theories and methodologies

From Animal to Animality Studies

MICHAEL LUNDBLAD

WHEN JACK LONDON'S HUMAN CHARACTERS INTERACT WITH DOGS AND WOLVES IN TEXTS SUCH AS *THE CALL OF THE WILD* (1903) AND *WHITE FANG* (1906), erotic fireworks often light up the wild. The love between the dog Buck and his human partner, John Thornton, in *The Call of the Wild* is characterized as "[l]ove, genuine passionate love. . . . love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness" (59–60). In *White Fang*, the half wolf of the title experiences a love for Weedon Scott that "manifested itself to [White Fang] as a void in his being—a hungry, aching, yearning void that clamored to be filled. It was a pain and an unrest; and it received easement only by the touch of the new god's presence" (244). Instead of reading these passionate nonhuman characters as "real" animals, literary and cultural critics often read them as "men in furs," in Mark Seltzer's memorable phrase, leading to interesting and important discussions of, for example, homoerotic interactions between men.[1]

In the context of animal studies, we might expect critics to emphasize readings of Buck and White Fang as "actual" animals or to focus on links between these representations and various kinds of practical and theoretical advocacy for nonhuman animals in the world today. Those moves might not seem very compelling for literary and cultural critics primarily interested in the politics of how various *human* populations are constructed. But the recent work of Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway, and Cary Wolfe, among many others, illustrates how difficult it has become to maintain easy distinctions between "the human" and "the animal." With incredibly rich and complex inquiries into the question of the animal, much of the recent work in animal studies has prompted fundamental reconsiderations of nonhuman and human difference, otherness, and subjectivity.

But the phrase "animal studies" strikes me as too limiting, too easily mistaken for a unified call for universal advocacy for actual animals.[2] I want to make a distinction between critical attention to how we think about "real" animals and various forms of advocacy for treating nonhuman animals better. I want to associate animal studies

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even further with that advocacy, with work explicitly concerned about the living conditions of nonhuman animals. Conversely, I want to argue for "animality studies" as a way to describe work that expresses no explicit interest in advocacy for various nonhuman animals, even though it shares an interest in how we think about "real" animals. Animality studies can prioritize questions of human politics, for example, in relation to how we have thought about human and nonhuman animality at various historical and cultural moments. Increased attention to the history of animality and related discourses can lead to new insights in fields such as the history of sexuality, as London's texts will help me illustrate below. To the extent that this kind of methodology resists engaging with concern for nonhuman animals, it could be seen as "speciesist." But I want to open up a space for new critical work that might have different priorities, without an imperative to claim the advocacy for nonhuman animals that runs through much of the recent work in animal studies.

In *When Species Meet* (2008), Haraway illustrates this concern for animals by drawing attention to the "actual wolves" that she finds absent in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's well-known critique of Freud's Wolf-Man (29). In their *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Haraway finds instead a "call-of-the-wild version of a wolf pack" and "scorn for all that is mundane and ordinary and the profound absence of curiosity about or respect for and with *actual animals*" (313n36, 27; my emphasis).[3] Derrida's "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" is similarly taken to task because "actual animals" are ultimately "oddly missing" (19). Although Derrida writes "at length about a cat, his small female cat, in a particular bathroom on a real morning actually looking at him," he does not "seriously consider an alternative form of engagement" with that cat (19, 20).[4] Derrida shares a kind of outrage with Haraway, though, when he focuses on "the annihilation of certain species" that is "occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, virtually interminable survival" (394). In *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003), Wolfe echoes this feeling when he suggests that in a hundred years we will most likely "look back on our current mechanized and systematized practices of factory farming, product testing, and much else that undeniably involves animal exploitation and suffering . . . with much the same horror and disbelief with which we now regard slavery or the genocide of the Second World War" (190). Wolfe is also clear that he has "no intention in this book of providing a 'foundation' on which we might justify more humane, less exploitative treatment of nonhuman animals," arguing instead that "the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like animals*. We all, human and nonhuman alike, have a stake in the discourse and institution of speciesism . . ." (190, 7). But his "posthumanist ethical pluralism" also draws particular attention to the "overwhelmingly direct and disproportionate effects" that the institution of speciesism has on animals (7).

These examples certainly do not do justice to the range of fascinating theoretical insights explored in the recent work of Wolfe and others, but I want to identify this thread of concern for nonhuman animals more explicitly with animal studies. I also want to acknowledge, though, that work with this motivation can be very useful for indicating new directions in animality studies, even if there is not a shared interest in nonhuman advocacy. In the opening pages of *When Species Meet*, for example, Haraway analyzes a digital picture of what appears to be a dog but is actually composed of a "burned-out redwood stump covered with redwood needles, mosses, ferns, lichens—and even a little California bay laurel seedling for a docked tail" (5). The central

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questions that she explores and clarifies throughout her book can be asked in relation to this creature, just as they can be asked in relation to "real" dogs: "Whom and what do we touch when we touch this dog? How does this touch make us more worldly, in alliance with all the beings who work and play for an alter-globalization that can endure more than one season?" (5). To respond to this dog, we must pay attention to intertwined histories: "Visually and tactically, I am in the presence of the intersectional race-, sex-, age-, class-, and region-differentiated systems of labor that made . . . [this] dog live" (6). Representations of animality can thus point toward complex human histories, without necessarily prescribing how various human beings should treat various nonhuman beings, globally or locally. But there is more work to be done in animality studies, I believe, particularly in terms of exploring how constructions of the animal have shifted historically in relation to the human and how discourses of human and nonhuman animality have produced various identity categories within the human.

An animality studies approach to London's texts at the turn of the twentieth century, for example, can reveal a more complex, unsettled, and inconsistent engagement with the question of the animal and constructions of the human than we might otherwise assume. The erotic desire between species—or between "species" of men—gestures toward a discourse of animality that seems rather removed from our current dominant deployment of the animal as a signifier of naturally violent and heterosexual instincts. Texts at the turn of the century belong to a different epistemology, in other words, or an epistemology in transition that resists the post-Darwinian and post-Freudian frameworks most often used to explain them. A closer look allows us to see how shifting constructions of the animal are linked with new constructions of sexuality at this historical moment. In a larger project of mine, I reveal how animality and sexuality contribute to a new discourse that can be identified as "the jungle." The birth of this discourse produces "the homosexual," among other new figures, in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century.[5] What is new at the turn of the century can be broadly characterized as a shift toward thinking about the human being as just another animal, particularly in the context of social Darwinism. Sexual desire is newly constructed in relation to "animal instinct" rather than temptation or devilish impulse in a Protestant Christian framework. Desires that are "unnatural" are constructed against Darwinian reproduction rather than a Christian god's will. In the discourse of the jungle, the behavior of "real" animals soon represents "natural" human instincts, particularly in terms of violence and heterosexuality.[6]

We often associate the turn of the century and naturalist literary texts with this Darwinist turn, assuming that the several decades following the publication of Darwin's major works are enough time to solidify Darwinist constructions of the animal and human animality. But the discourse of the jungle remains in transition at the turn of the century, and various texts and cultural events represent alternative constructions of animality and thus alternative ways of thinking about related discourses, such as sexuality.[7] Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* is first published in 1859, and his sequel, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, comes in 1871. But his influence is not pervasive in the United States until the logic of *social* Darwinism is explored, contested, and finally reinforced through various texts and events at the turn of the century.[8] The key confluence, in my view, is when Freudian psychoanalysis travels to United States shores and translates Darwinist constructions of "real" animals into "animal instincts" within the human psyche. The early work of Freud, such as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Every-*

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day Life (1901), and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), soon crystallizes these constructions of animality for European and American psychologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, G. Stanley Hall, and William James.

Freud's trip to the United States in 1909 brings him into contact with James and Hall, and his Clark University lectures indicate how his formulation of psychoanalysis is built, at least in part, on the naturalization of animal instincts.[9] Freud insists that to break down the ill effects of "civilized" repression, "we ought not to go so far as to fully neglect the animal part of our nature" (qtd. in Bender 20). In his 1917 paper "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-analysis," he reveals his premise that the instincts of the human mind are derived from "hunger and love, as being the representatives of the instincts which aim respectively at the preservation of the individual and at the reproduction of the species" (17: 137). Freud famously identifies Darwin as dealing the "biological blow" to human narcissism: "Man is not a being different from animals or superior to them; he himself is of animal descent, being more closely related to some species and more distantly to others" (141). A human being's animal instincts thus become essential for understanding human behavior. The third and final blow to human narcissism, according to Freud, is the psychoanalytic discovery that the human mind cannot always control its unconscious instincts, including those that can be explained by its "animal descent."[10] This Darwinist-Freudian framework soon associates animality with the supposedly essential, biological instincts for heterosexuality in the name of reproduction and for violence in the name of survival. Kill or be killed, in other words, and produce as many offspring as you can. The animal within you, just like the animal in the wild, is naturally hardwired for survival in the jungle, even if the human part of you is defined by the capacity for restraining those animal instincts.

Texts of literary naturalism that are often thought to epitomize this kind of social Darwinism also include varied forms of *resistance* to the idea that "animal instinct" is the best framework for understanding human violence and sexuality. Critical attention to what *else* animality might signify at this time can reveal alternatives to the growing hegemony of Darwinist-Freudian formulations: sexual pleasure that does not lead to propagation; corporate exploitation that is "monstrous" rather than "natural"; and inverted, racist evolutionary hierarchies that elevate certain animals over certain humans. London's construction of the wolf suggests alternative ways of thinking about sexuality, resisting the transition to the homosexual-heterosexual binary that Sedgwick and others have identified at the end of the nineteenth century. Dogs and wolves in London might otherwise bring to mind Freud's famous declaration in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) that man is a wolf to man ("*Homo homini lupus*"), but London's texts actually resonate more with George Chauncey's work on "wolf" sexualities among human males in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (1994), Chauncey reveals how early-twentieth-century American males identified as wolves "combined homosexual interest with a marked masculinity. None of them behaved effeminately or took feminine nicknames, and few played the 'woman's part' in sexual relations—and then only secretly" (89). His research complicates studies in the history of sexuality that suggest a new definition of homosexuality was universal in American culture at the turn of the century. Chauncey argues that the construction of "the homosexual" at the end of the nineteenth century in medical discourses had a more immediate impact on middle-class culture and elite discourses than on less privileged domains. Working-class culture in New

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York, for example, maintained discursive categories related to sexual acts and roles much longer before shifting to the homosexual-heterosexual binary: "'the modern homosexual,' whose preeminence is usually thought to have been established in the nineteenth century, did not dominate Western urban industrial culture until well into the twentieth century, at least in one of the world capitals of that culture" (27). Chauncey reveals that the culture of the early twentieth century "permitted men to engage in sexual relations with other men, often on a regular basis, without requiring them to regard themselves—or to be regarded by others—as gay" (65). London's "men in furs" might well exemplify "wolves" in this sense, including seemingly straightforward human characters such as Wolf Larsen in *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). But there is more to explore here in terms of the logic that might allow these men to call themselves wolves.[11]

On the one hand, discourses of animality construct human sexuality in London's texts and in the broader discourse of the jungle. On the other hand, there is more work to be done in terms of thinking about these dog and wolf characters as "actual" animals. The passions between Buck and John Thornton, for example, can be read as gestures toward interspecies erotic desire, toward alternative constructions of love between human and nonhuman beings that resist the singular and reductive signifier of "bestiality." Within the discourse of the jungle, our language to describe these interactions between species remains extremely limited.[12] An animal studies approach to interspecies love of various kinds might be concerned primarily with the implications for nonhuman animals. But animality studies might explore different questions here: What is—or should be—the relation between constructions of queer desire between species and queer desire between men?[13] To what extent is the discourse of the jungle challenged by recent work that documents extensive examples of "animal homosexuality" among hundreds of species?[14] How might the queering of animality relate to antihomophobic human politics?

If animal studies can be seen as work that explores representations of animality and related discourses with an emphasis on advocacy for nonhuman animals, animality studies becomes work that emphasizes the history of animality in relation to human cultural studies, without an explicit call for nonhuman advocacy. Animality studies might thus be seen as speciesist, but animal studies, conversely, runs the risk of ahistorical, universalist prescriptions about how to treat or interact with nonhuman animals. The spectrum running from animal studies to animality studies, though, produces a unified insistence that critical attention to discourses of animality is increasingly necessary, provocative, and even crucial within literary and cultural studies today.

Notes

1. See Seltzer 166–72. On homoerotic elements, see Derrick; Auerbach 104–13.

2. For a sharp critique of animal studies as not oriented *enough* toward animal advocacy, see "About ICAS." For other resources, organizations, and journals related to animal studies, see the resources page of the H-Animal Discussion Network. For related debates about "real" versus socially constructed environments in the field of ecocriticism, see Heise.

3. Haraway provides a useful summary and critique of Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-animal" in *When Species Meet* (27–30). It is important to note here that Haraway's "ordinary" is far from it: "The ordinary is a multipartner mud dance issuing from and in entangled species. . . . [T]he partners do not preexist their constitutive intra-action at every folded layer of time and space" (32).

4. See Haraway's broader critique of Derrida's essay in *When Species Meet* (19–27).

5. In my "Epistemology of the Jungle," I explore the discourse of the jungle in the context of Eve Sedgwick's work and Foucault's suggestion that the "species" of the homosexual is born at the end of the nineteenth century (Foucault 43). In my book manuscript in progress, "The Progressive Animal: Evolutionary Fictions and the Discourse of the American Jungle," I explore how the discourse of the jungle performs a foundational role in the

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production of three seemingly unrelated *human* identities in American culture at the turn of the century, through or against new formulations of "animal instinct": the homosexual, the corporation, and the African American man. Heteronormativity, class hierarchies, and racial differences are thus produced in a wide range of literary and cultural texts deploying new constructions of animality.

6. For elaborations of how this kind of circular logic persists throughout the twentieth century, see Haraway, *Primate Visions*; Ross.

7. The proliferation of texts most clearly related to animality that are published at the turn of the century includes, in addition to London's work, Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Charles Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman* (1899), Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914). A longer list here could include additional works by these writers as well as texts by Rudyard Kipling, Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Dixon, Ernest Thompson Seton, William J. Long, Charles Alexander Eastman, and James Weldon Johnson. In my larger project I also explore a wide range of related cultural events at this time that seem rather far removed from our current moment, including President Teddy (Bear) Roosevelt's arguing in the pages of American periodicals that London, among others, is a "nature faker," with unrealistic natural history in his wild-animal stories; the true story of Topsy, a circus elephant publicly electrocuted at Coney Island in 1903; Ota Benga, an African man displayed in the Monkey House of the Bronx Zoo in 1906; and the Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925. For more on the origin of the "teddy bear" story, see Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" 284–85n5. On the nature fakers, see Lutts. On Ota Benga, see Adams 25–59; Bradford and Blume. On Scopes, see Larson.

8. For an alternative view, see Bender. On Darwin's work in the context of Victorian literature, see Levine; Beer.

9. On Freud's 1909 Clark lectures, see Rosenzweig; Hale.

10. Haraway adds what she calls "a fourth wound" to Freud's discussion: "the informatic or cyborgian, which infolds organic and technological flesh and so melds that Great Divide as well" (*When Species* 12).

11. The association of "the wolf" with the so-called active or man's part of queer anal sex might suggest the trope of inversion, constructed in nineteenth-century medical and psychological discourses, as one way of explaining the logic at work here. As Sedgwick has pointed out in *Epistemology of the Closet*, inversion allows for "the preservation of an essential *heterosexuality* within desire itself" (87). What I am interested in, though, is the preservation of an essential heterosexuality within *animality* itself, a formulation that is elided in Chauncey's analysis. I explore this question in more detail in my "Epistemology of the Jungle."

12. In *Dog Love*, for example, Marjorie Garber briefly considers these interactions as examples of interspecies "love" (120–21). But she argues that "human love for dogs is bisexual" (129), and she seems to accept the term *homosexual* to describe "male-male cross-species contact" in the Kinsey reports (148–50). Other sources related to bestiality are Dekkers; Lingis.

13. I use "queer" here to suggest an interpretive framework rather than an identity category.

14. See, e.g., Bagemihl; Roughgarden; Zuk; Terry; and Lancaster. Bagemihl discusses how "animal homosexuality" apparently can be explained within evolutionary narratives (168–213).

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