

Donna Haraway: Interview with a dog lover on a dog day afternoon
By Jonah Raskin

Donna Haraway came to the following interview wearing a shirt that said, "unleashed." At her side, and on a leash, was her dog, Cayenne.

Q: Are you a dog lover?

A: Oh, God, yes. That's first and foremost. It's embarrassing how much I love dogs. I love to touch dogs and smell dogs and just be with dogs and around them.

Q: Do your dogs, Cayenne and Roland, add to the quality of your life?

A: Absolutely! They bring a raw joy to my life. There's an honesty about dogs that I love. Humans lie. Apes lie. Dogs don't. They don't have the equipment to lie, and that's refreshing.

Q: In your previous books, *Primate Visions* and *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, you write about apes, humans and machines—from a feminist point of view. Now, in your new book you write about dogs. Why is that?

A: I'm interested in creatures that inhabit borderlands. Dogs inhabit the borderland between the civilized and the wildness that lies just beyond. Dogs are about unfreedom. Dogs are degraded wolves. They're about the realization of man's will in nature. All that is fascinating to me.

Q: You've been quoted as saying, "I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess." What did you mean by that?

A: I made that remark in the 1980s, in the context of the environmental movement in California when political activists were demonizing technology. What I meant was that machines are not the enemy. Science is not the enemy. Knowledge is not the enemy. We've got to get smart about technology—computers, Cyborgs, cell phones.

Q: Since you've written so much about Cyborgs I wonder if you're planning to vote for Arnold Schwarzenegger, "The Terminator," in the race for governor.

A: No, I am not voting for Arnold, though I have watched his movies and though I am not immune to the beauty of his body. Still, his is a hard, machine-crafted body—he's not my type—though I do also work out. I see Arnold as super boy. He has never really grown-up.

Q: You seem to feel that dogs can help human beings. How so?

A: I'm not a romantic about dogs. I know that dogs—and human beings—have done vile things throughout history. In the colonial era, the Spanish used dogs to hunt and kill Native Americans. Dogs were like lethal guided missiles. Today, I think that we have an obligation to learn from dogs. I think that we can become better human beings by paying attention to the relationships that we're in with dogs. Together we

can not only survive, but flourish. We can learn to be present and to be real. And of course, on the practical side, search and rescue dogs save lives.

Q: Do dogs think? Do they have active minds?

A: They do think, but not in terms of words and symbols. They don't think linguistically, but they problem-solve and they learn to learn. Conditioning shapes dog behavior and dogs respond to consequences - much as humans do.

Q: You've recently reread Jack London's "The Call of the Wild?"
What do you think about the story, and about Buck, London's fictional dog?

A: It's a great story and London certainly knows how to tell it. He obviously spent a lot of time around dogs and knew a lot about them, especially the work dogs in Alaska. I see "The Call of the Wild" as a story about initiation. I think that Buck is a stand-in for London's fantasies. Of course, it's not the story I'd write. If I were to redo it, I'd have Buck get over his need for unconditional love. And I'd have his master, John Thornton, get over his love of gold. If they could both do that, they might be able to have an adult relationship.

Q: In all your books you use big words. Are you showing off?

A: I use big words because I'm in love with words. In "The Companion Species Manifesto" I'm talking to dog lovers, biologists, and to university teachers in the humanities. I use an everyday language and several technical languages as well.

Q: There's a saying, "It's a dog eat dog world." Do you think that's true?

A: No, I don't think so. We do not live in a "dog eat dog world." We live in a world of nuisances and complexities, not cliches. I think we've turned dogs into metaphorical vehicles for our own stupidities.

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