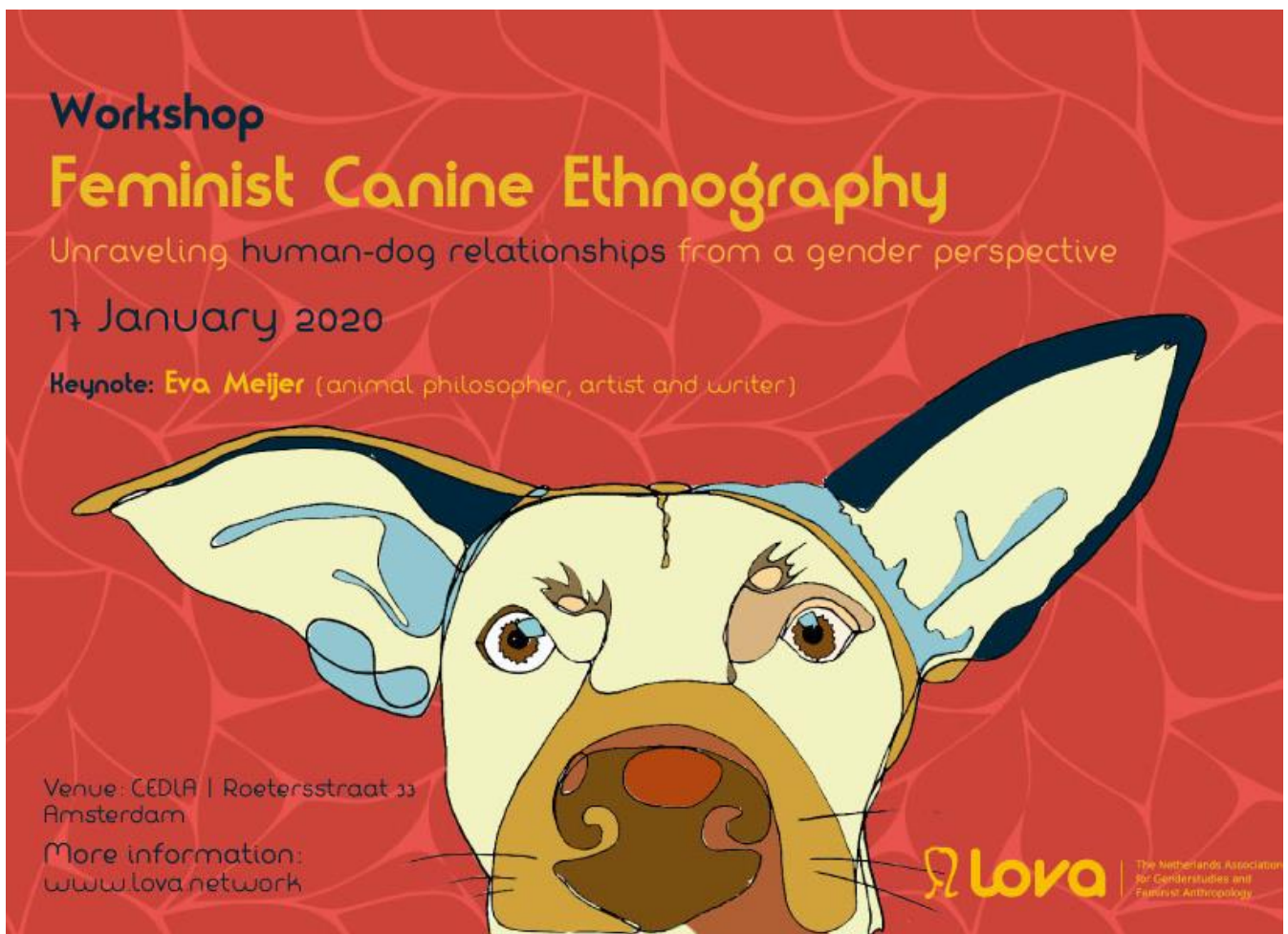


Program

LOVA Workshop 'Feminist Canine Ethnography' 17 January 2020, Amsterdam



Workshop
Feminist Canine Ethnography
Unraveling human-dog relationships from a gender perspective
17 January 2020
Keynote: **Eva Meijer** (animal philosopher, artist and writer)

Venue: CEDLA | Roetersstraat 33
Amsterdam
More information:
www.lova.network

lova | The Netherlands Association
for Genderstudies and
Feminist Anthropology

Workshop organizers

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Program 'Feminist Canine Ethnography'

17 January 2020, University of Amsterdam

The morning program takes place at the JK building of Roeterseiland University campus: Valckeniersstraat 65-67. For lunch and the afternoon program we will walk together to CEDLA: Roetersstraat 33.

Room JK3.05B

Walk-in & Coffee 9.00 - 9.30

Welcome words: Irene & Reinhilde 9.30 -10.00

Assembly (JK3.05B)

Kennel 1: Dogs in the Picture 10.00-11.40

1.) Charli Brissey, University of Michigan (10.00)

Canis Major: Imagining radical interspecies futures at the end of the world

2.) Maythe Han, University of Edinburgh (10.20)

More-than-human methods and ethics in canine ethnographic research

3.) Lee Deigaard, Independent researcher & artist (10.40)

Vixen.Vector: chronicling sympathetic alignments and other canine geometries

4.) Holly Hughes, University of Michigan (11.00)

The Dog and Pony Show (Bring Your Own Pony)

Discussion: 11.20 – 11.40

Parallel sessions

Kennel 2: Love & Learning (JK3.05B) 11.45 – 13.00

5.) Rebekah Fox, University of Warwick (11.45)

A feminist approach to multi-species ethnography

6.) Constanze Gulle, Humboldt University of Berlin (12.05)

Gender aspects in canine pedagogy

7.) Bernardo Couto Soares, University of Amsterdam (12.25)

Animal Shelter: Intra-actions between humans and nonhuman animals in processes of domestication (research proposal)

Discussion: 12.45– 13.00

Kennel 3: Digital Dogs (JK3.88A) 11.45- 13.00

8.) Jennie Doyle, Queen Mary University of London (11.45)

Pawfect and Impawtent: Border Terriers on Twitter

9.) Isabel de Berrie (12.05)

Le Tombeau de Gabe: the death of an internet meme and the gendered work of mourning

10.) Fernando González, University of Amsterdam (12.25)
Cosmetic anthropomorphism and visual and framing of the zoomorphic self (research proposal)

Discussion: 12.45– 13.00

Feeding time (Vegan lunch) 13.00-14.00

Workshop (Cedla, 2nd floor) 14.00-14.30

11.) Angela Bartram, University of Derby
'Be your dog'

Free roaming (Coffee break) 14.30-15.00

Keynote lecture (Cedla, 2nd floor) 15.00-16.00

12.) Eva Meijer, Wageningen University
Stray Philosophy: Dog/Human Reflections on Boundaries, Care and Forming New Interspecies Communities

Closing Assembly Barking, Play and Fight 16.00-16.30

Drinks and Treats

Back into the wild

Abstracts of the workshop contributions

Keynote lecture by Eva Meijer, Wageningen University

Title: *Stray Philosophy: Dog/Human Reflections on Boundaries, Care and Forming New Interspecies Communities*

Angela Bartram, University of Derby

Title: *'Be Your Dog'*

'Be Your Dog' sees participants learn from the behaviour of their dogs by mirroring what they do: walking, laying, barking, drinking, etc. They become *dog* in essence and learn through empathy, becoming an inter-species pack.

Bernardo Couto Soares, University of Amsterdam

Title: *Animal Shelter: Intra-actions between humans and nonhuman animals in processes of domestication (research proposal)*

The research will be conducted within an animal shelter in the city of Amsterdam and intends to understand the process of domestication, or the actions and practices of disciplining the body underlines the passing from the category of "stray animal" to the "potentially adoptable" animal. Within our post-industrial society, a shift as occurred in the way that pets are perceived, from a utilitarian, to objects of human love and affection. This is particularly the case for dogs, with a plethora of possibilities to demonstrate this affection through dog hotels, cafes and department stores catering to most varied products within this booming consumer culture. The bodies of dog have become the loci of economic and emotional investment, but in order to become "pet animal" there are several practices of disciplining. Such as training and teaching, or internalizing practices, that affect the animal subjectivity, and confinement, vaccination and castration that effect the animal body. (Palmer, 2001) Hence, the project looks at the conjoint world, the animal shelter, and how it is co- created by the human/animal relationships through their daily intra-actions, subjacent in regulatory frameworks, such as kennel rules, dog training practices, feeding times, etc. And how through these performative practices the subjectivity of the dog, changes from "stray" to "pet". (Birke, 2004)

Charli Brissey, University of Michigan

Title: *Canis Major: Imagining radical interspecies futures at the end of the world*

This presentation features excerpts from a forthcoming experimental manuscript titled "Dancing at the End of the World: Choreographies of Time and Uncertainty," and will include a screening of new short film by Charli Brissey, *Canis Major* (2019). Building on questions of interspecies interdependence and the role of more-than-human actors in imagining livable futures in precarious times, this film integrates gender-bending cyborg sci-fi with experimental choreography as an artist works through severe writer's block with the imaginative help of their dog. Based on many true stories, including the 1957 Russian Space Mission that sent the first canine into space, this fifteen-minute video-animation hybrid ruminates gender, care, and concern at the "end of the world." This research, both in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and aesthetic inquiries, is in dialogue with

scholars and artists engaging in current critical discourse between art, science, and feminist theory. Specifically, the areas of interspecies ecologies and care (Donna Haraway), intersections of gender, race, and technology (Lisa Nakamura), choreography as a research method for studying ecological phenomenon (Jennifer Monson), and the absolute necessity of creative efforts in citizen science (Karen Barad).

Contstanze Gülle, Humboldt University of Berlin

Title: *Gender aspects in canine pedagogy*

The pedagogical field is no longer reserved for humans anymore. More and more pedagogical practices increase within the terrain of the work with canines. For example, dogs play a huge role in areas of social work as well as being support animals. But also the care of dogs and their training and education has become a practical field of great importance. There are dog coaches, dog behaviour trainees, dog walkers and dog therapists. I would like to compare the pedagogical practice of dog care with the established institutional, administrative and legal framework behind the practical fields. When I researching for pedagogical aspects in these areas of dog care, I was struck by the fact that it was mostly womxn who were engaged in the actual practices of dog pedagogy. However, when looking at who is involved in professionalizing these practices, for example by developing quality standards, examinations and certified degrees, I couldn't find any womxn. Therefore, I want to investigate the aspect of gender within the fields of practical dog care on the one hand and its professionalisation and administration on the other. Can an analogy be drawn to the gender aspects as they are found in the education of humans? Another relevant aspect I would like to focus on is the anthropocentrism of pedagogy and the resulting binary view of humans and animals. When we speak of human, we are supposed to mean 'man'. All other beings, such as womxn and animals are defined in contrary to men. For me it would be interesting to discuss these dualistic positions and their impact on care work with dogs.

Fernando González Rodríguez, University of Amsterdam

Title: *Cosmetic Anthropomorphism and Visual and Framing of the Zoomorphic Self*

Central to this paper is an assessment of the role of dogs in the creation of digital identities among their *owners* from a gender perspective. In specific, the focal point is a review of the positionality, posturing and negotiation of the figure of the feminized and masculinized pet (dogs), as crucial element in the construction of a more likeable, approachable, popular, seductive, attractive and relatable (self)-image. Through a gender lens, this paper explores the ways in which visual digital outputs reflect ideologies about staged femininity, masculinity and *queerness*. By applying cyber-ethnography and content analysis to photos and videos uploaded on Instagram by users, this paper is an attempt to reflect on dog-oriented digital practices. The underlying goal is to propose a taxonomy of visual codes and strategies where pets are visually framed according to gender-related expectations and ideals. Worthy of consideration is the notion of ownership in the context of animals being cosmetically and aesthetically manipulated to appeal to human notions of cuteness. In many ways, posting carefully composed images of dogs is a tactic, I posit, used by the owners—regardless of their gender—to evoke specific responses among their digital audiences. A zoomorphic self (owner), at least from a conceptual perspective, emerges vis-à-vis an anthropomorphic pet (dog). Animals become objects of conspicuous consumption in the sense that *owning* them offers recognition and status, and increases the allure, enchantment and appeal of their *owners*. This realization is essential for a reflection on how gender as a social concept is transposed onto other

species by association or subalternity in regards to human beings. All along, I attempt to make a distinction between the visuals produced to document moments, and those manufactured to elicit self-reflective associations.

Holly Hughes, University of Michigan

Title: *The Dog and Pony Show (Bring Your Own Pony)*

I would like to propose a presentation of a solo performance art piece “The Dog and Pony Show (Bring Your Own Pony),” a work that maps my experience as a queer feminist participant in the sport of canine agility for the Canine Feminist Ethnography Conference in January 2020. My work has long used personal narrative grounded in intersectional feminist analysis to talk about queer desire. This piece extends and complicates this investigation by discussing my involvement in the sport of canine agility. In the past thirty years, this activity adapted from equestrian competitions, has spread across the globe, particularly in North America, Europe and Asia, with international competitions that are televised.

The overwhelming majority of the competitors are women, many of whom structure their lives around the rigors of training and the competitions, in effect re centering lives built around the heterosexual nuclear family to a parallel universe build around their canine companions and the largely female community created by the competitions. I move thru this community as a visibly queer feminist, accompanied by my four-legged familiars, exploring the inherent, unspoken but palpable queerness of this subculture, from the almost erotic fixation on the animals’ beauty and athleticism to the classic “bad object choice” investments in a non procreative relationship with a creature deemed not worthy of such passion. Following Haraway, dog agility allows us to think about how critiques of heteronormativity, ideas about queerness and feminism circulate and are informed by a cross species love.

Isabelle de Berrie

Title: *Le Tombeau de Gabe: the death of an internet meme and the gendered work of mourning*

In this paper the authors explore the internet culture phenomenon of Gabe the dog. Beginning in 2013, Gabe’s image and vocalisations underwent extensive remixing into music videos. We analyse the emergence of the “bork remix” as a subgenre (“bork” being a colloquial version of “bark”), and the ways in which the division of Gabe’s utterances into the “bork” and the more lyrical “yowl” offer a musico-analytic framework mirroring the masculine/feminine dichotomies of the more traditional sonata form. Moving on to consider the practice of the remix itself, we consider it as a form of ventriloquism, in which Gabe’s vocalisations become separated from himself and his intentions. This provides rich material concerning Gabe’s participation in the uncanny; assessment of the ramifications of this is informed by existing theories of ventriloquism in feminist opera studies and film studies. Finally, this presentation coalesces upon a particular moment – the death of the real-life Gabe. These strands are brought together in a video work which, by combining the genres of the “bork remix” and the culturally-laden “tombeau,” brings together several gendered reception histories, while re-integrating private and public responses to Gabe’s death.

Jennie Doyle, Queen Mary University of London

Title: *Pawfect and Impawtent: Border Terriers on Twitter*

People writing in the first person for or as animals, especially dogs, is not a new practice, however the way it is enacted within the virtual world has faced little interrogation by scholars despite

around a third of pets globally estimated to have some form of social media presence. This research interrogates, from an insider perspective, a breed specific community on Twitter has the attributes of a 'traditional' community with its own language and rituals. It consists of over a thousand 'tweeting' Border Terriers (predominantly women aged 40-59 years) plus a range of other non-human members including other animals, soft toys and a very small number of conventional human accounts. It is democratic, having no leader as such, no politics, religion or rules, whilst the majority live in the UK it has members from across the globe. This paper explores how membership both strengthens canine-human bonds and provides an outlet for creativity and a knowingly light-hearted escape in a world separate from the challenges and difficulties found in real life. This community of fantasy has created deep emotional ties and lifelong friendships between members which develop through but also transcend the virtual world of dogs communicating with each other. The real-life meetings of both humans and dogs provide an opportunity to reinforce those relationships but are not necessarily more 'real' than the virtual communication as border terriers. This paper addresses the nature and value of this community of women-as-their-dogs and the difficulties of doing so in ways which challenge masculinist trivialising of this novel social formation.

Lee Deigaard, Independent researcher & artist

Title: *Vixen.Vector: chronicling sympathetic alignments and other canine geometries*

Vixen. Vector is a photographic series exploring the synchronicities and micro-alignments of a dog protagonist within the urban environment. It relies on acts of incidental witnessing rather than intervention. On daily walks, tiger dog moves through the big city, carrying nothing, wearing nothing; her body is her vehicle and her expression. Her everyday geometry, its ephemerality and its searching sequences, are both improvisations and statements. Quick-witted and subtle, through the medium of photography, the only thing nearly as fast as she is, she teaches the relationships of parts. She adapts and applies the companionate mirroring, so tactful and supportive within the domestic sphere, to city streets, punctuating and graphic, in subtle conversation with her environment, with me. To see the city through her is to discover and understand space differently. The photographs may not convey the triangulations of scent, a rich multi-dimensional world beyond human ken, but they reveal deliberate, meaningful formal and geometric connections she identifies with her body as a vector and retroactive insight into her instantaneous perceptions. Rescued from the streets, she retains aspects of a wild creature, like a coyote or a vixen, and the decisions she makes about where to go, the ways she exercises her autonomy carry added poignancy. To see her in the world, to behold what she does, to not pin her with an appropriating gaze, to slink *with* her down streets and alleys emboldened in our pairing... Although a dog, not big, often fearful, she is on a quest to know in full. She may stalk cats, she may be stalked by cats, but she will not be catcalled. Because she is two steps ahead of the wolf whistle.

Maythe Han, University of Edinburgh

Title: *More-than-human methods and ethics in canine ethnographic research*

This proposed presentation is a collection of short essays and ethnographic portraits that explores creative and speculative methodological and ethical approaches to researching dog-human relatedness. Drawing on my interaction with my interlocutors (dogs and their humans in Edinburgh) as well as my own experiences as a dog owner, I argue that if we are to take multispecies assemblages seriously as subjects of anthropological inquiry, we must expand beyond the repertoire of conventional research methods and human-centric ethics with which we have all too often

become uncritically comfortable. Reflecting on my positionality as a woman of colour, I contend that we must re-imagine what ethnographic research can look like — methodologically and ethically — in order to explore the scope of anthropology more fully. The data and analyses may no longer be best expressed in the ‘standard’ mode of academic writing based largely on robust theory, but through other, more experimental, ethnographic forms that prioritize engaging with affect, emotions, and senses. The presentation is an exercise in this ‘other ethnographic format’ through storytelling and photography. As multispecies subjectivities become increasingly entangled in this complex world, my aim is to envision new, ethical ways of studying what it means to live with and research our nonhuman companions by telling textured stories of my interlocutors — both human and canine.

Rebekah Fox, University of Warwick

Title: *A feminist approach to multi-species ethnography*

This paper addresses the construction of human-canine relations, based upon a ‘multi-species ethnography’ (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010) of different dog training cultures. It asks how we can conceptualise dog training from a feminist standpoint and challenge anthropocentric understandings through the use of innovative research methods. - Histories of dog training describe a general shift from a male dominated world of correction and coercion, to a largely female profession based upon rewards and positive reinforcement (Pregowski, 2015). For many, dog training is seen as a means of ‘civilising’ canines as suitable members of human society, however, in the contemporary world of dog training, there is increasing talk of ‘dog-centred’ methods which embrace canine subjectivity and pay attention to canine desires and emotions (Włodarczyk, 2017). Feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway (2003, 2007) have described training as a process of ‘becoming with’ canine companions and a means of communication between the species. Through the use of participant observation, interviews, visual methods (including photo and video diaries) and Qualitative Behaviour Assessment (Wemelsfelder, 2001) we aim to capture the different forms of inter-species connectedness performed through training relationships. We examine the intersectional relationships of species, race, class and gender embedded within these practices and argue that whilst training embraces elements of play, communication and bodily connection, it also inevitably involves elements of human control, frustration and misunderstanding. In doing so we challenge simplistic readings of different training philosophies and explore how a feminist analysis can help us think ethically about training relationships for both companion and working dogs as part of a complex more-than-human society.