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Studying Other Species: Understanding the Webs of Living

An Interview with Katie Gillespie, *University of Kentucky*
Interviewers: Aylin Castro, Jed DeBruin, and Kelly Ferguson, *University of Kentucky*

Kathryn (Katie) Gillespie is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of Kentucky in the Department of Geography and the Applied Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program. Her research and teaching interests focus on feminist and multispecies theory and methods, food and agriculture, political economy, critical animal studies, human-environment relations, and critical race and postcolonial studies. She is the author of The Cow with Ear Tag #1389 [University of Chicago Press, 2018]. *She has also published in numerous scholarly journals and has co-edited three books:* Vulnerable Witness: The Politics of Grief in the Field [University of California Press, 2018, co-edited with Patricia J. Lopez]; Critical Animal Geographies: Politics, Intersections and Hierarchies in a Multispecies World [Routledge, 2015, co-edited with Rosemary-Claire Collard]; *and* Economies of Death: Economic Logics of Killable Life and Grievable Death [Routledge, 2015, co-edited with Patricia J. Lopez]. *Gillespie was an Animal Studies Postdoctoral Fellow at Wesleyan University (2016-2018) and has taught various courses at the University of Washington. She has volunteered with Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (a Puget Sound, WA-based prison education organization), Food Empowerment Project (a food justice organization in Cotati, CA), and Pigs Peace Sanctuary (a sanctuary for pigs in Stanwood, WA).*

Kelly Ferguson (KF): *Well, thanks so much for coming today! I'm really excited to hear about your work and about yourself. Just getting started off with some easy questions: could you briefly introduce yourself and your work? Some of the questions we're interested in having answered are: how did you arrive at animal studies? And how is your current work engaging with the field?*

Katie Gillespie (KG): I'm Katie Gillespie. I did my PhD in geography at the University of Washington and finished in 2014. I'd say I've been doing animal studies since my master's. I entered the UW [University of Washington] master's program with a focus on critical food studies and it was in the early stages of developing a master's thesis project on urban agriculture and urban food justice movements and then, I met an animal studies scholar, María Elena García at UW. If you don't know her work, you should check her out. She does amazing stuff, and she just had a book released, actually, this last spring, that is quite beautiful. But, anyway, we did an independent reading together on animals in the food system because she had just recently developed an interest in animal studies. We were exploring that together, and it totally changed the trajectory of my research. Until then, I had been really a proponent of alternative local animal agriculture and believed in these narratives of humane slaughter and of animal welfare on small scale farmers. The readings that we did really pushed against those beliefs and I had just got to thinking critically about my own day to day practices, and so it was sort of a window into then thinking in all kinds of other ways about our relationships with other species and the different geographical context and sort of cultural contexts that shape how we are in these multispecies relationships.

So, I did my master's thesis on reconceptualizing humane slaughter, because it was something that I wanted to interrogate really on a personal level - what is this that I'm sort of believing as possible? And then realizing through that work that there was not much done on dairy production. I mean there's a lot of research on dairy, but not from the perspective of thinking about the lives of animals in the industry so that was my dissertation. Then I rewrote that [her dissertation] after I finished my PhD into the book *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*.

I guess in my research I'm trying to focus on centering the animals as much as possible and trying to think from the perspective of what might their experience be of these systems that they're kind of caught up in. I think that that's a question that a lot of animal studies scholars and activists and animal caregivers struggle with because we don't want to project our own ideas onto what other animals may be experiencing. One of the common things that comes up in talking about animals' experiences is anthropomorphism, and I've been thinking in some different ways about anthropomorphism; on one hand it's merely using human terms to try to understand what you're seeing in another species, and so, in some ways, anthropomorphism is unavoidable. It's just how we interpret the world from other animals from our human standpoint. But I think also one of the problems with anthropomorphism is that because we're so situated in our own human way of thinking and being in the world, it can sometimes erase what other species might actually be going through, unique from humans. For instance, it kind of obscures or erases their animality, what makes them unique not in a lesser kind of hierarchical way, but in [the unique characteristics that] makes a cow a cow. And it's different from the kinds of things that make a human a human. So, anthropomorphism I think, that's one of the risks - you can erase the particular kinds of subjectivity of some other species. Also, we talk so often about other species as like "oh cows are like this" ... or, "you know, pigs are like this" and it's an odd thing because it's such a broad generalization of an entire species. It's sort of a generalization that I don't think many people would make quite so haphazardly with humans, these sort of broad characteristics. I mean certainly people do make those kinds of generalizations.

One of the things I've been thinking about in recent years is this relationship between the individual as embodied subject in this broader species context, but also in the structures of capitalism and settler colonialism, and these various systems that we are embedded in.

KF: *Okay, awesome. I have another question for you. How would you characterize animal studies as a body of scholarship? And then, as a follow up, where do you see the direction of the field headed in the future?*

KG: It's a very diverse field, I mean really broadly animal studies can involve everything from research that uses animals in biomedical studies, you know, in biomedicine. And then everything from critical animal studies as a kind of a subset of animal studies that explicitly takes a critical approach to thinking about human-animal relations. I think when most people talk about animal studies, they're not talking about the biomedical research animal studies, but if you Google "animal studies," that definitely comes up, the biomedical research field. I think actually talking more specifically about it is helpful to flag what exactly you mean because animal studies are so broad. One division would be sort of mainstream animal studies and critical animal studies would be characterized by this perspective that animals are interesting to think with, like what

can we learn about ourselves, or, about various theories through thinking what the nonhuman; post humanism falls, maybe under that umbrella of questions.

There are so many terms now, more than human, other than human, post, so, I think that there's that body of work. Then, there's a body of work within animal and postcolonial studies that says that posthumanism doesn't take into account the fact that the category of the human is still a very contested category and that post humanists move too quickly beyond the category of the human and don't take into account the sort of ongoing violence of racism and homophobia, all of these sorts of human sites of inequality and of hierarchy. Then, there's the sort of postcolonial-post humanist crowd who, I think are trying to think in these critical ways like yes, we can think beyond the human with having a grounded kind of attention to the ways the human is an ongoing kind of contested category and a category of violence really for humans or for some humans.

Let's see, then there's feminist animal studies, which I think sometimes kind of crosses paths with the critical animal studies approach. The feminist animal studies stuff sometimes tends to be more critically oriented in terms of thinking about the gendered balance to which animals are subjected; that was certainly one of the key frameworks that I used for the dairy project thinking about how there's this gendered and sexualized violence at the heart of the dairy industry. I think feminist animal studies really takes up questions around gender.

Let's see... what else is there? I think I'd be interested to see what you guys think actually, bringing together this issue, because there seems to be just like a tiny bit of work coming out in queering animal studies and thinking about the intersection of queer theory and post humanist theory or multispecies studies and I think that's a really exciting subfield or area of study, but which I haven't myself gotten into yet. I guess that that makes me think of another subset of animal studies which is the multispecies studies.

I'm just categorizing these things like ways that I sort of see them, but I know other people have totally different ideas about where these kind of different perspectives come from. But in multispecies studies I'm sort of thinking more broadly about the multispecies world that we're living in and I think sometimes takes a critical approach but is sort of more interested really in these kinds of entanglements and understanding. Anna Tsing's work, for instance, the way that looking at the growth of these mushrooms, and the harvesting of these mushrooms, what it can tell us about late liberal capitalism and the impending apocalypse and all of that kind of stuff. So, I think there's that and then, of course, there's the intersection of Indigenous studies and animal studies. People like Kim Tall Bear have written really explicitly about critical animal studies and Indigenous studies and where the limitations are in terms of how critical animal studies and broader animal studies can sort of co-opt Indigenous ways of thinking about like multispecies relationality. I think that's true beyond just the kind of scholars who are thinking about multispecies relations; I think that work gets caught in all kinds of different ways. I think there's interesting possibilities for thinking really carefully with Indigenous scholars on these issues, and also, to think critically about that sort of instinct to appropriate these ideas. I think this is something that critical geography and critical social sciences and humanities is really grappling with more broadly, and I see that same thing reflected in the way these conversations are unfolding and in animal studies. Yeah, I think that might be a little bit of the landscape.

It's a very varied field from my perspective, in terms of what kinds of arguments are being made, what kinds of beings are being engaged, how what kinds of questions come up, also thinking about the aim of this work, the stakes of it. I think this kind of gets into methodological questions, a little bit too, which is just who is animal studies scholarship for? I think we think about this in human geography and human focused social sciences as well, but who is it benefiting? How is it interfering with or harming others? And that, for me, is one of the driving questions to consider in these different kinds of traditions of thinking about animals within the field.

KF: *Well, thank you.*

Aylin Castro (AC): *For our next question, I think you already started touching on it, but you're also a feminist geographer, so how do you see feminist theory and methods coming together with critical animal studies?*

KG: I think certainly in the kinds of attention and analysis paid in terms of what I said before, the gendered forms of commodification, the sexualized violence which animals are subjected to in the food industry, but also in all kinds of other industries. I think the topic of reproduction is one that comes up again and again in every animal use industry. Like embodied reproduction, the reproductive process, and the human interventions into that process but also how that reproductive process reproduces these industries and structures, and you know, keep some kind of turning along in service to capital in most cases, so there's that kind of like explicit focus on gender reproduction, sexualized violence, that is, you know, our core questions for feminists. But I think also just in the way I'm thinking about is also that the sort of feminist attention to the body, and the sort of geography of the "closest in" like what can we understand if we looked at, you know, structure and the impacts of structural processes on individual bodies and then how those bodies create collectives and a sort of broader impact or a set of impacts on a population. And along with that, I think the kind of feminist attention to emotion and just the ways that feminism helps us to sort of understand, along with pathological research on animal emotions and cognitions, that not only do animals have emotions, but that those emotions, if we take a sort of feminist approach, that those emotional responses, what we see in other animals, what they're experiencing can be instructive in terms of understanding the kind of webs of living and the processes that they're kind of entangled in. And so, I think feminist attention to emotion is a window into those kinds of bigger questions and processes.

In my own research, I think a lot about like... this is obviously a feminist kind of orientation, but thinking about positionality, and like what does it mean to study other species? You know, as a member of the human species, it gets into really problematic questions about representation. How can we think about the accuracy of representation when we can't talk to a member of another species? I mean certainly they're all kinds of ways of communication, methods of communication going on, but we can't talk in very clear terms to understand their experience. So, I think in that way, issues around representation are quite heightened. I think really being consistently clear about my own or a researcher's own positionality and also limitations in being able to understand what's going on with someone of another species [is necessary].

Actually, I was just working on a piece of writing before I hopped on this call and one of the things I'm trying to think through is we as humans tend to... well that's a generalization, but some humans think that we need to know for certain, have research backing the idea that animals are thinking, feeling beings in order to treat them with respect and care and I've been thinking about what is that sort of compulsion to need to understand someone else's experience of the world in order to treat them with care and respect? Maybe we could start from the opposite and in terms of thinking about why not default to a relationship of [care and respect] and actions and then feelings, about care and respect for others? And then, what might we learn about them that enriches our practices of that care and helps us to do that care better instead of sort of necessitating or needing proof that a cow feels trauma at the loss of her calf. There's just this real pervasive question, especially in academia right now, which is about intellectual pursuit and understanding, but with a little more humility and modesty about do we need to understand? Like what is this "I need to understand everything" in order to categorize where someone fits in the world and then how we treat that someone or interact with that someone? I'm sort of half forming an idea but I'm just thinking through that frustration because writing about animals is often kind of an uphill struggle in terms of having to make the case again and again about the most basic [concepts] like yes, animals feel joy and pain and grief and fear, and love and there's research to back it up. But do we even need that research to try to just sort of shape how we are in relationship with others? So, I don't know. That's one thing that I've been thinking. That veers a little bit off from the feminist theme but, not so much, just in terms of the questions about positionality and representation. And also, I have just been thinking a lot about humility and what that means in terms of not just sort of giving up and saying "well what's the point of trying to understand or talk about this at all"? But instead, just meeting these questions a bit more modestly I think in terms of what we can say. Yeah, I think that's all I have to say about that.

AC: *Thank you. Have you been thinking differently about animals since the initial outbreak of COVID-19? How do you think this area of study might help us think differently about the pandemic?*

KG: Yes and no, I guess. You know, it's funny - most of my research is on animals in the food system and for decades there have been warnings about the risks of raising animals in such close confinement [such as] the diseases that spread within CAFOs [concentrated animal feeding operations] or factory farms are really routine and happen all the time. We've seen this with other zoonotic disease outbreaks around the world and in recent decades, right? None of them have been as widespread as COVID-19, but I think these risks have been well known. So, I, in some ways, I don't think it's surprising that we're here in the global pandemic. COVID-19 didn't come from a factory farm necessarily, but it could have very easily [done so]. We'll probably experience future pandemics as a result of the way we farm animals if it doesn't change.

It's sort of poignant that Jonathan's Safran Foer's book *Eating Animals* has a chapter in there on avian influenza and in the context of the 1918 influenza pandemic. He explained what would happen today, what might happen today in terms of a global flu pandemic. And looking back at that now, it was it's like he's talking about this [the COVID-19 pandemic]. Obviously he didn't anticipate COVID-19 exactly, but just the conditions and really just devastation globally from this. In some ways, I think that it seems very expected just given what we do know about raising animals for food.

I think that animal studies anticipated this, and animal studies has been thinking critically about zoonotic diseases, not even in a biomedical kind of way, but into the social implications of zoonotic diseases. So, I think these kinds of conversations in animal studies […] to be more common in the general public, I think this could have, maybe, it could have changed or change the kind of ways that that we do interact with animals, because as I said, animal studies as a field is about those core questions of how we live with and are involved with killing other species. So, yes. I think that animal studies could really help. Not only could it have helped in advance of thinking about COVID-19 but now that we're in this, think about sort of fast forward in terms of our relationships with animals.

But I think there are totally different ways that COVID-19 has sort of brought up questions around human-animal relations, like in the massive dog and cat adoptions that occurred during the pandemic. I think that the pandemic really changed the possibilities for interspecies relationships in the home and thinking about as we had to sort of close ourselves in, in some ways, socially and physically or geographically. Animals being brought into families has been a way of really developing new forms of kinship and a sense of family and home. I sort of see this as being really meaningful to a lot of people who maybe hadn't lived with animals before or weren't currently living with animals. Although, the outcome of that is now, people are having to go back to work and they've adopted animals who have acclimated to having them home every day so, unfortunately, we have been at the vet quite a lot in the last couple months and the vet was saying that the number of dogs that she's put on Prozac and on anti-anxiety meds has just skyrocketed because the dogs, in particular, but both dogs and cats are really experiencing extreme separation anxiety when their human caregivers go to work. So, I don't know what I think about that. I think in some ways there's just costs, I guess, to that kind of building of kinship networks, when being at home is a temporary thing. I don't know what I want to say about that. Maybe nothing. I think just that there's sort of interesting dynamics going on with the way that humans have changed relationships to animals around the home and outside the home. I've read some articles about the number of people who have put bird feeders and bird baths out and have started building relationships with wildlife around their house, whether that's urban or rural or whatever, just because they're home all the time to see who's around and obviously not everyone has had the privilege of being able to stay home during the pandemic but there were a lot of these instances of homebased new relationships forming.

I can't really think of anything else right now on the pandemic question. I sort of avoided thinking about animals in the pandemic. It's funny... I mean not totally avoided it, but I just haven't picked it up as the sort of research or writing interest and it's funny because, well not funny, but at the beginning of the pandemic, all these animal studies colleagues of mine were immediately, just jumping into gear like, "Okay, this came from an animal source" ... like this is just what has been part of this conversation about the cost of how we raise animals and they just kind of launched into action, writing and thinking and as a result, now there's a fair number of articles and even now books coming out on sort of animal studies in the pandemic and I just had nothing to say. I was glad that other people were writing about it and thinking about it, but I just don't know. I could not think in a sort of critical or scholarly way about it. Through most or all of last year, and even now, I certainly don't have anything groundbreaking or interesting to say about it. So, some people really got it, you know, have said wonderfully productive and

interesting and critical and have been critically engaging with the pandemic from an animal studies perspective, but I haven't done that.

Jed DeBruin (JD): *Well, with that in mind, I guess we'll turn back to some of your work that you have written and see if we can reengage with some of the tensions and discussions that you're discussing. We'd like with this next question to turn towards your book,* The Cow with Ear Tag #1389. *We were thinking here how you discuss the unique politics of research based in industrial spaces of food production and during this discussion you demonstrate some of the tensions between human subject and animal subject research, particularly in regard to IRB [institutional review board] regulations. With that in mind, can you speak about the ethical implications of animal studies for research ethics, both in terms of human-oriented and animal-oriented research?*

KG: Yeah, certainly. Well, the IRB is interesting. These institutional ethics review processes are really interesting because as I described in the book, I was going to be interviewing humans and in spaces with humans during my research, and so I completed the IRB. But, when I applied, I checked the box - there's a box that asks if you're researching animals - and I checked yes. And then my whole IRB application was routed into the medical track because they assumed that when I checked yes to animals, that meant I was using animals in lab research. I think that's an interesting thing because it really reveals that, as an institution, the academy has very narrow ideas about how other species fit into the creation of, and sharing of knowledge, and that the institution, if it can imagine things, it can't imagine anything beyond animals in a lab. So, the ethics review process is set up within that context. So, then the IRB was routed into the biomedical track, which caused all kinds of problems for the IRB because I was going to be doing participant observation. They were like, “what is participant observation like? what is this?” And I’m like this is a little... I didn’t make this up at all! I send them like all these citations, demonstrating that this is a hugely well-established qualitative social science research method, it's part of ethnography and they responded, “what's ethnography?” So, that caused problems for the IRB.

It took a really long time to get the human subjects part through, and then on the animal track, I got routed into the Office of Animal Welfare, which has the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, the IACUC, which is the body that oversees ethics in animal research, and it is all totally oriented around the use of animals in medicine and medical research. At UW, the University of Washington, there's a massive amount of biomedical research on animals. They have a huge underground housing complex built for animal research, including nonhuman primates such as dogs, cats, parrots, rats, pigs, all kinds of species. And, so, it was within that context of how do you sort [all of this] so-called ethical research with animals in the lab context? So, there was all kinds of things that just didn't translate in terms of the research I was proposing to do. I was not proposing to harm animals in any way. They were like, “what kind of contact will you have with them?” And I was like, “Well... no contact really.” And they're like, “Well, really? Like what kind of contact?” And I said, “Well, you know, I might pet them…” And they were just like, “What is going on?” There was just a total disjuncture between what I was doing and what they were prepared to assess ethically. I think what's interesting about that is that the whole system is oriented around trying to not even really mitigate, but just trying to [...] because the IACUC approves all kinds of really harmful research involving animals. The aim there, I

think, is to sort of assess how much harm and how necessary is the harm. And so, within that context, that's how they're framing ethical questions; around this active kind of harm, which is how IRB, human ethics frames research as well.

But, if you think more expansively about ethics and research, it wasn't that my research didn't bring up ethical problems or that it wasn't ethically problematic. I mean, yes I wasn't involved in actively harming animals during the research, but I was involved in watching animals suffer and die and be killed. And that poses all kinds of ethical questions! If you tried to push that through the IRB - I don't know, I haven't tried that - but if you tried to push it through the IRB for humans in that situation, I can't imagine that that would be approved. Like I'm going to sit here and watch humans be murdered? That's not going to be approved by the IRB! And yet, it's absolutely acceptable, not even something that needs to be substantively evaluated by an ethics review process [for similar situations for animals] in the university. I'm not saying that exactly, I'm saying that that's sort of how the structure sort of sees this. So, there have been a lot of questions or conversations in animal studies about how can we think about ethical research without a meaningful institutional ethics review process? And not that the IRB is not incredibly flawed, and I mean there's lots and lots of really great writing about the critiques, the real shortcomings of the IRB, but there's not even animal ethics review in so far beyond or behind even where the IRB is in terms of guiding ethics and research. So, there's these questions, like okay well how do we evaluate research? Because right now, it's like people who are in my position or Timothy Pachirat who wrote *Every 12 Seconds* or Alex Blanchette whose new book *Porkopolis* just came out - we've all been in the position, we've all done research in spaces of animal exploitation. They both were actually more actively involved in participating processes that caused harm to animals, but for all of us, we were largely like, and other animal studies scholars too, dictating the ethicality of our own research because there is no meaningful ethics review process.

I thought really extensively about the ethics and I, even long after the research was done, have really reflected on what does it mean to just sit there and watch someone you know suffer and die? There's been some conversation about some senior scholars in the field coming together to develop sort of optional, not attached to an institution, but kind of an ethics review process that a researcher could submit their research protocol to and have a committee of reviewers give feedback on the ethics of the research. I've heard of that actually sort of informally happening with a grad student I know. She did that with her dissertation research design. She got together about five academics who she really respected for their ethical kind of sensitivity. But, you know, that's all optional and you have to really go out of your way. She had to really go out of her way to make that possible. So, I think that there's certainly a lot of work to be done in in terms of thinking about how to do research ethically and then whether we should be doing that research. This is something that that Pachirat and I have talked about before, that he was involved in, he worked in a slaughterhouse, undercover in the slaughterhouse, for his PhD and was involved. I don't think he actually killed any cows, but was involved in that that process of seeing them be killed and dismembering them and that kind of thing.

I think the question that comes up whether we should even be doing research in places of animal exploitation. Because there's a real - even for those of us who are really trying to think against anthropocentrism in our research, trying to maybe be actively anti-anthropocentric -

inherent anthropocentrism in that. Just the fact that we, even with the ethical quandaries that it poses, that ultimately we could just go into a place of animal exploitation and sit there. And we wouldn't necessarily do that in real life. And, so, I think there's this inherent devaluing of animals, even among those of us who are trying to think critically about how they're devalued, and then the outcomes of that. That devaluation in there, lives in futures work - how to undo anthropocentrism in research may require not doing research in those kinds of places. But then that brings up the ethical question of those places are still operating and how do we understand what is going on there without entering those spaces? So, yeah, it's really quite sticky, sticky territory in terms of animal research. I think that, like a lot of the struggles that we're going through and kind of hashing out, ethics are a thing that human ethics review has historically, and still are, grappling with. So, it's not like human ethics review [has] got it all figured out, and now we got to figure [it] out [as animal studies scholars], how to make an ethics review meaningful for animals. I think it really prompts serious questions about research in general and sort of whether with living subjects how it can be ethical at all in spaces where there is potential for harm.

JD: *Katie, you're introducing a ton of quandaries. I mean, I think you know, especially your stuff there on sort of the limits of the institutions to define ethics and then the kind of failures to engage with a multispecies approach and the mismatches in attempting overlay these IRB considerations for humans on to animal research and the fact that also just the frameworks' understandings of animals are so limited under the institutional model.*

I think your part discussing the grad student's outside reviewers is fantastic. If you are going to engage with those sorts of ethical questions, sort of how much more work that goes on outside of the project? And not only getting these scholars to agree, but then if it's sort of nascent and it's very "we're not really sure how to do that", or what that looks like and how that might change over time and I don't think you explicitly said it, but this, the fact that the IRB is also very limited in a sense; it has a limited temporality, set in a very particular set period of time, and everything you were discussing there is outside; it's not a definable period of time. I think that was very enlightening for myself and shows how lots of considerations go into this.

I want to keep us sitting here at this multispecies sort of engagement as I think it's offering lots of new avenues of thought. One thing is we noticed that you've used and written about multispecies ethnographic methods. Could you speak a little bit about what those methods are? And, what they offer animal studies as a field of study, as theoretical engagements both in the field and outside of field, and as its potential for politics more broadly?

KG: That's the main question.

JD: *I wanted to give you a nice big question there right at the end!*

KG: I think that we can think about multispecies ethnography in relation to human focused ethnography, thinking about the study of people, the study of culture, social relations, methods that come up frequently are certainly in ethnography; our interviews, participant observation being kind of embedded in a particular place for an extended period of time. Of course, in multispecies ethnography, these things are a bit limited because you can't interview animals in a

sort of conventional sort of way, although I've been trying to think of how you could access the kind of knowledge that you get with interviews with humans in a sort of human-animal context. What are the possibilities for not reading speech but reading, learning more about body language or the sort of audible ways that the animals communicate? The ways that they interact with each other, like if we think about interviewing as not an exchange of information just through speech, but through a whole bunch of different kind of embodied forms of exchange of information; that might be one way to think about that.

I think it obviously comes up and sort of crosses over with participant observation, or just observation, but I'm thinking about what are we seeing when we look at a particular animal or a particular animal in a particular situation in the particular geographic context? But one of the challenges with that, I think, is going back to this question of anthropomorphism. So, if you think of a dog, for instance, and you think about a dog yawning, and then you think about what that means in humans and it's usually you're bored or you're tired. But in a dog, it can be a lot more; it could be that they're tired or they're bored or they're excited or they're anxious. When I take my dogs to the vet, they're just yawning constantly, or if I'm getting the leash and they're excited to go out on a walk, they do this yawn. So, if we just read like a dog yawn based on our ideas of human yawns, we'd be missing a whole sort of spectrum of experience. Here, thinking about context becomes really important. So, like if a dog were in some kind of super stressful situation, like in a vet [office] and they're having some procedure done and they yawn and you might think, okay, they're not tired, they're not bored, like this is a stressful situation, so you could like pick up on, hey, maybe this means something else then what I'm assuming it means based on my human knowledge of this particular act. This is just a little example, the dog yawn, but I think it sort of illustrates really that there are so many ways we could get it wrong in observing animals and project our own ideas on to what we're seeing, and so in that way, animal behavior research or ethological research can be really useful in helping us to understand what might be going on. But that's also sort of limited and constrained by the animal behaviorists' or the pathologists' way of seeing, and a way of making assumptions about another animal's behavior. It comes back to these questions about humility and about sort of accepting that, maybe, there are things that we don't understand.

And, so, in my writing, especially lately, I've gotten more unsure the longer I'm studying animals about what I'm seeing. That whole thing, like the more you know, the more you realize that you don't know or something; I can't remember what it is exactly but, I definitely feel like that about animals. So, for me and my writing about animals, I've started just posing a lot of questions: like, what if we look at this particular behavior in this way? What might that mean? Or just trying to offer some potential analysis but not foreclosing the possibility that that's just wrong. But trying to make these points or ask these questions is important because of what it can help us to think about in terms of treating animals better. I think in terms of ethnography, those are some key points. I didn't really get at the participant observation part of observation, but I think this kind of gets back to the earlier questions around Gold's spectrum [ed. note: see Gold, 1958]. He says that there's the sort of high participation end of participant observation and then like the high observation end of participant observation. Killing an animal in a slaughterhouse as part of research would be like the far participant observation end and sitting in an auction as an audience member might be closer to the observation end of participation, but, not totally, because you are a participant, really participating as an audience member. You're helping to

create this kind of human landscape in the audience that is looking on this animal. So, maybe a fuller observational role might be being behind glass and watching an auction unfold or something. So, yeah, I think a lot about just that spectrum of where a particular research activity lies on that spectrum. And then, what are the ethics attached to the different kinds of nodes on that spectrum? Because you probably have a lot of more urgent ethical questions that our guiding how this animal is harmed, for instance.

So, let's see methods... oh, and then I just want to also say that I just wrote a paper. I think some time it's going to be coming out in EPE [ed. note: EPE: Nature and Space] on multispecies autoethnography [ed. note: see Gillespie, 2021]. So, sort of getting back to methods - not that autoethnography is a totally feminist method, but there is certainly a nice feminist streak through it in terms of how autoethnography is oriented with this focus on the self and the self in relation to others. So, I wrote this paper just kind of really wondering; how might we think about autoethnography in a multispecies context? And this book I'm working on right now, it's sort of using multispecies autoethnography to understand the everyday kinds of relationships we are in with other animals through a series of five little case studies from my own life. I think autoethnography gives us this access point that really allows for asking some questions about the sort of intimate embodied kind of encounters or relationships that we have with other species. The stakes, I think, become clear if you can attend to your own impact on others in those kinds of everyday contexts. I think it's sort of odd to think about all of these species and autoethnography because the auto is human race, the human self, but the self in this kind of web of multispecies relations, and this gets one of the things that maybe delineates that sort of difference between a kind of more mainstream animal studies and a sort of more critical or feminist animal studies is: Who is this research for? And what kind of impact is it going to have in the world? And, so, thinking about your intimate sort of individual lived experience in relation to another animal, I think that the stakes are, if you pay attention, the stakes are sort of readily visible in that context. How am I going to harm this other animal just by living my life? How can I be in relationships of care, and be in kinship with this animal who lives in the crawl space of my house with their other rat kin? So yeah, I think that's one of the things I've been exploring lately is this autoethnography.

I think maybe that gets a little bit at its potential for politics or its kind of orientation in what ethnography can do in the world is focusing on those stakes, focusing on the things that we can know and understand and the things that we can and might never know and understand and what those suggest in terms of how we might live more ethically and carefully and kind of gently in relationship with others. I think it really is the foundation of a political, as well as an ethical kind of methodological framework I guess, if you choose for it to be. There's a lot of multispecies ethnography that doesn't do that within animal studies, multispecies ethnography; some of the scholars that I work with would say that multispecies ethnography is sort of apolitical, but in the way that I envision it, it is [political], because it's focused on those stakes, because it's focused on research for other species, not on other species. Then, at its core, it is political, but I don't think, not everybody thinks that way about it.

JD: *I think that's all the questions we had. Kelly and Aylin, did you have anything you wanted to add to that?*

KF: *I want to know what kind of dogs do you have?*

KG: They’re beagles. They're actually from the biomedical research labs at the UW here in Seattle. So, they have a lot of quirks. One of them came out of the lab super friendly and outgoing. One of them came out, you know, so terrified; it took her a year to even walk up to another person. And the third one is super feisty and just wants to be held, all the time. So yeah, they're just wonderful. We've had them for about eight years and so they're getting up in age, which means lots of vet visits.

Thanks for including me in this. I'm really looking forward to seeing the issue.