

ABSTRACT

KENNETH T. PINION. *Animal Remains: Towards an Archaeology of Anthropomorphic Media and “Furry” Representation* (Under the direction of Professor Devin Orgeron.)

Anthropomorphic media depicts animal characters with physically human traits.

Anthropomorphic media, and the developing “furry” subculture that identifies with this type of humanized animality, remain under-explored aspects of American literature, film, and television. Until now, scholarship regarding these topics have been inaccurate and, as exemplified by a project by Kathleen Gerbasi, which ascribes to the community a condition tentatively titled “Species Identity Disorder,” oftentimes reductive. As a response to academia's incomplete and potentially marginalizing portraits of the furry community, this project demonstrates how setting traditional methods of critical analysis in conversation with the representation of furies in mainstream US television, the digital artifacts produced by the online furry community, and the real-world exercise of furry identity at conventions, can lead us to unique insights into the American psyche and cultural landscape. Drawing on an intersection of television studies, queer theory, animality studies and notions of the “archive,” this project discusses anthropomorphic media and furry identity from multiple angles.

To begin, this essay employs a detailed, deconstructive analysis of an episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, “Fur and Loathing,” to show how the televisual representation of the furry community represents a queer, transgressive, and spectacular phenomenon. Other appearances of furies on American television--episodes of *Dr. Phil*, *My Strange Addiction*, *ER*, and *True Life*--also come into scrutiny.

Additionally, this essay discusses how members of the furry fandom employ digital tools, such as YouTube, Wikifur, and FurAffinity, to form a “furry archive,” to refute slanted media

portrayals and produce a more honest audiovisual record of the history and culture of the furry community.

Lastly, through field research conducted at Furry Weekend Atlanta 2014, this essay observes the space of the furry convention to suggest that the most productive cultural significance of the furry fandom is the unique way that participants employ nontraditional notions of identity and society to resist methods of human oppression, violence, and exploitation.

While the *raison d'être* of furry culture is the juncture of human and animal identity, furries must consistently engage in complex negotiations with social constructs of “non-furry” human identity, such as gender and sexuality. Despite the furry community's foregrounding of “animal” identities, the cultural logic of the community ultimately necessitates the construction, interrogation, and often subversion of questions and notions that are quintessentially “human.”