

An Animal Without an Animal Within

*For Hector*

*Örebro Studies in Sociology 17*



DAVID REDMALM

**An Animal Without an Animal Within  
The Powers of Pet Keeping**

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## Abstract

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If the human is an animal without an animal within—a creature that has transcended the animal condition—what is a pet? This creature balancing on the border between nature and culture, simultaneously included in and excluded from a human “we”, is the focus of this thesis. The thesis analyzes the discourses and normative frameworks structuring the meaning of pets in people’s lives. By extension, it analyzes how the boundary between “human” and “animal” is produced, negotiated, and challenged in the relationship between pet and owner.

Each of this thesis’ four constituent studies focuses on an aspect of personal relationships between humans and pets: pets as figures for philosophical thinking, the dual role of pets as commodities and companions, the grief for lost pets, and the power issues at play in the everyday life of pet and owner. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach, cross-bred with Donna Haraway’s material-semiotic perspective, the analysis exposes the powers allowing pets to occupy these various positions.

The thesis demonstrates that pets occupy a special position as boundary creatures in the lives of humans, allowing humans to play with and thus reproduce dichotomies inherent to the contemporary Western worldview, such as human/animal, person/nonperson, subject/object, and friend/commodity. However, pets’ conceptual transgressions may also challenge this worldview. On the one hand, pets are bought and sold as commodities, but on the other, they are widely included in the human sphere as friends or family members. This paradoxical position is accentuated in the construction of a more-than-human home, and it is also visible when pets pass away. This thesis argues that pets, these anomalous creatures, may help humans understand that there are no humans or animals within, only relations between them. Based on this argument, this thesis develops a sociological approach for analyzing the production of humanity and animality in relations between humans and other animals.

*Keywords:* Animal studies, animality, anomalies, companion animals, Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, human-animal studies, material-semiotics, pets, posthumanism.

David Redmalm, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences  
Örebro University, SE-701 82 Örebro, Sweden, david.redmalm@oru.com

## List of studies

This thesis is based on the following studies, which will be referred to in the text by their roman numerals:

I) Redmalm, David (2011) "In-Your-Face-Ethics: Phenomenology of the Face and Social Psychological Animal Studies," 73-104 in Segerdahl, Pär (ed.) *Undisciplined Animals: Invitations to Animal Studies*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Published with the permission of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

II) Redmalm, David (2013) "Holy Bonsai Wolves: Chihuahuas and the Paris Hilton Syndrome," published online January 2013 in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, DOI:10.1177/1367877912464539 (printed version is forthcoming). Published with the permission of Sage Publications.

III) Redmalm, David (2013) "Pet Grief: When Is Nonhuman Life Grievable?" Submitted.

IV) Redmalm, David (2013) "Discipline and Puppies: The Powers of Pet Keeping." Submitted.

## Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	9
I SMELL A RAT .....	12
Are Pets Animals? .....	16
Aim .....	17
Disposition .....	19
PETS AS A SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEM .....	21
Thinking with the Human/Animal Dichotomy in Sociology.....	21
Pets' Social Function .....	26
Pets as Symbols .....	30
Pets as Social Actors.....	32
A Critical Posthumanist Sociology of Pets.....	34
STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE: METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS .....	38
Genealogical Methodology .....	39
Nonhuman Subjectivity.....	42
Data .....	49
Analysis.....	53
Reflexivity.....	59
SUMMARY OF THE STUDIES.....	64
CONCLUSIONS.....	70
The Excesses of Pet Keeping.....	70
An Animal Without an Animal Within .....	76
The Sociologist's Pet.....	84
REFERENCES .....	89
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	115
APPENDIX B: THE INTERVIEWEES.....	117



## Acknowledgments

I wish I were as eloquent as Mr. Fox in Wes Anderson's 2009 film *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. When farmers unite to rid themselves of the food and cider-thieving little critters of the forest once and for all, Mr. Fox gathers his animal friends to give them an inspirational talk before the final battle: "I [...] see a room full of wild animals. Wild animals with true natures and pure talents. Wild animals with scientific-sounding Latin names that mean something about our DNA. Wild animals each with his [and her] own strengths and weaknesses due to his or her species." In his speech, Mr. Fox emphasizes that it is "the beautiful differences" among them that give them the opportunity to permanently liberate the animals of the forest. I feel the same way—what would I have done without the many wild animals of different species who supported me during my work on this thesis?

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David Redmalm, Uppsala, September 2013

# I Smell a Rat

Who, then, made the noise? The rats, of course. A feast makes noise. Here are the guests, with their little paws; it seems like thunder above the ceiling. Here are the gnashing of their teeth and the scratching of the rodents. All that wakes him up. The noise, then, was called for by noise. At the door of the room, he heard a noise. He gets up, the rats flee... A change of position for the observer.

Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (2002: 66)

It began with a revolting smell, like a combination of over-aged cheese and a moldy cellar in a house soon to be demolished. The smell began to spread in my office and then quickly accelerated and expanded to fill the whole corridor of the Sociology Department at Örebro University. After a while, the stench had become so intense that the sociologists found it difficult to focus on their work. After a visit from the pest controller, I was informed that some creature had hidden within the walls of my office and had died there—most likely a rat. Because there was no way to determine precisely where the rat had laid down to die, the only thing to do was to wait for the creature residing somewhere on the other side of my office wall to decompose slowly until only a little rat skeleton remained. When I realized that the rat corpse would be residing in my office on a permanent basis, I decided to give her/him a name, Ghost Rat, and make him/her into the office pet.

Although I only know Ghost Rat by smell, I will stay with him/her a bit longer because by her/his smell alone this spectral rodent is able to raise some questions relevant to this thesis. Can nonhuman animals affect or even participate in social relations, and how? In what way can nonhuman animals be considered persons, and of what does this personhood consist? Michel Serres (1982: 12) noted that philosophers constructing theoretical, abstract systems resemble homeowners who burn down their houses to rid themselves of the noisy and smelly rats in the basement. Of course, when philosophers begin rebuilding their theoretical constructions, new vermin soon find their way into the building. Serres' objective is to find a way to conceive complex systems and yet allow for disturbing elements within those systems. In this thesis, the pets are the ones making noise within a theoretical, sociological construction. This thesis analyzes the normative frameworks structuring the meaning of pets in individuals' lives and the challenges that pet keeping poses for these normative frameworks. What

powers are at work that make a personal relationship between humans and nonhumans possible? Thereby, it contributes to a sociological understanding of a society that is inhabited by humans *and* other animals.

So let us return to my spectral pet rat. Örebro University's policy strictly forbids bringing nonhuman animals into any university buildings (except guide dogs and animals used in experiments), although there may be great individual and organizational benefits to having pets in the workplace (see Barker 2005). More specifically, according to the policy,

Bringing pets into the workplace and allowing them to reside in the workplace is not compatible with the employer's responsibility to provide a safe work environment for employees and students. This applies to both the physical and psychosocial work environment. (Gidlund and Borg, 2005, my translation from Swedish)

In this document, a pet is considered a *risk*. For individuals allergic to cats and dogs, for example, pets are associated with the risks of swollen eyes and windpipes and runny noses. The reference to the "psychosocial work environment" is less clear—pets themselves are associated with a number of mental health benefits (Serpell, 1996: 99ff), except of course for those afraid of dogs or other animals. The policy relies on and reproduces a distinction not only between human and animal but also between professional space and the home, and reminds the employees of Örebro University that nonhuman animals do not belong in a flourishing intellectual environment. Ghost Rat is acceptable only as a momentary nuisance and would not have been allowed if I had brought her/him into my office as a pet (alive or dead).

Ghost Rat does not make much noise. I can no longer even smell him/her. Yet, Ghost Rat sheds light on nonhuman animals' involvement—sometimes conscious, sometimes not—in human meaning-making practices. First, nonhuman animals often challenge an established interactive order and therefore accentuate unwritten social rules. The introduction of a dead rat into the seemingly sterile environment of a university office thus resembles Harold Garfinkel's (see, e.g., 1967; Heritage 1987: 234) experiments, where his subjects were told to break norms to make them observable. When nonhuman animals remind humans of their presence in contexts where only a human presence is expected, it highlights the anthropocentrism inherent in human social organization. Having a dead rat in the walls of one's office certainly disturbed social interaction in the workplace and highlighted an interesting aspect of disturbances in shared spaces: I was ashamed by the fact that the smell came from my office, and even after the pest controller concluded that a dead rat was causing the smell, I kept

wondering if I had done anything to attract Ghost Rat. Second, Ghost Rat's presence also raised the issue of humans' understanding of other animals' intentions and their experience of the world. The pest controller, my colleagues, and I speculated on what Ghost Rat's intentions had been when s/he not only found a way into the university building but also made it up to the third floor to my office. In other words, we ascribed subjectivity to Ghost Rat. We also discussed whether Ghost Rat had become stuck in the wall and died in agony, or if s/he had been an elderly rat, deciding to spend her/his last moments in a warm, calm, and dark place before finally making acquaintance with Cerberus. My colleagues speculated whether Ghost Rat had chosen my office because I am the only one focusing exclusively on human-animal relations and had recently interviewed a devoted rat owner for my thesis. One of my colleagues even gave Ghost Rat a voice when speculating about Ghost Rat's last days of life and said in a slightly pitched and somewhat creaky tone: "Mmm, I wonder what goodies I'll find in this room?" Third, Ghost Rat definitely challenged my work—the smell literally forced me out of my office. In ways such as these, nonhuman animals often affect what humans would like to conceive as human "organization". All of these aspects—the ascription of nonhuman subjectivity, intention, and voice, as well as the general way in which nonhumans unsettle anthropocentric contexts—will be further investigated in this thesis.

There are limitations to using Ghost Rat as an example of human-nonhuman interaction because s/he only made her-/himself noticeable by his/her smell. However, simply by smelling, with Serres (1982: 225), s/he "thus occupies space." Although the interaction between Ghost Rat and me can in this sense be described as one-dimensional and essentially dependent on my speculations and those of my colleagues, this thesis focuses on personal relationships across species' borders with no walls in-between. Having a live pet in the office armchair, instead of a dead one in the wall, may allow for a more complex relationship and chain of events. To be allowed to bring her dog Cayenne, an Australian Shepherd, to her office, Donna Haraway (2008b: 205f), professor at the History of Consciousness Department at University of California at Santa Cruz, applied to have her dog certified as a "research dog." However, Haraway does not merely regard Cayenne as a test subject in a social experiment. She claims that she *becomes with* Cayenne. "Becoming with" is a notion that appears repeatedly in Haraway's work and refers to the poststructuralist problematization of identities and categories—which are continuously produced and revised, rather than existing in cemented structures. In the intra-

action<sup>1</sup> between beings, their different ways of existing in and perceiving the world play out, forcing each of them to adjust to the other. Haraway's work thus consists in not so much thinking *of* Cayenne as thinking *with* Cayenne (cf. Puig de la Bellacasa 2012).

A reciprocal becoming between human and nonhuman has traditionally been overlooked in sociology. Animals have first and foremost figured in sociology as symbols—as figures that sociologists can use to define their object of study—“the human” and “human society” (Tuomivaara 2009). The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991: 89) famously declared that “animals are good to think [with]”—they play an important part in social structures, worldviews, and myths because of their metaphorical potential. However, animals are not only good to think with but “good to live with” (Fudge 2008: 13)—in encounters with pets, humans are reminded that society is always already more-than-human. As Haraway makes clear, *thinking with* is also *becoming with*. Humans like to conceive of themselves as an animal without an animal within—as a civilized being that has conquered its animality. However, humans have reciprocal social relationships with pets and often recognize a bit of themselves in their nonhuman companions. What are they recognizing? An animality that they had buried deep within themselves and forgotten? Or is it the case that pet owners are not that human after all? The study of pets—these beings with one paw in nature, the other in culture—represents an opportunity for sociologists to reflect on how the notions of the animal, the human, nature, and culture have traditionally been deployed in sociology. By focusing on pet keeping, this thesis not only analyzes the powers making pet keeping possible; it also shows that pets have the power to help humans perceive the past dichotomies inherent to a contemporary Western worldview and encourages sociologists to allow the definition of the sociological object of study to remain open. This thesis will thus instruct sociologists on the benefits of pet keeping.

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<sup>1</sup> Haraway prefers Barad's (2008) term *intra-action* in favor of interaction because it emphasizes the difficulty of analytically separating distinct objects in a process whereby all participants are transformed as a consequence of that process. Intra-action is thus a way of looking at any event as a multifaceted process where the boundaries of the involved entities are always already blurred, rather than a causal chain of events between separate things. In intra-action, entities and events are inseparable, and “[t]he partners do not precede their relating” (Haraway 2008b: 17).

## Are Pets Animals?

The word “pet”<sup>2</sup> was originally used during the fifteenth century to refer to spoiled children and may originate from the French word *petite* (little) (DeMello 2012: 149). As a term used to refer to nonhuman animals, it originally designated farm animals that had been raised by humans, instead of their biological mothers (Beck and Katcher 1996: 84; Boggs 2013: 22). As Fudge (2002: 36f) notes, a pet lamb not only passes from the barn to the home, it also passes a number of symbolic boundaries such as animal/human, stranger/family, object/subject, and nonperson/person. It furthermore challenges the child/adult divide because in depictions of such stories, it is often a child who takes on the role of a parent in relation to the pet lamb-child. Moreover, many pet lambs ultimately return to the ominous category of “eatable animal.” Pets’ double status is indicative of humans’ paradoxical relationships with other animals in general (see Fudge 2002). Humans use nonhuman animals in harmful experiments and wear their skin and fur. Furthermore, many have highlighted humans’ paradoxical behavior of eating certain animals, while many pets are treated as family members (Fudge 2002: 36f; Fudge 2008: 18, Francione 2000: 76ff). Simultaneously, nonhuman animals are associated with positive values such as innocence and purity.

Pets, as Erica Fudge (2002: 27f) argues, are exceptionally paradoxical beings, to the extent that Fudge asks: *Are pets animals?* She writes, “they live with us, but are not us; they have names like us, but cannot call us by our names” (Fudge 2002: 28). Pets are often beloved members of the family, but pets are also bought and sold and are regularly abandoned or euthanized simply because their owners do not wish to keep them. Pets are belongings in a dual sense—they are both humans’ property and beings that help create a sense of belonging as such (Fox and Walsh 2011). For these reasons, the pet evokes precisely the type of friction I wish to explore in this thesis. The original use of the word “pet” accentuates pets as something anomalous, a “phenomenon of bordering” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 270). The pet it is created at the intersection of categorical borders humans have drawn, and it is an accomplice in the reproduction of these borders. However, an anomaly

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<sup>2</sup> Two of the studies in this thesis are based on an interview study with Swedish pet owners, and a common Swedish term is “husdjur”. The word literally means “house animal” and can designate both companion animals and nonhuman animals kept for their milk, skin, fur, or flesh. The word is nevertheless commonly used for companion animals and has the same widespread vernacular use as the word “pet”. It also emphasizes the association of the pet with the domestic sphere—as something or someone kept as personal company and/or for one’s personal pleasure.

is potentially disruptive—it draws attention to and makes us aware of the borders along which it moves. Anomalous phenomena are not only loved for their unique status—they also threaten an established social order. When living beings take the role of anomalous phenomena, they are regularly as a consequence exploited, objectified, abused, killed, and ridiculed. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987: 270) remark on the anomalous: “Human tenderness is as foreign to it as human classifications.” The tension-filled dichotomy between human and animal contributes to making pet keeping meaningful—pet and human are “made” (cf. Tuan 1984) when the border between human and animal is blurred and negotiated. By studying the anomalous phenomenon of pet keeping, this thesis, therefore, contributes to the understanding of the making of humans—the production and negotiation of a collective human identity.

The word “pet”, Alyce Miller (2011) writes, is often considered derogatory because it signals a one-way relationship in which pets are regarded as objects of amusement (see also Arluke and Sanders 1996: 171). Similarly, Leslie Irvine (2004b: 58) argues that the increasing popularity of the term “companion animal” rather than “pet” indicates a shift in the way humans perceive nonhuman animals, as sentient beings rather than mere objects for consumption and amusement. Yet, the notion of “companion animal” is also problematic because it risks obscuring the paradoxical status of the category’s members (Arluke and Sanders 1996: 11f; Miller 2011; Peggs 2012: 76f). “Companion” neglects the fact that humans are generally regarded as the owners of their nonhuman companions, in spite of the shift identified by Irvine (see Francione 2004: 31). Moreover, “animal” cements humans’ position as an exception to this category (see Haraway, 2003: 12ff, for further discussion). I therefore persist in using the terms “pet” and “pet owner” to emphasize the problematic power dynamic those concepts entail (see also Fudge 2008; Fox 2011: 54f). I adopt Haraway’s (2011a) exhortation to “stay with the trouble” that the word “pet” causes.

In this thesis, I regard the pet as a nodal point where different discourses and normative frameworks play out against one another and where pets themselves take an active part in this process. The pet phenomenon thus does not simply fulfill a specific function in the lives of humans—it is also productive, giving rise to new ways of interacting, communicating, and creating identities.

## **Aim**

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the discourses and normative frameworks structuring the meaning of pets in human lives and show how the boundary between “human” and “animal” is produced, negotiated, and

challenged in the relationship between pet and owner. In so doing, this thesis develops a sociological understanding of a society that is *more-than-human* (Whatmore 2006)—inhabited by humans *and* other animals. In other words, the thesis recognizes the existence of nonhuman subjectivity and develops a perspective for analyzing the parallel construction of human and nonhuman subjectivities—an approach that I consider part of a *posthumanist* sociology. Two issues are central to this thesis and its four studies. First, what powers allow the paradoxical pet to play an integral role in personal relationships with humans? Second, if humans are animals who have denounced their animal within, what occurs on the border between the human and the animal and what types of personal and collective identities are produced as a result? Or, to put it differently: To what extent can pets be considered part of a human “we”? What does it take to be human? And what does it take to be animal?

In each of the four studies on which this thesis is based, I focus on an aspect of personal relationships between humans and other animals: pets as figures for philosophical thinking, the dual role of pets as commodities and companions and the symbolism of the Chihuahua, the grief for lost pets, and the power issues at play in the everyday life of pet and owner. I present the overlapping discourses and normative frameworks that allow pets to occupy these various positions, but I also highlight the instances in which the logic of these discourses and frameworks crumble. In the first study, theoretical cats and dogs begin questioning the philosophers who wrote about them in the first place. In the second study the Chihuahua—a recurring symbol in popular culture—breaks with the norms and presuppositions it is supposed to confirm. In the third study, the established notion of human identity is challenged by humans’ grief for other animals. Finally, in the fourth study, pets begin decentering anthropocentrism when pet owners treat their “live belongings” as members of an equal and mutually beneficial relationship. By showing when discourses and normative frameworks producing pet animals and human owners fail to fulfill their duties, the studies ultimately elucidate what is required to be human—and animal.

Nonhuman animals in philosophy, Chihuahuas, grief for nonhumans and, finally, the notion of power in the human-pet relationship—will serve as figures, in a Harawayan sense (Haraway and Goodeve 2000: 135f, Haraway 2008b: 4; see also Holmberg 2005, e.g., 231f). Figures, for Haraway, are concrete abstractions, both alive and theoretical, and can be used and reused in different contexts. Haraway (2008b: 5) argues that figures “gather up those who respond to them into unpredictable kinds of ‘we’.” A figure is thus akin to a rat in the building that, when once invited, can create all sorts of unthinkable trouble, making all sorts of trouble thinkable.

Therefore, I conclude this thesis with a call for sociologists to become pet keepers—to let nonhuman animals help them resist the temptation to develop perfect theoretical constructions.

## **Disposition**

This is a compilation thesis and its constituent studies have been, or will be, published in other venues. As I present the disposition of this thesis, I thus wish readers to bear in mind that this book consists of another four “books”, existing simultaneously between the covers of this thesis and in other academic discussions. After all, as Wittgenstein (1969: 44f) has noted, occasionally the most rewarding philosophical method consists of “taking up some books which seemed to belong together, and putting them on different shelves.” Yet, the four studies share a common aim: to analyze the discourses and norms that make pet keeping possible and meaningful and investigate how the boundary between human and animal is created and negotiated. I hereby invite readers to join me in my work as a conscientious library assistant who has noticed that the established order on one particular shelf in the library will not suffice (section 636.001, the philosophy and theory of animal husbandry).

In the next chapter, I review recent sociological research concerning the role of pets in human lives and discuss the pet as a sociological problem. In the third chapter, I will present methodological concepts, adopted from Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach and Haraway’s material-semiotics, central to the analysis in the four studies. In this chapter, I will also discuss the data and analysis of the four studies: the way I have chosen and analyzed theoretical essays and popular media texts, as well as the way I conducted and analyzed interviews with pet owners. One section is also devoted to a discussion of nonhuman animals’ place in language-centered research. After the methodological chapter, the reader will find a summary of the four studies. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the contribution of the studies to the understanding of pets as creatures on the border between human and animal, collective human identity, and sociology’s object of study. At the end of the thesis, the reader will find the four studies. After each chapter there is a photograph or a drawing. These images have haunted me in different ways throughout the writing process. Instead of analyzing them and thus assimilating them into this academic text, I have chosen to enclose them without further comment. In this way, I allow the images to become rats in the building that is my thesis, emphasizing that any construction always has few skeletons in the closet—or inside the walls.



*Tangled Leash by Mel Kadel. Reprinted with the permission of the artist.*

## Pets as a Sociological Problem

In this chapter, I will discuss various strands of sociological literature on pets, which in turn will serve to contextualize pets as a sociological problem. I will begin with a discussion on the human/animal dichotomy in classical sociological thought to provide a background to the obstacles encountered when conducting a sociological analysis of the relations between humans and other animals. I will then present previous studies related to three themes. First, a number of scholars have investigated the *function* of pets. These scholars have sought structural explanations for the increasing popularity of pets—approximately 30–40% of Western households own pets (Morley and Fook 2005). Second, pets raise the wider question of humans’ *symbolic* relations with other animals: scholars have asked how pets contribute to humans’ construction of a personal identity, as well as a collective human identity. Third, a number of scholars have examined pets as minded *social actors*. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my own perspective concerning the theoretical and practical benefits of the sociological study of pets.

### Thinking with the Human/Animal Dichotomy in Sociology

This thesis concerns the normative framework surrounding personal relations between humans and other animals. Norms are often associated with the exchange of human language—norms proliferate in educational texts, mass media, and literature. However, categorizations also have consequences for nonhuman animals. Just as the categorization of nonhuman animals as “animals” makes it possible for humans to, for example, buy, sell, kill, and eat many nonhuman animals, the human/animal divide also affects relations among humans. The normative distinction between humans and other animals is in focus in this thesis—but, as I will show, it is not the only distinction constituting the normative framework surrounding personal relationships between humans and other animals. The distinction can itself be challenged by such personal relations. Nevertheless, the distinction plays an important role in social organization, the construction and reproduction of human identity, and sociological thinking. Adopting a critical stance toward this distinction is therefore also central to this thesis and its four studies.

The sociological study of nonhuman animals can be regarded as a distinct field, including the study of the environment, angling and hunting, the meat industry, farming, zoos, wildlife tourism and films, science studies (from, for example, veterinary science and biology), and pet keeping (Ar-luke and Sanders 1996; Franklin 1999; Peggs 2012). Although the sociolo-

gy literature contains contributions on human-animal relations, human-animal studies (also known as animal studies)<sup>3</sup> is an interdisciplinary field of research, including scholars from the humanities and the social and the natural sciences, with journals such as *Society and Animals*, *Anthrozoös*, *Humanimalia*, *Antennae*, and the *Journal of Critical Animal Studies*. Human-animal studies—whether sociological, from other disciplines, or interdisciplinary—all have in common that they include nonhuman animals in some way. They study nonhuman animals as social beings or animals' impact on or place in society—symbolic, material, or both. Scholars working in the field are transdisciplinary to different degrees. Some emphasize a critique of the oppression of nonhuman animals, while others have no explicit normative aim.

Jody Emel and Jennifer Wolch (1998) argue that there are several explanations for the growing interest in nonhuman animals in social theory. Economic globalization and its accelerated industrialization have created urgent environmental problems, threatening individual animals, their habitats, and whole species. This state of a constant threat against nature and the loss of wilderness areas unaffected by human activity, is occasionally spoken of as the “end of nature” (Emel and Wolch 1998: 2; see also Giddens 1991: 144).<sup>4</sup> The “end of nature” has created a demand for an understanding of these new and worrisome conditions. Animal rights and environmental activists concerned by this development have also raised awareness regarding human abuse of nonhuman animals, and sensitivity toward nonhuman animals' needs, and have thus contributed to a more nuanced theoretical understanding of nonhuman worlds in social theory. Furthermore, new strands in social thought that have arisen in recent decades, particularly postmodernism and feminist theory, have questioned the anthropocentric understanding of human existence characteristic of modernity. This interest in nonhuman animals is thus a consequence of the questioning of a clearly circumscribed, transparent, and singular human subject. Therefore, the labels “animal studies” and “human-animal studies” are themselves problematic—they presuppose a distinct notion of the animal. “From the perspective of theory,” Kari Weil (2012: 23) writes, “animal studies may have emerged only in time for

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the various labels used to refer to the study of human-animal relations, see DeMello (2012: 4f).

<sup>4</sup> To stipulate a conflict between nature and culture is problematic because the boundary between nature and culture, and what is natural and unnatural, is continuously negotiated (Uggla 2010; Gustafsson and Lidskog 2013). Yet, a perceived conflict between nature and culture nevertheless has consequences for how humans regard and act toward nonhuman animals.

its existence to be outdated.” I regard this thesis as belonging to the field of sociological animal studies.<sup>5</sup> I perceive animal studies as an inquiry into more-than-human societies. From a sociological perspective, which has traditionally focused on the formal and informal structuring of human societies, animal studies can contribute by both showing that humans are not alone in society and demonstrate the problems associated with the presuppositions pervading the nature/culture and the human/animal dichotomies. I will return to this discussion at the end of this chapter.

While animal studies can contribute to an extended understanding of nonhuman animals and humans’ relationships with them, sociology has not been devoid of nonhuman animals. In the next three sections, I will discuss contemporary sociological studies that analyze pets and pet keeping in various ways. Some classical sociological thinkers have also explicitly discussed domestic animals and their roles in human lives. For example, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2003) argued for a ban against dogs in cities in a text first published in the early twentieth century. Her point was that dogs can be noisy, an economic burden, are often carriers of diseases, and can be dangerous to humans in other ways. Furthermore, Gilman regarded it as cruel to keep dogs in an urban environment, as it kept them from living lives in accordance with their nature and acting on their drives. Harriet Martineau (2003) advanced a more liberal position in a text published during the nineteenth century and argued for the necessity of distinguishing between owned dogs and feral dogs. Émile Durkheim saw a limited but beneficial role of pets in human society: pets could give meaning to the lives of socially isolated women “because these very simple social forms satisfy all her needs” (Durkheim 2005: 174). In contrast to women, a man requires “more points of support outside himself,” as “he is a more complex social being” (Durkheim 2005: 174).<sup>6</sup> Both Durkheim and Gilman presupposed strict distinctions between nature and culture, and humans and animals. For Gilman, dogs should not be a part of society because they are animals and belong outside urban areas. For Durkheim, it is women who do not truly belong to society to the same extent as men.

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<sup>5</sup> I prefer the term animal studies to human-animal studies, as the latter risks obscuring the fact that humans are also animals. A problem with the term “animal studies” is that it can also refer to animal laboratory experimentation. I believe that animal studies as a field can reclaim the notion of animal studies and use it in the interests of animals, both human and nonhuman.

<sup>6</sup> See McHugh (2004: 85ff) and DeMello (2012: 152) for discussions on the traditional, misogynist associations between women and pets.

The distinction between humans and animals plays an important role in the classics of sociology.<sup>7</sup> The early sociologists repeatedly used the notion of the animal to conceptualize human life (Tuomivaara 2009). In Marx, the abstract notion of the animal is used to describe the alienation by which workers are reduced to their animal functions and experience a “loss of self” (Marx 1975: 327ff). Even humans’ “animal functions” are used for the sake of profit, Marx (1975: 360) writes, such that the workers begin to resemble the machines with which they work. Animality is thus a pre-human or subhuman form of life, to which the worker risks returning.<sup>8</sup> Weber, in turn, uses nonhuman animals to distinguish humans as the object of sociology. While he notes that there is “social organization among animals: monogamous and polygamous ‘families,’ herds, flocks, and finally ‘states,’ with a functional division of labour” (Weber 1978: 16), he also emphasizes that humans are conscious and rational actors to a far greater extent than instinct driven animals (Weber 1997: 17). Similar to Weber, Durkheim<sup>9</sup> (2005: 170) states that animals’ “psychological constitution differs from that of men only in degree,” but also emphasizes that “psychic functions have been carried, from the very beginnings of the human species, to a degree of perfection unknown among animal species” (Durkheim 1933: 346f).<sup>10</sup> In the early social psychological work of George Herbert Mead, there is a similar distinction between humans and animals. He states that although dogs can play, they do not ever truly occupy the role of the other in this game in the way a human child would, and nonhumans thus lack the self-reflective behavior typical of humans (Mead 1934: 150).

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<sup>7</sup> See Osborne and Rose, 2008, for a discussion regarding whether the sociological classics are sociological.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as James Hribal (2004) highlights, humans share a history of exploitation with many other animals, as animals have also been objects of forced labor, both as working animals in, for example, mines and agricultural work and as workers in factory farms where they themselves are the product. There is also an alternative history of working animals resisting oppression by escaping, turning against their owners, or refusing to work.

<sup>9</sup> Tuomivaara (2009) suggests that Durkheim draws a very distinct line between humans and other animals because he is never interested in the animals themselves and only mobilizes animality as a concept when defining human properties. In contrast, I would argue that Durkheim instead blurs the human/animal dichotomy, and it is because the line is blurry that the gap between humans and other animals in Durkheim’s writing is unbridgeable.

<sup>10</sup> Yet Durkheim (2005: xlii) suggests one way of making a clear distinction between humans and animals: humans are the only animals that commit suicide. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2005: 8) relies on the same distinction to define the human condition in *Human Work*, first published in 1904.

Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Mead recognize that humans are a type of animal, and they point to a similarity between humans and many other animals. Nevertheless, they also use such comparisons to emphasize humans' exceptionality. This distinction between the notion of "the human" and "the animal" has at least two consequences. First, the distinction cemented a separation between "civilized" humans and "savages" or "primitive men" and vice versa (Marx 1975: 360; Weber 1978: 15f; Durkheim 1933: 348). When early sociologists discussed the human as an object of study, they relied on a distinction between "civilized" humans and "uncivilized" animal-like humans. As Weber (1978: 16) notes, while there is no certain means of gaining access to animals' subjective experience of the world, "our ability to share the feelings of primitive men is not very much greater." Durkheim also associated women—as well as children (see Durkheim 2005: 71)—with the uncivilized side of the dichotomy. This rendered "civilized", adult Western human males as the most sociologically complex object of study. The use of the human/animal dichotomy in early sociological thinking allowed for a distancing from, and dehumanization of, some humans. Second, the distinction allowed for a sociological focus on humans and a negligence of nonhuman sociality. The early sociologists recognized a similarity between humans and nonhumans, as well as animal traits in humans—humans were perceived as advanced animals with a primitive animal within. Yet, this distinction between socially advanced humans on the one hand and primitive humans and animals on the other was crucial in defining the sociological object of study. Because early sociologists regarded human-to-human relations as qualitatively different from relations between members of other species, they could also define sociology as the study of these socially advanced animals.

Despite the ways in which nonhuman animals and animality have traditionally been used to conceptualize human life in the classics, nonhuman animals were recognized as being social to some extent and occasionally even part of simple social organizations. For instance, Weber (1978: 15) speculated whether there could be such a thing as a mutual understanding between humans and other animals and stated, "in so far as such understanding existed it would be theoretically possible to formulate a sociology of the relations of men [sic] to animals, both domestic and wild." This thesis contributes to such "a sociology of the relations of humans to animals" while drawing the sociological object of study as such into the limelight, and my objective is to keep the sociological object of study open. Because sociology is the study of the social and because the social is a constant fluctuation of connections and disconnections, inclusions and exclusions, it is important for sociologists to resist the temptation to once and

for all determine who should be considered a social actor, who is capable of creating meaning, and who is capable of participating in social relations. Whereas the early sociologists needed to exclude nonhuman animals from their focus to form a discipline, nonhuman animals' presence in the sociological classics demonstrates that nonhuman animals nevertheless remained an included exclusion (cf. Agamben 1998: 13); as in Serres (1982), the rats have remained in sociology's basement, although sociologists throughout the twentieth century could have devoted greater attention to the noise they were making.

I will now turn to more recent sociological research on pets specifically. Many have maintained that pets are primarily passive symbols for, or mirrors of, human identity (e.g., Veevers 1985), but there is also a growing field of interactional research examining human-pet relations. In the following three sections, I will discuss the sociological understanding of pets in recent decades in relation to three themes: pets' social function, pets as symbols, and pets as social actors.

### **Pets' Social Function**

Many scholars contributing to a sociological understanding of pet keeping regard pets as filling one or several social functions in the lives of humans. These scholars are interested in why pets are so popular and why the popularity of pets increased in the Western world during the twentieth century. Furthermore, a functional perspective on pets can improve sociological understandings of the benefits pets provide humans. Pets mean different things to different individuals; in a study on Australians' views of and relation to nonhuman animals, pet owners cite for keeping pets was to entertain children, participate in competitive showing and other sports, or have them for work, protection, or as company for themselves or their children (Franklin 2007).

One of the most influential sociological analyses of humans' relationships with animals is that of Adrian Franklin. Franklin (1999) draws on a sociological understanding of the modern Western world. Contemporary humans, in this perspective, are uprooted by secularization and urbanization, and personal relationships only last as long as their individual members perceive the relationship as advantageous (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Bauman 2000; Giddens 1990, 1991). Franklin (1999: 54ff; see also Franklin 2007) suggests that these conditions give rise to specific relations between humans on the one hand and nature and nonhuman animals on the other. First, a general misanthropy, induced by the eco-criticism of the 1970s in combination with Disneyfied wildlife films, caused individuals to regard nonhuman animals as essentially good in contrast to a tainted hu-

manity. Second, because of their rootless existence, Westerners tend to incorporate animals into the family to prevent it from scattering and thus secure their “ontological security” (see Giddens 1990: 92). Pets often play the role of “social substitutes for family, partners, children” (Franklin 1999: 101). Third, Franklin argues that the increasing awareness of humans’ effects on the environment—in line with a general increase in risk-reflexivity among contemporary Westerners (see Beck 1992)—causes individuals to become more concerned about nonhuman animals and the preservation of their habitats.

A scrutiny of Franklin’s outline of contemporary Western human-animal relations raises a number of doubts. For example, pet keeping is associated with a number of risks to human health and safety, not least zoonotic diseases (Wright 1990; Convery et al. 2005; Blue and Rock 2011; Pollock et al. 2012). If Westerners are increasingly risk reflexive, why would they voluntarily take on the additional responsibility of a pet? This indicates that pets are not merely “safe” substitutes for friends and family (see Walby and Doyle 2009). Moreover, if the nuclear family is dissolving, why does the human-pet relation often take the form of a human nuclear family, where master and mistress are called “dad” and “mum” and pets are spoken of as “furry children” (Haraway 2008b: 37; see also Charles and Davies 2008)? These common expressions are a sign that the family ideal persists. Furthermore, pets play such an important role in the lives of many humans that it is doubtful whether pets can be regarded as substitutes for family. Pets *are* family and can occupy numerous different positions within the family, not only as “furry children” (Charles and Davies 2008; see also Franklin 2007).

Western pet keeping is no longer a strictly Western phenomenon. Harding (2009) noted that Western politics, economics, and industry currently have a global impact: “It would be reasonable to say that every society today lives in global modernity, even if only in the darkest corners of its effects” (Harding 2009: 415). Personal relationships with nonhuman animals are not geographically or temporally limited to Western society; hence it is misleading to speak of pet keeping as an expanding Western phenomenon (Serpell 1996; Gray and Young 2011). However, if Western pet keeping is defined as a way of keeping nonhuman animals where a considerable amount of money is spent for the good of the pet, and where pets are treat-

ed as persons, Western pet keeping is indeed an expanding global phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

Many studies have attempted to develop an understanding of the precise type of effect pets have on humans. A number of studies have demonstrated the benefits of pet keeping to human psychological and physical health in general (Vormbrock and Grossberg 1988; Fitzgerald 2007; Headey and Grabka 2007; Headey et al. 2008; Walsh 2009a, 2009b; Wells 2009; Cline 2010) and the elderly in particular (Garrity et al. 1989; Siegel 1993). Studies have also demonstrated the positive effects of pet assisted therapy (Rochberg-Halton 1985; Casey 1996; Kogan et al. 1999; Baun and McCabe 2003; Cournoyer and Uttley 2007; Moretti et al. 2011) and dog training programs in prisons (Katcher et al. 1989; Moneymaker and Strimple 1991; Walsh and Mertin 1994; Strimple 2003).<sup>12</sup> These studies primarily focus on the benefits pet keeping has for humans.

Studies of the consumption needs and behavior of pet keepers are also examples of research focusing on the human side of the relationship (Herpin and Verger 1992; Brockman et al. 2007; Ridgway et al. 2008; Jyrinki 2012) and how pet keeping affects human consumption behavior (Hung et al. 2011, 2012). Moreover, studies have demonstrated the role of pets as social facilitators, permitting interactions with strangers (Robins et al. 1991), facilitating social interaction in neighborhoods (Wood et al. 2005) and across ethnic divides (Jerolmack 2009), and enhancing interaction with

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<sup>11</sup> For discussions concerning pet keeping as a global phenomenon, see for instance Serpell (1996); Builliet (2005: 211); Franklin (2007); Headey et al. (2008); and Gray and Young (2011). Yet, while the popularity of pets is not limited to Western culture, pets are more common among certain social groups—studies have, for example, shown that pets are rarer in lower income households (see Albert and Bulcroft 1988; Marx et al. 1988).

<sup>12</sup> While most health-oriented studies of pet keeping demonstrate that it has positive outcomes, Miller and Lago (1990) and Stallones et al. (1990) were unable to find any significant relationship between pet ownership and psychological or physical wellbeing. Watson and Weinstein (1993) have shown that pet keeping is less therapeutic among working women. Moreover, some studies show that pets can be a burden rather than a benefit among elderly people coping with illness or an ill partner (Parslow et al. 2005; Connell et al. 2007; Rijken and Beek 2011). Similarly, Ory and Goldberg (1983) suggest, based on a survey of elderly women, that the meaning of pet ownership is different for different segments of the population and pet ownership is associated with, for example, increased perceived happiness among women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Finally, it should be noted that the relationship between pet ownership and psychological and physical health may change over time due to changes in society. For example, increased access to pet related services such as veterinarians and dog walkers may mitigate the burdensome aspects of pet keeping.

friends (Rogers et al. 1993) and family (Savishinsky 1985; Hara 2007). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that pets are used as interactional resources in everyday interactions, where humans interact with one another by speaking in the voice of a present pet (Roberts 2004; Tannen 2004).

The status of pets in domestic and intimate partner violence has been thoroughly examined (Flynn 2000; Ascione et al. 2007; Atwood-Harvey 2007; Faver and Cavazos 2007; Krienert et al. 2012; Schaefer 2007; Simmons and Lehmann 2007; Volant et al. 2008; Degue and Dilillo 2009; McPhedran 2009). Many studies of pets and violence are based on quantitative analyses and focus in various ways on the statistical relationship between partner abuse, child abuse, and the abuse of nonhuman animals. In many of these analyses, while many of the authors are concerned for the pets involved, pets are discussed as tools used by perpetrators to carry out threats and other abusive actions. The focus is thus on nonhuman animals' role in partner and child abuse.

In contrast to strictly functional approaches to pet keeping, there are a number of studies that also recognize the complexity of human-pet relationships and that pets' role in humans' lives cannot be reduced to one or a few isolated aspects. Risley-Curtiss et al. (2006), in a study of women of color in the US, show that pet keeping includes love and friendship and that pet keepers and pets are involved in a reciprocal socialization, "each responding to the other's needs and closely coordinating their actions" (Risley-Curtiss et al. 2006: 442). Dog training programs in prisons have been shown to be good for both inmates and dogs and result in inmates having increased patience, impulse control, and emotional control (Britton and Button 2005; Furst 2007). Power (2008) emphasized the complexity and reciprocity of the relationship and argues that humans and nonhumans are involved in "furry families", where dogs constantly change positions from children, to pack members, and to individuals. In these families/packs, the "otherness" of nonhuman animals—their different needs and habits—can both strengthen family bonds and be a source of conflict.

Human organization has demonstrated consequences for pets and vice versa. The strong bond between pets and their owners has begun to affect veterinarians' work practices—for example, coping with the emotional reactions of bereaved pet owners is one of a veterinarian's duties (Morris 2012; see also Rollin 1986; Sanders 1994). Furthermore, as Stephens and Hill (1996) have shown, pets' roles in human lives are emphasized when pets pass away. Studies have also focused on the impact on owners when pets are lost in natural disasters, mass emergencies, and fires (Heath et al. 2000; Brackenridge et al. 2005; Campbell 2007; Irvine 2007; Zottarelli 2010). These studies call for better evacuation guidelines for pets, not least

because humans often return to dangerous situations to save pets. Human ownership of nonhuman animals also renders pets vulnerable to economic crises, such as when pet relinquishment increased in the US during the crisis in 2008 (Morris and Steffler 2011).

In summary, if researchers attempt to identify a single or a few functions that pets fulfill in human societies, they are bound to fail because of the complex way in which pets matter in humans' lives and because pets themselves actively contribute to human-pet relationships.<sup>13</sup> A strictly functional perspective on pet keeping is also problematic, as humans and other animals exist within cultural frameworks and problematic power structures that in turn condition the multiple forms of human-pet relationships.

### **Pets as Symbols**

Studies of pets as symbols explore the “grammar” of the pet phenomenon and analyze, for example, representations of pets in popular culture and humans' accounts of their pets. Berger (2009) stated that the popularity of pets as companions and the frequent use of animals as cultural symbols is a form of compensation for the lack of animals in the life of modern, urban humans (see also Burt 2001). According to Berger (2009: 24f; see also Burt 2005: 208f), pets constitute a certain type of representation: they are living beings but are simultaneously a creation of the pet owner in an effort to stabilize the privatized, anti-collectivistic family life typical of Western consumer society.<sup>14</sup> When pets are used as substitutes for the premodern proximity to nonhuman animals in human societies, Berger (2009) argues, it means the death of the metaphorical animal—humans are losing the possibility of an autonomous human identity by separating themselves from animals, as they have instead begun to identify with animals. However, as Jonathan Burt (2005: 212) noted, Berger's “overall pessimism” entails a deterministic perspective on the marginalization of nonhuman animals in the lives of humans. In Berger's perspective, Burt argues, nonhuman animals are rendered essentially passive in the exchange of symbols. In contrast, particularly in light of the last section, “Pets' social function,” it is clear that in one way humans and other animals are in greater proximity than ever before, as relationships with pets have become more widespread, more personal, and more highly valued (Thomas 1996; Franklin 2006; Fudge 2008).

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<sup>13</sup> See Serpell (1996: 67ff) for a critique of the functionalist view of pet keeping in anthropology.

<sup>14</sup> See also Lury (1992) for a discussion on the privatization of the family and Nast (2006b) for a further discussion of pets' place in this process.

Studies have shown that pets figure as symbols in different contexts and convey different meanings depending on the species or the breed, the owners' stance toward them, and wider representational frameworks in popular media and art (see, e.g., Nash 1989; Hirschman and Sanders 1997; Sheen 2005; Herzog 2006; Bettany and Daly 2008; Berland 2008; Weaver 2013). Individual animals can become symbols in the construction of humans' personal identities (Rossbach and Wilson 1992; Pycior 2005; Ramirez 2006; Hara 2007; Mutz 2010; Lawson 2011; Irvine et al. 2012; Maltzman et al. 2012). Furthermore, humans' pet-related practices contribute to human identity and humans' understanding of their pets, such as the naming of pets (Abel and Kruger 2007; Brandes 2012) and the representations of pets at pet cemeteries (Chalfen 2003; Brandes 2009).

Although many scholars who study pets' position in human identity construction are genuinely concerned for nonhuman animals as sentient beings (see, e.g., Lawson 2011; Irvine et al. 2012), the risk of a focus on the symbolic aspects of pets is that the sociological perspective on nonhuman animals is restricted so that nonhuman animals are only conceptualized as passive objects and means in human social practices. Studies that primarily regard pets as mirroring their human owners are analogous to studies of electronic and robot pets—in both research fields, nonhuman animals are viewed as mere passive surfaces for human identity ascription (see, e.g., Libin and Cohen-Mansfield 2004; Melson et al. 2009; Ruckenstein 2010). Some scholars have shifted focus from humans' use of animal representations to a critical examination of the consequences of these representations of pets—how certain representations make it possible to treat pets as consumption objects or superfluous and disposable (see, e.g., Beverland et al. 2008; Serpell 2009; Sollund 2011; Pires 2012; Shir-Vertesh 2012; Srinivasan 2013; Holmberg, unpublished). Weaver (2013) studied representations of so-called “pit bulls” to show the complex mutual process of “becoming in kind” in which owners are affected by the categorization of their dogs and vice versa. Related to the issue of problematic representations of pets are studies of how different representations of nonhuman animals allow them to be regarded as pets in some cultural contexts and food in others (Podberscek 2009; Abbots 2011).

When pets are viewed as symbols, it becomes possible to nuance understandings of their place in humans' lives and in wider cultural frameworks. Such a perspective can also be used to criticize the symbolic use of animals. The limitation of this perspective is that pets are regarded as essentially passive—either as symbols used by humans in popular culture or as victims of humans' objectifying representations. However, pets are also themselves actively engaged in social relations and affect social settings with their actions.

## Pets as Social Actors

Nonhuman animals are not only passive surfaces to which humans ascribe meaning, they also contribute to social production: identity construction, social relations, and the formation of social spaces. Some scholars have called for extended cooperation across the disciplinary boundaries of the natural sciences on the one hand and the social sciences and the humanities on the other to develop approaches to human-non-human relations (see, e.g., Haraway and Potts, 2010, and Haraway, 2011a, on *zooethnography*; McHugh, 2011: 211ff on *narrative ethology*; Herman, 2012, on *zoonarratology*; and Irvine, 2012, on *anthrozoology*). Studies in the natural sciences have to some extent regarded pets as subjects, or in other ways shown an interest in pets themselves. For instance, veterinary scholars have demonstrated that the human-pet relationship has health benefits not only for the human but also for the pet (Serpell 1996: 120). There is also extensive research on animal cognition focusing on pets. These studies generally aim to show that nonhuman animals kept as pets have a “theory of mind,” that is, they are able to think about other beings’ thoughts. One example is Nagasawa et al.’s (2011) study of dogs’ ability to distinguish different human facial expressions. Another example is Kaminski et al. (2012), who have shown that dogs are more prone to steal food in a dark kitchen, presumably because they believe that they are more likely to avoid detection.

While interdisciplinary studies expand the understanding of human-animal interactions, the natural sciences are not always necessary to understand human-pet interaction and pets’ subjectivity. Many scholars interested in pets as social actors have developed interactionist perspectives—symbolic interactionist perspectives in particular—to include nonhuman actors, arguing that nonhuman animals possess a form of self in the Meadian sense and are minded actors (Konecki 2005; see also Irvine 2004b; Sanders 2007). As humans and their pets often live together for an extended period of time, Franklin et al. (2007) emphasize that personal human-animal relationships have a *biography*. Pet keepers are therefore often aware of their nonhuman animals’ individual habits and modes of expression and have thus learnt to observe and understand their individual non-human companions.<sup>15</sup> An excessive reliance on the natural sciences when investigating human-animal relations runs the risk that researchers will neglect the impact of social structures on humans and other animals. In his studies of humans’ relationships with their dogs, the sociologist Clinton R.

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<sup>15</sup> There are also indications in behavioral science that naïve observers are skilled at assessing farm animals’ expressions in similar ways (see, e.g., Wemelsfelder et al. 2000, 2001).

Sanders (1990, 1993, 1995; see also Arluke and Sanders 1996: 65f) has shown that pets are often ascribed personhood. According to Sanders (1995: 209), pets “exist in the liminal position between the socially constructed categories of person/being and that of nonperson/object.” The “person” side of the nonperson/person divide should not be underestimated—Sanders argues based on his studies that pets can become “Others” to their owners in Mead’s sense. Accordingly, when humans speak for animals, it is not simply an expression of naïve anthropomorphism but a way for humans to make sense of nonhumans’ actions and understand them better. Sanders (1993, 2003) furthermore emphasized the importance of play and mutual gaze in meaningful interaction across species’ borders. Similarly, Irvine (Irvine 2004a: 17) argued that because nonhuman animals contribute to humans’ selfhood, they must be considered subjective others and not merely objects for “wishful anthropomorphic projection.” Pets are not symbols for persons—they are persons in their own right.

Several studies combine a microsociological analysis with a discussion of broader structural frameworks circumscribing relationships between humans and pets (Sanders 1995; Arluke and Sanders 1996; Irvine 2004a, 2004b). Taking structural aspects of pet keeping into consideration is crucial because pets are constituted under certain relational and structural conditions (Wrye 2009). Scholars have demonstrated pets’ (especially dogs’ and cats’) influence in the politics of public spaces (Wolch and Rowe 1992; Patterson 2002; Holmberg 2011a, forthcoming), in the creation of “posthumanist households” (Smith 2003, see also Smith 2005; Fox 2006; Franklin 2006), and in the formation of local cultures (Alger and Alger 1999). Some studies have focused on the embodied aspects of these relations. Holmberg (2008, 2011b) for example focused on the bodily aspect of human-animal interaction between experimenters and laboratory animals to show how some mice tend to cross the border between anonymous laboratory mouse and fellow being (or companion animal).<sup>16</sup>

When pets are studied as social actors, it becomes possible to understand how they actively contribute to the construction of social relations and identities. Such a perspective also recognizes the embodied aspects of the relationship, in contrast to a symbolic perspective on pet keeping. Nevertheless, studies of pets as social actors may risk an all too narrow focus on physical interactions between humans and nonhuman animals, thus ignoring the social structures framing the relationship and the hierarchization of humans

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<sup>16</sup> For further elaborations on the embodied aspect of human-animal relations, see Shapiro’s (1990) notion of *kinesthetic empathy* and Acampora’s (2006: 76) term *symphysis*.

and other animals more or less subtly affecting the relationship. Therefore, all three aspects—the functional, the symbolic, and the interactional or relational—are necessary when exploring the powers of pet keeping.

## **A Critical Posthumanist Sociology of Pets**

Based on my discussion concerning previous pet research, I have suggested that it is possible to both recognize pets as actors while simultaneously considering the social structures framing human-pet relationships (cf. Arluke and Sanders 1996: 57). Pets have social functions and are put to symbolic use, but their preferences, needs, actions, and biological disposition also affect the functions and symbolic properties they can come to possess. A study seeking to explore pets' places in human lives must thus take all three aspects—functional, symbolic, and relational (or interactional)—into consideration. For sociological studies of pet keeping, it is especially urgent to take structural aspects into consideration because, as I showed earlier in this chapter, the sociological discipline itself rests on problematic preconceptions of the notions of human and animal.

I subscribe to Heidi J. Nast's (2006a, see also 2006b) definition of *critical pet studies*. She suggests that critical pet studies could become an expansive field of social scientific research studying how humans live with pets, as well as to “show how global inequalities are implicated in the geographical, discursive, economic, political, cultural and/or psychical ways that pet love is made meaningful” (Nast 2006a: 902). Nast (2006a) regards Foucault's theoretical and methodological framework as an ideal approach for studying pets because of its capacity to map the genealogy of social objects: “For him, pet love would be seen as an effect of larger social, political, economic, and material-geographical processes” (Nast 2006a: 897). The Foucauldian perspective includes skepticism toward the notion of an autonomous human—or nonhuman—subject. Both human and nonhuman subjects are constituted by shared relational and structural conditions. Informed by Cary Wolfe (2010: 117ff), I regard animal studies as a *posthumanist* field of research that allows for both a critique of the humanist notion of the autonomous and rational subject and broadening the object of study in the humanities and social sciences to include nonhuman animals.<sup>17</sup> For Wolfe, these two aspects of posthumanism cross-fertilize each other: a critique of the humanist notion of the subject will imply a destabilization of the distinction between human subjects and animal ob-

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<sup>17</sup> More precisely, Wolfe (2010: 126) speaks of the type of posthumanist approach that succeeds in criticizing both anthropocentrism and the humanist notion of the subject as *posthuman posthumanism*.

jects, and a critique of anthropocentrism in the sciences will entail a critique of the traditional notion of the human subject. While a critique of the autonomous, rational subject is central to the sociological project, I agree with Wolfe and recognize the need for the dual critique he advances—a critique that can also enrich the broader sociological understanding of the subject.

A critical<sup>18</sup> posthumanist sociology of pets takes both humans' and pets' interests into consideration. Pets are “made” in the context of humans' affection for and domination of other animals (Tuan 1984). Because human-animal relations are often fundamentally hierarchical, Lynda Birke (2009: 1) emphasizes that studies of nonhuman animals should always persist in asking: “What’s in it for the animals? How could/might they benefit? Do they?” This is important in relation to both physical encounters across species' borders and broader normative frameworks. Because nonhuman animals are affected by the way humans categorize the world, categories always carry with them an ethical dimension that cannot be neglected in sociological discussions. The descriptive is political.

In this thesis, I acknowledge that human subjectivity, nonhuman subjectivity, and the relations between humans and other animals are emergent phenomena, continuously produced, rather than merely existing due to a human or animal essence. To do so, I will consider pets as co-constructors of relations, identities, social structures, and normative frameworks. Yet, this is not a thesis in ethology—I do not focus on observations of human and nonhuman behavior and interaction. Instead, I adopt a critical posthumanist sociology of pets—I use traditional social science methods such as text analysis and interviews to demonstrate that in accounts of pets and pet keeping, pets themselves appear not only as sentient beings but also as minded actors. Texts and speech concerning pets are only intelligible if regarded as stemming from the lives shared between humans and

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<sup>18</sup> Steve Best (2009: 12) emphasizes that a critical animal studies researcher “supports civil disobedience, direct action, and economic sabotage.” Best (2009: 26) contrasts such a scholar with “[s]cholars pursuing animal studies [who] typically seem concerned far more about academic opportunism and exploiting new forms of cultural capital than about abolishing the barbaric institutions and mindsets of human supremacism, species apartheid, and animal exploitation.” I do not necessarily regard engaging in political acts of civil disobedience to be a sociologist's duty. Rather, the results of critical research can demand political action or inaction depending on which power structures are identified by the critical analysis. I use the word “critical” to emphasize the need to (a) not only empirically describe pet keeping but also map out the power structures making it possible and (b) underline the need for studies of pet keeping seriously taking nonhuman animals' position in society and their interests into consideration.

pets, as if pets had marked the accounts with their traces. In the next chapter, I will further discuss the methodological issues of a critical posthumanist sociology of pets.



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## Staying with the Trouble: Methodological Concepts and Considerations

In this chapter, I will describe and discuss the rationale for my methodological approach—genealogical discourse analysis—and discuss how I apply this approach when conducting interviews and analyzing text and speech. I regard text and speech as productive: written and spoken words do not simply mirror the world, but shape it. The world only becomes intelligible by means of meaning-making practices. These practices also have normative effects—they not only produce and transform the world but also create expectations regarding how it should be organized. Therefore, power and knowledge are intimately related. My perspective also implies a close connection between epistemology and ontology: there is no truth that precedes meaning-making practices taking place in a lived reality. Genealogy is an elaborate methodology that includes both methodological tools for gathering data and analysis and a set of theoretical concepts and standpoints concerning linguistic exchanges, subjectivity, norms, and social structure. In this chapter, I will discuss abstract theoretical issues pertaining to researching humans and other animals, and more specific questions concerning method. The first section presents the genealogical perspective and its conceptual framework, followed by a section on how methodological tools principally developed for studying human meaning-making practices can be applied to the study of more-than-human contexts. Finally, I describe and discuss the research process in greater detail in three succeeding sections: “Data”, “Analysis”, and “Reflexivity”.

While I delve into the details of poststructuralist theory and methodology in this chapter, I am guided more generally by Donna Haraway’s (2011a, 2012a, 2012b) exhortation to *stay with the trouble*. To stay with the trouble is to refuse a methodological exclusion of certain potential actors or types of data. Staying with the trouble means following the different threads running from the original troubling insight. This means that for the sake of keeping the analysis manageable and the presentation comprehensive, some threads will necessarily have to be ignored in favor of others. Yet, staying with the trouble implies a preparedness to consider the cultural, economic, political, normative, and historical frameworks, as well as the material frames, governing both humans and animals involved in intra-action. Staying with the trouble includes considering the interests of the involved beings and not recoiling when one realizes one’s own involvement in and shared responsibility for, the trouble in question. Haraway (2012a: 313) writes:

Each time I trace a tangle and add a few threads that first seemed whimsical but turned out to be essential to the fabric, I get a bit straighter that staying with the trouble of complex worlding is the name of the game of living and dying well together on terra.

Staying with the trouble thus also has an ethical dimension. The whole thesis can be understood as an example of staying with the trouble because I have chosen to study different types of data—theoretical texts, popular texts, TV, interviews, and observation—to map out the logics of pet keeping. In line with a critical posthumanist sociology of pets, I also take both the productive and destructive aspects of pet keeping into consideration and recognize the ethical aspect of the powers of pet keeping. The use of multiple methods is often called triangulation, and Taylor (2001b) recommends it as a fruitful approach in discourse analysis. Discourse analysis does not posit the existence of an external, objective truth for researchers to disclose; instead, there are multiple ways of perceiving the world that are continuously produced and negotiated. Therefore, triangulation—and staying with the trouble—should not be understood as a way to move “closer to” or “deeper into” reality but as a means of creating a more nuanced way of understanding of the multifaceted production of reality. Even if it is impossible to provide a completely inclusive and objective account of “the world”, there are better and worse approaches to making sense of it. I am thus convinced that staying with the trouble is a better approach than staying out of it.

### **Genealogical Methodology**

As Carabine (2001: 276) highlights, genealogy is more of a methodology than a method. Foucault avoided writing step-by-step instructions to guide other researchers in their own work, which is rather reasonable: it is difficult to imagine that precisely identical methods can be used to analyze contemporary pet keeping and the emergence of the modern prison system (even if there are some overlaps, as I show in Study IV). In this section, I will present the genealogical approach.

Foucauldian genealogy is an ideal methodological approach for staying with the troubling nature of complex phenomena. Genealogy literally means the tracing of family lineages. In Foucauldian genealogical analysis, which falls under the discourse analysis umbrella, the lineage one is tracing is the kinship between different ways of making sense of the world, both historically and in a contemporary context. Genealogy traces relations between ways of sense-making to not only describe a certain phenomenon by means of empirical analysis but also to trace the logic making the stud-

ied phenomenon possible. Furthermore, genealogy explores the kinship between power and knowledge: how, for some realities to emerge and be maintained, other realities must be assimilated, neglected, or rejected. A genealogy can have a historical focus on how a certain concept or institution has developed, affected by and affecting a larger social and political context (see Carabine 2001). A genealogical study can also have a contemporary focus. Butler, in her reading of Foucault, understands genealogy as the study of the “constitutive and exclusionary relations of power through which contemporary discursive resources are formed” (Butler 1993: 227; see also Foucault 1984b: 45f; Rose 1999: 11). The past is an aspect of this formation, but there is also thus a complex contemporary set of power/knowledge relations that genealogical studies need to take into consideration. This thesis adopts such a contemporary focus on the genealogy of pet keeping.

I use the Foucauldian notion of *discourse* to refer to the totality of all utterances and meaningful actions:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. (Foucault 2002: 131)

When talking and acting, one always talks and acts against the background of discourse, and discourse enables meaningful talk and action. It is also possible to speak of discourse in the plural—the word can also be used to designate a specific set of utterances connected to a specific context (see Foucault 2002: 120f; 144f; see also Hall 2001). Pet keeping can be regarded as a *discursive formation* consisting of several discourses, such as discussions concerning pets’ place in the family, their dietary needs, behavioral shaping, neutering and spaying, euthanasia, and so on.

For Foucault (1977: 27, see also 1978: 92; Hall 2001), “power produces knowledge.” Social relations and practices allow some realities to be thinkable, while other realities are rendered unthinkable. Pet keeping is a strong example of the entanglement of power and knowledge. Many pet owners readily eat meat produced under cruel conditions, while it is for them unthinkable to kill, cook, and eat the family dog. It is therefore possible to study pet keeping as a power/knowledge dynamic and to tease out the knowledge and relations that make pet keeping meaningful and possible. Foucault’s perspective is in line with “the linguistic turn”—a general understanding of language that emerged during the twentieth century, em-

phasizing humans' understandings of the world, or reality, as dependent on meaning-making practices with an emphasis on linguistic exchanges (see, e.g., Saussure 1959; Potter 1996; Kress 2001; Wittgenstein 2001, especially §60–§74). Speech is, according to this perspective, continuously contributing to the construction of reality—speech is fundamentally *performative* (Butler 1990, 1993; see also Potter 1996:11, 2001: 45).

In line with Butler (see, e.g., 1990, 1991, 2009; see also Birke et al. 2004), I regard the reproduction of discursive frameworks as a performative act, where beings draw on existing discourses to maintain or contest a mutually accomplished reality. According to Butler (2009: 75, 149f), patterns of discursive reproduction construct both epistemological and ethical *normative frameworks*—epistemological in the sense that they bring meaning to a shared existence and ethical in the sense that they guide value-laden actions. While all interaction relies on existing normative frameworks, each use of language draws on different discourses and is thus only an imperfect repetition of the norm, with the potential to disrupt and renegotiate normative frameworks (Butler 2009: 10, 24). I regard the notion of discursive formation as broader than normative frameworks. For example, even if a stockbroker often uses normative language, the stock market can be regarded as a discursive formation that to a large extent consists of discursive exchanges of numbers and technical terms that are not apparently normative (even if these exchanges have very palpable consequences in individuals' everyday lives). Butler (2009) speaks in terms of *framing* when she discusses how different normative frameworks affect different beings, especially in relation to grief. A being, according to Butler (see, e.g., 2004: 20f, 2009: 75), is framed as grievable when it is given a certain position in relation to the broader norms that circumscribe individual and collective identity. A grievable being is regarded as a part of a human “we”, while beings framed as un-grievable are regarded as living unlivable, lose-able lives—lives that were “never lived nor lost in the full sense” (Butler 2009: 1).

Discourse analysis, including genealogy, does not generally reject the notion of reality. I agree when Foucault (Foucault and Fontana 1988: 51) states, “I believe too much in truth not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth.” To say that reality is constituted by language is to say that “[r]eality enters into human practices by way of the categories and descriptions that are part of these practices” (Potter 1996: 98; see also Edwards et al. 1995). Making sense of how language constitutes reality is thus itself a linguistic practice, relying on existing discourse. Discourse analytic research is as a consequence a discourse about discourses (Wetherell 2001). All genealogical mappings are therefore

doomed to be provisional because there is no single description that would suffice. Yet, it is possible for a researcher drawing on a genealogical approach to use language to reorder the discourse to bring out patterns of compliances and resistances not visible at the first reading. Similarly, the isolation of a normative framework is ultimately a construction of the researcher, created to shed light on the productive relation between power and knowledge pertaining to a certain theme. Genealogy avoids a dependence on an objective truth beyond or disclosed behind what the texts actually say. It focuses on the trouble present in the studied texts, rather than, for example, a psychoanalytic or hermeneutic attempt to disclose the authors' original intentions. In defense of this type of discourse analysis, Rose (1999: 57) writes: "Against interpretation [...] I advocate superficiality, an empiricism of the surface, of identifying the differences in what is said, how it is said, and what allows it to be said and to have an effectivity." I will return to the issue of genealogy's knowledge claims at the end of this chapter when I discuss research reflexivity.

### **Nonhuman Subjectivity**

It may seem that genealogy, with its focus on linguistic exchanges, is an insufficient approach when exploring social contexts involving nonhuman animals. Yet, as I will argue in this section, genealogy can be a powerful approach to study human relations with other animals. I will approach this question by discussing genealogy's notion of subjectivity in relation to Haraway's *material-semiotics*, a concept that "emphasizes the absolute simultaneity of materiality and semiosis" (Haraway and Goodeve 2000: 137; see also Haraway 1991, 2008b).

Nonhuman animals create trouble in an anthropocentric and logocentric research context. As Kari Weil notes, "those who constitute the objects of animal studies cannot speak for themselves, or at least they cannot speak any of the languages that the academy recognizes as necessary for such self-representation" (Weil 2012: 4). Nonhuman animals may have subjectivity, but it is forever concealed from humans, who only can conceive of the world using their human language. In the words of Wittgenstein (2001: 190): "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him [sic]." Or to paraphrase Spivak (1988: 287), the nonhuman has no history and cannot

speak—the nonhuman is not considered a voice in “human” society.<sup>19</sup> There are no conventions for “listening” to nonhuman animals to understand them and adjust to their needs. Yet, as Jean Baudrillard (1994: 129f) maintains, laboratory animals are currently violently forced to “confess” their animality in experiments seeking to map out an animal essence that humans share with other animals. Humans readily “listen” to nonhumans as objects but are more hesitant to listen to them as subjects.

The broader distinction between nature and culture is one of the obstacles to including nonhuman animals in social analysis.<sup>20</sup> As Latour (1993, 2004) has made clear, humans do not consider animals as spokespersons because the moderns have drawn a distinct line between the natural sphere of things existing “out there” for humans to discover and culture, or society, which has been created by human hands (Latour 2004, see, e.g., 4, 14, 45). According to Latour, “we have never been modern” (1993, see, e.g., 46) because nothing is essentially “natural” or “cultural”. There are at least two ways that this distinction neglects nonhuman animals’ impact on the social world. First, nonhuman forces constitute, shape, or obstruct social processes, challenging the limits of “the social” itself. The converse is also true—social organization often sets the conditions for nonhumans’ existence and actions (see Mitchell 2002: 28f). Because nonhuman animals “speak”, they can also “intervene in their own representations” (Hayward, 2010: 584). For example, whales are affected by human regulations concerning whaling. Their movements across maritime nation state borders also generate political conflicts when they leave a nation that advocates a ban on whale hunting for a nation that embraces the practice (Blok 2007). However, this is not the only way whales affect a human, or rather more-than-human, society. In an analysis of representations of whales, Hayward (2011) discerns that with recordings of whale songs, as well as the photographs of whales that are proliferated in science and popular culture, whales’ reach into the human attention span is extended, and whales have thus unintentionally appropriated this technology that in a way helps them

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<sup>19</sup> Communication between humans and other animals can take forms resembling human language. Members of nonhuman primate species use aspects of human language to communicate. Bonobos, for example, speak in this manner, which in turn challenges the distinction between human and nonhuman language and culture (Segerdahl et al. 2005; Segerdahl 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Lidskog (2001) notes that while nature occupied a central place in the theoretical constructions of Weber, Marx, and Durkheim, nature only played a marginal role in their analyses.

to help themselves.<sup>21</sup> Second, nonhuman animals are consciously involved in social settings. Pets adjust to humans and vice versa to be able to engage with each other in play, training, or when out taking a walk. Nonhuman animals also learn from their interactions with humans. Thus, to Latour's statement, posthumanists add, "we have never been human"—both because humans are animal beings and nonhuman animals constantly intervene in what humans conceive of as *human* society, both unintentionally and intentionally (Mendieta 2003; Gareau 2005; Haraway and Gane 2006; Haraway 2008b: 165).

Methodologically, I believe it is important to be attentive to the way nonhumans and material processes affect social reproduction. Yet, there is a methodologically important difference between animals who themselves socially adjust to other creatures around them and animals who are incapable of such adjustments. A dog can be formed by a training paradigm and act accordingly; a "soul" in the Foucauldian sense can be produced around, on, and within the body of a dog (cf. Foucault 1977: 29). One can ascribe such a soul to a mosquito, but I am doubtful whether it is meaningful to talk of a mosquito adjusting to normative frameworks or other discursive formations in the same way in which one could say of a dog. A genealogical analysis must devote special attention to beings that can participate in social contexts because such beings are endowed with subjectivity, which in turn has consequences for the social relations of which they

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<sup>21</sup> This first point is similar to that of actor-network theory (ANT): nonhumans affect what humans typically conceive of as "human" society, rendering society more-than-human—or what Latour (2004, 2005) calls a *collective*. The term "non-human" as used in ANT nevertheless risks overemphasizing the difference between humans and other animals—with the term "nonhuman" (rather than nonhuman animals), nonhuman animals are grouped with material non-sentient objects, while humans remain on the other side of the divide. Whatmore and Thorne (2000: 202) similarly criticized "the too often flat political and moral landscapes of ANT" because of its inability to take into consideration "the situatedness of radically different kinds of subjects within [...] networks." An example of such a problematic distinction between humans and nonhumans within ANT is Blok's (2007) study of whales. Blok argues that humans regularly become spokespersons for whales—humans transform whales into political subjects, rather than natural resources, which transforms whales' movements across maritime national borders into political actions. Yet, the very notion of mediation reinforces a dichotomy between nature and culture, where the expressions of natural objects need to be translated into cultural terms to make sense to human beings (cf. Latour 1993: 10f, 2004: 70). ANT thus risks ignoring the role of subjectivity in the reproduction and contestation of "the collective".

are a part. Which nonhuman animals can be said to participate in a social context is an empirical question.<sup>22</sup>

An elaboration on genealogy's notion of subjectivity is necessary to specify the role of subjectivity in more-than-human social processes. Genealogy regards the production of subjectivity as simultaneously physical and discursive, which bridges the gap between biological "natural" bodies and "cultural" souls (Foucault 1977, 1982). Genealogy does therefore not make an ontological distinction between different meaning-making practices; neither does the approach demand an essential difference between material and discursive processes (see Foucault 1981: 69; Carabine 2001).<sup>23</sup> Genealogy therefore does not exclude nonhuman subjectivities and sociality because, as with human subjectivity and sociality, semantic processes are not easily separable from material processes. Foucault (1977), in his analysis of the emergence of the modern prison system, showed that both educational interventions and bodily discipline contributed to a reproduction of society within the bodies of the prisoners. According to Foucault, the disciplining process was not a matter of forcing inmates to internalize social norms; instead, the repetitious acts that produced *docile bodies* (Foucault 1977: 138) also created an impression of the prisoners as civilized and orderly subjects—what Foucault speaks of as a *soul*. Disciplining processes thus produce a soul "around, on, [and] within the body" (Foucault 1977: 29; see also Butler 1989). Subjects actively adjust to norms by what they do and what they say to become intelligible to themselves and others as *objects of knowledge* (Foucault 1977: 28).

To act in a way meaningful to ourselves and others, beings need to act in relation to existing norms. These norms act upon subjects as an inhibiting power but also enable beings to act socially. Power is thus productive: it makes relationships possible, organizes relationships, and determines our

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<sup>22</sup> This matter is touched upon in studies III and IV when I discuss pet owners' accounts of pets who are not regarded as persons, such as some fish, birds, snakes, and lizards. I also discuss the risks of rejecting the possibility of nonhuman subjectivity too hastily in Study I. When I stress that it is an empirical question whose subjectivity to take into consideration, I am informed by Latour's notion of *experimental metaphysics* (Latour 2004, see, e.g., 72, 123, 204). Latour holds that humans should avoid the temptation to permanently exclude the interests of some categories of beings when attempting to shape society—or the *collective*—to serve its members' needs.

<sup>23</sup> In contrast, critical discourse analysis distinguishes between material conditions and discursive production (Van Dijk 2001; Wetherell 2001). This makes it possible to establish a causal relationship between the two, but the approach is not as useful regarding phenomena that are not clearly either material or discursive—which from my material-semiotic perspective is true for most phenomena.

understanding of them—as Foucault (1977: 27, see also 1978: 92, 1982) famously says, “power produces knowledge.” Power, as Foucault uses the notion, is twofold. According to Foucault (1978: 139; see also 1982), a “bipolar technology” of regulatory biopower and disciplinary power organizes social life. *Disciplinary power* is a broad system of surveillance and educational institutions, both formal and informal (Foucault 1977: 302f). *Biopower* denotes the knowledge and techniques used to create, support, and improve life on both a personal level and a societal, statistical level (Foucault 1978: 140ff). To be a subject, according to Foucault, is to incorporate both disciplinary and biopower norms (Foucault 2003: 253). Power thus operates abstractly on normative frameworks, and “it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force, bearing on material elements” (Foucault 1977: 26).

In Foucault’s writing, subjection to disciplinary and biopower norms primarily consists in gaining a “soul” that resonates with the ideals of humanism (Foucault 1977: 28). However, in the case of nonhuman animals, this view needs to be revised somewhat. Nonhuman animals can contribute to the production of a shared humanist human identity, for example when humans identify as human by treating animals humanely (see McAllister Groves 2001; Lundblad 2012). Yet, the type of soul produced around, on, and within nonhuman bodies is not necessarily a human soul, although they are sometimes subject to anthropomorphization. In embodied interaction across species, humans and nonhumans adjust their behavior to each other—they become “partners-in-the-making through active relations of coshaping” (Haraway 2008b: 208). Here, human language often plays a seemingly small role. Haraway discusses such practices where meaning and matter meet in terms of *material-semiotics*, a concept that “emphasizes the absolute simultaneity of materiality and semiosis” (Haraway and Goodeve 2000: 137). For Foucault, subjects are constituted when their embodied actions are played out in relation to broader discursive formations. Just as genealogy does not necessarily distinguish between linguistic and embodied or in other ways material processes, Haraway (2008b: 32) argues that individual beings “do not preexist their constitutive intra-action.” Beings are always inscribed by and produce meaning in relation to other meaning producers. Their very boundaries as objects are formed only in relation to other material-semiotic entities (Haraway 1991, 2008b). In the pet-human relationship, humans’ linguistic production, normative frameworks, embodied interaction, and nonhuman animals’ interests and needs meet in the same *material-semiotic knot* (Haraway 2008b).

An example may illustrate the interconnected production of human and nonhuman subjectivities: Haraway (2000) has drawn on Foucault to iden-

tify a strong historical, political, and material connection between canine and human pedagogy. Ivan Pavlov's dog feeding experiments were intended to explore general learning mechanisms and ultimately psychological development in humans. Dogs' bodies were made into docile objects of knowledge used to develop pedagogical tools to make docile human bodies. Furthermore, dogs were, and still are, bred with respect to their behavioral traits, so both materially and semiotically, "culture is inscribed in animals through the process of domestication" (Jerolmack 2007: 74). Behaviorism has become a part of a larger biopower rationale, according to which deviant behavior is widely understood as something that is learned and can be unlearned—both in human education and dog training. Dogs and humans have been enrolled in the development of both dog training and human education, and both dogs and humans are affected by their consequences. Dogs are thus materially-semiotically involved in a mutual production of subjectivity—as well as humanity and caninity—enabled by the productive friction between different kinds of beings and ways of being. As Haraway expresses it: "If dogs are a human technology, so also is the reverse true, as part of an extended phenotype in a canine sociobiological tale" (2003: 308, see also 2008b: 262). Dogs provide humans, and humans provide dogs, with what Haraway speaks of as *significant otherness* (Haraway 2003: 7f, 25, 2008b: 72). Donna Haraway notes that dogs are not only companion animals but a *companion species*: dogs have been humans', as well as many other species', companions throughout their evolutionary and cultural history (see, e.g., 2003: 5, 11f, 28, 2004: 300, 2008b: 57).

When comparing Foucault and Haraway, both have a productive notion of power, although Haraway emphasizes the active and creative aspects of being entwined in material-semiotic knots to a greater extent. Furthermore, both regard networks of knowledge (or semiosis, with Haraway) as constitutive of subjects. Yet, while Foucault emphasizes human subjects, Haraway underscores that nonhuman animals are also relationally constituted as subjects to normative frameworks. Haraway (2008a: 178) contends that nonhuman animals, from humans' point of view, have an "'otherworldly' subject status." A third important comparison is that they both emphasize that the reproduction of norms and knowledge is embodied to a large extent. This means that nonhuman animals are not excluded from discursive reproduction merely because they lack language. In this thesis, I adopt a genealogical, material-semiotic approach to speech and other actions produced in relation to human-pet relationships, structuring such relationships in specific ways and associating such relationships with specific values and ideals. I do not develop a comprehensive theory or method in this thesis for

studying human-animal interaction. Neither do I develop a way of investigating nonhumans' experiences of the world to speculate about what it is like to be a pet (cf. Nagel 1974)—a nonhuman hermeneutics or phenomenology.<sup>24</sup> Instead, I emphasize the need to take nonhuman animals into account when studying the effect and reproduction of normative frameworks. Nonhuman animals affect the formation and reproduction of these frameworks. An aspect of such formation and reproduction is the production of nonhuman subjectivities, that is, nonhuman ways of being in a normative context.

The studies in this thesis focus on text and speech produced by humans. The thesis itself consist of text produced by a human—me—and by extension the persons who have helped me in various ways, the authors of the texts cited, and the interviewees whose accounts I draw on in my analyses. In other words, I produce a discourse on the subject of other discourses—text about texts. Where are the nonhuman animals in my writing? I believe that Haraway (2003: 21) perfectly pinpoints the problem of anthropocentrism in academic writing on human-non-human relations when she discusses her attempt to map out the relations between dogs and humans: “I tell stories about stories, all the way down. Woof.” As a genealogical researcher, I compulsively tell stories about stories, creating discourses about discourses—and there are both human and nonhuman animals involved in the stories I study and tell. While I am the author of this thesis, I take pains to emphasize the “woof” in the written text: nonhuman animals affect my writing and the results of my studies, despite that the studies focus on text and talk. There are two ways in which nonhuman animals themselves figure into all four studies. First, nonhuman animals matter because a problematization of the human/animal dichotomy may counter destructive practices and benefit not only humans but also other animals. Second, nonhuman animals are present in the text despite humans being the “authors” of the studied texts and speech (cf. Foucault 1984a). Just as nonhumans affect social organization, nonhumans affect the humans that write and talk about them.

As I have argued in this section, I perceive two ways in which nonhumans are involved in social organization as crucial sociological analyses of more-than-human societies. On the one hand, nonhuman animals con-

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<sup>24</sup> Uexküll (1957: 6) adopted such a phenomenological notion of subjectivity and speaks of nonhuman subjectivities as “worlds of wonders.” For him, to understand nonhuman animals' involvement in and experience of the world—their *Umwelt*—humans need to picture the world from nonhuman animals' perspectives and explore their “different worlds, worlds which are as manifold as the animals themselves” (Uexküll 1957: 6).

stantly affect or in various ways have an influence on what are often spoken of as “human” societies. On the other hand, nonhuman animals directly intervene in social contexts, interact with humans, adjust to others, and thus take on behaviors or modes of existence required by the context in which they act. Such modes of existence are what I call nonhuman subjectivities in a Foucauldian sense. In the following two sections, I address the specific way I used genealogy when gathering and analyzing the data.

## Data

Discourse analysis is the analysis of texts (written or spoken). When an empirical material has been selected based on the analyst’s conceptualizations and theoretical considerations, distinguished from a broader discursive context, and transcribed if necessary, the material can be considered a set of data, that is, an empirical material circumscribed and prepared for analysis (see Taylor 2001a). The word “data” may be associated with a traditional empiricist perspective, where the world is regarded as consisting of neatly ordered pieces of information existing independently of the observer, ready to be collected. In contrast, discourse analysis treats data as a product of the analyst’s active engagement with texts. The word “data” also emphasizes that the conclusions drawn are based on the analyzed data rather than creative interpretations of a reality behind or beyond the data—an issue I will return to in the next section. In this section I will further discuss the considerations leading to the choice of data, as well as their collection, used in the studies.

To develop an understanding of the various discourses permeating pet keeping, I began my work on this thesis by attending pet exhibitions, reading magazines and news articles, and watching TV-shows related to the subject. I also relied on my personal knowledge from spending time with pet owners, horses, cats, and dogs. This helped me to make an informed choice when selecting data. To stay with the trouble of pet keeping, I collected and analyzed theoretical texts that included encounters with domestic animals, dog handbooks, TV shows, and interviews with pet keepers. I have in this way been able to study how pet keeping is simultaneously produced in various sites, both abstractly and in individuals’ everyday lives.

I began with Study I because I had noted that human identity is defined in relation to “the animal”, both in philosophical discussions and in everyday talk. I found Emmanuel Lévinas’ phenomenology of the face especially interesting because his philosophical approach can be used to argue for the existence of both sociality and ethical responsibility across species’ borders. Nevertheless, there is a reoccurring use of an abstract notion of the animal in his work. For Study I, I chose some of Lévinas’ most central texts related

to his notion of the face and included secondary literature on the subject with a particular focus on nonhuman animals. I also attempted to include the greatest diversity of perspectives possible, including for example scholars of philosophy, literature, and sociology, with the aim of adding as much nuance to my initial understanding of Lévinas as possible—so that my prejudices were “brought into play” (Gadamer 2004: 304).

The inspiration for Study II was the popular literature on dog training. In these books, hands-on advice is combined with life lessons reminiscent of the language of self-help books, indicating that there are diverse powers and knowledges at play in dog training books. The professional dog trainer César Millan, for example, in the dedication of his book *Be the Pack Leader* writes, “if we can change our own lives and become better pack leaders to our dogs, to our families, and to ourselves, then together we can change the world” (Millan and Peltier: 2007: v). The quote is a blend of the human/animal dichotomy, enlightenment discourse, and heteronormativity and inspired me to continue to examine the normative frameworks of dog handbooks. The notion of focusing on Chihuahuas in particular stemmed from, on the one hand, the plethora of breed-specific handbooks on Chihuahua ownership on the market, and on the other, from the peculiar fixation with Chihuahuas in popular media. I chose Chihuahua handbooks that were internationally available, many of them from well-known publishers. I also wished to analyze representations of the Chihuahua in popular texts not immediately related to dog training, as I was interested in understanding whether the paradoxical representation of the Chihuahua is an intertextual phenomenon (which it very much turned out to be). I chose *The Simple Life* reality show because the overpopulation of Chihuahuas in the Western world—the Paris Hilton syndrome—is named after one of the two humans central to the program.

To study how the human-pet relation is created by humans and their pets in greater detail, as a third and final stage in my work on the thesis, I interviewed pet owners about their pets—why they keep them, what the pets’ characteristics are, what they do with their pets, and what a good life for a pet is like. I also asked the pet owners about experiences of losing pets (see Appendix A for the interview guide). The questions on pet loss gave rise to numerous and extensive accounts, and I decided to focus on these questions in Study III. Throughout the interviews, interviewees repeatedly touched on the issue of the power struggles between pet and owner. This resonated with my previously awakened interest in dog training and became the focus of Study IV. I interviewed eighteen owners living in Sweden, two of whom were a married couple I interviewed jointly. I conducted all of the interviews; they were recorded and subsequently tran-

scribed verbatim. The interviews lasted between one and two hours; most of them lasted for a little more than one hour, for a total of twenty-three hours of recorded speech. The visits focused on the interviews, but before and after the interview we would often talk for a while and the interviewees occasionally showed me around their homes.

To capture a variety of perspectives on pet keeping, I strove for a sample that included a variety of humans and other animals. As a result, interviewees varied by sex, relationship status (single or in a relationship, with or without children), location (rural or urban), occupation (unemployed, unqualified, or qualified), education, and country of birth (one person was born outside Sweden, two outside Europe) (see Appendix B for a list of interviewees). I used my personal network and pet owners' organizations to obtain recommendations for suitable interviewees. Choosing which types of pet owners to interview was difficult, as there is such a variety of different types of pets—both with respect to breed and species and the way pets are kept. Yet, as the notion of the pet is performed and negotiated, there was no point in attempting to stipulate a waterproof definition of “the pet” (Arluke and Sanders 1996: 12f; Wrye 2009; Peggs 2012: 77f). Instead, I remained attentive to how the interviewees used the word “husdjur” (pet) and thus stayed with the trouble of the diverse uses of the term. The sample included owners of dogs, cats, birds, fish, snakes and lizards, and a rat.<sup>25</sup> Cats and dogs are the most common pets. Dogs are interesting because owners regularly train them to not run away, obey certain commands, walk with a leash, and so on. Cats represent an interesting type of pet keeping for the opposite reason: there is a common understanding that cats refuse to be disciplined. I wanted to include a fish owner in the sample because fish are regarded as non-social and less intelligent than mammals, their lives are separated from humans by a glass wall, and their lives in water defy humans' “airycentric” perspective (Bull 2011b, see also 2011a: 121ff). I chose to include a snake owner in the study for similar reasons. Further, the substantial number of ophidiophobic individuals and that many of the snake owner's snakes were poisonous raised questions about what types of animals one can keep in the home for pleasure. I also included a rat and his owner, as rats problematize the pet/pest distinction—how can one keep an animal who is generally regarded as a nuisance as a companion? The two bird owners were chosen be-

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<sup>25</sup> All of these species are represented at Sweden's largest national fair for pet keepers and are thus officially attributed the status of “husdjur” (pets). However, again, there is no way to perfectly define what a pet is—the notion of the pet is a performative accomplishment.

cause they kept birds in very different manners. One had five birds and valued each individual bird highly. The other had approximately 150 birds, most of them pigeons. He had not named his birds and did not regard them as persons. This particular choice of interviewees and pets allowed for an analysis of how the same animal can be subjectified in different ways. The large-scale bird owner, as well as the fish owner and snake and lizard owner, in various ways challenged the stereotypical notion of “the pet”.

I wanted to conduct the interviews in the homes of the interviewees to be near the pets of whom we would be speaking. This was a means of keeping the focus of the conversation on the actual relations between the interviewed pet keepers and the pets in question, but it was also a result of an ethical consideration. Haraway (2008b: 70f) suggested that research on nonhuman animals should always be conducted in their proximity to ensure that they are not reduced from subjects to objects, from unique beings to members of a homogenous category. Greenhough and Roe (2010: 44), in their reading of Haraway, use the term *active copresencing*—by using a verb form of “presence” they emphasize that securing an ethical research relationship is always a continuous effort between beings. Holmberg and Ideland (2011: 24) touch on the same issue in a discussion of researching transgenic laboratory mice and their researchers. Holmberg and Ideland use the notion of *speaking nearby animals* to designate research conducted in the proximity of and with respect for the animals discussed. This is, according to Holmberg and Ideland (2011: 24), a way “to invite mice to crawl into discourse and create some noise” without claiming to speak *for* the mice or in other ways claim to represent their subjective experience of the world. An advantage of such an approach is that the researcher can recognize the presence of nonhuman animals in the research process without claiming to be able to speak for the nonhuman animals involved. I spoke nearby the pets by, for example, meeting them, observing them in the interview situation, and taking notes of their, as well as the interviewees’ and my, reactions to the situation. The pets’ presence forced both the owners and me to address the subject in an involved manner, constantly reminded of the actual beings about whom we were speaking. This concern was expressed, for example, when on several occasions owners began to speak with their pets when we touched on the subject of loss. I also noticed that I had difficulty discussing loss and grief with the pets present, especially during interviews with owners who spoke of their pets as persons. In studies III and IV, I only briefly discuss the observations I made during the interviews. Yet, observing the pets and owners together gave me a sense of the pets’ places in the lives of the owners. It also gave me insights concern-

ing the dynamics between them. One particularly interesting observation was that pets often disobeyed their owners' rules during my stay, for example by playing around roughly in the house, jumping on me, or growling at me or another pet. This demonstrated the everyday negotiations in the relations between pet and owner—a relation that is continuously developed rather than something that is established once and then maintained. Interviewers have a power advantage, not only over their interviewees' pets but also over their human interviewees, especially when they are also the ones who will analyze the data and write publications. I attempted to remediate this inequality by, for example, handling all collected contact information and data with caution, informing interviewees about the research project, allowing interviewees to withdraw their participation during or after the interview, and anonymizing quotes.<sup>26</sup>

## Analysis

Foucault notes that discourses need bodies to be reproduced, and discourses always have material consequences. Discourse analysis is thus not an abstract activity—it takes place “at the level of materiality” (Foucault 1981: 69). In a genealogical analysis, the aim is to discover the discourses making a phenomenon meaningfully possible. This means that the “themes” or “categories” that a genealogical study searches for are seldom identical to the themes and categories explicitly figuring in the data. Furthermore, staying with the trouble of *intertextuality*—that is, searching for cross-references between discourses—is key to mapping out the dynamics of power and knowledge (Carabine 2001). When uttered, a statement might connote discourses in unforeseeable ways (see Billig et al. 1988: 22f). Thus, in meaning-making practices, complex relations between discourses are established.

Intersecting discourses do not always form a logical whole. Discursive formations often include paradoxical elements and meanings that are constantly contested. *Resistance* is central to the dynamics of power and knowledge; as Foucault (1978: 95) puts it: “Where there is power, there is resistance.” Ethical issues and matters of common sense often take the form of a dilemma, providing language users with the possibility of arguing both in favor of and against particular positions (Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1989). Meaning-making practices thus include a continuous process of

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<sup>26</sup> These considerations were guided by Taylor's (2001a) discussion of ethics in discourse analytic research involving interviews and guidelines for ethical research published by The Swedish Research Council (Gustafsson et al. 2004). The project was approved by the regional ethical review board in Uppsala (no. 2010/187).

associations, assimilations, and resistances. A discourse also contains *silences*. Genealogy avoids constructing meanings not present in the text by means of creative interpretation. Yet, it is possible to bring out textual absences by showing the lack of what is present—by contrasting the studied discourse with discursive production in other contexts. Thus silences are discursive, but when locating a silence, the genealogical analysis “remains within the dimension of discourse” (Foucault 2002: 85; see also, e.g., Billig 1989: 222; Fairclough 2001).

Genealogy does not treat discourse as distinct from other meaningful processes, and therefore, it is impossible to analytically separate discourse from its consequences. Yet, the analysis of a limited set of data concerns a broader social condition, which is why it is possible for a genealogical study to discuss the *effects* of a discourse—the types of realities produced by a certain discourse and the consequences for the beings categorized and positioned by that discourse. While the thematization of data focuses on the content of the empirical data, genealogy also accounts for the discursive dynamics—the discursive strategies and techniques—that make certain meanings possible and order the world in specific ways. I prefer the word “dynamics” because it emphasizes the processual character of the discourse: categories and distinctions are best understood as being in constant negotiation of inclusions and exclusions and part of continuous meaning production. Any attempt to a definite distinction or clear-cut categorization is always incomplete because all distinctions are dependent on other distinctions, and no given distinction resonates perfectly with other, similar distinctions (see Derrida 1982 on *différance*). Both humanity and animality are continuously produced but are never finished products. Moreover, both terms can be applied to humans and other animals in discursive acts—both humans and nonhuman animals can be subjects of *animating* and *humaning* (Birke et al. 2004).

Genealogy shares an attentiveness to paradoxical tensions in texts with deconstructionism. An important device I employed to isolate the dynamics of humanity and animality is Jacques Derrida’s (2008: 41, 48) deconstruction of the word “animal”—*l’animot* in Derrida’s terminology. Derrida (2008, see, e.g., 14, 48ff, see also 1995: 268f) suggests that it is humans’ very act of “following” the animal—of persistently devising new ways of differentiating humans from a neutral category of all other animals—that creates the distinction between humans and animals. *L’animot* thus designates all attempts to use the all too inclusive category of the animal or essentialize animality as a property. The notion of humanity can thus be regarded as an *anthropological machine* (Agamben 2004: 27), making it possible for humans to perceive themselves as exclusive in relation to other

animals. Yet, this also makes it possible to use the human/animal dichotomy to associate certain humans with animality. The human/animal dichotomy has been used in this way to justify colonization, slavery, and racism (see, e.g., Shohat and Stam 1994: 137f; Hall 1997), as well as the subjugation of women in patriarchal societies (Dunayer 1995; Thomas 1996).

Focusing on the human/animal dichotomy as a device or a machine makes it possible to not only discuss what individuals say of humans and animals but also how the concepts are used and what they produce. Thus, even if a focus on linguistic distinctions may seem anthropocentric, binary oppositions have consequences for both humans and other animals. They not only affect the way humans speak of animals—they also make possible acts of inclusion and exclusion of humans and other animals, which are occasionally very violent and quite literally a matter of life and death. I therefore follow Haraway's (2012c) advice: "Stay with your binaries." I use the deconstructionist method of viewing binary oppositions and other dichotomous constructions as a tool to analyze human-nonhuman relations, bearing in mind that the destructive aspects of *l'animot* and the anthropological machine may be heeded if exposed and subjected to scrutiny.

Study I is written in the style of a theoretical exegesis, and I do not discuss genealogical methodology in this essay. Yet, I consider the study a genealogy of "the animal" in Lévinas' phenomenology of the face and related theoretical discussions. The study is thus a re-reading of Lévinas' work, focusing on the notion of the animal to demonstrate how certain anthropocentric dead ends are created in Lévinas' thought. Power and knowledge are at work in his writing such that the possibility of a nonhuman "face"—or nonhuman ethical subjectivity—is rejected. Nonhuman faces are thus a silence that haunts Lévinas' analysis of "the face." In this text, I also trace the representation of individual nonhuman animals in Lévinas' work and related texts. By playing out the discursive production of the category of the animal against representations of individual animals, I demonstrate that it is always a cultural effort to dismiss nonhuman "faces", and sociology and social psychology therefore should be more attentive to the subjectivity of other animals. Thus, I read philosophical texts including nonhuman animals as actually being about animals, avoiding perceiving the nonhuman animals being discussed as figures or symbols for something other than themselves. This sort of reading is inspired by works in deconstructionist philosophy and literary studies (see Derrida 2008: 7; Lönngren 2011; McHugh 2011). Sociological texts could be reread in the same way to bring out problematically simplifying sociological definitions of "the human" and the sociological object of study.

In Study II, I began by analyzing Chihuahua handbooks and focused on the categories repeatedly used by the authors themselves such as purchasing a dog, breed history, family, neutering/spaying, death, diseases, and diets. I noticed that each of these themes related to certain dilemmatic tensions and paradoxes—authors would state one thing in one instance, only to change their position in the next. These odd fluctuations turned out to be crucial to representations of Chihuahuas, and I ultimately thematized the data into a number of dichotomies that the Chihuahua transcends. Although the texts concern Chihuahuas, they are written by humans, and as I show, the texts also concern a collective human identity to a substantial extent. The multifaceted and contradictory image of the Chihuahua has been made possible by a material-semiotic knot of Chihuahua dogs, humans, publishers, popular media, and dog experts. Intertextuality is essential to the analysis, as I establish an analogy between Paris Hilton and the Chihuahua as two figures that in turn allow me to highlight the different discursive dilemmas characteristic of contemporary Western society. Chihuahuas in general, Paris Hilton’s Chihuahua Tinkerbelle Hilton, and Paris Hilton herself are thus essentially intertextual beings, transgressing the boundaries of individual texts. A palpable silence in the Chihuahua handbooks concerns the issue of loss and death. Chihuahua owners often regard their Chihuahuas as “grievable” (Butler 2004, 2009)—as irreplaceable, unique, living beings. Yet, this existential aspect of the relationship is reduced to a technicality by the marginalization of the issue in the books. This silence also influenced the focus on grief in Study III.

Study III is a genealogy of pet grief—what type of power/knowledge makes it possible to grieve for nonhumans in an anthropocentric society? When analyzing pet grief for Study III, I specifically focused on accounts in the data concerning death, transience, loss, and grief. I collected all paragraphs in my transcriptions concerning these themes and began looking for common features among the quotes. When I noticed that most interviewees emphasized that each pet is irreplaceable and that interviewees often discussed the embodied nature of grief, I perceived clear similarities to Butler’s (2004, 2009) conceptualization of grief. For a truly reciprocal personal relationship to emerge between human and pet, pets need to be framed as grievable. Pet grief is thus not an isolated aspect of having a pet; instead, the framing of a pet as grievable (or the absence of such a framing) structures the entire relationship. I then read the quotes from this vantage point—the subsequent analysis was guided by Butler’s theory. While categorizing the data following Butler’s theory, I noticed resistance to the framing of pets as grievable. I thus chose to stay with the trouble regarding these frictions to determine whether there was a logic to the paradoxical

approach to pet loss found in the data. Ultimately, while I could trace the different aspects of Butler's conceptualization of grief, each aspect was also contested throughout the collection of quotes. Pet owners' accounts of pet loss and grief were thus characterized by dichotomous dynamics fuelled by pets' dual status of being included in and excluded from a human "we".

Pets themselves and their needs, habits, and individual ways of being are central to these accounts. Just as Chihuahua handbooks could not have been written without Chihuahuas, the accounts of pet grief carry the pets' traces. The focus of the study may be on the ways in which humans frame pets as grievable, but pets also make themselves grievable by acting in ways that generate certain types of attributions. Moreover, once they are grievable, pets affect the ways in which their owners' lead their lives in specific ways. I thus consider the accounts to be material-semiotic products made possible by normative frameworks, the interviewees' accounts, and pets' and owners' embodied relationships.

Study IV is a genealogy of the relation between power and knowledge in the human-pet relationship. The study focuses on the notion of power itself to analyze how the power dynamic between pet and owner and the knowledge associated with pet keeping allow for a multispecies home and the subjectivities of pet and owner. In the early stages of the work on Study IV, I was interested by the fact that different species have different needs and habits but nevertheless have to adjust to living in a home primarily designed for humans. When analyzing pet owners' discussions on attending to the needs of their pets, I realized that many of the accounts concerned the problem of control and domination. In various ways, the interviewees stressed that they often reflected on the extent to which they inhibited their pets from acting upon their needs, interests, or instincts. There is a dilemma between control and autonomy in pet keeping that has to be addressed in the production of the subjectivities of pet and owner and for a personal relationship to emerge. I connected the notion of productive control to Foucault's notion of productive power. The autonomy/control dilemma was especially palpable in discussions concerning the home environment and training and disciplining, and these became central themes in the analysis. As in Study III, the focus is on pet owners' perspectives on their relationships with their pets. Nevertheless, the accounts are marked by the pets' presence in human lives—subjectivation is a two-way process. I show that pet ownership produces both docile pets and owners who act in accordance with disciplinary and biopower norms. Power issues in the relationship not only concern specific instances of struggle or disagreement, but are something that connects all aspects of pet keeping, both physical interaction and the values surrounding pet keeping (which, in turn, cannot

be strictly separated). The powers of pet keeping are material-semiotic processes.

The analyses in studies III and IV are discourse-centered rather than person-centered. Each interviewee's account should not be understood as an absolute truth regarding what is "out there" or inside the minds of the interviewees or their pets (see Silverman 2013). Nevertheless, the 23 hours of discussions on pet keeping I collected is a robust set of data for interpreting the *dynamics* of pet keeping. I therefore regard my findings as "transferable" to other pet keepers and pets, and accordingly, I prefer the term *transferability* to that of generalization (Taylor 2001b; see also Lincoln and Guba 1985: 124). The analyses of the interview data emphasize general discursive patterns, rather than dwelling on individual narratives, which makes it possible to accentuate recurring patterns of both compliance and resistance in the data.

When does a genealogical project end? While I do not adopt the sort of inductive and explorative approach that Glaser and Strauss (1999: 61f) advocate, I am influenced by their notion of theoretical saturation. For example, the interview with the snake and lizard owner caused me to search for other potential interviewees who did not relate to their pets as persons, such as the fish owner and the large-scale bird owner. Conversely, the interview with the large-scale bird owner led me to search for a bird owner who treated his birds as individuals or persons to problematize my initial understanding of bird keeping. I also believe that I have gathered an extensive collection of interview data concerning power struggles in the home, euthanasia, grief, and spaying and neutering. Furthermore, the last few Chihuahua handbooks did not contribute any new themes or categories. The theoretical categories related to these themes are thus "almost, if not completely filled" (Glaser and Strauss 1999: 61). Nevertheless, because the owners of non-individualized pets (pets who are not regarded as persons) raised interesting issues concerning the limits of subjectivity and personhood, I believe the analysis could have benefited from additional interviewees and pets from different species in this category. Furthermore, interviewees often spoke of unique aspects of keeping pets of a certain species or breed, and therefore, it may be sensible for future research to focus on a particular breed or species to grasp nuances now obscured due to my wider sample. The studies' limitations in scope demonstrate that the choice of data and the analysis ultimately depend on the researcher. Yet, I have remained relatively silent regarding my own position as a researcher in the analysis. In line with the genealogical approach, I regard meaning-making practices as constitutive of reality and subjectivity, which means that my studies themselves are constructs contributing to the production of reality.

I will further discuss the issue of genealogists' position in relation to their own genealogy in the next section.

## **Reflexivity**

In natural and social science studies drawing on surveys and experiments, scientific facts are produced when knowledge is separated from the research practice. For facts to be produced, it is necessary to deemphasize that facts are created, contested, and negotiated by researchers and practices located in time and space (see Latour and Woolgar 1986: 106). Haraway (1989: 5, see also 2011b), who shares Latour and Woolgar's view regarding scientific practices, considers both scientific and popularized scientific texts as "science fiction, where possible worlds are constantly reinvented in the contest for very real, present worlds." In contrast, researchers drawing on a genealogical approach paradoxically depend on the same discursive framework that they analyze. Genealogy is "science fiction" but recognizes this fact and attempts to reinvent the world rather than passively reproducing it. A structured, scientific knowledge-product cannot be completely separated from the research practice, and consequently, Foucault (1984b: 46) notes that a genealogical analysis will always be "experimental". According to Rose (1999: 55), who is informed by Foucault, genealogical analysis is best understood as "a kind of experimental moment in thought, a moment when thought tries to realize itself in the real." Research always relies on theoretical background knowledge and more or less educated assumptions. Wetherell (2001: 396) notes that a discourse analyst should therefore "reflexively acknowledge the theories, values, and politics which guide research so these can be taken into account when evaluating the analyst's claims." In this section, I discuss the extent to which I have succeeded in realizing a genealogical study of pet keeping and the rhetorical moves I have made in this experimental endeavor.

Discourse analysis shares many of the same research quality criteria as other qualitative methodologies. Those criteria are connected to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, the rigor of the analytical process, coherence of researchers' presentation and argumentation, the novelty, plausibility, fruitfulness and transferability of the findings, and the connection between one's own findings and previous research (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 124; Carabine 2001; Taylor 2001a, 2001b; Wetherell 2001). I discuss many of these issues in relation to each specific investigation in studies I–IV. Nevertheless, there are some more general considerations worth highlighting concerning the issue of quality in discourse analysis. Any conceptualization of a large set of data actively ignores or reduces

certain aspects of the lives of humans and other animals. The framing of the set of data and the contextualization of the study are also best understood as rhetorical constructions (see, e.g., Schegloff 1997; Billig 1999; Carabine 2001; Wetherell 2001). As genealogical analysts create a rhetorical construction when analyzing and representing the data, the risk is that the researchers will select empirical examples that confirm their constructions (Carabine 2001). As a solution, genealogical analysts need to constantly search for discontinuities and counterexamples, both in the data and in relation to other studies, and recognize that the rhetorical constructions of “analysis” and “conclusion” are always preliminary. Therefore, I am skeptical of Glaser and Strauss’ (1999) argument that theoretical saturation not only applies to the process of gathering data but also to qualitative analysis. Certain issues—such as the problem of pet euthanasia discussed in studies II, III, and IV—cannot, and should not, be summarized in a brief paragraph. A pet owner’s account of the loss of a pet cannot be replaced by another individual’s account of a seemingly similar experience. Accumulating accounts, as I do in these analyses, instead reveals the complex ways in which beings constitute the world. In this way, it is occasionally the sociologist’s duty to create collectives and populate the world, rather than to reduce its complexity (Haraway 1994; Puig de la Bellacasa 2012: 203).

Regarding reality as a joint accomplishment has the consequence that interviews must be regarded as instances of reality-in-the-making. Nevertheless, I do not quote myself in the studies. I can thus be criticized for neglecting the mutuality of the interview situation.<sup>27</sup> To avoid seeking out confirmations of my own presuppositions, I paid attention to the interview interaction as a social situation throughout the analysis to, for example, avoid drawing far-fetched conclusions based on replies to leading questions. Although studies of research interviews may, for example, benefit sociologists’ understandings of how institutional restrictions are managed in interaction (Iversen 2012), as well as a broader understanding of the methodology of interviewing (Roulston 2006), this is not the focus of the present thesis. In genealogical discourse analysis and other discourse analytic approaches, “the focus is on the patterns across wider social or cultural contexts” (Taylor 2001a: 15)—on the discursive content rather than discursive production as process.

I also recognize that “discourse analysis is a discursive construction of a discursive construction” (Wetherell 2001: 397) and my own writing can be

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<sup>27</sup> For a discussion concerning interview interaction and “natural data,” see Potter (2010) and Silverman (2013).

analyzed as a rhetorical construction with political consequences if necessary. The reason for analyzing my research is that on some level, I may be contributing to the reproduction of problematic discourses by my act of writing. For example, I largely focus on pets in contemporary Western culture, thus reproducing the distinction between “the West and the rest” (see, e.g., Hall 1992; Latour 1993: 97f; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005: 69). I am nevertheless explicit with this choice of framing the study. I argue in all four studies, more or less explicitly, that the human/animal dichotomy plays an important role in the logics of contemporary Western society. Therefore, examining how the human/animal dichotomy is played out in the contemporary Western world can thus contribute to an understanding of how different normative frameworks can combine forces and produce a single phenomenon: pet keeping. Consequently, an understanding of pet keeping can also contribute to an understanding of an increasingly global late modernity.

Even if research is a discursive effort realizing itself in a discursively constituted reality, a methodical analysis can nonetheless draw on existing discourses to identify problematic patterns by reproducing existing discourses with a shift in focus and the presentation’s systematization. Following Haraway, this thesis problematizes existing discourses on pet keeping by shifting the focus from a traditional, dichotomous view of humans and other animals, thus distorting the “sacred” image of humans as persons and subjects and other animals as nonpersons and objects (Haraway 1994; Puig de la Bellacasa 2012). From a genealogical perspective, as matter and semiotics, or power and knowledge, are deeply intertwined, there is no way of clearly distinguishing between descriptive and normative research. Therefore, the researcher’s discursive production may have consequences for the broader social context in which the text is produced. However, even if the reproduction of discourse entails violent consequences, at once symbolical and physical, there may be less violent ways of doing so that are attentive to the risks of reproducing problematic normative frameworks. As Butler (2009: 167) notes, “it may be that precisely because one is formed through violence, the responsibility not to repeat the violence of one’s formation is all the more pressing and important.”

If beings are more or less violently constituted by relations, and if a number of both responses and responsibilities are latently present in each encounter, then a relational reality is intrinsically ethical (see Lévinas 2002; Butler 2004; Haraway 2008b; Redmalm 2011b). Therefore, ethical issues cannot be strictly distinguished from other issues in research. There is no privileged viewpoint where one does not have to take responsibility for one’s view of the world; instead, it is everyone’s responsibility to persistent-

ly challenge one's view by taking others' viewpoints into consideration. To recognize the intersection of descriptive and normative research, the studies aim to make readers more sensitive to nonhumans' positions in human society. Killing, physical and mental control and domination, consumption, objectification, and exploitation are brought into focus in the studies. By recognizing these issues, I highlight how ethical questions persistently demand attention when discussing descriptive matters. Although I avoid suggesting ethical guidelines in humans' relations to other animals, I nevertheless identify the way that humans, both readers and me as a researcher, are always already involved in deeply problematic power relations with other animals. Thus, by staying with the trouble that more-than-human encounters generate, I strive to highlight the problematic position both I as a researcher and other humans share in relation to other animals.



Chihuahua on Cheeseburgers by *William Hundley*.  
*Reprinted with the permission of the artist.*

## Summary of the Studies

Study I: *In-Your-Face-Ethics: Phenomenology of the Face and Social Psychological Animal Studies*. According to the central social psychological thought figure, humans become the individual beings they are in the eyes of others. What occurs when those others are nonhuman animals? Many social philosophers focusing on face-to-face encounters have a peculiar fascination with nonhuman animals; nonhuman animals seem to call attention to themselves as soon as philosophers begin their meditations. In the first study, I demonstrate how nonhuman animals can challenge anthropocentric theoretical reflection by their mere gaze.

In the study, I especially focus on Emmanuel Lévinas' phenomenology of the face. For Lévinas (2002), meeting face-to-face is prior to all other forms of sociality. When another being responds to one's existence, one becomes someone in the very invitation to speak. The invitation to speak entails a responsibility to respond and confirm the existence of the other, and therefore, ethics is intimately intertwined with the process of perceiving a notion of self and meeting face-to-face. Although Lévinas argues that humans can never decide in advance who has a face and who does not and that human beings may be bereaved of their faces, Lévinas is not prepared to grant a face to a nonhuman animal. This prompted a discussion of whether Lévinas is indeed consistent in his own thinking. In the text, I read Lévinas with a Lévinasian approach. Lévinas' (1990) uses a specific animal—Bobby the dog—as a philosophical example to secure human exceptionalism. However, when the reader glimpses the “face” of Bobby, the representation exceeds its own original intention and thus challenges the human/animal distinction it was supposed to underpin. I demonstrate that Lévinas' position in relation to nonhuman animals does not follow from his discussion of the phenomenology of the face but from his traditional view of “the animal”. When Lévinas uses this notion of the animal to define the human subject, he has by definition excluded the possibility of nonhuman faces.

I conclude by suggesting that studies of social life cannot in advance define what an “other” is, as the moment when beings discover a new face that challenges their notion of themselves is an integral part of social existence. Social scientists and philosophers can never dismiss a possible face in advance, as the encounter with a face is always prior to the I. This becomes crucial in relation to nonhuman animals, as they regularly are bereaved of their faces with reference to their animality, despite that many humans interact on a face-to-face basis with nonhuman animals. Consequently, to avoid risking neglecting meaningful interaction, social scientists must adopt an open stance toward possible faces, and they should begin by allowing

nonhuman animals into social science studies in general and social psychological studies in particular.

Study II: *Holy Bonsai Wolves: Chihuahuas and the Paris Hilton Syndrome*. The second study concerns the tension between the contemporary presentation of domestic animals in popular media and the presented beings themselves. More specifically, the study examines the reasons for the Chihuahua breed's popularity in contemporary Western society by examining two sets of data: Chihuahua handbooks totaling 1700 pages and three seasons of *The Simple Life* TV show, starring Paris Hilton and her Chihuahua Tinkerbelle.

The Chihuahua transcends two dichotomies fundamental to contemporary Westerners: it is both a commodity and a companion, and it is regarded as both a wild animal and a cultural artifact—it is a *bonsai wolf*. Because of its ambiguity and the attention devoted to the breed, the Chihuahua is here regarded as a *holy anomaly*: a creature that can be used in myths and rituals to temporarily alleviate the tension-filled dichotomies inherent in a particular culture (see Douglas 1984, 1999). In the case of the Chihuahua, it not only transcends the nature/culture and subject/object binaries; it also plays with gender and class stereotypes, matters of life and death, and various taboos and conceptions of moral virtue. Yet, the Chihuahua's cultural transgressions are never subversive, as its appearances are dismissed as humor, low-brow entertainment, or expressions of sentimentality. The Chihuahua is thus a *holy bonsai wolf*.

In the analysis, I extract a number of quotes from Chihuahua handbooks and *The Simple Life* show to point to the often absurd and humorous representations of Chihuahuas. Although the reader may be tempted to laugh at this risible collection of quotes, I emphasize that the laughter helps reproducing the dichotomies the Chihuahua transcends. For a holy anomaly to work it need to be included in myths or rituals separated from everyday life. Because the Chihuahua Tinkerbelle's (Hilton and Resin 2004) mock autobiography is labeled "FICTION/HUMOR" in bold capital letters, I suggest that this is also a suiting designation for Westerners' way of framing modern myths and rituals. Inspired by Sara Ahmed's (2010) notion of the feminist killjoy, I suggest that by refusing to laugh and seriously considering the Chihuahua's paradoxical nature, Westerners can make themselves aware of their own problematic dichotomous worldview. In representations of holy anomalies, problematic dichotomies are accentuated because it is in these representations that they are most efficiently produced. By analyzing holy anomalies while keeping a straight face, it be-

comes possible to scrutinize problematic categorizations where they are the most apparent.

Study III: *Pet Grief: When Is Nonhuman Life Grievable?* After briefly touching on the matter of Chihuahuas' mortality in the second study, I devote the third study exclusively to the subject of pets' transience. Here, I turn to interviews with eighteen humans and their pets and explore how pet owners discuss pet loss and the grief for lost pets. I draw on Butler's (2004, 2009) notion of *the differential allocation of grievability*. She argues that grievability is made possible by a normative framework that allows human or human-like lives to be grieved, while other lives are rendered "lose-able". A life is framed as grievable when the grieved being is considered irreplaceable and the grief after the loss is described as unpredictable and embodied.

All of the pet owners interviewed say that they either have or are capable of grieving for a nonhuman animal, but analysis suggests that the interviewees make their pets grievable and ungrievable by turns by means of dilemmatic accounts. First, the interviewees frame their pets as grievable by highlighting their pets' special place in their lives. Nevertheless, they also discuss the possibility of replacing lost pets. Second, owners emphasize the unpredictable power of the grief that follows the loss of a pet. However, most pets' relatively short life spans make the loss manageable in relation to the owners' longer life plans. Third, owners emphasize their pets' grievability by discussing an embodied empathic contact between pet and owner. Nonetheless, they also discuss pets' bodily signs of ageing as passively emitted signs guiding them in euthanasia decisions. The dilemmatic character of the pet owners' accounts—their effort to balance the different aspects of grievability—give the pets a paradoxical status as simultaneously grievable and lose-able.

I show that the discourses surrounding pet loss are indeed a matter of life and death—discourse here draws the lines between grievable, killable, and lose-able life. Pet loss is not necessarily less painful than human loss. However, persons who lose grievable pets (as opposed to ungrievable pets not framed as persons) face, on the one hand, the loss of an important person in their lives, and on the other, the normative frameworks surrounding human-pet relationships. The owners of grievable pets compare their loss to the loss of human significant others, but simultaneously, draw on discourses separating humans from animals. I argue that by maintaining this ambivalence, the interviewees negotiate pets' inclusion in a human society—a human "we"—while simultaneously defending human exceptionalism. The study concludes with a discussion of pet grief as a potential-

ly destabilizing emotion. I suggest that grieving beings on the border between grievable human and lose-able animal—*werewolves* using Giorgio Agamben’s term (1998: 63)—may be a powerful way of challenging normative frameworks that arbitrarily render some human and nonhuman lives lose-able.

Study IV: *Discipline and Puppies: The Powers of Pet Keeping*. The final study is based on the same interviews as the third study. Here, I focus on how pet owners organize their lives in relation to their pets. I adopt Foucault’s (1978) *bipolar technology* of *disciplinary power* and regulatory *biopower* in combination with Haraway’s *material-semiotics* to study how these power logics make the relations between pet and owner meaningful for the owners.

The analysis shows that the boundaries of the home, the play of power between bodies, and the exchanges of love and care are central to producing the pet relation as inherently meaningful and an indispensable part of the lives of both pet keepers and pets. A discourse permeating all of these themes was “anxieties about domination and freedom” (Smith 2003: 196). In various ways, the interviewees stress that they often reflect on the extent to which they might inhibit their pets from acting upon their instincts, needs, or interests. Too little control on the pet owners’ behalf would mean that the pets could be a nuisance to other humans, or even a danger to themselves, the owners, other pets, and other humans. Too much control without mutually benefitting social exchanges implies that it would no longer be meaningful to speaking of a reciprocal relationship between pet and owner.

Pet owners produce their pets’ subjectivity by speaking of them as autonomous persons, but pets are also highly engaged in enabling their owners’ subjectivity. For humans to become proper pet owners, they need to be attentive to the pets’ interests and needs. The fish owner, the snake and lizard owner, and the large-scale bird owner do not speak of personal relationships with their pets. These interviewees keep their nonhuman animals in aquariums, terrariums, or cages. This suggests that there is a need for a balance between control and autonomy in pet keeping for a personal relationship to emerge. I also show that the relationship between pet and owner is structured both by an embodied disciplinary power and more abstract biopower norms. In the relationship, both pets and owners are disciplined, and both partners are affected by normative ideas concerning sociality, regular exercise, scheduling, consistency, family life, the ability to live for the moment, and emotional bonding. The relationship between pet and owner thus perfectly harmonizes the two poles of disciplinary power and

biopower, as it allows both pets and owners to engage in socially acceptable play, and simultaneously, ensures a healthy and controlled life for both owner and pet.

I conclude the study by comparing pet keeping to Foucault's (2011) notion of a "lived critique," informed by the Cynic philosophers of ancient Greece. Pet keeping can be a way for pets and their owners to interact according to a logic that focuses on the productive aspects of the relationship and defies a capitalist focus on productivity. However, there is also a risk that this lived critique will become "domesticated" if pets and owners channel irrational, playful, and creative behaviors into socially accepted activities. If so, the relationship primarily reproduces normative, perfunctory anthropocentric thinking and limitative biopower norms.



*Bonsai Wolf by Olov Redmalm.  
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## Conclusions

In this thesis and its constituent studies, I have analyzed the powers making the personal relationship between pet and owner possible and the normative frameworks structuring the meaning of pets in human lives. I intended to show how personal relationships between humans and other animals challenge the human/animal dichotomy and the notion of a collective human “we”. In this concluding chapter, I will begin by discussing pets’ role as holy anomalies and the effects the social relationship between pet and owner creates. Holy anomalies are created by intersecting normative frameworks, but as I argue, they also tend to exceed their own function, disrupting the order they were supposed to cement. In the following section, I will discuss in greater detail how my studies contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of the human/animal dichotomy and how the pet as a figure and a living being can help humans counteract the workings of the anthropological machine. In the final section, I suggest that humans should cease using their humanity as an excuse for human exceptionalism and begin using the notion of humanity as a tool to conceptualize “the differential of power by which it operates” (Butler 2009: 77). By critically reminding themselves that humanity is not a stable category or property, humans can leave the comfort of their own humanity and instead employ the term humanity to expose the structural violence exercised in its name. To refuse a concrete definition of humanity would especially benefit sociologists, who, as was shown in chapter two, share a history of a dichotomous distinction between humans and other animals. I conclude this thesis by suggesting that pet keeping can be a means for sociologists to refuse the anthropocentric aspects of the sociological tradition.

### The Excesses of Pet Keeping

In the studies of this thesis, I demonstrated how representations of pets can, on the one hand, cement a number of problematic dichotomies, and, on the other, exceed their own representations and owners’ expectations and be part of subversive practices questioning both human exceptionalism and other problematic categorizations and power structures. In all four studies, pets proved to play an important role in different contexts, and in all four studies, pets demonstrably challenged various categorizations and dichotomies. A pervading theme has been that pets occupy a special position in the lives of humans as boundary creatures, or what I speak of as “holy anomalies” in the second study. According to Mary Douglas (1984, 1999), holy anomalies are anomalous phenomena granted holy status. Although anomalies are generally avoided, destroyed, labeled as danger-

ous, or absorbed in a society's worldview, anomalies are occasionally instead included in myths and rituals because they teach the participants about their society's central dichotomies and its normative frameworks. Pets as holy anomalies are powerful contributors to meaning production. As Marc Shell (1986: 142) puts it: "If there was no such beings as pets, we would breed them, for ourselves, in the imagination." As holy anomalies, pets disturb humans' meticulous schematizations of the world—they bring out the inherent tensions in humans' worldview and mitigate those tensions in their role as anomalous creatures.

Pets occupy positions at the intersection of a number of dichotomies and thus bridge these categorical breaches: human/animal, person/nonperson, subject/object, communicative/mute, and friend/commodity. However, the living beings occupying these positions can also refuse their role as figures with which to think. When living beings are drawn into human meaning-making practices, these living beings' own interests and actions can overturn the humans' original intentions. When they encounter the anomalous phenomenon called pets, humans risk dethronement from their position as the sole animals capable of controlling their inner animal. Pets are a product of certain discourses and normative frameworks, but they are also living beings taking place and acting in more-than-human contexts.

Pets' boundary transgressions disrupt the work of the *anthropological machine* (Agamben 1998; see also Stanescu 2012). *Homo sapiens*, for Giorgio Agamben (2004: 26f), "is an optical machine constructed of a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape." Humans must thus recognize themselves in a nonhuman "in order to be human." The anthropological machine is twofold: the "premodern" machine treats nonhuman animals as excluded others, and the "modern" machine treats nonhuman animals as expressing a pure animality that is also to some extent present in humans (Agamben 2004: 27f, 37). As my studies show, pets can figure as bugs in both machines. They often pass from being an animal other to become at least partly part of a human "we". They also take on a double status as animals without animals within—they are not humans, but many pets are nevertheless ascribed personality and given a place in the family or are regarded as friends. The illusion performed by the notion of *homo sapiens*—the anthropological machine—accomplished with a play of mirrors fails because pets are not the passive surfaces for human identity projection that some scholars of human-pet relationships have suggested (see, e.g., Veevers 1985; Hara 2007; Berger 2009; Lawson 2011).

Pet keeping has a productive potential because personal relationships between humans and other animals may challenge humans' self-under-

standings and demand new ways of organizing identity production and social life. Nonhuman animals carry the seeds of the undoing of their own symbolic status—their own *Entzauberung*. I term these unforeseeable consequences of more-than-human social contexts *the excesses of pet keeping*. According to Butler (1993: 122), any performance in accordance with a norm produces excesses: “the performative, the call by the law which seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law.” In this way, when animals are invited into the picture, they tend to distort the image because they break with the endless recursion of human-animal mirroring. Weil (2012: 60) writes in a similar fashion on animals in literature, who she argues can have “unintended effects on narrative,” as they “have their own stories about what, for example, fetching a ball or being caught mean.” My emphasis on these excesses, or unintended effects, contrasts with theories suggesting that pet keeping and domesticated animals are primarily symbols of humans’ power over animals and nature (see, e.g., Tuan 1984; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 208; Francione 2004). As I have shown, although human-pet relations are partly structured by problematic discursive formations, pet keeping is more complex than a one-way domination—it can even be subversive. The understanding of pets as holy anomalies, and as potentially subversive, is a point permeating all four studies in this thesis. Yet, in each of the studies, I also develop specific approaches and conceptual tools to analyze human-nonhuman relations and the excesses of pet keeping.

In Study I, I reveal the excesses produced by domestic animals used as examples in philosophical essays. Lévinas (1990) introduces Bobby the dog to suggest the possibility of a human collective identity and the limits of nonhuman animals’ impact on human relations. However, his account of his meeting with Bobby raises questions regarding whether Lévinas underestimates Bobby when he writes that Bobby lacks “the brain needed to universalize maxims and drives” (Lévinas 1990: 153) and therefore lacks a face and cannot be an *Other* in the human sense. Several scholars have criticized Lévinas for this conclusion (Calarco 2004; Simmons 2007; Derrida 2008: 117; Haraway 2008b: 311, n28; Kendall 2008: 186; Weisberg 2009). Thus, Bobby has become a feral dog roaming the margins of humanist philosophy, threatening the autonomy of the autonomous human subject. Lévinas created a “monster”, both in Mary Shelley’s sense—as an invention overpowering its inventor—and in Bruno Latour’s (see, e.g., 1993: 42) sense—as a paradoxical “mixture” of categories important to the modern Western worldview, especially “animal” and “human”. As a philosophical example, the dog in Lévinas’ essay figures as a holy anomaly

helping him to restore human exceptionalism. However, the representation exceeds its original textual function and thus challenges the human/animal distinction it was intended to underpin. Social scientists thus need to be aware of the power of *l'animot* (see Derrida 2008: 48) and remain open to the creative sociality that can emerge from face-to-face encounters across species' borders.

While Study I helps to identify the potentially subversive role that Bobby and other philosophical pets can have, Study II does the same for Chihuahuas. When representations of the Chihuahua are analyzed, they expose the arbitrariness of the human/animal dichotomy, as well as a number of other dichotomies. Chihuahuas bring out the tensions inherent to a modern Western worldview and can therefore be used in potentially subversive projects scrutinizing the problematic aspects of dichotomous thought. Baker (2001: 223) states, "the image of the animal body [...] needs to be taken out of nature and rendered unstable as a sign." This is what the Chihuahua handbooks are doing: Chihuahuas are represented as both wild wolves belonging to the realm of nature and fragile bonsai trees created by human hands. Nevertheless, the power of the images is often dismantled, as Chihuahuas are represented surrounded by a sentimental shimmer or as a target for humor. Chihuahua images are therefore deceptive—they seem innocuous but may surprise viewers and have unforeseeable effects (cf. Kramer 2005: 159). The Chihuahua imagery can in its perceived innocence contribute to a cementation of dichotomous normative frameworks related, for instance, to species, sex, class, and age. However, there is hope. A number of contemporary artists have taken Chihuahuas out of their usual modes of representation to make them part of provocative interventions in an anthropocentric society, for instance Bjarne Melgaard (1991; Melgaard and Demeester 2010), Scott Musgrove (Jordan 2005: 99), Daniel Edwards (2007), and William Hundley (see the photograph before the article summaries). I use the term "FICTION/HUMOR", a word combination printed in capital letters on the cover of the Chihuahua Tinkerbell's mock autobiography, to identify the way that Chihuahuas' monstrous break with a number of dichotomies central to the world view of the "moderns" is rendered innocuous. If humans cease belittling or laughing at Chihuahuas, they can instead allow Chihuahuas to become "spokespersons" (see Latour 2004: 112) for humans', as well as for their own interests. This is also why the end of the study I intimate that the Chihuahua could be used not as a symbol of humans' domination over nature and animals but a symbol of a political struggle against problematic intersections between exploitative structures such as heterosexism, racism, and anthropocentrism.

In Study III, I draw the conclusion that pet grief is a form of *liminal grief* exposing discursive frictions created by personal relationships across species' borders. Inspired by Agamben's notion of the werewolf and Butler's writing on grief, I suggest that this liminal grief is potentially a *werewolf grief*, which represents a potential vantage point for rethinking humans' relations with other animals. Werewolves are, according to Agamben (1998: 63), boundary figures balancing on the border between human and animal, citizenship and lawlessness. Grief, in turn, can become "a point of identification with suffering itself" (Butler 2004: 30), dissolve the boundaries of identities established on aggressive exclusions, and be the starting point for radical identifications. In accounts of pet grief, humans draw on the human/animal dichotomy (or *l'animot*), thus reinforcing the effects of the anthropological machine; however, as I showed in Study III, it also gives rise to accounts transcending this dichotomy, as pets are also grieved as unique beings. Pet grief is thus a liminal werewolf grief that can challenge the differential allocation of grievability and the anthropocentric politics of kin and kind (cf. Shell 1986). Werewolf grief can also be a helpful figure for individuals wrestling with emotions following the loss of a pet. As I show in the study, anthropomorphic modes of grieving for non-human animals are partly insufficient because losing a pet is different from losing a human—and losing a dog for example is different from losing a beloved bird. Grieving one's pet as a werewolf could be a starting point for finding unique means of grieving for a unique being.

In Study IV, I compare pet keeping to the life of the Cynic philosopher. Foucault (2011) summarizes the position of the Cynics of ancient Greece (the word "Cynic" stems from the ancient Greek word for "dog") as a group of thinkers who strived for a way to challenge the conditions for their own subjectivity by means of a lived, rather than an abstract, critique. The Cynics did not attempt to reach the truth in the form of a proposition but instead asked, "what can the form of life be such that it practices truth-telling?" (Foucault 2011: 234). Foucault (2011: 187) suggests that at present, the Cynic can only be recognized in the works of certain artists who bluntly and violently expose the logics of the society of which they are part. However, I suggest that pet keeping can be a lived skepticism against a humanist ideal of the human. In the lived relation between human and pet, traditional understandings of human exceptionalism come to naught, as humans and pets can make each other into persons and simultaneously remind each other of their animal sides in playful, physical activities. While certain pet owners perhaps have specific ideas of the role that pets will play in their lives, pets can exceed their owners' original intentions and conceptions. Yet, there is also a risk that encounters across species' borders are

“domesticated”—that pet keeping become a “false activity” that only benefits current biopower norms, including the distinction between human and animal. There is a risk that pet keeping will take on the role of an organic Tamagochi—the electronic virtual pet—if pets are kept as things or status items, rather than being acknowledged as sentient companions (see Žižek 1998; see also Žižek 1989). Judging from my interviews, none of my interviewees keep their pets as organic Tamagochis. Yet, to some extent, the tendency to naturalize a traditional human/animal dichotomy is present in the data.

Future research needs to consider pets’ status as holy anomalies, as well as their power to intervene in or exceed their own representations. In research on pet keeping as such, it is essential to remember that pets cannot simply and passively mirror their owners, as their owners are changed by the relationship. Neither can the symbolic use of companion animals be mapped out in a final sense. Pets cannot be regarded as isolated symbols meaning specific things, as they are constituted by wider discursive formations and never simply take on one unambiguous meaning. The meaning-making practices surrounding pet keeping are often exceptionally complex, as pets regularly take on the position of holy anomalies. Holy anomalies can be used for different purposes and give rise to different effects. When a holy anomaly is put to symbolic use, it can even have subversive effects on the discursive conditions that gave rise to its representation in the first place. Pets’ dual status as beloved companions and commodities often becomes problematic both for pets and pet keepers. Pets’ paradoxical position explains why perpetrators of domestic violence use them to threaten or harm partners or children. Individuals who are subject to domestic violence become particularly vulnerable because there is no institutionalized form of protection for both them and their pets. For the pet keepers, their pets are beloved companions, and they would go to great lengths to keep their pets safe. Yet, pets are protected under the law as property rather than individuals with rights of their own (Francione 2000: 50f; Lulka 2009), and protection for pets is accordingly rarely included in domestic violence agencies’ efforts. More generally, pets’ dual status as subjects and objects makes it possible to allow nonhumans to be a part of families and friendship relations while simultaneously placing humans’ interests before those of nonhuman animals in political discussions and social policies.

Because of pets’ dual status, interactionist studies of pet keeping should always consider the broader discursive formation making pet keeping possible and the normative frameworks structuring this relationship. Pets’ paradoxical character affects humans’ relations to them and has conse-

quences for their interaction. Conversely, lived relationships between humans and pets have consequences for the normative frameworks surrounding their relationship (as becomes especially evident in Study IV). As is also shown in the studies, different pets take on different meanings and positions in their relationships with humans. In studies of the use of pets in therapy and rehabilitation, it is important to acknowledge this difference. It is not possible to conclusively and finally determine whether pets have a generally positive outcome in therapeutic work. Instead of quantitatively measuring the outcomes of such interventions, further qualitative research of pet keeping that explores the different positions different pets can occupy in different humans' lives is necessary. If animal therapy is regarded as a panacea for mental discomfort, the risk is that therapy pets will be mass-bred and recommodified (cf. Wilkie 2005) and that the reciprocal relationship that produces the positive results in animal therapy will be nullified. As this thesis has shown, there is not one role for pets in human lives. To grasp the meaning of pets in various social contexts, there is therefore need for a perspective taking the multiple powers of pet keeping into consideration—a critical posthumanist sociology of pets.

In this section, I have suggested that pets have an exceptional, paradoxical power to reproduce categorizations essential to the worldview of the moderns. Yet, I have also suggested that encounters with pets can lead to a questioning of anthropocentrism and other normative frameworks. I will now discuss in greater detail the dynamics of the human/animal dichotomy and how the figure of the pet—as well as pets themselves—can help counteract its effects.

### **An Animal Without an Animal Within**

The twofold power of pets of having the potential to both cement norms and challenge them is a theme that recurs in all of the studies. Essentially, these are the dynamics of the holy anomaly—it is used to reproduce an existing worldview, but it can also exceed the function of its own use. There is a risk that the insights pet keepers gain from their interactions with their pets never reach outside the four walls of the home or that sympathy with an individual nonhuman animal remains disconnected from the broader questions of human-non-human relations. The seemingly transformative act of identifying with a nonhuman animal in this scenario renders the human partner in the relationship unaffected. Fudge (2008: 48) summarizes this risk:

[T]he boundaries of difference that might appear to be uprooted in the anthropomorphic relationship between the owner and the pet could actually

still be in place; the home remains human because the pet is made human and all other non-human animals are excluded.

As long as humans treat pets as objects, as belongings, within a human home, pets risk being reduced to a symbol of humans' domesticated animal within. How can humans think and live with pets without re-establishing the dichotomous worldview that they set out to challenge in collaboration with their pets? As I will argue in this section, thinking and living with pets is helpful, not because they help to circumscribe human essence, nor because they represent an extra-discursive existence saved from the storming sea of freely floating *signifiés* and *signifiants*, but because pets disrupt humans' identification as an animal without an animal within.

The four studies in this thesis show how the human/animal dichotomy is produced through a frictional movement between the two categories but also that this friction gives rise to challenges to the dichotomy. Whereas Agamben's notion of the anthropological machine captures the processual character of the human/animal dichotomy, the studies in this thesis have helped to specify precisely how the human and the animal can be both made and unmade. The human/animal dichotomy has also proven productive—once a line is drawn between human and animal, philosophers and pet owners will have to make sense of that distinction—a distinction that is never clear-cut. Depending on how the human and the animal are separated and defined in relation to each other, the dichotomization will also produce different discursive effects. The studies show that the human/animal dichotomy is produced through a frictional movement in at least three ways, by means of three spatial metaphors—or three *metaphorical dichotomies*. While these metaphors are a result of the four studies, they also resonate with a broader, shared understanding of the human/animal dichotomy and can thus be used as conceptual tools for analyzing the way the anthropological machine produces the human/animal dichotomy in other contexts.

The first metaphorical dichotomy is *above/under*: as shown in studies II, III, and IV, pet keepers continuously balance between regarding themselves as hierarchically above animals, while simultaneously emphasizing that pet keepers should place their pets' needs first. I especially focus on this tension in the relationship in Study IV. Furthermore, as I show in Study IV, pets are, for instance because of their honesty and playfulness, regarded as being in some ways superior to humans with respect to companionship. Pets and their humans thus fluctuate between above and under in pet owners' accounts. Occasionally, the hierarchy is also flattened, as in Study III when pet owners hold that they experience grief after a lost pet "as if" they had

lost a fellow human. Furthermore, in Study II I demonstrated that Paris Hilton's degrading associations with animals and animal characteristics are a part of the FICTION/HUMOR securing both Hilton's and the Chihuahua's status as holy anomalies. Above/under is also to some degree present in Study I, when Lévinas reinforces a distinction between human and animal by conceptualizing the animal as a simpler life form. This frictional movement of above and under also corresponds to a broader normative framework according to which humans are generally placed above animals, while at the same time, as for example Emel and Wolch (1998) and Franklin (1999) have noted, there is also a contemporary misanthropic view of nonhuman animals as victims of humans' crimes against nature. The above/under distinction is part of common sense, yet insufficient when applied to the actual human-pet relationships studied in the articles—its instability makes it productive.

The second metaphorical dichotomy is *before/after*: the recurring description of humans as advanced animals makes it possible for humans to simultaneously regard themselves as animals and emphasize their own exclusivity. Lévinas (2002: 149), as I show in Study I, regards “the animal condition” as a state *prior* to self-conscious, social existence—humans are humans because they have stepped away from an original animal state. Yet, as Derrida (2008) has observed, humans constantly “follow” animals: they need other animals to define themselves as exceptional and constantly find new ways of differing between their own species and others. Humans are thus always, so to speak, a step behind other animals—they constantly attempt to capture “the animal” with a perfect description to ensure that humans can define themselves as the exception to that description. This play of before/after results in a continuous production of speech and text. Several apposite examples of the dynamics of before/after are presented in Study I, where I discuss Lévinas' and other philosophers' attempts to follow “the animal”—they compare humans to other animals to be able to establish a distance between humans and other animals. A second example is the description of Chihuahuas as, on the one hand, advanced social beings that have evolved from wolves and now can take an active part in human social contexts and, on the other hand, degenerated, fragile artifacts that need special care to be able to coexist with humans. A third example is the way human and canine collectivity is negotiated in Study IV: humans live in families and dogs in packs, which in turn makes it possible for them to live together. Speaking of the pack as a sort of primitive family is also a way to speak of pack and family animals as belonging together without conflating humanity and caninity. Yet, in the interviews, humans are occasionally spoken of as pack members and animals as family members. The

unstable metaphorical dichotomy is thus productive and also tends to make the human/animal dichotomy unstable. It also corresponds to a more general understanding of humans as advanced animals, at the end of evolution. This was the way Durkheim and Weber defined humans as their object of study: humans are animals, and while some animals (and here, the early sociologists tended to include nonhuman animals, children, women, and “savages”) can be part of social or pseudo-social encounters, humans are ultimately exceptional animals with respect to their intelligence and social capabilities. Before/after can thus also create boundaries between humans.

The third and final metaphor has given its name to this thesis: *inside/outside*. This is the notion that humans have an inner animal that civilized humans can control. Inside/outside also has a collective dimension—everyone inside the sphere of a human “we” is human, while anyone excluded is animal. However, when humans actually recognize themselves in unique, individual nonhuman beings—pets—they understand that their pets’ inner animals are not always that animal after all, and points of comparison cannot always be made in terms of human and animal. This is a recurring theme in all four studies. Thus, in the relation between pet and owner, the paradoxical relation between inside and outside is accentuated. In Study II, I discuss how the Chihuahua is occasionally described as an animal without an animal within. Chihuahuas are descended from wolves, but if trained, they can control their animal within and consequently have more in common with humans than wolves. Chihuahuas are thus discursively produced, partly by the same dichotomous metaphor that also produces “the human”. Studies III and IV show how pet keepers include nonhuman animals in a sense of “we”—in families or friendship circles—while “the human” and “the animal” have traditionally been species markers used to draw a strict distinction between “us” and “them”. Furthermore, as the two interview studies show, the fact that many pets are described as persons defies a strict distinction between animals with and without animals within. Pets can in this sense be labeled animals with an inner human, and pet keepers in turn testify that they discover an animal within themselves when spending time with pets—a playful and unreflective yet easily neglected aspect of themselves. Inside/outside also corresponds to a broader understanding of humans and other animals and humanity and animality. As Agamben (2004) has noted, the notion of an animal within can be used to label all irrational or unreflective behavior in humans as animal, thus essentializing the distinction between humans and all other animals. This is not necessarily a hierarchical understanding of humans being superior to other animals. According to Sigmund Freud (1962: 38), the human

is a “feeble animal organism” who can only survive by cooperating in the form of social organization. Humans, for Freud, aim at controlling their inner nature because they cannot control their outer nature. Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche (1996: 35) stated: “The beast in us [humans] wants to be lied to; morality is an official lie told so that it shall not tear us to pieces.” Nevertheless, inside/outside can be used to attribute an unreflective, amoral animal character to some beings, thus justifying exclusions of not only nonhumans but also some humans from a notion of a human “we”.

These three metaphorical movements between above and under, from before to after, and from inside to outside and back again summarize the way the human/animal dichotomy is discursively productive in the studies and can thus also be used as analytical tools to demonstrate the workings of the anthropological machine in other contexts. The frictions between the categories of “human” and “animal” reproduce the dichotomy and human exceptionalism. However, if one stays with the trouble that these comparisons give rise to, they ultimately disclose the fragility of human exceptionalism. The three metaphorical movements allow for a critique of the human/animal dichotomy and disclose the fragility of human exceptionalism, as the three metaphors are insufficient when applied to actual more-than-human relations. Moreover, as the studies show, the fragility of the dichotomy is accentuated in the relationship between pet and owner. When engaging in encounters with pets, humans begin in the familiar and mundane but together with nonhumans reach into multifaceted ways of existing beyond a dichotomous “modern” worldview. In the studies, I indicate the different ways that pets help humans recognize their coexistence with other companion species, their interdependence with other beings, and the limits of a cemented, essentialist, collective human identity. The reader is acquainted with philosophical pets’ unexpected refusal of their philosophers’ postulates, Chihuahuas’ persisting ambiguity, the unpredictable power of pet grief, and the subversive potential of “posthumanist households” (Smith 2003). Fudge (2008) summarizes this well: “[L]iving with a pet can be regarded as a powerful exercise in being humbled” (Fudge 2008: 46). Humans often like to think of themselves as an animal without an animal within—a creature that has transcended the animal condition. Pets, these anomalous creatures, may help humans to understand that there are no humans or animals within, only relations between them. Pets are bugs—or more accurately, to speak with Serres—*rats* in the anthropological machine.

There is no animal that can define itself as a human with reference to a singular, lower, primordial, outer, or inner animality. Humanity cannot simply be defined in relation to an animal, the animal, or animality, as the

number of characteristics used to define humanity is indefinite. The notion of the animal is even more volatile: the human designates only one species, but “the animal” is used to designate all living things, including or excluding humans (what Derrida 2008: 48 describes as “a crime of the first order against the animals, against animals”). This is why the production of “the human” and “the animal” must take the form of a continuous process occurring in many different ways in an endless number of locations. The fragmented character of the human/animal dichotomy is also the reason it is repeatedly reversed, inversed, and disrupted. A collective human identity is a frictional movement, rather than a stable category or a group of beings. The problematic effects of a collective human identity can thus only be counteracted with analytical countermovements—by persisting in showing that above and under, before and after, and inside and outside are constantly shifting in humans’ attempts to make sense of themselves as humans and other animals as animals. The metaphorical dichotomies are analytical tools that can be used in such critical countermovements.

Promoting the pet as a figure with which humans can question anthropocentrism is not to suggest that humans should abandon language or in other ways embrace some sort of animality. Such a move would simply reinforce the dichotomy between mute animals and verbal humans. Because poststructuralists and other theorists focusing on the productive aspect of language also emphasize the inhibiting aspects of language, they are occasionally regarded as being skeptical of language altogether. Mikael Carleheden (2003) notes that with this skepticism, the poststructuralists themselves draw a line between linguistic subjection and non-linguistic freedom and thus romanticize a non-linguistic existence. Jürgen Habermas (1997: 53) has a similar understanding of poststructuralist thinkers, whom he regards as conservative because they oppose modernity, embrace “de-centred subjectivity liberated from all the constraints of cognition and purposive action,” and tend to couple these ideas with a premodernist ideal. I only know of one theorist who would fit this description—John Zerzan (2008: 9), who argues that it is urgent that humans “transcend, escape, get rid of the symbolic,” in other words unlearn language, domestication, and “advanced” culture. Zerzan must be considered an extreme in this discussion. Although poststructuralists thoroughly and critically analyze the discursive conditions under which humans and others become subjects, they do not generally argue for a ban on language as such or a return to some idealized, so-called primitive state of existence. For instance, my material-semiotic genealogical approach questions the distinction between the intra- and extra-linguistic, rather than arguing in favor for one or the other. Fur-

thermore, as I have argued, the figure of the pet can be used as a reminder of this problematic distinction.

In many ways, the figure of the pet shares similarities with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, chap. 10) *becoming animal*. For them, identity or subjectivity is never fixed but fundamentally unstable—"a becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 238). They propose that a means of refusing a capitalist logic and oedipal structures is to strive for an identity as pack animals, that is, beings who recognize that they are not single and autonomous coherent subjects but a multitude of relations. Susan McHugh (2011: 14) writes that Deleuze and Guattari's concept has wrongly been criticized for romanticizing an animal state as an extra-linguistic paradisiacal existence. She emphasizes that they themselves choose to use language to construct becoming animal (as well as other forms of becoming). McHugh stresses that animality can be present in writing: "Far from simply a defining property internalized by the human, animality pervades the forms of agency, permeating language, literature, and every living thing potentially engaged with processes of becoming" (McHugh 2011: 14). Writing and other forms of linguistic exchanges are thus not essentially human simply because nonhuman animals do not write critical essays.

Deleuze and Guattari warn against choosing the pet as a figure to identify with in the project of becoming animal. They regard pets as a symbol of the subject trapped in an illusion of its own autonomy and emphasize, "*anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool* [emphasis in original]" and that pets "invite us to regress" (1987: 240). The pet primarily becomes a fantasy person with whom humans can play out Oedipal conflicts and cannot be part of a becoming or a "pack" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 239ff). The pet in their view is clearly an animal without an animal within—an animal that has lost its potential for becoming and has been individuated and solidified as a person in an Oedipal arrangement. They prefer the figure of the wolf to that of the dog. What Deleuze and Guattari neglect to mention is the simple fact that it is difficult for humans to form packs with undomesticated animals. This is perhaps what Deleuze and Guattari indicate when they add that any animal can be part of a pack, or a becoming—"[e]ven the cat, even the dog" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 241).

Following Haraway's (2008b: 30) critique of Deleuze and Guattari, I would instead argue that cats and dogs and many other pets are the ultimate partners in becoming, or rather in Haraway's term, *becoming with* (2008b: 244). Dogs and cats are everywhere, ready to form packs with their pet keepers and become "partners-in-the-making" of each other and the world (Haraway 2008b: 208). As I have shown in my studies, while

humans engage with pets in personal relationships, pets also allow humans to affirm their “animal” characteristics. In interactions with pets, humans are allowed to play. There is also often greater physical contact between humans and their pets than between many human friends. The body is itself a source of subversive performances—the body constantly fails to perfectly repeat normative appellations because of the many factors involved in a physical performance (see Butler 1993: 122; 1999). Furthermore, many pet owners say that there is a wordless, empathic connection between them and their pets. Therefore, humans become with pets in an often nonverbal way of being, frequently quite different from the way in which humans interact. I cannot see this occurring, at least not on a large scale, with for example wolves or bears. While Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming animal is a rebellion against subjectivation, the figure of the pet reminds humans that they were never subjects to begin with, but products of the friction between material-semiotic differences.

In all four studies, there is ambivalence present in the analyses: the encounters between humans and animals can lead to productive becomings, but humans can also choose to ignore the possibilities that encounters across species’ borders offer. Lévinas chose to distance himself from Bobby the dog. Humans can choose to laugh at Chihuahuas. Pet loss can be made manageable and reinforce the human/animal divide if the emotional reactions to pet loss are dismissed. The bodily surplus energy of spontaneous play can also be domesticated and channeled into socially accepted forms, creating docile bodies vitalized to serve economic productivity. The human-pet relationship as such is not bound to be subversive. Yet, with the studies, I have identified some of the ways that pets can help humans to think further than their subjectivity’s conditions, and some of the ways nonhuman animals—and human animals—can intervene in or exceed their own representations. As I stress in Study I, just as living beings’ continuous adjustment and maladjustment to expectations, disciplinary appellations, and normative frameworks are an ongoing performance, as is animal studies research:

The meeting with the other absolutely other gives rise to words, thoughts and questions we could never have foreseen, and thus, this form of research is never finished. The house cat wakes Buber from his isolation, it puts an end to silence, it demands an answer. Now, there’s a possibility for an infinite conversation. (Redmalm 2011b: 100)

Buber’s house cat demanded that Buber take the cat’s subjectivity into consideration. However, Buber soon chose to turn away again, making the house cat into yet another philosophical example of the difference between

humans and all other animals. In the final section of this concluding chapter, I suggest that the best way for sociologists to keep themselves open to an “infinite conversation” is by being sensitive to the limitations of their own humanity and the sentience of nonhuman beings.

### **The Sociologist’s Pet**

During the last stages of writing this thesis, I dreamt that I was sitting by my computer, immersed in work, when suddenly something fierce and furry attacked my right hand, biting it and stubbornly hanging on to it while I frenetically attempted to get rid of it. Was this Ghost Rat coming back once more to extract revenge from the roommate that survived him/her, now using her/him as a theoretical example to make a relatively abstract sociological point? Had I failed to speak for, to, instead of, or nearby Ghost Rat? Did Ghost Rat attempt to remind me that I could not have written this thesis without the nonhuman animals who surround me—dead and alive?

I began this thesis with an account of how Ghost Rat had disturbed my daily work routines and forced me out of my office. I discussed some aspects of my encounter with Ghost Rat that I later returned to in my studies—the ascription of subjectivity, the way some individuals gave a voice to Ghost Rat, and the way nonhuman animals interfere in practices that at a quick glance seem human but are more-than-human. The thesis also includes a living rat, as I interviewed a rat owner and met her rat. Perhaps, then, Ghost Rat attempted to remind me that humans and pets make each other in specific interactions, and the proposition of the pet as a theoretical figure risks becoming yet another animot—an all too inclusive word reducing a multitude of nonhuman animals into one simple figure. Perhaps my next book should be exclusively about rats.

Yet, I believe that Ghost Rat would agree that I have done my best to stay with the trouble of the specificities of human-pet relationships. I have shown that human-pet relationships may contribute to subversive transgressions of categories and dichotomies inherent to a contemporary Western culture, but I have also made clear that human-pet relationships may cement those categories and dichotomies if pet owners do not remain alert to what their pets are telling them. The categorical transgressions, if they appear, are always specific to the human and nonhuman animals engaged in the encounter. One of the first texts I wrote while working on this thesis was a short piece called “Hector” (Redmalm 2011a), published in the same anthology as Study I. In this text, I write about the feral cat my partner and I took care of after our landlord had threatened to shoot him because he chased other cats living nearby and ate their food. The themes that I

brought up in “Hector” recur in this thesis: pet owners’ understandings of their pets’ subjectivity; the power inequality between pet and owner; the fine line between pet and pest, the issue of superfluous pets and the threat of “euthanasia” that face unwanted pets; the complexities of behavioral and bodily alterations (including spaying); and finally, the close and loving relationship formed across species’ boundaries. Hector played, and still plays, a greater role in my life than Ghost Rat. In many ways, this thesis is an attempt to stay with the trouble that Hector caused. Hector passed away from cancer during my work on this thesis, but I still find myself asking the same questions he once raised.

One of sociology’s most interesting dilemmas is that each sociological description of the world is historically contingent, while the description simultaneously affects the social world that constitutes it (see Wide et al. 2011). Sociology’s object of study is therefore fundamentally volatile. Yet, many sociological studies, including studies of pet keeping, continue to rely on a fundamental notion—that sociology is primarily the study of *human* society, or relations among *humans*. For a sociologist, it is tempting to reach for l’animot—to follow the early sociologists’ example and use the notion of “the animal” to define the notion of “the human” and thus secure a neatly circumscribed object of knowledge. However, as “the human” is a fluctuation or a movement between above and under, before and after, and inside/outside, sociological analysis is most efficient when it takes the form of a countermovement, refusing to compliantly rest in a false sense of anthropocentric security. Sociological analysis only has the capacity to expose oppressive structures related to the human/animal dichotomy if sociologists also take care not to fuel the anthropological machine with their own distinctions and definitions. Sociologists can avoid doing so by remaining attentive to the impossibility of permanently pinpointing a sociological object of study based on species distinctions. Herein lies sociology’s paradoxical potential: sociology is the discipline with an unobjectifiable object of study.

As this thesis has argued, sociological thinking is most effective when it allows for rats in its theoretical constructions. By allowing for the anomalous and paradoxical, sociologists avoid forcing dichotomous conceptualizations on the world and are instead able to perceive how the seemingly coherent and logical is produced and negotiated. The pet is an exceptionally productive anomaly in this venture; pets make good rats. Instead of reaching after an abstract and distant animot, sociologists could reach after someone more familiar who kept them company all along; not the abstract notion of “the animal” on the other side of the human/animal divide, but the pets residing on their living room floors or in their furniture, challeng-

ing that very same divide. Sociologists' pets can help to ensure that their humans will avoid resorting to such a crude trick as using l'animot to define their object of study. By keeping a pet close, sociologists are also reminded not to exclude nonhuman animals from sociology's scope to cement an object of study. Because the sociological discipline has an anthropocentric past that occasionally continues to haunt the sociological understanding of humans and other animals, sociologists would benefit from being in the company of pets—may I suggest a Bobby, a Hector, a Ghost Rat, a “little cat,” or a Chihuahua? Then, again, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 241), any animal can become a pet.

I may have failed Ghost Rat in some instances, forgetting to keep him or her close at all times. What can I say? I am only human. However, what is a human being human? Tautological everyday expressions, sentences that are meaningful, even though they should not be according to propositional logic, have puzzled many analytical philosophers (see, e.g., Davidson 2005; Grice 2008: 385). Typically, if humans need to demonstrate that they are human, this calls for caution—they are likely either facing a great threat or just did something exceptionally bad. Hector or Ghost Rat could never defend their bad behavior (or bad smell) by saying “I'm only human.” The same is the case for members of the human species who are, for some reason, not granted fully human status. In this thesis, I have emphasized that the term human is attributed to some beings unconditionally, to others conditionally, and yet others are denied such a label altogether. However, humanity is not simply a poor excuse. Butler (2009: 77) notes that humans need the term “human” to analyze instances in which the term is used in violent acts or oppressive structures. The recognition that humanity is a process, a becoming, ensures that violence can never be justified in the name of humanity. If humanity is the product of a number of metaphorical, dichotomous fluctuations, then humans have no human or animal within that they can finally lay bare—not by dissection, nor by introspection. “Humanity” consists of the relations and processes that become visible when humans change their focus from inwards to outwards and understand how they make each other up (see Scheman 2000: 63) together with significant others and significant otherness. Although humans have never been human and never will be, humanity thus remains a useful term when attempting to grasp how humans are constantly becoming human in the face of others, where the collective of others is more-than-human. However, to halt the anthropological machine and relieve humans and other animals of the horrors of “dehumanization”, humans have to avoid adhering to a human “we” and recognize that they are part of a more-than-human

we—an inclusive *animal collective* of humans *and* other animals (cf. Latour 2004, see, e.g., 89, 2005, see, e.g., 247).

I thus suggest that sociologists attempt to find a pet—a favorite—to remind themselves that they have never been human. Pets can help sociologists to resist the incessant temptation to take their humanity for granted and avoid turning to the animal to define their own humanity. Humans' urge to cement their human status can never be completely defeated; there is no state outside society or the human sphere in which humans have finally become animal or eliminated the last bit of anthropocentric mythology. That is why pets are good for sociologists—one lives with pets, pets are there all the time to persistently challenge any attempts at dichotomous thinking, and cannot simply be taken up when it is practically or philosophically convenient. However, I also urge sociologists not to identify with a pet. Identifications soon start the usual dichotomous identificatory processes moving (above/under, before/after, inside/outside). Instead, sociologists should seek to form alliances with pets. In a Cynic alliance between human and pet, the processes of the anthropological machine come to a halt. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 244) write that finding and forming an alliance with an anomalous favorite in a pack is the quintessential means of becoming animal. Favorites stand out, yet they remain an integral part of a pack rather than an atomic, autonomous individual. Instead of abandoning one's humanity for becoming animal and refusing the familiar categorical framework, pet keeping provides a means to reach the subversive from the point of failure—from a point where humans' dichotomous worldview fails to fulfill its duties. After closing this thesis, I thus invite the reader to go on and be humbled by a pet.



*Härva by Anna Redmalm. Härva also figures on the front cover of this thesis.  
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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

The interview guide changed slightly throughout the data gathering process; I revised some questions and eliminated others that did not spur discussion during the first few interviews. The version of the interview guide below is the version used in most of the interviews (although it has been translated from Swedish and some details have been changed in this version for the sake of readability). The reader should also be reminded that I never asked all of the questions during a given interview, and the questions were often reformulated or posed as follow up questions.

### Background

Ask about age, occupation, where the interviewee grew up, and family and relationships.

### The pet relationship

What pets do you have?

What are they called? Ask about the names.

Tell me about them.

What do you do together with your pet/s

How do you communicate with your pet/s?

Do you speak to your pet/s? What do you say?

Could you tell me what happened when you got the pet/s you have now?

What is the best thing about having pets?

What is the worst thing?

Do you make any sacrifices for your pet/s?

What do you think your pet/s think/s is

- the best thing about your relationship?
- the worst thing about your relationship?

Is there something your pet/s is/are not allowed to do?

Has something changed in your relationship during the time you've had your pet/s?

[If interviewee has pets of more than one species:] What is the difference between keeping pets of different species?

Have you neutered or spayed your pet/s? Why?

Have you had any pets in the past?

Do you think that there is something that stands out in your relationship with this/these particular pet/s?

### Pet/s and the social environment

Do/es your pet/s ever behave in a way that you think is embarrassing?

Do you sometimes come into conflict with other people because you keep pets?

### Loss and grief

What are your thoughts about the fact that your pet/s will pass away one day? How do you think it will feel when he/she/they do?

Would you like to honor the pet's memory with a ceremony, an obituary, a place in a pet cemetery, or in any other way?

What are your thoughts about the animal's last part of life—what is a good end for an animal?

### Pets' needs

What do you think is important to consider when getting a pet?

What is a good life for a pet?

What is a bad life for a pet?

In general, do you think that society makes things easy for pet keepers, or is there something you would like to change (in terms of people's attitudes, regulations and laws, or the services and products available?)

Is there something more you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked?

Was there any question that you perceived as strange?

Was there any question you thought was particularly good?

## Appendix B: The Interviewees

What follows is a list of the interviewees participating in the studies to demonstrate the variety of perspectives included in studies III and IV. To the greatest extent possible, I attempted to ensure the interviewees' confidentiality by reducing the number of details provided in this list. This in some cases includes not mentioning, for example, the breeds of dogs and cats, as some breeds are very rare in Sweden, and this information could be used to determine the identity of an interviewee. The interviewees were born in Sweden except when stated otherwise.

- A woman approximately forty years old owning two indoor cats, who lives in a medium-sized city, in a house with a husband, does not have children, works as an information officer, and has a university degree.
- A woman, approximately 30 years old, owning one Chihuahua, who lives in an apartment building in a medium-sized city, runs a small-scale business, has a university degree, is unmarried, has no children, and lives with a partner. Most days she brings her dog to work.
- A man, approximately 40 years old, owning two purebred dogs, who lives in a house outside a middle-sized city, is engaged in a dog training organization, works as a dog trainer for the military and part-time with manual work, and does not have a university degree. He always brings his dogs to work.
- A man, approximately 30 years old, owning snakes and lizards, who lives in an apartment house in a large city, is married, and has two children. He has had at most approximately fifty snakes at home, is involved in an organization for snake and lizard owners, and works as a pre-school teacher. He also owns cats but was primarily interviewed about his snakes and lizards.
- A man, approximately 30 years old, owning a mixed-breed dog, single, with no children, who lives in a collective in a middle-sized city, is unemployed, does not have a university degree, and is a vegetarian.
- A woman owning twenty dogs and running a kennel, who had thirty dogs at home at the time of my visit. She is approximately fifty years old, single, has no children, lives in a house in a small city, and was born and grew up in another Nordic country and moved to Sweden because she was part of a Swedish informal network of dog

owners. She works in education in the private sector and has no university degree. She also has a cat, but the interview focused on her dogs.

- A woman, approximately twenty years old, owning a rescue dog, is single, has no children, and lives in an apartment building in a middle-sized city. She is an educated dog trainer and professional dog walker, works with welfare services, and does not have a university degree.
- A woman owning four cats, one of them pure-bred, who lives in a house in a middle-sized city, is married and has grown up children, works as a pre-school teacher, has a university degree, and volunteers at a cat shelter.
- A man owning approximately 150 birds, mainly doves and is approximately fifty years old. He is married and has children, lives in a house in a suburb of a middle-sized city, runs a small-scale business, and does not have a university degree. He was born in a country in the Middle East, was a soldier in his home country and fled to Sweden during a period of war. He also had cats at home but was primarily interviewed about his birds, which took up most of his spare time.
- A man, owning two dogs, who works full time as a dog trainer, specializing in hunting dogs, lives in a house outside a small city, is approximately forty years old, is divorced, and has children. He was born in a country in the Middle East and moved to a European country to pursue his education. He did not return because of armed conflicts in his country of origin. He then moved to Sweden because of the wildlife, as he is an avid hunter.
- A woman owning several aquariums with different types of water-living animals, mainly fish, who is involved in an organization for aquarium enthusiasts, approximately thirty years old, lives in a middle-sized city in an apartment with a partner, does not have children, works as an editor, and has a university degree.
- A woman owning two rescue dogs, she is an educated dog trainer and is involved in a dog training organization, lives in an apartment in a middle-sized city, is single, and does not have children. She identifies as a vegan and an animal rights activist, works with animal welfare issues, and does not have a university degree.

- A woman owning a mixed-breed dog that she inherited after the dog's former master passed away. She is approximately fifty years old, formerly worked as a manager in a large company, and has a university degree. She works at home on health-related work and has customers at home. Therefore, she can have her dog with her all day. She always has her dog with her and rarely uses a leash and is therefore repeatedly reprimanded for this in public places. She also has a cat but was primarily interviewed about her relationship with her dog.
- A farmer owning a dog, which she kept both for company and as a cattle dog. She also has birds and bovines for eggs, meat, and milk, and horses for riding and as companion animals. She lives in a house on her farm; she is approximately sixty years old, is married, and has children and grandchildren. She has a university degree. She also had cats at the farm, which were semi-wild. They were not allowed in the house, and she did not regard these cats as her pets.
- A couple—one woman and one man—running a small-scale kennel and owning two purebred dogs. They were interviewed jointly because they both wished to discuss their dogs. Both are approximately thirty-five years old, have a child, and live in a house outside a middle-sized Swedish city. Both have university degrees and qualified employment. They are both engaged in organized training and competitions with their dogs.
- A woman, approximately thirty-five years old, who owns a rat, lives in a house in a middle-sized city with a partner, and does not have children. She has a university degree and qualified employment.
- A man owning five birds, is approximately forty years old, is married, and has children. He lives in a house in a suburb of a middle-sized city, works from home over the internet, and has reserved a room in the house for his birds, where he spends most of his day.



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