

**Of Monkeys, Men and Menstruation: Gendered Dualisms and the Absent Referent in  
Mid-Twentieth Century British Menstrual Science**

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At the Fourth Annual Addison Lecture, at Guy's Hospital on July 13, 1950, Dr George Corner, embryologist and keen investigator of the menstrual cycle, advocated the importance of experiments on monkeys in order to explore the biological processes of menstruation in women. He declared that the 'study of other menstruating animals has aided and stimulated investigation of the human cycle'. Further research on understanding menstruation 'calls for continual experimental work on monkeys' (Corner, 1951:921). For Corner, and many other reproductive scientists at the time, monkeys mattered. They were the *sine qua non* of menstrual science. This lecture gives us a chance to discuss (lip-smack, pout and grunt at) the construction of gendered dualisms by endocrinological science in mid-twentieth century Britain. Consequently, allowing us to address how the study of hormones informed the understanding of menstruation in women and nonhuman animals. We will explore and analyse these historically contingent bodily transmutations using Carol J Adams' (2015) notion of the Absent Referent. This is a lecture of nonhumanity as much as it is a feminist analysis of the past.

**Required Reading**

Adams, C. J., (2015). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist vegetarian critical theory*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. Chapter 2 The rape of animals, the butchering of women. pp.19-45

Adams, Carol, J and Tyler, T., (2006) 'An animal manifesto: gender, identity, and vegan-feminism in the twenty-first century'. *Parallax* pp. 120-128.

Blackman, H., (2005). Embryological and agricultural constructions of the menstrual cycle, 1890-1910. In: *Menstruation: a cultural history*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 117-130.

Martin, E., (1989). *The woman in the body: a cultural analysis of reproduction*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. Chapter 3 Medical metaphors of women's bodies: menstruation and the menopause. pp27-53.

**Lecture based on following publication:**

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