

Animal Autobiography

By **Kendall Gerdes**, University of Texas at Austin

The looking of “*a little cat*” shames Jacques Derrida, its look cast “in the direction of my sex.”¹ A gendered body writes the autobiography of the deconstructive animal. His sex marks his exposedness and shame.

An animal is looking at me.² A dog, looking to see what I will write about him. If I stay still, the eye that spies me over a fold of blanket closes, confident that my returning look will not disturb his sleep. Does he have an “I” for me to record?

A gendered body writes my autobiography, too. Who am I following? “Why, you. You want to become me by following me around and writing down my autobiography. I am you.” Anything that can be called by my name assembles around the welcoming within of an “irreducible hetero-affection.”³ This internal alterity shows itself in me as a *homo affection*. My sex marks my exposedness, too: I am trying to write a butch/er/ed up “I.” The saying of “I am” follows “butch” over a corpse left by its utterance. “I” always belong(s) to a sacrificed body, a scrap of butch(er) meat that autobiography cuts up, even as it nevertheless (de)composes and re-members.

Autodeixis as autopsy.

Does the on-looking dog receive what I've recorded, “I”? He follows me; I follow him; he also follows his own tail. After our own traces.

His look marks my exposedness. Across our shared finitude, he stares at me with adulation, the same way I stare at him.

Butch and animal.

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1 Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 6 and 4.

2 "What animal? The other." *Ibid.*, 3.

3 *Ibid.*, 95.