

# ANIMAL STUDIES

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**“ANIMAL STUDIES” IS** a posthumanist, cross-disciplinary field consisting of several branches that both overlap and diverge, such as “critical animal studies,” “human-animal studies,” “humanimal studies,” “animality studies,” and “species studies” (Lundblad 2017, 1–21). Based on thoughts developed over a few decades, it was formed in the 1990s – just like queer studies, and like which it has a close relation (and some tension) with a movement for social and political recognition (animal rights/gay rights). Historically, there have been many connections between these two movements, and this is also true for the respective scholarly fields today. With the publication of *Queering the Non/Human* (Hird and Giffney 2008), an animal studies/queer studies subfield was initiated with the aim to scrutinize the role of norms regarding gender and sexuality in relation to non-human life. Since then, several special issues of research journals that focus on this intersection have been published (e.g. Lönngren 2011; Grubbs 2012; Luciano and Chen 2015; Hayward and Weinstein 2015; Steinbock et al. 2017).

The queer-inspired thought that non-human animals might not be “naturally” heterosexual gained ground with a few larger studies at the turn of the 2000s (e.g. Bagemihl 1999; Roughgarden 2004). This process noted the ways in which animals’ sexual behavior, in research as well as the “edutainment” of, for example wildlife films, are used to validate heteronormative ideologies in human society and politics. This discussion was soon extended to include how the normativity of the

two-sex model forms an axiom in biological research, despite the great diversity in this regard in both human and non-human life forms. These heteronormative studies are then used as arguments for what is “natural” and desirable in relation to human sexuality and gender (Kulick 1997; Terry 2000; Ganetz 2004; McHugh 2009; Alaimo 2010). Indeed, it has been argued that one’s very recognition as “human” depends on integration in the two-sex model and the display of a clear heterosexual desire – a process that is also intimately linked to categories of, for example ethnicity, race, class, and functionality (Butler 1993, 7; Halberstam and Livingstone 1995, 10).

Other queer perspectives in the field of animal studies include a focus on reproduction; this central part of heteronormativity has its counterpart in the thoroughly capitalized animal industry’s breeding programs, which are characterized by oppressions regarding gender and sexuality (Franklin 2002; Rosenberg 2017). Moreover, there are vital on-going discussions in the area of intimacies and pleasure in the relationship between humans and non-human animals. While there are occasional uses of the terms “zoosexuality” and “zoophilia,” which have been used since the 1980s to identify sexual attraction toward animals as a specific form of orientation (Bakke 2009), there are also attempts to historicize the rigid bestiality paradigm of penetration and abuse. Particularly in relation to the keeping of pets, several scholars take a more nuanced approach toward forms of cross-species intimacies that may result in non-normative concepts of “family” (Garber 1996; Haraway 2003; Rudy 2012; Jagose 2019).

The potential of intersecting queer studies and animal studies is, however, not only in scrutinizing and undermining pre-existing categories but in making space for something that may go beyond existing paradigms and create “other worlds” (Dell’Aversano 2010). In connecting the politically emancipatory foundation of queer studies with animal studies’ ability to question humanistically defined paradigms of knowledge, a space is opened up for subversive thinking and change.

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Lönngren's most recent book is *Following the Animal: Power, Agency, and Human-Animal Transformations in Modern, Northern-European Literature* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2015). She is affiliated with the transdisciplinary Humanimal Research Group at the Center for Gender Research at Uppsala University since 2010, and in 2014, she became an associate member of New Zealand Center for Human-Animal Studies at Canterbury University in Christchurch. In 2018, she initiated the establishment of the Ratatöskr Research Group for Literary Animal Studies.

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