

## For the love of meat: A conversation

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*The following conversation between Rebeca and Sophia took place on 27 June 2023.*

**SE:** I thought it would be fun to do a discussion with you Rebeca because I've been interested in how meat gets done as a performative project, and I see also in your work you're very much interested in the specifics of how an animal will become meat in different, traditional as opposed to industrial, settings. I was very inspired by our #MEATmeets webinar with you [May 24<sup>th</sup> 2023, cf.

<https://meatigation.no/webinar/>] and also by our conversations to think about relationships and how they matter for the coming about of meat. Maybe you can say a little bit about your research and how you think of meat, or different types of meat, and the differences you see between 'meat' and 'meat'?

**RIM:** Thank you! Yeah, so initially, the first time that I came to think about meat relations was when I was doing fieldwork about food relations in the north of Spain. I realized that there were very specific ways of relating between humans and other animals in this household [where I did fieldwork] that had to do with two very salient

ways. One was to make the animal “domestic”, in the sense of *domus*, or of *belonging* to the household. Ways of doing that, of performing this belonging or domesticity, were through eating relations: What do you feed the animal? How do you care for the animal to feed them food that belongs to the house, and that forms part, or belongs to the web of relationships with the extended household? This was one of the ways to perform these relationships with the animal –and always with the view that you will eat the animal.

And this is the second thing that started to interest me: that these relationships that I found in my fieldwork went against this truism in the social sciences that there is a “meat paradox” (Loughnan et al. 2010): that you cannot love animals and love meat at the same time. That if you knew the animal, if you knew the killing, you would love eating meat less (1). And this paradox was not at all at play here. So, I thought that this fieldwork was a very interesting intervention, or interference, in the dominant view, the Western view of the paradox about eating animals. So, this was my entrance in meat and in animal relations with humans.

**SE:** Yes, and that's super interesting because indeed through your work you even develop a new concept of love, of loving the animal that you are going to eat, which I think is very interesting. And you trace how this gets performed through acts of care, or what you also call a ‘labor of love’, where the farmer would be taking the time and doing the work and putting the hours in so that—to some extent—they might have a better meat at the end or taste a tastier meat. Can you say a bit more about this kind of love, the *gustar* as you call it?

**RIM:** Yeah, so it's about the process. So, this *gustar* arose from an incident during fieldwork and crystallized in a co-authored article with Annemarie Mol (Ibáñez Martín & Mol 2022). When I was in fieldwork, I was invited to one of those celebratory meals in which my interlocutors were offering their guests this animal to eat, this lamb that had been carefully grown in the household. After the meal, I extended a compliment to the cook, to one of my interlocutors, to thank her for the meal. And this compliment was not appreciated at all. I was told that the compliment should go into this animal, not her [the cook]. And then she used this phrase “Joaquín nos gusta.” In this sentence, Joaquín is not the object, but the subject: he *does* the *gustar* to them. He generates the loving. But that does not mean he is similar to humans, or, for that matter, pigs, cats, or rabbits. In my fieldwork, similarity—and, likewise, equality—do not figure as local ideals. Instead, everyone possesses their own specific traits.

So I thought, this is very interesting, that they are saying this, because they're putting ‘Joaquín’ in the subject position and ‘us’ in the dative position. And this is another truism, usually, in philosophical thought about our relationships with the animals in the so-called West: we can eat animals because we objectify them. We are made the subjects of the relationship and we are objectifying the animals, and

through that object-subject relationship, we can eat the animals because we are the subjects of power and they are the objects. But this was reversed in *gustar*. The animal was not objectified. It had a name, and it was part of the conversation, and it was the subject of the relationship. And I was made to understand that I had to put him in the subject position too. So that was for us also the entrance in this discussion about love and *gustar*, because we understood that this was another kind of love that was happening here (cf. Ibáñez Martín & Mol 2022).

And this is not a romanticisation of love. It takes a lot of work. They have to wake up early, they get no recognition. They don't want any financial recognition. It's just a 'labor of love' in the sense that this is what they wake up in the mornings for: to keep their household and the animals, these animals, in particular. This lamb, in particular, belonged to the household and it required a lot of work, a lot of heavy handling of food, never leaving the household, because you have to care for your animals. So, my intention was not to romanticize this 'labor of love', but to interfere in this idea that *love* can only be expressed in *not* eating an animal you care for.

**SE:** I think this is very interesting: this recognition of the animal, and the naming of the animal in a setting of making meat. And it connects—contrasts—the idea of 'technologies of effacement' and of how, in other settings, part of the industrialization of animal husbandry involves breaking these relationships or blocking these caring encounters between animals and people. So, in my work (Efstathiou 2021), I've introduced the idea of *technologies of effacement* which consist in: a. architectures and built enclosures; b. personal protective equipment; c. rituals for entering and exiting these spaces; d. protocols for handling animals; and, e. conventions for naming animals, that all become part of the animal and the human seeing each other as just one more animal, an item, and vice-versa, as just one more farmer. So, these technologies that contribute to 'effacement', at the same time contribute to block a *moral* encounter between the individual human and animal, through their 'face'. 'The face' is a concept of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who considers ethics as an experience. Levinas claims that ethics, or what is 'good', is not arrived at by following rules or general maxims, but that it is the experience of pausing one's spontaneity at the 'face' of the Other (Levinas 1969). The idea is that when I look at *your* face, I see a secret: another person, someone radically different from me, whose wants and needs I cannot read or know, unless I stop and basically enter into a relationship with you. He uses this idea to discuss human encounters but several of us have developed his concepts to speak to human-animal encounters (cf. Atterton & Wright 2019).

So, an animal's face includes the body, besides the 'head-face', and all this expression in sound, movement, in the eyes, and voice, of what speaks as a secret, unique individual. The idea is that 'technologies of effacement' make the production practically faster, so we produce more volume, cheaper, but at the same time, without having these moments of pause and care and personal attention, which

would facilitate the *gustar* in your account. And I'm wondering what did you think of that?

**RIM:** I read your texts with a lot of interest, and with a lot of love. I *loved* how you first have this kind of embodied introduction into text, with a personal ethnographic excerpt in which you write about Pavlo [Sophia's dog] encountering a cow! (Laughter). Pavlo is scared "I don't want to face the cow, because I am *terrified*." And you are the mediator in the encounter.

**SE:** Yeah (laughter).

**RIM:** Brilliant! Because this is, you know, this is brilliant because you are the mediator, you recognize the cow, and you recognize Pavlo, no? And then you mediate in the encounter and you mediate in facilitating the *facing* of these two animals. And then, there is a happy outcome [Pavlo is not terrified anymore, neither is the cow].

**SE:** Yes.

**RIM:** The thing with this 'effacement technology' that you write about, drawing on Levinas, is that there is no space for curiosity left.

**SE:** Exactly!

**RIM:** There is no space for Otherness. There is no place for Otherness to exist. And Otherness is not bad. It's this difference, this coexistence, this "OK let's learn how we coexist" as a possibility that is effectively erased. And I thought, this is so inspiring. Because this is exactly what is happening in industrial farming. There is no space for that, in these five technologies that you identify, there is no space for sociability between humans and animals, but also there is no space for the sociability of the animals, to dig, to play, explore... So, curiosity is completely killed, in order to have this very intensification, mechanization and effectivity as the only goods. And then again, this is for a financial reason.

All these ways of dealing with our animals are because of a capitalist industrial vision of what kind of relationships we need to foster to have our food. And this is exactly what I am very interested in. Because this change has been very recent. This has only happened in the last 50 years, basically, taking over, as a big wave, other the kinds of relationships with animals, and other kinds of thinking about other ways of loving animals. So really, taking away other possibilities of being with animals. And in your ethics of the face, I think this is *such* a powerful metaphor to show that it is not just about the brutality of these places. It is that they prevent the possibility of *getting to know each other*, other ways we can be together.

**SE:** Thank you for saying that. You bring in the economic system. That's very clear in your work, where a lot of work is happening informally, as you said, without compensation. One way maybe to think about it is as meaningful work; that is, not necessarily work that will be compensated with money, but that is seen as a way of

being, or as a calling even. So, perhaps this element is not accidental. The time and money in the slowness of it, and the fact that optimizing, intensifying, speeding things up will naturally just create much less *time* for curiosity as you said. Because curiosity, and openness is out of control. An open encounter is not controlled: it is not predictable how the human and the animal are going to behave at that moment. There is a kind of freedom in that outcome, if you are allowing the space for that, and also consequences that you would then have to account for, or maybe even correct for, in different systems of meat making.

What do you think about the concept of *carnophallogocentrism* in Derrida? Because you mentioned the position of Joaquin in the relationship as subject, as a subject who is mentioned at the dinner table, or is mentioned while we are eating *him*, we are remembering his playfulness, for example, or how nice he was to the pig --when your informant, Apolonia, says that he was kissing the pig for example. So here, Derrida made this claim, that the modern subject constitutes Himself, and I'm using the male pronoun on purpose. For Derrida the constitution of this subject as the 'proper' Man is through: eating other animals or *-carno*; *-phallo*, by upholding masculinist values like dominance and power and virility; and *-logo*, through asserting the dominance of reason and rationality (Derrida 1991). And we can expand this to think of rationalization and optimization, and all these processes for getting things on time, on target, etcetera, as values – ranked over emotion, or the body, or other faculties that we might have as human animals. So, eating Others, asserting dominance over others and the primacy of reason are flagged by Derrida as all being characteristic of who is the proper modern subject. So, in that sense, the person who is thinking of Joaquin as the subject, or putting Joaquin in the position of subject, maybe themselves are not a 'modern' subject? What do you think?

**RIM:** With *carnophallogocentrism* what comes to my mind is *zootechnics* in opposition to animal husbandry. Zootechnics would be the idea of animals as meat: detached from the processes and the practices that go into animal relations with humans, in farming and husbandry. If you completely overlook these relations, then you only see meat as a commodity, as in the industrial production of meat, and you only see a rational understanding of what it is to eat meat, which is producing meat. It's not about living with animals and then having meat; it's not about working with animals: it's producing meat. It's only about facilitating this very mechanical approach to what is the only possible relationship with meat. This is a very rationalistic and reductionist way of considering human and animal relations: animals as *only* a commodity. It is not about living with animals, it's about producing a commodity, for the value of the market and for the pleasure of a, kind of, caricature of the male carnivorous eater.

If you look at other ways of living with animals, and I'm thinking here of the work of Jocelyne Porcher (2017, 2021), it's completely different: it's about work and cooperating. I think Porcher uses the words interconnection; mutuality; and mutual

transformation. She writes about living with animals—and eating—as a mutual transformation. The animal lives with humans and the humans also live with the animals, and they are mutually transformed in their relationship encounters, through care: the animals' need the care, need the protection from feral animals. So, this is not about meat *per se*, this is about living and working with animals. It's about the process of working with animals. The working subject is not only the human: it is also the animal. The subject position becomes relevant for the two, for the animal and the human, in this idea of animal husbandry.

If we have this idea of zootechnics instead, then the subject position is completely in the human: they have to control the metabolics of the animal, they have to control the fertility, and the reproduction of the animal; it is rational. And the end is meat. Whereas in this other version of having animals, the end is not meat: it is living with animals. The end is to have this co-habitation and working relationship with animals.

**SE:** Does that animal, though, enter that relationship freely? Is that living with animals/humans a shared end?

I can see how both human and animal workers in animal husbandry can be subjects and objects at the same time. It depends on how vulnerable you are, as well, as a human and it depends on the system of husbandry that you are involved in. So, if we're thinking of intensive animal farming and the fact that a lot of vulnerable workers are employed in these industries, often because you do not need, for example, to speak a language or write etcetera, to do this manual labor. So, in some ways humans and animals are both bound in these systems of capitalist value creation out of human and animal labor. But at the same time, in the case of a smaller, more 'traditional' shall we say, farm do you think that part of the labour is to be with the animal, and enjoy that, or enjoy that as a way of living with animals? But, the fact that these animals will then be killed, versus the farmer not: How does that challenge this idea of mutuality or of a mutual transformation in this setting?

There is another related concept of Donna Haraway (2007), that she develops in the case of working with laboratory animals: the idea of *sharing suffering*, to put it in the negative. So, when you and the animal are working in these spaces, the work done is not necessarily pleasurable for anyone, neither the humans nor the animals. So, this concept of sharing suffering and accepting that suffering is going to happen is one way in which Haraway frames the ethics of being in these spaces. And for me this idea is lacking... I understand it, but I also find it challenging, because there seems to be a very clear asymmetry between how free an animal is to enter and exit that relationship compared to a human.

And so, I know we don't want to romanticise this kind of love, or caring labor that is going on in that setting either. So how should one deal with that kind of challenge? Because one might say, actually, not to fall into the meat paradox, but if you *really* love the animal you can't eat it. ...I see how the situation in the farm is a

situation where a person does love an animal and does love eating them—but perhaps one does not love killing them, so also suffers, or shares suffering, as Haraway might say? This is not necessarily paradoxical... But yeah, how do we deal with that question of freedom, or choice, shall we say, offered to an animal?

**RIM:** This is a big question. I don't have an answer, I can only offer some learning moments from fieldwork, which can inspire approaches to disentangle this question. A couple of moments in fieldwork in which this question became apparent. One is when I was witnessing the killing of Joaquín. It is killing and it's violent: this living animal will be *lying down*. I love the linguistic link that you draw to the abattoir, and the different nomenclatures that were used for these abattoirs (2). I had no idea, and I thought this was so interesting that the term 'abatre' relates to 'put a body down'. And, indeed Joaquín stops being lively, and he's 'put down'.

And the person that was my main interlocutor, who mostly cared for Joaquín, he was not present in the killing of Joaquín. He had done it many times before, now he was too old for this job, and younger relatives took over. In addition, he never really liked it, and now with the excuse of his age, he opted not to be present. But then again, he did it next year again, with another animal. So, living and dying was part of a continuum. And this dying did not prevent his *love* for the living, for the next living animal, nor his passion for that next animal, for his taking the *utmost* care for this animal. But then, he had sadness when the killing happened. A lively creature was no more.

Another moment from fieldwork that I can bring into this discussion is that I've been talking to farmers in the north of Spain who keep cows, breeds that are autochthonous. And for them killing is not the *end*, it is not the *objective*. It's part of the process of keeping animals. It's not what they do it *for*. And when the moment comes to kill the animal, they struggle because there are so many rules nowadays in Spain that prevent farmers from killing the animals in the way that they want. They have to transport the animals to the abattoirs and the animals get so scared, so stressed, and they suffer. This is *not* how the farmers want it. They would *love* to do it in a different way. They would love to do it at home, and they would love to do it with the people that the animals have been with. This is a tragedy for these farmers, that they are forced to do this part of the process in a way that they don't like. Because even in that moment [of sacrifice] they are caring for the well-being of the animal. Jocelyne Porcher puts it in a very kind of obvious way: that dying is part of living.

But then again, you were asking about this idea of *control*, and who has the *choice*, and the idea of *agency*. Porcher has I think a response to the question of agency. It is that dying is part of the threat of being an animal. Animals and humans, we all want to prevent our dying. And if a farm animal would be living without the shelter and the care provided by the human, dying would happen. Dying would be a constant threat - from disease, from the wolves, etc. And the farmer is always

preventing that dying from happening by caring for the animal. She called this the “donne” [from French, to give]: I give you protection then you give me something back.

**SE:** Yeah, this is also in the ethnography of Noellie Vialles, in her 1994 book *Animal to Edible*. Vialles did an ethnography of slaughterhouses in France in this moment of them becoming bigger and bigger, and collected in one place. She charted this transformation of slaughtering, and she talks about the transition from the person who has been caring for the animal killing them, to other people killing them. And she also has excerpts from conversations with people working in the abattoirs where they're saying “we are hired killers” - they call themselves “hired killers.”

It also inspired me to write about technologies of effacement in the meat industry, because she talks about this change from an ethics of reciprocity, of: I've given you life, I've taken care of you, and now you can give me your life (laughter) – which still sounds like a heavy price to pay! Like in a fairy tale, where you've signed a contract you didn't realize you signed, and you will pay for it: with your *life*! But at least you have received something... Versus, in the other case, the person killing you is just a stranger hired to do it. And in industrialised systems there is a disconnection, or a break of that relationship. So, when we also transform farming into this intensive model, then in some ways there's nobody taking care of you, and there's nobody killing you either. The farm becomes this machine for managing the living and breathing and baby- and milk- making bodies of animals.

If we think about traditional modes of living with animals and indigenous practices that are still alive, and have also been endangered, also threatened by regulations and questions of what is hygienic, and what is proper - this is the case also with Sámi indigenous animal herders in Scandinavia (cf. Burgess 2018). People are allowed still to have some animals and kill them for their own use, but they do have to send their commercially used animals to slaughter. And that's very difficult because there are also ritual aspects to the killing, for recognizing the animal and giving thanks, which are impossible to do in those industrial settings (see Buljo et al. 2018, p. 54). So, this is deeply problematic for Sámi herders in Norway. For farmers who have been living with animals for many years and who do it not because of the meat, necessarily, or not just because of the meat, but also for indigenous people.

**RIM:** There is also the relevance of territory, of place, of creating ties and kinship with other people that live around the place, and kinship with the animals, too. So, it's not just about a utilitarian relationship towards the animal. I'm speaking from what I learned from fieldwork, it is not about: “Oh, I keep this animal because I will have the meat later on”. No, I mean it is not a clear, one direction utilitarian relationship.

Specifically with the farmers that I've been talking to in the north of Spain who have cows in extensive farming, they are actually keeping one of the rare cow



species in that territory, that otherwise would become extinct, which at the same time are super adapted to the orography of the territory, in the way that they have their hooves, for example. It's about *making* place, and keeping, maintaining place, or actually, no: it's not about maintenance, it's about *cultivating* place.

**SE:** I do think the concept of love is important here and the complexity of it, as you're saying, this caring. I did wonder at some point, if it's *care* versus love that you are talking about in your work, and an ethics of care. This would be about the relationships and commitments to specific individuals and specific situations that guide you into deciding what is good or bad, in different situations (3). I think it's important to bring that in. And I do like in your work that you highlight these tensions that were present.

There is a difficulty: you don't necessarily want to face the killing of your lamb - in the case of Damián. And you are sad that they are gone, even if you are eating their tasty flesh - as in the case of Apolonia. And these contrasts are not necessarily paradoxical in the same way because we hold very many contradictory feelings, all the time, humans. To think that this is a problem is perhaps to espouse a carnophallogocentric idea of who is a proper subject. If you're being always reasonable or always having logic as your guide (laughter) of what is the right or wrong thing to do, then yeah, you would call this paradoxical, or a problem.

**RIM:** One of the things that I've learned from your work (cf. Efstathiou 2022) which I really like is that there are many natures of meat (4). You completely destabilize this assumption that we have one nature, and that meat that belongs to the animals. You say, well no! (laughter). How about performativity? It is possible to perform meat!

If we go to gender studies, we have for very long learned about the possibilities of performative acts. And why are we not doing this with meat? And this is very nice. If you would like to talk about meat as a performance or meat as 'drag' a bit more... It is the only moment in my life, that I thought "OK something is good about industrial farming! Isn't it?" (S&R laugh). It allows to destabilize meat as belonging to these animals, it offers a way out for animals trapped in these horrendous relationships of industrial farming.

**SE:** Yeah, yeah... I've been thinking about this because in some ways, and actually Noellie Vialles mentions this in her work (1994), that once this system changes and this logic changes from "I take care of you, I nurture you, I protect you, I eat you", to nobody's really wants to do this work, nobody really wants to kill these animals; if that logic changes, in a way, the animal becomes unnecessary. So, it is a bit of an irony that actually by industrializing, by removing these relationships, we are in essence making animals superfluous. And then something non-animal can play: "Today the role of the animal will be played by the soya bean!" [spoken in a soap-

opera voice] (laughter)- you know? And nobody super cares because, it's not Apolonia who loves Joaquín, nobody loves you, nobody loves these animals... So, then, we all love meat. What remains in this equation is "I love sausage." So then, if *that's* your point of attachment, this gives some room for the meat of the sausage to be non-animal based, basically. So, I do, I think that it's interesting how that transformation of relationships might be in some ways liberating.

If we think of gender, also, part of this liberation of the woman –'liberation' I don't know, are we free? I don't, know. Maybe not! (laughter). We're just caught working as academics long hours– but, that's also been part of this transformation of women's labor and going into these modes where women are entering the workforce. You are getting a bit removed from your role as the caretaker at home, for your children. And maybe part of that is liberating. There is a kind of parallel perhaps there.

But yeah, when I did this paper using Butler, I thought it was so exciting to read her work and to think of meat! I "trans-phrased" excerpts from her texts (Butler 1991, 1999), substituting 'drag/ gender/ sex/ heterosexism' terms & relations with 'meat replacement/ meat/ species/ carnism' ones doing a kind of Butler-drag (Efstathiou 2022). You know, I also have a little background in mathematics, (laughter) so my brain was like "oh these are these variables that I'm substituting here. The equation is the same, but I'm having now these other concepts in there!" So, it was a bit playful for me to do that. But, actually, I really think that it works. And, might it work with other concepts too? What other ideas are performatively constituted, and how could they be done differently and less violently? In your work on material citizenship (Ibáñez Martín and de Laet 2018) you talked about the agency of the material, and how entering in relationships with materials affects how we perform citizenship, say now with sausage versus with Joaquín. What kind of possibilities and blockages does that create when we do that?

**RIM:** In terms of categories, because when I was reading your text, I have a background in feminist critical studies, I thought, indeed there is no original! I remembered my philosophical readings on Butler: there is no original. The concept is not attached to a solid substrate. It's all about the relations. And how interesting your philosophical exercise was to undo this taken-for-granted category and destabilize it. And then, what meat is becomes detached from a supposed origin story: the animal. And that is indeed liberating, the realness of performativity. Another question is, what happens to the animal?

In the case of your paper "Performing 'meat': Meat replacement as drag" (Efstathiou 2022), carnivorism becomes contingent. And I thought, this is great because we can undo this carnophallogocentrism. It's not the only subject logic possible. So then, I really liked it, because it reminds me of our discussions about heteronormativity and how you can undo that by performing other normativities,

gender normativities that make the substrate of heteronormativity less stable. So, you are making carnivorousism a *performance*! That was so great!

**SE:** Thank you! Thanks!

**RIM:** And so inspiring in a way, because indeed you are making room for an emancipation of *this* way of doing meat as the *only* way of doing meat. That for me really is the problem: that intensive farming systems have become the *only* way; the only possibility for us to think about meat, both practically and philosophically. What drives me in my work is to look for moments in which we can destabilize this dominant truism, that this is the *only* way we can have our meats. And also, that the *only* way to go about this is to stop altogether eating meat. I really hope in my work to find other stories, in the way that Donna Haraway (1992) thought about interferences. Interferences as ways in which our academic modes of working might be productive (cf. Yates-Doerr and Mol 2012). Stories that *interfere* with the dominant philosophical or Western philosophical tradition of what it is to eat meat: that it can only be exploitative.

**SE:** One question that has come up from the work of many people (e.g. Calarco and Adams 2016), is when we see vegan masculinities or vegan identities that perform going away from the carno- element but keeping the phallogocentric. So, it's such a complex situation, that I've been wondering: would doing meat *otherwise* deal with the *other* elements of what is problematic, in terms of the phallogocentric, as well, or not? And I guess, it would depend on destabilizing or subverting all these norms at the same time. And that can be done differently. I'm thinking of the meat-eating that is caring, as in the case of Apolonia and Damián for example, which is carno- but maybe not phallogocentric in the same way? Different modes of destabilizing that idea could be interesting, as you said.

**RIM:** I completely agree with what you say that vegan identities that perform going away from the carno- element are keeping the *phallogocentric*. These alternatives become dominant: it becomes the *only* possible answer to the problem of meat eating. And maybe if we look ethnographically, we can see very different logics, that are already working as alternatives. And they can be elevated, and they can be *discussed*. But those alternatives are often very mundane, or disappearing, or not very 'masculine' neither 'heroic' maybe (laughter). They are left unattended. I like the version of loving and eating meat that goes beyond this meat paradox (cf. Ibáñez Martín & Mol 2022). Or the versions of Jocelyne Porcher (2017, 2021): how she sees her love for animals as work, labor, in which there is this mutuality of work. And that it is constitutive of what we are in the world, that for her is work. We work with them, and they work with us. That is what makes us in the interdependencies. I

think there is an argument for ethnographic works and ethnographic attentiveness to such interdependencies with animals.

**SE:** Yes, and the specificity of this work. You see also in some of the studies of people using meat replacements for example, how they do it, or different ways in which they would introduce these products in their everyday life will matter, change from time to time, from person to person... This is good, no? Do we have other things to bring to the table?

**RIM:** I really like how you are playful with concepts. Instead of like looking for robust definitions of concepts that can travel unaltered like "meat comes from animals" you look for other logics, or ways in which concepts are done, in other practices, no? Your work conceptually was, for me, very inspiring: you don't take concepts in isolation. But that you recognize there is a fuzzy assemblage of *them*, of these concepts in practices, and that um... they can take *endless* shapes and meat can take *endless* shapes, when we recognize the fuzziness of concepts. But maybe this stereotypical vegan male, phallogocentric male, maybe he does not recognize this playfulness. He takes Concepts as very stable, very seriously, as solid as rocks.

**SE:** Well yeah, maybe... Then again you know there is this argument of course that you want to be ... clear, stable, committed...? (laughter)

Another concept I've been thinking about is: what would be the opposite of carnophallogocentrism? I don't know even if thinking in dualisms makes sense here, but I've been thinking about *vegovagoaffectisshhhh* (laughter). We made a song with the art pop band *Chicks on Speed* and this is part of the song! There, I was like vego- for carno-, vago- as opposite to phallo- and 'affect' to contrast logos. And -sshhhh instead of -centrism (laughter), to signal a kind of like fuzziness, as you said, or a dispersal or something you know going on... diffuse. And yeah, I was thinking, because, of course, it was developed as an answer, but then I was wondering, what would that concept be? So I've been wondering, if carno- is about us eating Others, this dominance, the vego- maybe it's like a plant being: growing by receiving nourishment from your environment, and dying and coming up again, another way of being perhaps that is more receptive. And the vagina, I was thinking of - I don't know if you know Ursula Le Guin's carrier theory of fiction? (5)

**RIM:** Yeah!

**SE:** So, it's like a container, or collector, or another kind of logic of being, containing. Maybe care is part of it. I don't know. But yeah, affect as opposed to 'logos' -or 'pathos' would be another Greek word for that: passion. This is a nice word actually – *vegovagopathisshhhh*.

But I've been wondering, should you have a binary or should you have just another way of getting out of that? Who is the proper subject? Maybe we don't have to have proper subjects, right?

**RIM:** But this is exactly what we are trying to look for: versions in which things work otherwise, right? And get inspired from that. Or this is at least how I see my work, and I think your work?

**SE:** Yes. Though I do look for possibilities that are also emancipatory, somehow.

**RIM:** It's options for creating possibilities for other stories to be told, instead of closing debates by just offering a solution that then becomes the Other. But this is playful! Because it's a feminist intervention, right? It's like "You have the -phallo, well, I have another thing! I'm going to ..." (S&R laugh). It's highlighting the limitations of this way of thinking.

**SE:** Next step a song, Rebeca! Because, you know, part of this method we followed in the MEATigation project ([www.meatigation.no](http://www.meatigation.no)) was to make songs with *Chicks on Speed* (6). The way they speak, I think it's part of it, because it's not the formal normal, the logos, the academic production with the same format. Going into music and song was really interesting for me: to have a paper and then make it into lyrics! So, this could be a next project for us.

**RIM:** (Laughter) I have never tried... Well, I've been a fan, so I would love to meet them!

## Author Biographies

**Sophia Efstathiou** is Senior Researcher in the Programme for Applied Ethics, at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Efstathiou holds a Master of Physics in Mathematics and Physics from Warwick University (2000) and earned her MA in Philosophy (2006) and PhD in Philosophy and Science Studies (2009) from University of California San Diego, working with Nancy Cartwright. Her doctoral thesis 'The use of race as a variable in biomedical research' was awarded with a White scholarship for the best thesis in humanities and medicine across the University of California. Her artistic collaborations have been featured in Athens Biennale (2012, 2018), Ars Electronica (2020), Cornell Biennial (2020) and Sonár music festival (2023).

**Rebeca Ibáñez Martín** is a tenured research scientist at the Institute of Ethnology of the Dutch Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (HUC-KNAW, Amsterdam) where she leads the thematic line "Anthropology of Food, Body, and Wellbeing" and lecturer at the Department of Anthropology at the U. of Amsterdam (UvA). Her doctoral thesis, entitled

“Bad to eat? Empirical Explorations of Fat as Food” (2014) was awarded the prize for the best thesis in Humanities and Social Sciences (U. de Salamanca). Between 2014 and 2018 she worked as a postdoc at the University of Amsterdam, with Prof. Annemarie Mol on the project “The Eating Body in Western Practice and Theory”. She has several ongoing projects around industrial food systems: exploring greenhouses multispecies relations in Spain and the Netherlands, as well as mobile livings in both countries; and industrial pig farming practices in the Netherlands.

## Endnotes

- (1) According to the research of Loughnan and colleagues, meat eaters resolve a conflict between loving meat and loving animals by denying food animals the capacity of mind that they might attribute to non-food animals, or to these food animals when not primed to consider food settings (cf. Loughnan et al. 2010, Loughnan et al. 2012). Dowsett et al. (2018) report a gendered difference in eaters’ commitments to eat meat once the meat-animal connection is drawn, with self-identified women eaters showing greater reluctance than men in eating meat once the connection to the animal is drawn.
- (2) The term ‘abattoir’, in French, came initially from the term for felling trees: ‘abattre’. The same word would be used for putting a horse down, and then exported to the work done in slaughtering other animals: turning them from standing up into lying down. Cf. Efstathiou (2021) and Vialles (1994).
- (3) Care ethics became a field within normative ethics, starting with the work of Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (1982) on women’s and men’s approaches to morality. It has been developed further in fields like STS, and geography.
- (4) Efstathiou (2022) proposes that meat replacement is to meat, as drag is to gender. Meat replacement has the potential to shake concepts of meat, like drag does for gender. See also the work of Yates-Doerr and Mol (2012) which explores Western animal / human relations by describing various ways of enacting ‘meat’.
- (5) Science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin entertains the proposal that the turning point in humankind’s evolution was not the invention of the spear but that of the carrier bag. This technology allowed what was foraged to be brought with, to be taken home (Le Guin (2019[1986])). See also du Plessis (2022).
- (6) Chicks on Speed (CoS) are a feminist art pop band formed in 1997 in Munich, by Melissa E. Logan and Alexandra Murray Leslie. CoS works within MEATigation are featured in the YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/3KJ4qJJjDgE>, and the art exhibition MOREMEATLESSMEAT co-curated with the bioartist group Center for Genomic Gastronomy [www.moremeatlessmeat.com](http://www.moremeatlessmeat.com).

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