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**Book Review.** Carrie Rohman's *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. 208 Pages. (Paperback, \$27.50). ISBN-10: 0231145071.

*By Andrew Keese*

Some of the most widely used critical approaches of today—including feminism, queer studies, Marxism, and post colonialism—revolve around an aspect of equality. The same can be said about a relatively new literary theory called animal studies which pushes that concept of equality to another level. Now, in addition to gender, social status, race, and nationality, critics have the concept of speciesism at their disposal. These theorists have made a simple revolutionary conclusion that affects how the animal is regarded in texts – simply put, the human is an animal. Much about this new field of inquiry, which is an outgrowth of poststructuralism, will need to endure vigorous academic debate. Among the texts seeking to push the dialogue of animal studies is Carrie Rohman's lucid *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*.

Rohman positions the animal debate around the issue of evolutionism and the consequences of Charles Darwin's theories. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin breaks down the assumed barriers that separate humans from animals (4). She notes that "His third chapter, 'Comparison of the Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals,' continues to be an astonishing read given how exhaustively the uniqueness of human emotional and mental capacities is dismantled" (4). Rohman notes that Darwin weakly attempts to qualify his discussions with the disclaimer "that no animal is self-conscious," but humans are (4).

Darwin's theories about the origin of species, of course, are twisted into a convenient philosophy called social Darwinism. This wild, ramifying theory becomes the justification for imperialist attitudes and the discrimination of various groups, such as blacks, Jews, the poor, and women (29). It involves "the animalizing of disenfranchised groups and the concomitant humanizing of imperialist power" (29). Rohman even shows how Darwin's theories influenced

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Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis, which contributed to the notion of separate human and animal selves (22-23).

After her thoughtful discussion surrounding the issues of animal studies, including the influence of Jacques Derrida, Rohman applies her studies to literary works by Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, H. G. Wells, and Djuna Barnes. In *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, Rohman notes how Conrad treats the native Africans as backward animals and clearly inferior to the more human white Europeans, who have progressed on the evolutionary chain (41). Quoting Conrad, Rohman notes how the Africans, like the animal, “had faces like grotesque masks – these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast” (43).

Animals are also described in a positive light. Lawrence, for instance, uses his observations about animals to demonstrate what humans are lacking (94). If humans can embrace their more primitive, pure state, following the examples of other animals, they may just be able to save themselves “from the deadening effects of advanced socialization” (103). Rohman provides an interesting take on how Lawrence’s novel, *Women in Love*, is basically protagonist Rupert Burkin’s “quest for being, for a recuperation of something beyond the rational, and ... beyond language” (103). The answer ultimately lies in the animal, which “possesses the kind of being that Lawrence wants to recuperate in humans” (101).