

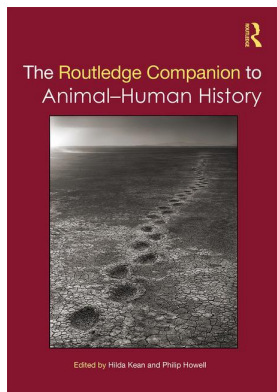
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Publisher: *Routledge*

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## The Routledge Companion to Animal–Human History

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### The triumph of animal history?

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429468933-22>

Philip Howell

**Published online on: 03 Sep 2018**

**How to cite :-** Philip Howell. 03 Sep 2018, *The triumph of animal history? from:* The Routledge Companion to Animal–Human History Routledge

Accessed on: 05 Dec 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429468933-22>

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## 22

THE TRIUMPH  
OF ANIMAL HISTORY?*Philip Howell*

## I

The extraordinarily rapid proliferation of historical studies of nonhuman animals in recent years is only one aspect of the much wider academic engagement with animals and animality, a phenomenon that has freed nonhuman animals from their traditional confines within ‘natural history’ for good and moved them to the centre of concern in any number of disciplines. The fields that have been affected are extremely diverse: Steve Best writes that this so-called ‘animal turn’ has ‘moved throughout humanities, the fine arts, and social sciences; it has crossed into psychology, philosophy, anthropology, political science, and sociology; and it has made its mark in literature, history, cultural studies, geography, feminism, and queer theory’.<sup>1</sup> It is safe to say that the horse, along with all the other animals, has long since bolted – and even those who remain sceptical of the historical study of animal–human relations will probably accept that the stable doors might as well stay open now. More than that, though, we can suggest that animal–human history, specifically, is distinctly fashionable: ‘one of the hot topics of historical research’ in the current decade, it has been suggested.<sup>2</sup> One only has to look to the volume of publications, the rounds of seminars, sessions and specialist conferences, the rise of animal-centred courses and curricula in country after country.<sup>3</sup> We might well say, with Joshua Specht, that ‘Animal history has arrived’.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Specht has gone further, speaking of animal history’s ‘triumph’.<sup>5</sup> This is all aligned with the direction of travel for animal studies as a whole, a journey from the margins to the centre being a familiar trope.<sup>6</sup> Animal–human history might be of central significance for all that, however, history being a pillar of the humanities and an education in the liberal arts, and the historical profession (arguably – the accusation is as familiar as it is unfair) more conservative than radical.<sup>7</sup> Which is to say that if ‘animal studies’ can make inroads even into the discipline of history then surely this says something about where we are in the academy as a whole.

There is an obvious danger to any triumphalism, however. Proclaiming the ‘triumph of animal history’ reminds us only of George W. Bush’s infamous May 2003 ‘Mission Accomplished’ speech on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, marking

the end of ‘major combat operations’ in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Even without the contentious comparison, practitioners of animal–human history might prefer not to have such enthusiastic cheerleading. So whilst Specht insists that ‘mainstream historians have accepted that animals are important actors’, even if this was the case (and we have our doubts) the provocation that animal–human history makes to the methodological and theoretical presumptions of conventional historiography is patently obvious.<sup>9</sup> There is remarkably little consensus, for instance, on many of the issues raised in this volume, such as ‘agency’ and the animal ‘archive’, nor in terms of narrative synthesis. We have wanted in this *Companion* not only to produce an up-to-date guide to animal–human history, with an informed sense of this diversity, but also to explore the ongoing challenges posed by historical studies of animals and animal–human relationships. At this point, indeed, it falls to me to summarise something of the state of the field, the problems that still beset us with regard to how we *do* ‘animal–human history’, but also the opportunities ahead. I want here to reflect on the methods of animal–human history, first of all in response to suggestions that animal–human history is in the end not wholly compatible with an ‘animal turn’ that has turned decisively against anthropocentrism. For some hostile commentators, history might still be seen as too conservative and staid a discipline, too shackled to humanist pieties, to be anything more than marginal in the project of ‘animal studies’. This is a position that students of animal–human history need to confront head on, and refute.

There is a second problematic aspect in any premature triumphalism, however, and that is the downside of animal history’s (and animal studies’) institutionalisation within the academy. I do not mean merely that with the growth of animal history comes the diversification of interests, true though this is: Erica Fudge has recently observed that many historians have contributed and are contributing to animal–human history without needing or wanting to call themselves ‘animal historians’.<sup>10</sup> The measure of animal–human history’s growing popularity is inevitably going to be the ‘good and varied company’ it will keep, even at the cost of a certain dilution of purpose.<sup>11</sup> For many commentators whose primary concerns are with the welfare or the rights of animals, however, this institutionalisation (we might borrow, though distort, Vinciane Despret’s conception of ‘academocentrism’), is freighted with political dangers.<sup>12</sup> As I will discuss in more detail below, the ‘mainstreaming’ of animal studies, including the rise of animal–human history, has been succeeded by a self-consciously ‘critical’ animal studies movement that views such academic normalisation as nothing but complicity and collaboration with anthropocentric reason and unrelenting animal exploitation. For this reason, it is necessary to say something about the responsibilities of animal–human history and its practitioners. To some extent, this concern overlaps with the first, as questions of the role and the place of theory have been an important part of this critique, but the ethical commitments involved take us further from the realm of academic practice considered in its narrowest sense. We need to fly the flag for historical work in its own right, without conceding too much ground to those who see political and academic commitments as incompatible, or detaching ourselves completely from the inevitability of ethical and political engagement.

One present danger is that the historical study of animals can be portrayed as inadmissible or even impossible from a more theoretically positioned reading of

animal studies, whilst being seen as equally irrelevant (at best) from the perspective of animal advocacy. In this curious pincer movement (the respective camps hardly agree with each other, and are not natural allies), animal–human history might be regarded as more vulnerable than victorious. And this is without mentioning the political opposition from those Hegelians or neo-Hegelians who seek to claim the ends of history for human beings alone, relegating all other animals to that dim and dusty store cupboard named ‘Nature’.<sup>13</sup> For these reasons, I turn finally to a defence of the special position of animal–human history, and a reflection on the possibilities that lie ahead.

## II

It is worth underlining the fact that the institutionalisation of animal–human history does not mean that basic questions of practice and purpose have been settled: far from it. Despite Joshua Specht’s suggestion that animal–human history is already a ‘mature’ field, it is plainly still in its infancy, and exhibiting some of the characteristic growing pains of emergent fields, such as a lack of integration within the wider discipline, the relative isolation of enthusiastic adherents, the difficulty of agreeing upon a conceptual core or even a lingua franca.<sup>14</sup> Rob Boddice refers, reasonably enough, to the ‘amorphous’ and ‘disparate’ nature of animal–human history, but Pascal Eitler, more punchily and provocatively, speaks of its ‘freak status’ within the academy.<sup>15</sup>

As a ready index, we might usefully compare the situation of a close cousin. Whilst accepting the challenges that environmental history still faced, Richard White (as far back as 2001) argued that it was already a mature field; more recently, Paul Sutter’s similarly careful retrospective of (specifically American) environmental history declares that it is by any measure ‘one of the most vital subfields within American history and one of the fastest-growing approaches to the study of the past within the larger profession’.<sup>16</sup> Nothing is ever so settled, for sure, and the coherence, meaning, and significance of environmental history as an interdisciplinary project remain contested – not to mention the inevitable unevenness when we consider its global situation.<sup>17</sup> All the same, animal–human history clearly has a long, long way to go before it reaches the security and respectability that environmental history has achieved in the last half-century: ‘a broadly conceived environmental history perspective has triumphed’, writes Jason Moore, using the term more convincingly here than does Specht.<sup>18</sup> It is telling that one of the deans of the discipline, J.R. McNeill, has referred to environmental history’s potential overlap with ‘animal history’ in uncharacteristic but unmistakably condescending terms: ‘if that is what it is’, is McNeill’s terse comment on the putative ‘field’ of animal history, firmly putting in its place a junior, perhaps even an unacknowledged, sibling.<sup>19</sup>

Now there is nothing absolutely distinctive or disabling about this, and indeed we could reasonably suggest that this situation is precisely what makes the ‘field’ (*pace* McNeill, it is one) so lively and exciting. It may well be worth preserving the ‘marginal’ situation of animal–human history, wearing the ‘freak’ status as a badge of honour, celebrating its challenges to conventional historical practice.<sup>20</sup> But claims of maturity or triumph would still be out of order. We can see this when we reflect on the diversity of approaches taken by the contributors to this volume. Consider the linked

issues of theory and interdisciplinarity, in particular, where talk of diversity may simply mask fractures and contradictions. It is a commonplace to argue that animal–human historians should be prepared to ignore disciplinary boundaries, just as nonhuman animals do. Animal history must be ‘radically interdisciplinary’, writes Susan Nance.<sup>21</sup> Dan Vandermommers argues, more specifically, that:

Animal history challenges us to escape the deified anthropocentrism that has undergirded the pursuit of history, a task requiring understanding in philosophy and critical theory. Animal history challenges us to be conversant with the sciences – ethology, ecology, animal welfare science, zoology, comparative psychology, veterinary medicine – to track animal agency in historical sources.<sup>22</sup>

In fairness, animal–human historians have been notable for taking in insights from archaeology and anthropology and my own discipline of geography, to name but three: here, the hybrid subfields of zooarchaeology, anthrozoology/zooanthropology, and ‘animal geography’ have much to offer animal–human history, and vice versa.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, attention to material culture and the supplementing of traditional historical sources is increasingly practised; even the seemingly most human creations, such as literature, have been read against their superficially anthropocentric grain – as Jennifer McDonnell has shown in this volume. But we need to be cautious all the same: as Sandra Swart has noted, elsewhere, claims to interdisciplinarity are more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and evidently need to be interrogated further: bluntly, the most ambitious prospects for innovation in animal–human history are likely to be overstated.<sup>24</sup> Methodologically, much current animal–human history is relatively conventional. Some popular histories are light, entertaining and informative but almost by definition insubstantial.<sup>25</sup> But more obviously academic contributions are hardly more ambitious, learned though they are.<sup>26</sup> There have been some urban histories, for instance, that focus on nonhuman animals, but which serve to remind the reader of their presence rather than (as sometimes claimed) returning them their ‘voice’.<sup>27</sup> Occasionally, these approaches remind us of the feminist academic complaints against merely incorporating women into existing scholarship – namely, ‘add women and stir’ – though here it is nonhuman animals who are mixed in, and anthropocentrism rather than androcentrism that remains untouched.

There are compound difficulties here. It is hard enough to be expected to be equally expert with artefacts as well as archives, conversant with ethology and ethnography as well as with the interpretation of texts. But it is also true to say that, for all the efforts and exhortations, animal–human historians are rather less likely to follow the twists and turns of contemporary critical theory than their cousins in the allied social sciences. In animal studies as a whole, a deep engagement with social and critical theory is particularly striking, even if – especially if – these theoretical stances are barely compatible. This can hardly be said for much contemporary animal–human history. The comments of the editors of a recent animal urban history collection, though they are thinking specifically about Canadian environmental history, might be presumed true for much current animal–human history: ‘Discussions of animal sentience, subjectivity, or agency are seldom addressed, and concepts such

as actor–network theory, assemblage, or posthumanism are even more rare'.<sup>28</sup> Some historians will simply be more comfortable with and more committed to these theoretical conversations than others. If I can be forgiven for alluding to my own work, two reviews of my book on Victorian dogs might be considered exemplary: one reviewer recommended a much deeper discussion of theory, particularly that of Deleuze and Guattari, whilst another specifically commended me for avoiding the 'occasionally indigestible language of cultural theorists'.<sup>29</sup> Present and future practitioners of animal–human history will no doubt need to be aware of the diversity of audiences that accompanies the much-heralded interdisciplinarity.

We might go a lot further, however, for the terrain of critical theory is particularly uncomfortable for historians caught up in the 'animal turn'. Their efforts, however honest and humble, may be met with incomprehension or worse from the perspective of animal studies scholars interested principally in questions of theory or philosophy, and many of whom see themselves responding to movements from outside the humanities rather than from within it.<sup>30</sup> For some within the wider community of 'animal studies', it is not simply that animal–human historians have by and large *not* escaped the pull of anthropocentrism: it is that they *cannot*, being yoked to the supposedly foundational presumption that history is a matter for humans alone. For some critics tracing (or excavating) a schism between proponents of history and proponents of theory, the liberal humanities are precisely the problem, and what is needed is a revolutionary realignment, away from the internal dynamics of a tradition that is by definition anthropocentric to a 'posthumanist' alternative.<sup>31</sup> The animal studies philosopher Cary Wolfe has taken a notably antagonistic stance towards academic history, portraying it as a 'humanist' project par excellence. Wolfe writes, in a notably direct address:

For example, just because a historian devotes attention to the topic of nonhuman animals – let's say, the awful plight of combat operations during World War I – doesn't mean that humanism and anthropocentrism aren't being maintained in his or her disciplinary practice ... even though – to return to our historian example – your concept of the discipline's *external* relations to its larger environment is posthumanist in taking seriously the existence of nonhuman subjects and the consequent compulsion to make the discipline respond to the question of nonhuman animals foisted on it by changes in the discipline's environment, your *internal* disciplinarity may remain humanist through and through.<sup>32</sup>

For Wolfe, conventional history, insofar as it remains merely thematic and refuses to interrogate the discourse of species difference, is incapable of meeting the challenge that posthumanism poses, let alone the scale and nature of animal suffering. 'Animal history', from this perspective, looks more or less impossible.

Returning the compliment, some historians may think that there is little to be gained with engaging with high theory – I am thinking not just of the posthuman turn, but the rise of relational theories such as actor–network theory, assemblage theory, neo-vitalism, the more-than-human, and so on.<sup>33</sup> This is not my view, and I will say more about the potential of these kinds of theories towards the end of these

reflections, but it would be as well to accept that the theoretical programme of animal studies can be off-putting as well as uncomfortable for academic historians. It is one of those areas of difficulty that animal–human historians should prepare to face if they have not confronted it already. There is no space here to provide a full defence of an animal–human history, let alone the ‘humanities’ as a whole, even if I thought I was well-placed to do so. But we can suggest, at least, that the tradition of the humanities has served to trouble the status of the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ as much as it has done to shore up these identities – not least in terms of providing a historical perspective on the emergence of ‘humanity’.<sup>34</sup> Think of the great ‘humanist’ Montaigne, and his presentation of ‘the *humaine condition* with all its burdens, pitfalls, and problems, with all its essential insecurity, with all the creatural bonds which confine it’.<sup>35</sup> Do we really have to insist that we are now long ‘after’ history, living in its ‘ruins’, in order to record this common but historically mutable ‘creaturely life’, ‘the peculiar proximity of the human and the animal at the very point of their radical difference’?<sup>36</sup> History has also long engaged with traditions and disciplines for whom ‘taking seriously the existence of nonhuman subjects’ is a matter of course: here again I am thinking of archaeology, anthropology, geography, and so on. The supposedly moribund humanities are currently busily diversifying in endless new forms labelled ‘environmental humanities’, ‘ecohumanities’, ‘geohumanities’ and so on, something that calls into question the stark opposition of humanism and posthumanism, and also the argument that change can only come from *without*.<sup>37</sup> Lastly, we might reasonably argue that history has always been about the power of some humans over others, rather than simply a tedious monologue about ‘human’ privilege. The theorist Matthew Calarco rightly points out in this regard that the history of Western culture may be considered anthropocentric but not truly *speciesist*, for the reason that many human beings and groups of human beings end up excluded and exploited, the problem being the attempt to shore up the privileges of those deemed, historically, to be fully *human*.<sup>38</sup> It remains for historians to extend our understanding of the costs, for people as well as nonhumans, of this spurious ‘humanity’.

### III

This brings us on to a second area of profound disagreement, which is the responsibility of historians to the ethical and political projects associated with animal welfare or animal rights. At one level, we might argue that no such responsibility exists. Here is the anthropologist Brian Fagan, for instance, in a preface to a popular recent history of the enduring relationship between humans and animals, matter-of-factly admitting the limited lessons that (his) history supplies: ‘History provides the background but, alas, no ready solutions’.<sup>39</sup> Though he raises the questions of human dominion and animal exploitation, Fagan limits himself to what he rather revealingly calls ‘a purely historical inquiry’.<sup>40</sup> Now, for sure, Fagan’s work is not intended as a fully footnoted scholarly treatise, but his stance is hardly unusual as far as animal–human history goes: it might even be thought of as the default position. With regard to the age-old, purgatorial suffering of nonhuman animals, we might feel that we have responsibilities as human beings, but not – or rather, not *specifically* – as historians.

There are a few who would go further and argue that animal–human history should have nothing whatsoever to do with animal advocacy, save as it exists as an historical phenomenon. Rob Boddice, for instance, has consistently warned that animal–human historians typically neglect or distort the history of human speculation about relationships with nonhuman animals precisely because they import a priori and ahistorical ethical commitments.<sup>41</sup> What Boddice has in mind is the now familiar team roll call of supposedly theriophile thinkers, from Theophrastus and Plutarch and Porphyry, say, down to Montaigne and Bentham and Ruskin, and beyond – the ‘long line of poets, philosophers, saints, seers, writers, and intellectuals’ who have advocated for animal rights, and who form (in the words of the animal theologian Andrew Linzey) a comforting ‘cloud of witnesses’ in our own struggles for justice for animals.<sup>42</sup> Boddice’s response to such invariably partial histories – here he invokes his mentor Rod Preece – is a lofty paean to the virtues of ‘dispassionate and critical scholarship’, stating that he ‘cannot reconcile the tenets of scholarship and intellectual honesty with the blind following of empty rhetoric’.<sup>43</sup> What we need to do instead, Boddice insists, is to understand these historical commentaries on animal–human relations in their own terms, in their own contexts, which in all ages before our own only appears to mean different *versions* of anthropocentrism, different ways of understanding what it meant to be *human*, and never truly a focus on animals as ends in themselves. Even the record of condemnation of cruelty towards animals seems in this scholarship to orbit ceaselessly around the figure of the human, so that it can apparently never be invoked in the terms of contemporary animal politics.<sup>44</sup> The record of animal–human history, and the complexities of human attitudes to other animals, is invoked not so much to pour cold water on contemporary animal rights causes, as to show that even the most well-intentioned ethical argument is, likely as not, *bad history*. For some others, however (I do not mean Boddice, nor Preece), this careful historicism can be repurposed straightforwardly as a weapon against the claims of the animal rights movement, this time in the insistence that bad history means *bad politics*.<sup>45</sup>

Now Boddice has a certain contrarian reputation – this is not quite fair – but even so many historians may sympathise with the substance of his argument, if not necessarily the tone. Few historians would be comfortable with animal–human history merely as the handmaiden to the politics of animal liberation – and I append here a reasonably representative statement of purpose with regard to what the place of historical enquiry would look like in such a politics:

[Critical Animal Studies] Deconstructs and reconstructs the socially constructed binary oppositions between human and nonhuman animals, a move basic to mainstream animal studies, but also looks to illuminate related dichotomies between culture and nature, civilization and wilderness and other dominator hierarchies to emphasize the historical limits placed upon humanity, nonhuman animals, cultural/political norms, and the liberation of nature as part of a transformative project that seeks to transcend these limits towards greater freedom and ecological harmony.<sup>46</sup>

For self-consciously critical scholar-activists, the institutionalisation of animal studies as a whole is precisely what needs to be combatted; for the likes of Steve Best,



promoting the ‘animal standpoint’, mainstream animal studies has merely been ‘defanged, declawed, and neutered by the academic–industrial complex’.<sup>47</sup> An alternative ‘Critical Animal Studies’ has more than animal–human history in its sights, obviously, and it should be noted that its ire and fire are directed more at the ‘contradictory ideas and deliberate obfuscation’ of ‘postmodern’ sophists than at the lowly empiricists who toil in history’s vineyards.<sup>48</sup> For these critics, ‘theory for theory’s sake’ indeed comes in for particular scorn:

Deliberately vague and apolitical, postmodern animal studies avoids any direct commitment to animals or to serious criticism of their exploitation. Although typically presented as radical interventions, these works are characterized by obscurantist language accessible only to a tiny number of academics and offer little practical help in terms of efforts to reduce the exploitation of non-human animals and advance the cause of animal rights.<sup>49</sup>

More temperately, we might agree that ‘posthumanism’s engagement with “the animal question” does not *in and by itself* create more beneficial subject positions for animals in human society’.<sup>50</sup> Cary Wolfe’s remark that animal studies has nothing to do, ‘strictly speaking’, with whether we even *like* animals, might in its own candid way be even more apposite.<sup>51</sup>

Now even if historians are typically less guilty of theoretical obfuscation, even if they are further from core academic respectability, the kind of animal–human history represented in this volume is still largely ground from the same academic mill so condemned by Critical Animal Studies. At best, such work can be presented as a distraction from the urgent struggles against speciesism; at worst, it is regarded as fully complicit with the human exploitation of animal others. Given the intransigence of this critique, it might, to repeat myself, be tempting to refuse all political commitments whatsoever. Boddice’s Olympian detachment towards ethical commitments looks in this sense defensive and strategic as much as it is proudly principled. In his vision of animal–human history, the relationship between humans and other animals is limited to a matter of attitudes rather than behaviours, further restricted to the history of ideas or to intellectual history, finally reaching so dessicated and airless a state that no possibility of an ethical critique can ever emerge.<sup>52</sup> This is equally unsatisfactory. Trying to quarantine historical enquiry from what is declared by fiat to be partisan politics is surely futile – as the ‘history wars’ in Australia or the ‘revisionist’ quarrels in Ireland or debates about the record of the British Empire have taught us.<sup>53</sup> All research is a political act, whether we like it or not. It is hard to imagine that Boddice’s strictures could be applied to the history of racism or slavery, for instance, or even to environmental history, where commonplace ‘green’ commitments have not attracted the same level or type of criticism: being concerned about the environment and its future does not make anyone a bad environmental historian.

In the end, animal–human historians will have to tack between these problematic positions, the invidious ideal types of the disinterested scholar and the inspired activist. Susan Nance has argued that an ‘ethical purity test’ for animal–human history is hardly acceptable, and I would only add that a commitment to veganism (say) would not be enough in itself by way of accreditation, given (say) the arguments of

‘veganarchists’ or the proponents of intersectionality who want to contest the privileges of ‘white vegan men’ – all of this reminding us that nonhuman animals are not the only animals who suffer, and that an animal rights movement that ignores these wider, linked forms of oppression is not above reproach.<sup>54</sup> Navigating these politics is never going to be easy, and I suspect that those of us who have taught animal–human history will be perfectly familiar with the difficulties of reconciling scholarship and ethical positionality (we can speak of a broader ‘ecopedagogy’).<sup>55</sup> The only reflection on teaching animal–human history I am aware of is provided by Thomas Andrews, writing of his own experiences in running a seminar course on ‘Animals in America’, an experiment that is sobering and inspiring in more or less equal measure.<sup>56</sup> He concludes:

I hope I have helped my students see people and other animals in all sorts of new ways. Not a single student has become a political activist simply because of my course. Yet most of them now possess a much deeper understanding of the historical conditions that have given rise to animal welfare, rights, and liberation movements across the globe. They may not agree with the tactics of PETA or ALF, but my students know how animal suffering became an important issue, and they understand why many people have become so passionate about animal-related causes. If my students have not become radicalized themselves, most of them seem to have become more sympathetic toward activists most of them previously perceived as extreme, even dangerous.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps, he says cautiously, it is enough ‘simply to help students wake up and pay attention’.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps we may still dare to hope that animal–human history can contribute to a more just world, ‘For, if we come to know what animals have done in the past, which human activities will we feel compelled to change in the future?’<sup>59</sup>

#### IV

I have raised these two basic questions, unavoidable for animal–human historians, concerned with the *how* of animal–human history, the practical, methodological questions, and the *why* of political or ethical purpose respectively. This still leaves the issue of *where* we go from here, and I want at this traditional point to collect some suggestions, albeit with no great claim to originality. I do not want to dwell upon issues that I think are plain enough, such as the need for animal–human history to develop in a truly global sense, and to learn from the non-Western world as it does so. At present, even non-Anglophone speakers close at hand might feel neglected in the recent emergence of animal–human history, and we clearly have an obligation towards those further afield too; the benefits of such a global conversation are also evident – this is obviously not mere charity.<sup>60</sup> Such an endeavour will undoubtedly require teamwork, ‘the pooling of the techniques, practiced by different scholars, but all tending to throw light upon a specific subject’, as the great Marc Bloch put it.<sup>61</sup> But important as these projects are, they are relatively uncontroversial, even platitudinous. I have in mind instead a more speculative

commentary. Looking ahead – not five or ten or even twenty years ahead but further still – where might animal–human history be? What would it look like? Would we even recognise it as the same field we had in mind when we began this project? To some extent the paths that I am suggesting lead in the same direction, but there is also apparent divergence, not least in the demands that they make of animal–human historians, and implicit or explicit challenges to how we define our joint enterprise.

Firstly, we might consider the potential for integration of animal–human history with what has been called ‘big history’ or (not quite the same thing) ‘deep history’.<sup>62</sup> We might suppose that it is already there, that it has always been there; other animals and the question of our animal inheritance have never been absent from accounts of past time over the *longue durée*, sometimes, it is true, as a contrastive with the rise and fall of human ‘civilisations’, but also more prominently in more recent ‘megahistories’ or ‘metahistories’ that exemplify E.O. Wilson’s ideal of ‘consilience’, capable of synthesising natural science, social science, and the humanities.<sup>63</sup> We might imagine that animal–human histories could find a home within these ambitious narratives. But it would be difficult to see the specific purpose of animal–human history flourishing within these widescreen histories, and many historians are already wary of the simplifications involved. The purported synthesis of evolutionary biology and history is likely to be ‘neither good science nor good history’.<sup>64</sup> True, we might expect future animal–human historians to be more conversant with the natural sciences and allied disciplines, interested and invested in a ‘deep history’ that extends to evolutionary time and the lessons of natural selection. We might then approach ‘a co-evolutionary perspective that sees nonhuman animals as inseparably embedded in human history and as dynamic agents in their own right’.<sup>65</sup> But this is likely, however, to be quite distinct from the template set out by E.O. Wilson’s ‘consilience’, not least because we need to understand evolution as natural *history* and not just natural ‘science’. It has been recently pointed out that the demise of ‘natural history’ in the nineteenth century did not somehow surgically remove ‘history’ from the new sciences of nature: quite the contrary, for the triumph of natural selection installed history in the understanding of life itself:

There are a number of ironies in the birth of biology and the attendant appearance of a new evolutionary paradigm. First, the moment at which the term ‘history’ disappears from the descriptor that characterizes the life sciences is the very moment at which they become genuinely historical in the modern sense. Natural history had been concerned with the manifold adaptations of static species. These species had no history. They were understood in terms of a kind of atemporal functionality. Evolutionary biology, however, assumed a long period of organic development. Creatures not only had a structure, they and their structures had a history. Thus while natural history had not been at all historical in the temporal sense, evolutionary biology was.<sup>66</sup>

The isolation of the humanities from the sciences that we routinely say we seek to counter is not a matter merely of the incapacities and ignorance of the former camp,

but also and much more problematically of the historical emergence of the life sciences themselves. Not only the process of evolution but its theorisation belong to history rather than standing outside it as a guarantor of truth. So if an animal–human history to come is more integrated with the sciences it will not be as anyone’s hand-maiden. Any engagement or reconciliation of animal–human history with such big-picture ‘deep history’ cannot involve only the incorporation of insights from, say, zoology or ethology or animal welfare science, helpful as these may be. Sandra Swart has, for instance, blurred the genres of history and natural history in her book on horses and ‘horsetory’; Jonathan Burt explains how the history of primates in primatology may be used to analyse the term ‘posthuman’; and Susan Nance has skilfully incorporated ethological research into her account of the American circus elephant.<sup>67</sup> We might pause at this point to emphasise the need for *specificity* rather than a spuriously general account of ‘animal’ behaviour, thinking not just of species, but also of breeds, types, and so on. Given the sheer diversity involved, the complexity of evolutionary genealogies, and the limits of our knowledge and understanding, we might reflect on the inadequacy of terms such as ‘fish’ and ‘birds’, or even the more familiar ‘dogs’.<sup>68</sup> Most importantly, however, the reengagement with ‘science’ must be a critical, historical, understanding of the status of scientific ‘nature’. The example of Science and Technology Studies (STS) is an obvious resource here, and I have in mind its powerful critiques of ethology in particular.<sup>69</sup> There is also a rich history of the production of science, the sites in which knowledge was made, and the role of nonhuman animals themselves.<sup>70</sup> Animal–human history must engage with natural science, then, but also with natural history.

It follows, I think, that we might also expect future animal–human history to be more questioning of the term ‘animal’, and the implied separation of ‘animal’ from ‘human’. It is not so much that the generalisation ‘animal’ is problematic, as I have just indicated: the ‘*bétise*’ or ‘asinine’ stupidity critiqued by Jacques Derrida.<sup>71</sup> It is also the fact that the term ‘human’ has to be understood relationally too. Pascal Eitler has expressed this problem with an excellent sense of its special significance for animal–human historians:

[W]riting a ‘symmetrical anthropology’ would have serious consequences for Animal History. It would not only mean historicizing human–animal relations as being variable, but rather would also mean historicizing humans and animals themselves as products. This implies not only a specific understanding of empirical work but also of political critique.<sup>72</sup>

And, more succinctly:

Animal History opens up a new perspective on humans, not only a new perspective on animals.<sup>73</sup>

The issue here is that we cannot assume the stability provided by a defunct nature/culture dichotomy. Eitler proposes, as an alternative to ‘animal history’, a ‘body history’, but I would prefer to use the term ‘biosocial history’, refusing the distinction between the ‘biological’ and the ‘social’ and promoting a general theory of evolution

instead of the neo-Darwinian paradigm that animates much ‘deep history’.<sup>74</sup> In this sense we should not assume the substantive difference between nonhuman animals and humans, nor indeed between living and inert ‘things’. In place of these familiar distinctions we have instead a fully relational approach that refuses to separate humans from their ‘environments’ (for this reason, subsuming animal–human history within environmental history is likely to be doomed from the start), and which focuses on the bodily existence of humans and other animals (without disconnecting these bodies from one another and from the existence of plants and things and so much else). All of this is something of a mouthful, and historians might complain that we are again sitting down to dine, theory-wise, on the unpalatable or the indigestible. But all the same I suspect that future work will have to take its stand on this ground whether we like it or not: the future of animal–human history will surely be one in which the nature/culture distinction has long been left behind.

An obvious response is that we will not then have the focus on the ‘animal’, nor on ‘history’, that animates our present studies. I am reminded at this point of Bruno Latour’s well-known comment (in these circles) that there were only four things wrong with his lauded ‘actor–network theory’, namely the words ‘actor’, ‘network’, and ‘theory’ . . . plus the hyphen. In a biosocial history, what would be the specific point in focusing on the relations between humans and other animals? Recognising that humans and animals – but also a whole host of other ‘things’ *make* history has its benefits, but it also has downsides as far as the field of animal–human history is concerned. Even in Erica Fudge’s capable hands, it is hard to be enthusiastic about the potential of ‘itstory’.<sup>75</sup> Can we still preserve a sense of historical change, even purpose, in this fashionably ‘flat ontology’? In this regard, it is worth fixing, finally, on the argument that nonhuman animals have a ‘history’ in its most specific sense in terms of their *entanglement* with human beings, up to and including the human appropriation of ‘History’ as a discipline. ‘An animal that has had no such confrontations with humans has no history’, is how Eitler puts it.<sup>76</sup> This is emphatically not the same as arguing, with Ingrid Tague, that ‘ultimately the study of history must be a study of humans’.<sup>77</sup> Rather, we need to look at the conjoined histories of humans and other animals in their specific existences. This would be to argue that ‘animal history’ is only ever an *animal–human history*, wherein nonhumans are bundled with human beings in historically specific sets of relations. Crucial here are those more recent conjunctures of ‘modernity’ and ‘capitalism’, with the history of the 500-year-old ‘world system’ a crucial referent. We might underline the opportunities of exploring animal–human history within the focus on ‘historical nature’ put forward by the likes of Jason Moore.<sup>78</sup> What Moore means by this is the ways in which such great historical transformations as global capitalism are ecological processes, not merely the predation of Nature by Capital or Culture. The dismantling of the kind of Cartesian reason that separates nature from culture on the one hand, and animal from human on the other, might well find here a powerful purpose for animal–human history in assessing the contribution of nonhuman animals to the rise of contemporary capitalism over this timescale. Nonhuman animals clearly have a major role to play in historical capitalism’s dependence on ‘Cheap Nature’, and the ‘Four Cheaps’ of labour power, food, energy, and raw materials. One of the few animal–human historians to consider this at this level of generality has been Alan Mikhail,

locating the changes in the modern near East within a world historical transformation of animal lives:

Imagine what will happen when our world suddenly finds itself without the fossil fuels that make so much of our lives possible today. Cities will take a different shape; the way we communicate and move will change; how we eat will be radically altered; we will have to seek out other forms of energy to sustain the economy. What happened in Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century was just such a process – a wholesale reconfiguration of the rural world precipitated by the loss of a historic source of energy. The social, cultural, political, and special consequences of this shifting animal economy and energy regime were clearly enormous and deserve further study, both in Egypt and elsewhere. Our biases toward humans as the most important historical agents perhaps predispose us to miss some of these animal histories. We ignore them at our peril.<sup>79</sup>

So ‘animal histories’ might well be recognised within these larger narratives of ‘historical nature’, and perhaps more specifically within our current accumulation cycle. This would not mean dissolving animal–human history within a repurposed environmental history, but rather promises the connecting up of our specific studies with the wider historical work that animals have accomplished, up to and including the performative constitution of human beings, and of the enterprise of History itself, for our worldviews and ways of knowing are inextricably part of this historical nature. This serves inevitably to remind us that ‘humans not [nonhuman] animals are writing this history’, but this is not so much a methodological problem as an historical phenomenon, of the greatest importance.<sup>80</sup> In this sense, all history is indeed animal history.<sup>81</sup>

## Notes

- 1 S. Best, ‘The rise (and fall) of critical animal studies’, *Liberazioni: Associazione* (2013), available at [www.liberazioni.org/articoli/BestS-TheRise\(and%20Fall\)ofCriticalAnimalStudies.pdf](http://www.liberazioni.org/articoli/BestS-TheRise(and%20Fall)ofCriticalAnimalStudies.pdf), last accessed 1 March 2017. This is a revised version of S. Best, ‘The rise of critical animal studies: putting theory into action and animal liberation into higher education’, *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 7, 1 (2009): 9–52.
- 2 B. Breen, ‘Animal history: an emerging scholarly trend’, 29 October 2014, available at <https://daily.jstor.org/animals-in-the-archive/>, last accessed 1 March 2017.
- 3 For history courses within Human–Animal Studies (HAS), see [www.animalsandsociety.org/human-animal-studies/courses/has-courses-in-history](http://www.animalsandsociety.org/human-animal-studies/courses/has-courses-in-history), last accessed 1 March 2017, and H-Animal’s syllabus exchange, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/16560/pages/27594/h-animal-syllabus-exchange>, last accessed 1 March 2017.
- 4 J. Specht, ‘Animal history after its triumph: unexpected animals, evolutionary approaches, and the animal lens’, *History Compass* 14, 7 (2016): 326–336.
- 5 Specht, ‘Animal history after its triumph’.
- 6 For example, N. Taylor and R. Twine, *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*, London: Routledge, 2014; ‘edging towards the mainstream’ is how Harriet Ritvo expressed it before over a decade of subsequent progress: H. Ritvo, ‘Animal planet’, *Environmental History* 9, 2 (2004): 204–220, 205.

- 7 For further discussion of the humanities, see A.V. Kernan (ed.), *What's Happened to the Humanities?*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014; C. Emmeche, D.B. Pedersen, and F. Stjernfelt (eds.) *Mapping Frontier Research in the Humanities*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016; M.C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- 8 Specht, 'Animal history after its triumph'.
- 9 Specht, 'Animal history after its triumph', 331.
- 10 E. Fudge, 'What was it like to be a cow? History and animal studies', in L. Kalof (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 258–278.
- 11 Fudge, 'What was it like to be a cow?'.
- 12 V. Despret, *What Might Animals Say if We Asked the Right Questions?*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- 13 Here is Fukuyama's gloss on Hegel's argument: 'only man is able to overcome his most basic animal instincts – chief among them his instinct for self-preservation – for the sake of higher, abstract principles and goals. According to Hegel, the desire for recognition initially drives two primordial combatants to seek to make the other "recognise" their humanness by staking their lives in a mortal battle. When the natural fear of death leads one combatant to submit, the relationship of master and slave is born. The stakes in this bloody battle at the beginning of history are not food, shelter, or security, but pure prestige. And precisely because the goal of the battle is not determined by biology, Hegel sees in it the first glimmer of human freedom': F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Penguin, 2012, xvi.
- 14 On the general academic landscape, see T. Becher and P. Trowler, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*, second edition, Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2001.
- 15 R. Boddice, 'The moral status of animals and the historical human cachet', *JAC* 30, 3/4 (2010): 457–489, 457, 458; P. Eitler, 'Animal history as body history: four suggestions from a genealogical perspective', *Body Politics* 2, 4 (2014): 259–274, 271, n. 36.
- 16 R. White, 'Environmental history: watching a historical field mature', *Pacific Historical Review* 70, 1 (2001): 103–111; P.S. Sutter, 'The world with us: the state of American environmental history', *Journal of American History* 100, 1 (2013): 94–119. See also J.R. McNeill, 'Observations on the nature and culture of environmental history', *History and Theory* 42, 4 (2003): 5–43.
- 17 S. Sörlin and P. Warde, 'The problem of the problem of environmental history: a re-reading of the field', *Environmental History* 12, 1 (2007): 107–130; see also D.R. Weiner (2005) 'A death-defying attempt to articulate a coherent definition of environmental history', *Environmental History* 10, 3 (2005): 404–420. An alternative prospectus for 'environmental history' is provided by J.W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*, London: Verso, 2015.
- 18 Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 39.
- 19 J.R. McNeill, 'Introduction' in J.R. Richards, *The World Hunt: An Environmental History of the Commodification of Animals*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2014, xi–xix, xviii. For a more welcoming response, see B.L. Walker, 'Animals and the intimacy of history', *History and Theory* 52, 4 (2013): 45–67.
- 20 See H. Ritvo, 'On the animal turn', *Daedalus* (Fall, 2007): 118–122, 121–122: 'Within my own experience as a scholar, the study of animals has become more respectable and more popular in many disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, but it is far from the recognized core of any of them. It remains marginal in most disciplines, and (not the same thing) it is often on the borderline between disciplines. This awkward location or set of locations is, however, the source of much of its appeal and power. Its very marginality

- allows the study of animals to challenge settled assumptions and relationships – to re-raise the largest issues – both within the community of scholars and in the larger society to which they and their subjects belong’.
- 21 S. Nance, ‘Introduction’, in S. Nance (ed.), *The Historical Animal*, Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015: 1–16, 3.
  - 22 D. Vandersommers, ‘The “animal turn” in history’, *AHA Today*, 3 November 2016, available at <http://blog.historians.org/2016/11/animal-turn-history/>, last accessed 7 March 2017.
  - 23 See for instance N. Russell, *Social Zooarcheology: Humans and Animals in Prehistory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; M.C. Tobias and J.G. Morrison, *Anthrozoology: Embracing Coexistence in the Anthropocene*, Cham: Springer, 2017; J. Wolch and J. Emel (eds.), *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity in the Nature–Culture Borderlands*, London: Verso, 2000; C. Philo and C. Wilbert (eds.), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human–Animal Relations*, London: Routledge, 2000.
  - 24 S. Swart, “‘But where’s the bloody horse?’ Textuality and corporeality in the “animal turn””, *Journal of Literary Studies* 23, 3 (2007): 271–292, 287–288. For further critical appraisal, see A. Barry and G. Born (eds.), *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.
  - 25 Just as a relatively random example: J. Bondeson, *The Cat Orchestra and the Elephant Butler: The Strange History of Amazing Animals*, Stroud: Tempus, 2006.
  - 26 Again merely for example: A. Macgregor, *Animal Encounters: Human and Animal Interaction in Britain from the Norman Conquest to World War One*, London: Reaktion, 2012.
  - 27 H. Velten, *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City*, London: Reaktion, 2013. See also C. Plumb, *The Georgian Menagerie: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century London*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2015. More ambitious and satisfying in its discussion of urban ‘sorting’ and ‘blending’ is F.L. Brown, *The City is More than Human: An Animal History of Seattle*, Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2016.
  - 28 D. Ingram, C. Sethna and J. Dean, ‘Introduction: *canamalia urbanis*’, in J. Dean, D. Ingram, and C. Sethna (eds.), *Animal Metropolis: Histories of Human–Animal Relations in Urban Canada*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017, 1–28, 12.
  - 29 Reviews of P. Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain*, Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015 by P. Macadré, *Journal of British Studies* 56(1): 202–204, 204, and by D.A.H. Wilson, *Anthrozoös* 29, 1 (2016): 171–172, 172.
  - 30 C. Wolfe, ‘Introduction’ in C. Wolfe (ed.) *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, ix–xxxiii.
  - 31 C. Wolfe, ‘Human, all too human: “animal studies” and the humanities’, *PMLA* 124, 2 (2009): 564–575.
  - 32 C. Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 123, emphasis in original. In the previous iteration of this argument (Wolfe, ‘Human, all too human’, 572) history is accompanied by literary criticism in his challenge to readers to choose between humanism and posthumanism.
  - 33 See in this volume, my own chapter, ‘Animals, agency, and history’.
  - 34 G. Goodale, *The Rhetorical Invention of Man: A History of Distinguishing Humans from Other Animals*, Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2015.
  - 35 E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. This argument chimes with Boria Sax’s commentary on Pico della Mirandola in the conclusions to his chapter in this volume.
  - 36 E.L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 12.
  - 37 As even the partisan Rosi Braidotti points out (*The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity, 2013, 50), there are many ‘humanisms’. For environmental, ecological and geo-humanities, see



- the programmatic statements of D.B. Rose *et al.* 'Thinking through the environment, unsettling the humanities', *Environmental Humanities* 1, 1 (2012): 1–5; M. Dear, 'Practicing geohumanities', *GeoHumanities* 1, 1 (2015): 20–35; N. Castree, 'The Anthropocene and the environmental humanities: extending the conversation', *Environmental Humanities* 5, 1 (2014): 233–260. See also V. Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, London: Routledge, 2002.
- 38 M. Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2015, 26.
- 39 B. Fagan, *The Intimate Bond: How Animals Shaped Human History*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015, xvii, xi.
- 40 Fagan, *The Intimate Bond*, xi. Similar reservations might be held about an earlier work on domestication, R.A. Caras's *A Perfect Harmony: The Intertwining Lives of Animals and Humans Throughout History*, West Lafayette IN: Purdue University Press, 1996; his conception of the 'intertwined' history of 'these two children of Earth' (19) is undermined by its peculiar title, which hardly suggests a critical stance, all this despite its author being a noted animal welfare advocate in the United States.
- 41 R. Boddice, *A History of Attitudes and Behaviours Toward Animals in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain: Anthropocentrism and the Emergence of Animals*, Lewiston NY: The Edward Mellen Press, 2008.
- 42 A. Linzey, 'A sense of history', *The Animals' Agenda* 20, 2 (2000): 39.
- 43 Boddice, 'The Moral Status of Animals', 476. See also R. Preece, *Brute Souls, Happy Beasts and Evolution: The Historical Status of Animals*, Vancouver BC: UBC Press, 2005.
- 44 See Boddice, *A History of Attitudes and Behaviours*.
- 45 See for instance: [www.bedlamfarm.com/2017/01/19/animal-myths-animal-rights-animal-welfare-what-are-animals-for/](http://www.bedlamfarm.com/2017/01/19/animal-myths-animal-rights-animal-welfare-what-are-animals-for/), last accessed 7 March 2017.
- 46 [www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/ICAnimalStudies.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/ICAnimalStudies.htm), last accessed 7 March 2017.
- 47 Best, 'Rise (and fall) of critical animal studies'.
- 48 'Contradictory ideas and deliberate obfuscation': J. Sorensen, 'Introduction: thinking the unthinkable', in J. Sorensen (ed.), *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2014, xi–xxxiv, xvii.
- 49 Sorensen, 'Introduction', xix. See also Taylor and Twine, *Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, and D. McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2013.
- 50 H. Pedersen, 'Release the moths: Critical Animal Studies and the posthumanist impulse', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 52, 1 (2011): 65–81, 75, emphasis in original.
- 51 Wolfe, 'Human, all too human', 567.
- 52 An alternative approach to 'intellectual history', albeit convoluted, is provided by D. LaCapra, *History and its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- 53 S. Macintyre and A. Clark, *The History Wars*, Carlton VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2004; D.G. Boyce and A. O'Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, London: Routledge, 2006; A. Murray, *The Imperial Controversy: Challenging the Empire Apologists*, Croydon: Manifesto Press, 2009.
- 54 See for instance S. Wolf, 'Beyond nonhuman animal rights: a grassroots movement in Istanbul and its alignment with other causes', *Interface* 1, 7 (2015): 40–69; N. Frambuesa, 'Intersectionality and the privilege of white vegan men', available at <http://ninaframbuesa.weebly.com/ninaframbuesa/intersectionality-and-the-privilege-of-white-vegan-men>, last accessed 4 March 2017.
- 55 R. Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy, Ecopedagogy, and Planetary Crisis: The Ecopedagogy Movement*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

- 56 T.G. Andrews, 'Contemplating animal histories: pedagogy and politics across borders', *Radical History Review* 107 (2010): 139–165, 151–152.
- 57 Andrews, 'Contemplating animal histories', 151–152.
- 58 Andrews, 'Contemplating animal histories', 152. See also C.G. Boggs, *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 33.
- 59 Nance, *Historical Animal*, 16.
- 60 See for instance D. Domínguez, 'At the intersection of animal and area studies: fostering Latin Americanist and Caribbeanist animal studies', *Humanimalia* 8, 1 (2016), available at [www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/issue%2015/dominguez-a.html](http://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/issue%2015/dominguez-a.html), last accessed 7 March 2017.
- 61 M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. P. Putnam, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, 57.
- 62 C.S. Brown, *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present*, New York: New Press, 2008; D. Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004; F. Spier, *Big History and the Future of Humanity*, London, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
- 63 For such 'megahistory', consider J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies*, revised edition, New York: Norton, 2005, or Y.N. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind*, London: Vintage, 2011. For consilience see E.O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, London: Abacus, 1999.
- 64 P. Harrison and I. Hesketh, 'Introduction: evolution and historical explanation', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 58 (2016): 1–7, 6.
- 65 Best, 'Rise (and fall) of critical animal studies'.
- 66 P. Harrison, 'What was historical about natural history? Contingency and explanation in the science of living things', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 58 (2016): 8–16, 12–13.
- 67 Swart, "'But where's the bloody horse?"; J. Burt, 'Invisible histories: primate bodies and the rise of posthumanism in the twentieth century', in T. Tyler and M.S. Rossini (eds.), *Animal Encounters*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 159–170; S. Nance, *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus*, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- 68 See J. Balcombe, *What a Fish Knows: The Inner Lives of Our Underwater Cousins*, London: Oneworld, 2016; J. Ackerman, *The Genius of Birds: The Intelligent Life of Birds*, London: Corsair, 2016; R. Coppinger and L. Coppinger, *What is a Dog?*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- 69 See for instance Despret, *What Would Animals Say*; D. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, New York: Routledge, 1989; B. Latour, 'A well-articulated primatology: reflexions of a fellow-traveler', in S.C. Strum and L.M. Fedigan (eds.), *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000, 358–381.
- 70 See here, in general argument, D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003, but also, as specific if diverse examples: E. Benson, *Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern Wildlife*, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010; R. De Bont, *Stations in the Field: A History of Place-based Animal Research, 1870–1930*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015; A. Guerrini, *The Courtiers' Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV's Paris*, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 2015.
- 71 J. Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. D. Wills, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

- 72 Eitler, 'From animal history to body history', 272.
- 73 Eitler, 'From animal history to body history', 273–274.
- 74 T. Ingold and G. Palsson (eds.), *Biosocial Becomings: Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- 75 Fudge, 'What was it like to be a cow?', 22.
- 76 Eitler, 'Animal History as Body History', 262.
- 77 I.H. Tague, *Animal Companions: Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Philadelphia PA: Penn State University Press, 2015, 9.
- 78 Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 48; Moore admittedly does not himself favour the term 'big history'.
- 79 A. Mikhail, *Under Osman's Tree: The Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Environmental History*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017, 150.
- 80 Eitler, 'Animal history as body history', 261.
- 81 E. Benson, 'Animal writes: historiography, disciplinarity, and the animal trace', in L. Kalof and G.M. Montgomery (eds.), *Making Animal Meaning*, East Lansing MI: Michigan State University Press, 2011, 5.

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# EPILOGUE

*Harriet Ritvo*

It has become commonplace to notice that the range of respectable subjects for humanistic scholarship has expanded over the last century or so. Other animals are (so far) the latest beneficiaries of this increasingly generous vision, with species thus following (as usual) in the wake of class, race, gender, and other axes of human differentiation. An analogous democratising tendency has also been manifest within the animal kingdom. Attention has transpired through the phylogenetic tree (or bush), so that scholarly scrutiny, which at first lingered on the charismatic megafauna who grace the logos of wildlife conservation societies and the equally charismatic (though smaller) domestic companions who represent humane advocacy organisations, now extends to such invertebrate fellow creatures as ants, octopi, and leeches. Or at least it does so in the most expansive reaches of multispecies ethnography and animal studies (a field that overlaps with animal history, although perhaps not as completely as the label might suggest). As the contributions to this volume show, most historians have tended to stick closer to taxonomic home, restricting their analyses to other vertebrates, other mammals, or other primates.

There are good reasons for this relatively (though far from absolutely) modest zoological reach, which reflects divergent disciplinary conventions regarding evidence and argument. But divergence does not signal indifference; as the names of subfields such as economic history and the history of technology indicate, historians routinely incorporate the insights offered and approaches offered by other disciplines. This volume demonstrates that animal–human historians are at least as open-minded as their colleagues. About a third of its chapters were contributed by scholars of geography, literary and cultural studies, and art history, and many of the chapters written by historians also engage issues raised by work in these ancillary fields or in the interdisciplinary field of animal studies. The most complex and intractable of these issues are theoretical, including the nature of agency, the consequences of representation, and the ineluctability of anthropomorphism. Such discussions tend to consider non-human animals in the abstract, so, somewhat paradoxically, the more intense they become, the less room there is for animals in the flesh. Consequently, in addition to their explicitly



theoretical concerns, they implicitly broach a very pragmatic problem: how to ensure that animals themselves play a prominent role in animal history.

In a sense, of course, this concern reflects an issue inherent in the attempt to integrate non-human subjects into historical accounts that rely heavily on records written, or otherwise produced, by people (they have independent histories too, but those are usually retrieved by paleontologists and archaeozoologists); this is an extreme version of the challenges posed by attempts to retrieve the experience of humans who left relatively faint traces in the historical record. The contributions point to several possible solutions. Some, like Michael Guida's exploration of the role played by broadcast birdsong in twentieth-century Britain, offer concrete and focused examples. Others, like Liv Emma Thorsen's survey of the evidence provided by natural history museums, describe ways to expand the conventional range of historical sources. And a few, like Abigail Woods' discussion of the history of medicine, veterinary and otherwise, explicitly address the difficulty of decentering the human, even within work ostensibly focused on other animals.

The contributions also show that choices inevitably have negative as well as positive aspects; there is always at least one road not taken. The range of approaches that they illustrate is wide, but far from exhaustive. The decision to interrogate generalisations requires de-emphasis of the concrete; a focus on the richness and complexity of artistic representation can obscure the value of other kinds of sources. Animal-human history extends far beyond the North Atlantic rim, and long before the last two centuries. And interdisciplinarily inclined though they are, historians (other than historians of science and environmental historians) seem less likely to incorporate insights from science into their work, than insights from more closely allied areas. Thus Woods' essay is one of only three in this collection (the others are Robert Kirk's discussion of laboratory animals and the treatment of breeding by Neil Pemberton, Julie-Marie Strange, and Michael Worboys) to draw heavily on the non-humanistic disciplines mostly closely concerned with animals – zoology, veterinary medicine, natural history, environmental science, and agricultural science.

Such lacunae point to opportunities. At the same time that the essays collected here demonstrate the multiple disciplinary linkages of animal-human history, as well as, in their texts and their notes, the impressive work that has already been produced, they also demonstrate that many connections remain to be explored – many surfaces have only been scratched. Thus, although its historiography has become very lively and rich, the field is still opening up.