

## CHAPTER 8

### *Animal Rescue*

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On July 1, 2015, a white American recreational game hunter named Walter Palmer shot a thirteen-year-old male African lion named Cecil on the privately owned property outside of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. The arrow failed to kill Cecil instantaneously, and he did not die until he was later tracked and shot with a rifle. Cecil's death received international media attention, famously embodied in American late-night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel's (1967–) tearful condemnation of Palmer's actions, in which he addressed Palmer directly by asking, "Is it that difficult for you to get an erection that you need to kill things that are stronger than you?" Kimmel's reaction was emblematic of many public reactions to the case, which interpreted Palmer's affinity for big game hunting as way of compensating for his diminished masculinity. The killing of Cecil also prompted debates about the ethics of wildlife sanctuaries and Western tourism, trophy hunting and masculinity, and questions about which lives matter and why.

On May 28, 2016, a three-year-old African American boy climbed into a gorilla enclosure at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden and was grabbed and dragged by Harambe, a seventeen-year-old lowland gorilla. Out of fear for the boy's life, a zoo worker shot and killed Harambe—an occurrence that was recorded on video and widely disseminated on social media. In response to the tragic event, in the months to follow, many social media commentators blamed the child's mother, suggesting that she had failed to control him and recklessly allowed him to wander about the zoo unsupervised. Some went so far as to circulate online petitions calling for her to be deemed legally negligent and charged with causing the death of an endangered animal. Whereas Cecil's killing was interpreted as a symbol of a white American's fragile masculinity, Harambe's death was seen as a reflection of an African American woman's poor mothering. Both these tragic events demonstrate how understandings of human and animal relationships involve questions of gender—the social characteristics that a society or culture defines as masculine and feminine that are imposed on "biologically" sexed male, female, and intersex humans.

These polarizing occurrences also show that animal rescue, which can be broadly defined as human interventions in the lives of animals to ensure their physical and mental well-being, raises ethical considerations about power. As residents of, respectively, a protected wildlife sanctuary and a city zoo committed to wildlife conservation, both Cecil and Harambe can be understood as rescue animals. Both animals have been subjected to the ongoing legacies of Western imperialism—the advocacy, policy, or practice of extending the power and hegemony of western European and settler colonial states (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the

United States) over other nations and territories. Harambe, whose grandparents were shipped to the United States from Africa, was born and raised in captivity—his species, native to Africa, and Swahili name were the primary reminders of his African heritage. Although Cecil the lion remained in his native home of Zimbabwe, he too experienced the effects of imperialism: he was outfitted with a GPS tracking collar in order to be studied by British scientists and was named after the British businessman Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), an active proponent of imperialism who founded the southern African territory of Rhodesia (what is now Zimbabwe and Zambia). In the cases of both animals, the human interventions in their lives were carried out in the name of wildlife education and preservation, with the implicit assumption that the human rescuers knew what was best for the animals. However, as the controversies around their deaths demonstrate, animal rescue elicits questions about the role of human beings in controlling, monitoring, and profiting from the lives and deaths of animals.

This chapter outlines the roles of gender as well as race and sexuality in animal rescue. Discussions of gender in animal rescue recur throughout this chapter with reference to the work of scholars from the fields of animal studies, anthropology, gender and sexuality studies, political science, and others. To set the stage for discussion about animal rescue specifically, this chapter begins by drawing on feminist scholarship that critiques imperialist Western efforts to rescue women from non-Western countries and shows the unequal power dynamics that can emerge between the rescuer and the individual being rescued. The chapter then extends the discussion of imperialist understandings of rescue to animals, examining international animal rescue efforts that seek to transport animals from “Third World countries” to the United States or Europe. These accounts highlight the cultural specificity of answers to questions of what constitutes a good life for an animal. From this intercultural and international context, the chapter moves to a national context that explores race- and breed-specific issues in animal rescue in the United States by detailing how racist stereotypes are used similarly with reference to black men and pit bull terriers. Pit bulls also figure as outsider figures in the context of trans\* identity. In order to flesh out this connection, the chapter next turns to trans\* identity and animal rescue, discussing how these identities overlap through their shared vulnerabilities. Expanding its discussion of nonheteronormative gender identities, the chapter takes into account questions of sexuality and reproduction by exploring accounts of close bonds with animals that are understood as the creation of queer or nontraditional family relationships. These bonds with rescue animals rely on encounters with individual animals that can be seen, spoken to, and touched. The chapter concludes with a reflection on affective relationships with individual animals, mapping how gendered ideologies of care are involved in the work of animal rescue.

## IMPERIALISM AND WESTERN FEMINIST RESCUE PROJECTS

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Imperialist projects and rescue missions often go hand in hand. The idea of rescue involves an unequal power dynamic, with an active subject doing the rescuing and a passive object being rescued. In order to justify this power hierarchy, the rescuers often reduce the diverse groups of people they are trying to assist into a single category. US-based postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1955–) suggests that such is the case for people categorized as being part of the “Third World,” a term attributed to countries with colonial pasts in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In her 1984 article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” Mohanty explains that colonization involves a

relationship based on the domination and suppression of the diversity of those being colonized (333). As an example of this phenomenon, Mohanty argues that Western feminist scholarship has produced the “Third World Woman,” someone who “leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)” (337). Governments and humanitarian organizations are not the only ones responsible for the creation of the Third World Woman; Western feminist texts are also complicit in this process (337). As Mohanty explains, the tendency to reduce all non-Western women to a stereotype leads to the assumption that “backward” non-Western women are in need of rescue by “modern” white Western women. Not only is this representation of the Third World Woman damaging and inaccurate, it also forecloses the possibility of any meaningful coalitions among white Western feminists and feminists of color around the world (334).

In her writings about American attitudes toward Muslim women, US-based anthropologist and scholar of women’s and gender studies Lila Abu-Lughod (1952–) not only cautions against the reduction of all non-Western women to a stereotype but also criticizes the rhetoric of rescue itself. In her 2002 article “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” Abu-Lughod decries the tendency of white Western women to place feminism “on the side of the West” and therefore to assume that all non-Western women are in need of “saving” from their repressive societies (787–788). For example, she identifies this rhetoric in the post-9/11 speeches by Laura Bush (1946–), then First Lady of the United States, in which Bush describes Afghan women as “rejoicing” at their liberation by the Americans (785). Beyond being skeptical of these claims, Abu-Lughod argues that “projects of saving other women depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority by Westerners, a form of arrogance that deserves to be challenged” (789). As Abu-Lughod shows, Western efforts to “rescue” human beings are part of a longer history of women-coordinated Christian missionary efforts in Muslim countries. Instead of appealing to religious ideas through the lens of Christianity, Bush speaks in the name of human rights and the liberal West, using rescue narratives in a secularized—but equally problematic—way (789). As an alternative to the rhetoric of rescue, Abu-Lughod calls for a “more egalitarian language of alliances, coalitions, and solidarity” (789). As Abu-Lughod’s article shows, the language of rescue is rooted in troubling power dynamics between the rescuer and those deemed in need of rescue. Like Mohanty, Abu-Lughod supports collaborative and equitable efforts between Western and non-Western women.

Turning to a concrete example of the pitfalls of imperialist rescue efforts, US-based anthropologist Aihwa Ong’s (1950–) scholarship shows how Western feminist projects can inadvertently harm those determined to be in need of rescue. In her book *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America* (2003), Ong explores what US citizenship means for Cambodian refugees living in the United States in the late twentieth century. She approaches the idea of US citizenship by considering how Cambodian refugees negotiate a set of common American values about family, health, social welfare, gender relations, and work and entrepreneurialism in their everyday lives (xvii). According to Ong, Cambodian immigrants soon learn that American identity requires becoming economically productive and self-reliant. Those who remain dependent on the US welfare system are racialized and stigmatized “within a national ideology that projects worthy citizens as inherently white” (9). Ong argues that white social workers and feminists are complicit in this process. In supporting Cambodian women’s efforts to gain financial independence for their families,

Ong says, social workers and feminists stigmatized Cambodian men who struggled to assimilate to these American values and required welfare assistance, leading to familial tensions (124). Ong argues that despite their good intentions, social workers “inflicted symbolic violence” on their clients and the Cambodian culture that they believed controlled and repressed women (167). The “compassionate domination” practiced by the white social workers produces a “double submission—majority women dominating minority women, who dominate minority men” (167). Ong thus exposes the cost of white feminist social workers’ attempts to rescue Cambodian refugees by imposing their own understandings of “appropriate” family relationships on them, rather than attending to the particular cultural contexts from which they came.

## IMPERIALISM AND ANIMAL RESCUE

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In a similar fashion to the Western rescue projects described above, animal rescue efforts often adopt imperialist assumptions about what kinds of animals need to be rescued and why. American feminist theorist and science and technology studies scholar Donna Haraway (1944–) highlights the challenges and possibilities that arise in transnational animal rescue efforts by focusing on a dog rescue organization called Save a Sato. Founded as a partnership between two women—one from Puerto Rico, the other from the United States—its goal is to transport street dogs (known as “satos”) from Puerto Rico’s impoverished neighborhoods to homes in the United States (Haraway 2003, 90). The women-coordinated efforts behind Save a Sato have facilitated the transport of more than 10,000 Puerto Rican dogs from the streets to American homes (90–91). Although the Puerto Rican satos now living in the United States are arguably living good lives, Haraway argues that the presuppositions behind their rescue demand further scrutiny.

Similar to the Western feminist efforts to rescue nonwhite, economically disadvantaged people from “Third World” countries, animal rescue work can become an extension of imperialist endeavors to regulate the attitudes and conduct of people living in “developing” countries. For instance, Haraway describes how the practice of spaying and neutering dogs is less common in Puerto Rico than in the United States, which is upsetting to many Americans who believe that “the only proper dog is a sterile dog—except for those in the care of responsible . . . breeders” (2003, 91). As Haraway points out, this attitude toward spaying and neutering carries class- and nation-based assumptions about what constitutes the “right” kind of care for animals (91). At the same time, however, Haraway does not suggest that one should do away with animal rescue entirely, or dismiss it as no more than imperialism. To write off animal rescue organizations such as Save a Sato is to overlook the strong bonds formed between humans and the animals they rescue, as well as the good work done in the name of the animals involved. Rather than taking a position for or against animal rescue, Haraway’s scholarship emphasizes the importance of being attuned to the underlying assumptions behind such efforts.

### VILLAGE DOGS

As is the case with spaying and neutering, the idea that dogs naturally belong in homes carries with it a specific set of suppositions that are not shared by everyone and do not reflect the living conditions of most dogs in the world today. Biologists have argued that the majority of the world’s dogs today live as scavengers of villages, with humans paying little or no attention to them (Coppinger and Coppinger 2001, 26). These dogs, known as village dogs, feed in the streets, backyards, and garbage dumps and do not have a single human owner (38). Other

studies confirm the wide variety of human and canine relationships, moving beyond the image of a dog in a home with a single human owner. For example, a 2014 study conducted by scholars of veterinary medicine from the Netherlands and Mexico describes the prevalence of free-roaming village dogs in Mexico (Ruiz-Izaguirre et al. 2014, 58). In rural areas of Mexico, most households keep dogs, and about 80 percent of them roam freely (58). Food is a central aspect of human-canine interactions, and the dogs' efforts to find food involves different levels of interactions with human beings, from scavenging from afar to begging for household scraps. Village dogs that receive food scraps from caregivers in the village or tourists may be more willing to approach people in general, whereas dogs that do not receive food or have had negative experiences with humans will remain more aloof.

### ARTHUR THE AMAZONIAN DOG

Many Western tourists are unaware of the prevalence of village dogs in other cultures, and they tend to assume that the dogs are neglected and therefore need to be rescued so they can live “better” lives in homes. Often, their focus on village dogs excludes awareness of the people living in similarly challenging circumstances, leading to debates about what kinds of lives should be rescued and why. An example of this is found in a 2014 story about a Swedish team of endurance athletes and an Amazonian dog that made international headlines. In a Public Radio International piece titled “A Stray Dog Adopts a Team of Swedish Trekkers on an Endurance Race in the Amazon,” the agency in the act of rescue is attributed to the dog, who decided to “adopt” the Swedish athletes, rather than the other way around (Crossan 2014). Much like the scientific studies about village dogs suggest, the encounter between the Amazonian dog and the Swedish athletes begins with food. According to Mikael Lindnord, the athlete featured in the story, he tossed part of his lunch to a seemingly stray dog begging at his feet, prompting the dog to continue to follow Lindnord and his team for over twenty miles. When Lindnord attempted to leave the dog behind during a long kayaking route down a river, the dog jumped into the river to follow them. After he realized the dog was still trailing behind them, Lindnord put the dog on the kayak, reasoning that “you can’t reject a dog that had put so much energy into you. It felt like he was one of the team members, and we didn’t want to let him down” (Crossan 2014). Lindnord’s assumption was that the dog did not have a home or any humans who would miss him and that leaving him behind meant that the dog would have to fend for himself in the Amazonian jungle. Lindnord’s account of the dog’s ability to keep up with the team of athletes also draws attention to their shared physical strength and endurance, linking the dog’s physical abilities with his own masculine athleticism. This connection proved to be strong, and after Lindnord and his team completed the race, Lindnord decided to adopt the dog and take him back to Sweden. He named the dog Arthur after the legendary British king—much like Cecil the Zimbabwean lion, this Amazonian dog became a representative of empire through his symbolic renaming.

The story, however, does not end here. In the comments section under the story as it appeared on the Public Radio International website, a woman who identified herself as an anthropologist who studies the part of Ecuador where the dog was found stated that the dog has an owner who lives in rural Ecuador. In her comments, the anthropologist draws an explicit connection between animal rescue and imperialism, noting, “I hate to say it, but the Swedes didn’t think to ask if the dog had an owner. Dogs in this area of the jungle are community dogs, and certainly might look stray. . . . We should be more cautious when trying to ‘save’ animals from the ‘Third World.’” This criticism of the Swedish team’s imperialist assumptions that the dog was in need of “rescue” from the jungles of the Amazon recalls Lila Abu-Lughod’s reminder about the dangers of a rhetoric of rescue rooted in a sense

of cultural and moral superiority. Most of the other commentators, however, did not share the anthropologist's perspective. She received a great deal of backlash in response to her comments, with some suggesting that the dog made his own choice and "will have a better life in Sweden." While acknowledging that the dog would surely have a good life in Sweden, the anthropologist responded that "the people living in this area, who all provide us with coffee, chocolate and bananas that we drink every day with their back breaking work, are totally ignored. Here we are focusing on how a dog needs to be 'saved.'" Her response to the dog's story shows how animal rescue can prioritize some lives as being more important than others, focusing on animals at the expense of human beings. This controversy also shows how the idea of what constitutes a "better" life is culturally specific, and these assumptions are always worth close examination.

## RACE, BREED, AND ANIMAL RESCUE

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Even within the confines of a single nation, ethical dilemmas about animal rescue arise, particularly when animal rescue brings together vulnerable populations of humans and animals. US-based political scientist Claire Jean Kim's (1965–) work does just that, focusing on the Michael Vick dogfighting case in order to highlight the connection between black masculinity and pit bulls. In 2007 Vick, an African American professional football player, was indicted on federal felony charges of operating an unlawful interstate dogfighting ring. Local police seized the dogs, and the majority of them were rescued by animal welfare organizations across the country and eventually placed into homes. The case generated a great deal of controversy, pitting primarily white animal advocates against mainly African American Vick supporters. As Kim argues, "the Vick controversy was explosive in part because its central players were in the American cultural imaginary, the most animal of humans (the Black man) and the most human of animals (the dog)" (Kim 2015, 255). Public responses to the case blurred the boundary between Vick's humanity and the dogs' animality, while focusing at the same time on Vick's gender identity. Vick's status as a black man played a central role in public responses to the case, as "ubiquitous and tenacious tropes about Black masculinity as violent, criminal, hypersexual, and animal overdetermined the narrow terms in which Vick's story could become culturally legible to us" (266). The public outcry over Vick's crimes against the dogs was tied up in his identity as a black man, bringing to the surface enduring racist stereotypes about black masculinity and animality.

A similar dynamic is at work for the dogs involved in the case. As pit bulls, the umbrella designation for stocky dogs with short fur, the dogs were represented as being black in the American imagination (Kim 2015, 272). Kim argues that, like African Americans, "pit bulls have been constructed as a group of beings whose behavior is biologically determined as violent, ruthless, and dangerous" (272). Similar to racial identification that depends on physical characteristics, pit bulls are defined as such through the eyes of the beholder. Technically speaking, there is no such thing as "the pit bull," which is an elastic and imprecise term for a variety of different breeds of dogs. These stereotypes, which are rooted in biologically essentialized ideas about race and breed, mutually reinforce one another (Weaver 2013, 691). This understanding of pit bulls as a "breed" that is defined by the arbitrary visual perception of the viewer mirrors how racial identification works in the United States. The application of human racial categories reduces a diverse group of dogs to an imagined monolithic breed (the pit bull) and determines whether or not these dogs are deemed worthy of rescue.



## TRANS\* AND INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES

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Race is not the only identity category tied up in animal rescue efforts. Through his work on pit bulls and race, gender, and sexuality, feminist theorist Harlan Weaver (1977–) demonstrates the importance of approaching animal rescue from an intersectional perspective that accounts for multiple grounds of identity when understanding how the social world is constructed. In his 2013 article “‘Becoming in Kind’: Race, Class, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Rescue and Dogfighting,” Weaver explores his experiences navigating public spaces as a trans\*person with his rescue pit bull, Haley. As Weaver explains, Haley has ensured his safety at moments when he felt the most vulnerable in public as a visibly trans\*person. At the same time, Weaver’s whiteness, queer identity, and middle-class status disrupt negative stereotypes about Haley’s breed status, encouraging people on the street to see Haley as less threatening or dangerous (689). Weaver and Haley each shape who the other one is, embodying a reciprocal interspecies relationship that Weaver calls “becoming in kind” (689). According to Weaver, “becoming in kind” is a practice of relating across species, where the relationship between a human and a nonhuman animal changes how others perceive them both and how they experience their own gender- and breed-specific identities. In theorizing what it means to become in kind with his pit bull–type dog, Weaver draws from American critical race and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1959–) notion of “intersectionality,” which highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when understanding how the social world is constructed (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Thus, in his experiences with his dog, Weaver demonstrates the entanglement of the categories of breed, class, gender, and race in understanding his and Haley’s relationship. Through introducing becoming in kind, Weaver proposes a way “to understand how the overlapping categories of difference that divide human worlds are part and parcel of necessarily intermingled human and nonhuman worldings,” the possibility of humans and animals creating new experiences and worlds together (Weaver 2013, 705).

Weaver also draws a connection between animal rescue and salvation narratives, harking back to critiques of white feminist efforts to save women of color from societies they see as patriarchal (a society controlled by men) and restrictive (699). Using dog rescue in the United States as an example, Weaver describes how “the sense of a self made more whole by the act of rescue reflects the ways that dog rescuers are changed by their encounters with their canine charges” (699). The term *rescue* is not only “inflected by religion,” but also by geography, “for it hinges on moving these dogs out of the woods and/or the streets, out of animal shelters, and into homes” (699). As with the Save a Sato foundation and the story of Arthur the dog, ethical questions also surround animal rescue in the United States that involves moving dogs into a white, middle-class context.

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY

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Like Weaver and Haraway, American scholar of literature, feminist and queer theory, and animal studies Carla Freccero (1956–) studies how animal rescue entails the intersection of multiple forms of identity—ranging from breed and class to sexuality and race. As an example of these overlapping identities, Freccero’s 2011 article “Carnivorous Virility; or, Becoming-Dog” focuses on the notorious 2001 killing of San Francisco resident Diane Whipple by two Presa Canarios—large dogs that were originally bred in the Canary Islands and are often labeled as pit bulls. Whipple was mauled in the hallway of her apartment

building where she lived with her female partner. The two dogs were owned by a Pelican Bay State Prison inmate, who was also a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, and were being cared for by his adoptive parents while he was in prison (177).

The Whipple case is famous for being a landmark moment in securing rights and privileges for same-sex partners. Sharon Smith, Whipple's partner, was able to bring a wrongful death lawsuit against the people who were harboring the two dogs. However, Freccero notes that media reports of the violent encounter between Whipple and the dogs were described in "queerly heterosexual terms" (187). For instance, the owners of the dogs suggested that the male Presa did not intend to attack Whipple, but approached her "as a dominant male inspecting a creature of the opposite sex" (187). Instead of figuring this attack as being motivated by bloodlust, it becomes reinterpreted as a scene of (interspecies) male and female sexual attraction gone awry. Furthermore, sensationalist media accounts alluded to evidence of bestiality between the dog and the woman who was caring for him (187).

This ascription of heteronormative masculinity—male identity rooted in stereotypes about physical strength, sexual potency, and an attraction to the opposite female sex—to the dog is consistent with other accounts of this breed, which is typically engaged in the work of protection and guardianship. Freccero describes how Presa websites often feature, on the one hand, pictures of puppies surrounded by children, to demonstrate their docility, and on the other hand, scenes of adult dogs attacking men in padding (187). The dogs are also depicted alongside muscular men and women of color, recalling Claire Kim's and Harlan Weaver's arguments about pit bulls being associated with black masculinity (188). Freccero's article suggests that the human owner of the male Presa identifies with the dog's masculinity, which explains why a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, a group that privileges white heterosexual hypermasculinity, might be interested in this particular breed of dog (188). Although it is not directly about animal rescue, Freccero's article provides an important intervention in understanding how sexuality is a lens through which human and animal relationships are interpreted.

## ANIMAL RESCUE AND FAMILY

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Turning to a broader discussion of nonheteronormative gender identities, this section explores questions of sexuality and reproduction by examining accounts of close bonds with animals that are understood as the creation of queer or nontraditional family relationships. For example, in her 2015 book *Urban Animals: Crowding in Zoocities*, Swedish sociologist Tora Holmberg describes how the figure of the cat lady can be understood as rejecting traditional norms around a woman's role in the family. One recurring theme in representations of cat ladies is that they are "lonely and childless, (hetero)sexually inactive, often middle-aged or older, sometimes represented as ill. There would seem to be something missing in their lives—a hole that living with cats may superficially fill" (103). These stereotypes suggest that instead of having husbands and children, cat ladies create feline families, which are interpreted as a poor or "superficial" substitute for human families.

### CAT LADIES

The cat lady is often depicted as a "sentimental woman who cares more about cats than about the things one (a woman) should value in life: a clean and orderly home, children and a husband, meaningful work, valuable feminine things" (Holmberg 2015, 115). The stereotypical cat lady is a woman for whom the care for cats comes at the extreme expense of her own financial and psychological well-being. Instead of caring for herself, she rescues cats, and



accumulates them in large numbers. However, Holmberg argues that this stereotype need not be the only way of understanding cat ladies: the cat lady also embodies “a feline femininity that does not make herself available primarily for other humans in accordance to heteronormative ideals” that assume heterosexuality is the only “natural” expression of sexuality (116). Instead, she prioritizes her cats, subverting social expectations about the “proper” role of women. By refusing to subscribe to such traditional gender roles, the cat lady creates a new kind of interspecies family unit. As Holmberg suggests, this alternative familial arrangement warrants serious consideration, rather than condescension or dismissal.

### QUEER INTERSPECIES LOVE

Many scholars are invested in theorizing alternate family relationships that are not heteronormative, moving beyond an understanding of family as being defined by heterosexual relationships between men and women, with children as the ultimate goal. American gender studies scholar Kathy Rudy (1956–) uses queer theory in her work to help her reimagine families that include people and animals. Rescue animals play a large role in Rudy’s writings about such interspecies families. In *Loving Animals: Toward a New Animal Advocacy* (2011), Rudy approaches her study of animal rescue through the lens of love, emphasizing the emotional and spiritual connections formed between humans and animals. This understanding of love makes space for animal agency in a way that many of the animal rescue stories described above—from Harambe the gorilla to Arthur the dog—do not. Animal rescue in Rudy’s understanding is therefore not only about people loving animals, but also about animals loving humans in return (Rudy 2011, xii). In Rudy’s view, human and animal relationships should be reciprocal, with humans responding to animal needs, and vice versa. For example, Rudy describes a time when she injured herself and was unable to walk her dogs, prompting them to become destructive in the home. Instead of punishing their behavior, Rudy hired a dog walker to ensure they received an adequate amount of exercise. As a result, the dogs stopped acting out, and peace returned to the home. In small, everyday gestures, Rudy is able to locate a reciprocal form of interspecies love (70–71).

Drawing from queer theory, which recognizes various forms of intimacy that are often invisible and erased, Rudy calls for a broader definition of family that includes humans and animals, moving beyond defining families based on sexual identity or reproduction (Rudy 2011, 41). For example, when justifying her past decision to end a relationship with her girlfriend in order to focus on the six dogs living in her home, Rudy states, “I was gay then, I believe, because I chose to share my emotional, financial, and daily life with a person of the same gender. Now I choose to share that same life with six dogs. These canines teach me more about life and love than one human ever has or could. And so I ask again, isn’t this queer?” (41). Rudy’s work represents a shift in thinking about gender and family, where she forgoes relationships with other people in favor of forming a family made up of six dogs. As noted above, these relationships are meaningful and reciprocal, based on mutual love and trust.

Harlan Weaver also interrogates the possibility of queer kinships (a web of close social relationships) with animals but moves past the home as a site for these interactions. In his 2015 article “Pit Bull Promises: Inhuman Intimacies and Queer Kinships in an Animal Shelter,” Weaver explores the queer dimensions of families with rescued pit bulls. Citing American social anthropologist Nancy E. Levine (1960–), Weaver describes how recent work on kinship has “stressed the fluid and contingent nature kin relationships and how they are instituted and nurtured over time” (Weaver 2015, 349). Weaver also builds on the work of US-based anthropologist Kath Weston’s (1958–) *Families We Choose* (1991), which describes how the lives of people in gay or chosen, nonbiologically related families subvert

the belief that “procreation *alone* constitutes kinship, and that ‘nonbiological’ ties must be patterned after a biological model (like adoption) or forfeit any claim to kinship status” (Weston 1991, 34). However, as Weaver notes, more recent gay marriage campaigns can be understood to reinforce the privileges and rights associated with contemporary heterosexual family formations in the United States (Weaver 2015, 349). Weaver shows how not only heterosexual identities but also LGBTQ identities are connected to the structures and histories of sexuality, race, and class.

Weaver brings dogs into these discussions of queer kinships in writing about pit bull advocacy in the context of an American animal shelter. The article focuses on a dog named Bailey who ended up on the euthanasia list because his intense love for tennis balls made the shelter decide he was not an ideal candidate for families with children (354). As a result, a group of five women banded together to coordinate duties for Bailey’s care, ranging from taking him into their homes to bringing him to training classes, walking him, and feeding him (354). This shared labor was particularly unusual because these women did not socialize outside of the context of the shelter, making Bailey “a nexus through which these humans and various practices of care came together” (354). As Weaver notes, this arrangement echoes what Weston describes in *Families We Choose*, which argues that a large portion of what constitutes a chosen family is connected to the work of caretaking (354). Thus, Weaver argues that Bailey’s foster situation demonstrates the “‘relatedness without kinship’ at the heart of many an animal rescue organization” (355). As Weaver describes, there is love in these relationships, but the volunteers are not a family—not even of the chosen variety described by Weston. Instead, they work together to coordinate “a network cemented through relationships of care,” demonstrating an alternative form of kinship (355).

## AFFECT AND CARE

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### AFFECT AND WILDLIFE RESCUE

Whether describing a close encounter with a village dog or the experience of walking a shelter dog, a great deal of the scholarship about animal rescue emphasizes an individual encounter that inspires the human to care for the animal, both affectively and practically. Many of the accounts above privilege the emotional aspects of animal rescue, focusing on the relationships between individual animals and humans. These meetings are not only with domesticated animals, such as cats and dogs, but also with wildlife. For example, US-based anthropologist Juno Parreñas’s (1979–) work on orangutan rehabilitation in Lundu, Sarawak, Malaysia, examines wildlife animal rescue in the context of affect, gender, and imperialism. Parreñas studies “the unequal distribution of risk and vulnerability among those involved” in caring for displaced or confiscated orangutans at the Matang Wildlife Center (2012, 673). This work brings together rescued orangutans, Sarawakian male workers who care for the animals, and primarily female British volunteers who visit the wildlife center as a vacation.

Parreñas uses affect, the feelings produced between human and animal bodies, as a lens to interpret these relationships. According to Parreñas, affective experiences at the wildlife center work in two ways: through the volunteers’ bodily encounters with endangered animals and through the physically demanding manual labor that the volunteers perform (2012, 673). This latter form of affect based in physical labor is shaped by the relationship between the postindustrial Global North (e.g., the United Kingdom) and the industrializing Global South (e.g., Malaysia), in which vacationing workers from England pay thousands of dollars to visit the wildlife center, physically encounter orangutans, and perform manual labor in

service of these animals (680). Parreñas shows that the physical labor required “is produced through the toil of one’s gendered body in relation to other gendered bodies at a work site and the heightened awareness of one’s own and others’ bodies through hard labor” (680). Although most of the volunteers were white, professional women, they were keenly aware of the masculine associations of their work, which required bodily strength and endurance (681). Despite these masculine valences, the women who participated in this work reinterpreted it as “a form of feminized care work” (681). Instead of understanding care as a form of emotional labor rooted in attending to another individual’s emotional or mental state, Parreñas argues that care at the wildlife center is “a form of custodial labor” where the female volunteers pay to perform physical work to improve the lives of the animals living there (682). This article demonstrates that the caring work involved in wildlife animal rescue and rehabilitation cannot be separated from considerations of nationality and gender.

### THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE EXOTIC PET

Moving from wealthy people who pay to volunteer with wild animals to those who purchase exotic animals to live in their homes, Canadian geographers Rosemary-Claire Collard and Jessica Dempsey’s 2013 article “Life for Sale? The Politics of Lively Commodities” discusses the international exotic pet trade, in which living animals such as snakes, monkeys, parrots, and hawks are bought and sold as pets. Collard and Dempsey explain that the animal trade was historically a colonial activity, based in natural history collecting and the creation of royal menageries and zoological gardens in Europe. Today, the geographical trajectory of the exotic animal trade continues, with the contemporary animal trade moving from biodiversity-rich, economically poor countries to wealthy countries such as the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. A large number of animals are caught up in this trade. For example, between 2000 and 2006, the United States imported over half a million shipments of wildlife, including more than 1.48 billion live animals (2013, 2686).

At animal auctions where these exotic pets are sold, they are presented alone in small cages, with the auctioneers emphasizing their domesticity, physical appearance, ability to speak and engage with future owners, and calm demeanor (2687). Collard and Dempsey highlight the auctioneers’ emphasis on the importance of individual, physical encounters between the exotic animals for sale and those who want to purchase them. They argue that “these lively commodities’ ability to enter into encounters with humans—to be touched, looked upon, spoken to, and heard—is central to their construction as valuable objects” (2687). The ability to physically encounter and engage with an exotic pet is therefore central to its value, demonstrating that affective connections are important in the exotic pet industry as well as in wildlife rescue. Although they are wild animals, their value rests in their ability to conform to middle-class expectations of pethood: they must be calm, docile, entertaining, and visually striking (2687). The physical effects of attempting to make wild animals into pets are harrowing, as seen in the thousands of animals that arrive at the steps of wildlife centers discarded, sick, or dead (2692). The capacity to be made something that can be thrown away is part of what makes a living being a commodity—something that can be bought and sold for human consumption. As the need for wildlife refuge centers shows, the fact that an animal can be treated as a disposable commodity is often what makes it in need of rescue. As in the case of Harambe’s grandparents, who were shipped to the United States from Africa, and the rescued orangutans British volunteers pay to encounter, animal rescue is connected to economics.

### INTIMACY AND ANIMAL RESCUE IN INDIA

Like the affective labor described by Parreñas and the commodification of the exotic pet detailed by Collard and Dempsey, the importance of the individual animal is central to Canada-based anthropologist Naisargi N. Dave's (1975–) study of animal rescue in contemporary India. In her 2014 article “Witness: Humans, Animals, and the Politics of Becoming,” Dave argues that animal rights activists in India attribute their involvement in animal rescue to a single, powerful moment, which they understand as “an intimate event in which the sight of a suffering animal, the locking of eyes between human and nonhuman, inaugurates a bond demanding from the person a life of responsibility” (434). This responsibility is generated through the intimate experience of locking eyes with an individual animal. A female Hindu animal rights activist who Dave interviewed describes her animal activism as follows: “To realize the suffering of animals . . . requires you to *become an animal that talks*. Because they cannot [talk], that becomes my responsibility” (444; italics in original). Based on this understanding, the activist must simultaneously become an animal by witnessing its pain, while also using her human capacity for language to speak for the suffering animal. In these moments of caring for a suffering animal, the boundaries between the human and the animal species dissolve.

Similarly, such acts of witnessing have the potential to disrupt the social categories that are so firmly settled in India. For instance, Dave describes observing a white American animal activist, who is known by Indian animal activists as “the mother of animals,” attending to a dying cow (448). In this moment, the American animal activist calls the Indian workers over to the dying cow, asking them to comfort it, speak to it, and touch it. As Dave details, “in these moments of being-with . . . the social boundaries between humans, too, fall apart, when they *are* together, all from their varying backgrounds of caste and race, facing the boundary between life and death that will someday hunt us all down, regardless of the skin we wear” (448). Although the particular differences among the human beings do not disappear, the shared act of witnessing an animal's suffering temporarily dissolves them, and something new is created.

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### Summary

Animal rescue involves ethical considerations about power, including what constitutes a good life for an animal and who has the right to make such determinations. Scholars in gender, race, and sexuality studies have shown that the underlying assumptions motivating rescue efforts are culturally specific. Whether it involves humans or animals, the work of rescue often entails imperialist assumptions about those being rescued, reducing and assigning them to monolithic categories such as the oppressed, the “primitive,” and the victimized. Similar criticisms apply to international animal rescue projects, which transport street animals from “Third World countries” to middle-class homes in the United States or Europe. At the same time, however, animal rescue should not be dismissed as just imperialism; to do so would overlook the emotional bonds formed between humans and the animals they rescue. Individual encounters play an important role in animal rescue, in which both the human and animal are transformed through seeing, speaking, and touching one another. Feminist scholars in queer and affect theory have shown how the act of rescuing animals can resist traditional gender expectations and create alternative family arrangements with animals and people committed to rescuing them. All these facets of animal rescue reveal the importance of taking into account how intersecting factors such as gender, race, and sexuality inform contemporary understandings of animal rescue.

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