Ruminant

By: Ruth Burke

Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 2012

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

April 24, 2017

Approved by:

Anne Mondro, Graduate Committee Chair

Stephanie Rowden, Graduate Committee Member

Amy Chavasse, Graduate Committee Member

Osman Khan, Director MFA Graduate Program

Elona Van Gent, Associate Dean for Academic Programs

Gunalan Nadarajan, Dean, Stamps School of Art and Design

Date Degree Conferred: April 27, 2017

STAMPS SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

M STAMPS
SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Ruth K. Burke, MFA '17

Ruminant

Ruth K. Burke

Candidate, MFA
University of Michigan
Spring 2017

RUMINANT

Ruth Burke
Candidate, MFA
University of Michigan
Spring 2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to express a loving and heartfelt thanks to my stellar advising team: Anne Mondro, Stephanie Rowden, and Amy Chavasse. As well as Holly Hughes, Leslie Rogers, David Chung, Osman Khan, Jim Cogswell, Jennifer Metsger, Rebekah Modrak, Nick Tobier, and Howard White.

Thank you for mentoring me, pushing me to always think harder and work differently. Most of all, thank you for believing in me.

To my cohort, thank you.

Thank you to the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design, Rackham Graduate School, the Smucker Wagstaff family, ArtsEngine, and the UM Library for the generous support to complete this work.

To my human collaborators, Ruth Ehman and the Guerra family: thank you. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, insight, and for opening your hearts, homes, and animals to me. This work was not possible without you.

And to Sean, for everything.
I couldn't have done this without you.

Contents

Abstract

Ruminant is an installation that combines sculpture, video, sound, and performance. Ethnographic research informs a visual language that embraces proximity through the lens of a contemporary relationship with cows, in the context of the small family farm. The work utilizes the feminist ethics of care, in which interpersonal connection, care, and interconnectedness are virtues essential to moral action. *Ruminant* is sequential and creates an overarching narrative of the cyclical nature of the human-cow relationship. The viewer experiences first, an immersive sound installation which distills the tender and intimate relationship between a woman and her dairy cow as they participate in the twice-daily ritual of hand milking. A five-minute film inhabits the territory of the cow, presenting the physicality of human-cow interaction and playing with notions of becoming with. A separate interactive video installation explores interspecies mimesis and alterity through movement; performance documentation investigates vulnerability and the reversal of typical power structures assumed by both species. The exhibition concludes with a process video and sculpture constituted of the hide of bovine collaborator, who suffered an accidental death during the course of the artists' studies. The installation investigates the following questions: what is the role of proximity in developing empathy and in developing kinship? How do we generate a new language to reveal our ancient covenant with cows? And what is the historical and somatic relationship to kinship? What does it mean to have kinship with a cow?

Keywords

interspecies kinship, proximity, empathy, movement, kinship, cow, dairy cow, ruminant, performance art, interspecies performance, installation

CHEWING THE CUD

Consider this an invitation into the pasture, the cows, and the quiet. This is a place where stillness reverberates in a gaze between two seemingly separate species and where the only sounds are rhythmic chewing and regurgitation of fermented grass, occasionally punctured by lowing throughout the small herd. This document covers the contextual, methodological, and creative processes that are vital to my work in the University of Michigan Stamps School of Art & Design MFA program. I will provide important historical facts, influential scholarly research, artists working in a similar or provocative way, as well as anecdotes as they relate to and fuel my creative research.

A *Ruminant* is one who chews the cud, who ingests plant-based food only to regurgitate it and chew it over, and over, again. Let's begin by chewing on the word itself. Ruminant stems from the Latin *rūmināre*, which means to chew cud; a term that aptly describes the primary daily activity in which my small herd of dairy-cow-collaborators participate. Humans have adopted this word in verb form, *to ruminate*. To ruminate as humans means chewing our own cud, meditating on or thinking deeply about whatever it is we might be chewing.

In my creative work, I am physically and metaphorically chewing on the individual cow and our relationship, past and present, to species as a whole. The Latin term rumen, meaning throat or gullet, is a site of interest as the throat is the source of language, generated by the vocal chords which sit at the very top of our trachea. Human's advanced and complex linguistic abilities have often been the source of division between us and other species, those who cannot respond in a human way. Thus, to explore a relationship with a cow, we must create a new language. I suggest contemporary art as a container in which to perform and generate a vocabulary that exists in the void between words and physicality. The term ruminant flips the anthropomorphizing of animals onto it's belly; humans adopted such a physical action into one of thinking.

Return to *Ruminant*, particularly its tail; *-ant*, being a suffix that denotes causing or performing an action or existing in certain conditions. Chewing the cud, entering into the world of *Ruminant* requests not only a metaphorical chewing, but is one of physical engagement. It is in this suffix, *the existing in certain conditions*, from which my work and research arise. .

My overarching thesis question asks what it means to have kinship with a cow. The sentence addresses the singular, one cow, but with the complicated nature of being one of many in the world, I must look to the historical relationship between human and cow, particularly as it attends to women, to attempt the contemporary.

I am interested in how humans acknowledge individuation in other species and wonder what constitutes the language of cows. The relationship between human and cattle is an ancient covenant that has nurtured our human existence for almost 10,000 years. And cows are a ubiquitous presence. They are here, in the private spaces of our freezers, handbags, and shoes, yet living cows are there, simultaneously absent from our modern day lives. The ethos of my artistic practice arises from the writings of Donna Haraway. "To be kin... is to be responsible to and for each other, human and not."[1] I have, to the greatest of my efforts, attempted to understand the nuances of responsibility. And if caring for a cow is to acknowledge the covenant that binds us, what tools might we need to be capable of this care, despite our alienation from living cows?

The responsibility towards both individual cows and the species is one that is uniquely human. In her book, When Species Meet, Haraway uses the term "quiet" to describe species which "bear the marks of generations."[2] Though Haraway originally used this term to discuss canines, I apply Haraway's term to cows, a species domesticated yet not valued in the way a companion animal might be; the wild in which cows once existed has disappeared, along with their auroch ancestors. Rather than asserting an agenda with patriarchal qualities (i.e. justice, domination) the feminist ethics of care call upon characteristics like compassion, emotionality, interdependence, corporeality, and connection, in order to fully evaluate all factors that impact the wellbeing of an individual.

This topic is not without urgency. In a Midwestern area where the general public is removed from their sources of nutrition, it may be easy to forget that cattle are one of the most impactful species on the planet, second only to humans. From the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Cattle (raised for both beef and

1 *Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008) 28.*
2 *Ibid.*

milk, as well as for inedible outputs like manure and draft power) are the animal species responsible for the most emissions, representing about 65% of the livestock sector's emissions." Therefore, implicit in this research is larger environmental consequence. With seven billion people on earth and one and a half billion cows,[3] I insist a meditation, a chewing on, of our relationship is urgent and necessary. Marc Bekoff, philosopher and author plainly states, "compassion begets compassion and caring for and loving animals spills over into compassion and caring for humans. The umbrella of compassion is very important to share freely and widely."[4] Considering the well-being of the sentient nonhuman world is an effective way to extend our compassion outside of ourselves, our species, and our needs. I come to, with, out of this research from a place of love. This being said, I must clearly state that I do not aim to make the world a vegan or vegetarian place. I follow in the footsteps of Haraway: "I look for ways of getting co-evolution and co-constitution without stripping the story of its brutalities as well as multiform beauties."[5] It would counter the feminist ethics of care to make such radical blanket statements about how other humans should live and consume animals.[6] I do ask that we reconsider how we look, consume, and touch a cow; I aim to complicate, to stay with the trouble, as any good disciple of Haraway would. To use contemporary art as a platform to do this work asks for empathy for a cow, for those who care for these animals, and requests a reconsideration of the conventional consciousness around these creatures.

---

3 "Key facts and findings," FAO - News Article: Key facts and findings, 2013, accessed January 11, 2017, http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/197623/icode/.
4 Marc Bekoff, The emotional lives of animals: a leading scientist explores animal joy, sorrow, and empathy - and why they matter (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 25.
5 Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003). 33.
6 i.e. "no one should eat animals", "no one should consume dairy products."

My research-based practice visualizes and investigates interspecies kinship through a combination of sculpture, video, sound, installation and performance. I use ethnographic methods to make language anew, to listen for a response and to accept responsibility for those who do not have a human voice. This creative research considers proximity, individuation, and engaged empathy as tools to understand the now distant bond between humans and cows, utilizing the feminist ethics of care, in which interpersonal connection, care, and interconnectedness are virtues essential to moral action; conjuring questions of how do we respond, rather than one of what is it. These ethics of care are my lens with which I explore the intersection of contemporary art, animal studies, and dance theory.

REARING OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Just as with humans, loving farm animals is a complicated affair. It's a relationship filled with wonder, joy and vexation. What I love about these creatures is how they call our attention to this world, and to our time and place within it. While we care and provide for them, what farm animals provide us—more importantly, perhaps, than food—is a way of being. The nature of our covenant has nothing to do with innocence: by a special kind of grace farm animals suffer through the world with us.

Michael Mercil, Covenant

I, like many other young people (particularly women), have horse fever. This fever never broke, even into adulthood. This information is relevant as these experiences calibrated my understanding of relating to, along, and with, the cow, as a feminist gesture. The barn is typically a woman-centric place and it is where I first saw women physically engage in strenuous and emotionally-taxing labor—labor as part of maintaining relationships, both human and not; labor that was not based in child-rearing. This was a rearing of, and with, a different kind.

In, *of*, *on*, *under*, *with*.

I was not raised in, around, or on a farm or rural community. And cows initially came into my life geographically attached to other entities and other places— not intentionally sought out by a self-directed interest. My motivated interest arrived almost two decades later.

My creative work and research explores interspecies kinship, particularly what it means to have kinship with a cow. To contextualize this question, I will present a brief history of the human/cow relationship, historical and contemporary impacts of domestication, and situate my creative research as a feminist endeavor by illustrating the connotations attached to domestication as they relate to both cows and women. In addition, I will present what kinship means and why it demands ethical action and a sensitivity towards emotion and feeling. Then, I will introduce the importance of the sensory experience in our ability to empathize with "kin." I will conclude by discussing my own experience and research and its manifestation as the thesis exhibition *Ruminant*.

Treatment for "Horse Fever."
Ruth, age 11, with her first interspecies love, Domino, the Pinto pony.

COVENANT OF DOMESTICATION

Domestication is an emergent process of cohabitating, involving agencies of many sorts and stories that do not lend themselves to yet one more version of the Fall or to an assured outcome for anybody. Co-habitating does not mean fuzzy and touchy-feeling...Relationship is multiform, at stake, unfinished, consequential. Co-evolution has to be defined more broadly than biologists habitually do.

Donna Haraway, Companion Species Manifesto

When was the last time you were close enough to a cow to touch it? To run a hand over bony hips or touch a hair-covered udder? To understand the problematic and alienated nature of our contemporary relationship with cows, we need to grasp the history attached to the 10,000-year relationship. Before the Industrial Revolution, cows used to live in close proximity to humans. We had a better, more holistic, connection with cows and the family dairy cow was considered a prized possession. Yet what once was familiar is now unknown. Living cows are noticeably absent from most of our contemporary daily lives yet we continue to depend on them as suppliers of material, like leather, and nutrition, such as dairy and meat products.

Cows were the subject of some of the first artworks. The longevity of our attention towards and with these animals can be seen on walls at the Lascaux Caves in France and the Laas Geel caves in Somaliland. Through these cave paintings, we can infer that the mystical allure of these animals existed before both humans and cows realized the benefits of living in close proximity to one another. One need not look further than the word *domestic* and its Latin root of *domus* to make the connection between cows and their historical proximity to humans. Domestic is defined as "living near or about human habitations" or "tame."[1] We will revisit this term later to discuss the historical relationship between women and cows.

Studying the process of domestication and its effects on animal behavior, University of California Davis professor E.O. Price defines domestication as "a process by which a population of animals becomes adapted to man and the captive environment by some combination of genetic changes occurring over generations and environmentally induced developmental events recurring during each generation."[2]

---

1 "Domestic" Merriam-Webster, accessed February 19, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domestic
2 Edward O. Price, Animal domestication and behavior (Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CABI Pub., 2002), 97.

The wording in this definition is worth examination: adapted *to* man. The use of this preposition asserts a hierarchy in the human/cow relationship and an inherently anthropocentric view of the nonhuman world.

Laas Geel caves in Somaliland. Source: JMcdowell/Flickr

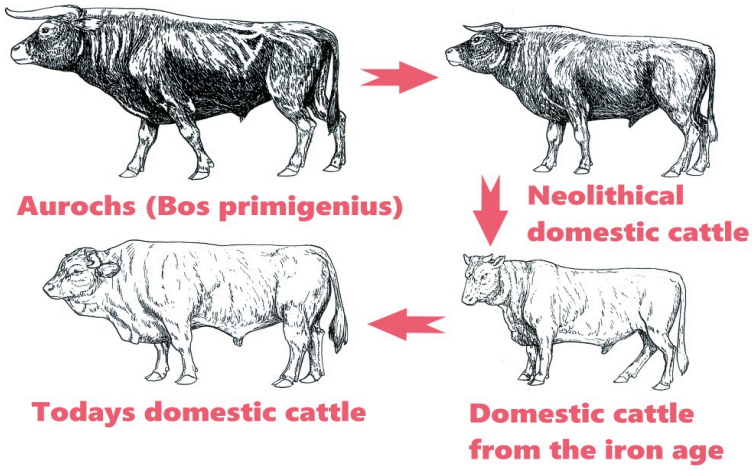


Figure illustrating the evolution of domestic cattle. Source: http://www.afm-oerlinghausen.de/en/afm-rundgang-en/steinzeit-en/jungsteinzeit-en/haustiere-en#prettyPhoto

Stephen Budiansky, author of The Covenant of the Wild; Why Animals Chose Domestication and a farmer in Maryland, argues domestication is the result of forces over which we have never had control. He advises we pay heed to the fact that "we are so accustomed to the notion that domestication was a human exploit that to suggest otherwise can make one sound more like a mystic than a scientist." Budiansky asserts domestication was a mutual agreement, one in the best interests of the survival of both parties. "Animals chose us, just as much as we chose them."[3] If we entertain this notion, then we can recognize a form of mutualism present in the human/cow relationship. Mutualism is a biological term that describes a relationship between two individual species who benefit one another.[4] The term is synonymous with symbiosis. I adopted Budiansky's theory of domestication in my research as it further complicates our contemporary relationship and also presents a platform to comprehend that the domestication of this species occurred thousands of years ago—we cannot revert back to living in a world where wild cows exist.

Lauri Carlson researched the longstanding cultural significance of cattle to human society for her book, Cattle: An Informal Social History. In it, she states the initial importance of cows to humanity: "the most important asset cattle had was their strength. Their ability to power wagons, sledges, grinding stones, and grain threshing equipment was invaluable...For millennia, humans relied on oxen to power civilization over much of the world."[5] Humans first harnessed cattle for their sheer strength; like the dairy cow, oxen were more valuable alive than dead.

---

3 Stephen Budiansky, The covenant of the wild: why animals chose domestication: with a new preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). 26.
4 One can also argue that in the context of factory farms, this mutualism is nonexistent and the human only benefits from exploiting cows. I will return to this argument in the methodology section.
5 Laurie M. Carlson, Cattle: an informal social history (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001). 27.

Oxen pulling plow. Source: Library of Congress.

Up until the industrial revolution, animals were treated as animals and "they were respected for their own natural attributes, whether wild or domestic." With onset of industrial revolution, animals were then treated as machines and discarded after use; urbanization further distanced people from an agricultural/pastoral life.[6] In a contemporary lens, farm animals, particularly cows, have moved away from notions of domestication; in the context of the United States Midwestern region, humans ceased to live along alongside the majority of cows.

Dr. Henry Buller, a professor of Geography at the University of Exeter has a particular interest in rural and animal geographies. In his article Individuation, the Mass and Farm Animals, he discusses the pervasive myth of the cow:

Farm animals as individuals constitute a pervasive form of affective rural agrarian imagery, one we are initially exposed to at a young age. They are still remarkably prevalent as children's toys and infantile imaginaries. James Joyce's 'moo-cow' coming down the road was a benevolent, if supernatural, creature in Irish mythology, resident of that mythical island of Inishbofin. Accepting that there are a lot of vested interests in maintaining the alluring fiction of the farm, these are forceful and durable representations; these wonderfully monogamous, animalian couples, these anthropomorphized humanimals where nurture, care and conviviality are the dominant paradigms of a seemingly innocent conviviality. Such representations are all about life (not death). Intentional animal death takes place – for the most part – somewhere else.[7]

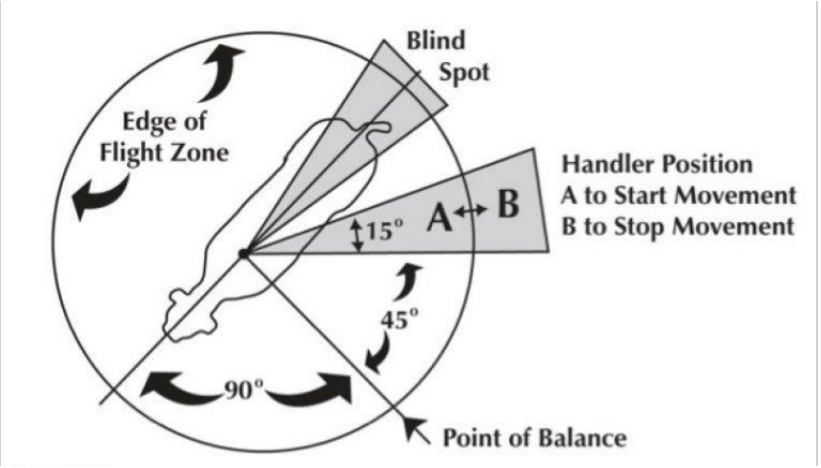
I lean into Buller's argument: bovine life and death take place away from modern society but humans choose to maintain the stereotype, the illusion of the species, close to us.

6 Stephen Budianksy, 44.
7 Henry Buller, "Individuation, the Mass and Farm Animals," Theory, Culture & Society 30, no. 7-8 (2013): , doi:10.1177/0263276413501205.167.

Centuries of domestication have resulted in cows being habituated to humans. The ability of humans to approach and engage with a cow is dependent on factors of tameness and habituation, two terms defined by renowned animal science researcher, Temple Grandin. Grandin revolutionized the commercial meat processing industry by focusing on bovine welfare particularly as it relates to "humane" slaughter.[8] Habituation asserts that the animal is not frightened by the sight of a human and thus will not flee. Tameness in cows is defined as a total absence of a flight zone.[9] [See Fig. below]

Most beef cattle are habituated to humans and most dairy cows are tame. I found this to be true in working with dairy cows: they do not flee at the sight of me entering their pasture; on the contrary, they approach me. As I have only worked with dairy and pet cows for this research, I will not speak about the relationship between meat and slaughter in this text.

8 "Humane" slaughter is a widely contested term and in this context I will use the term to mean putting the least amount of stress possible on the animal.
9 Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, "Cows," in Animals Make Us Human (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2010). 139.



The circle represents the flight zone of a cow and how a human should approach the animal in order for it to move in the desired direction.

Writing on the impact that observing and analyzing animal behavior has on the welfare of farm animals, Christine Nicol (2011) affirms that "farm animals have preferred companions, have complex social behavior, will spend time in social interaction at the expense of rest time and so on. These 'wants' (as opposed to 'needs') are increasingly being understood as socially contextualized rather than purely individual, yet they are not only increasingly denied within modern animal husbandry practice but also escape scientific investigation and consideration."[10] This entangled, knotty history between cow and human presents ample snares to trap humans into an assumption of cows, that defines them only as a species and renewable resource, concealing the individual qualities of each creature. Buller discusses the danger of desingularization: "the animals within [the farm] share conspecific and self-defining properties, becoming, in our eyes, desingularized imitations of their prescribed species or breed time... In their massivity, these herds and flocks [of farm animals] become metaphoric and, as such, killable. It is not only numbers that help us to stop thinking but also the hubris of our selective anthropomorphic conceit."[11]

As humans often cannot help but anthropomorphize the other, perhaps in this case, we can use anthropomorphizing as a useful tool for building interspecies empathy and consideration.[12]Cows are sentient beings and cows, like humans, have deep relationships with three to five other cows.[13]

10 Henry Buller, 167.
11 Ibid, 170.
12 Though I propose it as a tool here, anthropomorphizing can be problematic in itself. Val Plumwood, an ecofeminist scholar, discusses these dangers in her 2001 article "Nature as Agency." The article highlights the problematic nature of decid what nonhuman species are given "human" qualities and which are not.
13 On average, three-to-five close relationships.

The bonds between mother and daughter cows is especially meaningful.[14] Despite blossoming scientific evidence of these social bonds, both inter and intra species, the complicated nature of our relationship to cows prevents us from granting them a status equal to our celebrated companion species.[15]

14 Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, "Cows," 137.
15 Companion species being dogs and cats.

Jiggy and Ruby, mother and daughter, share a moment of intimacy by rubbing their heads together.

Why are cows lower on the hierarchal totem pole than traditional companions? Dogs and cats are "companion species" who share the spaces of our homes—we accept them into an intimate proximity. Through proximity, we can learn the individual traits of a creature, as they eat alongside us, provide company; in the case of a "conventional" companion animal, my dog sleeps in my bed. In the Western world, horses are often kept as companion animals, though restricted to the confines of the barn and pasture. One does not typically buy a horse to eat later, though some people do use horses to pull farm machinery, race, and for purposes of breeding. Our complicated cultural relationship with cows is perhaps what prevents them from accessing the esteemed ranks of companion species.

Bekoff uses the example "would you do it to your dog?"[16] as a leveling question that pokes seeping holes into arguments centered around dualisms.[17] There are also cultural differences to consider in the hierarchal status of cows. Three years ago, I had the privilege of visiting a nomadic Masaai tribe in the Mara region of Kenya. After a wholehearted auditory welcome to their small village, a village elder gave a brief introduction of the spiritual relevance of nonhuman life to their culture. The Masaai are semi-nomadic cow herders, meaning that the people move when herds of cows have consumed nearby resources. In addition to living in very close proximity to their herds, these Masaai drink the milk and the blood of cows; they sleep on cow hide mats. Temple Grandin would say that the Masaai cows are habituated to humans. In the tribes, cows are slaughtered with the utmost reverence- quite the opposite from the lurking factory farms in the Western worlds, though the Masaai relationship to the cows is not unlike subsistence farming[18] in the United States.

16 Marc Bekoff, 14.
17 Dualisms consist of two contrary or polarizing ideas.
18 Subsistence farming is the practice of growing enough food/livestock to feed only your family.

Women of a Masaai Tribe give a warm verbal welcome.

Indian Cows on arid land. Source: New Indian Express.

Before embarking on my graduate studies, I spent three weeks in India. I traveled up and down the Western Ghats and during my trip, I observed the polarities of how steers and women were invited to occupy public space. An August 2016 article in The Economist magazine describes the importance of cows to the Indian economy; most of India's 29 states ban or do not permit the slaughter of cows. A "gau rakshak" is a quickly-growing occupation of cow protector. Cow byproducts, such as milk, kefir, and ghee, are vital to the Indian economy as well.[19] In India, cows are revered as venerable beings; they are not to be harmed by any human. This contrasts a conventional U.S. attitude towards cows, one that conjures images of cowboys, massive herds of cattle, and hidden slaughterhouses.

Since the industrial revolution, many people experience a lack of opportunities to experience livestock due to rapidly urbanizing and suburbanizing lifestyles. In most regions of the Midwestern United States, municipal code demands that a landowner possesses two

19 *"Cowboys and Indians; Protecting India's cows." The Economist, August 20, 2016, 32(US). General OneFile (accessed March 21, 2017). http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&sw=w&u=lom_umichanna&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA461002000&sid=summon&asid=71133e04d2d674c6438046e721107c34.*

and a half acres of pasture for every cow they own. The combination of American cultural attitudes towards cows, our consumption of cows and their byproducts, and the large geographical and financial demands of these animals prevents a layperson[20] person from granting cows a status similar to that of dogs and cats.

I found myself interested in notions of proximity and the cultural connotations around cows as I realized my only previous interactions with cows derived from other interspecies exchanges (horses) and brief experiences in other countries, where the cultural consciousness towards cows differs from those in the United States. As proximity is a primarily somatic experience, it presents the possibility of individuating an animal—seeing one of a multitudinous species as unique in their own way. Individuation is one method point for humans to extend ethical considerations to both individual cows and cattle as a species. For those who cannot access proximity with a living cow, I pose the relationship between women and cattle as a "case study" to consider interspecies kinship.

20 *Layperson being a non-farmer, non-rural inhabitant. City dweller.*

THE TAME
THE FEMININE

A cultural link between women and cattle seems an unlikely combination to us today. Most women never see live cattle and have little interest in them....ages ago, women linked themselves inextricably and symbolically with cows.

Lauri Carlson, Cattle: A Social History

Milk and cows have been considered sacred for thousands of years and their likeness has been portrayed in homes, cooking areas, and sacred sites; milk and meat are gendered substances for glaring reasons: animal herding societies altered the gendered roles that formerly suited hunting society; meat and dairy products nurtured a far different society than that of the hunting societies. As hunters, men slaughtered animals and harvested meat; women cared for the dairy cows. Dairy cows were domestic in the sense of the definition—of the house.

Elizabeth Spelman, a feminist scholar coins the term somatophobia, which describes the associations of women, children, animals and the natural world with one another, and the abject body.[1] It also refers to "the Western Philosophical habit of hostility of the body" and a heavy emphasis on reason.

From Aristotle onwards, the intellectual reasoning for women's charged "inferiority" has been justified by likening them to animals; animals who cannot help but follow the impulse of their body rather than impulses motivated by reason. This reverberates into the world of the Western theorists and their omnipotent power to grant moral status to beings: animals, women, nonwhite men. These populations, despite constituting a large percentage of sentient, animate beings on this planet, had no ability to reason.[2]

We meander down a trail pioneered by feminist scholars Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan, who argue that the ethical approach is for feminist theory not only to recognize, but engage with, the status and treatment of nonhuman animals because of the oppressions shared by both women and nonhuman animals: abuse, exploitation, commercialization.

---

1 Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, "Sexism/Speciesism: Interlocking Opressions," in Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995) 2.
2 Ibid.

In her essay "Thinking Like A Chicken", feminist scholar and poultry welfare pioneer, Karen Davis, Ph.D "argue[s] that although nonhuman animals are oppressed by basic strategies and attitudes that are similar to those operating in the oppression of women, it is also true that men have traditionally admired and even sought to emulate certain kinds of animals, even as they out to subjugate and destroy them, whereas they have no traditionally admired or sought to emulate women."[3] While the wild animal offers unbridled potential and mystique, a domesticated animal is abject, feminine, and even boring. In a discussion about animal individuality, Haraway challenges conventions of domesticated animal's selfhood and compares it with the endowed selfhood of wild animals: "pets can have names in the newspapers because they are personalized and familiarized but not because they are somebody in their own right, much less in their difference from human personhood and families. Within this frame, only wild animals in the conventional Western sense, as separate as possible from subjugation to human domination, can be themselves."[4] By this rationale, subjugation wipes any inkling of selfhood—for women and for domesticated animals.

Contemporary artist Dana Sherwood works with animal populations in a similar manner as I. Dana works with wild animals displaced by human populations; she makes elaborate feasts for families of raccoons, possums, foxes, with the occasional appearance of a feral cat. Each year, she travels to Florida and works in the same location. During a casual Skype conversation in late 2016, she noted the "unknown" of "things not going as planned" as one of the exciting aspects of working with animals.

3 Karen Davis, "Thinking like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection," in Women and Animals: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, ed. Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). 196.
4 Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008). 135.

Dana and I share similarities in working methodologies: we both recognize the importance of not harming the animal or causing them excessive stress. We also "know" our nonhuman "collaborators" through spending time with populations of raccoons, or in my case, cows.

Our observation techniques differ in that Dana is often a removed observer, seeing her subjects through hunting cameras and other documentary devices—my work is with domesticated species and I take great consideration of husbandry and complicated issues of subjugation, rather than displacement, in my work. We both create methods of translating research into forms to present within a gallery context.

Dana Sherwood, Crossing the Wild Line 2016.
Image courtesy of the artist & Denny Gallery.

Dana Sherwood, Feral Nights Florida, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist & Denny Gallery.

As previously presented, domesticated and farm animals are often associated with notions of tameness. In regard to animals, tameness means lacking any fear of humans, or a gentle and docile disposition. These words conjure a synonym: feminine. Historically, one might desire a wife and the family cow to have similar tame or domestic dispositions. Karen Davis calls out the gendered negative connotations that are attached to ideas of tameness: "the analogy between women and nonhuman animals overlooks perhaps a more specifically crucial comparison between women and farm animals"[5] as both farm animals and women exist in a similar historical praxis of care and subjugation.

Agricultural women fell victim to a colloquial trope just as cows did. Author Zachary Michael Jack explores the paradox of this trope in his book, "The Midwest Farmer's Daughter". He questions how today, though women own 30 percent of new farms, America's farm-reared daughters continue to be conspicuously missing from popular film, television, and literature. To quote Jack: "by 1950 the Midwest farmer's daughter had become part celebrity, part myth, part scapegoat, and part salvation. Soon enough she, like Santa, would qualify as a cultural apparition kept alive mostly as an article of faith."[6] This is not psychologically different from the way our homes are filled with stereotypical manifestations of cows, yet the authentic fabric that makes up these living, autonomous beings is noticeably absent from our lives.

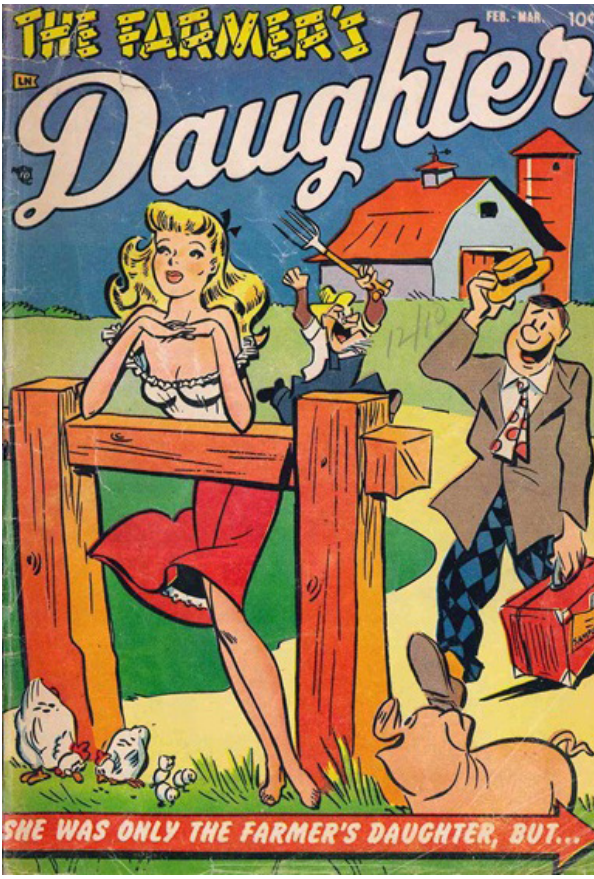
The American agricultural woman's existence is validated only through an overly-sexualized, metaphorical ideal, a notion that manifests parallel to a recognition of cows as species, but not individual creatures. This emerges as a romanticized ideal of cows. We discuss these comparisons since they create an implicit kinship between women and cows.

---

5 Karen Davis, 198.
6 Zachary Michael Jack, The Midwest farmer's daughter: in search of an American icon (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2012). 48.

Top: Maidenform Ad Published in April 1962 issue of Woman's Day Magazine. Source: Flickr.

Bottom: Farmers' daughters and traveling salesmen were often thrust together in jokes and narratives. Courtesy of Cartoonsnap.Blogspot.com



KINSHIP & BONDS

Cattle had to be nurtured, tamed, cared for—a job that women gravitated to because the animals could be kept near the house and fed or watered with the help of children and the elderly...milking was an essentially feminine task, along with processing the dairy products that were vital to survival. As [cattle] clans began to abase their politics and survival on the nurturing of cattle, women came to be seen as more powerful; in fact, the rise of earth-goddess societies coincides with the move onto the grasslands and the adoption of a pastoral way of life.

Lauri Carlson, Cattle: An Informal Social History

As my creative research progressed, notions of bonding surfaced with increasing importance. I developed a kinship with my human and bovine collaborators; this kinship became multiform and complicated. It grew from cultural and historical connection, but also from time spent in proximity to one another. Hours in tall grass, mud, or bearing cold winds together; the cows have come to recognize me.

My practice is female centric: My primary human collaborator is single 61 year-old Ruth Ehman, owner of Firesign Family Farm, and save for the young bull calf Charlotte gave birth to in mid-November of 2017, all my bovine collaborators are, and have been, female. We are kin by gender, by our abject bodies. I have chosen to take these cows and Ruth, as my kin.

In her influential text, When Species Meet, Haraway touches on the implications of being kin: "to be kin in that sense is to be responsible to and for each other, human and not."[1] This particularly speaks to domesticated species and the mutualism profoundly woven into our relationship. The Merriman-Webster Dictionary defines kinship as "the state or fact of being of kin; family relationship and/or relationship by nature, qualities, etc.; affinity."[2] We are primarily concerned with the specificity of the latter: "relationship by nature, qualities, etc.; affinity." As previously presented, women and cows share an inherent kinship through the body, representation, and their shared historical praxis of care.

Dr. Nickie Charles, a Sociology Professor and Director of the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender at the University of Warwick, does qualitative research into how non-human animals become kin. In 2014, she concluded a study on the affective relationships between human and animals as they are understood and experienced.

---

1 Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008). 79.
2 "Kinship," Merriam-Webster,accessed February 19, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kinship.

From her published findings:

The affinities between people and their pets are experienced as emotionally close, embodied and ethereal and are deeply embedded in family lives. They are understood in terms of kinship, an idiom which indicates significant and enduring connectedness between humans and animals, and are valued because of animals' differences from, as well as similarities to, humans. Kinship across the species barrier is not something new and strange, but is an everyday experience of those humans who share their domestic space with other animals.[3]

The study reinforces the multifaceted nature of connectedness; people connect with their animals through spiritual, sensory and ethereal dimensions. Charles continues: "the sensory dimension of affinity was brought out when correspondents wrote about their relationships in terms of touch and physical contact, pointing to the centrality of embodiment to human–animal connectedness. Relationships were often described in terms of intercorporeality."[4] The sensory dimension of affinity is particularly interesting as our senses are aspects of existence that we share with animals, though in differing degrees. Animals often offer an affective dimension that many of us do not find satisfied in our close human relationships. They require a daily care, often outdoors. It is the caretaker[s] responsibility to provide shelter, food, and medical care for their animal.

As previously mentioned, one of the outcomes of daily care in close proximity is that we begin to individuate the animal. Individuation is a crucial factor in establishing interspecies bonds. In Dr. Charles' study, she found participants' emotional affection towards their animals elevated their status to an almost human level, allowing the human to make human-like bonds with their friend. Charles' work raises the larger question, do we anthropomorphize animals in order to have meaningful relationships with them?

---

3 Nickie Charles, "'Animals Just Love You as You Are': Experiencing Kinship across the Species Barrier," Sociology 48, no. 4 (2014): accessed January 10, 2017, doi:10.1177/0038038513515353. 727.
4 Ibid, 723.

She continues:

It is undoubtedly the case that many so-called human capacities are attributed to animals, and it has been suggested that humans act towards the animals with whom they engage 'as if' they share meanings and have a sense of self (Jerolmack, 2009). There is, however, evidence in the correspondents' accounts that relationships with animals were valued not only because animals were 'almost human' but also because they were not (cf. Fudge, 2008). Animals were sometimes found to be better at being family than were human animals; they were 'more family than family' and the emotional bond was experienced as stronger and more enduring than that with some human family members.

From her study, Dr. Charles' concluded that animals are experienced as sources of comfort, security and emotional support for their human caretakers, thus they provide a sense of ontological security for humans.[5]

5 *Nickie Charles, 727.*

A porous boundary separates kinship and friendship. While friendship is a chosen relationship, one that both parties willingly enter and maintain, the formal definition of kinship encompasses both genetic and social kin. The Merriman-Webster Dictionary defines kinship as, "the state or fact of being of kin; family relationship and/or relationship by nature, qualities, etc.; affinity."[6] Kinship, by definition, is not built nor maintained by affection between the parties. At its core, friendship is based on affection—though the reasons for said affection can vary.

I chose to use the term kinship in my overarching thesis question as it encompasses the nature of asymmetrical interspecies relationships, where one party cannot explicitly express their satisfaction with the relationship, and also the nature of my personal relationship to my bovine collaborators. Ultimately, the nature of the "kinship" and "friendship" will having meaning for the human that it will not for the nonhuman party, and vice-versa. One of the outcomes being, again, that we individuate with. Affection can be contingent on superficial qualities, such as emotional generosity or material wealth.

6 *https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kinship.*

Kinship can manifest asymmetric to friendship: humans often do not choose kin but we do choose friends. One of my bovine collaborators, Shyanne the Scottish Highland cow, never explicitly returned my affections. I spent many hours with the boisterous heifer and came to know her habits and preferences. We performed together, we touched skin-to-skin. We were, at times, face to face breathing in the air the other exhaled. One night in early March, 2016, Shyanne and her Dexter cow companion, Brianne, escaped their pasture. Shyanne was hit by a car; it was a fatal accident.

I was devastated after her death.

In Staying with the Trouble, Haraway points out that the act of grieving is not an activity reserved solely for humans, but she urges a "grieving-with" in order to thwart the trap of human exceptionalism. We exist in a multispecies world. To do so in a thoughtful manner, she turns to Thom Van Dooren, an ecological philosopher and interspecies ethnographer. Van Dooren believes that mourning is essential to becoming responsible. If we embrace a grieving-with, we can recognize that other species too, grieve the loss of one another or loss of place.[7]

Though I sought Shyanne and Brianne out as a means to an end, the relationship blossomed into something more substantial. A kin-making. Brianne and I grieved-with one another over the loss of our companion and kin. This body of work has brought me kinship in different forms: a genuine friendship with a farmer, a passing down of tradition, and relationships of various capacities with eight different cows.

7 Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene. (Durham: Duke University press, 2016). 73.

Shyanne, Brianne, and myself.

INTERSPECIES ETHICS

If I consider a cow to be kin, it is important that I engage with cows in an ethical manner. The feminist ethics of care provide a holistic manner of conducting interspecies research. These ethics demand a standard of care, compassion and emotionality.

One synonym of the word care is *responsibility*, an important term I previously raised.

Compassion is defined as "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it."[1] In The Dictionary of Psychology, emotionality is defined as "the observable behavioral and physiological component of emotion. It is a measure of a person's emotional reactivity to a stimulus."[2] An individual's response can, at times, be observed and at other times, the emotion must be experienced to be understood. I define compassion as the desire to reduce suffering of another through empathetic means, a term which I will define shortly. Emotionality is a mode of being present, of accessing the world through means that transcend verbal or written language.

In Western traditions, emotion has been historically positioned as opposite to and lower than rational thought.[3] Beginning in the Victorian age, physicians consider women to be more prone to malady, or hysteria, than men; women were perceived as more fragile and sensitive than men. "Emotions" were the problem rather than a reaction to social circumstances. These traditions lingered in the household until the 1970's.[4] Marc Bekoff defines emotions as psychological phenomena that aid in behavior management and control; "they are phenomena that emote us, that make us move."[5] He makes a distinction between emotional responses to physical stimulus and feelings that result from thoughts.

The former shows the body responds to external stimuli but the latter are psychological occurrences that occur within the confines of the mind. Bekoff states, "we may interpret our emotions. Feelings express themselves in different moods. feelings help us and influence

---

1 "Compassion." Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion.
2 Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber, The Penguin dictionary of psychology (London: Penguin, 2001). 281.
3 Jennifer S. Lerner et al., "Emotion and Decision Making," Annual Review of Psychology 66, no. 1 (2015): , doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115043.
4 "Science Museum. Brought to Life: Exploring the History of Medicine." Women and psychiatry. Accessed April 19, 2017. http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/menalhealthandillness/womanandpsychiatry.
5 Marc Belkoff, 7.

how we interact with others in a wide variety of different social systems."[6] We know that cows have feelings, though the extent to which they experience them akin to our human ways, is unknown. After Shyanne passed away, her companion Brianne exhibited unusual behavior; for days, she paced back and forth on the fence line closest to the Guerra's house, bellowing at anyone she saw.

Bekoff recognizes the importance of emotion in interspecies relationships and deems emotion as the most effective method of communicating between species that do not share a common language.[7] The universal interspecies language is one of emotion. Lori Marino, a senior lecturer in the Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology program at Emory University who studies whale and dolphin cognitive processes, illuminates the importance of emotions: "Without emotions an individual cannot act or make the kinds of decisions that are key to survival, of course, some emotions are basic and others are tied into cognitive processes, so some are more complex than others."[8] This goes against the common Western belief that emotions and logic are contrary to one another. Rather, we can recognize emotions are important factors in coming to logical conclusions.

Studying environmental feminism and animal studies, Hunter College Professor Traci Warkentin lays out a strategy for approaching animals. In her article "Interspecies Etiquette," she discusses the importance of corporeal and affective consideration: "The kind of attentiveness we are concerned with here involves one's whole bodily comportment and a recognition that embodiment is always in relation to social others, both human and

6 *Bekoff, 22.*
7 *Bekoff, 15.*
8 *Laurel Braitman, Animal madness: how anxious dogs, compulsive parrots, and elephants in recovery help us understand ourselves (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 244.*

animal."[9] I position emotional sensitivity and the body as tools essential to responding ethically to cows. This is not a weakness nor is it in opposition of ideas around rationality.

Traci Warkentin quotes Josephine Donovan and "explains that, unlike a traditional Western rational approaches to a moral dilemma, feminist animal care theory promotes a "narrative, contextually aware form of reasoning as opposed to the rigid rationalist abstractions of the "one-size-fits-all" rights and utilitarian approach, emphasizing instead that we heed the individual partialities of any given care and acknowledge the qualitative heterogeneity of life-forms."[10]

If being compassionate involves the desire to alleviate suffering, we must understand what it means to suffer, and what it means for a cow to suffers. Eric Cassell, M.D. and author of The Nature of Suffering, determined that for humans, "suffering occurs when an impending destruction of the person is perceived; it continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or until the integrity of the person can be restored in some other manner."[11] For a cow, suffering can be generalized as not being presented with an option to approach a new or frightening situation by their own volition. Though anecdotal and fraught with speculation, one may consider Brianne's behavior of pacing the fence as a visual manifestation of suffering after her companion Shyanne's death. A multispecies grieving.

By accessing our human emotions and sensory experience, an opportunity arises for empathy, putting oneself in another's shoes. Author Leslie Jamison discusses the word in her text, The Empathy Exams: "Empathy comes from the Greek empatheia -em (into) and

---

9 Traci Warkentin, "Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals," Ethics & the Environment 15, no. 1 (2010): , doi:10.2979/ete.2010.15.1.101. 102.
10 Ibid, 104.
11 Eric J. Cassell, "The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine," Loss, Grief & Care 8, no. 1-2 (1998): , doi:10.1300/j132v08n01_18. 133.

pathos (feeling) - a penetration, a kind of travel."[12] Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster dives deeper, empathy being: "feelings that one experienced in response to observation another person or object were produced through replication in the mind of the actions of the other. Empathy consisted in the act of reproducing in one's mind the kinesthetic images of other, imaged that synthesized physical and emotional responses."[13] Empathy is necessary in attempting to emotionally and psychologically connect with other species; it moves us out of a theoretical analysis of the animal and into a zone where we have a part of ourselves at stake in the inquiry. I have been working through defining this term and have concluded it to be seeing a reflection of oneself through the mirror of a separate experience.

As we've already abandoned dualistic ways of thinking[14] in exchange for a more holistic and interconnected approach to the nonhuman world, we turn to Lori Gruen, a feminist philosopher who works at the intersection of ethical theory and praxis with a focus on issues that impact those often overlooked in traditional ethical investigations. Gruen calls for an engaged empathy. This requires critical attention to situations that undermine the wellbeing or flourishing of the beings to whom we extend said empathy. In addition, this practice requires "moral agents to attend to things they might not have otherwise. Engaged empathy requires gaining wisdom and perspective, and, importantly, motivates the empathizer to act ethically"[15] Attending to things they may not have otherwise resonates with me. Contemporary art allows me to attend to cows in this manner.

Otherwise, my lack of training as a scientist, animal studies scholar, veterinarian, or farmer would prevent me from positioning this work,

---

12 Leslie Jamison, The empathy exams: essays (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014). 39.
13 Susan Leigh. Foster, Choreographing empathy: kinesthesia in performance (London: Routledge, 2011). 128.
14 i.e. Logic vs. emotion
15 Lori Gruen, "Attending to Nature: Empathetic Engagement with the More than Human World," Ethics & the Environment, 14, no. 2 (2009): , doi:10.2979/ete.2009.14.2.23. 23.

Ann Carlson, Mary Ellen Strom, Madame 710, 2008. Three-Channel Video. Film Still.

Ann Carlson, Mary Ellen Strom, Madame 710, 2008. Three-Channel Video. Film Still.

replete with its complications, as valid, urgent and necessary. Other artists and creatives are also thinking about new ways to generate language between species.

Mary Ellen Strom, a video artist, and Ann Carlson, a choreographer and performer, often attend to other species in somatic ways in their work. Carlson is well-known for her notable five-part 1988 work, Animals, which testifies to interspecies kinship on a broad level. Strom and Carlson often engage livestock in their work—horses, sheep, goats. And in *Madame 710*, a Holstein cow. The work was meant to address gender liberation and simultaneously critique agribusiness.[16]
Naked under a clear vinyl, hooded, money-filled costume, Carlson moves around Gerri the cow with grace and the two females share discernible intimate moments; the visuals in the almost nine-minute video are seductive.

16 *http://prod-images.exhibit-e.com/www_alexandergray_com/8f11c979.pdf*

Strom's intuitive sense of video plays with "ordinary" materials, such as hay, in a playful and mesmerizing way. The cow is obviously not in her "natural" territory and a viewer is left wondering how exactly how Gerri the cow managed to find her way into the white cube gallery. Strom and Carlson's efforts to attend to Gerri, though commendable and visually provocative, were not enough to constitute an engaged empathy. I respect this work and find it provocative, but with this new knowledge, I find I am questioning the ethical implications of this performance. Carlson openly admits that, "She [Gerri the cow] couldn't sink her feet onto the studio floor the way they'd sink into earth. So she had her feet up, kind of balletic."[17] This was Gerri the cow's first foray from her familiar home at Great Brook Farm in Carlisle, MA. Gerri's first trip away from the farm wasn't to a local location, but to a first floor space in Hyde park gallery to film the performance. I question why Gerri's tail is docked,[18] thus lacking the course hair cows rely on to escape flies in the hot summer months.

My comment is not meant as a direct critique of Great Brook, as I am not familiar with their farming practices. But critique of the artwork is warranted: what was the necessity in bringing Gerri to Hyde Park, when there surely must have been a more suitable location closer to what is familiar and comfortable to the bovine character, who carries equal, if not more importance, than Carlson in the film.

---

17 Cate McQuaid, "Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom enjoy working on the wild side," Boston.com, January 23, 2009, accessed April 19, 2017, http://archive.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2009/01/23/on_the_wild_side/.

18 According to American Veterinary Medical Association Animal Welfare Division, there is no evidence that tail docking improves the rate of leptospirosis contamination or mastitis.
"Welfare Implications of Tail Docking of Cattle," American Veterinary Medical Association, accessed April 11, 2017, https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Pages/Welfare-Implications-of-Tail-Docking-of-Cattle.aspx?PF=1.

Ann Carlson, Mary Ellen Strom, Madame 710, 2008. Three-Channel Video. Film Still.

Dr. Lourdes Orozco, MA, PhD, is a Professor in Theatre at the University of Leeds in the UK; she is the author of Theatre & Animals and her research surrounds the intersection of Animal Studies, Theatre, and Performance Studies. She raises relevant ethical concerns about engaging animals in traditional performance spaces:[19] "it might seem that animal performance is inherently unethical, either because the animal has not agreed to participate or because its presence points towards a problematic representation of human-animal relations."[20] To take an animal that has lived their entire life in the same pasture outside of their familiar environment would cause undue stress.

19 Traditional performance spaces being indoor theaters, galleries, clubs.
20 Lourdes Orozco García, Theatre & animals (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 49.

My first project in this graduate program fell victim to anthropocentric considerations. I was interested in making an elaborate blanket for a free marten (barren) Jersey cow named Shania at SASHA Farm Animal Sanctuary. Though I worked with Shania's caretakers to habituate her to taking a blanket over her back, I did not acknowledge her sensory experience of the world. A mere six seconds after the performance began, Shania refused the attempt to place the blanket on her back., It was a sunny day and all objects cast prominent shadows on the ground. No wonder she refused my gesture: it was likely frightening. The work manifested as a clear lack of experiential understanding of a cow on my part. Once the blanket was on the ground and the cows were able to investigate the foreign object on their own terms, they engaged with the work in a more exciting, holistic manner.

Gopi, 2015. Performance.

Gopi, 2015. Performance. Photo by Emily Schiffer.

Gopi, 2015. Installation view.

The Dutch designer Marie Caye makes a more effective attempt to access the sensory experience of other species, as exemplified by her recently project that explores empathy through embodiment and the musical culture of domesticated swine. Caye constructed a pig "empathy" suit that mimics the physical experience of "being pig" complete with "hooves" and ample accommodation for a human to remain on all fours for an extended period of time.[21] Caye used the suit as a precursor to access the pig umwelt, or experience, and used the information gleaned from her embodiment experience to inform her *Pigstrument* project.

In her *Pigstrument* statement, Caye says "the *Pigstrument* is a complex shape made of different materials, pigs are always in movement so the object rolls around as well and they do everything as a community so several pigs can play the instrument at the same time. The metallic tubular bells have also been chosen to suit the pigs taste for this sharp clear sound."[22] Caye and I share an interest in the sensory understanding of nonhuman domesticated animals as an accessibility point into their experience.

One of the essential aspects to my practice and methodologies is primary research from the field, and philosophical/theoretical knowledge of bovine cognition. As I've been apprenticing with Ruth Ehman over the past ten months and recently taking an independent study course catered to bovine cognition and psychology, I have had the opportunity to research from philosophical, theoretical and experiential points of reference.[23] The theoretical and hands on research helps me to understand cows as a species and as individuals.

---

21 Marie Caye, "Pig Empathy Suit," Marie Caye, accessed January 27, 2017, http://mariewebsite.arvidjense.nl/pigempathysuit.html.
22 Marie Caye, "Pigstrument," Marie Caye, accessed January 27, 2017, http://mariewebsite.arvidjense.nl/pigstrumentindex.html.
23 It is worthwhile to mention that I am not making any new scientific, psychological, or cognitive claims with my field research.

Marie Caye, Pig Empathy Suit, 2016..
All images courtesy of the artist.

Marie Caye, Pigstrument, 2016.

Marie Caye, Pig Empathy Suit, 2016.

Marc Bekoff discusses "behavioral flexibility", or how we know animals think and feel things: "animal display flexibility in their behavior patterns, and this shows that they are conscious and passionate and not merely "programmed" by genetic instinct to do "this" in one situation and "that" in another situation."[24] Again, this concept hearkens to the feminist ethics of care as it requires consideration of all environmental factors in making conclusions, whether they be philosophical or scientific in nature. Bekoff notes that flexibility in behavior is a litmus test for consciousness and that we must consider "evolutionary continuity" in determining motivations for behavior. Theory of evolutionary continuity determines that animals share enough similar organs, sensory receptors, and cognitive abilities, but similarities and contrasts among intra species behaviors are not black and white contrasts. Rather, they are nuances and thousands of shades of grey.[25]

My work is deeply informed by Temple Grandin's extensive research on bovine cognition and behavior. In her text, Animals Make Us Human, she stresses that cows are "curiously afraid" creatures; cows enjoy learning and take pleasure in discovering new things.[26]

My ability to spend extended periods of time getting to know the individual cows in Ruth's herd allows me to loosely structured performances. For example, I know which cows are more sensitive to sound or movement and which ones will approach me in the field. This being said, I cannot ignore Bekoff's caveat to animal emotion or their lack of ability to hide said emotions: identifying emotion is different than understanding the social behavior of animals. To interpret complex behavior correctly takes extensive training. If 10,000 hours makes an expert, I am only 1/10th of the way there.

Empathy and the act of being empathetic is an embodied practice.

---

24 Bekoff, 31.
25 Ibid, 32.
26 Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, "Cows," 138.

Returning to Susan Leigh Foster's text, Choreographing Empathy, which explores the relationship between empathy and kinesthesia, Foster states, "empathy is a strong and vital component of kinesthetic sensation. And both envisioned empathy and an experience undertaken by one's entire subjectivity."[27] Engaged empathy requires a desire to reduce suffering and an attention to proximity, individuation and emotionality.

27 *Susan Leigh Foster, 127.*

Grandin with cows. Source: Sioux City Paper

FARM AS RESEARCH SITE

My work has occurred on different types of farms: a rescue sanctuary, a backyard farm, and a small family farm. This research on interspecies kinship only considers the context of the small family farm. Over the past ten months, I have been apprenticing at Firesign Family Farm, where I have developed an intimate relationship with Ruth Ehman, the owner and operator of the 53-acre farm just north of Ann Arbor. Here, she raises Angus steers for beef, keeps a small herd of Jersey cows for dairy, a variety of goats for dairy, egg-laying and broiler chickens, turkeys, pigs, companion horses, egg-laying ducks, and sheep. Ruth also grows a copious amount of vegetables during the summer months.

Dr. Henry Buller discusses the complex and changing nature of the farm as a research site:

Although animal farms are unequivocally sites of affective relationality, intertwining human and non-human species together in both instrumental and convivial assemblies, it is argued here that those affective relations are complicated by an enduring duality, that of the animal as individual and the animal as multitude/herd/mass. In livestock farms, animals are both 'one' and 'many'. At one level, both as individuals and as multi-tudes, farm animals offer us the potential or the promise for an affective mattering derived from 'a more proximal, contingent and bodily form of thought', one of noises, smells, movement and shared vitality. Yet, at another level, by their very numbers, (farm) animals offer a challenge to individualization, one that has been singularly useful to humankind.[1]

The farmhouse is approximately fifty feet from the barn with pastures flanking one side of the house. When I pulled into Ruth's long driveway for the first time, it was still dark. The morning chores begin at 4:30 am. Ruth and I walked out to the barn as she sincerely asked about my motivations for working with cows and if I'd considered the research of Temple Grandin. In bare feet, Ruth Ehman talked about her experience with cows as she milked Jiggy, the Jersey cow.

The notions of living alongside animals is of great importance to my research. Ruth maintains high ethical standards for how her animals are treated during their life and subsequent death. All living beings on her property enjoy large pastures, the freedom to roam, the inter and intraspecies company, and above all, consistent care and positive human interaction. The feed given to the livestock comes from Dexter Mill and the pigs and cows enjoy leftover scraps of the same organic vegetables consumed by the human inhabitants—nothing goes to waste on the farm.

1 *Henry Buller, 157-158.*

A small-scale farming operation like the one at Firesign offered the unique opportunity to work with a micro-herd of dairy cow. This relationship between farmer/caretaker, cows, and their offspring exemplifies how the ethical treatment of these animals arises parallel to the feminist nature of citizenship, one that considers all factors that impact the well-being of an individual. It engages with a praxis of attentiveness. Return to Dr. Buller:

Acknowledging individual animal lives, which is the problematic pre-occupation not only of statutory animal welfare but also of the care relationships that develop between animal and farmer and stock-person, is a complex balancing act of the singular and the plural, the individual and the multitude, that is never adequately resolved.[2]

Though the Angus cattle do not get names, the scale of the farm demands an inevitable attention to the individual cow. For those who oppose the slaughter of cows raised in this manner, an acknowledgement and high standard of care during their lifespan is surely is a move in the right direction, the first step.

Perhaps the right direction exists within animal rights activist Josephine Donovan's theory of attentiveness, which asserts that humans have the ability to "grant" moral status to other beings. Traci Warkentin finds Donovan's theory problematic in this aspect, understanding then limitations of human understanding to be less about the human "mental apparatus" and more geared towards the vast differences "differences across species and individuals in phenomenological, sensory experience more broadly defined, and with the relative limitations of human perception compared with the physiology and abilities of other animals" "mental apparatus."[3] I agree with Warkentin and do not think humans will ever fully transcend a hierarchal association with other species. For farmers working with livestock, the realities of birth and death are present, salient, and unavoidable.

2 *Henry Buller, 159.*
3 *Traci Warkentin, 108-109.*

I return to Buller as he discusses "what might stand as a seemingly fixed entity or unit is, in reality, a constant flow and passage of multiple life (zoe) and individual lives (bios)...you can never really go into the same farm twice. The life and lives within them is forever changing and moving." And he continues "...if, in general, animals are good to think with, then respect to farm animals: *'Numbers help us stop thinking'*"[4]

A small farm, with a select few animals, is my site for exploration.

4 Henry Buller, 157.

Jeremiah, the bull calf, lets his guard down and relaxes in the sunshine.

INVOLVE ME & I WILL UNDERSTAND

Feminism's general insistence upon an acknowledgement of non-ranked differences and an honoring of first-person narratives which situation diverse individual voices and experiences while allowing for alliances based on common beliefs. Concomitantly, emphasis on the situated embodiment of individuals is integral to feminist ethics and epistemologies, as is a practice of attentiveness.

Traci Warkentin

I adopt Haraway's contextualization, in which she views interspecies exchanges as *performances of the everyday*. In this mode of thinking, combined with Benkhe's attunement theory, subtle interspecies encounters become important avenues for possibility. In referring to the nature of listening to animals, Dr. Buller states the following:

Implicit here are two things: first, a recognition – often intuitive rather than analytical – of the degrees of shared experience, movement, affect, materiality, the 'ordinary circumstances' (Lorimer, 2010) between human and non-human individuals and, second, of how the de-centred relations that are thus established can become constitutive of a more practical, flourishing, convivial and empathetic understanding.[1]

Haraway contextualizes even the most banal actions as performances and as I will introduce through scholar Elizabeth Behnke's writings, these are the moments, actions, and exchanges that make up the fabric of our everyday lives—the moments Behnke feels we are capable of missing if we do not pay close enough attention.[2] A paying attention of, to and with, leaves us open and vulnerable,[3] with more stake in interspecies interaction. In the context of my research, these performances emerge in the daily rituals of care: feeding, milking, brushing, acclimating the cow to a routine. Ritual is defined in the dictionary as being of or relating to rites, a word that means "a prescribed form or manner governing the words or actions for a ceremony."[4] It stems from the Latin *ritus*, or ceremony, habit, and custom. Between woman and cow, a performance of the everyday is one of care and the ritualistic nature of these actions or gestures are performative.

---

1 Henry Buller, 169.
2 Elizabeth A. Behnke, "Interkinaesthetic affectivity: a phenomenological approach," Continental Philosophy Review41, no. 2 (2008): , doi:10.1007/s11007-008-9074-9. 147.
3 I use the term vulnerable here to mean exposed, uncurled.
4 "Ritual." Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritual.

Performance artist Tehching Hsieh has pioneered the synthesis of art and life through his extensive career and the work *One Year Performance (Rope Piece)* comes to mind as we follow my interspecies unraveling. Hseih and fellow artist Linda Montano used a two-meter rope tied around their waists to remain connected, without touching, for an entire year; a test of endurance. In the conclusion, we will re-examine durational performance in relation to interspecies exchanges.

Teching Hsieh and Linda Montano, One Year Performance (Rope Piece) , 1983-1984

To maintain a certain level of ethical integrity in my creative research, I work in the territory of cows- a pasture or a barn and do not put the cows on show as spectacle, as I did with the two massive draft horses who visited the studio for a performance in March of 2016.

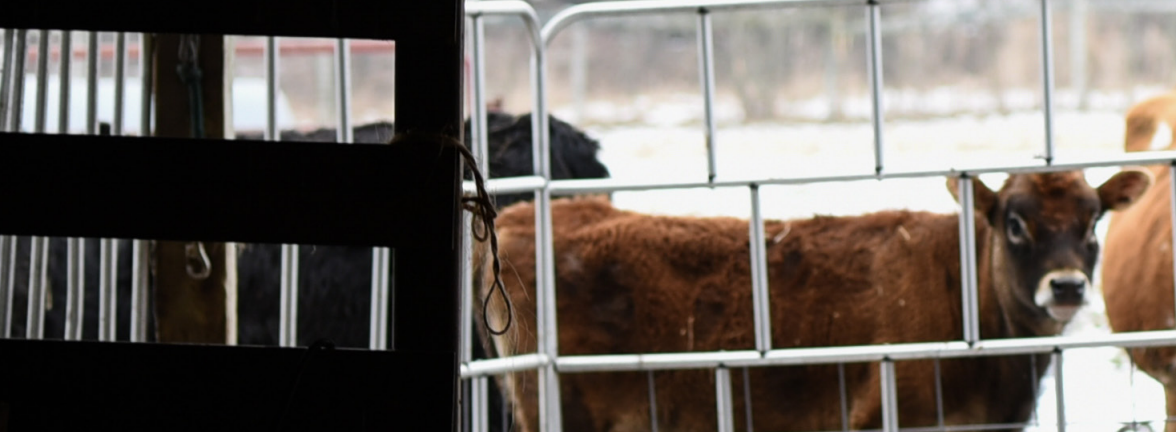
Herd II, 2016. Performance. Photo by Niki Williams.

A cow's role in contemporary human life varies depending on setting and circumstance. Cows are dinner. They are celebrated and in exalted. Cows are nonexistent in most of our lives. Cows are pets, providing emotional benefit for caretakers. After losing Shyanne in the tragic accident, my grief led me to understand that the time spent together formed a bond. I cared for her.

Arriving back at the importance of the first person experience, my feminist-ethics-of-care-led research demanded an organic relationship with the caregiver of my bovine collaborators. Ruth Ehman knows each of her dairy cows on a

profound level. She knows them through their heat cycles, calves, their demeanor. This recognition of individuality comes from love, care, and compassion. Ruth's livelihood thrives when her cows do. The dairy cows are Jerseys, which originated from the Isle of Jersey in the Channel Islands (UK). They are known for their agreeability, big personalities, and high butterfat content in milk but the choice to own a dairy cow is not a responsibility to be taken lightly.

Joann Grohman is the author of Keeping a Family Cow, a canonical text in small-scale dairying. At almost 90 years old, she has devoted her life to cow



husbandry and continues to educate thousands of families through her blog and nine-times-revised text (mentioned before.) Grohman puts the responsibility of owning a cow quite simply: "she does not ask for much, but she will ask every day."[5] Every day. One does not own a dairy cow because they are especially profitable. A love, respect, and sincere commitment to care is ever present in the interspecies relationships on the small-scale dairy farm. What does the day-to-day relationship between a woman and her cows look like? Ruth Ehman milks her cows by hand and this is a disappearing art as many family cow owners opt for milking machines. Warkentin states "embodiment enables the expression of ethical comportment toward others, while also providing a kind of empathic approximation of the experience of others in our midst, which can (and should) inform our responsive interactions with them."[6]

Since empathy and kinesthesia are inextricably linked through physical engagement, we can infer this tender, tactile engagement with the dairy cows lends itself to an empathetic connection. Susan Leigh Foster discusses embodiment as an point of access: "we use the feeling of our own body as a platform for knowing how to respond to other people's social and psychological situations. These emotions are visceral, in the most literal sense—they are the biological expression of 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"[7] As we cannot truly understand exactly what a cow is thinking or feeling, we might use physical exchanges to access or acknowledge an individual cow's experience.

5 *Joann S. Grohman, Keeping a family cow (Dixfield, Me.: Coburn Press, 2009). 16.*
6 *Traci Warkentin, 103.*
7 *Susan Leigh Foster, 127.*

Scholar Elizabeth Behnke founded The Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body, a freestanding research and networking organization that follows Husserlian methods and philsophy.[8] Behnke takes us one step further by extending phenomenological consideration to the nonhuman world around us. In her 2008 article "Interkinesthetic affectivity, a phenomenological approach", Behnke discusses kinesthetic comportment- a theory that holds we constantly adjust our bodies and gestures to the world around us.[9] I embrace this theory as it alludes to larger notions of interconnectedness.

Behnke presents the accessible example of standing next to a friend when she receives terrible news and the friend's reaction physically reverberates into our being. But Behnke's research is interested in the subtler ways we respond to the world around us, the ones that are harder to pinpoint. The ones we might miss if we are not open to them, "kinaestheses are also correlationally implicated in our appreciation of all somaesthetic sensations: the "how of the givenness" of such sensations points back to the correlative "how of the receivingness" on the part of the experiencer."[10] We are in constant flux of giving into and closing off from whatever the somatic register spits out. With practice, we can recognize our bodies as register and allow them to undergoaffect as participant, rather than removed observer. This belief reveals parallel with the feminism's honoring of the first-person narrative. This sensitivity to subtle exchanges lends itself well to Haraway's framing of interspecies interactions.

8 Edmund Husserl, german philosopher (1859-1938), established school of phenomenology.
9 Elizabeth A. Behnke, 153.
10 Ibid, 148.

Rituals of care: Milking Jiggy. Photo by Jesse Meria.

CREATIVE WORK

Ruminant is an installation that combines sculpture, video, sound, and performance and creates an overarching narrative of the cyclical nature of the human-cow relationship. The work embraces relational aesthetics as a mode of working, building narrative by blending the rituals of livestock care with affective interspecies relationships to manifest an embodied, tangible, and somatic connection between woman and cow. A viewer experiences first, an immersive sound installation which distills the tender and intimate relationship between a woman and her dairy cow as they participate in the twice-daily ritual of hand milking. A five-minute film inhabits the territory of the cow, presenting the physicality of human-cow interaction and playing with notions of *becoming*

with. A separate interactive video installation explores kinesthetic comportment through movement; performance documentation investigates vulnerability and the reversal of typical power structures assumed by both species. The exhibition concludes with a process video and the hide of bovine collaborator. The installation investigates the role of proximity in developing empathy and in developing kinship in various parts of the show, it asks how we might generate a new language to reveal our ancient covenant with cows, and in a contemporary sense, what it means to have kinship with a cow? As the installation is sequential and it was necessary to have a closed floor plan, I opted for a 20' split-rail fence to corral the installation and its viewers.

Keeping Everyone Comfortable. Eight Channel Sound installation. 8' x 6' x 22'

Keeping Everyone Comfortable is an eight-channel immersive sound installation that alludes to the metaphoric function of the barn as a transformative space. In most of my experiences with livestock, the barn has been the structure which connects the human and livestock world. It is, to quote Haraway, literally *where species meet*. The barn exists for comfort, protection, and storage. The installation references a barn in its crude wooden construction and large barn hex graces the inward-facing exterior walls.

Barn hexes appeared in the 18th century from the Pennsylvania Dutch in Lancaster, PA and their origins are disputed; theories range from witchcraft references to simply symbols of good luck.[1] This particular design came from a historic barn in Ohio, and it was chosen for its decorative quality. Future iterations of this work will include downsizing the footprint of the installation to accommodate one listener at a time.

1 *Patrick J. Donmoyer and Don Yoder, Hex signs: myth and meaning in Pennsylvania Dutch barn stars (Kutztown, PA: Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, 2013). 19.*

Inside 'Keeping Everyone Comfortable.' Two speakers flank the bench.

Historic Barn Hexes, Delaware, OH.

A listener contemplates inside the installation.

Inside the corridor, velvety suede curtains line the walls and ceilings, blocking outside light and muffling street noise. Eight speakers are covered with similar colored cloth. In the middle section of the structure, a bench is flush against the wall, opposite of a protruding form. Behind the bench is a similar but subtler form. The protruding forms are rigged with four heating pads over foam, alluding to the physical sensation of being next to a 1,000 lb cow. The heat is comforting. Two speakers flank the bench, hung at ear height, inviting a listener to remain in the space for a moment.

The listening experience changes as a viewer moves through the space—from the intimate sounds of Ruth Ehman singing to her cows during milking, a cow yearning for her calf, to a cow's rhythmic chewing and breathing. Following Behkne's theory of response to a somatic register, the work embraces the previously mentioned feminist ethics of care as a world shaping force that allows the listener to make a multitude of decisions within the installation; it also fosters kinesthetic comportment as a listener moves through the corridor. This multisensory priming to experience art calls to a praxis of attention, not unlike that necessary for interacting with animals. If we can remember that *paying attention with* can cultivate a vulnerability, or openness, to moments that otherwise may slip by, using a multisensory experience as a primer for the audience opens up new possibility for looking at artwork.

The title of the work, *Keeping Everyone Comfortable*, emerges from the ethical concerns of the human/cow relationship in the specific context of the small family farm. As previously stated, Jersey cows have been bred to produce an immense amount of milk for their size and this amount of milk is more than a calf could, or would want to, consume. The act of milking keeps the cows comfortable and prevents infections such as mastitis. Milking the cows also keeps Ruth E. comfortable on a spiritual and financial level.

Inside the sound installation. Note the protruding forms off the walls.

Charlotte (right) wears a lavalier microphone to record sounds of regurgitation.

The sounds were recorded over a four-month period and then distilled into three chapters, each with a different shape. Two feature Ruth singing church hymns, such as the recognizable Amazing Grace.

At this point, Ruth Ehman and Jiggy are protagonists in the installation.

The sequencing of works in *Ruminant* positions the viewer to be privilege to the same initial access I had to cows: through others. Therefore, *Keeping Everyone Comfortable* conveys subtle feelings of sonic voyeurism. From this point onwards, the artist is the only human portrayed in the work, following in the feminist tradition of honoring first person narratives.

Looking out of the covered corridor.

As a viewer moves out of the covered corridor, they are presented with a projection. *Emblem of Rural Quiet* is a five-minute video that introduces a viewer to the physicality of cow. With the artist as one of the main characters, the short film depicts her sewing a bright orange fibrous object into her own hair then calling the cows to interact with her.

The imagery in the first scenes references ritual—a preparation, of sorts, for an interspecies exchange. Circling back to Marie Caye's *Pig Empathy Suit*, I don the tail as my vehicle for engaged empathy, a term we previously defined that requires "attending to things they may not have otherwise." Wearing the tail gave me perspective on the physical experience of being with persistent flies, among other things.

A cow bell rings and the following shot shows Prudence approaching of her own volition. The camera's angle is non confrontational and often low, almost at the same height of the tall October grass. Scenes of forest and pasture light up the small alcove that houses the projection and the rich green colors reflect on the concrete floors.

Emblem of Rural Quiet, 2017. Film Still. 5'25" A bell calls the cows.

Emblem of Rural Quiet, 2017. Film Still. 5'25". Furry teats.

The viewer sees the territory of the cow, and my relationship with the cows is evident in their tameness. Certain cows, like Prudence, are more curious about the camera.

Viewers are introduced to the physicality of my dairy collaborators: hips, ears, teats. Legs covered in flies. The corporeal imagery references Dr. Nicki Charles' findings in which "relationships were often described in terms of inter corporeality." This body, much like a woman's, is at once abject, yet valued. I run my fingers over a hip bone, covered with hair the color of melted caramel. A furry udder and finger-like teats covered in flies graces the next shot, referencing the tactile nature of hand milking. We see shots of tails—tails with hair on the ends to deter flies.

Prudence comes close to the camera, flicking her ears and investigating the strange device in her living space. Returning to contextual information, I provoke Dr. Buller's statements that cows live and die away from human populations; the video presents the cows as accessible individuals, a small taste of the slow-moving but ever-changing farm life. To put this into perspective, Prudence was sold to one of Ruth Ehman's neighbors down the road.

The artist reappears on camera, weighted to and in a similar manner as Prudence previously was. The appendage sewn onto the performer's head flicks from side to side, mimicking Prudence's tail. The performer adopts a similar vigilance as the cows, watching Ava the calf happily run around the field in the distance. Flick more flies.

Emblem of Rural Quiet derives its title from a poem I discovered in the Library of Congress. It also references Haraway's use of quiet to describe species that "bear the marks of generations." The exchanges depicted in the context of this film and the show are improvised. While I have a general idea of which cows will interact with me in a specific manner, I enjoy the surprising and disappointing moments. The proximity of *Keeping Everyone Comfortable* and *Emblem of Rural Quiet* resulted in many synchronous moments as the media endlessly loops. For example, on the video, a cow perks her ears in the direction of the sound installation as Ruth Ehman whispers "good". As the performer sits in tall grass, Prudence licks her in a gentle manner. Licking is an important aspect of social connections for cows as it strengthens social bonds. One of the last scenes alludes to the following works that utilize a more gestural, movement based way of being with and around these cows.

Emblem of Rural Quiet, 2017. Film Still. Note the hair on the end of the tail.

"BRUTE foster-mother, mild of humankind,
Whether in farm-yard ruminant reclined
At eve, with richest pasturage distent,
Emblem of rural quiet and content ;
From their secretions sweet their udders freed,
Or grazing patiently on hill or mead,
No beast or tame or wild, O gentle cow,
Can sweeter thoughts recall to mind than thou.

"The golden butter is thy produce, and
Thou feedest all the nurseries of the land
With streams nectareous, health-bestowing, sweet,
When iced, a luscious drink in summer's heat ;
In the old mythic heaven of the North
The cow Adumbla prominent stood forth.
When summer suns extend their farewell beams,
At eve, what pastoral music sweeter seems
Than the cow's lowings when she hastens home,
While clouds of insects round her sport and hum ;
Her breath is then most odorous indeed,
Full of the scent of hillside and of mead ;
Inhaling it the milkmaid's cheeks can show
A bloom such as cosmetics can't bestow."

The Dairy Cow: A Monograph on The Ayrshire Breed of Cattle by E.L. Sturtevant, & J. N. Sturtevant. Source: Library of Congress.

Emblem of Rural Quiet, installation view.

Forever Heifer, 2017. Wood, paint, hardware, projector, motion sensor, fabric, hay. 76" x 72" x 48".

A viewer then encounters *Forever Heifer*, freestanding sculpture that houses a movement piece. The structure has multiform references: a run-in shed, a stanchion, a trough, and a dolman (ancient burial marker). It is constructed of wood and painted the same brown, yellow, and blues as seen on the exterior of the sound installation.

Like the barn, a run-in shed offers protection. To keep optimal shelter from sun, rain, and wind, a Midwestern farmer would orient their run-in shed with back-facing north or northeast.94 In the exhibition, the back of the sculpture faces northeast and a viewer faces northwest when looking into the shed. The work is activated by the presence of a viewer: a motion sensor is built into the work and triggers a two-minute screen dance a few moments after sensing a viewer's presence. Through the piled alfalfa/timothy blend hay, the structure activates the viewer's olfactory senses. On opening night, the smell of the hay was pleasantly overwhelming but it dissipated over time. The next iteration of this work will require that the hay is replenished daily.

Forever Heifer is a direct reference to the artist/performer in the work. Ruby, the brown Jersey cow pictured, is a heifer. A heifer is defined as a cow who has not had any calves.95 Ruby is only one and half years old, six months shy of the appropriate age for a cow to be impregnated. I call myself a *Forever Heifer* as I do not want children and would prefer livestock. The two-minute screen dance is the result of a piece produced parallel to my studio practice: half was "generated" in a traditional dance studio96; the other, through on-site improvisation with newfound collaborators.

As a viewer proceeds through the exhibition, gestures become more visually formalized and apparent. Movement emerges as an important aesthetic. It is an essential interspecies communication tool, particularly as it relates to cows. I use it as a measurement device: it communicates this specific cow's tameness and the cow's familiarity with me. Ruby is acknowledged as an individual and fruitful co-creator in the work.

Forever Heifer, 2017. Detail.

In dance, improvisation is understood as completing something that is incomplete.[1] Michael Chorney, the Music Director for the Dance program at Middlebury College, discusses notions of improvisation: "One thing implicit in improvised work that will be helpful for us to recognize and embrace is that we are creating works of art that are about process."[2] Working in an improvisational manner requires a dancer/performer/mover to be aware of all aspects of their environment.

1 From Amy Chavasse's Performance Improvisation Class, University of Michigan, Fall 2016.
2 Penny Campbell, "Objectives and Notions." Performance Improvisation. August 31, 2016. Accessed January 22, 2017. https://campbell830.wordpress.com/some-basic-principles/objectives-and-notions/.

Penny Campbell, Professor of Dance, also at Middlebury College, states,

"Everything that happens physically, sonically, visually is part of the piece…You have to attend to everything that happens."[3]

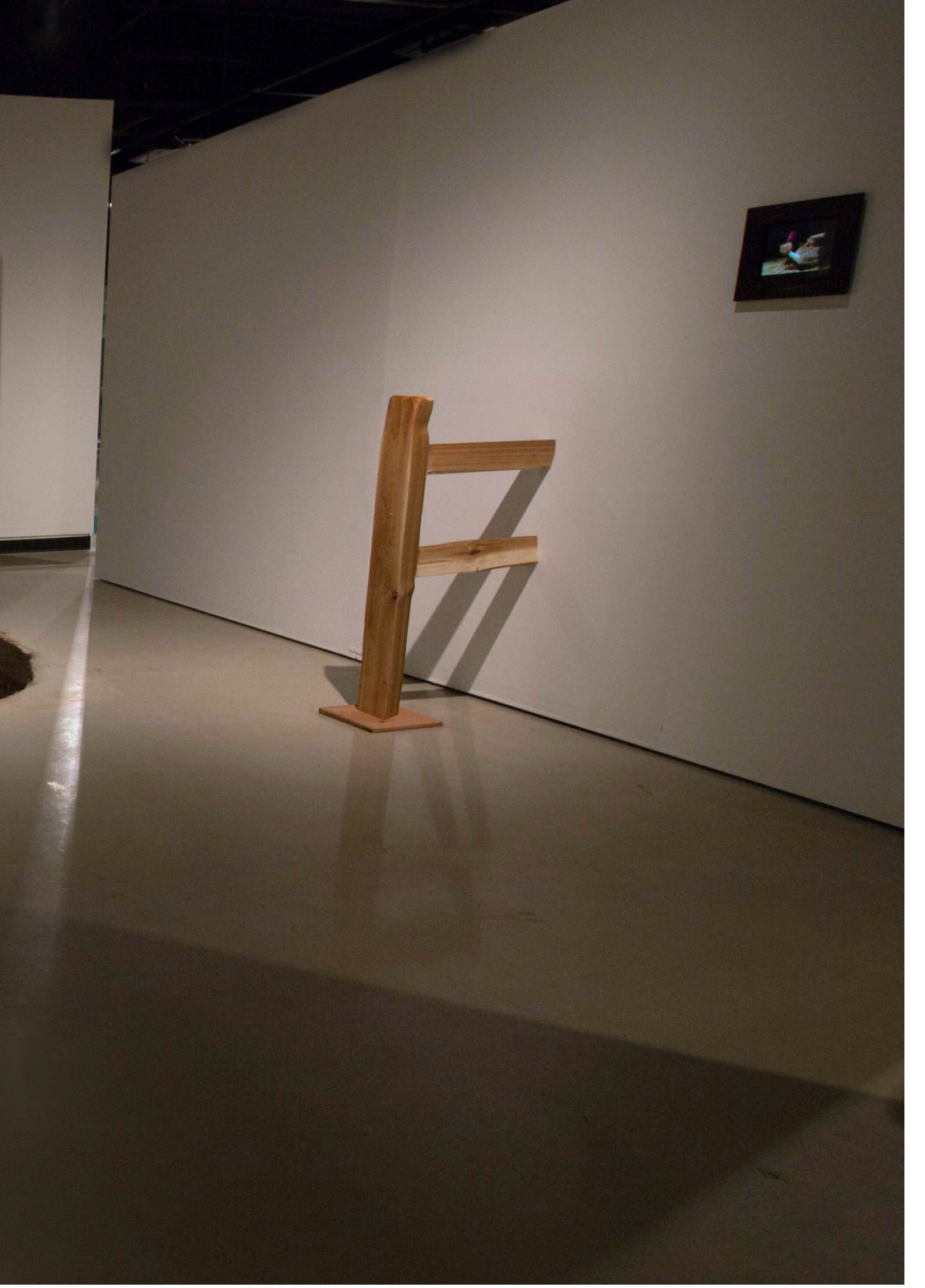
Campbell's theory resonates with interspecies interactions in its ability to circumscribe ambiguity and contradictions, as well as embrace an unknown outcome—a contingency in working with live animals.

Movement based works allow for an attending, *an attention*, that both cows and humans can access. The improvised gestures provoke Spelman's reference to the Western habit of hostility towards the body, and to generate and perform material in that very moment.

3 Penny Campbell, "Everything is material," Performance Improvisation, August 27, 2016, accessedJanuary 18, 2017, https://campbell830.wordpress.com/some-basic-principles/everything-is-material/.

Forever Heifer, 2017. Film Still from screendance.

Ruminant, Installation view.



Trough, 2016. Performance. Image not included in Ruminant. Photo by Emily Schiffer.

A photograph (on right) highlights the tension and possibility of the human/cow relationship. Trough is a short performance that occurred in March of 2016. Shyanne and Brianne, the bovine participants, were pets, and as I began spending time out at the Guerra family's property in late 2015 and early 2016, I noticed the interspecies dynamics were different than those I observed at SASHA Farm Animal Sanctuary. The pet cows had a significantly smaller flight zone—meaning one can get close to them as illustrated through Temple Grandin's definitions of habituation and tameness—and they enjoyed scratches on the top of their heads and tops of their hips: they did not mind human presence, however, without food or grain, they did not consistently express interest in interacting with humans.

Trough, 2016. Performance. Digital C-Print, 30" x 40" Photo by Emily Schiffer.

Shyanne and I are face-to-face. The power structures typically assumed by humans and cows are reversed, in which the cow eats from the body of a human,rather than the human eating from the body of a cow, a type of performing submission. This reexamines the possibility of ethical behavior between two subjugated populations—women and cows. To achieve this, both Shyanne and I engaged in a close proximity. I was on my knees in a blue costume, sporting a large collar around my neck that obstructs my full range of vision. My head is exposed and the rest of my body is under the cloak portion of the costume. I am physically vulnerable to the cows. Though the work was documented through both photography and video, a single photograph leaves a sense of mystery within the larger narrative of the performance.

The last two works are in an inseparable conversation with one another: a video work titled *We are Flesh, Fat, and Blood*, which documents the visceral process of fleshing a hide, and *Closer to Closure*, the tanned and treated hide of my deceased bovine collaborator.

My understanding and interest in interspecies kinship emerged from this devastating event. Through the tanning process, I was able to extend the physical aspect of care. Only the first night of the fleshing process was a group effort. Six women surrounded the edges of hide, cutting away at the membrane of an animal with whom we were all familiar. The women were friends of the Guerra family and as we gathered at the Guerra's house to mourn, coincidentally, the women were the ones who ended up around the hide. The scene in *We are Flesh, Fat, and Blood* accurately portrays the vast majority of the process. Presenting a process video communicates the tedious nature of fleshing and also brings the narrative of the show full-circle. I began as a sonic voyeur and graduate into a literal shaping force of the work as the responsibility of honoring Shyanne was in my hands. Audio of the fleshing action was included in the video to convey a somatic sense of labor.

The process video plays on a small monitor to give a viewer a sense of intimacy while viewing the borderline grotesque video. In her text When Species Meet, Haraway discusses the implications of body after death: "that knotted thing as we call the body has left; it is undone... we are kin to the dead because their bodies have touched us." Haraway asserts that the corpse is not a body, but rather that the body remains "un-done" upon passing. Initially, Shyanne's hide was not slated to be displayed, nor even considered an artwork—I began the endeavor as a favor to her human family. Her death was transformative and her body remains undone. Tanning the hide evolved into a form of grieving-with—grieving with the loss of Shyanne and also grieving alongside Brianne, the now lone cow.

We are Flesh, Fat, and Blood, 2016. Installation view.

We are Flesh, Fat, and Blood, 2016. Digital video 3' 33"

Closer to Closure, 2017. Cow hide, soil. 4' x 7' x 7'.

The tanning and curing process took a total of four months, though the hide continues to evolve in various iterations. I contextualize the process as a durational performance of sorts. Throughout the fall term, I made various adjustments to the piece—experimenting with different shapes, and using a gold-colored wire to help the hide hold a specific form. For its presentation in *Ruminant*, I ultimately decided to remove my material additions from the hide. On top of a circular mound of soil, 7' in diameter, I chose to let the hide "lay as it falls." Through further reflection on the work, I am not satisfied with my decision to use soil—or the particular soil I purchased. The orderly texture of the soil soil runs contrary to the messy nature of engaging in interspecies relationships—and of loving and losing someone. I am left with her undone body continue to work towards "finishing" it. As in improvisation, I worked towards completing the incomplete and perhaps, the incomplete-able.

Closer to Closure, 2017. Detail view.

Ruminant, installation view.

LEAVING THINGS UNDONE

That knotted thing as we call the body has left; it is undone…we are kin to the dead because their bodies have touched us

Donna Haraway, When Species Meet

Returning to Haraway's body quote, I argue it is the same for the living. Kinship is established through historical bonds and we become kin through proximity, touch, and knowing one another. Shyanne's death both changed and determined the trajectory of the thesis work. My research over the past two years has evolved, struggled, become seeped in complications, and fell victim to powers outside of my control. This body of work is incomplete—and I use this word in the most positive sense. The complicated nature of the human/cow relationship leaves much to continue mining.

As the environmental crisis looms, as a species, humans must extend consideration outwards of ourselves. Haraway does this by inviting us to "stay with the trouble."[1] We cannot simply surrender to what appears to be the inevitable environmental crisis; we are here on this earth, with one cow for every billion people. And we must make do with what we have: a species of regionally-varied cultural importance, domesticated, in the center of the amalgamation of human responsibility. This work and research demands interspecies art making, and the subsequent chewing on, be done in an ethical manner in consideration of the nonhuman collaborators.

On a personal level, making this work has transformed me and I emerge a more compassionate and aware citizen in this multispecies cosmopolitan[2] we inhabit. I no longer eat beef unless I know the cow it was sourced from: this gives me the power to make an ethical judgment and leaves me accountable for my actions in a way I did not feel motivated to do before. The research has empowered me to embrace somatic interspecies experiences, and the spaces in which the human and nonhuman experience overlap, as valid sources of visual semiotics and methods of making ethical and rational decisions.

---

1 Haraway is well known for using this term; drastically condensing the meaning, staying with the trouble means to not give up, to acknowledge where we are and to make do with the situation at hand.
2 Term used in Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

At the end of this journey, I will lose access to some of the comforts provided by an institution, such as studios and the extensive time to do this work. But I will not lose my rich friendship with Ruth Ehman. I will continue to apprentice under her, learning as much as possible about cows, land management, and livestock farming. This relationship is also a conduit for passing down knowledge—Ruth Ehman has said that having a young person show such eager interest in small-scale livestock farming and way of living, affirms her work.

The means by which Ruth E. passes her knowledge onto me is akin to an oral tradition, one that is transmitted orally and through performance. This summer, I will continue to generate movement and sound-based works with her cows. Ruby, my collaborator in *Forever Heifer*, will be old enough to impregnate in the fall of 2017 and Ruth Ehman and I put together a training plan for Ruby and the youngest heifer, Ava, to learn the manners of the milking stall. Ava is one of two cows who have been known me their entire lives and this relationship generates new questions and possibilities. What are the interspecies implications of familiarity? I look forward to learning how my relationship with her blossoms in a different way because of this familiarity.

Looking out to the next five or ten years, I plan to exercise this knowledge as a method of making my art practice sustainable as I hope to purchase a property and my own cows. Since a Jersey cow can remain in a lactation period of up to 600 days after calving (giving birth), I situate the practice of caring for my own cow as a durational [interspecies] performance, akin to Tehching Hseih's *One Year Performances (Time Clock Piece)*. In this performance, he punched a timecard every hour, every day, for one year. I propose the twice daily ritual of milking a cow is not so distance from punching in or out on a time clock.

Tehching Hsieh, One Year Performance (time clock piece) 1980–1981. Source: Artstor.

“Big Ruth”, “Little Ruth”, and Jiggy. Photo by Jesse Meria.

please visit www.ruthkburke.com for videos and other current work.

Kinship can be implicit, connecting two pieces in a larger puzzle. Kinship can also be grown— this type of kinship requires care and upkeep. If a viewer finds themselves thinking more deeply about how and why they touch or consume a cow and their byproducts, than I consider this work successful. In a broad sense, these methods of "art practice"— considering the nonhuman world (and all the human caretakers of livestock)—link together two traditionally separate worlds. It is my hope that this work, in the context of contemporary art, makes the art world a more inclusive community to all species. Perhaps in this time, which feels particular divisive, we can unite traditionally separate communities through an ethic of care.

Works Cited

"Compassion." Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/compassion.

Covenant: a film about farm animals (and us). Directed by Michael Mercil. Http://www.michaelmercil.com/covenant/. 2012. Accessed October 4, 2016. https://vimeo.com/42438346.

"Cowboys and Indians; Protecting India's cows." The Economist, August 20, 2016, 32(US). General OneFile (accessed March 12, 2017). http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&sw=w&u=lom_umichanna&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA461002000&sid=summon&asid=71133e04d2d674c6438046e721107c34.

"Domestic" Merriam-Webster, accessed February 19, 2017, https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/domestic.

"Science Museum. Brought to Life: Exploring the History of Medicine." Women and psychiatry. Accessed April 19, 2017. http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/menalhealthandillness/womanandpsychiatry.

"Welfare Implications of Tail Docking of Cattle." American Veterinary Medical Association. Accessed April 19, 2017. https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Pages/Welfare-Implications-of-Tail-Docking-of-Cattle.aspx?PF=1.

"Key facts and findings." FAO - News Article: Key facts and findings. 2013. AccessedApril 18, 2017. http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/197623/icode/.

"Kinship." Merriam-Webster. Accessed February 19, 2017. https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/kinship.

"Ritual." Merriam-Webster. Accessed February 19, 2017. https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/ritual.

Adams, Carol J., and Josephine Donovan. "Sexism/Speciesism: Interlocking Opressions" In *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, 9-11. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

Behnke, Elizabeth A. "Interkinaesthetic affectivity: a phenomenological approach." *Continental Philosophy Review* 41, no. 2 (2008): 143-61. doi:10.1007/s11007-008-9074-9.

Budiansky, Stephen. *The covenant of the wild: why animals chose domestication: with a new preface*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Buller, Henry. "Individuation, the Mass and Farm Animals." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 7-8 (2013): 155-75. doi:10.1177/0263276413501205.

Campbell, Penny. "Everything is material." Performance Improvisation. August 27, 2016. Accessed January 18, 2017. https://campbell830.wordpress.com/some-basic-principles/everything-is-material/.

Campbell, Penny. "Objectives and Notions." Performance Improvisation. August 31, 2016. Accessed January 22, 2017. https://campbell830.wordpress.com/some-basicprinciples/objectives-and-notions/.

Carlson, Laurie M. *Cattle: an informal social history*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001.

Cassell, Eric J. "The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine." *Loss, Grief & Care* 8, no. 1-2 (1998): 129-42. doi:10.1300/j132v08n01_18.

Caye, Marie. “Pigstrument.” Marie Caye. Accessed January 27,, 2017. http://mariewebsite.arvidjense.nl/pigstrumentindex.html.

Caye, Marie. “Pig Empathy Suit.” Marie Caye. Accessed January 27, 2017. http://mariewebsite.arvidjense.nl/pigempathysuit.html.”

Davis, Karen. “Thinking like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection.” In *Women and Animals: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, edited by Carol J. Adams and

Donmoyer, Patrick J., and Don Yoder. *Hex signs: myth and meaning in Pennsylvania Dutch barn stars*. Kutztown, PA: Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, 2013.

Foster, Susan Leigh. *Choreographing empathy: kinesthesia in performance*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Grandin, Temple, and Catherine Johnson. “Cows.” In *Animals Make Us Human*, 130-60. Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2010.

Grohman, Joann S. *Keeping a family cow*. Dixfield, Me.: Coburn Press, 2009.

Gruen, Lori. “Attending to Nature: Empathetic Engagement with the More than Human World.” *Ethics & the Environment* 14, no. 2 (2009): 23-38. doi:10.2979/ete. 2009.14.2.23.

Haraway, Donna, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs*, *People*, *and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003.

Haraway, Donna, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene*. Durham:Duke University press, 2016.

Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008. Publishing: Publisher

Jack, Zachary Michael. *The Midwest farmer's daughter: in search of an American icon*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2012.

Jamison, Leslie. *The empathy exams: essays*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014.

Lerner, Jennifer S., Ye Li, Piercarlo Valdesolo, and Karim S. Kassam. "Emotion and Decision Making." *Annual Review of Psychology* 66, no. 1 (2015): 799-823. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115043.

McQuaid, Cate. "Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom enjoy working on the wild side."Boston.com. January 23, 2009. Accessed April 19, 2017. http://archive.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2009/01/23/on_the_wild_side/.

Plumwood, Val. "Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 12, no. 4 (2001): 3-32. doi:10.1080/10455750110124522 5.

Price, Edward O. *Animal domestication and behavior*. Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CABI Pub., 2002.

Reber, Arthur S., and Emily S. Reber. *The Penguin dictionary of psychology*. London: Penguin, 2001.

Sato, Shusuke, Keijiro Tarumizu, and Koichi Hatae. "The influence of social factors on allogrooming in cows." *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 38, no. 3-4 (1993): 235-44.doi:10.1016/0168-1591(93)90022-h.

Warkentin, Traci. "Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals." *Ethics & the Environment* 15, no. 1 (2010): 101-21. doi:10.2979/ete.2010.15.1.101.