault: “She had horses who tried to save her, who climbed in her / bed at night and prayed as they raped her” (*Horses* [1983] 64). The combination of rape and prayer in this scene of sexual violence perpetrated in the name of salvation yields a pained recollection of residential school trauma, casting a dark pall over the poem as a whole. Intriguingly, Harjo chooses to omit this moment of graphic equine sexual assault from the subsequent editions of the poem. In both the 2002 volume *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems 1975-2001* and the 2008 Norton reissue of *She Had Some Horses*, Harjo excavates the line “[s]he had horses with long, pointed breasts” and replaces it with the much less erotic phrase, “She had some horses with eyes of trains” (*Horses* [1983] 63; *Horses* [2008] 61). This change shifts gears, turning away from interspecies sexual trauma and towards an analytic of railroad Manifest Destiny. Here, Harjo’s poem opens into another history: after the U.S. Civil War the government punished Indigenous nations, like the Creek and Chickasaw people, who, for complex reasons, had fought with the Confederates, by running railroads through their lands (Green 5).¹⁸³ The revised poem, then, also indicates the historical shift from early equine-assisted colonialism to mechanized developments that would replace horses with steam engines and technologized units of “horsepower.” In the modern era, horses are for the most part antiquated as technology, rendering their connection to the human species primarily aesthetic, athletic, and affective—conveyances of pleasure and love, not war and domination.

In the later versions, Harjo also truncates the macabre interspecies sexuality of the lines “She had horses who [. . .] climbed in her / bed at night and prayed as they

¹⁸³ The railroad thematic is already present in the poem, in the earlier line “She had horses with eyes of trains” (*Horses* 61).

raped her” to “She had horses [. . .] who climbed in her / bed at night and prayed” (*Horses* [1983] 64; *Horses* [2008] 62). Why would Harjo choose to remove the most explicit moments of equine eroticism from her poem? The extant scholarship on Harjo has not addressed this question, nor has Harjo spoken about the omissions in interviews or written comments. The removal of the unsettling equine breasts and the explicit language of sexual assault suggests that Harjo may have found her early version too heavy-handed; the author may have been searching for the subtler evocation of equine eroticism found in the later version of the poem. If the changes make the poems less species-transgressive, they also make the horses friendlier, more palatable, and the message of the poem more nuanced, more suggestive.

What I would like to emphasize, though, is the way Harjo’s pursuit of the equine-erotic-ecstatic culminates in the horse poems following the title poem in *She Had Some Horses*. In the section “She Had Some Horses,” the titular poem is followed by “Two Horses,” “Drowning Horses,” “Ice Horses,” and “Explosion,” marking a general movement towards the equine-erotic-ecstatic that culminates in the final poem of the series. (Each poem in this section is also given a Roman numeral, suggesting that the section should be read as a unit.) The speaker of “Ice Horses” sings of “horses who moaned like oceans” (*Horses* 66), one of whom is “a young woman” (*Horses* 66). Here we see, once again, the hybridization of human and equine bodies. This interspecies transference is again emphasized when it turns out that the horses “are the ones who pranced on your belly” and “chased the deer out of your womb” (*Horses* 66). Harjo’s ice horses conjure an image of species transgressive reproduction, recalling traditional Creek

deer transformation stories in a species-blurring vision of equine-human hybridity. This trajectory culminates in the poem's conclusion:

These are the ones who loved you.

They are the horses who have held you

so close that you have become

a part of them,

an ice horse

galloping

into fire. (*Horses* 66)

In Creek terms, what Harjo describes here is the human-as-horse's entrance into the Upper World, the stellar realm of sky and "planetary orbits" that will become the central concern of Harjo's 1994 collection *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky* (Womack 240). Harjo's equine-erotic-ecstatic image of the "ice horse / galloping / into fire" also recalls the imagistic power of the conclusion of American feminist poet Sylvia Plath's "Ariel," where a woman and a horse soar "Into the red // Eye, the cauldron of morning" (29). Harjo's poem builds on Plath's by further collapsing the boundaries of species being; the "you" of Harjo's poem, connected to horses through bonds of love and reproductive embodiment, ultimately joins with horses, becomes "a part of them." This final arresting moment of equine-erotic-ecstatic rapture connotes a jubilant bursting together of woman and horse, a stellar diffusion of the Western view of species taxonomization.

The last poem in this section, "Explosion," offers the apotheosis of the equine-erotic-ecstatic. This poem imagines the explosion of a highway "near Okemah, Oklahoma" (67), a small community, home to the federally recognized Muscogee Creek

Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, about 70 miles from Harjo's hometown of Tulsa. In the poem, Harjo imagines a "new people" emerging "from the center of the earth" (*Horses* 67), where the Creek origin story begins. The new people are "another color" yet bear an affiliation to the Creek people: they "live in Muskogee on the side of the tracks / that Indians live on. (And they will be the / ones to save us" (67). The poem also depicts a scene of striking equine messianism: "But maybe the explosion was horses, / bursting out of the crazy earth / near Okemah. They were a violent birth" (*Horses* 67). Horses, here, are explosive and redemptive, suggesting the possibility of transformation and renewal. The explosion of the highway, of course, opens a seam through an already transitional space, a borderland. This blast also suggests the destruction of the settler state, a move characteristic for Harjo, whose poetic vision often dramatizes "life without colonialism" (Womack 230). Harjo's exploration of the equine-erotic-ecstatic ends with a vision of kinetic plenitude: "some will see the horses with their hearts of sleeping volcanoes / and will be rocked awake / past their bodies" (*Horses* 68). Among the other fictions these horses collapse (the sanctity of the settler colonial state) is the fiction of permanent, stable embodiment. Those who can see the horses—and only some can—will see "past" their own corporeal existence. This transcendence of embodiment serves to subvert rigid identities such as species and gender, the entrapments of European thinking. The idea of being "rocked awake" suggests a coming-into-new-knowledge with the gentleness of a lullaby. Simultaneously, though, the image of the "sleeping volcano" implies a massive violence, a potential punishment, an enormous geological change that may provide the possibility of regrowth and renewal.

Harjo's horses are various—at times dark and threatening, at times viscerally erotic, at times cosmic. Crucially, though, they are never stable, never rigidly embodied; they are corporeally queer, subverting the bounds of normative species being, crossing over into human bodies and flickering back to charge “into fire,” to soar the “countless dawns” of the “cracked sky.” It is only taken as a whole that a genuine vision of Harjo's equine-erotic-ecstatic begins to emerge, and I can only hope that this short glimpse into Harjo's work has provided a passable shorthand for her vision of horses transforming, horses in motion, horses exploding and giving birth and licking razor blades but most importantly galloping.

Over the last few years Anishinaabe novelist, scholar, and political activist Winona LaDuke has led a series of environmental horse rides following the proposed routes of pipelines such as Enbridge's Line 3 Replacement along wild rice lakes crucial to Ojibwe communities in Minnesota.¹⁸⁴ LaDuke's work offers one important example of the way the horse can serve as an ally to decolonial struggle—symbolizing older ways of caring for the land and its inhabitants in the face of our modern, oil-drunken age. Linda Hogan and Joy Harjo mobilize a different, though complementary, version of equine subversion of settler colonialism: the cultivation of a loving, interspecies affinity (Hogan) and the equine-erotic-ecstatic (Harjo). For both poets, equine *eros* serves as a powerful force of decolonial subversion, announcing the possibility of a revolution of love. Robert Warrior

¹⁸⁴ For more on LaDuke's rides, see Douglas Thompson's article “Treaty Rights Battle Links Hunting and Oil Pipelines in Minnesota” in *Indian Country Media Network* and Sarah Littleredfeather Kalmanson's article “Winona LaDuke leads Environmental Horse Ride Against Enbridge's New Pipeline Route and Pipeline Abandonment Threats in Minnesota” at *Honortheearth.org* as well as the YouTube clip “Honor The Earth: Triple Crown of Pipeline Rides” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1v6_1DLth9U).

writes that “[t]he presence of the erotic in Harjo’s texts is a challenge, a confrontation” (341), calling readers to recognize the primacy of embodiment and the power of the erotic as a “force for human liberation” (340, 342). For both Hogan and Harjo, the erotic also opens a node of connection to the nonhuman. In an era of mass extinction and extraction, when the current U.S. president has habitually and belligerently denied the rapid acceleration of anthropogenic climate change and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved the Doomsday Clock from three to two and a half minutes to midnight, there has never been a more crucial time to cultivate love for the nonhuman world. Exploring equine eroticism and exploring human love of horses provides one way to begin to counter the settler colonial industrial-capitalist logics of human greed and extraction, a machinery based in the faulty claim of human exceptionalism. Poetic attention to the land, and poetic attendance to a particular creature, is a form of love, a form of stewardship. The horse can be a symbol of resistance but it can also be a symbol of shared pain, of tenderness, of grief. Unlike a car or an airplane, a horse feels back, loves back. Reading the poetics of equine *eros* through the lens of settler colonialism opens a seam into an erotic and affective world that persists beyond and in spite of settler logics of white human supremacy, rigid species taxonomies, and Western regimes of linear progress. Linda Hogan and Joy Harjo sing alongside the horse, a creature as gentle as it is strong, crafting, in their equine erotopoetics, a space for ecstatic and transformative interspecies love.

Conclusion: Climate Climax, Planet Panic

On April 15th, 2018, as I was putting the finishing touches on this dissertation, 60-year-old former Lambda lawyer and gay rights champion David S. Buckel committed suicide by self-immolation. Buckel emailed his suicide note to several major media outlets, citing environmental devastation as the cause of his suicide and stating that his death by burning fossil fuels—he used gasoline as an accelerant—should serve as a cautionary tale for our fragile world ecology and the socio-political infrastructures that continue to devour so-called natural resources, contribute to widespread extinction of nonhuman lifeforms, and in turn cause current and future famine, water crises, increasingly malevolent weather systems, and global temperature rise.¹⁸⁵

Reading about the story, it struck me that Buckel's tragic death offers an uncanny parallel with my opening literary case study of the species panic complex, H.P. Lovecraft's Arthur Jermyn, who sets himself on fire after finding that he is directly descended from a lost race of Congolese ape-human hybrids. While these cases are by no means neatly symmetrical (one is real life and one is literary anti-fantasy), they might be read as indicating a shift in American mood from 1921, when Lovecraft published "Arthur Jermyn," to 1918, when a person could pour gasoline on himself and start a suicidal fire in the name of ecological activism. Buckel's suicide demonstrates a different iteration of species panic, one where the threat comes from inside: no longer animal *eros* as indicator of the latent animality within the human and threat to human exceptionalism but human existence as threat to the vulnerable natural world—a wake-

¹⁸⁵ Buckel wrote: "my early death by fossil fuel reflects what we are doing to ourselves" (qtd. in Mays, np).

up call for a species devouring the very grounds of its existence. No longer a monstrous and fearful animality lurking within the civilized human but civilization itself as parasitical and chaotic, monstrous in its propensity to devour.

Another way of stating what I'm trying to articulate here is that what I see as a future direction for this research is not so much a step forward but a lateral gesture, beyond the charismatic megafauna that have traditionally been the literary *loci* of interspecies erotics and on to broader ecoscapes. Botanic panic, for example, haunts the gothic narratives of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe. How might *Species Panic* grow to contemplate the *eros* of plastic, usually derived from petroleum and in turn from ancient zooplankton and plant life? Viral panic, cyborg panic, AI panic, zombie panic, alien panic, and zoonotic disease panic pulse and purr through modern film, television, and literature. These are signs and symptoms of a species panic that is, if not dissolving, perhaps migrating crabwise. No longer the human under threat from the animal but the human as threat to itself as well as to other species. Becoming uncanny, species panic now looks back from the mirror as humans themselves become the threatening creature, without and within.

The contemporary environmental mood seems to call for abject panic. Food looks like it's running out and water is becoming increasingly scarce, polluted, and privatized. Species go extinct at a rate that has been called "alarming" so many times the phrase has become banal. One of the ways we work through climate panic is through literature. More and more modern fictions deal with nightmarish scenarios of ecopocalypse. The proliferation of works like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011), Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017), and Cherie Dimaline's *The*

Marrow Thieves (2017) demonstrate a cultural preoccupation with climate panic that has begun to supplement if not replace the post-Darwinian species panic that preoccupied the American literary imagination of the late-nineteenth century and carried through the majority of the twentieth. If many writers interested in the natural world used to explore the threatening *eros* of human-animal love, they are now more often turning to the blasted sublime of full-scale ecological devastation. Although the ecological panic of the current moment is itself a form of species panic, narratives of climate panic may sidestep, somewhat, the dilemmas of *Species Panic*; the symbolic horror of the animal within becomes less of a concern when famine, superstorms, and water shortage begin to threaten human and nonhuman life. At the same time, as the human animal finds its technoscientific bulwarks increasingly unable to defend against superstorms and forest fires, the nature/culture distinction devolves before our eyes and the human becomes desperately biological, enfleshed. In *The Road*, cannibalism emerges as a live possibility again, as the no-longer sacrosanct human body becomes, once again, meat.

But the very fact that such narratives traffic in the horror of such an image, using it to build narrative momentum, also suggests that species panic is alive and well in America and beyond.¹⁸⁶ Being treated “like an animal” remains a watchword for ultimate subjection, “human” continues to denote unequivocal praise as a literary-critical adjective (as in “a work of remarkable humanity”), and bestial, especially hybrid, creatures continue to mobilize fear and shock in the aesthetics of the gothic. People—many of whom sleep in beds with dogs or cats—still shudder and tremble when

¹⁸⁶ A slew of recent literary examples demonstrate the species panic complex. Books from recent years that fit the bill: Dennis Johnson’s *Train Dreams* (2011), Jesmyn Ward’s *Salvage The Bones* (2011), and Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad* (2016).

nonhuman *eros* is made explicit. But a major, if not dominant, discourse of species panic has largely given way to the larger and more dramatic discourse of climate change and ecological catastrophe.

In such circumstances, interspecies erotics can emerge as a form of healing and a force of redemption, as it often does in recent work in the field of multispecies studies, as discussed in the Introduction to this project. Such work suggests that if we love ecosystems hard enough and cultivate new stories about them, maybe we can shift a neoliberal mindset of extractivism and technoscientific frenzy towards a more balanced viewpoint. But one of the things I've shown throughout this project, and one of the revelations of literature, is that stories can and should be dangerous and slippery. As much as we might turn to story for healing and guidance, we also seek it out for terror and trembling, for warnings and mystery, to project the darkness in the seams of the known. Furthermore, crucial as interspecies entanglements are (I've explored them at length while trying to maintain critical distance), the preceding pages have certainly shown the value of examining particular species in the literary terrain; we learn something different when we examine horse literature alongside the ethology and history of horses than what we learn when we try to understand massive-scale ecological systems such as the one Timothy Morton calls "the mesh" (53). Each of the governing animals of my five chapters—dogs, bulls, cows, androids, and horses—has its own unique, if entangled, aesthetic, historical, and erotic narrative in human literary history.

But how can we panic better? How can criticism ride the fine line between the desolate and the redemptive? In her 2016 book *Risk Criticism: Precautionary Reading in an Age of Environmental Uncertainty*, Molly Wallace extends Ulrich Beck's diagnosis of

modern “risk society” to develop her own ecocritical practice of “[p]recautionary reading” (20). Against the charisma of apocalypse, Wallace posits precaution. And in a way what I’ve been doing all along is a form of precautionary reading, spurred by the intuition that nonhuman *eros* is too often oversimplified in scholarship for the purpose of mobilizing it in the service of the good. I want to show the dark side of love, the messiness of companionship, the tensions of care, and the inherent exclusions of interspecies entanglement. I want to show the extent to which our lives and literature are already steeped in interspecies *eros*, and to emphasize that such eroticism isn’t always edifying: that it can be thrilling and ecstatic, boring and banal, murky and milky, brooding and curmudgeonly. I want to celebrate the complexity of story and poetics, the ability of literature to explore the nebulas and ambiguities of interspecies coupling without reducing such relations to salvations.

There is a perhaps surprising affinity between precaution and panic: panic, while it sets the heart racing, also holds you still in the grip of arrest. Conceiving these affects in tandem brings me back to the literary, reveals that my own method has been to collect moments held in the tension of species-transgressive *eros*. Hemingway’s bulls, Morrison’s cattle, Dick’s androids, London’s dogs, Hogan and Harjo’s horses. The main thing that unites my readings of all of these species’ emergence in literature is perhaps not so much the content of interspecies erotics in its various formations but the form or feeling of the encounter. An animal appears, say Derrida’s cat. A human beholds, considers. Something lurks, sweaty and panting. Something that threatens and connects, something that draws closer. Something suggested, something palpitating, something that is both the secret of nonhuman *eros* and the very enigma of story.

In his thrilling paeon to Nietzschean interconnectivity, *The Ecological Thought* (2010), Timothy Morton offers a lightspeed argument for the value of literature to ecological thinking: “Art’s ambiguous, vague qualities will help us think things that remain difficult to put into words. Reading poetry won’t save the planet. Sound science and progressive social policies will do that. But art can allow us to glimpse beings that exist beyond or between our normal categories” (61). Aside from its salvationist timbre (will or should anything really “save” the planet?), my issue with this passage is its assumption that literature is and should be illuminating. Almost without exception, when Morton quotes literature he uses it as tinsel with which to decorate his altar of ecophilia (“the best environmental thinking” [20]). But, always suspicious regarding claims that one way of thinking is better, I believe we turn to literature for complexity, ambiguity, the tension of the unsaid, the spinach wilting between the teeth of language. Yes, literature can help us see the creatures that inhabit and dissolve the margins of our typical ways of thinking, but it can also show the panic, the overwhelming hurt, of trying to let those categories go. It can show us that there are times when it’s okay to panic, acceptable to flinch. It can show us that malleability and interconnectedness isn’t all fun and games—there are connections across species bounds but there are also pressure points, lines we might want to be wary about crossing. This approach, the approach I’ve tried to demonstrate throughout this project, might perhaps be called a precautionary attitude towards the typical animal studies and ecocritical tendency to want to revel unproblematically in biophilia.

Above all, what I have found in *Species Panic* is a recognizable, if variegated, literary trope: again and again, nonhuman *eros* threatens foundational Western premises

about the human being. The literature I've examined in *Species Panic* has also demonstrated that interspecies erotics can be a relation of enormous conscientiousness and care, that it can help to soothe even as it provokes panic. I have explored five literary avenues where species panic has twitched differently. I have watched species panic move, gotten tangled in its thorns. I have tried to show how ubiquitous interspecies *erotics* in American literature is and, by extension and for context, how entangled human bodies and stories are with the erotic lives of animals more broadly.

The problem with a study about species malleability and the mangling mingle of interspecies erotics is that all you can really take away from it is murk and mist, the joy of the join. If there's one thing my research has shown me definitively it is that interspecies erotics is not necessarily liberating, redemptive, or beautiful. Rather, I understand my intervention to be an unveiling or excavation of the importance of *eros* in human-nonhuman relations historically and today. Nonhuman eroticism fills our literature, engenders our fantasies, and yet it still makes us tremble to name the thought. While writers like Hogan and Harjo help me see that a more intimate, less panicked connection with the nonhuman world is possible, I am by no means sure that the cultivation of interspecies erotics guarantees a better world. I am sure, though, that what the literature of species panic provides is the cultivation of nuance, of doubleness, of complication—tension suspended in the unexpected aesthetic loveliness of panic. What such literature opens is reflection onto a world in which there are no right answers, just the curves and swerves of *eros* and the perpetual vibrato, the shuddering tension of panic. Here, at the denouement, *Species Panic* looks much the same as it did at the beginning: a drift of Freudian hill-fog wafting over an entangled bank.

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