



## Orienting ourselves to the gay penguin<sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the global proliferation of discourse about gay penguins in zoos. Based on internet-based representations, we identify a directional narrative logic of “gay penguin discourses” in which the ideal gay penguin comes out as gay, falls in love, follows natural desires to parent, and may marry as a reward. This discursive chain is animated by the zoo as institutional space of captivity, which incites human subjects to become agents in its reproduction. In contests over penguin actions and morality, zookeepers, gay activists, and conservative family groups reiterate a homonormative politics of identity through talk of discrimination and rights. To identify what makes this discourse seem real, we draw on Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* to analyze the composition of the zoo as the site of a particular “mode of address” that orients humans to adopt positions of authority, evaluation, and regulation. Three orientations—reason, emotion, and instinct—function as an assemblage whose elements connect and separate, such that when one orientation's ability to explain penguin behaviors is exceeded, another orientation steps in or connects with the first to supply a logic that confirms the discursive chain for the ideal gay penguin and how humans can meet his needs. Locked into logics of hetero/homo, oriented through reason, instinct, and emotion, and interpellated through emotions, humans can imagine little more than an anthropocentric repetition of our own “progress.” The future, for humans and penguins, is secured.

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“Why does anyone bond? Why do people want to get married and divorced?” said Dr. Dee Boersma, penguin expert at the University of Washington in Seattle. “Presumably, they've got their reasons.”—speaking about the mating practices of penguins in “Gay Penguins Break Up”.<sup>1</sup>

The gay penguin has been invented in the context of a general explosion of penguin popularity, evidenced by public fascination with the sexual, romantic, and family lives of penguins over the past decade. To “google” the words “gay penguin” reveals a proliferation of discourse about gay penguins in various locations, including film, newspapers, the internet, blogs, and the children's book industry. Filmic representations include two Oscar-winning films, *March of the Penguins*, about the life cycle of emperor

penguins in Antarctica,<sup>2</sup> and *Happy Feet*, an animated film about a young penguin who is “different.”<sup>3</sup> These were followed by another animated film, *Surf's Up*, about a young penguin who wants to be a famous surfer.<sup>4</sup> Around the same time that these films were released, a controversial children's book appeared, *And Tango Makes Three*, which is based on a “true story” of two gay penguin fathers who adopt an egg and raise Tango, their penguin chick.<sup>5</sup> These representations were accompanied by news reports of zookeepers' increasingly frequent identification of gay penguins in zoos. The “real” gay penguin has become a global phenomenon, with couples spotted in zoos in China, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and other countries.

We were initially simply amused by the circulation of representations of these tuxedo-clad objects of attention and their

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<sup>1</sup> “Gay Penguins Break Up,” *Fox News*, September 16, 2005. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,169653,00.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *March of the Penguins*. Directed by Luc Jacquet. Burbank, CA: Warner Independent Pictures, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *Happy Feet*. Directed by George Miller. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> *Surf's Up*. Directed by Ash Brannon and Chris Buck. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, *And Tango Makes Three* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

coming out, adopting, or marrying. But such representations are never “innocent” or “neutral,” and instead serve particular social, cultural, and political purposes. We thus ask: what do the creation and circulation of discourses of the gay penguin do? We analyze online newspaper and magazine articles about gay penguins in zoos in order to address two sets of questions concerning the creation of the gay penguin. First, what discourses are evident? What narratives do they construct? We then turn to a more complex pair of questions: What orientations support these discourses? How do these orientations position subjects?

We use discourse analysis to read these representations as discourses that perpetuate networks of words, images, thoughts, and actions that produce and legitimate normative narratives of sexuality. Seemingly self-evident, discourses are more than reflections of meaning; they shape meanings and ways of thinking, speaking, and acting.<sup>6</sup> Mills explains, “In this sense, a discourse is something which produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analysed in isolation.”<sup>7</sup> Important for us is the performative nature of discourse, as it is produced within and productive of linkages across seemingly unrelated sites. In studying discourse’s circulations and effects, “it is no longer appropriate to ask what a text means, what it says, what is the structure of its interiority, how to interpret or decipher it. Instead, one must ask what it does.”<sup>8</sup> In this article, we argue that the discursive construction of the gay penguin travels across sites (the zoo, the children’s book, the media report, the activist group) to reproduce the given and to direct subjects’ social, cultural, and political imaginations. We identify a narrative logic of gay penguin discourses that offers an opening to a more complex inquiry into what animates, activates, intensifies, and sustains these discourses. In other words, we explore how gay penguin discourses address and incite subjects to become agents in their reproduction, with an eye to how zoos as institutional spaces of captivity interpellate viewers in certain ways. The invention of the gay penguin sets into motion and reaffirms normalizing conceptualizations of sexuality and subjectivity that are quickly reduced to regulatory practices of rights. Moreover, gay penguin discourses confirm the dominance of human meanings and make invisible the relevance of animal logics to the human. Our analysis gestures to a decentering of the human that presses beyond “the anthropocentrism and humanism that are inherent in much queer theorizing.”<sup>9</sup>

We begin with stories of three couples represented by the media: Silo and Roy of New York City, two unnamed penguins in Northern China, and Vielpunkt and Z of Germany. We choose these particular stories not for their unique nature among gay penguin narratives, but due to their circulation in various sites over time.

### 1. Three stories of gay penguin partnerships

We begin with Roy and Silo, who live in Manhattan at the Central Park Zoo. Theirs is the “love story that touched the heart of New Yorkers”<sup>10</sup> that became the basis for the children’s book, *And*

*Tango Makes Three*.<sup>11</sup> According to the Fox News “Celebrity Gossip” website, Roy and Silo “made local headlines six years ago when they came out with their same-sex relationship.”<sup>12</sup> *The New York Times* explains that they came out by displaying “what in penguin parlance is called ‘ecstatic behavior’: that is, they entwine their necks, they vocalize to each other, they have sex.”<sup>13</sup> The couple remained “completely devoted to each other” and “inseparable” even after zookeepers’ attempts to convert them by offering them “female companionship.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, during those six years since they came out, Roy and Silo were so “desperate” to become fathers that they tried to incubate rocks.<sup>13</sup> Given an egg by zookeepers, they finally hatched and raised their adopted chick, named Tango. They did such a great job feeding and caring for Tango that, as Fox News explains, “they became role models for six other same-sex couples among penguins at the zoo.”<sup>14</sup> But suddenly things changed “when Scrappy, a single female newly arrived from SeaWorld in San Diego, caught Silo’s eye.”<sup>14</sup> Silo left Roy and moved in with Scrappy, leaving zookeepers confused by his “sudden conversion.”<sup>14</sup> This conversion has led Focus on the Family to note that he is now an “ex-gay” penguin.<sup>15</sup>

The second story concerns two unnamed gay penguins in a zoo in Harbin, in northern China, who made news due to their repeated attempts to “steal eggs from straight birds” in the zoo’s penguin colony.<sup>16</sup> As a controversial consequence of their deviant behaviors, zookeepers segregated the gay couple from the straight penguins in order “to avoid disrupting the rest of the community during the hatching season.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, one news story reports that zookeepers segregated the couple “after they were caught placing stones at the feet of parents before waddling away with their eggs.”<sup>17</sup> Zookeepers argued that the intervention was in the community’s interest, explaining in response to animal rights protestors, “It’s not discrimination. We have to fence them separately, otherwise the whole group will be disturbed during hatching time.”<sup>17</sup> But angry visitors “complained it wasn’t fair to stop the couple from becoming surrogate fathers and urged zoo bosses to give them a chance.”<sup>17</sup> Zookeepers then gave the couple two eggs from a straight couple “‘whose hatching ability had been poor and they’ve turned out to be the best parents in the whole zoo,’ said one of the keepers.”<sup>17</sup> To describe these events, zookeepers explained that the male couple was simply fulfilling what they called “the natural urge to become fathers, despite their sexuality.”<sup>17</sup> Zookeepers were so enthusiastic

<sup>11</sup> Parnell and Richardson, *And Tango Makes Three*.

<sup>12</sup> “Gay Penguins Break Up,” *Fox News*, September 16, 2005. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,169653,00.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Dinita Smith, “Love that Dare Not Squeak Its Name,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/07/arts/love-that-dare-not-squeak-its-name.html?pagewanted=1>.

<sup>14</sup> “Gay Penguins Break Up.”

<sup>15</sup> Stuart Shepard, “And Tango Makes Activism,” *Focus on the Family*, February 26, 2008. [www.citizenlink.org/Stoplight/A000006646.cfm](http://www.citizenlink.org/Stoplight/A000006646.cfm). *And Tango Makes Three* has ranked first on the American Library Association’s list of most frequently challenged books for the past three years (Whelan, Debra Lau, “Gay Penguins Top ALA’s Most Challenged Books, Again,” *School Library Journal*, March 22, 2009, <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6653100.html>). Focus on the Family finds the book particularly dangerous, calling the use of penguins a part of the “gay agenda” in schools to naturalize homosexuality and gay marriage: “What better way to capture a child’s imagination than with a heart-warming story about cute, fuzzy little animals?” (Candi Cushman, “Capturing Children’s Minds” *Focus on the Family’s Issue Analysis: Gay Activism in Schools*, <http://www.citizenlink.org/FOSI/education/gais/A000010822.cfm>).

<sup>16</sup> “Gay Penguins Steal Eggs From Straight Couples,” *Telegraph*, November 27, 2008. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/howaboutthat/3530723/Gay-penguins-steal-eggs-from-straight-couples.html>.

<sup>17</sup> “Gay Penguins Expelled From Zoo Colony for Stealing Eggs Are Given Their Own to Look After Following Animal Rights Protest,” *Daily Mail*, December 15, 2008. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1094977/Gay-penguins-expelled-zoo-colony-stealing-eggs-given-look-following-animal-rights-protest.html>.

<sup>6</sup> James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy: Critical Essays*, eds. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, 187–210 (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, “Introduction: Queering the Non/Human,” in *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Harris, “Flap Over a Tale of Gay Penguins,” *The Observer*, November 19, 2006. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/nov/19/gayrights.usa>.

about the pair's parenting skills that they were considering "try [ing] to arrange for them to become real parents themselves with artificial insemination."<sup>17</sup> As if this happy parental ending were not enough, three months later, the gay couple was back in the news, this time with word of their wedding. The *British Sun News* reported in an article entitled "Gay Penguin Pair Tie the Knot": "The besotted male birds turned out to be such a great parenting pair their keepers thought they deserved a reward and let them marry."<sup>18</sup> The news story, accompanied by photos, described the ceremony: "One wore a tie and the other was dressed in a red blouse—a traditional Chinese bridal colour—as they stepped into their icy wedding room to the music of the Wedding March. Keepers then served them their favorite dish for the occasion—spring fish."<sup>18</sup>

Our third story presents Z and Vielpunkt, a gay penguin couple in Bremerhaven, Germany, who became "adoptive parents" in 2009.<sup>19</sup> But the institutional story begins earlier, in 2005, when, as one news report narrated, the Bremerhaven Zoo "imported four female penguins from Sweden in an effort to tempt its gay penguins to go straight. . . after it was found that three of the zoo's five penguin pairs were homosexual. Keepers at the zoo ordered DNA tests to be carried out on the penguins after they had been mating for years without producing any chicks. It was only then they realized that six of the birds were living in homosexual partnerships."<sup>20</sup> The importation of the Swedish temptresses provoked "outrage"<sup>21</sup> among "gay rights activists [who] became angry that the zoo was interfering in natural animal behavior."<sup>22</sup> The zoo since appears to have progressed to a more "gay penguin-friendly" position. Rather than conversion, it has supported the creation of a gay penguin family. Four years later, Z and Vielpunkt, two gay penguins at the zoo, "were given an egg as it was rejected by its biological parents so the gay couple decided to hatch and rear it as their own."<sup>23</sup> The couple are now described as "adoptive parents."<sup>23</sup> According to a zoo statement, "Since the chick arrived, they have been behaving just as you would expect a heterosexual couple to do. The two happy fathers spend their days attentively protecting, caring for and feeding their adopted offspring."<sup>23</sup> A news article reports that "The chick is now four weeks old and seems to be happy and content."<sup>23</sup>

## 2. A chain of strange and familiar discourses

What discourses are evident across these stories of gay penguins? Romantic love, family, parenting, community, sexuality, and morality circulate throughout these anthropomorphic narratives. The narratives are sequential, directed by a founding discourse of the hetero/homo divide, or a primal moment of a penguin's "coming out." In some stories, this coming out is a mysterious moment whose form of announcement is not always clear to us. In other stories, such as that of the Bremerhaven Zoo, the lack of visible reproductive evidence, eggs, leads humans to suspect gayness, which must be confirmed through the science of DNA. Regardless of the ways penguin gayness is unveiled, the

penguin homo/hetero divide puts into motion a host of linear, normative discourses. In describing the production of this discursive chain, we note that not all stories about gay penguins include all elements or links in the chain. Yet they are not all always necessary, as the directional logic of these discourses assembles to create a whole. As Roof comments, "Narrative constantly reproduces the phantom of a whole, articulated system."<sup>24</sup> In other words, even when missing a "link" in the discursive chain, a narrative's arrival at the endpoint reinforces the directional logic. In a story about gay penguins, the appearance of an image of happy fathers caring for their content chick functions as a narrative climax that implies the preceding elements in the discursive chain.

As we have said, the penguins' "coming out" initiates a seemingly natural and inevitable chain of discourse. Coming out leads to a discourse of "real love" and "devotion" between penguins, positioning them as "good." In contrast to the ostensible "penguin norm" of monogamy for one season, in these narratives, gay penguins demonstrate such "true love" that they remain in committed relationships for five or six years.<sup>25</sup> Following from coming out and true love is the "natural urge" to reproduce. Thus, despite a deviant sexual orientation, these gay penguins have authentic (and good) emotions, loving each other and desiring to become parents. Their natural, biological procreative drive (as suggested by compulsively incubating rocks) is congruent with their successful monogamy and subsequent nurturing of their eggs and chicks.<sup>26</sup> As a point in the discursive chain, parenting initiates an overtly evaluative set of discourses that creates a hierarchy of penguin positions based on penguin practices that implicates both straight and gay penguins—stealing eggs, disrupting communities, being poor hatchers, displaying good parenting skills, or serving as role models for other gay penguins. This organization of penguin practices according to valued, reproductive behaviors justifies zookeeper interventions, such as segregating gays from straights or bequeathing the eggs of poor straight hatchers to promising gay couples (those committed to incubating rocks, for example). This (re)productive discursive chain does not necessarily end only in successful parenting and family, but can complete itself with gay-penguin-marriage-as-reward. The story of the zookeepers in China who "allowed" the gay penguins to marry not only attributed intentionality to the penguins (did they ask to marry?) but also created a ceremony that repeated heterosexual logics. Dressed as man and woman (in other words, with one penguin in drag), the Chinese penguins were positioned not as transgressors of gender norms but as national emblems of a reproductive unit.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Judith Roof, *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xv.

<sup>25</sup> Judith Halberstam, "Animating Revolt/Revolution Animation: Penguin Love, Doll Sex and the Spectacle of the Queer Nonhuman," in *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 270.

<sup>26</sup> As in all normative systems of regulation, there is room for deviance, which itself supports the system, inciting the affirmation of the directional logic. Such examples include the poor hatcher or the "ex-gay."

<sup>27</sup> One could read these three "global" gay penguin narratives as produced by and productive of nationalistic sentiments, such as ideologies of U.S. exceptionalism regarding gay rights and tolerance (see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* [Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007]), Chinese assertions of a place in dominant narratives of Western modernity (see Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* [Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007]), or German demonstrations of social tolerance and moral relations with animals (see Lynn K. Nyhart, *Modern Nature: The Rise of the Biological Perspective in Germany* [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009], 79–124). While the social functions of zoos in different national contexts (particularly in relation to histories of empire) could offer insights into the construction and circulation of ideas of sexuality, race, nation, community, and rights as they articulate locally and globally, such analysis is beyond the scope of our article.

<sup>18</sup> "Gay Penguin Pair Tie the Knot," *The Sun*, January 27, 2009. <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article2176812.ece>.

<sup>19</sup> "Two Gay Penguins and A Chick: German Zoo Pair Raising Baby," *The Huffington Post*, June 4, 2009. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/04/two-gay-penguins-and-a-chick\\_n\\_211497.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/04/two-gay-penguins-and-a-chick_n_211497.html).

<sup>20</sup> "Zoo Tempts Gay Penguins To Go Straight," *Ananova*. [http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm\\_1275591.html](http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_1275591.html).

<sup>21</sup> "Male Penguins Raise Adopted Chick," *BBC News*, June 3, 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8081829.stm>.

<sup>22</sup> "Two Gay Penguins and A Chick: German Zoo Pair Raising Baby."

<sup>23</sup> "Two Gay Penguins Raise Their Adopted Chick in Germany" *Now Public News Coverage*, June 4, 2009. <http://www.nowpublic.com/environment/two-gay-penguins-raise-their-adopted-chick-germany>

As we depict the naturalization of the discursive chain, it is important to keep in mind that these news stories reify the gay penguin and the homo/hetero divide at the same time that they undermine rituals that validate heterosexual (and good homosexual) practices—for penguins and humans alike. For example, the articles' playful language and tone go beyond a "cute factor" (can a penguin really be "besotted?") to belie the seeming seriousness of the ceremonial Wedding March and the celebratory spring fish dinner. Such "light touches"<sup>28</sup> combined, for example, with narrative details of the controversy surrounding the attempted conversion of the gay penguins by placing them in the presence of single Swedish females, potentially put into relief the absurdity of "correcting" not only penguin but also human sexuality. In this sense, these slightly tongue-in-cheek gay penguin narratives invite readers to look not only at the penguin but at human conventions. Considered performatively, these narratives' parodies of dominant practices could, following Butler, denaturalize human heterosexual norms or reconsolidate them, as "parodic imitation is always implicated in the power that it opposes."<sup>29</sup> Some readers of penguin narratives may laugh; others, such as Focus on the Family, may take gay penguin conversion seriously. Given a tension between subverting or reiterating dominant norms, there thus may or may not be moments when the narratives exceed the linear trajectory we describe.

Even with these potential slippages, we suggest that the repetition of a directional chain of positions initiated by naming an identity creates an orientation to understanding and regulating who and what the gay penguin is, can do, and should do. The ideal sequence for gay penguins is as follows:

1. being a gay penguin → being a good gay penguin in love.
2. being a good gay penguin in love → having the urge to become a good parent.
3. having the urge to become a good parent → being a good parent and role model.
4. being a good parent and role model → deserving to get married.

This chain of discourses, beginning with coming out and moving to romantic love, followed by natural desires to parent, and culminating in marriage as the maximum aspiration, incites zookeepers' actions and public interventions. Zookeepers, gay activists, and conservative family groups reiterate the politics of identity through discourses of discrimination and rights. This liberal politics is played out in contests over the ethics of zookeepers' pseudo-conversion therapy (bringing in single female birds), the gay penguins' rights to parent or marry, and naming penguins' status as "gay" or "ex-gay."<sup>30</sup> But there is more at stake in this discursive chain than an anthropomorphic reiteration of liberal identity politics that follows what Duggan calls "homonormativity," or the mainstream political figuring of freedom and liberation in narrow terms, such as the advocacy of gay marriage,

which privileges the privacy of (hetero) normalized gay and lesbian subjects.<sup>31</sup>

At stake is the power of this discursive chain to address consumers of gay penguin discourses by orienting them in a straight line whose directional logic has a future-oriented temporality that creates a comforting, familiar narrative of progress. At one level, the "homonormativized" gay penguin is repeating directions he did not know existed, ending as a liberal subject of rights. As penguin subjects, penguin meanings, and penguin practices come into view through acts of authority, evaluation, and regulation, consumers of penguin discourses are oriented to adopt an evaluative position not unlike that of the zookeeper. At another level, this sequential logic of developing positions constructs the audience as more than witness, but as participants in the discursive reproduction of the imagination of social relations within penguin space, as well as beyond it.

### 3. The composition of the zoo

As we move to our second set of questions regarding how these discourses become activated and intensified, we note the particular role of zoos as places that constitute spectators as active agents of the perpetuation of certain ways of thinking and seeing. We include in our conceptualization what Malamud calls "zoo stories," or cultural descriptions that "promise varying degrees of mimetic representation of zoos," such as the children's book or the news report.<sup>32</sup> We do not wish to collapse "zoos" with "zoo stories," as the internet articles we have drawn on are mimetic in the sense that they activate a positionality for readers that is similar to that of a spectator in a zoo.<sup>33</sup> Textual representations of zoo life, whether the book, the newspaper, or the virtual space of the internet, create a dynamic in which the animal humans encounter is an animal in captivity *for humans*.<sup>34</sup> These visual and textual, or narrative, spaces are particularly useful for anthropomorphizing gay penguins, who become celebrities in "local headlines," have names and romances, experience heartbreak in the face of homewreckers like Scrapy, or become happy fathers. This narrative population of the zoo with protagonists mediates humans' contemporary discomforts with animal captivity.<sup>35</sup>

As central sites of spectatorship, with stated purposes ranging from education, preservation, and scientific research to amusement and entertainment,<sup>36</sup> zoos authorize certain kinds of knowledges that simultaneously separate and bring together humans and animals. Berger describes a relational space that cuts off the possibility of reciprocity: the human is positioned as viewer and knower, whereas the enclosed animal, whose relations to humans have been reduced to the space of the zoo, may or may not look back. Yet, "[t]he fact that they can observe us has lost all

<sup>28</sup> Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Randy Malamud, *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>30</sup> We note here that our analysis does not consider the internet or zoo websites as particular spaces of encounter with gay penguins. Our interest is in the circulation of stories in the press, or news, about gay penguins in zoos. Our use of the internet is less as a site of analysis than a site of artifact collection.

<sup>31</sup> Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Beardsworth and Alan E. Bryman, "The Wild Animal in Late Modernity: The Case of the Disneyization of Zoos," *Tourist Studies* 1.1 (2001): 92.

<sup>33</sup> See Kay Anderson, "Animals, Science, and Spectacle in the City," in *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*, eds. Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, 27–50 (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 27–50; Randy Malamud, *Reading Zoos*; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 78–82.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Crowther and Dick Leith, "Feminism, Language, and the Rhetoric of Television Wildlife Programs," in *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Sara Mills (Essex and New York: Longman, 1995), 207.

<sup>29</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 125.

<sup>30</sup> In addition to the "real life" examples of activist groups in Germany or Focus on the Family in the U.S., a recent U.S. TV representation of NBC's "Parks and Recreation" (2009) aired an episode entitled "Pawnee Zoo," in which the series' protagonist, Leslie, marries two penguins at the local zoo in order to boost attendance. After it is discovered that the penguins were "gay," local gay rights and conservative groups celebrate and vilify her as an activist for gay marriage. Parks and Recreation, "Pawnee Zoo" (Season 2, Episode 1), 2009. <http://www.hulu.com/watch/96405/parks-and-recreation-pawnee-zoo>.



significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them.<sup>37</sup>

Enclosed spaces that are in turn constituted by multiple enclosures, zoos function as “urbanizing institutions” that orient visitors to read animals (and themselves) as occupying specific locations.<sup>38</sup> By urbanizing, we refer to a dominant, modernist spatiotemporal imaginary that demands organization of animals, their natures, their activities, and their needs within categorical spaces and times. For instance, zoos place cold creatures like penguins and polar bears in one area, or “African” creatures like leopards, zebras, and baboons in another area, or discrete species in enclosures such as the “snake house” or the “bird area.” Another organizational rubric for viewing animals bases itself on temporality, with fixed or predictable patterns for animal activities, such as “feeding time,” “rest time,” “mating time,” and “birthing and nursing time.”<sup>39</sup> We argue that zoos and zoo stories are more than reflections of “boundary-making activities on the part of humans”<sup>40</sup> or that as “sites of voyeurism,” they enable humans to tell ourselves stories about our own gender and sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Rather, they are active agents in perpetuating established boundaries between animals and humans. They thus determine humans’ “animal encounters” in advance.<sup>42</sup>

We conceptualize the predictable, modernist, spatiotemporal organization of zoos as produced by and reproducing a composition of lines and traces that position the human and animal. The event of entering the zoo or a zoo story positions the spectator in this composition, which constitutes a mode of address. Residing neither in the zoo nor the viewer, but as a transaction between them, modes of address interpellate viewers to follow certain orientations. In understanding the transaction between the text and the viewer, we draw on Ellsworth’s reworking of the concept of “modes of address” in film studies and bring it to zoos.<sup>43</sup> A mode of address refers to a zoo’s intended, imagined, or desired audiences, or the positions it assumes spectators may occupy. But a mode of address is more than a question of the zoo’s intentionality. Rather, it is “an event that takes place somewhere between the social and the individual. Here, the event of address takes place in the space that is social, psychic, or both, between the [zoo’s] text and the viewer’s use of it.”<sup>44</sup> On engaging with the text of the zoo, viewers occupy a physical position, for example, in front of an exhibit, a place to which the exhibit design “points, . . . a [place] at which the lines of perspective converge.”<sup>44</sup> This physical position and the direction it creates, or the ways viewers inhabit and orient themselves to space, shapes a social position imbricated in power, pleasure, and knowledge. Ellsworth’s work suggests that conscious and unconscious assumptions about the social positions the zoo audience occupies “leave intended and

unintended traces in the [zoo] itself.”<sup>45</sup> These traces are not visible but form the composition of the zoo, which constitutes a mode of address that creates relationships among zoos, their animals, and their human spectators.

This idea of mode of address, or the interpellative scene at which the viewer enters the composition of the zoo, allows us to theorize the ways in which the chain of penguin discourses begins to materialize. As sites of captivity that institutionalize particular spatiotemporalities, in which both animals and spectators are captive to a composition of being seen and seeing, zoos bring into analytic view how the discursive chain of the ideal gay penguin becomes comprehensible as a line to be followed. The institutionalized nature of “ways of following” makes possible the collective sharing of discourses. As Ahmed explains, these “[a]cts of domestication are not private; they involve the shaping of collective bodies.”<sup>46</sup> We understand these “ways of following” as naturalized through their circulation through multiple sites. In the case of the spatial composition of the zoo, these “ways of following” happen through the assembling of what we conceptualize as orientations and lines.

In order to understand how the discursive chain that constitutes the ideal gay penguin becomes visible and seemingly real, we bring together the scene of address with Ahmed’s exploration of “orientations,” in which she argues that subjects are incited to orient themselves to objects, such as animals and their sexuality, in predetermined ways.<sup>46</sup> As approaches to facing the world, orientations “involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation.”<sup>46</sup> An orientation makes certain objects available, visible, or intelligible. In the case of “penguin sexuality,” specific orientations direct humans to recognize what Ahmed calls the “same object.”<sup>47</sup> For instance, an imagined proximity to penguins allows humans to name “penguin sexuality” according to a founding hetero/homo divide that draws viewers’ attention to certain objects and orients them to familiar, intelligible lines. In this case, the hetero/homo divide creates objects of perception (straight and gay penguins) that in turn create the perceiver’s position (as one who can interpret the world she inhabits in comfortable ways). Oriented to identify this “same object,” spectators reproduce the hetero/homo divide as the object of circulation that assembles an economy of lines that are confirmed and intensified, putting into motion “ways of following” that confirm the discursive chain.

An orientation allows for the creation of self, other, and collective: “I can perceive an object only insofar as my orientation allows me to see it (it must be near enough to me, which in turn means that I must be near enough to it), and in seeing it, in this way or that, it becomes an ‘it,’ which means I have already taken an orientation toward it.”<sup>48</sup> As an object is created, an assemblage of lines becomes available. We read lines, a metaphor Ahmed offers in connection with orientations, as signifying potential movements activated by becoming oriented. Lines and orientations are mutually constitutive. If we follow the idea that lines constitute themselves through orientations and vice-versa, lines serve to describe how bodies come to have shape as social and cultural agents, as in the case of gay penguins. While an orientation asks subjects to face

<sup>37</sup> John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 16.

<sup>38</sup> Our reading of “urbanizing” is somewhat different than Anderson’s (1998), who argues that zoos serve as “mirrors” of human cultural practices related to nature.

<sup>39</sup> On the power relations of observing these activities or participating in feeding animals, see Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*, 80; on watching animal sexuality, see Malamud, *Reading Zoos*, 236. See also Malamud’s description of the San Diego Wild Animal Park’s special Saturday tours called “Night Moves,” which “focus[es] on the wild courtship and mating rituals of the facility’s ‘exotic—and erotic—animals’ to offer visitors a “unique dating experience” (236).

<sup>40</sup> Kay Anderson, “Animals, Science, and Spectacle in the City,” 28.

<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Terry, “Unnatural Acts” in *Nature: The Scientific Fascination With Queer Animals*, *GLQ* 6.2 (2000): 152.

<sup>42</sup> Berger suggests, “The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters” (21).

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 117.

<sup>47</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 119.

<sup>48</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 27.

in a certain way, lines move subjects in a certain direction. Ahmed says:

Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought, as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way and that we know which direction we face only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view.<sup>49</sup>

A line becomes what Ahmed calls a “commitment” or “social investment” that “‘promise[s]’ return (if we follow this line, then ‘this’ or ‘that’ will follow).”<sup>50</sup> As forms of “sociality”<sup>51</sup> that come to seem real through circulation, lines in turn constitute orientations toward “objects of thought, feeling and judgment, as well as objects in the sense of aims, aspirations, and objectives.”<sup>52</sup> The case of the discursive chain demonstrates how the assembling of lines and orientations works to create and perpetuate a “real” gay penguin who is contained by certain narratives.

We want to be clear that this is not a linear organization in which orientations found lines; rather, orientations and lines regenerate themselves in conjunction with other lines and orientations. In order to understand how orientations and lines assemble to naturalize ways of imagining gay penguin sexuality as something to regulate and normalize, we turn our attention to our second set of questions: What orientations support the discourses that constitute the discursive chain? How do these orientations position subjects?

#### 4. Getting oriented

As we described, zoos are intrinsically normative spaces that market and circulate “animal” and “human” essences, divisions, and relations. They reauthorize the viewer as human by naturalizing the self’s authority to survey a unified whole made comprehensible by divisions, order, and hierarchy. This seemingly objective or neutral gaze is imbued with different forms of pleasure and activates emotions inherent in the experience of viewing animals, “including excitement, pleasure, wonder, distaste, guilt, nostalgia.”<sup>53</sup> We identify three orientations to gay penguins that act from different but not unrelated sites: reason, emotion, and instinct. These orientations are animated by the context of the zoo and zoo stories, habits of characterizing animals, and discourses of differences and similarities between humans and animals.

As the most obvious way to think how this gay penguin discursive chain becomes possible, at first glance, the use of traditional binary oppositions that privilege reason would seem to offer an immediate answer. These binaries would be reason vs. emotion and reason vs. instinct. But we argue that this discursive chain is not produced by the workings of two separate and distinct binary orientations. Rather, the three orientations—reason, emotion, and instinct—constitute themselves in relation to each other, functioning as an assemblage whose elements connect and separate, articulating moments of identification, meaning and confirmation. Each operates as an orienting site of explanation, but when the ability of one to explain penguin behaviors is exceeded,

another orientation steps in or connects with the first to supply a logic that confirms the discursive chain. Despite their perpetual imbrication, we first describe each orientation somewhat separately, moving to provide a more complex image of how they assemble to hold the gay penguin discursive chain in place.

The gay penguin narratives from Germany, China, and the U.S. that we detailed earlier at times present penguins as creatures defined by instinct, desiring to reproduce or incubate rocks, thus assimilating them to the animal world and the mandates of “nature,” driven by biological urges beyond conscious intentionality.<sup>54</sup> As an orientation to looking at the gay penguin, instinct has particular uses: “As Evernden (1999, 153) remarks, instinct is ‘a term that signifies nothing but permits us to dismiss subjectivity’, that is used whenever and wherever there is a need to cover over the fact that we do not understand others’ mode of Being but want to distinguish ourselves from them.”<sup>55</sup> This orientation of instinct reaffirms the human as above instinct and as one who can evaluate the behaviors of penguins. Incited by the pleasure of occupying the position of rational subject, the human can identify the gay penguin as possessing the “right” instincts, such as nurturance, monogamy, and procreation. But these instincts have gone awry, as they are directed toward the wrong sexual object choice. Authorized as reasonable, zookeepers and viewers can imagine appropriate interventions to “enable” penguin instincts, such as giving an egg to a deviant couple or converting gay penguins, so that they may align with the correct path.

While the orientation of instinct functions as one site of penguin truth, it is intertwined with the orientation of emotions. The anthropomorphic narratives present gay penguins as “in love,” devoted to each other, happy fathers, or disconsolate after separation. In this different site, humans are interpellated to care about penguins’ well-being because penguins themselves are constructed as having emotions. This orientational shift has a particular intensity because it positions gay penguins closer to humans, as (almost) “just like us.” The orientation of emotion opens another space for the practice of human morality regarding penguin behaviors: given their proximity to us, penguins cease to be solely instinctive bodies but become anthropomorphized as social entities whose emotional lives can be evaluated. As Lingis proposes, a body becomes a subject.<sup>56</sup> While some argue that “anthropomorphism promises to elevate the status of animals in general cultural regard,”<sup>57</sup> we suggest instead that it functions as a site of particular emotional interpellative force that incites regulation. This anthropomorphic incitement to help penguins be happy is reinforced by other zoo practices, such as naming animals, giving them birthday parties, or offering them special dinners. In the case of the penguin, humans easily attach to them anthropomorphically, given their “cuteness” as they waddle about in their “tuxedos.” The orientation of emotion, we argue, is of paramount importance in naturalizing the regulation of penguin sexuality as desirable. Their happiness, like ours, depends on established identities and the rights presumed to inhere in those identities.

The third orientation, reason, directs human observers to construct penguins as lacking rational faculties, as dominated by

<sup>49</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 118.

<sup>52</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 56.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, “Animals, Science, and Spectacle in the City,” 34.

<sup>54</sup> See Lynda Birke and Luciana Parisi, “Animals, Becoming,” in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 55–73, on the human-animal distinction as it relates to dualisms of mind-body and instinct-rationality.

<sup>55</sup> Mick Smith, “Road Kill: Remembering What is Left in Our Encounters With Other Animals,” in *Emotion, Place and Culture*, eds. Mick Smith, Joyce Davidson, Laura Cameron, and Liz Bondi (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 30.

<sup>56</sup> Alphonso Lingis, “Bestiality,” in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 39.

<sup>57</sup> Malamud, *Reading Zoos*, 38.

instinct and emotion.<sup>58</sup> Whereas emotion serves to create proximity and relationality, reason, like instinct, institutes divisions between penguins and humans. Proximity allows humans to care about penguin well-being and justifies human regulation of them; distinction from penguins, or constructing them as not-rational and thus inferior, also allows humans to justify regulating them. Lynn, for example, privileges reason in distinguishing the moral status of humans and penguins, explaining that because “animals lack the sentience to be self-aware political subjects, the linguistic skills to understand moral rights and obligations, and the capacity to reciprocate a moral regard for human beings,”<sup>59</sup> they do not have the moral agency of humans. Such thinking results in a reductionist view of human-animal relations, in which humans are called on to recognize that animals and humans are distinct kinds of moral beings. Animals are moral “recipients,” incapable of ethical actions but legitimate recipients of human moral consideration nonetheless. In contrast, humans are moral “agents.”<sup>59</sup> Either in order to allow instinct to run a natural course or to make penguins happy, humans employ reason to create coordinates from which to regulate the community and individuals. In other words, an orientation of reason allows humans to provide things penguins are deemed to need, such as an egg, conversion therapy, segregation of gays, or a gay wedding.

In contrast, we argue that binary oppositions of reason/instinct or reason/emotion do not provide all the possibilities for understanding the powerful pull to help gay penguins. Rather, considered as orientations, these binary oppositions are in fact not separate but work together in shifting combinations with varying intensities. When the orientations of reason and instinct intertwine, humans are called on to act authoritatively. Instinct as orientation asks viewers to understand penguins only as instinctive creatures, but once they are perceived as displaying behaviors, such as love, that do not conform to this orientation, emotion comes into play. When the orientations of reason and emotion intermingle, a discourse of

morality (family, community, sexuality) comes to the surface, further interpellating humans to be affected. Reason and emotion have a particular interplay in creating a scenario of providing solutions to penguins’ problems as spectators become actors motivated by emotions. This interplay makes invisible the workings of power in constructing the “reality” of narratives of progress for gay penguin political and social identities. Emotion functions as an economic way of securing reason’s place as a site of regulation.

The three orientations assemble in such a way that when one of them can not account for correspondences between what humans expect penguins to do and what humans believe penguins are doing, they assemble and reassemble to contain moments in which “penguin logics”<sup>60</sup> exceed human logics. Grosz speaks of such “behavioral superabundance,” quoting Caillois, “the object always exceeds its instrumentality. Thus it is possible to discover in each object an irrational residue.”<sup>61</sup> These orientations assemble and reassemble to obscure potentially non-teleological residues that might disrupt the ideal gay penguin sequence, or the discursive chain. They thus keep in place lines, or “ways to follow,” that ask humans to think in particular ways about what penguins are, what they need, and how humans can help them. For instance, an orientation of instinct tells humans that penguins mate for a year; however, many gay penguins, like Roy and Silo, exceed that logic and pair monogamously for a number of years. This excess, in which the orientation of instinct no longer serves to explain penguins’ behaviors, activates the orientation of emotion: monogamy over years must mean love. Emotion can explain the compulsion to procreate and nurture; however, when gay penguins deviate from good citizenship and, arguably reasonably, steal eggs from straights and leave rocks as deposits, human reason is activated. To sustain the ideal penguin chain, human reason intervenes to maintain community order by appropriately distributing eggs, evaluating incompetent straight hatchers and promising gay couples. Teleological subject positions are upheld.

## 5. Securing the future

To return to our original fascination with the proliferation of gay penguin discourses, we are not interested in whether one believes he should or should not parent or marry, for those “political battles” simply confirm and recirculate the line of the discourse. Instead, we are interested in how the assemblage of orientations and lines sets up in advance a limited path to follow, or the discursive chain for the ideal gay penguin. At an initial level of analysis, to ask what these discourses do is to recall our claim that representations are never innocent or neutral but are embedded in and productive of cultural politics. Indeed, the seemingly trivial circulation of images and texts about gay penguins, as well as human practices of adjudicating and protecting their rights, is anything but trivial, for it is precisely this circulation that participates in sedimenting normative logics. A crucial means by which the discursive chain perpetuates itself is by inciting humans to become agents in the recirculation of homonormative ideals of liberal subjects of rights. Our human amusement at penguin cuteness, our identifications with penguin protagonists, or our indignation at institutional mistreatment of gay penguins constitute affective circulations that make the correct path to progress seem all the more “real.” This repetition of circulations functions as what Ahmed calls a “straightening device,” which “keep[s] things in line, in part by ‘holding’ things in place.”<sup>62</sup> The discursive chain, then, is not

<sup>58</sup> There is a large literature that we do not dwell on here related to the division of humans and animals based on rationality and instinct, or rationality and irrationality, in Western philosophical traditions since Aristotle. Writers critique this anthropocentric thinking as implicated in the perpetuation of human dominance over nature and animals (including the ethics of ecological issues and animal rights), oppressive uses of evolutionary theory, and biological determinism. See, for example, Birke and Parisi, 1999; Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The question of the animal from Heidegger to Derrida*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, eds., *Queering the Non/Human*, (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008); Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, (New York and London: Routledge 1995); Malamud, 1998; Smith, 2009; H. Peter Steeves, ed., *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999); Jennifer Wolch, and Jody Emel, eds., *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands* (London and New York: Verso, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> William S. Lynn, “Animals, Ethics, and Geography,” in *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*, eds. Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 287.

<sup>60</sup> Judith Halberstam, “Animating revolt/Revolution Animation: Penguin Love, Doll Sex and the Spectacle of the Queer Nonhuman,” in *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, 265–281 (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 269. In viewing animals and their sexuality, Halberstam claims that the cultural and the biological are fused such that “the biological, the animal and the non-human are simply recruited for the continuing reinforcement of the human, the heteronormative and the familial” (266). Her suggestion is that as the human is synonymous with heterosexuality, and heterosexuality intrinsically implies monogamous reproductivity, the human constructs the animal according to “old notions of kinship, relationality and love” (266) and makes invisible actions that are non-reproductive or non-monogamous or that follow different logics of reproduction. For example, in her discussion of *The March of the Penguins*, Halberstam writes of the film’s heteronormative erasure of “a resolutely animal narrative about cooperation, affiliation and the anachronism of the homo-hetero divide. The indifference within the film to all non-reproductive behaviors obscures the more complex narratives of penguin life” (270).

<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, (New York and London: Routledge 1995), 190.

<sup>62</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 66.

innocent; rather, it produces the homonormativized gay penguin as another site that justifies the evaluation, regulation, and granting of rights based on stable sexualities and appropriate behaviors.

Interesting to us is how these discourses line up so quickly, seemingly waiting for us and the penguin. How does the invention of the gay penguin activate a discursive chain that constitutes him as a subject of rights? As gay penguin discourses incite subjects to become agents in their reproduction, the consequent reduction of sexuality and subjectivity to intelligible practices of rights reproduces and installs recognizable narratives of progress to follow. Our emphasis on showing how orientations and lines create comprehensive narratives to follow points to the ways that these normalizing stories of progress obscure alternative readings of penguin sexuality. The lack of alternative readings becomes the safest way to secure the future, a future that sustains itself through the preservation of the “same object” of the present: a dominant way to follow narratives of human progress through discourses of normative sexuality. Although the parodic nature of much of the gay penguin discursive chain we identified has the potential to undermine human conceits and tropes, and perhaps to cause momentary departures from the lines, this parody continues to center the human even as it casts it in a different light. Even as they denaturalize human cultural practices, and perhaps even allow for their critique, the gay penguin discourses we analyzed nonetheless do not offer alternative orientations or lines that question the teleology of becoming individual subjects of rights.

To understand the seeming inevitability of the discursive chain despite parody's potential to undermine it, we turned our focus to the assembling of orientations and lines as a composition that addresses and constitutes spectators and actors. In this sense, our analysis locates the performative nature of discourse as “happening” at the site of orientation. In other words, the zoo story's mode of address functions as a transaction with viewers, who are oriented to face the penguin, or the gay penguin, in a certain way and mobilized to follow lines that direct them to create particular narratives of the “subjects” they see. As social spaces designed for humans, zoos function as sites of a modernist, spatiotemporal logic that congregate orientations and lines, a composition that naturalizes boundaries, rules, and positions. The assemblage of shifting orientations interpellates subjects to become actors who follow and produce the discursive chain. Locked into logics of hetero/homo, oriented through reason, instinct, and emotion, and interpellated through emotions, humans can imagine little more than an anthropocentric repetition of our own “progress.” Actors put the discursive chain into motion, mobilizing themselves through institutions, practices, and meanings that reiterate the direction of the line. If one orientation does not capture an actor, another is ready to step in, to secure her participation in the perpetuation of the discursive chain. In other words, the reassembling orientations of reason-instinct-emotion point humans in directions they already know, limiting alternative responses to the invention of the gay penguin. For example, if reason does not incite a viewer, emotion can be put into motion, keeping the penguin close to us and keeping us oriented, committed affectively and morally to maintaining the right direction. Dis-oriented approaches to understanding penguin sexuality are relatively unavailable within this composition, which directs humans “to identify [the body] with the grammatical notion of a subject or the juridical notion of a subject of decisions and initiatives.”<sup>63</sup> “Given” his “sexuality,” the gay penguin body is assimilated to human logics of becoming a legal, liberal subject of rights.

The orientations and lines that we have presented incite humans to read penguin bodies as individual subjects. This conversion into subjecthood perpetuates “the notion that our body is constituted by the form that makes it an objective for the observation and manipulation of an outside observer.”<sup>64</sup> Having constituted penguins as subjects, and thus as objects of regulation, actors secure a future based on the “same object” of the present. Deleuze calls this way of thinking “passive synthesis”: “it constitutes our habit of living, our expectations that ‘it’ will continue, that one of the two elements will appear after the other, thereby assuring the perpetuation of our case.”<sup>65</sup> The future's openness is kept “in line” with what we already know. As we have described, the future that these orientations and lines create is simple. It is based on the sequence for the ideal gay penguin, in which he falls in love, wants to procreate, and ultimately marries. And it is humans' responsibility to assist him in *our* trajectory.

It is in this repetition that the limits of our social and political imaginations become clear. Silo, Roy, Scrappy, Z, Vielpunkt, and the two nameless Chinese penguins populate and animate narratives of human sociality and progress, taking on roles as homewrecker, unfaithful, monogamous, good fathers, or married couple. But rather than taking on human roles, might it be possible to “see” Silo, Roy, Scrappy, Z, Vielpunkt, and the Chinese penguins by mobilizing other orientations and lines that do not presume the composition of human culture, history, and futurity? Rather than making “the democratizing move. . . to invite non-human entities into our sociality,”<sup>66</sup> what if penguin actions were placed in the world rather than in the (human) social? If human cultural forms, which assume individual subjects acting with agency (or, conversely, needing protection) in a world of cause-effect sequences, did not animate our orientations to penguin sexualities and penguin logics, what might happen?

One apparent alternative would be to ask if there is disruptive potential in queering the penguin. Yet “queer” continues to orient us to the penguin on human cultural terms. Much queer scholarship that explores animal relations that do not conform to heteroreproductivity centers human practices by privileging culture as the signifier on which “queer” depends. The “queerness” of nature or biology is obscured. Arguing that instead “we might read queer through a non-human lens,”<sup>67</sup> Hird quotes Elizabeth Wilson's figuring of the barnacle to decenter dominant understandings of queerness as human: “The queerness of Darwin's barnacles is salutary not because it renders the barnacle knowable through its association with familiar human forms, but because it renders the human, cultural, and social guises of queer less familiar and more captivated by natural and biological forces.”<sup>67</sup> Other logics of “nature,” then, can decenter knowing humans as proper subjects and queer as human/cultural practice.

So, if it is difficult to queer the penguin on human terms, can the penguin queer the human? To return to the scene of interpellation, the composition of the zoo orients viewers to face the penguin in certain ways, activating reason, emotion, and instinct to make the penguin visible as a subject. But there is a possible site of disjuncture, or a possible failure of interpellation in which the orientations and lines might assemble differently or fail to assemble at all and “disoriented” views and lines might assemble. Rather than thinking that the hyperbolic absurdity of gay penguin

<sup>64</sup> Lingis, “Bestiality,” 39.

<sup>65</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 74.

<sup>66</sup> Karen Barad, “Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering,” in: *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, 311–338 (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 329.

<sup>67</sup> Myra J. Hird, “Animal Trans,” in *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, 227–247 (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 242.

<sup>63</sup> Lingis, “Bestiality,” 39.



discourses and practices (conversion therapy, weddings, DNA testing) can orient viewers to question the human, failed interpellation depends precisely on not orienting oneself to the non-human penguin through human social and cultural forms. In other words, “penguin logics” that do not equate bodies with subjects may queer our understandings of human and non-human sexuality. As Barad posits, “Bodies are not situated *in* the world; they are part of the world. . . if being situated in the world means occupying particular coordinates in space and time, in culture and in history.”<sup>68</sup> Her emphasis on “connectivity,” in which entanglements in the world replace bodily boundaries and discrete identities, suggests that “nature” can teach “culture” something about the possibilities of differences in the world without individuation and subjectification.<sup>69</sup> The queer animal can act and respond “queerly” without cultural constructs of emotion, intellection, subjectivity, or agency. Penguin practices may suggest to “culture” that it think

differently about “nature” (whether human or non-human nature), orienting itself to a world in which non-human animals engage in diverse sexual and affiliative behaviors that question sedimented “cultural ideas about the family, monogamy, fidelity, parental care, heterosexuality, and perhaps most fundamentally, sexual difference.”<sup>70</sup> Queerness is not about human constructions of individual subjectivity or secure futures. Rather, as Colebrook says, “Queer encounters, from a Deleuzian perspective, are not affirmations of a group of bodies who recognize themselves as other than normative, but are those in which bodies enter into relations where the mode of relation can not be determined in advance.”<sup>71</sup> The penguin, disoriented and without a straight line, is not imitating humans, following the right path, or crafting a subjectivity, but is engaging in becomings that suggest a “non-teleological notion of direction, movement, and process,”<sup>72</sup> articulations of other relations, transformations, and trajectories in the world.

<sup>68</sup> Barad, “Queer Causation,” 326.

<sup>69</sup> Barad, “Queer Causation,” 326–330.

<sup>70</sup> Hird, “Animal Trans,” 234.

<sup>71</sup> Claire Colebrook, “How Queer Can You Go? Theory, Normality and Normativity,” in *Queering the Non/Human*, eds. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, 17–34 (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 30.

<sup>72</sup> Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes,” 170.