

# Social lives with animals: domination, intersectionality and heterotopia

Erika Cudworth

# What has Val Plumwood ever done for me?

- *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* – one copy is not enough!
- Linked (intersected) domination – racism, sexism, colonialism, 'naturism' – *key to different forms of social relations* (sociological challenge!)
  - 'network of oppressive dualisms' (1993)
  - Unified? 'Forming a single system' (1994), 'common centric structure' (eurocentrism, androcentrism, anthropocentrism) (1997)
- Possibilities of non-hierarchical difference (1993)
- *Environmental Culture* (2002)
  - Interspecies communicative ethics
  - Querying the human
- Philosophical animism, nature in the active voice (2009)
  - Paying close attention
  - Intentionality
  - Mystery
- Nature writing, story-telling and creativity and HUMOUR!

# Anthroparchy - systemic domination of animals

- Sociological framework
- A system of social relations which centre and prioritise the human – human domination
- Complex systems involving human and non-human natures
- System co-constitution....intersectional analysis
- With different domains of domination: violence, polity, culture, re/production
- Different historically, culturally, geographically
- Different degrees of domination – marginalisation, exploitation, oppression

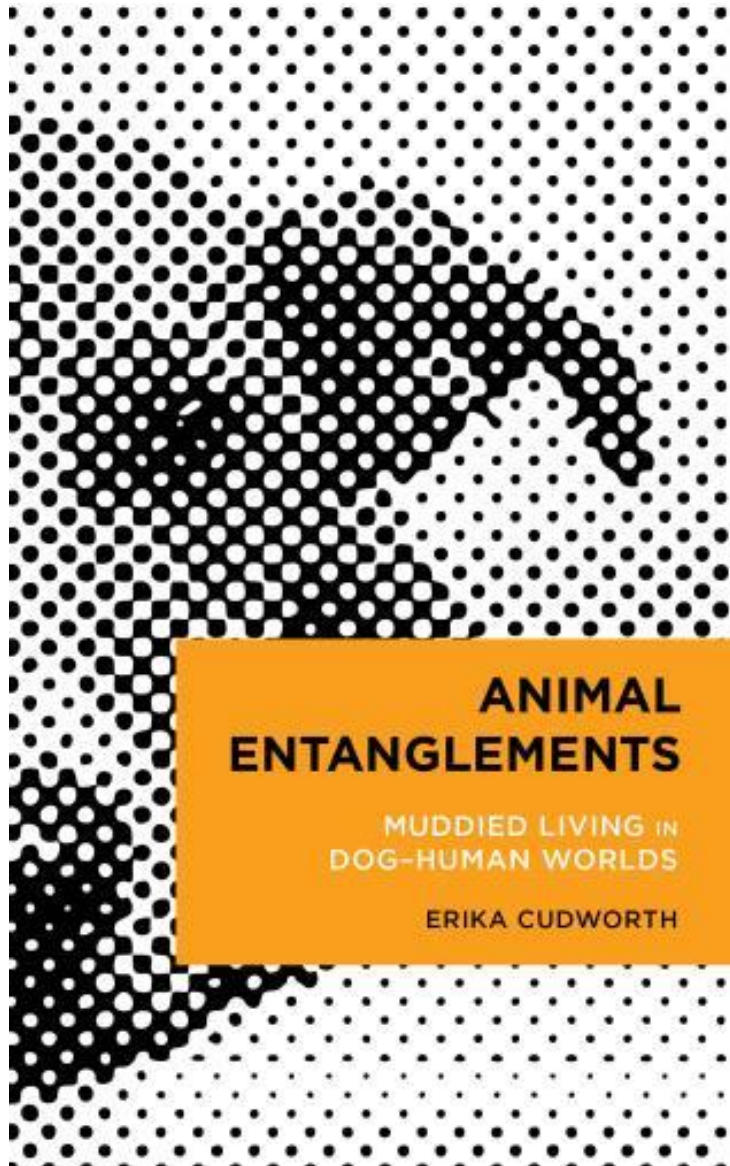


## Social Lives with Other Animals

Tales of Sex, Death and Love

Erika Cudworth





# Everyday encounters and boundaries

- Everyday life and interactions the 'essence of who we are' (Pink 2007)
- where are animal companions in the sociology of the family, work, carework, home, food and eating?
- Dogs - 34% of UK homes; figures higher elsewhere (Romania 45%, Poland 43%, Argentina 66%, Brazil 44%) (Statista 2022).
- Intimate relations in shared household space (Charles 2016; Cudworth 2021)
- Based on ethnographic observation and interviewing

# Keeping dogs as domination?

- Tuan (1986) Domination and affection
  - Pets are produced through physical and behavioural modification
  - The dog is the 'pet par excellence'
- Motamedi-Fraser (2024)
  - 'canis familiaris' – the species story of the dog, they are 'hard-wired' to be with humans? The BOND
  - Behavioural 'problems' are an 'objection to their living conditions'
- Bekoff and Pierce (2021) unreasonable human expectations of dogs
- Haraway (2008) being a pet is 'a difficult job' for a dog





# Anthroparchy and dogs

## Marginalisation

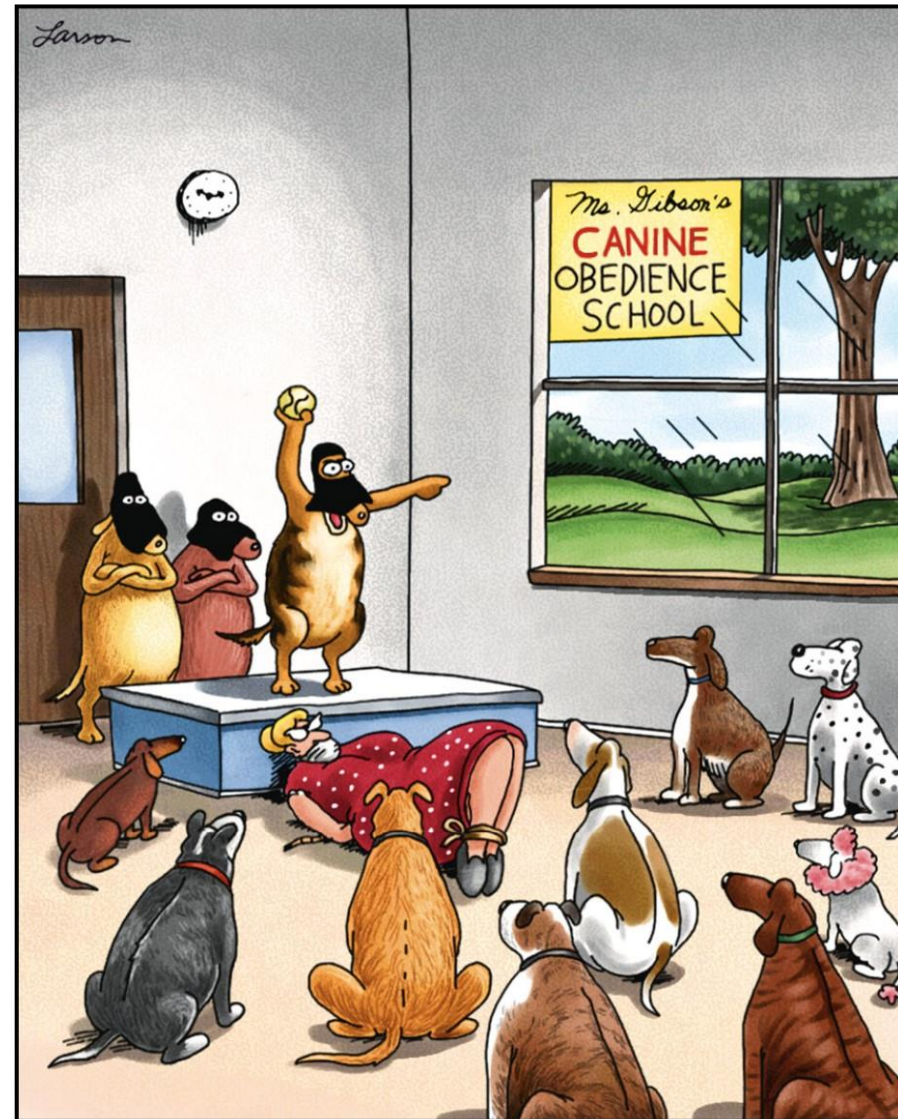
Spatial exclusion – in homes and public places  
Lack of inclusion in policy making  
Left home alone?

## Exploitation

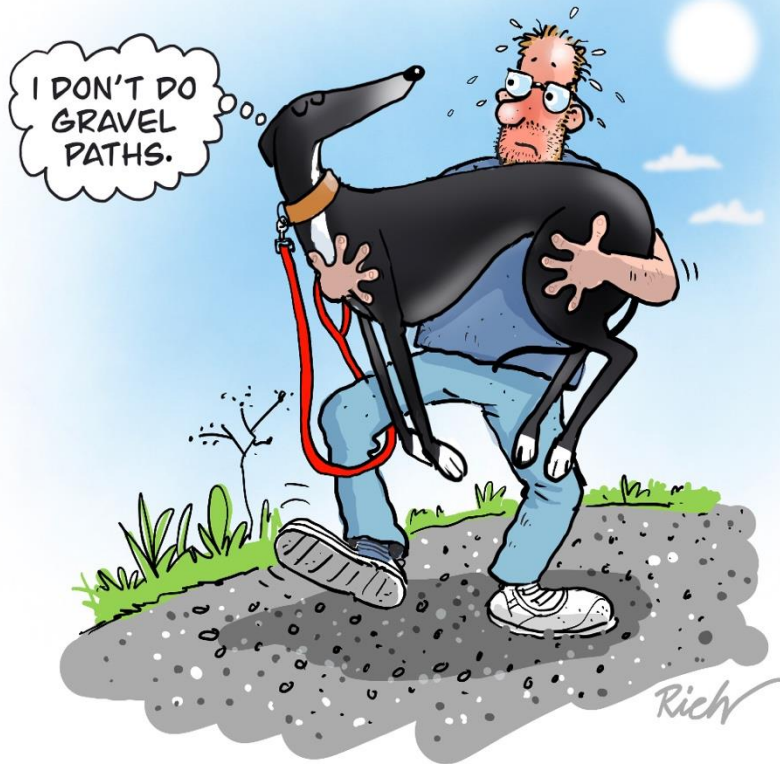
Puppy breeding industries  
For entertainment – commercially or in home settings  
For caring labour e.g. therapy animals?  
Other work e.g. security

## Oppression

Harsh training regimes and punishment  
Neglect and abuse, abandonment  
Lack of socialisation?



"And I say we go outside and we *play with this ball!*"



## GREYT LIFTING

The strenuous muscle building exercise used by owners of Greyhounds that refuse to walk on such surfaces as gravel paths, sand, stony ground, muddy ground, gritty tarmac, puddles, etc. etc. etc.

## Dogs as agential and agentic

- Human enabled agency e.g. play and socialization
- Initiated by dogs?
- Different kinds of relationships with humans possible: as toys, as dependents, as surrogate children, as companions and friends etc.
- Ability of dogs to change human behaviour and relations
- Walking dogs generates particular communities and intra-pack relations
- Intra-species communication?



Look,  
I really  
appreciate it  
but I don't like  
that you brought  
this gift or whatever  
the reason is that you  
bring this dead animal here  
after I shared my breakfast with  
you this morning. I mean, I really  
appreciate it, but you will not even eat  
her. I wish we could negotiate this more

to stop. How can  
I remember this?  
Do you remember  
me, in a bad  
mood about  
the cat?



## Muddied living

- Extra 'stuff'
- Antithesis of the 'ideal home'
- Dog agency in shaping space, making 'beastly place'

Well, he farts a lot, pretty much constantly when he's dosing, which if he is not out walking or eating, is pretty much most of the time. I mean he just creates an atmosphere [laughing] a thick fug, a thick fug of horror [pause for laughter]. And always nearest to me as well. And sometimes, well bloody hell, phew! God. A thick, thick fug. (F, Leicestershire)



# Spatial restriction

Clearly, he's quite a big dog [the dog is huge, a mixed mastiff/Great Dane breed], so he's not allowed up on the sofa because then there'd be no room for anybody else, we kind of knew that [...] He's not allowed in the dining room when we eat and there are kind of doors that we can shut, exclude him from bits we don't want him to go, but he's pretty much got the er, he's got the run of most of the downstairs of the house.

[...] having so many dogs at once, I couldn't afford to let three or four or more of them just take over the house

## Dirty pleasures – co-sleeping



- Most do not intend to sleep with a dog
- Dog agency, ingenuity and persistence
- Human guilt/embarrassment

I've got a king size bed and he takes up most of it so I usually find that I'm across the top or wedged into a really small bit of the bed and he's stretched out over the whole thing and he takes up a surprising amount of space for a small dog [meaning slim, a whippet lurcher]. But it really amazes me that he's so heavy as well so I can't really move him either; I have to actually kind of wake him up and get him off the bed, erm, just so that I can move

Well, the Staffie [Staffordshire terrier rescued] from out of the canal, he could open the fridge. And he'd do it while you were there. He got so you know, just like he'd be standing there and [impersonating dog] "move along", pushing you out the way.

He stole 12 onion bhaji's and 12 samosa's – frozen -- from on top of the cooker. I was laying the table for a meal and I heard this big clang -- and it was on the back of the cooker as well -- a big clang on the floor. By the time I got in there, nothing left, he'd eaten the whole lot.

## Living by the nose



# Primate vs canid

We shout don't we? We shout at them and wave our arms around, like when they run off, and we sit and stare at them and freak them out. And we put food away and in bags and cupboards and stuff and he can smell bloody anything, a door doesn't stop him smelling and he's so clever, he can open doors. He's more clever than my husband, he can close them too! [laughing] So he smells stuff, he gets stuff and eats it and I go ballistic and start shouting which is not fair but it's frustrating. (F, London)



Knowing how it could change the lives of canines everywhere, the dog scientists struggled diligently to understand the Doorknob Principle.



# Ambivalence in food and eating

- All claim to find animals interesting, to 'love' animals (other than dogs)
- Concerns expressed about intensive farming, breeding for the pet trade, wellbeing of 'pets' (e.g. caged rabbits)
- 1 vegan, 7 known vegetarians, others 'restricted' or 'unrestricted' carnists.
- Unrestricted carnist owners have least boundary confusion, vegetarians the highest levels.
- Feeding dogs meat is essential for health – natural and normal
- Dogs would choose not to be vegetarians – human vegetarian ambivalence over 'pet keeping'



Canagan Dog Food



# CANAGAN

Chris Mitchell: [www.epicicons.com](http://www.epicicons.com) ©All rights reserved

## Carnism - 'a natural diet'

...the thing about vegetarianism is that it's to do with humans having a choice and not being under any necessity of eating meat. Dogs are essentially wolves and it's an essential part of their diet. (vegetarian)

I don't know about a vegetarian dog...they're not the same as us, they don't have the same enzymes... It's like trying to give a horse [some] meat or a sheep a nice bit of steak, I think there some things that are meant to be. (vegan)



we don't eat much meat ... but I suppose I'm like a lot of people, I just push it out of my mind all the time. And pork is probably, well, although it's one of my favourite meats it's probably the one that troubles me the most because they're supposed to be as intelligent as dogs and have similar emotions....which is quite chilling really.

(restricted carnist)



# Carework for dogs

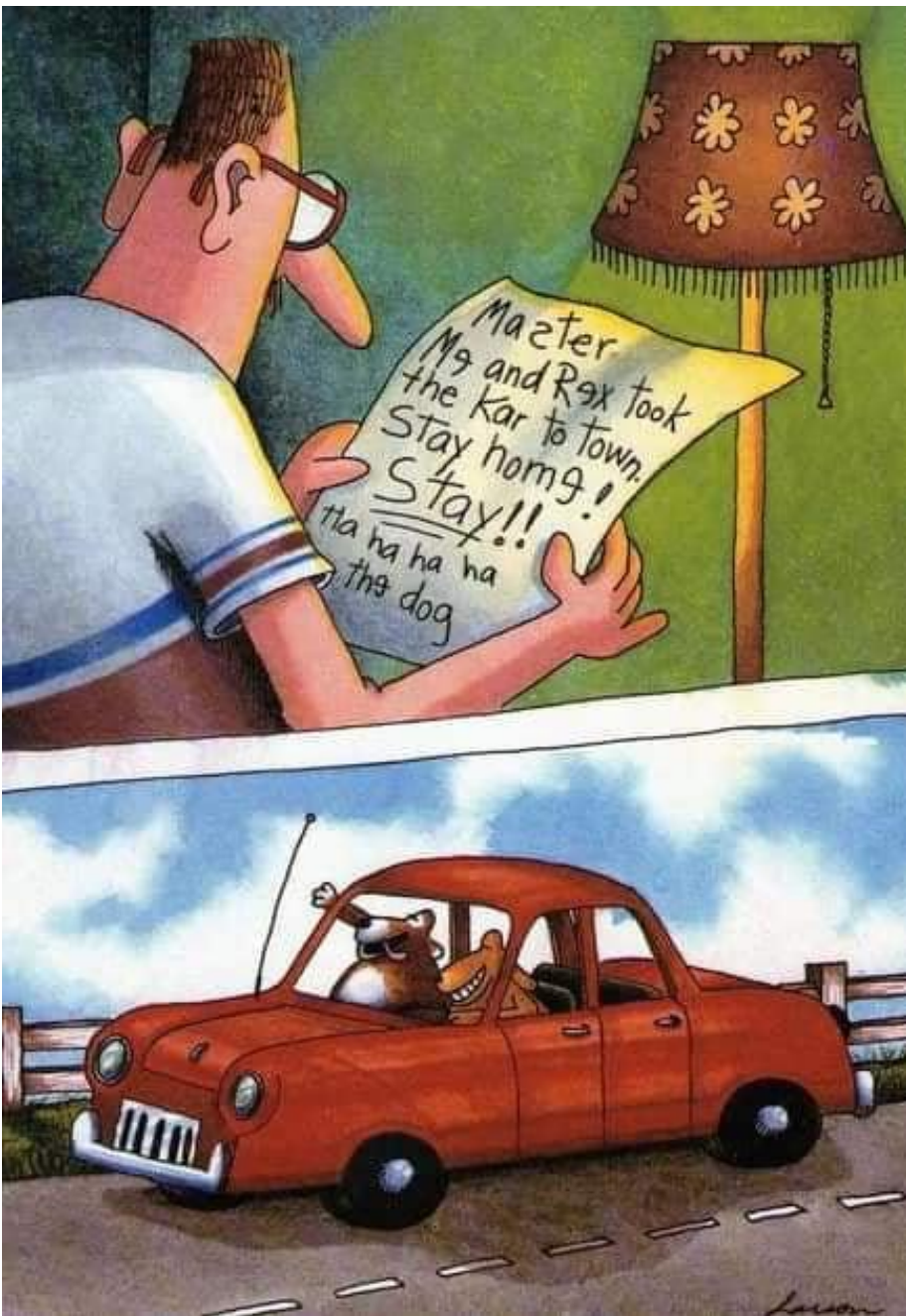
- Comparisons with caring for children and grandchildren – ‘very different to having a cat’
- Walking a time hungry activity – one to two and a half hours per day. Gendered impact – walking early/in the dark, ‘a man without a dog’
- Provision of related services: veterinary care, dog walking and dog sitting, ‘day care centres’, dependence on family members while at work
- Burden of care: puppies, ill and elderly dogs – lack of sleep, disrupted sleep, nursing, washing and cleaning up



## THE HOWL OF DEATH

The panic inducing, heart rate accelerating, ear splitting howl emitted by a Greyhound following the slightest discomfort. Usually cured by holding a paw or asking “what’s the matter”





# Carework by dogs

- Being there

The house would be very empty without a dog I think because it's just somebody [...] unconditional love, you know, they never ask questions, they're always there

- Emotional support

I feel they're quite intelligent. I feel that they respond to how you feel. They feel your emotions [...] if you are a bit sort of upset or something I think they feel that. [...] and they want to be tactile and touch you, they want to be close to you.

# Rethinking Carework



## FLORENCE NIGHTINGREYLE

The comforting nursing presence provided by a hound when its owner comes down with an illness requiring bed rest, or a lie down on the sofa, or a quiet sit down because of feeling a bit blehh.

- Caring labour for humans: cleaning homes and bodies, shopping, tidying, training, socialisation, preparing meals and feeding, entertaining and playing, day care/medical care, nursing, attention and affection.
- Caring labour of 'good' dog owners: providing exercise, cleaning and grooming bodies, cleaning and tidying homes, socialisation, training, feeding (shopping, cooking) and management of additional services (day care or veterinary); emotional labour of providing attention and affection.
- Carework by dogs: providing exercise, enabling socialisation (with dogs and humans), providing company, emotional support and affection, play and entertainment. Nursing?

# Furry family?



- Not surrogates for children/other relationships – alterfamilialism

when you're my age and lots of your friends have had children, and your family are thinking that you should be having children - - you're that age -- then I think it's nice for them to put you in that box and say "oh [interviewees name] hasn't had children yet but that Rocky [name of dog] is her little baby". I think almost it's just for them to reinforce their family values or something.

- Close bonds with individuals – love

I just have so many feelings. When I'm just thinking about something, thinking about him during the day when he's not there, something that's made you smile, you know, he just makes you laugh – it's all quite overwhelming really



# Dogs as oddkin



I don't like that phrase that a dog is like a baby or whatever, because it's not [...] you've got this relationship with something that's not human. Yes, it's that thing with a different being.

I think there's something really magical about becoming intimate with a member of a different species. And the bond of, you know, need, and dependency and responsibility and love crossing that boundary, is very exciting. In some ways, even more exciting than with another human, 'cause it's so much more mysterious as well.

It's so hard to get your head around it [...] that she's a dog and that I am [pause] a human [...] I just look at her with real love and I just think god -- you know me and I know you and you're another, you are another [pause] that thing, you are another species. Species, it's a very strange thing.





# From godkin to oddkin?

- “daily practices of kinship” in shared human-dog households which enables dogs to be constituted as ‘kin’ because they “are part of the same social group” (Charles 2016).
- Indigenous conceptions “furry whanau” (Sayers, Forrest & Pearson 2022). A broader category than family, encompassing various human and non-human relationships and affinities – akin to kin
- Dogkin – unfamiliar, relationality and response-ability
- Limits to kin making across species and categories?
- Some too odd to be kin?

M: Stick insects are a bit beyond me. But maybe people feel like that [the way he feels about his dog] about their goldfish as well. But it's more extreme with mammals, I guess. It's more evident; it's more clear.

F: Like with stick insects and fish it's that closeness to a living thing, possibly, but not the relationship side. You know, the interest of watching what they're doing, the way they move, the colours, and the way that they breathe – it's the visual thing, the interest in nature not the relationship I think.

the fish are kind of part of the home really, they're part of the furniture [...] I don't, don't really have a relationship. I think it's because with the fish you can't physically be in their world.







# Heterotopic spaces

- Foucault (1984) 'Of other spaces'
- Multispecies agency
- Compromise and re-drawing of boundaries
- Space of home can be one of possibility for some dogs and humans in an anthroparchal public world
- Intra-species intimacy in shared space
- The mongrel domestic (Cudworth and Jensen, 2016) – being less human and being more dog!

*“Utopia is a place where everything is good; dystopia is a place where everything is bad; heterotopia is where things are different.”*

*(Mead, 1996: 13)*

# Implications?

- How might we 'live less wrongly' when we breach the human/animal dichotomy – Freyenhagen on Adorno (Cudworth & Hobden 2018)
- What relations to make or break?
- Contextual relational eating practices with respect to plant and animal life
- Reversing the tide of industrial animal farming
- Situated knowledges of other species that are not imperial, exploitative, extractive
- Policies respecting social realities of intra-dependencies of kin and care
- But are dogs 'in' and other creatures 'out'? Of which 'animals' do we speak?
- What would Val Plumwood do?