



FORUM: HUMANS AND OTHER SPECIES

Alex Blanchette

Tufts University
110 Braker Hall, 8 Upper Campus Road, Medford, MA, USA
alex.blanchette@tufts.edu

Elena Bogdanova

Independent researcher
Helsinki, Finland
bogdanova.nova@gmail.com

Anastasia Fedotova

St Petersburg branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology, RAS
5/2 Universitetskaya Emb., St Petersburg, Russia
f.anastasia.spb@gmail.com

Carole Ferret

Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale CNRS / Collège de France /
École des hautes études en sciences sociales
52 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, Paris, France
carole.ferret@college-de-france.fr

Mark D. Hersey

Mississippi State University
208 Allen Hall, Starkville, MS, USA
mhersey@history.msstate.edu

Anna Mazanik

Munich, Germany
anya.mazanik@gmail.com

Mark Mefed

Independent researcher
Balashikha, Russia
fleainmyhead@gmail.com

Eva Meijer

University of Amsterdam
145 Oude Turfmarkt, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
e.r.meijer@uva.nl

Henrietta Mondry

University of Canterbury
20 Kirkwood Ave., Upper Riccarton, Christchurch, New Zealand
henrietta.mondry@canterbury.ac.nz

Elena Nikiforova

Independent researcher
Helsinki, Finland
elenikifor@gmail.com

Tamar Novick

Technical University of Munich
21 Arcisstraße, Munich, Germany
tamar.novick@tum.de

Stepan Petryakov

European University at St Petersburg
6/1A Gagarinskaya Str., St Petersburg, Russia
spetryakov@eu.spb.ru

Maria Pirogovskaya

Munich, Germany
adeyanova@gmail.ru



Milena Pugina

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, St Petersburg State University
58–60 Galernaya Str., St Petersburg, Russia
milenapugina.ru@gmail.com

Lidiya Rakhmanova

HSE University
123A Griboedov Channel Emb., St Petersburg, Russia
muza-spb@yandex.ru

John Sanbonmatsu

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA, USA
js@wpi.edu

Julia Shanina

Karelian Scientific Centre
11 Pushkinskaya Str., Petrozavodsk, Russia
ishanina@eu.spb.ru

Drew Swanson

Georgia Southern University
Interdisciplinary Academic Building, Statesboro, GA, USA
dswanson@georgiasouthern.edu

Alexandra Terekhina

Arctic Research Station of Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology,
Ural Branch of RAS
21 Zelenaya gorka Str., Labytnangi, Russia
terekhina.yamal@gmail.com

Maxim Vinarski

St Petersburg State University
7/9 Universitetskaya Emb., St Petersburg, Russia
St Petersburg branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology, RAS
5/2 Universitetskaya Emb., St Petersburg, Russia
radix.vinarski@gmail.com

Alexandr Volkovitskiy

Arctic Research Station of Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology, Ural Branch of RAS
21 Zelenaya gorka Str., Labytnangi, Russia
alvolkovitskiy@gmail.com

Aleksandra Zakharova

European University at St Petersburg
6/1A Gagarinskaya, St Petersburg, Russia
azakharova@eu.spb.ru

Oksana Zaporozhets

The Georg-Simmel Center for Urban Studies, Humboldt University
6 Unter den Linden, Berlin, Germany
oksana.zaporozhetc@hu-berlin.de

Abstract: Studies of more-than-human sociality in general, and multispecies ethnography in particular, are becoming an increasingly popular trend in global (social, human, and transdisciplinary) scholarship. In the current forum, researchers from various disciplines discuss the advantages, limitations, and challenges of this trend. They also share their thoughts on why multispecies research has (or has not) an appeal in Russian academia and what the future may hold for it. The discussion addresses the key issues of the origin of this trend and its distinctive vocabulary; the subject and object problem; the search for an appropriate methodology and elaborating a scholarly narrative; interdisciplinarity and the relationship between political activism and research.

The original Russian publication also included contributions from Varvara Baholdina, Lomonosov Moscow State University; Ian Helfant, Colgate University; Stepan Kalinin, International Slavic Institute, Moscow, Russia; Frédéric Keck, Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, CNRS / Collège de France / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, France; Olga Korovkina, independent researcher, Moscow, Russia; Vladimir Korshunkov, Vyatka State University, Kirov, Russia; Olga Kosheleva, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia; Ekaterina (Katya) Krylova, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand; Irina Podgorny, CONICET / Archivo Historico del Museo de La Plata UNLP, La Plata, Argentina; Denis Sivkov, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow, Russia, and The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka), Moscow, Russia; Sergei Sokolovskiy, Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia; Anna Varfolomeeva, Independent



researcher, Oulu, Finland; Grigorij Vinokurov, European University at St Petersburg, St Petersburg, Russia, and Higher School of Economics University, St Petersburg, Russia.

Keywords: more-than-human sociality, multispecies ethnography, animal turn, Anthropocene, interdisciplinarity.

Acknowledgments:

Julia Shanina's material is produced within the framework of the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education program (the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences) "Cultural heritage of Karelia and historical experience: new approaches and interpretations," 124022000029-0.

Alexandra Terekhina and Alexandr Volkovitskiy's material is produced within the framework of the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education program "Terrestrial ecosystem of Northwestern Siberia: assessment of the modern transformation of the communities," 122021000089-9.

To cite: 'Forum: Humans and Other Species', *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, 2025, no. 21, pp. 11–128.

doi: 10.31250/1815-8870-2025-21-21-11-128

URL: <http://anthropologie.kunstkamera.ru/files/pdf/eng021/forum.pdf>

Participants

Alex Blanchette (Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA)

Elena Bogdanova (Independent researcher, Helsinki, Finland)

Anastasia Fedotova (St Petersburg branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology, RAS, St Petersburg, Russia)

Carole Ferret (Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, CNRS / Collège de France / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, France)

Mark D. Hersey (Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA)

Anna Mazanik (Munich, Germany)

Mark Mefed (Independent researcher, Balashikha, Russia)

Eva Meijer (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Henrietta Mondry (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand)

Elena Nikiforova (Independent researcher, Helsinki, Finland)

Tamar Novick (Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany)

Stepan Petryakov (European University at St Petersburg / SI RAS — FCTAS RAS, St Petersburg, Russia)

Maria Pirogovskaya (Munich, Germany)

Milena Pugina (Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, St Petersburg State University, St Petersburg, Russia)

Lidiya Rakhmanova (HSE University, St Petersburg, Russia)

John Sanbonmatsu (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA, USA)

Julia Shanina (Karelian Scientific Centre, Petrozavodsk, Russia)

Drew Swanson (Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA, USA)

Alexandra Terekhina (Arctic Research Station of Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology, Ural Branch of RAS, Labytnangi, Russia)

Maxim Vinarski (St Petersburg State University, St Petersburg, Russia / St Petersburg branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology, RAS, St Petersburg, Russia)

Alexandr Volkovitskiy¹ (Arctic Research Station of Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology, Ural Branch of RAS, Labytnangi, Russia)

Aleksandra Zakharova (European University at St Petersburg / SI RAS — FCTAS RAS, St Petersburg, Russia)

Oksana Zaporozhets (Georg-Simmel Center for Urban Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany)

¹ This is the author's preferred spelling.

Humans and Other Species

Studies of more-than-human sociality in general, and multispecies ethnography in particular, are becoming an increasingly popular trend in global (social, human, and transdisciplinary) scholarship. In the current forum, researchers from various disciplines discuss the advantages, limitations, and challenges of this trend. They also share their thoughts on why multispecies research has (or has not) an appeal in Russian academia and what the future may hold for it. The discussion addresses the key issues of the origin of this trend and its distinctive vocabulary; the subject and object problem; the search for an appropriate methodology and elaborating a scholarly narrative; interdisciplinarity and the relationship between political activism and research.

The original Russian publication also included contributions from **Varvara Baholdina** Lomonosov Moscow State University; **Ian Helfant**, Colgate University; **Stepan Katinin**, International Slavic Institute, Moscow, Russia; **Frédéric Keck**, Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, CNRS / Collège de France / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, France; **Olga Korovkina**, independent researcher, Moscow, Russia; **Vladimir Korshunkov**, Vyatka State University, Kirov, Russia; **Olga Kosheleva**, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia; **Ekaterina (Katya) Krylova**, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand; **Irina Podgorny**, CONICET / Archivo Historico del Museo de La Plata-UNLP, La Plata, Argentina; **Denis Sivkov**, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow, Russia, and The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka), Moscow, Russia; **Sergei Sokolovskiy**, Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia; **Anna Varfolomeeva**, Independent researcher, Oulu, Finland; **Grigoriy Vinokurov**, European University at St Petersburg, St Petersburg, Russia, and Higher School of Economics University, St Petersburg, Russia.

Keywords: more-than-human sociality, multispecies ethnography, animal turn, Anthropocene, interdisciplinarity.

QUESTIONS FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

By its very etymology, the term ‘anthropology’ suggests that the focus of research is on human beings. Yet for all that, the various fields of anthropology have not excluded attention to other members of the natural world, from primates within biological anthropology to animals, fungi, and plants that participate in some capacity in human culture. Lewis Henry Morgan, one of the discipline’s co-founders, described the engineering activities of beavers, and Edward Evans-Pritchard devoted many pages to the relationship between the Nuer people of Sudan and their cattle, as well as to the principles of categorization that group humans with other creatures [Morgan 1868; Evans-Pritchard 1940]. ‘Natural species are chosen not because they are “good to eat” but because they are “good to think,”’ this aphorism by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his work on totemism stated the importance of animals to anthropologists who studied their role in myths, taxonomies, rituals, and social institutions [Lévi-Strauss 1991 (1962): 89]. A key question that emerged, in particular through the study of shamanism and vernacular ontologies, was the question of the boundary between humans and other beings, and the problems of interspecies

communication as well as the construction of the self and community associated with this boundary-making [Hamayon 1990; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Conklin 2001; Willerslev 2007].

In the 2000s, a growing critique of the unbalanced relationship between humans and other animals [Ritvo 1987] as well as skepticism about human exceptionalism led to the *species turn* in global anthropology. Expanding the horizons of social research, scholars have chosen to focus not only on humans but also on other representatives of wildlife and their tensions and entanglements, addressing ecological niches, networks, rhizomes, symbiosis, and interspecific alliances, and introducing a new method of *multispecies ethnography* [Kirksey, Helmreich 2010]. Besides Eduardo Kohn's "anthropology of life" and his critique of anthropocentrism [Kohn 2013], the *species turn* has borne fruit such as studies of the connections between humans and insects [Raffles 2010] or the interdependence of humans and matsutake mushrooms [Tsing 2015]. It has influenced discussions of classical problems of anthropology, such as subject and subjectivity, social hierarchy, morality, ecological imagination, political economy, etc. [Govindrajan 2018; Blanchette 2020].

In the current issue of the *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, we would like to discuss what the inclusion of other species in our focus, along with the methods of multispecies ethnography, offers anthropology, how this issue affects the future of the social sciences, and what complexities and challenges it poses for researchers. We invited participants in the "Forum" to respond to the following questions:

- 1 *Have you ever studied the relationships between humans and other species? Do you observe any changes in the study of these relationships in current scholarship, or are the approaches in your field unchanged? What interspecies interactions (neighboring, cooperating, exploiting, ignoring) do academics in the field of anthropology that you are familiar with discuss, and which ones are needlessly overlooked? Which living things can be productively introduced into the study?*
- 2 *In your opinion, what is the main task of multispecies ethnography and research on relationships between humans and other species? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such research? Can anthropologists benefit from the experience of scholars from other fields of knowledge (natural sciences, philosophy, literature, art) or from interdisciplinary approaches?*
- 3 *How can we most effectively explore a social world not limited to human relations? How can anthropological work "lend a voice" to animals, plants, fungi, viruses (those who in English-language literature are referred to by the term "nonhumans")? Are new methods needed for such research?*

- 4 Why are interspecies studies less popular in the Russian context in comparison with global trends in anthropology? In what direction are they currently developing and what can they bring to anthropology as a whole?
- 5 How can we separate scholarship and political activism in the study of human-animal relations? Is it possible?

References

- Blanchette A., *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020, 320 pp.
- Conklin B. A., *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001, XXXI+285 pp.
- Evans-Pritchard E. E., *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, VIII+271 pp.
- Govindrajana R., *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018, 256 pp.
- Hamayon R. N., *La chasse à l'âme. Esquisse d'une théorie du chamanisme sibérien*. Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie, 1990, 878 pp.
- Kirksey S. E., Helmreich S., 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, 2010, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 545–576. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x.
- Kohn E., *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*. Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 2013, 288 pp.
- Lévi-Strauss C., *Totemism*, trans. by R. Needham. London: Merklin Press, 1991, 116 pp.
- Morgan L. H., *The American Beaver and His Works*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Company, 1868, 330 pp.
- Raffles H., *Insectopedia*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010, 465 pp.
- Ritvo H., *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. London; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987, 368 pp.
- Tsing A. L., *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 352 pp.
- Viveiros de Castro E., 'Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1998, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 469–488.
- Willerslev R., *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, XVI+229 pp.

ALEX BLANCHETTE

1 When I was reading these questions, I was surprised to find myself thinking about linen and coats.

In his 1998 essay, “Marx’s Coat”, the literary historian Peter Stallybrass asked why academic culture is so dismissive of people’s attachments to material, physical things [Stallybrass 1998]. Recounting a miniature history of Karl Marx’s dependence on his overcoat, which he was constantly forced to pawn to afford life’s necessities, Stallybrass reminded readers that the notion of commodity fetishism was not a critique of people’s desire for possessions or material relations, but instead a critique of a social system that organises itself around the objectification of human effort. Marx’s notion of the commodity fetish was an indictment of capitalism as the most abstract society to ever exist. Those of us dwelling amidst industrialism may think that we are clear-minded materialists pursuing tangible things and real values. But this churn, transformation, and movement of the planet’s crust and lifeforms is all animated by the insatiable chase after culturally projected, fantasy symbols of human time, energy, and creativity [Graeber 2013].

Alex Blanchette
Tufts University,
Medford, MA, USA
alex.blanchette@tufts.edu

Most of my research revolves around labour, capitalism, and interspecies relations on American factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses. I have written a book based on ethnographic research within some of the world's largest hog breeding farms, confinement facilities, and carcass processing factories in the United States, places where over six million animals are annually birthed, raised, and killed [Blanchette 2020]. It was about the transformations to human being necessary to mass-produce animal life and death. I am currently researching another book about workers' creative efforts to quit these operations — on their often-quiet, sometimes loud dreams of refusal and escape from body-breaking, violent spaces [Blanchette 2021]. The question I would ask is this: what does the study of these sites *without* multispecies sympathies and sensibilities look like? I think it was Timothy Pachirat who mused that there is a curious quality to some early writing on slaughterhouses [Pachirat 2011]: many profound, rigorous, and important worker-centered studies nonetheless leave the reader with the impression that the analysis could be easily transposed to a tyre, garment, or electronics factory. Struggles over racial hierarchy play out on the shop floor, forms of class coercion and resistance duel, and clues as to the evolving nature of accumulation in capitalism reveal themselves. Of course, those processes of power and exploitation really happen in slaughterhouses, often in more intensified ways than in other worksites. They are indispensable. But it feels to me like an unnecessary abstraction to reduce a factory designated for animal death into a generic setting for elaborating modes of human sociocultural difference alone.

If, to be real anthropologists, we must analyse making pig carcasses, automobile tires, and linen coats as just the production of interchangeable “things,” then I struggle to see how our discipline is not a mirror image of capitalism's commodity fetish — chasing after abstracted, reified images of human effort. Perhaps more importantly, hardly anyone that I met on the floor of a factory farm or a slaughterhouse felt they were just producing interchangeable commodities. Most knew they were breeding, drugging, feeding, and cutting complex, sensate, and sentient organisms. And the majority of people felt that what they were tasked with doing — or, at the least, the way they were tasked with doing it — was deeply wrong.

I articulate this with a certain stridency because I was myself a product of a similar kind of ethos. In 2009, before becoming engaged with an array of perspectives and sympathies that get labeled multispecies ethnography, I started what would become some 38 months of ethnographic research on factory farming. I think I told myself something to the effect that I was going to study peoples' values and aspirations for a better life from within the belly of the beast. A key question I often asked people was simple: what would make their

working lives better? The question seemed to annoy my friends in hog confinement barns, or in conversations with slaughterhouse employees in bars. It took me a while, and a lot of unlearning, to begin to understand why. The question perhaps implies that one *can* make these worksites satisfying — that factory farms can be redeemed in some way — or that people’s identities are reducible to their work, and that they would continue to work in similar operations in an ideal world. But the truth is that most people did not want to be defined as doing this kind of work, or even be reduced to “workers.” Most probably felt that it would be better if these kinds of worksites did not exist at all.

More to the point, I emerged from factory farms convinced that we cannot separate industrial violence to animals, and the exploitation of human workers, as two distinct issues. Most studies of agribusiness seem to explicitly or implicitly suggest that we need to take either a workerist or animalist “side,” and develop our analyses from that one perspective. However, the fact is that an industrial pig is an organism that has simultaneously been shaped to work, and is continuously being made subject to new kinds of human labour [Wadiwel 2023]. Being killed and being exploited are clearly different things, but they are nonetheless conjoined. Even the pig genetics that a company opts to use, and the relative quantity of work required to keep the resulting offspring alive, are inseparable from the cost of labour at any given time. Conversely, maintaining prolific but immuno-fragile strains of hog life requires ever-more intrusive demands of workers’ time and lives. I believe that building worker power is an important ecological project, and animal ethics may provide a vantage point for reimagining the politics of human work.

2

I tell my undergraduate students — most of whom will not identify as anthropologists for their whole lives — that one point of cultural anthropology and ethnography is the pursuit of conceptual specificity, without particularism. Much of the discipline challenges inherited myths and ways of seeing, popular culture’s quick summative appraisals, by engaging ongoing lives in ways that make the public stories we are told ring hollow or seem restrictive [Bessire 2021]. Even challenging the little commonsensical quips that some might take for granted, but which shape senses of social realism and possibility. I came to the study of workers, pigs, agribusiness with a lot of those quips bouncing in my head — and they quickly evaporated within the barns themselves. For instance, “The pig is just an instinctual, programmed being.” A factory farm that operated under this assumption would fall apart quickly, if it could not learn to accommodate and engage animal variation and difference. Or, “The factory farm is a site of human domination over animals.” No, it is much better to say that factory farms are capitalist sites that transform pigs’ lives into vessels for the domination and exploitation

of other human beings. Alternatively, “Workers in agribusiness are deskilled laborers who just treat pigs like inanimate widgets.” The people that I met worked hard to try to care for pigs *in spite* of the brutality of these conditions, to become knowledgeable enough to try to limit their suffering even if it is ultimately a futile task. Indeed, my own experiences suggest that the fragility of modern pig genetics, and capitalist demands on species’ growth, are at the point where the system may verge on ruination if it was not for workers’ care.

One further thing I will say is that it may seem intuitive to prioritise biology, applied ethology, and the natural sciences in these discussions as ways to get at the “real” animal. These kinds of knowledge could be important under many situations — I am not reducing this to an either/or orientation. John Hartigan’s effort to synthesise horse ethology and certain anthropological approaches to ritual [Hartigan 2020], to give but one example, is stunningly insightful and sympathetic to other lives. But in the very specific contexts where I research, it was helpful for me to think about how breeding sows, whom I was made to intimately touch for hours per day in an insemination barn, may well act in entirely different ways if they were not locked in tiny cages on the concrete floors of confinement barns. If they could actually turn around, walk, or root in the soil. I am therefore sceptical of any “science” that purports to establish laws of animal behaviour, health, or well-being from within a place like a confinement barn. I would also want to recognise, for instance, that the abstractions of capitalism, militarism, racism, and classism are very real and they have conditioned the breeding and physical, biological reality of pigs. Capitalist pigs are not timeless creatures locked within cages. Like human beings, and much of the rest of the planet, they have been shaped in durable and challenging ways by dominative dictates of racial capitalism.

Some kinds of ethology are important to study animals living or dying on farms. But so is feminist political economy, or queer theory (see, for example: [Weeks 2011; Rosenberg 2017]). On a personal note, I will say that reading the critical labour scholar Harry Braverman’s classic *Labor and Monopoly Capital* [Braverman 1974] taught me as much about unlearning my assumptions of hog nature as did most any farm animal science article. Braverman critiqued how much social knowledge was marshalled under the auspices of so-called scientific management to reduce human beings the world over to industrial workers. Today’s pigs live in the wake of over a century of concerted applied “science” that aims to reduce them to commodities.

3

I am admittedly not that interested in ventriloquising animals — or making them into a new kind of other that requires an advocate to speak for them [cf. Kosek 2010]. Perhaps this is tied to what I wrote

before: even after some 200 hours of sitting on breeding sows' backs, I am not confident that I emerged from factory farms knowing anything positive about the nature of a pig that was not locked in confinement.

There is no doubt a need for new methods that place non-humans more into the centre of social worlds or arenas of concern. New ethics, or at least awareness of ethical dilemmas, also seem crucial. I think of Kathryn Gillespie's [2022] important reflections on whether some forms of ethnographic work should be done at all. As researchers, should we be actively participating in sites characterised by brutal violence against non-humans, doing things that we would avowedly refuse or be barred from doing if the subjects were human? I do not necessarily regret what I did for my first book, for better or worse. But it is striking how seldom I encountered social or institutional discomfort that I received a PhD through participant-observation amidst some of the most gratuitous violence on the planet. Similarly, I would want to join many others in being open to a variety of modalities of interspecies relations beyond those that transpire face-to-face. I am doubtful that I will enter into a barn or slaughterhouse while thinking alongside actual or aspirational agribusiness quitters. But for a lot of people that I know, including people in dire circumstances of poverty, their desires to escape these sites are not *only* matters of self-preservation in the face of pollution or injury in the workplace. They are also rooted in principled refusal to participate in normalised animal abuse. Learning how to talk about that openly with other people, given that we are all the products of cultures that insist that these are "just animals," is one methodological challenge. Thinking about how to make those refusals matter for the lives of animals and rural communities is something that is also puzzling me, of how to help make quitting not an end but also a way of living alongside other beings [Latimer 2013; Giraud 2019; Abrell 2021]. Another is the development of anti-classist methods and forms of writing that make room for a so-called "migrant worker" to be allowed to express care about beings other than themselves or their immediate associates (even if care for self, community, or kin is important).

Lastly, I will just note again that I live in a time, and amidst a public culture, that is obsessed with simplification. Ethnographers have long insisted that the world is more complicated than the summative stories that get recounted in mass media. Amidst the continuous reduction of species, or even all of the animal kingdom, to a series of identical drives and caricatures, I do think that anthropological attention to radical diversity remains crucial. Even within a factory farm, there is no such thing as a generic "pig." There are boars, sows, piglets, and varied breeds of all sorts with distinct living situations and socio-evolutionary histories — in addition, of course,

to differences of temperament within each sub-class. Ethnographers should be as sceptical of the idea of “species” as many are of simplified ideas of “the human” [Arregui 2023].

5

All work that is critical of commonsense knowledge could be political. And the cultural common sense in most places I have lived is to reduce a great diversity of plants and animals to resources. The work to date that I most appreciate has contested such objectification by illuminating the depth of lived relations with more-than-human beings, and, in so doing, articulates different kinds of lived human ethics and attachments [van Dooren 2014; Parreñas 2018; Govindraján 2018; Abrell 2021]. One could call that political, but it is also just scholarship. A point of scholarship is to unsettle taken-for-granted premises.

The more challenging question, I believe, is what kind of scholarship can actually have political effects? What kinds of questions, collaborations, and modes of dissemination might allow our research to have a tangible effect in terms of interrupting the deplorable treatment of all beings — human and otherwise — today? We are living amidst an odd time whereby virtually no one, save perhaps their owners or PR representatives, would agree that things like factory farms are ideal. But their forms and rationalities are expanding globally at a tremendous pace. I personally long for an anthropology — whether one calls it “political,” “activist,” or something else — that might contribute something tangible towards the outright abolition of these relations.

References

- Abrell E., *Saving Animals: Multispecies Ecologies of Rescue and Care*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2021, 272 pp.
- Arregui A. G., ‘Reversible Pigs: An Intraspecies Ethnography of Wild Boars in Barcelona’, *American Ethnologist*, 2023, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 115–128. doi: 10.1111/amet.13114.
- Bessire L., *Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021, 264 pp.
- Blanchette A., *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020, 320 pp.
- Blanchette A., ‘Ending Things, as an End in Itself: Notes on Quitting American Meatpacking’, *Anthropology Now*, 2021, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 73–78. doi: 10.1080/19428200.2021.1903561.
- Braverman H., *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, 475 pp.
- Hartigan J., Jr., *Shaving the Beasts: Wild Horses and Ritual in Spain*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 272 pp.
- Gillespie K., Castro A., DeBruin J., Ferguson K., ‘Studying Other Species: Understanding the Webs of Living’, *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*, 2022, vol. 30, no. 1, article 11.

- Giraud E., *What Comes after Entanglement?: Activism, Anthropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019, 264 pp.
- Govindrajana R., *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 256 pp.
- Graeber D., 'It Is Value That Brings Universes into Being', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2013, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 219–243. doi: 10.14318/hau3.2.012.
- Kosek J., 'Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee', *Cultural Anthropology*, 2010, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 650–678. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01073.x.
- Latimer J., 'Being Alongside: Rethinking Relations Amongst Different Kinds', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2013, vol. 30, no. 7–8, pp. 77–104. doi: 10.1177/0263276413500078.
- Pachirat T., *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*. New Haven, CT: YUP, 2011, 320 pp.
- Parreñas J. S., *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, 288 pp.
- Rosenberg G., 'How Meat Changed Sex: The Law of Interspecies Intimacy after Industrial Reproduction', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2017, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 473–507. doi: 10.1215/10642684-4157487.
- Stallybrass P., 'Marx's Coat', Spyer P. (ed.), *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*. London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 183–207.
- van Dooren T., *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, 208 pp.
- Wadiwel D., *Animals and Capital*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023, 328 pp.
- Weeks K., *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011, 304 pp.

ANASTASIA FEDOTOVA

a) I am a historian, and therefore I shall answer the questions as a historian; b) the questions mention “representatives of other species” in general, not only “other animals”, and accordingly I shall speak of *environmental history*, and not only of *animal history*.

Anastasia Fedotova

St Petersburg branch
of the Institute for the History
of Science and Technology, RAS,
St Petersburg, Russia
f.anastasia.spb@gmail.com

1

I came to environmental history from the history of science, and to that I had come from biology (by training I am a botanist and plant ecologist). Therefore, from the very beginning environmental history seemed to me the most

obvious sphere of research, and I was struck by the absurd ubiquity of the anthropocentric approach. I have constantly been surprised by the extent to which the overwhelming majority of historians do not even imagine any other points of view. What does it mean to say “How interesting, I didn’t know that forests have a history too”?¹ Sorry, dear colleagues, don’t you know that the hypothesis that the world was created seven and half thousand years ago is long out of date? Are you aware that planet Earth and the living organisms on it have existed far longer than man as a species, let alone written culture? How can one construct economic models completely ignoring “non-human” resources? And, if we descend to particularities and to questions closer to anthropology and ethnography, how can one describe the ownership marks on trees from which honey is gathered in the forest, and say nothing about forest beekeeping? Discuss traditional embroidery motifs ignoring the origin of the fibres from which the thread is spun, or the pigments with which they are dyed? Which had the more significant consequences — the activity of a secret lodge, the success of which was confined to secret meetings and the discussion of unachievable projects, or the appearance of a new pest in an important crop, because of which the established techniques in a region had to be substantially changed?² The publication of a literary almanac or the selection of a new breed of cattle?³ Nevertheless, the first and third of these are perfectly respectable and comprehensible topics for academic historiography, unlike the second and fourth. I am, of course, by no means intending to say that all historians completely ignore such questions. Still, it is more than sixty years since *Silent Spring* came out, and nearly forty since *Seeds of Change* [Carson 1962; Hobhouse 1985].

In our attitude to Mother Nature we (scholars in the humanities, obsessed with the anthropocentric approach) behave like a five-year-old who has regularly “got” jars of jam from the pantry, and to whom it finally occurs to wonder how they got there. Eventually he guesses that his mother puts the jars there, and goes into raptures at how clever he is. He shares his insight with the boy next door (who also abstracts jam from the pantry), but the boy next door has no interest in this, he declines to be enraptured by his friend’s intellectual

¹ This comment was made at a presentation of our book on the Białowieża Forest in the nineteenth century [Samojlik et al. 2020]. Of course, my reply at that seminar was much more restrained; I pointed out that in our native historiography there have been good works on such subjects for quite a long time, citing the example of Tsvetkov’s book [Tsvetkov 1957]. My colleagues working on the history of animals and I regularly get comments of this sort from “mainstream” historians, frequently with a deprecatory subtext.

² The introduction of phylloxera into the Old World (together with some other kinds of micropathogen), brought about substantial change in the techniques of viticulture. See, for example: [Badia-Miró et al. 2010; Gale 2011].

³ See, for example, on the merino: [Phillips, Phillips 1997].

capabilities, and wants everyone around to admire the patterns he has made on the wallpaper with the jam.

Which inter-species connections are scholars wrong to ignore? My answer (again as a historian with an education in biology): interaction, and the history of that interaction, with more or less all species is worth studying, since in the present day absolutely all species on earth are forced to interact with us. Of course, there will not be sources in natural history or in the written record for all species. Over the last few decades historians, anthropologists, sociologists and specialists in cultural studies have finally (!) begun to talk a bit about those species that play the most noticeable roles in economics and in the sphere of public health. Hurrah! But that's not enough for me!

Of course, the more significant the role of a species for the economy or for human health, the more chance there is of finding written sources about it, at least indirect ones. The more numerous (and, sometimes, the more massive) a species is, the more chance there is that it will leave behind traces that can be discovered by the methods of archaeology and palaeontology. We can make an approximate evaluation of how the range of the European bison has shrunk over the last two or three thousand years, and for this written, archaeological and palaeontological data are used.¹ We have far fewer opportunities of writing a reliable history of the Russian desman (the visibility of this species, *Desmana moschata*, is much lower, both from the point of view of natural history and from the point of view of economics²), and very little chance at all of describing the anthropogenic contraction of the range of *Saga pedo* (a species of *Orthoptera* included in the Red List).³ With pathogens it depends on other things, but the general sense is clear: being more widespread and more virulent increases the chances of traces being discovered.⁴

The answer to the question of “which living creatures may be productively included in historical research” is obvious — those

¹ In this case I speak of “describing the history of the contraction of the range” in order to distance myself as far as possible from the anthropocentric view of the history of these animals. It goes without saying that historical and anthropological (but not biological) works on bison deal only with the interaction, or the history of the interaction of this species with humanity. The result is a closed circle. We cannot reject the anthropocentric view of animals, because as soon as we move away from it, we find ourselves outside the spheres of anthropology and history.

² The desman was hunted for its musk glands and fur.

³ One can nevertheless make certain suppositions about the anthropogenic contraction in the range of this species, since the main reason for the contraction in the numbers and range of the insect is the destruction of its habitats (steppe ecosystems).

⁴ I would very much like to know when the bison of the Białowieża Forest first began to suffer in large numbers from fasciolosis, but as far as I understand, there are as yet no methods that would allow us to determine whether a bison that lived 150–200 years ago (and there are at least a score of such skeletons and stuffed specimens in zoological museums) had these parasites in its liver, and no one is yet involved in developing such methods.

about which one can find material. Of course, both for discovering and for the qualitative analysis of such material the inclusion of data from the natural sciences and co-operation with colleagues from those spheres are necessary. The greatest number of works (both anthropological and historical) are about domesticated animals, followed by agricultural pests and disease vectors, and species that are hunted. Many interesting works have been written about animals kept in captivity (in zoos, circuses, etc.) and species that are threatened with extinction (particularly so-called *iconic species* — “charismatic” species that play a significant role for the public representation of conservation institutions and undertakings). Another important topic is the deliberate or accidental introduction and reintroduction of living organisms, and also species that through the fault of human beings have become invasive.

Researchers are particularly attracted to those cases when a single species can have a fundamentally different significance for different groups of people, at the same time or successively. For example, from the point of view of a medic many species of rodents in grassland ecosystems are a natural reservoir of a whole range of pathogens, including the plague bacillus; for a farmer these numerous species are agricultural pests; for a herdsman who spends many weeks in the steppe or the mountains, they may be animals to hunt, or sometimes animal companions; for a zoologist they are an object of study, and in recent decades, also an object of conservation.¹

2

We exist almost exclusively by exploiting other species, directly or indirectly; almost all other species of living organism have suffered because we have destroyed and continue to destroy their habitats.² How can we claim to be trying to construct a more or less coherent and consistent (scientific, if you will) picture of our world, if we do not even attempt to include all those species in our model?

If anthropologists and historians want to study “the relationship between people and other animals”, they must have interdisciplinary approaches and expertise in the natural sciences. An uncritical re-telling of their sources, for example, about an invasion of insect pests, is liable to result in more substantial errors than an uncritical re-telling of sources about an invasion of, shall we say, the Huns, if only because in many cases an “invasion” of insect pests is not an invasion at all, but an explosion of the local population. This, incidentally, may also be true of locusts, or, more precisely, certain species of locust.

¹ See, for example: [Jones 1999; De Bont 2021].

² See: [Bar-On et al. 2018; Elhacham et al. 2020] and the bibliographies therein.

I would divide the weaknesses of such research into two groups. The first is related to the fact that historians (anthropologists, ethnographers, etc.) simply declare that they are studying “multi-species” history, but in reality they are writing about people, and other species of living organism merely form the background. There is nothing wrong with this sort of study, but it should not be called multi-species. Strictly speaking the article about a taxidermist by Ekaterina Zharova and myself which appears in this issue [Fedotova, Zharova 2025] is an example of such a work.

The second group of weaknesses arises as a result of a low level of expertise in the natural sciences. A lack of respect for the expertise and methods used by specialists in another discipline may also frequently be observed, and this is an obstacle to collaboration between researchers from the humanities and naturalists. This is a two-way phenomenon: representatives of the humanities often do not even attempt to find out about opinions and methods in the sphere of the natural sciences, and vice versa. The removal of such problems will require both a more comprehensive training of researchers and greater efforts to develop a common language between specialists in different areas. A zoologist will, to put it mildly, be baffled by the formulation “constructing a marmot” (or a mammoth, or phylloxera, etc.), and a specialist in the humanities will not, without special explanations, understand the expression “a landscape of fear” [Ramirez et al. 2024]. Developing a common language is a separate task for each specific case, and it takes a lot of resources. If a historian wants to write an article, in collaboration with an entomologist, about the catalogues of a museum’s zoological collections, they must first explain to the entomologist what value these catalogues have apart from that which is obvious to the entomologist (the correlation of entries in the catalogue with the surviving exhibits). The entomologist must in turn explain to the historian at least the fundamentals of the theory and history of systematics, provide information about certain taxonomic groups, tell them how the exhibits in the collections are kept and how and why they perish, why some of the exhibits are unlabelled, etc. What is perfectly obvious to one is often completely outside the other’s field of vision.

There is a substantial difference in the actual creation of scholarly texts. Unlike “humanities” texts, there are many more standard constructions in works by natural scientists, technical terms are rarely explained and the principle to be followed is “maximal brevity consistent with clarity”. Not so long ago an article by my co-author and me discussing narrowly specialised biological research of 120 years ago was rejected by a journal (a journal of biology) on the grounds that its language was “far too comprehensible”. The editor informed us that that was how popular science texts were written,

and that for their “high-rating scientific journal” such style was unacceptable. And on the other hand, the most frequent comment that I get from editors and peer reviewers of humanities journals is “explain the meaning of such-and-such a term”.

Finding a common language and field of study, and then creating a text that both sides (humanities and natural sciences) will regard as respectable is, in my view, the weak (or, more exactly, difficult) link in this research.

3

Here the answer is the same: in collaboration with specialists from other fields of knowledge. New methods? It depends on what you mean by “new”. It seems to me that it is not so much the development of new methods, as borrowing from other fields and a synthesis of methods, a sort of appropriation, but in the positive sense of the word.

How can one “give a voice” to animals, plants, fungi and viruses in anthropological works? As in the punchline of the old joke about David Copperfield — very cautiously!¹ Without breaking the bounds of one’s own incompetence, without ascribing to a source or a method something that is not there, or something that it cannot give. The question of animals’ “voice” can often be heard nowadays at seminars on *animal studies*. Alas, we historians usually have no opportunity to hear this voice or to interpret it in the least bit correctly, at least if we want to remain within the bounds of scholarly methodology. I am afraid that the ardent desire of some representatives of the humanities to convey this voice in their works will only scare off the biologists. There is a very short answer to the question “how do forests think?” — they don’t. Forests do not think. In the first third of the twentieth century plant ecologists were actively developing the idea that a plant community is a certain whole, a sort of super-organism. However, such hypotheses were soon abandoned, as were discussions of how communities develop and evolve: communities have no heredity, therefore they do not evolve, end of the discussion. Teleology and anthropomorphism are a bad fit with scientific methodology.

Of course, some groups of animals have evolved what must (with the necessary qualifications) be called a culture, and the more we study the behaviour of animals in their natural environment, the more species we find that are capable of teaching their fellows some quite complicated procedures [De Waal 2016]. Many mammals have not only developed extremely sophisticated methods of hunting as a group, and pass them on to the next generation, but they also adapt them to anthropogenic conditions. Whereas in former centuries

¹ David Copperfield (the illusionist, not the hero of Dickens’s novel) is asked: ‘How do you fly?’ He replies: ‘Very cautiously!’ [Eds].

brown bears taught their cubs to open forest beehives, now they teach the rising generation to open car boots and waste bins at tourist stops.

4

It seems to me that the problem is the comparatively greater conservatism of the humanities amongst us, and also in the way that both the humanities and the natural sciences are taught in our schools. Future historians leave school not only without the most basic knowledge of their own body and those of the living organisms around them, but also regarding biology as the most boring subject on earth. And by contrast, the future biologist leaves school with extremely peculiar ideas about what historians do.

There has so far been no success in solving this problem by publishing translations of what one might call good Western books aimed at a wide audience. Advanced specialisation makes translating such books an extremely difficult task, and the state of publishing amongst us makes publishers save money both on translators and on scientific (and not only scientific) editing.¹ As a result we get a selection of howlers and an accumulation of absurdities instead of a translation of a book that could have shown Russian speakers working in the humanities (who by and large are reluctant to read anything in English) the attraction of research problems in the *environmental humanities* sphere. The only person who can extract a grain of sense from this accumulation of absurdities is a researcher who is themselves already advanced in such interdisciplinary research, has a decent knowledge of English and has no need for this book to be translated for them.

Another problem is that there are too few of us. I see this from the community of historians: Russian historiography is nothing but an assemblage of empty spaces and black holes. Do we have a base on which we can stand in order, for example, to write a work about the interaction of the peasant with his domestic cattle in some specific region in the second half of the nineteenth century (already a comparatively well documented period)? Can we examine this question not on the basis of ethnographers' records of peasant superstitions and shepherds' songs, but relying on evaluations of the real, "physical" contribution of the animals to the economy of the peasant household — as a workforce, as a source of dairy and meat products and of fertiliser, etc.? Have we any data on the number of man-hours needed to keep a single beast? Is there any possibility of making well-founded judgements about the significance of hunting and/or fishing for the economy of peasant households in,

¹ One of the most widespread problems is connected with the translators' frequent inability to recognise narrowly specialised terms in the text, so that they translate them as if they were words from everyday language. This could be solved if there were a scientific editor, but see above.

for example, different parts of Archangel Province? Or about whether explosions in the numbers of pests were a significant brake on the Russian agricultural colonisation of Central Asia, Siberia or the Far East? What about epizootics? I suspect that the answer will most often be “No, we can’t.” To write about the relationship of the peasant in a particular region and period with a particular group of animals, the researcher must first examine, almost from the very beginning, how the peasant economy was organised in that region at that time.

5

What, is Karl Popper’s criterion of falsifiability no longer respected? It suits me very well.

Besides, the one does not necessarily rule out the other. Several years ago the Polish forest administration took the decision for blanket felling of trees over significant areas of the Białowieża Forest (which is not only a reserve, but a biosphere reserve and a UNESCO World Heritage Site). This decision and the ensuing action was resisted both by activists in practice (including chaining themselves to the harvesters) and by scientists at a whole range of research centres in publications at all levels and disciplines, including those who held administrative posts. During the border crisis, also in the Białowieża Forest (which is still going on) the employees and leadership of scientific centres have also been acting in concert with activists. There is quite a large number of biologists, ecologists and conservationists among those who are protesting against the actions of the Polish army and border force in the protected forest.¹

References

- Badia-Miró M., Tello E., Valls F., Garrabou R., ‘The Grape Phylloxera Plague as a Natural Experiment: the Upkeep of Vineyards in Catalonia (Spain), 1858–1935’, *Australian Economic History Review*, 2010, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 39–61. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8446.2009.00271.x.
- Bar-On Y. M., Phillips R., Milo R., ‘The Biomass Distribution on Earth’, *PNAS*, 2018, vol. 115 (25), pp. 6506–6511. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1711842115.
- Carson R., *Silent Spring*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1962, 400 pp.
- De Bont R., ‘Hamster Numbers: Biopolitics and Animal Agency in the Dutch Fields, Circa 1870–Present’, *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 2021, vol. 43, no. 2, article 50. doi: 10.1007/s40656-021-00398-3.
- De Waal F., *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W. W. Norton, 2016, 320 pp.

¹ See, for example: [Kowalczyk 2024]. Rafał Kowalczyk was director of the Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences. See also the film *Zielona granica* by Agnieszka Holland, Kino Świat, 2023, 147 min.

- Elhacham E., Ben-Uri L., Grozovski J., Bar-On Y. M., Milo R., 'Global Human-made Mass Exceeds All Living Biomass', *Nature*, 2020, vol. 588, pp. 442–444. doi: 10.1038/s41586-020-3010-5.
- Fedotova A., Zharova E., 'Of Bison and Taxidermy: The Biography of a Practical Zoologist, Augustus Szusterus', *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, 2025, no. 21, pp. 173–204. doi: 10.31250/1815-8870-2025-21-21-173-204.
- Gale G., *Dying on the Vine: How Phylloxera Transformed Wine*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011, 336 pp.
- Hobhouse H., *Seeds of Change: Five Plants That Transformed Mankind*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985, 245 pp.
- Jones S., 'Becoming a Pest: Prairie Dog Ecology and the Human Economy in the Euroamerican West', *Environmental History*, 1999, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 531–552. doi: 10.2307/3985400.
- Kowalczyk R., 'Panie Premierze, jak żyć w miejscu, które za chwilę stanie się militarną fortyfikacją?', *Wyborcza.pl*, 2024, 31 maja. <<https://wyborcza.pl/7,162657,31021957,panie-premierze-jak-zyc-w-miejscu-ktore-za-chwile-stanie-sie.html>>.
- Phillips C. R., Phillips W. D., Jr., *Spain's Golden Fleece: Wool Production and the Wool Trade from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 441 pp.
- Ramirez J. I., Kuijper D. P. J., Olofsson J., Smit C., Hofmeester T. R., Siewert M. B., Widemo F., Cromsigt J. P. G. M., 'Applied Ecology of Fear: A Meta-analysis on the Potential of Facilitating Human-Wildlife Coexistence through Nonlethal Tools', *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*, 2024, vol. 5, no. 2, article e12322. doi: 10.1002/2688-8319.12322.
- Samojlik T., Fedotova A., Daszkiewicz P., Rotherham I. D. (eds), *Białowieża Forest in the Nineteenth Century: Nature and Culture*. Cham: Springer, 2020, 223 pp.
- Tsvetkov M. A., *Izmenenie lesistosti Evropeiskoi Rossii s kontsa XVII stoletiya po 1914 g.* [Alterations in the Forest Cover of European Russia from the late Seventeenth Century until 1914], Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences Press, 1957, 213 pp. (In Russian).

CAROLE FERRET

Acting on and with animals

A 'turn' that doesn't start from nothing

I began studying the relationship between humans and animals in 1988, when I was a student preparing a master's degree in sociology with a specialisation in anthropology and comparative sociology at the University of Paris V, under the supervision of Raymond Pujol, a professor at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. Since the 1960s, he had been

Carole Ferret

Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale, CNRS / Collège de France / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, France
carole.ferret@college-de-france.fr

one of the pillars of French ethnozoology, defined as a branch of ethnology that studies the relationships between human societies, animals and ecosystems, thus building a bridge between the humanities and the natural sciences [Chevallier et al. 1988]. His ethnozoology seminar periodically brought together passionate researchers and students in the Salle Chevalier at the Museum, a beautiful old wooden room filled with stuffed animals and jars of chloroform, very similar to some of the rooms in the *Kunstkamera* — which I would regularly visit a few years later, between 1993 and 1996 — except that the Salle Chevalier was entirely devoted to ‘other-than-human’ animals, as we now call them. Some works in ethnozoology were inspired by folklore, and most of them focused on an animal species, studying its zoological characteristics and behavior, in order to understand the practices and representations linked to it within a given human society [Pujol, Laurans 1975; Pujol 1990]. Practices and representations were conceived as two sides — ideal and material [Godelier 1984] — of the same reality, which had to be distinguished in order to analyse them.

My master’s degree was devoted to ‘hommes de cheval’ (‘homme de cheval’ is a French expression meaning more than a rider, but a person who perfectly knows horses and knows how to work with them).¹ I studied several aspects of the complex human-horse relationship including the figure of the centaur, conducted and analysed interviews with a few French professionals, horse enthusiasts who devoted all their life and all their time to this animal. I myself was a rider and my passion for horses guided my choice of subject.

In those days, no one talked about ‘animal agency’ in these terms. Anthropomorphism was distrusted as an unscientific attitude, but that didn’t mean denying animals any subjectivity or creativity, or regarding them just as things [Guillo 2015]. Far from it. No breeder, no rider, no-one who worked with animals and therefore knew how to deal with them on a daily basis, or any of the few social scientists who were truly interested in the humans-animals relationship, considered these singular, living beings as mere commodities or vehicles for symbols, only ‘good to eat’ or ‘good to think’ [Lévi-Strauss 1962: 132], according to the outrageous image painted twenty years later by their successors.

The following year, François Sigaut, in his seminar on Technology at the *École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, suggested I give a talk on animal tools, encouraging me to read recent articles by primatologists, and also introducing me to *The American Beaver and Its Works* [Morgan 1868] and *Les outils chez les êtres vivants* (*Tools of Living Beings*) [Tétry 1948]. Indeed, one of the founding

¹ Cf. the term ‘horseman’ or ‘horsewoman’ in English. [Eds].

fathers of social anthropology, Lewis Morgan, had already been interested in ethology and had described in detail the astonishing ingenuity of beavers in the mid-19th century. French zoologist André Tétry (1907–1992) inventoried in her book the tools of animals and plants and compared them to similarly functioning tools made and used by humans (zippers, press-studs, etc.), almost half a century before the emergence of biomimicry, which took up the same idea as if it was an innovation.

Sources of inspiration for French social scientists interested in these issues included André-Georges Haudricourt [Haudricourt 1962], Keith Thomas [Thomas 1983] and Robert Delort [Delort 1984]. I also attended Philippe Descola's seminars, who was then denouncing the errors of cultural ecology and its 'starved determinism' [Descola 1988], but who was not yet talking about ontology or non-humans. In 1990, Jean-Pierre Digard, my future thesis supervisor, published a synthesis entitled *L'homme et les animaux domestiques. Anthropologie d'une passion (Man and Domestic Animals: Anatomy of a Passion)*, in which he developed the notion of the domesticatory system [Digard 1990].

Reading Haudricourt and Thomas inspired me, and I conceived the project of writing a doctoral thesis on horse training. The acquisition of what French riders call '*le langage des aides*' ('the language of aids' — hands, legs, weight)¹ fascinated me. How does an animal weighing 300 kg or more launch into a gallop with just a light pressure of the calf of his or her rider's inside leg? Why does he or she turn to the left if the rider leans lightly on the left buttock? When this pressure and this leaning are so discreet and subtle that they often remain invisible to the eyes of observers, and don't necessarily surface in the rider's consciousness? The historian Joan Thirsk noted that, in England around 1560, the adoption of gentler methods of horse training, using persuasion rather than blows, preceded by more than half a century a similar doctrinal shift in the principles of child rearing [Thirsk 1978: 18]. I wanted to explore this idea further and I moved towards a comparison of the treatment of nature and social relations, based not on the identification of analogies between the principles of training methods and those of education, but on an analysis of the forms of action concretely implemented when training a horse or educating a child [Ferret 2010a].

One more Copernician revolution?

From 2000 onwards, there has been what has come to be known as an 'animal turn', or even an 'animalistic turn'. The proponents

¹ That is, the use of tactful pressure on the mouth, sides, and back of the horse to communicate what the rider wants him or her to do (cf. the technical term 'aids' in Anglophone equestrian). [Eds].

of this movement claim a radically innovative approach, breaking with the past and rejecting a dualism that would be specific of Western thought, opposing nature and culture. The publication, in 2005, of Philippe Descola's book *Par delà nature et culture* (*Beyond Nature and Culture*) [Descola 2005] and its matrix of four ontologies (animism, naturalism, analogism and totemism) was an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

More generally, the aim was to bring about a reversal, a 'Copernican revolution' consisting in a decentering, in abandoning the dominant and dominating point of view of the white, adult, Western man to adopt that of the dominated, on the other side of the great divide: indigenous, woman, child, animal, plant, element of the landscape or even artifact. From this perspective, the animalistic turn is one of a succession of other 'turns' that form part of a vast decolonial movement in the broadest sense, deconstructing modernity. Thus, the theme of this issue of *Antropologičeskij forum* is reminiscent of a recent one, entitled 'Children as Subjects' [Forum 2019]. Here, too, animals are given full subject status.

As far as animals are concerned, this means recognising that, for example, in the domestication process, animals may have played an initiating role, benefiting from cohabitation with humans. It would therefore be more accurate to speak of co-domestication and even, in a symmetrical reversal, to say that man was domesticated by them rather than he domesticated them.

I won't go back over the milestones and key texts of this movement here. Several syntheses have been made on this subject, notably in French by Dominique Guillo [Guillo 2015], Vanessa Manceron [Manceron 2016], and Elise Demeulenaere [Demeulenaere 2017], who adopt a position that is intended to be moderate, intermediate or measured in its criticism, whereas some researchers of the previous generation seem definitively irreconcilable on this subject, such as Jean-Pierre Digard and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro at the colloquium 'An Animal Turn in Anthropology?' in Paris in 2011.

Since then, the number of books, conferences and research projects has multiplied, all following in the footsteps of this animalistic turn and advocating a multispecies ethnography. This posture became a doxa, so much so that every anthropologist studying relations with animals had to proclaim the same profession of faith, in a beautiful unanimity that was all the more paradoxical as each claimed for him- or herself the rupture and originality. To a certain extent, this obligatory passage is reminiscent of Soviet ethnographic works, whose introductions were obliged to quote Marx and Lenin. Unfortunately, many works and projects of multispecific ethnography stop there, announcing a program that toes the line but going little further.

The aporias of multispecies ethnography

Let me forward a few arguments to temper animalistic enthusiasm. In the political sphere, the fight for the dignity of the oppressed in general, and for the animal cause in particular, is perfectly justified in view of the glaring inequalities between peoples, classes, genders and ages, and in the light of the ongoing ecological catastrophe. To mention just two aspects, the deplorable excesses of intensive livestock farming and the vertiginous decline in biodiversity are legitimate reasons for doing so. In the scientific field, the application of a multispecies ethnography program in social anthropology is more questionable.

Firstly, as I mentioned earlier, it does not do justice to earlier works to assert that social scientists had previously no interest in animals. Works devoted to describing and analysing the complex relationships between humans and animals were certainly in the minority, but they were not absent. Making a clean sweep of the past, vilifying one's predecessors and posing as a revolutionary is an easy and tempting posture, but scientifically not very rigorous.

Secondly, it's a strange choice, for anyone wishing to reject Western dualism and decentralize their gaze outside the human perspective, to divide the entire existing world into two parts: on the one hand, humans, and on the other, non-humans, this second category amalgamating all kinds of beings and things into a single heterogeneous whole. Indeed, such a division of the world in two has all the hallmarks of hypertrophied dualism and anthropocentrism.

Thirdly, it makes little sense to oppose, on the one hand, a Western world sharing the same naturalistic ontology and following, in its practices towards animals, only the Cartesian theory of the animal-machine, a model that has been caricatured and vilified [Cottingham 1978] and, on the other hand, a distant and exotic world, happily possessing an animistic ontology, which would live in harmony with nature and respect all living beings as fellow beings. Neither 'we' nor 'they' resemble this fable.

In particular, Siberia, where I lived for several years, has little in common with the picture recently painted by some English-speaking anthropologists. Indeed, in the anthropological study of the post-Soviet world, the animal turn has taken much better hold among specialists of Siberia than among those of Central Asia because the latter is supposed to belong to the world of analogism and the former to that of animism. However, both Sakha-Yakut and Kazakh, the herders I have worked with, find the idea that they and their herds would form 'hybrid communities' incongruous. Roberte Hamayon herself is not satisfied with the interpretation that is sometimes made of her work on Siberian shamanism [Hamayon 1990]. I wonder

whether, by dint of trying to avoid anthropocentrism, some students and researchers don't fall into ethnocentrism by seeing others as they would like them to be, according to an ideology peculiar to early 21st-century Western postmodernist thought.

Fourthly, the symmetrisation advocated by Bruno Latour [Latour 1991; 2006], if understood *stricto sensu*, risks, by denying the relations of domination that exist between species, making relations of power invisible. As Vanessa Manceron puts it, if symmetry means renouncing relational thinking about social relations, hierarchy or conflict, then anthropology has a lot to lose [Manceron 2016; see also: Grossetti 2007]. Here again, we might venture to recall Marx, who judged that capitalism's frightening efficiency lay in its ability to conceal the exploitation of workers. For example, proposing to say 'riding with a horse' instead of 'riding [on] a horse' [Argent 2012: 125] is nothing less than a denial of reality, erasing the respective positions of rider and mount, which physically manifest the asymmetry of their relationship. Rider and mount are indeed partners; the relationship between them is reciprocal, as they influence each other, but it is not symmetrical [Ferret 2010a].

Fifthly, this redoubled attention to animals in anthropology is laudable, given their essential role in the history and functioning of human societies, but the ethnography of non-human animal species raises unresolved heuristic questions. Indeed, if we assume, following Max Weber, that social anthropology is, like sociology, a comprehensive social science [Weber 1995 (1921): 28], i.e., that it is interested in the meaning people give to their actions, and that it takes seriously the explanations they give for them, then how can we gain access to animal subjectivity in the 'silence of the beasts' [Fontenay 1998]? One of the essential characteristics of the ethnographic method is the privileged relationship of interlocution that the ethnographer establishes with his informants. How do you talk to an animal interlocutor? This is an obstacle also faced by historians who plan to write history by adopting the point of view of animals [Baratay 2015], but *de facto* also admit that of humans [Shaw 2013].

Sixthly, the desire to place human and non-human animals on an equal footing as scientific objects means that the rise in animal dignity and the increased complexity of the way we look at animal societies and cultures risk going hand in hand with a decline in consideration and a simplification of the way we look at human societies and cultures, thus returning to the errors of behaviourism. This argument is linked to the previous one, insofar as scientists such as ethologists, who study living beings whose language they do not share, do not have easy access to their reasons for acting. This risk is already at work in the social sciences, with the replacement of the concept of *action* by that of *agency*, which is extended to the

entire living and even non-living world, tending to become synonymous with existence, and thus weakening because agency sets aside the intentionality of actors.

Acting on and with

While these difficulties call for caution, they should not lead anthropologists to abandon the animal subject. It's perfectly possible to have it both ways: to recognise the autonomy of animals, while at the same time studying their relationships with humans from a human perspective. In fact, holding both ends together is also what breeders do, living with animals and making a living from them, caring for them and slaughtering them, or hunters who recognize the intelligence of the prey they track. Or the Sakha-Yakuts, for example, who are both horse-lovers and horse-eaters [Ferret 2010b].

Possibilities open up if, in the anthropological study of human-animal relations, we choose to privilege practice over ontology. In this respect, it is worth noting that, by giving primacy to modes of identification over modes of relation [Descola 2005: 179–180], Descola has broken with part of his earlier work and, more broadly, with a major part of the social sciences. Another choice remains possible, consisting in focusing not on what beings *are* — nor on what they think others are — but on what they *do*. Haudricourt indicated this path by distinguishing two archetypes of action (positive direct vs. negative indirect) in the treatment of animals and plants [Haudricourt 1962] — although his elliptical text does not clearly establish the distinction [Ferret 2012].

Among the different ways of treating animals in general, or training horses in particular, it's common to oppose two ways of acting, one gentle, through persuasion, and the other brutal, through coercion. Similarly, among livestock breeders, it is common to contrast those who exploit animals as things, and those who cooperate with them as autonomous living beings. This cooperation is evident in the case of auxiliary animals, such as sheepdogs or working horses, which help guard livestock. For some authors, it is likely to concern all farmed animals, following Jocelyne Porcher's proposal, which extends the notion of 'animal labor' [Porcher 2014].

Some of Haudricourt's readers tend to equate his two types of action with these two ways of acting, positive direct action being assumed to be brutal, and negative indirect action, gentle, by contrasting, to simplify, 'good guys' and 'bad guys' among people who interact with animals — the terms used by researchers are obviously more learned, but it often comes down to the same thing. And these differences in attitudes and treatment would be due to differences in the status conferred on animals: persuasion towards animals seen as subjects in an 'empathic mode of engagement' or constraint towards animals

seen as objects in an ‘objectifying’ or ‘distant mode of engagement’ [Rémy 2016]. In other words, humans would act *on* animals when they consider them as objects, and they would act *with* animals when they consider them as subjects.

Such analyses, which implicitly or explicitly involve value judgments, are not scientifically satisfactory. What’s more, they give an imperfect account of a more complex reality. While studying horse training in Central Asia and Siberia, I found out a formal criterion, linked to the temporality of actions, that seemed more relevant than a simple opposition of values between gentle and brutal manners. In Sakha-Yakutia, training corresponds to a discontinuity, a rupture, which, in a few days, takes an adult horse from a life of free roaming in a herd, far from humans, to a life of work in their service; in Central Asia, there is no key moment corresponding to training, but a gradual habituation of foals who are handled and tied for milking mares, then ridden bareback by children, following a continuous process. But these different temporalities do not imply that the latter behave more gently and the former more violently with their horses. More generally, I have come to understand that an essential feature of Yakut horse-breeding is the discontinuity of the actions carried out by herders (not only in training, but also in feeding and tending). However, this discontinuity does not extend to all livestock farming, either in Sakha-Yakutia (reindeer herding and, above all, cattle care are daily and continuous) or in Inner Asia (herding of small livestock, sheep and goats, is also made of continuous actions).

When analysing forms of action by going into the details of gestures, other criteria can be identified that refine and complicate our understanding of how modes of action work (there are external, passive, contrary, participative actions, etc.) [Ferret 2012; 2014]. In particular, we need to distinguish between actions that are operations (*doing*), and other actions, which are manipulations (*making the other do*), when the action is delegated. A shepherd who pushes his flock, a rider who stops his horse, a milker who encourages a cow to give milk — they all conduct manipulative actions. The shepherd does not push his flock by exerting a physical force on it that would move it as if he were pushing a piece of furniture, but by his position, by his movements, by his cries, by his gestures, he incites it to move forward. In fact, rather than saying that the shepherd pushes his flock, it would be more accurate to say that he makes it move forward. The same goes for the rider. For the milker, it is more questionable. But the fact that, in Inner Asia, herders use the suckling method to milk females, involving their young, which encourages them to give milk shows that milking is also a manipulation. The shepherd, the rider, the milker, they are all perfectly aware that they are dealing with living beings, not inert things, and they know how to take advantage of the capacity to act of the animals they are handling.

Manipulating a living being, making it do something, presupposes that this being is both an object (the object of our action) and a subject (the subject of its own action). This implies that we act both *on* it and *with* it. So, we don't need to establish a stable dichotomy between 'subjects' and 'objects' in the ontological sense, which would irreducibly separate two classes of existents, but we need to identify 'subjects' and 'objects' in the grammatical sense in the details of each action carried out, because each existent is capable of being, successively or concomitantly, subject and object in the course of the different actions in which it participates.

This approach, which I call 'anthropology of action', reconciles a strictly anthropocentric point of view, necessary for the human sciences, with a consideration of animal life and animal autonomy. It seems, in my view, to be fruitful for the anthropological analysis of the rich and complex relationships that humans and animals have with each other.

References

- Argent G., 'Toward a Privileging of the Nonverbal Communication, Corporeal Synchrony, and Transcendence in Humans and Horses', Smith J. A., Mitchell R. W. (eds), *Experiencing Animal Minds: An Anthology of Animal-Human Encounters*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, pp. 111–128.
- Baratay É., 'Buiding an "Animal" History', Mackenzie L., Posthumus S. (eds), *French Thinking about Animals*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015, pp. 3–14.
- Chevallier D., Langlois C., Pujol R., 'A propos d'ethnozoologie', *Terrain. Anthropologie et sciences humaines*, 1988, no. 10, pp. 108–112. doi: 10.4000/terrain.2935.
- Cottingham J., "'A Brute to the Brutes?" Descartes' Treatment of Animals', *Philosophy*, 1978, vol. 53, no. 206, pp. 551–559.
- Delort R., *Les animaux ont une histoire*. Paris: Seuil, 1984, 397 pp.
- Demeulenaere É., 'L'anthropologie au-delà de l'anthropos. Un récit par les marges de la discipline', Blanc G., Demeulenaere É., Feuerhahn W. (dirs), *Humanités environnementales. Enquêtes et contre-enquêtes*. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2017, pp. 43–73.
- Descola P., 'Le déterminisme famélique', Cadoret A. (dir.), *Chasser le naturel...* Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1988, pp. 121–136.
- Descola P., *Par-delà nature et culture*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005, 623 pp.
- Digard J.-P., *L'homme et les animaux domestiques: anthropologie d'une passion*. Paris: Fayard, 1990, 325 pp.
- Ferret C., 'Éducation des enfants et dressage des chevaux. Des analogies aux modes d'action', Aigle D., Charleux I., Goossaert V., Hamaçon R. (dirs), *Miscellanea Asiatica. Mélanges en l'honneur de Françoise Aubin / Festschrift in Honour of Françoise Aubin*.

- St Augustin: Steyler Verlag; Institut Monumenta Serica, 2010a, pp. 141–172.
- Ferret C., ‘Hippophiles et hippophages’, *Anthropozoologica*, 2010b, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 115–135. doi: 10.5252/az2010n1a8.
- Ferret C., ‘Vers une anthropologie de l’action: André-Georges Haudricourt et l’efficacité technique’, *L’Homme. Revue française d’anthropologie*, 2012, no. 202, pp. 113–139. doi: 10.4000/lhomme.23041.
- Ferret C., ‘Towards an Anthropology of Action: From Pastoral Techniques to Modes of Action’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 2014, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 279–302. doi: 10.1177/1359183514540065.
- Fontenay É. de, *Le silence des bêtes. La philosophie à l’épreuve de l’animalité*. Paris: Fayard, 1998, 784 pp.
- ‘Forum: V poiskakh detskoy subyektности’ [Forum: Children as Subjects], *Antropologicheskij forum*, 2019, no. 42, pp. 9–106. (In Russian). doi: 10.31250/1815-8870-2019-15-42-9-106.
- Godelier M., *L’idéal et le matériel: pensée, économies, sociétés*. Paris: Fayard, 1984, 348 pp.
- Grossetti M., ‘Les limites de la symétrie. À propos de l’ouvrage de Bruno Latour “Changer de société. Refaire de la Sociologie”’, Paris: La Découverte, 2006’, *SociologieS*, 2007. <<http://journals.openedition.org/sociologies/712>>.
- Guillo D., ‘What Is the Place of Animals in the Social Sciences?’, *Revue française de sociologie*, 2015, vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 135–163.
- Hamayon R., *La chasse à l’âme: esquisse d’une théorie du chamanisme sibérien*. Nanterre: Société d’ethnologie, 1990, 878 pp.
- Haudricourt A.-G., ‘Domestication des animaux, culture des plantes et traitement d’autrui’, *L’Homme. Revue française d’anthropologie*, 1962, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 40–50.
- Latour B., *Nous n’avons jamais été modernes. Essai d’anthropologie symétrique*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1991, 211 pp.
- Latour B., *Changer de société, refaire de la sociologie*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2006, 400 pp.
- Lévi-Strauss C., *Le Totémisme aujourd’hui*. Paris: P.U.F., 1962, 155 pp.
- Manceron V., ‘Exil ou agentivité? Ce que l’anthropologie fabrique avec les animaux’, *L’Année sociologique*, 2016, vol. 66, no. 2, pp. 279–298. doi: 10.3917/anso.162.0279.
- Morgan L. H., *The American Beaver and His Works*. Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Cie, 1868, 330 pp.
- Porcher J., ‘The Work of Animals: A Challenge for Social Sciences’, *Humanimalia — Journal of Human / Animal Interface Studies*, 2014, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 1–9. doi: 10.52537/humanimalia.9925.
- Pujol R., ‘Liste des mémoires d’ethnozoologie présentés au laboratoire d’ethnobiologie-biogéographie du Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle de 1985 à 1988’, *Anthropozoologica*, 1990, no. 12, pp. 38–41.
- Pujol R., Laurans R., *L’Homme et l’animal: premier colloque d’ethnozoologie*. Paris: Institut international d’ethnoscience, 1975, 644 pp.

- Rémy C., 'Agir avec l'animal. Pour une approche ethnographique des relations hybrides', *L'Année sociologique*, 2016, vol. 66, no. 2, pp. 299–318.
- Shaw D. G., 'The Torturer's Horse: Agency and Animals in History', *History and Theory*, 2013, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 146–167. doi: 10.1111/hith.10691.
- Tétry A., *Les outils chez les êtres vivants*. Paris: Gallimard, 1948, 345 pp.
- Thirsk J., *Horses in Early Modern England: For Service, for Pleasure, for Power*. Reading: University of Reading, 1978, 28 pp.
- Thomas K., *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility*. New York: Pantheon, 1983, 425 pp.
- Weber M., *Économie et société. 1. Les catégories de la sociologie*. Paris: Pocket, 1995 (1921), 411 pp.

MARK D. HERSEY

1 As I am an environmental historian, one who pays particular attention to agricultural and rural history, animals have inevitably had a place in my scholarship from the very beginning. Live-stock, insects, and wildlife appeared precisely because they mattered to my historical subjects. For most of its history, after all, daily life in the rural American South entailed a profound intimacy with animals that began with the proverbial rooster's crow in the morning. That I did not initially approach animals with the same kind of nuance as someone attuned to the field of animal studies put me in the mainstream of historical scholarship at the time.

In the years since, the insights of animal studies have increasingly infused environmental history. As they have done so, a growing community of animal historians has carved out a niche in the field. At the annual meeting of the American Society for Environmental History, for instance, there is now a dedicated breakfast for animal historians, much as there is for other cohorts within the field: war and environment, enviro-tech, and the like. That many animal historians could also find a comfortable place at those other breakfasts speaks to the diversity of animal history's intersections with environmental history. That a new *Animal History* journal is being launched underscores, however, that it is hardly limited to environmental history. Plenty of agricultural historians, historians

of science and technology, urban historians, gender historians, and others who would not identify as environmental historians are quite comfortable framing their work as animal history. For that matter, the journal self-consciously seeks to foster longstanding connections with the broader field of animal studies.¹

For environmental history, this growing emphasis on animals has introduced new methodologies, perhaps most notably an emphasis on more-than-human histories, and has contributed to fostering further intersections with other subfields, including the history of science as it has interrogated the notion of species and explored the various ways in which we have come to know what we ostensibly know about wildlife. These new trends haven't wholly displaced older methodologies or subject matter, and animals continue to appear as exploited game, as bellwethers for ecological health, as vital technologies for both rural and urban life, as vectors for disease, as integral parts of regional foodways, and as fellow travellers in evolutionary history.²

Because environmental history traces the relationship between the human and other-than-human world over time and across the globe, the range of animals that appear in studies is enormously broad: from mosquitoes to elephants, seahorses to Clydesdales, hogs to haddock. Yet for all that, there remain huge gaps. Scholars looking for a history of even well-studied animals, like white-tailed deer, often have to piece their story together through dozens of histories — most of which center on small groups of people (be it hunters or wildlife ecologists) in a carefully demarcated region (sometimes a country, but more often something much more discrete like a state or even a particular park). And even then, the animals often remain not exactly ancillary but primarily important as a measure of something else: a way to underscore a conservation success or failure, a shift in scientific understanding, or a given manifestation of social inequity. There is, in short, ample room for synthesis.

2

It seems to me that the main task of multispecies ethnography is produce a humbler scholarship, one that moves beyond the kind of thinking that the historian Donald Worster dismissed as cultural determinism in which people exist as disembodied intellects shaped

¹ For more about the journal, see: <<https://online.ucpress.edu/ah/pages/About>>.

² For a self-conscious effort to get environmental historians to embrace more-than-human framings, see: [O'Gorman, Gaynor 2020]. The literature on the history of science and technology is far too big to adequately trace, but for representative examples, see: [Barrow 2009; Benson 2010; Jacobs 2016]. Evolutionary history, which has connections to the history of science (even if it operates on rather different assumptions) expands those considerations. See for instance: [Russell 2018]. Animals have factored into environmental history since the field coalesced as a discrete historical subfield in the 1970s, where it provided a welcoming environment for scholars like Harriet Ritvo, who would go on to serve as the president of the ASEH from 2009–2011 and whose work profoundly shaped the intersection of environmental history and animal studies [Ritvo 1987; 1997].

by an array of values (religious, economic, political, ethical, and what-have-you) that lend meaning to the world around them.¹ This, of course, is easier said than done. It is easy to recapitulate the conceits that have treated animals (and the other-than-human world more broadly) merely as backdrop, metaphor, or mirror for human societies. The great challenge then is twofold: first, capturing the entanglements between humans and other species without anthropomorphising the other-than-human; and, second, doing so without resorting to jargon, which truncates the audience and blunts the scholarship's influence (even if it's welcomed with knowing nods by the initiated).

Surmounting those challenges is necessarily an interdisciplinary project, as the founders of both environmental history and animal studies recognised, and, as I imagine, most readers of this Forum would readily concede. This, however, constitutes another challenge, and not merely because scholarly methodologies often diverge markedly. Few scholars, to take one additional complication, would claim to read broadly beyond their own discipline. Even fewer actually do — and understandably so in the face of myriad obligations of teaching and administrative obligations, grant writing, and academic service (and often in difficult institutional environments), to say nothing of life's other encroachments.

3

There is no easy way to explore a social world that includes but extends beyond humans. Perhaps it is inevitable that we've proven better at diagnosing the inherent problems in doing so than finding an effective solution for them. That's not to say that there aren't good models, but many of those models succeed because of the elegance of their storytelling rather than because they have succeeded in fashioning a replicable methodology.² But, perhaps, even recognising the problem represents a kind of solution: a humbler recognition that humans don't travel alone, that they are more than the cultural baggage they carry, that they don't exist in a kind of ethereal demesne severed from the material world, that — in that sense at least — they themselves are “more-than-human.”

But even in this, there are difficulties. To take the low-hanging fruit as an example: the idea that scholarship can “lend a voice” to the other-than-human recapitulates the very conceit it seeks to undermine by not only anthropomorphising the nonhuman but by empowering people to speak for it. It also underscores a tension between the activist bent of much animal studies (and environmental

¹ Although the entire field of environmental history was predicated on this insight, none of the founding members of the field pushed harder in that than Donald Worster. See, for instance: [Worster 1988; 1990].

² Some of the most successful examples actually come from studies of things other than animals. See, for instance: [Kimmerer 2015; Tsing 2015].

history) scholarship. It is easy to understand what activists mean when they “speak” on behalf of nature to restrain human economies and societies from wanton exploitation, but that is quite different from a scholarly endeavor that ostensibly seeks to develop conceptual and interpretive methodologies that will allow us to better understand animals in relation to human society (and vice versa).

“Lending a voice” to animals has long offered a powerful rhetorical tool for people seeking to foster a more ethical relationship with the other-than-human world. Aldo Leopold, who casts a long shadow in American environmentalism, began his classic *A Sand County Almanac* with a story of snow melt in January. In the book’s opening chapter, Leopold describes a meadow mouse as “a sober citizen who knows that grass grows in order that mice may store it as underground haystacks, and that snow falls that mice may build subways from stack to stack” [Leopold 2020 (1949): 4]. The rough-legged hawk, by contrast, “has no opinion why grass grows, but he is well aware that snow melts that hawks may again catch mice” [Ibid.]. As a rhetorical tool, it is an enormously powerful framing, inviting readers to imagine themselves as a mouse or hawk might (and so decenter their humanness) and introducing readers to the trophic interdependencies that undergird his call for a “Land Ethic” at the end of the book. As a tool for understanding field mice or rough-legged hawks, however, it’s considerably less useful — as Leopold himself, a wildlife ecologist, would undoubtedly have acknowledged.¹

I’m not sure any methodology can resolve that tension. I’m not sure that the tension needs resolution. But certainly, scholars should conduct their research with a humility born of an awareness of that tension in mind.

4

I would quickly be out of my depth if I waded into Russian historiography, let alone animal studies in a part of the world that is far from the heart of my own research. As a journal editor, I have seen several impressive studies of animals in Russia (and the former Soviet Union more generally) cross my desk. If they are indicative of the broader field, there is a lot of promising work being done on wildlife, from fish to birds, that entail an emphasis on subjects as diverse as population ecology and aristocratic hunting.

5

I don’t know that it is either possible or desirable to separate scholarship and political activism in studying human-animal relations. The research questions that interest scholars are inextricably bound

¹ The affective power of anthropomorphising animals has a long legacy in environmental writing. Rachel Carson, another American environmentalist who casts a long shadow, self-consciously acknowledged the problematic nature of doing so when she wrote, “I have spoken of fish ‘fearing’ his enemies, for example, not because I suppose a fish experiences fear in the same way we do, but because I think *he behaves as if he were frightened.*” Quote drawn from [Lockwood 2012: 124].

up in the worldviews that shape their politics, that raised the academic questions for which they couldn't find answers in the first place. Moreover, the answers to those questions often have political implications. But connecting scholarship and political activism is quite different from *conflating* activism and scholarship, and it is with the latter that the trouble lies. If we (as scholars) find ourselves demanding less in the way of evidence of those with whom we agree, we will reinforce the growing divides that mark the riven political landscapes of the countries many of us labour in.

Worse, we will undercut our very aims as activists if we speak only into an echo chamber of the likeminded, who will affirm our otherwise weak scholarship because they share its activist bent. We are hardly the first generation to wrestle with this conundrum. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1931, Carl Becker warned his fellow historians against conducting "research, valuable not in itself but for some ulterior purpose." Historians, he insisted, might berate "Mr. Everyman" for "not reading our books," but the problem was theirs rather than their readers. "The history that lies inert in unread books," he reminded them, "does no work in the world" [Becker 1932: 234]. Surely that sentiment is as applicable to studies exploring the nexus of human-animal relations as it is to history, and is as timely now as it was then.

References

- Barrow M., *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 497 pp.
- Becker C., 'Every Man His Own Historian', *American Historical Review*, 1932, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 221–236.
- Benson E., *Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern Wildlife*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 264 pp.
- Jacobs N. J., *Birders of Africa: History of a Network*. New Haven, CT: YUP, 2016, XIII+325 pp.
- Kimmerer R. W., *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2015, 408 pp.
- Leopold A., *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, 240 pp.
- Lockwood A., 'The Affective Legacy of "Silent Spring"', *Environmental Humanities*, 2012, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 123–140.
doi: 10.1215/22011919-3610003.
- O'Gorman E., Gaynor A., 'More-Than-Human Histories', *Environmental History*, 2020, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 711–735.
doi: 10.1093/envhis/ema027.

- Ritvo H., *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. London; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987, 368 pp.
- Ritvo H., *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, XIV+288 pp.
- Russell E., *Greyhound Nation: A Coevolutionary History of England, 1200–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 214 pp.
- Tsing A. L., *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, XII+331 pp.
- Worster D., 'Appendix: Doing Environmental History', Worster D. (ed.), *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 289–308.
- Worster D., 'Seeing beyond Culture', *Journal of American History*, 1990, vol. 76, no. 4, pp. 1142–1147. doi: 10.2307/2936592.

ANNA MAZANIK

1

My experience is mostly in historical inter-species research. In my field I am observing a surge in interest in the history of the interrelationships between people and other species against the background of a general expansion of Russian and Soviet ecological history and ecological humanities. At the forefront of historical works are not those dealing with proximity and co-operation (though these do also exist), but rather with “problematic” interaction: breeding and exploitation, research and use in science, extermination and destruction of habitat (and attempts to resist it), parasitism, and the relationship between species in the context of diseases spread by animals, such as plague or malaria.

2

In my opinion, the basic social aims of multi-species research are connected in one way or another with the rhetoric of nature conservation, the preservation of biodiversity and the popularisation of a more humane and careful attitude towards other living creatures through an appreciation of a certain subjectivity in various non-humans, their biological and cultural role in the past and in the present, and their vulnerability when faced with humanity. Interaction with other fields of knowledge, principally the natural sciences, is key to this area and is

insufficiently practised, partly because of institutional limitations and the practical difficulties of organising interdisciplinary projects, and partly because researchers are unprepared to enter into the subtleties of other disciplines and their methods, and to reformulate their research in such a way that it could be comprehensible and useful to scholars in other fields.

3

I shall answer about historical research. In works about the history of inter-species relations using Russian and Soviet material I observe a substantial “bias” towards the history of science and written sources produced by various government institutions that were usually intended for the effective exploitation of natural resources. This is easily explained, as there was a strong biological school in Russia and the USSR, and much field research and many expeditions were conducted, and these sources are well preserved in the archives (central archives as a rule), or have actually been published, that is, they are easily accessible and rich in material. As a result we do not simply expound history almost exclusively through the experience of people (and this, unfortunately, is always very hard to get away from), but through the experience of a very limited, privileged group of people. The other sources which might allow us in some way to overcome this limitation — archaeological, ethnographical, material, biological collections, folklore, oral history — are very rarely used. Here too the difficulties in organising interdisciplinary projects, mentioned above, play their part.

4

5

I combine my answers to the fourth and fifth questions. As I said before, inter-species research is closely linked to the rhetoric of conservation. This rhetoric is supranational, relevant for countries and regions with diverse cultures and political structures, and with a certain will it may be presented as not connected with politics in the narrow sense. If we compare, say, research into nationalism in border regions, or research into corruption, with, for example, the history of seals and whales in the Far East, the history of seals and whales will seem the most “apolitical” (although, as recent works by Robert Kindler and Ryan Jones have shown, it was of course connected with politics in a most profound manner).¹ For this very reason I expect, and can already observe, a certain evolution of inter-species research in Russia against the background of ever increasing pressure on the academic community and the outlawing of certain topics of humanities research. Besides, and again because conservation rhetoric is global in its focus, the academic community in the ecological humanities has proved quite open, even in conditions of the most acute political crisis, and has preserved certain channels for international co-operation with Russian scholars, which

¹ See the review of Jones’s book in this issue of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*.

has proved impossible in other areas of science. In this situation the inter-species approach makes it possible to carry out methodologically and thematically innovative, relevant and potentially socially significant research in the current of world scholarship without incurring too great political risk.

MARK MEFED

Multi-species ethnography

Inspired by cognitive cartography [Jameson 1991], I would describe multi-species ethnography as a process in which we as human beings (individually or collectively) try to establish what links exist in any given common space between us and other, non-human forms of life and non-life; in which at the same time the non-human beings (individually or collectively) are also trying to establish and understand the links that exist between them and us human beings; in which the common space of the encounter is formed, changed, created *ex nihilo* or is co-constructed together with us (both human and non-human beings); in which, in the end, we can see, grasp, and feel each other and more or less understand the relationship in which we stand to one another: friendship, symbiosis, exploitation, support, etc.¹ In connection with this I would identify a number of the tasks of multi-species ethnography.

The tasks of multi-species ethnography

Task 1. Over the last couple of centuries, we have observed an ever more intensive process of urbanisation, which removes us ever further not only from nature and natural collectives, but also from non-human animals. Jennifer Wolch writes that urbanisation is directly connected with denaturalisation [Wolch 1998]. As a result, we begin to forget about our non-human nature, and oppose culture to nature, the human to the animal, the town to the country

Mark Mefed
Independent researcher,
Balashikha, Russia
fleainmyhead@gmail.com

¹ It also seems to me that multi-species ethnography works very well in combination with the critical geographies of animals [Wolch, Emel 1998; Philo, Wilbert 2000; Gillespie, Collard 2015; Kopnina 2017; Gillespie 2018].

and multiply various hierarchical dualisms, which affect our relationships. More and more we exploit non-human animals, using them as food, clothing, objects on which we test compounds, and make them engage in affective labour, changing their bodies so that they are better suited for it.

In this case multi-species ethnography can help us cope with our alienation from the non-human, which is ever present within us and an integral part of us.

It is no accident that the literature in English uses the terms *non-human animals* and *human animals*. This is done to a large extent in order to stress what we have in common, that we are all *animals* and have an animal nature. There is a mutual connection, mutual dependency and a long history of mutual relationships between human and non-human animals, which, in view of the mutability of the forms of connection, dependency and relationship requires constant reflection, mapping and permanent description, and multi-species ethnography may form the basis for this.

Multi-species ethnography may also help to recognise from outside the non-human animals that are killed and suffer every day in their millions, and every year in thousands of millions, in order to maintain human culture.

By shedding light on human animals' connection with non-human animals, multi-species ethnography can construct a firmer foundation for a new ethical world view, at the basis of which, in the words of Cary Wolfe, there should not be abilities, agency and the expression of the will, but compassion rooted in our vulnerability and passivity [Wolfe 2010], since multi-species ethnography describes our position within the existing inter-species relations and indicates that at any moment we might change places with non-human animals, becoming "animals before the law" [Wolfe 2012] and "naked life", with which anything at all can be done.

This context brings to mind the first lines of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis (Die Verwandlung)*: "Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt"¹ [Kafka 1915: 1]. Each of us might wake up tomorrow morning and find ourselves a *zoe*, a non-human animal, and insect that might be squashed with a slipper or a newspaper.

Task 2. Multi-species ethnography can help us answer the question of who we are, whom we mean when we say "we".

¹ "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin" [Kafka 1999: 1].

Humanism has left its mark on many spheres of scholarship and on our everyday life and speech. When we say “we”, proposing to rearrange the urban space according to “our” needs, we speak primarily of human animals. When we say “we”, advocating immediate changes in politics, economics, law and other spheres of activity, while we propose changes, in the majority of cases we take only the interests of human animals into account.¹

But who are we really?

Following Timothy Morton [Morton 2017], who, considering solidarity with the non-human, says that we all live in a symbiotic reality with other living creatures, that we are always pursued by them, they follow us about like ghosts, and Margaret Robinson [Robinson 2013], who says that in Mi'kmaq legends there is no gap between animals and people, that humanity/animality is a spectre, we want to say that we are both human and non-human beings.

For Morton solidarity is possible because we can superimpose ourselves on other creatures, that is, understand that they also participate in the creation of our common world. Morton's assertion that solidarity “always-already is” and we need not make any political effort to create it, we have only to realise it, accords very well in its content with multi-species ethnography, which can put forward the very same process, and which can show and describe to us our relationship with other, non-human beings.

For Robinson, non-human animals are our sisters and brothers, capable of bringing up and caring for human animals. And vice versa, non-human animals are the sisters and brothers of human animals, who can also bring up and care for non-human animals. In that sense we are all one big family.

Multi-species ethnography provides a basis for meaning and remembering not only our own interests, when we say “we”, the interests of human beings, but also the interests of non-human beings.

Task 3. Deliberately comparing and inspired by Jameson's cognitive cartography, I wanted to introduce a political dimension to multi-species ethnography [Gillespie 2019].

Multi-species ethnography is not a process that simply shines a light on other non-human beings and describes our interrelationships and life in common spaces, but a process that makes a critical evaluation of them and proposes new forms of interrelationship, passing from pure theory to revolutionary practice.

¹ Often “we” in the dominant discourse refers exclusively to adult white educated heterosexual property-owning males. Humanism bears the imprint of the period in which it was formulated.

In this connection it is worth saying and remembering how critical theory works productively in symbiosis with animal studies. In an article of 2007, written for the opening of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies, Steve Best, Anthony Nocella II, Richard Kahn, Carol Gigliotti and Lisa Kemmerer formulate the ten principles on which critical animal studies are based [Best et al. 2007]. These principles are, on the one hand, a framework for research, and may, on the other, be regarded as the distinguishing characteristics of *critical animal studies*.

In the present instance we are interested only in a few of them. Critical animal studies rejects “pseudo-objective academic analysis by explicitly clarifying its normative values and political commitments, such that there are no positivist illusions whatsoever that theory is disinterested or writing and research is nonpolitical”; it connects “theory to practice, analysis to politics, and the academy to the community”; seeks “to create openings for constructive critical dialogue” on questions relevant to animal liberation and the commonality of oppression in academia, “citizens and grassroots activists; the staffs of policy and social service organizations; and people in private, public, and non-profit sectors”. Critical animal studies considers that only through “new paradigms of ecopedagogy, bridge-building with other social movements, and a solidarity-based alliance politics, is it possible to build the new forms of consciousness, knowledge, social institutions that are necessary to dissolve the hierarchical society that has enslaved this planet for the last ten thousand years.”

In my opinion, neither can multi-species ethnography stand aside from politics; it must be loaded with political obligations. Even if you have published a hundred articles using multi-species ethnography to describe human-non-human commonality, only “the scraps on the bottom of the dish”, a political position and activism “will say what you” really “think about violence” and the position of the non-human collectives in current socio-politico-economic conditions.

Aesthetics and art as instruments of multi-species ethnography

It is important to remember that the non-human and non-human animals are not transparent and are withdrawn: however much we find out about them, there remains something that is inaccessible to us, that we cannot predict, in their behaviour and relationships. In this sense we are close to Graham Harman’s thought and his healthy scepticism fixed in the assertion that we have no direct access to real objects [Harman 2002; 2005; 2011; 2018].

At the same time, Harman does of course propose a particular variant of interaction with the inaccessibility and withdrawal

of objects. He turns to aesthetics, saying that that might be the sphere in which objects might be partially manifested to each other, without revealing themselves entirely. In that case art becomes a guide to the revelation of hidden aspects, presenting objects in new and unexpected forms. It is not without importance that metaphor plays a central role in Harman's theory: it allows certain objects temporarily to represent or hint at other objects, without revealing them completely.

These are all important ideas which, it seems to me, may be useful to multi-species ethnography. It can rely on the aesthetic perception and description of the non-human. But in that case, for example, the text itself with the description should have a different appearance. On the one hand, it should be maximally metaphorical, and here we have a good example in the works of Donna Haraway [Haraway 2003; 2008; 2016], who works with philosophical texts as literature. On the other hand, it should be maximally detailed, inspired by the realism/naturalism of Émile Zola with his meticulous description of space, by Latour's litanies, and also, as far as possible, construct long verbal, participial, gerundial series of words¹ without punctuation marks to slow the glide across the text.

picking our way penetrating moving wandering creeping over the slippery bloodsoaked field we see a pig at first sight such an ordinary creature it opens up before us a terrifying microcosm of cruelty and pain a complex and multilayered world in which it was born and awaits its final hours the tragedy of reality the pig is the victim of the system its body is the central link in the chain of consumption and murder bearing in itself the stamp of humanism its body covered in mud scars blood reflects cruelty bloody traces stains lines left on the concrete recall the way of suffering wrapping penetrating its short life leaving behind it a thin red trace shining under the artificial light recalling bloody dew on the morning human meadow its soft trembling body shuddering with fear and pain its every movement a symphony of suffering consisting of thousands of tiny attempts at resistance the pig creates new forms and structures of horror imperceptible to the human eye cold lit by fluorescent lamps the darkness of abattoirs where under heavy drops of blood suffering weariness the pig moves unhurriedly

Conclusion

Multi-species ethnography as a research method can help us to understand and describe inter-species relations and our place within them, provide a basis for respectful mutual relationships, devoid of exploitation an domination, and for political actions, resistance and

¹ Series of adjectives, nouns, adverbs and other parts of speech.

struggle in the case where the existing relationships are relationships of domination, exploitation and inequality, and it can also help us to understand how our identities have been formed and continue to be formed under the influence of nature-culture, and are a hybrid of the human and non-human.

References

- Best S., Nocella II A. J., Kahn R., Gigliotti C. A., Kemmerer L., 'Introducing Critical Animal Studies', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 2007, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 4–5.
- Gillespie K., *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 259 pp.
- Gillespie K., 'For a Politicized Multispecies Ethnography: Reflections on a Feminist Geographic Pedagogical Experiment', *Politics and Animals*, 2019, vol. 5, pp. 17–32.
- Gillespie K., Collard R.-C. (eds), *Critical Animal Geographies: Politics, Intersections, and Hierarchies in a Multispecies World*. London: Routledge, 2015, 234 pp.
- Haraway D., *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, 65 pp.
- Haraway D., *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 423 pp.
- Haraway D., *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2016, XV+296 pp.
- Harman G., *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*. Chicago; La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2002, 256 pp.
- Harman G., *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2005, 296 pp.
- Harman G., *The Quadruple Object*. Winchester; Washington, D.C.: Zero Books, 2011, VII+148 pp.
- Harman G., *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*. London: Pelican, 2018, 295 pp.
- Jameson F., *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991, 461 pp.
- Kafka F., *Die Verwandlung*. Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1915, 78 S.
- Kafka F., *The Metamorphosis*. Planet eBook, 1999. <<https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/the-metamorphosis.pdf>>.
- Kopnina H., 'Beyond Multispecies Ethnography: Engaging with Violence and Animal Rights in Anthropology', *Critique of Anthropology*, 2017, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 333–357.
doi: 10.1177/0308275X17723973.
- Morton T., *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. London; New York: Verso, 2017, 224 pp.
- Philo C., Wilbert C. (eds), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*. London; New York: Routledge, 2000, 310 pp.

- Robinson M., 'Veganism and Mi'kmaq legends', *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 2013, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 189–196.
- Wolch J. R., 'Zoöpolis', Wolch J. R., Emel J. (eds), *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-culture Borderlands*. London; New York: Verso, 1998, pp. 119–138.
- Wolch J. R., Emel J. (eds), *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*. London; New York: Verso, 1998, 310 pp.
- Wolfe C., *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 400 pp.
- Wolfe C., *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012, 152 pp.

EVA MEIJER

1

I am a philosopher who writes about animals, politics and language. One of the things I found out in my research is that many nonhuman animal species and communities have their own languages and that there are multispecies language-games between humans and other animals [Meijer 2019]. This is not recognized as language, which is not a lack on the side of the animals, but a result of unequal power relations. Humans have silenced other beings (also plants), and ignored and suppressed their agency, as part of a larger trajectory of domination. In the past ten years, I found a great change in how questions about animal agency, politics and language are approached in philosophy, anthropology and beyond: there is much more attention for animal subjectivity and multispecies intersubjectivity. This is for example visible in attention for animal resistance, forming multispecies communities, and animal agency more broadly. One challenge is to expand the view to other living beings such as plants and fungi, without flattening ethical and political differences. Another challenge is to “think with” animals: develop forms of theory that include their perspective on what is studied and how the study is set up. This is necessary so as not to replicate anthropocentrism in science and society.

Eva Meijer

University of Amsterdam,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
e.r.meijer@uva.nl

2

Multispecies ethnography is well-suited and needed to complement the critical task of

philosophy by turning the gaze towards what other animals want from us. For a long time, research took the human stand point as its starting point, and this has distorted what we know about animals. For example, if you study “language” by investigating how good other animals are at human language, you will not learn a lot about their languages and reinforce the idea that they do not have anything to say. In order to overcome prejudice, we need embodied and situated dialogues with other animals. To engage with other animals in a way that is ethically just we also need philosophy — for example through a critique of existing power relations, and in sketching other political systems. There are already projects in which humans aim to live and think differently with other animals, for example in animal sanctuaries.

3

The first thing to recognise is that our world is and always has been multispecies. Our societies, history, language, art and forms of thinking are influenced by animal and other nonhuman forms of agency. There is no “human” world. Secondly, we need new methods of engaging with these others, politically, but also in education and care, including health care. We live in an age in which we increasingly find out that human flourishing is entangled with the flourishing of others. In order to respect these others and survive, we need to develop a new attitude as humans. In the context of education this for example means we need multi-species education: respectful forms of learning with and about our fellow beings. In the context of politics, we need multispecies assemblies, in which other beings are consulted about their position on questions of common concern. In the context of academic thinking, this means we need to find ways of research that do not exploit others, hold them captive, and treat them in colonial ways, but search for research that is mutually beneficial, caring, and perhaps fun.

4

I am not an expert on Russian academia, but as an outsider I would say the political situation in Russia makes it difficult to imagine and work towards more caring and just forms of co-existence with nonhuman beings. I am writing from the Netherlands, where we have a Party for the Animals representing nonhuman animals in parliament, city councils and other political institutions. This does not automatically lead to change for animals, and we have much animal exploitation in this country, but it does make possible new conversations about them, in society but also academia. In philosophy there is much attention for the political side of animal scholarship at the moment, in political philosophy where animals by scholars such as Donaldson and Kymlicka [Donaldson, Kymlicka 2011] are seen as members of shared society, or living in their own societies. But also, in philosophy of science, where scholars such as Vinciane Despret [Despret 2016] and Donna Haraway

[Haraway 2008] challenge masculine, anthropocentric and patriarchal bias in knowledge production.

5

I have more or less answered this question in all my answers above. Knowledge production has long favoured the human, which has led to anthropocentric bias. Overcoming that, and getting a better view of “animals”, requires critical thinking and engaging differently with nonhuman beings. Being able to engage differently with nonhuman and humans asks for political activism, but also new forms of art, literature, and using the imagination in general. We live in a time in which very large numbers of animals are exploited in horrific ways. Changing this should be our priority as humans, when possible, and is interconnected with ending other forms of exploitation, of humans and nature. Perhaps in a more just and caring world we can separate scholarship and political activism, but we should always be careful not to repeat oppression towards others.

References

- Despret V., *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, 280 pp.
- Donaldson S., Kymlicka W., *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 329 pp.
- Haraway D., *When Species Meet.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 423 pp.
- Meijer E., *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy.* New York: New York University Press, 2019, 304 pp.

HENRIETTA MONDRY

1

My research on the relationships between humans and other species is based on interdisciplinary human-animal studies. I have authored a book on the representation of dogs in Russian culture, *Political Animals* [Mondry 2015] as well as a number of articles that deal with a range of topics in interaction of humans and animals, all of which study human-animal relations on the level of the material and the symbolic. Specifically, I have focused on companion animals, animal exploitation, speciesism in the choice of animals we protect, including choices for de-extinction, and intersections between speciesism and racialism.

Henrietta Mondry

University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand
henrietta.mondry@canterbury.ac.nz

For example, I have studied issues of *exploiting* service dogs in police and prison systems. This

topic has been researched in relation to totalitarian and oppressive societies such as apartheid South Africa and the GULAG system in the Soviet Union [van Sittert, Swart 2007; Mondry 2015]. In Soviet underground literature, Georgii Vladimov's *Vernyy Ruslan (Faithful Ruslan)* [Vladimov 1975] presents an example of addressing this topic with important insights into the impossibility to undo the damaging results of dog training employed by the Soviet handlers. This type of human-animal interaction has important implications for anthropology as it shows interspecies commonality in issues of long-lasting effects of training and indoctrination. These studies of parallel brutalisation of prison guards, policemen, inmates and dogs challenge some key precepts of *anthropocentrism*.

Thinking of main changes in studies of *animal domestication* that relate to *neighbouring species* Raymond and Lorna Coppingers' book *What is a Dog?* [Coppinger, Coppinger 2016] presents an important case because it challenges the scheme of human domination and hegemonic agency in the process of animal domestication. On the basis of their study in the countries of the Global South, the Coppingers demonstrate the reversal of the human-dog subjectivities related to initiating the choice of domesticated object. The so-called "village dogs" who lead independent existences from humans and comprise the largest dog population in the world (85 % of all dogs) adopt humans of their choice rather than being chosen by humans. In order to prevent the spread of zoonic diseases veterinarians in the rural townships of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa vaccinate these village dogs as a measure that could be viewed as an example of partial domestication of neighbouring species that presents a more hybrid case of cross-species co-existence. This research is useful not only for the subfield of multispecies ethnographies but for the wider studies of the role of co-evolution between canines and humans. These case studies present a new understanding of categories such as *domesticated and neighbouring species* showing the fuzziness of borders between categories applied to human-animal interaction.

Current scholarship pays significant attention to the issue of *speciesism*. The new directions depart from the original focus in Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* [Singer 1975] upon negative effects of discrimination against exploited farm animals and deal with the notions of *charismatic species* that we, as humans, empathise with because of their aesthetic appeal or the cases of *flagship species* that are under the danger of extinction thus establishing new hierarchies, categories and even classification of species. The process paradoxically goes contrary to the call to get rid of classification of species which has had a damaging effect on the human-animal relations and played a role in the construct of categorisations applied to humans, such as "race" [Wasserman 2003].

At the same time, there is a growth of studies that deal with “animal nationalism” [Dalziell, Wadiwel 2017] that demonstrate the misplaced use of animal advocacy in order to create hierarchies between human societies. By studying export and transportation of cattle from “civilised” countries like Australia to Asian countries, researchers observe that the animal suffering discourse is positioned to generate racial and cultural boundaries. Such research both builds on and departs from Singer’s thinking on speciesism which, according to him, operates in society in the same manner as racism. It shows that in the debates about who kills their animals “the right way” we are left with the tacit acceptance that the animals do not require saving in general but they require saving from “non-white others”. My own work on materiality in the construct of the Jewish body and the body of the ethnic other deals with the cases of using culture-specific practices of animal slaughter as a way to create racialised discourse [Mondry 2021].

2

The main task of multispecies ethnography and research on relationships between human and non-human animals is to discover mutual advantages of interspecies co-existence. I cannot see major disadvantages in researching human-animal relations from historical or scientific perspective, nor from studying representation of human-animal relations in literature and art. It is a commonplace popularised knowledge that as species humans evolved in contact with other species; learning of the role of nonhuman animals in our evolutionary process will enhance our understanding of the necessity of balanced interaction with other species.

Recent psychological research related to the *hypothesis of biophilia* demonstrates mutual benefits in human-animal interaction. The biophilia hypothesis makes the case that humans have an innate emotional affiliation with other life forms, including animals. The early and inherent attraction to animals (demonstrated by the experiments with children aged 1–3) suggests that humans might have evolved to think differently about animals relative to inanimate objects [Herzog 2011]. Our connection to non-human animals exists at an instinctual level. Strikingly, not only humans are interested and attracted to young animals but animals may exploit some of the mechanisms designed to care for other humans [Bastian, Amiot 2020].

Some case studies can have a major impact on such key categories studied by anthropologists as the role of hunting vs foraging in the history of *human development and evolution*. One such case study in progress is conducted by South African anthropologists who examine the role of ostrich eggs in shaping the human embryo development in ancient hunter-gatherer societies in sub-Saharan Africa — “the cradle of humankind”. The study shows that the size

of the human embryos' heads increased as a result of inclusion of this specific protein in the human diet. The additional value of the study is in demonstrating the role which women played in providing food in contrast to a performative role of the male hunt that was not necessary linked to the issue of food supply. This is a striking example of rational use of nature's resources, of taking from the animals what they can provide us with without harming them — the notion that some contemporary non-radical feminist theologians-ecologists advocate as a form of human-animal coexistence [Hobgood-Oster 2010].

In terms of possible advantages of research on human-animal interaction and multispecies ethnographies in contemporary Russia, I see the role that the field of *animal de-extinction* can play for the improvement of economic conditions of the Siberian Yukaghirs [Shapiro 2015]. As I have argued in my paper on de-extinction of mammoths in the Republic of Sakha the resources needed for the research and scientific work on de-extinction of mammoths could be spent on the support and involvement of local ethnic groups in this process [Mondry 2017]. While the Sakha Republic's wealth depends to a great degree on diamond mining that is ecologically problematic, creation of parks and zones that could host the wildlife and rehabilitate the landscape would bring economic benefits to human populations at risk of extinction.

In terms of benefits that anthropologists can have from learning from other scholarly fields, fiction and visual arts clearly play one of the important roles. Studies of folktales, fairytales and belief systems that normally have *anthropomorphic* dimensions should also be considered. There is a need to reevaluate the notion of *anthropomorphism* in appreciation of other species be it animals, plants or fungi. In *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* John Simons makes an important point in his defence of *anthropomorphism* as a representational strategy. He asserts that anthropomorphism “is perhaps the most powerful, important and multifaceted tool for development of a discourse” which might make a contribution to the end of discrimination against all species, human and non-human, in the “world in which literature is generated and which it reflects” [Simons 2002: 139]. Representational work, such as fiction and art, creates a case for the value of anthropomorphism in the socialisation of children and cultivating empathy. Anthropological work can build on this knowledge and study the effect and impact that learned material has on the development of ecological imagination, selfhood and ethics.

Social sciences research on companion animals including parallel cases of family violence and animal abuse has a great deal to learn from literary studies.

- 3 In order to “lend a voice” to nonhumans anthropology has to move in the direction of complex interdisciplinarity. Research in natural sciences and psychology contributes to the task of lending a voice to other species as it has been established that non-human animals have the ability to communicate in their own acoustic and sign languages. Anthropological studies of shamanism, ritualistic trance and performance by focusing on human embodied expressions of non-human essence can be viewed as an act of lending a voice to other species. Rock paintings and other representational arts have been lending a voice to animals for millennia and by interpreting pictorial images scholars lend a lost voice to both human and nonhuman animals. Following ethologists, anthropologists can study the *mutual cross-species effects* of verbal and non-verbal communication that manifest in imitation of sounds, signs, and other form of corporeal mimicry. Lending a voice to other species should be underpinned by the understanding that “human tongue, mouth, and brain mechanisms that regulate speech production and syntax evolved from the tongues, mouths and brains of archaic humanlike animals” [Lieberman 1991: 3].
- 4 If we extend “the Russian context” to be inclusive of the vast Eurasian territory with its numerous ethnic and language groups, and if the intent is to follow current developments in global human-animal studies and critical plant studies, then the necessity will arise to integrate *issues of decolonisation* into anthropological interspecies studies. The directions in interspecies ethnographies in this context consist of studying new created zones of interaction that require cultivation of native plants, changes in livestock and breeds of domestic animals, including controversial *back-breeding* and *rewilding* — the process that may lead to re-establishing and learning of “ancestral” skills and changes in the construction of the self and community. This process means creation of new zones for anthropological field work and research.
- 5 Thinking about the dynamic between scholarly research and political activism, we should not conflate *animal advocacy* with *political activism* that can be self-serving. Historical evidence exists that humans have been concerned with the issues of cruelty towards animals for millennia. Recent are the health concerns linked to consumption of meat-animals that rose to prominence mainly in the last 50 years. The rapidly-spreading environmental concerns are even more recent and address the entanglement of issues of animal well-being, such as industrial farming, and ecology. However, this area is full of “messy” paradoxes. Studies in moral psychology have shown that even in issues of meat-animal suffering humans hesitate to accept the hypothetical options of eating meat resultant from the modification of animals leading to creation of breeds that do not experience physical pain and are not capable of suffering [Holden,

Herzog 2020]. The human-created notion of “naturalness” that intersects with the love of nature paradoxically contributes to the continuation of animal suffering. Anthropological research can make an important contribution to understanding relationship of humans to their food as one of many disciplines that shapes the world that is kinder to animals.

The best way of separating scholarship from misplaced activism is to separate fact, fiction and hypothesis. *Biophilia* is a hypothesis, and it turns out that the widespread belief in western cultures that keeping companion animals is good for human physical and mental health can be treated as hypothesis only [Herzog 2011]. The belief is based on individual self-reporting rather than on systematic studies, with some of those proving the contrary. If empathy towards animals is the result of human evolution, then activism as a form of animal advocacy can take the form of rational discourse.

References

- Bastian B., Amiot C., ‘The Animal in Me: Understanding What Brings Us Closer and Pushes Us Away from Other Animals’, Dhont K., Hodson G. (eds), *Why We Love and Exploit Animals*. London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 9–28.
- Coppinger R., Coppinger L., *What Is a Dog?* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016, XVIII+258 pp.
- Dalziell J., Wadiwel D. J., ‘Live Exports, Animal Advocacy, Race and “Animal Nationalism”’, Potts A. (ed.), *Meat Culture*. Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2017, pp. 73–89. doi: 10.1163/9789004325852-005.
- Herzog H., ‘The Impact of Pets on Human Health and Psychological Well-being: Fact, Fiction or Hypothesis?’, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 2011, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 236–239. doi: 10.1177/0963721411415220.
- Hobgood-Oster L., *The Friends We Keep: Unleashing Christianity’s Compassion to Animals*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, 245 pp.
- Holden C. J., Herzog H., ‘Featherless Chickens and Puppies that Glow in the Dark: Moral Heuristics and the Concept of Animal “Naturalness”’, Dhont K., Hodson G. (eds), *Why We Love and Exploit Animals*. London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 137–153.
- Lieberman P., *Uniquely Human: The Evolution of Speech, Thought and Selfless Behaviour*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, 210 pp.
- Mondry H., *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture*. Amsterdam: Brill, 2015, 432 pp.
- Mondry H., ‘Selecting Candidates for De-extinction and Resurrection: Mammoths, Lenin’s Tomb and Neo-Eurasianism’, *Animal Studies Journal*, 2017, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 12–39.
- Mondry H., *Embodied Differences: The Jew’s Body and Materiality*. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2021, 234+XXII pp.

- Shapiro B., *How to Clone a Mammoth: The Science of De-extinction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 220 pp.
- Simons J., *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*. London: Palgrave, 2002, XII+218 pp.
- Singer P., *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York: Avon Books, 1975, XIX+297 pp.
- van Sittert L., Swart S., *Canis Africanus: A Dog History in Southern Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 295 pp.
- Vladimov G. N., *Vernyy Ruslan: istoriya karaulnoy sobaki* [Faithful Ruslan: The Story of a Guard Dog]. Frankfurt am Main: Posev, 1975, 173 pp. (In Russian).
- Wasserman D., 'Species and Race, Chimeras and Multiracial People', *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 2003, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 13–14. doi: 10.1162/15265160360706741.

TAMAR NOVICK

1

Animals were foundational to conceptualising and structuring my PhD dissertation, which then developed into a book. Centering on how agricultural technologies were used to recreate a biblical plenty — the Holy Land in modern Palestine, it mainly features water buffalos, honeybees, goats, sheep, and cows. These and other animal species, such as horses, ostriches, and orangutans, have accompanied my various research projects and interpretation of the world ever since. I became accustomed to considering animals as subjects of historical research during my graduate school training. At the time (late 2000s and early 2010s), within the history and sociology of science program in which I was trained, various kinds of animals, like the fruit fly and laboratory mice, appeared in many books we read, and several other dissertations were centered on them. Writing about the specific context of Palestine/Israel, in which historical narratives are very polarised, animals were very useful Trojan horses, so to speak. Since they seem neutral and unthreatening, and at time not even taken seriously as research subjects (unlike generals, politicians, or great scientists, for example), I was able to easily overcome archival gatekeeping and write political histories that go beyond the conventions and focus on discrimination, racism, gender,

and knowledge hierarchies. Animals, in other words, emerge not only as research topics, but as a methodology.

History of science and environmental history are the two main fields I identify with. Within the history of science, most of the work on animals has centered on animals as model organisms,¹ but in recent years, more attention is paid to animals outside of laboratory contexts, including in field and the farm, and in broader, increasingly also global, contexts. Within environmental history, animals have been crucial for analysing and explaining global imperialism and colonialism.² As these fields of study gradually merge — as the history of science has become more interested in the environment, and environmental history has become more interested in knowledge production processes — animals seem to have become naturalised as research subjects, not only in the natural sciences; it has become hard to consider writing histories of science and the environment without paying attention to them.

2

The focus on animals has played the fundamental role of challenging the boundary between nature and culture. This tendency has been particularly strong within the history of science, a field that is dedicated to historicising and contextualising our understanding of the natural world. Since animals are often understood as proxies for nature, the attempts to study them is key to forming scientific truths about nature. Observing sexual behavior and gender types in nature, that is, in animals (or plants), for example, has been motivated by, but also shaped the understanding and gender and sexuality conventions in human society [Schiebinger 1993]. Since anthropology's central goal is the analysis of culture — the other side of the same coin — animals could potentially be as fundamental to anthropological research in a similar manner.

3

The question of agency and the problem of anthropomorphising have occupied historians writing about animals for a long time (since the late 1980s, in fact). How can animal voices be rescued from archival traces? How can humans represent these voices in the first place? Some of the most interesting interventions went beyond the standard tools of historical research and suggested to combine research approaches from the natural sciences, such as ethology — the study of animal behaviour [Benson 2011]. But while discussions on agency and anthropomorphism have substantially enriched the scholarship, they will likely always remain somewhat open, and that is okay, because there are new questions about animals that are waiting to be answered, such as what kinds of historical or anthropological questions animals are particularly good for. The genre of

¹ See: [Kohler 1994]; for a recent historiographical essay see: [Creager 2022].

² See, for example: [Anderson 2004; Fischer 2015; Woods 2017].

animal biography, which has developed substantially in recent years and in which I am invested, is a good example of a format that allows to ask new questions about the human-animal boundary, about what means to be humans, and about the limits of historical research. Can we consider an animal not only as an agent, but also as an individual historical subject that has an independent life story that could be told? What sources could historians use to not only lend a voice, but narrate specific, at times private and at times public, past lives, and in what ways were these lives lived and experienced differently from others?

4

The humanistic and social science scholarship on animals has focused on the English-speaking world and one Europe and North America for a good while, especially as far as history is concerned, and most prominently within the field of environmental history. In the last couple of decades, with the rise of the anthropological species turn and the historical global turn, a substantial body of work on other, including Global-South contexts, has begun to emerge. For Middle East studies, a field of research that has been for long spearheaded by philology and political economy approaches, animals became a legitimate research topic only very recently.¹ A similar dynamic might well be at play in the Russian context, even if other circumstances might be shaping the direction of the field. A growing concern about climate change (even if that concern is not similar across contexts) has made “environmental topics” more prominent across disciplines, making animals more prone to becoming research topics. As environmental anthropology has been gaining more traction across the board, animals are likely to become more central also to scholarship on Russia, on its particular environmental nature, and on Russia in relation to the global contexts.

5

Many, if not most, of the animal scholars I met over the years were motivated by an animal rights ethics. This is an obvious connection between animal scholarship and activism, but other kinds certainly exist, especially when research is conducted in places and cases where animals have cultural and economic significance. The results of research in such circumstances have an inherent political role, in the broad sense of understanding politics. I have chosen animals as a way to write political histories exactly because they are unlikely political subjects, at least on the face of it. Yet the histories of the America bison and the Palestinian black herding goats are highly political, even in the narrow sense of the word, as their management as persecution paralleled violent policies enacted towards indigenous populations that owned and lived with them [Isenberg 2000; Novick 2023: 47–76]. In this sense, and regardless of animal rights activism,

¹ See, for example: [Dolbee 2023].

and as far as academic work could count as activism, scholarship on animals has a great potential to be considered as or be included within political action.

References

- Anderson V. D., *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, XI+322 pp.
- Benson E., 'Animal Writes: Historiography, Disciplinarity, and the Animal Trace', Kalof L., Montgomery G. M. (eds), *Making Animal Meaning: The Animal Turn*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2011, pp. 3–16.
- Creager A. N. H., 'Model Organisms Unbound', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 2022, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 21–28.
doi: 10.1007/s10739-022-09675-8.
- Dolbee S., *Locusts of Power: Borders, Empire, and Environment in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 336 pp.
- Fischer J. R., *Cattle Colonialism: An Environmental History of the Conquest of California and Hawai'i*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015, XIV+266 pp.
- Isenberg A. C., *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750–1920*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 218 pp.
- Kohler R. E., *Lords of the Fly: Drosophila Genetics and the Experimental Life*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994, XV+321 pp.
- Novick T., *Milk and Honey: Technologies of Plenty in the Making of a Holy Land*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2023, 262 pp.
- Schiebinger L., 'Why Mammals Are Called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History', *American Historical Review*, 1993, vol. 98, no. 2, pp. 382–411. doi: 10.2307/2166840.
- Woods R. G. H., *The Herds Shot Round the World: Native Breeds and the British Empire, 1800–1900*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, 233 pp.

STEPAN PETRYAKOV

1

First of all, it is always worth speaking not about individual living creatures, but about some sort of zones of contact between humans and non-humans, spaces of becoming, to use Deleuze's popular term. These might be monoculture plantations, livestock raising farms, logging sites, fishing grounds, scientific laboratories, zones of radioactive contamination and chemical pollution. That is, whatever could be called landscapes of the anthropocene, or even

Stepan Petryakov

European University
at St Petersburg /
SI RAS — FCTAS RAS,
St Petersburg, Russia
spetryakov@eu.spb.ru

the capitalocene. By studying them we shall avoid the danger of fetishising a particular species and proceed the more complicated analysis of the relations between humans and non-humans and also of those structural forces that form them. At this level I recall the “Feral Atlas” project, in which a group of artists and researchers from different fields of the social and natural sciences are working on demonstrating that every event in human history was a more than human event.¹ It is noteworthy that here there are no specific histories of non-human living creatures as such. On the contrary, there is a wide range of examples of inter-species relations, placed in the context of capitalist trade and industry, colonial expansion, wars and ecological catastrophes. This might be the distribution of non-human species by the trans-Atlantic transport network, the role of farm cats in projects of colonial settlement or the result of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station on the wild berries that end up in the breakfasts of contemporary Americans. From this position there is no point in simply changing the main hero of the anthropological narrative from man to cow, shall we say. Of course, if we perform such an operation, we can declare that we have “given a voice” to another species. Here, however, in my view, a serious danger lies in wait. It consists of the extrapolation to other species of a “too human” politics of identity and affirmative action, the results of which are quite contradictory, not to say dubious (see: [Haider 2018; Táíwò 2022]).

At the same time, we should not forget that the actual human viewpoint is not something homogeneous and unambiguous. In other words, when we pluralise the non-human world, we should not lose sight of how humans are always divided on class, race and gender lines, or of how that system of division affects interrelationships with non-human actors. These are quite obvious things for socio-anthropological analysis, and they are probably still quite anthropocentric. But I encourage myself with Terry Eagleton’s witty remark: “Men and women are indeed in some ways more creative than hedgehogs. They are also unspeakably more destructive, and for much the same reasons. Those who deny the former are at risk of ignoring the latter” [Eagleton 2017: 12].

2

I suppose that the main task of multi-species ethnography should be to supplement the critical relational analysis of other ontological foundations. Thanks to attention paid to other species, we can defamiliarise our established habits of thought. In essence, it is all the same critical work with regard to suppositions about the nature of social life that are taken for granted that Pierre Bourdieu once called *doxa*, and Marx *ideology*. On what bases are the hierarchies

¹ <<https://feralatlus.org/>>.

between different life-forms constructed? Who determines the boundary between the living and the non-living, and how? When we have an answer to those questions, the possibility of a radically different view of the well-known histories of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism will open up before us. We shall have the ability to see how profoundly the “achievements” of human sociality are rooted in the worlds of other living creatures. This is the tonality in which, for example, the historian Jason Moore, the inventor of the concepts of the capitalocene and cheap nature, is working [Moore 2015]. He shows how the logic of added value is built into the opposition between nature and culture, the categorisation of species and the hidden labour of non-humans. According to Moore, exploitative relations may be perpetuated only by the camouflaged labour of non-human beings. In this respect I can see a clear connection between multi-species research and feminist criticism. The multi-species perspective overall has a chance to be an important “reassembly point” of anthropological research today, since it allows the denaturalisation of many of the ideological assumptions that lie at the root of the current climate crisis. Finally, in a more-than-human world the ideas of alienable “resources”, constant progress or private property do not appear as something natural and predetermined. Recalling the well-known image of Michel Foucault, history (multi-species history) could wash them away as a wave washes away a face drawn in the sand.

3

In my view, it is essential to master new methods and dimensions of writing. In this context one should not forget Geertz’s maxim: “What does the ethnographer do? He writes!” Take note that Anna Tsing’s *Mushroom at the End of the World* [Tsing 2015], as multi-species ethnography, is one of the chief anthropological works of the past decade. Moreover, Tsing’s book is also an excellent example of experimental ethnographical writing. In my view, the strength of this text is that in many ways it imitates that which it intends to write about — the commercial chain of the matsutake mushroom. The composition of Tsing’s book, which she calls “a riot of short chapters” imitates the mushrooms’ sporadic growth after rain, or that very entanglement of which some anthropologists today so often write. The reader is introduced to the complex world of the mushroom trade in part thanks to the way the text is written. In just the same way another excellent work, *Porkopolis* by Alex Blanchette [Blanchette 2020], an ethnography of industrial pig-breeding, is inspired at the level of its composition by the life cycle of the industrial pig. Finally, Michael Taussig’s *Palma Africana* [Taussig 2018], on the expansion of monocultural agriculture in Colombia, has no chapters at all, but is what Taussig himself calls “a serpentine text”. That is a text that imitates the violence of agribusiness towards Colombian peasants. It is typical that in the case of multi-species

ethnography we are often dealing with mimetic writing, texts that literally absorb their own “objects of study”, depict them and thereby present them. It is in the imitation of other creatures at the level of the actual material of the language that I find one of the possible ways of creating a beyond human anthropology.

Generally speaking, it is easy to discover that there is a long genealogy to the connections between ethnographical writing and multi-species research. Thus, if we consider defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) to be a key device in an ethnographical text, we cannot help remembering Viktor Shklovsky, who invented the term. In his *Theory of Prose*, the Russian formalist illustrates how the method of defamiliarisation works, using Tolstoy’s story *Kholstomer*¹ [Shklovsky 1990 (1929): 7]. As we know, this is a text written in the person of a horse. It is entertaining how Shklovsky places the accent on the way the gelding, with profound incomprehension, considers the institution of private property. As a result, we achieve an effect thanks to which received social relations no longer appear something to be taken for granted, but appear denaturalised, that is to say defamiliarised. In this way, in Tolstoy the horse’s point of view makes capitalist common sense problematic and undermines its hegemony. That is, the more-than-human perspective reveals the absurdity of the human world, in which both humans and non-humans are reduced to the status of commodities. It all looks very fresh and anthropological. So does that mean that anthropologists have something to learn from Tolstoy?

4

One can see the main reason in the very way the question is asked — the peripheral status of Russian anthropology, caused by the worldwide division of academic labour and the history of the formation of the discipline in Russia. The situation that has come about has its obvious drawbacks, but there are also advantages. The main one in my view is the possibility of taking a calm interest in the discussions of the academic center or core (to use Immanuel Wallerstein’s term). This concerns not only multi-species ethnography, but everything that has happened to the discipline since *writing culture*. On the one hand, this sort of interest will not allow us naïvely to follow in the wake of Euro-American academic fashion, largely engaged in ceremonial citation and in repeating clichés to suit the market in English-language publications. On the other, a sober curiosity will save Russian anthropology from the danger of theoretical poverty and isolation. Here there is another important factor. As I see it, “global trends in anthropology” are often based on an original work with “big” philosophical ideas in new political and economic conditions. Behind multi-species ethnography, for example, one can

¹ Sometimes translated *Strider*, though *Yardstick* would be closer to the original (the horse’s name refers to the fact that his trot was so even you could measure lengths of linen by it). [Eds].

divine a critique of the modern dualisms of the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, the subject and object, nature and culture. This is a multi-faceted and contradictory project. In it humanity loses its privileged place in the world, as assumed by classical European metaphysics. Instead of this, as in Spinoza, there is a single substance and its infinite modes, to which any hierarchical order is foreign. Therefore, everything becomes important — the wind, insects, cliffs, liquids, dogs. It is by no means necessary to agree with this, but it is not productive to ignore the existence of such discussions.

In conclusion, I shall stress once more: behind multi-species ethnography there lurks a range of very serious political and theoretical positions, which must be taken into account. The multi-species turn is only the visible edge of everything that has been happening in critical social knowledge over the past thirty years. It is logical that a careful attitude to this tendency may be followed by the wider discussions of theory, method and writing that are so necessary to Russian anthropology.

References

- Blanchette A., *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020, 320 pp.
- Eagleton T., *Materialism*. New Haven, CT: YUP, 2017, 192 pp.
- Haider A., *Mistaken Identity: Mass Movements and Racial Ideology*. London: Verso, 2018, 146 pp.
- Moore J., *Capitalism in the Web of Life*. London: Verso, 2015, 336 pp.
- Shklovsky V., *O teorii prozy* [On the Theory of Prose]. Moscow: Federatsiya, 1929, 265 pp.
- Taussig M., *Palma Africana*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 258 pp.
- Táiwò O., *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2022, 168 pp.
- Tsing A. L., *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 352 pp.

MILENA PUGINA

It seems to me that the story of how I “ended up” in animal research is extremely indicative for an understanding of inter-species ethnography, and anthropology as a whole. It all began when, engaged in the study of the city, I was walking about St Petersburg in search of something to interest me as a researcher. In the end I chose the garden of the Academy of Arts,

Milena Pugina

St Petersburg State University,
St Petersburg, Russia
milenapugina.ru@gmail.com

which intrigued me with its constructed “secrecy” and its high walls and by the fact that although it is part of the Academy, it is freely accessible to be visited by anyone who passes by. In this garden there are stables built in the nineteenth century so that the artists of the Academy’s battle painting studio could draw horses “from life”. In the Soviet period it briefly ceased to function, but it was renewed by interested employees of the Academy in the 1990s. It seemed to me at first that the stables in the garden, and the horses that lived in them, were only one of the aspects that made this “secret” place in the city interesting. However, the more I went out “into the field” and observed the garden, the more I found that all my field notes and hypotheses were leading me unfailingly to them. For the horses, the garden is “home”, at least as that word is understood by human beings, and not just a garden for taking walks in, whereas people would come in occasionally to spend some time in a congenial park. Ignoring that fact is disrespectful, and from the point of view of research over-hasty.

Here, however, I was faced with a question. How could I include non-human actors in my research? How to give them a “voice”? I could not ask them questions, as I do to human informants of either sex. Technically, I could use the methods of non-participant observation, but that gives rise to another problem: how, by what words and concepts, to interpret what I see? It is understood that this question faces every anthropologist who is engaged in observation outside his or her own culture. And that, presumably, is also a peculiarity of inter-species ethnography: we think that researchers and non-humans are too different, that we are unable to interpret each other’s actions without possessing some sort of special knowledge. It is hard to tell, though, between whom the communicational barrier is “higher”: between me and my dog or between me and an inhabitant of a remote village somewhere in Brazil. Still, as a researcher I would feel more confident of my capability and knowledge if I were asked to observe life in a small village in Brazil than life in a pack of stray dogs.

Having caught myself in such thoughts and lack of assurance, I decided to begin my work with autoethnography, to see how I act and feel in the presence of animals in urban space, and I discovered that in some cases when I interact with animals I am trying more to tell other people something about myself through this than really to interact. Having observed other visitors to the Academy of Arts garden and a few other parks that are “home” to animals, I understood that most people do the same. This was the origin of my research into the performative practices of interaction between humans and animals in urban space and into how people use this interaction to contrast particular identities, and I am continuing to work on this to the present day.

I am very well aware that in my own scholarly research on the subject of interaction between species I start from a position that is nearer to the anthropocentric, since the object of my research is the performativity of human identity, and my research methods — participant observation and narrative interviews — are used when human beings are studied by human beings. However, in my view, there is a lack of such practical works at the moment. There is a huge amount of theoretical works (though still not enough in comparison with other areas of scholarship) considering what our interaction with animals and other non-human actors might be, if we recognise them as equal participants in the construction of our shared existence, from Donna Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* to Matthew Gandy's *Cyborg Urbanization*. But it seems to me that they all consider a hypothetical future in which we shall be able to change our perspective. Such works are very important, but so is the study of how things are now, how inter-species interaction is organised at this moment, and through what practices it comes about, so as to understand better where next to go and how to get there.

When I have presented my research at various conferences, I have often been met with the question of whether I had used the actor-network theory as understood by Bruno Latour. Although I do not mention it among my sources, I find the ontological equality of the non-human with human subjects to be something greater than a “theoretical framework” for research. It is part of my view of the world, a starting point for all my work. I do not cite Latour, but he can easily be read between the lines of my text. In my view, the future of inter-species ethnography lies in the reception of the key texts of the “ontological turn” as a given in the social sciences and in their application of their theoretical constructs in practice.

The world of the non-human is infinitely rich and includes a vast quantity of different species. Therefore, it should be understood that “non-human actors” is a very generalised term, and trying to find a universal approach to studying the whole group all at once is like trying to find a single approach to the study of all humanity, while ignoring all cultural and other differences. In the anthropology of the non-human, like the anthropology of the human, there are “marginalised” groups of creatures, to which humanity as a whole and researchers in particular pay the least attention, or connect with certain prejudices. One may include in such groups microbes and bacteria, stray animals, rats and cockroaches. I am also guilty of conniving at this sort of “marginalisation”. Once, after a conference at the European University, it was suggested that I should do some research on cockroaches, and I was forced to admit that I would only agree on condition that I would not have to spend much time observing them or to hold them, because at that stage of my life

it would be very difficult for me to overcome the irrational panic that they inspire and the fear I feel towards them.

My work in inter-species ethnography has dealt with horses, large domestic fowl (geese and swans) and squirrels. My colleagues often ask why I do not consider rats, or stray cats and dogs. The answer is quite simple: because I cannot examine “marginalised” animals at the same time as those that are not marginalised, they need completely different approaches that take account of their marginalisation. That does not, however, mean that I have no plans to take up the study of such approaches in future.

In this sense, the perspective of conservation workers and activists seems very important, because their work is connected with interpreting the current state of things within the interaction of people and animals. I do not regard myself as an activist in this field at present, but from my experience of interaction with colleagues who work on animals I can say that it is activism that brings many people to scholarship.

In April 2024, a most remarkable section on critical animal studies was organised at the Twenty-Second “Vectors” Conference for Young Scholars, which was, as far as I know, one of the first in Russia. I had the pleasure of giving one of the few papers with an anthropological perspective at that section. My contribution gave rise to a broad discussion, including participation by a delegation from “Voices for Animals”, a regional conservation organisation. My conservationist colleagues helped me to see my research from another side, that is, to start thinking about how the performative functions of interaction between animals and humans change when the animals are not urban, as in my work, but agricultural. (It is in defending the rights of animals in agriculture that this organisation specialises.)

Therefore, it seems to me that recognising the agency of animals and other non-humans in one’s work, accepting the principle of “radical” inter-species equality (Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*) means giving them a “voice”, and that is in itself already close to activism.

LIDIYA RAKHMANOVA

I have “plans” for those animals: on the ineffectiveness and courage of multi-species ethnography

Lidiya Rakhmanova
HSE University,
St Petersburg, Russia
muza-spb@yandex.ru

Anyone who has sat by a campfire on a summer evening has had the feeling that (s)he is being studied. A single persistent mosquito is whining,

now nearer, now darting away, now by my left temple, now by my right shoulder. The mosquito is studying me. The mosquito is sizing me up, evaluating me before landing and biting. I freeze; all my thoughts are concentrated on the only source of information about the presence (and intentions) of that living creature — the sound in the darkness. All my research capabilities are far removed not only from the conceptual operations in my future article. They are far removed even from the thought of what I might have written in my field diary today. Now I have only one goal: to strike like lightning, aiming “by ear” (and not “by eye”).

This situation, which repeats itself every year, of interaction between species, brings me to the thought that when mosquitoes “study” us, choosing whose blood to drink, we begin to “study” them in return.

“We study, we are studied...”

This sort of study is reactive. It is forced. Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether we are studying the insects and animals as social researchers, anthropologists, ethnographers... or is it (and this is more probable) that in this concentration of perception and attention we are displaying our common human nature, rather than our professional identity?

Returning to the forced, almost violently formed focus of research attention on dangerous and annoying insects, nimble venomous snakes that are hard to see among the leaves, bears and packs of wolves that freeze the blood in your veins, I ask the question: to what extent is the *species turn* a means of expanding the field of subjectivity in social anthropology and not, say, a field strategy for researchers’ survival, a strategy for coping with our own fears, squeamishness and attachments with regard to other living creatures?

Progressive classifications

Although Raffles’s *Insectopedia* [Raffles 2010] has already been translated into Russian, we still “lump together” certain kinds of living creatures, placing them in “kingdoms” and “families” or using pragmatic divisions, identifying, for example, “a woodland bird” and distinguishing it from “waterfowl”. What seems like an obvious step forward (for example, paying equally steadfast attention to insects and micro-organisms as to mammals), in other contexts (the ethnography of hunting) proves to be nothing more than the need to correlate the kind of game with the right calibre and type of weapon to hunt it with.

Therefore, I see the kind of attention paid to non-human subjects that has already been consciously “filtered” through the tradition of the ethnographic study of hunting, fishing, the exploitation of natural

resources in general, as problematic. Here the relations, or rather the direct confrontations, of man and beast, man and fish, are blurred by the lenses of the informal countryside economy, ecological activism, ritual practices, and beliefs about good luck in hunting.

In other words, the problem is not that anthropology used to pay much less attention to non-human than to human beings, but that the relations between human and non-human subjects (animals, spirits, etc.) are submerged in the context of practices, imaginations, rituals and languages and dissolved in these phenomena, which are easily grasped and described ethnographically. The problem of presence and opposition in the meeting, in the collision with another species is that we do not always know how to notice it, surprised both as researchers and as people. The art of noticing [Tsing 2015] partly shows the way toward decontextualising the world of the non-human subjectivities that have condensed around us and which it is time to start “recognising”.

On ineffectiveness and courage

In connection with what I have set out above, I see the basic task of multi-species ethnography as combining the position of a vulnerable subject (as an open subject) with a capacity to look with a certain degree of sarcasm and dubiety at those interpretations and those ways of understanding that we use or invent in the “field”. Here I cannot do without a story which will serve me as a prop to explain vulnerability and dubiety as fundamental elements.

*When, in the course of an informal conversation, a hunter suddenly starts to think about how a Christian understanding of the killing of another living creature by a man relates to his own practice of hunting birds and beasts, the very **impossibility of taking an unambiguous position** in these different fields of value is the most important material that is revealed to the researcher. However, this “understanding” is not the product of anthropological analysis; moreover, it does not come into being in the space between the anthropologist and their interlocutor, the hunter.*

Here it can be clearly felt that understanding and at the same time bewilderment is what we experience and see together with the animals — those that have already been killed and retrieved by the hunter, and those that have been wounded but have escaped and live on, and also *together* with those that are yet to be hunted. So, together with other living creatures we not only find understanding and clear interpretations, but also an ethical, methodological and ontological *bewilderment*.

In this connection, asking the question “how can the social world be effectively studied”, which contains not-only-human essences,

I am inclined to answer like this: by recognising the existence of a whole layer of research ineffectiveness arising in the process of inter-species contacts and *becoming-with* [Haraway 2003; 2008], and recognising it not as a failure and imperfection of method, but as the optical depth of multi-species ethnography, which requires constant refocusing, and when it reveals one thing, it blurs something else, which yesterday was equally clearly visible.

On methods and voices

- How do you call your dog?
- With a whistle.
- Withawhistle's a nice name!
- I haven't given him a name yet...

Early twenty-first-century joke

As a musician, I am willingly receptive to auditory metaphors and concepts in academic language. Therefore, “giving a voice” to animals in the anthropological literature is a problem that resonates with my experience and to which I still have no answer. However, the most ironic and constant phenomenon that might provide a key to vocalising animals' experience is ultra- and infrasound, outside the limits of our range of perception. We have learnt to “pack up” the network of deliveries, benefits, jobs in the village administration, out of date products in the village shop, and collapsing roads and crossings in the capacious concept of “infra-structure”, that is, we get to work with and study what escapes direct perception or is invisible to the naked eye.

Now we need to learn to work with the infrasound that we do not hear: the voice of living creatures, plants, waterfalls and cliffs. I see huge potential in this approach, if we view the unheard not as a disturbance of method and limitations on scientific understanding, but as the possibility of localising our language and our voices in a wider system of rich semiotic activity [Kohn 2013], which is more perfect and richer than ours. And this means that our external “critics” should be those creatures which by their whole life and living semiosis [Ibid.] are the guarantors of the existence of a wider linguistic, audible universe.

Recognition after death

Why then can animals' “voices” be heard, but not made out? The ever deeper research in the fields of ethology, the theory of communication, and the complex semiotic systems used in inter-species contacts is constantly deciphering for us new signs, motifs, sounds and forms. And nevertheless social scientists, anthropologists, who have all this repertoire and a developed vocabulary at their disposal, are asking the question of how to “give” a voice to animals and other

living beings. Even in the development of the topic of “equality without equivalence” [Walker 2020; Tutorskiy 2023] one can see a complex task — compensating for unequal forces in a possible fight (a rifle versus teeth and claws) by the right to speak, to present oneself, to express oneself and be understood. Pity and sympathy for the bear, when a hunter is simply “forced” to shoot a bear that has broken the rules and invaded the village, goes hand in hand, interestingly, with living comparisons — “He likes sweet things too!” [Tutorskiy 2023: 891, 893], or “We don’t eat them, we just give them to the dogs. A she-bear, you know, if you skin her, without her skin and with her two tits is like a naked woman. One to one” (author’s field materials, 2017, Tomsk Region, Russia). The likeness, the resemblance is a certain way of removing guilt, but also a source of horror at the appearance of something “too human” in an animal.

Above I referred to the dilemma that the hunter I was talking to indicated for me and for himself: being a Christian and feeling love and care for all “creation” in earth and in heaven, or being a skilled hunter, feeding one’s family, and showing mercy, perhaps, only in the accuracy of the shot (the “gift” of an instantaneous death, and not dying painfully).

In the course of my research I have also had to choose what position to take on inter-species entanglements and relationships when studying the hunters of the Siberian taiga. At first, I offered to help as a driver, to free one of the hunters’ hands from the wheel. At the beginning of our journey we came across a hazel grouse sitting on the branch of a fir tree in such a way that one of the hunters on the back seat could take a sure aim and shoot. One shot, and the branches of the tree beneath the bird began to sway, but the bird did not stir. Another shot: missed again. Suddenly the man who was shooting realised that during the year that had passed since the previous autumn’s hunting season, he had lost his sharpness of sight because of a trauma incurred in an accident: now he had no chance of hitting the mark without an optical sight. His connection with the world, the dialogue and opposition between man and bird, man and beast (including through a sight, binoculars or without any optical devices) was broken, leading to a sense of *radical separation* [Kohn 2013: 42–49]. It is interesting that Eduardo Kohn himself, after an incident with a landslide, experiencing profound alarm, “a feeling of being cut off from my body and [the] world” and a “displacement” from himself, was able to overcome this condition through an awareness that he was immersed in a dense ecology of entities, in a wider world than the human one.

In my case, the hunter had lost this unity with himself when he lost focus, lost the sight he used to have: “We become displaced to such an extent that we come to question the indexical ties that would

otherwise ground this special kind of symbolic thinking in ‘our’ bodies, bodies that are themselves indexically grounded in the worlds beyond them” [Kohn 2013: 49]. Realising that he could no longer hunt with an open sight, the hunter, with tears in his eyes, said “Now you take it and shoot. Here’s the rifle. I’m not a hunter any more. What sort of a hunter am I now!” Everyone in the vehicle was looking at me. I got out of the driver’s seat. My eyes started to look for other things — not potholes in the road, but birds on the branches.

My first black grouse was sitting at the top of a fir tree over a marsh. When it fell, it took us a long time to find its body. We complained that not a single shot should be wasted, that the bird should end up on the family dinner table, and not rot in a swamp. At last we found it. Being wet, it appeared small, its splendid feathers had lost their volume. At one and the same time I did and did not understand what had happened: the connection between the bird that had just been sitting on the tree and this body was indirect and winding. And nevertheless I understood that I was now on that road and bore responsibility for the killing that I had done.

A year later, I was embarrassed by an encounter with a capercaillie: wounded in the breast, it gathered its last strength, and after flying past the people along the road, tried to escape into the forest on foot. I had to catch it by falling on top of it, holding its body and wings in my hands until it stopped struggling. In that moment the link between the free, living bird at which I had been looking through the sights of my gun five minutes ago, and the creature I embraced as it fought for its life to the last, was evident. There is no getting away from this. The killing, the embrace before death, the struggle, the tenderness, they all go hand in hand.

At such moments we are still not giving a voice to non-human subjects, but we are listening to them. Through the hazel grouse, our distance from it, our ability to “get” it with a well-aimed bullet, we feel the connectedness of the whole world of ecological entities that surrounds us. A miss or an accurate hit is the world’s answer to us. That is, in trying to kill a bird or a bear we challenge it, we try to talk (sometimes one-sidedly). Hunting here proves to be radical contact on the threshold of death; the news of impending death is also a form of communication. It strikes, but in essence is also woven into the process of inter-species relations in the same way as feeding a new-born lamb from a bottle.

On superfluity and partisan writing

As I read over my text and the arguments I have adduced in my reply, I admit it: the intonations, the emotional density, the language itself (limited human language) lead the essay willy-nilly into that

sphere where it becomes hard to distinguish science from activism in the field of relations between humans and other living creatures. The fact that research in multi-species ethnography is not only drawn towards interdisciplinarity, but desperately needs other languages and platforms to discuss key problems, only complicates our balancing act on the boundary of academic research, activist anthropology and art. An example of this is Kirksey's *Multispecies Salon* project [Kirksey 2014].

There is no doubt that there is something in inter-species relationships that also impels us towards a clandestine study of the language of manifestos and its covert use in our articles and monographs. The manifesto character of our writing (see, for example: [Haraway 1991; 2003]) seeps into our classic texts just as mould infects old books, but also as the perfume of the flowers that she has been given makes the examiner smile and give the student a first-class mark. Here I can only cautiously propose that such a manifesto is not only an attempt to talk with the Other(s) and invite them to take a similar position in relation to the world, but also to speak together with the Other and even in their name.

It may be that the moderation of our style allows academic writing to be penetrated by bewilderment, uncertainty, surprise and infrasounds, and that it does it as a partisan. Superfluity has ruined all the beauty of the silent work of such an inter-species "cell" and predetermined its expulsion from the academic world. The manifesto, as a call to action and to a way of thought, is, in my view, a manifestation not so much of political activism, as of linguistic activism, which will gradually, by imperceptible steps, shift the norms of academic writing and allow the non-human into the text.

References

- Haraway D., 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', Haraway D., *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 149–181.
- Haraway D., *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, 65 pp.
- Haraway D., *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 423 pp.
- Kirksey E. (ed.), *The Multispecies Salon*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014, 328 pp.
- Kohn E., *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013, 288 pp.
- Raffles H., *Insectopedia*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010, 465 pp.
- Tsing A. L., *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015, 352 pp.

- Tutorskiy A. V., 'Bears as Pares: Some Notes on Bear Stories in Zapinejje (Arkhangelskaya Oblast, Northern Part of the Russian Federation) and the Tendency to Equality in Human-Bear Relations', Grimm O. (ed.), *Bear and Human: Facets of a Multi-Layered Relationship from Past to Recent Times, with Emphasis on Northern Europe*: in 3 vols. Belgium: Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2023, vol. 3, pp. 887–899.
- Walker H., 'Equality without Equivalence: An Anthropology of the Common', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2020, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 146–166. doi: 10.1111/1467-9655.13183.

JOHN SANBONMATSU

1

The environmental and animal rights movements have opened our eyes to a multiplicity of perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing and “being” that have been neglected for centuries and even millennia. Other animals are intelligent and have complex emotions [de Waal 2016], have unique cultures [Whitehead et al. 2008; Balter 2013], and exhibit astonishing creativity [Gigliotti 2022]. Even as we are gaining new insights into the nature and variety of nonhuman consciousness, however, our species is ruthlessly killing billions of animals and undermining the conditions for all life on Earth. Consequently, in parallel with new scholarship on nonhuman animal minds and capabilities, we also find seen the growth of research on the urgent problem of “speciesism” or human supremacy as a cultural system.

The interdisciplinary field I work within, Critical Animal Studies (CAS), is chiefly concerned with mapping interspecies relations within this context, viz. of human exploitation of and mass violence against other animals. This approach interprets human-nonhuman relations within the context of human economy, history, and society — particularly vis-à-vis the world capitalist system, patriarchy, and other systems of social oppression [Sanbonmatsu 2011; Sorenson 2014; Crary, Gruen 2022]. From the CAS perspective, no ethnographic study of interspecies relations can be deemed complete without an attempt by the researcher to grapple with the

John Sanbonmatsu
Worcester Polytechnic Institute,
Worcester, MA, USA
js@wpi.edu

conditions of violence and social structures that shape and distort human-nonhuman animal relations.

2

Human domination serves as an epistemic structure, reinforcing an “essentialist” conception of other animals as unchanging, fungible, and “killable” types, rather than as unique, intelligent, emotionally complex individuals. This structure mediates all of our relations with other beings, obliterating or obscuring nonhuman perspectives and interests. An important part of the work of Critical Animal Studies, thus, is to “dis-occlude” forms of nonhuman subjectivity and *being-in-the-world* which would otherwise remain hidden from us. In this context, multispecies ethnography has an important role to play in helping us recuperate the “being” of other beings — thereby recentering them in the stories we tell about ourselves and the world.

Anthropologists who wish to study other animals are advised to become acquainted first with the literature in cognitive ethology (the scientific study of animal minds), an interdisciplinary field first pioneered by Donald Griffin [Griffin 1985] and drawing upon such diverse fields as evolutionary biology, psychology, primatology, entomology, and philosophy [Rogers 1998; Bekoff 2002; Emery 2016]. Primatologist Jane Goodall [Goodall 2010] first revolutionised our understanding of other species and the complexities of their lifeworlds, showing us that scientific understanding could not advance without our ascribing individuality and complex consciousness to chimpanzees; since then, many scientists have conducted studies of animals that exhibit a strong “ethnographic” element. Interpretive practice, relation-building, and perspective-taking by the researcher — including empathy, friendship, and putting oneself in the “shoes” of the animals being studied — have been shown to be empirically sound forms of inquiry, providing us with indispensable insights into the nature of nonhuman consciousness, relationality, and culture [Merz 2008; Smuts 2008; Pepperberg 2009].

Beyond the natural sciences, there are other disciplines, too, that can help us illuminate the complex and ambiguous terrain of nonhuman experience and interspecies relations. Phenomenology, an empirical method first pioneered by philosopher Edmund Husserl, offers one rich arena for reflecting on the experiences and perspective of other species, both on their own and in relation to other species — including our own. For example, Elizabeth Behnke [Behnke 1999] provides an elegant phenomenological reduction of her attempts to mediate a conflict between two cats, while Jennifer McWeeny [McWeeny 2011] provides us with insights on the way cetaceans experience depth. Both thinkers make use of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception in their accounts; however,

there are other productive approaches from within the phenomenological canon [Painter, Lotz 2007].

We should also not discount “naïve” ethnographic accounts — for example, first-person accounts of encountering and entering into relationships with other animals, as in swimmer Lynne Cox’s remarkable account in *Grayson* [Cox 2008] of her experience as a teenager helping a lost baby whale become reunited with his mother. Cinema offers another portal through which we might explore the phenomenology of animal consciousness and multispecies relations. Films like *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, about interspecies relations between humans and parrots in San Francisco¹, *My Octopus Teacher*, a documentary depicting diver Craig Foster’s friendship with a Common octopus living in a South African kelp forest², and *Blackfish*, which describes the plight of orcas exploited at Sea World³, offer us glimpses into the *Mitsein* and *Umwelt* of nonhuman beings, particularly in relations with humans. YouTube and online media, too, offer a limitless wealth of ethological footage depicting animal behavior and relationships — and hence the “raw material” for phenomenological and critical research. Finally, we can also gain insight into human-nonhuman relations, animal consciousness, and speciesism as a system (and ideology) through literature — for example, J. M. Coetzee’s speculative account of chimpanzees thinking in *The Lives of Animals* [Coetzee 1999: 27–30] or Emile Zola’s depiction of Bateille (a horse exploited in the mines of France) in *Germinal* [Zola 1925: 445–446].

3

Poststructuralist critics like Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway have sought to blur the ontological differences between animals and other entities in ways that are both ethically dubious and serve to reinscribe human domination [Weisberg 2009]. Particularly today, at a time when we see a concerted effort by technologists to blur the distinction between persons and things by ascribing consciousness to Artificial Intelligence, it is vital that we acknowledge these ontological distinctions and appreciate their ethical importance. Unlike animals, there is no scientific evidence that plants, fungi, viruses and other living beings are able to experience their worlds in a subjective sense [Robinson, Draguhn 2021]. That is, conscious beings “have” a world in ways that non-conscious entities like plants or viruses do not: they feel, think, have memories, suffer, and so on. It is therefore a category mistake for researchers to try to give “voice” to entities incapable of having experiences, or to place them in the same category as other living entities. Only conscious beings (animals)

¹ Irving J. (dir.), *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*. Waterville, Maine, 2003.

² Ehrlich P., Reed J. (dirs), *My Octopus Teacher*. Off the Fence / The Sea Change Project, 2020; distributed by Netflix.

³ Cowperthwaite G. (dir.), *Blackfish*. CNN Films, 2013.

are *relational* beings; we cannot speak of human “relations” with viruses, plants, and so on, except in a figurative sense.

Unfortunately, the most characteristic relation between humans and other species is one of domination (*Herrschaft*) and subordination. Measured in biomass, only 4 % of mammals, excluding humans, and only 30 % of all birds, still live freely in nature; the rest are in confinement awaiting human slaughter [Bar-On et al. 2018]. We treat other beings not so much as mere “things”, but as degraded subjects, inferiors, within a system of mass destruction. Hence the need for a normative, “critical” approach to anthropological and ethnographic accounts of multispecies relations. Unlike other entities, animals have voices, and they use those voices both to communicate and to express their inner psychological states. We therefore have a responsibility to understand what their voices are saying and to amplify them to a wider public, so that they can be heard beneath the suffocating cultural mediations that silence them.

4

Since the Soviet era, Russia has occupied an ambiguous location between the core and the periphery of the capitalist world system; it is therefore unsurprising to find that some regions of academic culture in Russia (e.g., anthropology) should lag slightly behind those of the West, owing to lower levels of state support for novel forms of academic research. The difficult political climate in Russia today, too, is not conducive to forms of scholarship perceived as overly “liberal” or “Western” — such as theoretical trends associated with the critical tradition like ecology, feminism, and animal rights. Patriarchy and misogyny may also play a role in limiting academic receptiveness in Russia specifically to new theories and methods that seek to extend our empathic connection with, or sympathies for, nonhuman “others”. In the US and Western Europe, we are likewise seeing a reactionary pushback against ecological protection and animal welfare concerns, particularly among farmers and in rural areas — a trend closely tied to regressive gender roles. Veganism, for example, is treated as threat not merely to society but to the dominant gender order: men who express sympathy for animal suffering are deemed “effeminate” and hence as a threat to American masculine and even national identity [Dutkiewicz, Rosenberg 2023].

All this said, Russian culture has enormous resources, from its zoological sciences to its literary traditions and folk culture, for thinking through interspecies relations in novel ways [Costlow, Nelson 2010]. The very existence of this issue of *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* is evidence of growing Russian anthropological interest in interspecies relations.

5

In recent decades, the longstanding pretence of anthropology as a disinterested and objective natural science has been punctured

by feminists, Marxists, and other critical theorists, creating the opening for a more mature, politically engaged, and socially relevant ethnographic science of human culture and practice. However, while it is no longer seen as controversial for anthropologists to engage in normatively grounded and praxis-oriented forms of scholarship [Lewin 2006; McClaurin 2001], nor research grounded in participant-observer relationships [Burawoy et al. 1991], the discipline has been slow to recognise the need for an openly normative and “critical” approach to our relations with other animals.

Indeed, anthropologists frequently bring an unexamined anthropocentric bias to their research involving other species. This has typically taken the form of implicit sympathy for, and identification with, humans involved in exploitation of other animals in hunting, fishing, scientific experimentation, and so on. We see this, for example, in Michael E. Lynch’s Durkheimian and Maussian study of interspecies relations in a neuroscience laboratory [Lynch 1988]. Throughout his paper, which shows how scientists make use of quasi-religious symbology, language, and ritual to render living animals into research data in the course of their scientific practice, Lynch adopts the neutral tone of the disinterested observer. In doing so, however, he ironically reproduces the same unthinking Cartesian split between subject and object — and hence the same epistemic violence — that he implicitly critiques in the laboratory scientists. Furthermore, Lynch’s objective pose only thinly conceals his own normative political commitments. At the close of his essay, Lynch suddenly drops the pretense of being a neutral, objective observer, and offers advice to scientists on how they might silence the objections of animal advocates and other members of the public to their cruelties. The author suggests that, rather than shy away from the ritualistic elements of their practices, scientists might instead lean into them. “If scientists wish to neutralize ‘anti-scientific’ public attitudes,” Lynch writes, “they might consider acknowledging more openly in their pedagogy and public presentations that ‘objective’ results are rooted in commonsense knowledge and subject to social contingency.” Scientists might also “enhance their own, as well as the public’s, respect for their practices with animals as they were to institutionalize more fully their own metaphor of ‘sacrifice’. The ‘sacrificial’ destruction of an animal is condoned in Western religious traditions” [Lynch 1988: 282]. Even as Lynch sides with the scientists in the debate over animal exploitation, he nevertheless fails to clarify or to defend his own ethical principles. Instead, he merely assumes the reader’s sympathy for his own ideological (speciesist) position.

It is in fact common for ethnographers to overlook — and betray — the interests of other animals in the conduct of their research. For example, in the award-winning documentary film *Sweetgrass*, an intimate ethnographic portrait of Norwegian-American sheepherders

in Montana, directors Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Ilisa Barbash (respectively, an anthropology professor and Director the Sensory Ethnography Laboratory at Harvard University, and an associate curator of visual anthropology at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography), reinforce and naturalise the violence of animal agriculture¹. The film implicitly adopts the "human gaze", portraying the animals being herded, brutalised, and killed through the lens of those controlling and exploiting them. Ostensibly, the camera allows the sheep to "speak" for themselves; there are many scenes of sheep, and the film conveys some aspects of their subjectivity. But the film is aesthetically structured in such a way as to render impossible any critical vantage point from which one might ask meaningful questions about the ethics of exploiting and harming animals.

While there is now a substantial ethnographic literature by feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial scholars on the proper way to conduct research in disadvantaged or vulnerable communities — for example, prisoners or the mentally ill [Shaw et al. 2014], few anthropologists extend an ethically reflexive ethos to their encounters with other species; on the contrary, they tacitly form alliances of complicity with other humans, accepting their human subjects' normative frameworks even when those frameworks implicitly promote interspecies inequality or violent exploitation.

In some participant-observer studies, anthropologists have even committed acts of extreme violence against animals. In one recent ethnography of industrial animal production and slaughter in the American Midwest, the author helps other workers violently control and kill the animals, and includes detailed accounts of their deaths. Though no anthropologist would think to enact extreme violence against a human being in the course of her or his research, here the author apparently experiences no moral qualms about participating in the killing of animals. A dissociative, Cartesian tenor runs throughout the text, objectifying the victimised animals and splitting the ethnographer's thought off from the researcher's feelings. Sometimes, it is true, animal rights activists go undercover to secretly record the suffering of cows, pigs, chickens, and other animals farmed in industrialised conditions, and in some cases, they may have to participate in the killing process in order to document the abuse. But in this case, the author is careful not to reveal the identity of the company involved: as a participant-observer, he/she is merely gathering data to promote their scholarship, not to engage in advocacy on behalf of animal victims. This fundamental disrespect for the animals ends up distorting the researcher's own findings,

¹ Castaing-Taylor L., Barbash I. (dirs), *Sweetgrass*. The Lucien Cinema Build, 2009.

leading to a mischaracterisation of the interspecies relations of animal production and slaughter as “caring” ones, rather than as relations of domination and degradation. The effect of the study is to subtly legitimate the system’s violence.

Ethnographers have a responsibility, though, to approach their nonhuman animal subjects with the same degree of care and ethical sensitivity that they bring to their study of human subjects. Critical theory maintains that neutrality in the face of evil is wrong: we neither can nor should try to exclude our values from scholarly inquiry. Taking a critical approach begins with differentiating between “objective” anthropological inquiry and “truthful” anthropological inquiry: the former maintains the illusion of political and ethical neutrality; the latter finds the observer “always-already” involved in the work of society, and hence burdened by history and power. Scholars conducting interspecies research should adopt the latter approach, taking care not to lose sight of the power relations that mediate our relations with animals. In a context overwhelmingly defined by our injustices towards other beings, we have an ethical duty to use our scholarship “praxiologically”, i.e., as a tool for ending human mass violence towards the other sensitive beings with whom we share our dying world.

References

- Balter M., ‘Strongest Evidence of Animal Culture Seen in Monkeys and Whales’, *Science*, 2013, 25 April. <<https://www.science.org/content/article/strongest-evidence-animal-culture-seen-monkeys-and-whales>>.
- Bar-On Y. M., Philips R., Milo R., ‘The Biomass Distribution on Earth’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2018, vol. 115, no. 25, pp. 6506–6511. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1711842115.
- Behnke E., ‘From Merleau-Ponty’s Concept of Nature to an Interspecies Ethics of Peace’, Steeves P. (ed.), *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 1999, pp. 93–116.
- Bekoff M., *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 256 pp.
- Burawoy M., Burton A., Ferguson A. A., Fox K. J., *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, 362 pp.
- Coetzee J. M., *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, 133 pp.
- Costlow J., Nelson A., *Other Animals: Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010, 336 pp.
- Cox L., *Grayson*. New York: Mariner Books, 2008, 176 pp.
- Crary A., Gruen L., *Animal Crisis: A New Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022, 136 pp.
- De Waal F., *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W. W. Norton, 2016, 320 pp.

- Dutkiewicz J., Rosenberg G. N., 'Why Right-Wingers Are So Afraid of Men Eating Vegetables', *The New Republic*, 2023, 17 April. <<https://newrepublic.com/article/171781/meat-culture-war-cricket>>.
- Emery N., *Bird Brain: An Exploration of Avian Intelligence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016, 192 pp.
- Gigliotti C., *The Creative Lives of Animals*. New York: New York University Press, 2022, 289 pp.
- Goodall J., *In the Shadow of Man*, 50th anniversary ed. New York: Mariner, 2010, 400 pp.
- Griffin D. R., 'Animal Consciousness', *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 1985, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 615–622. doi: 10.1016/0149-7634(85)90008-9.
- Lewin E. (ed.), *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, 480 pp.
- Lynch M. E., 'Sacrifice and the Transformation of the Animal Body into a Scientific Object: Laboratory Culture and Ritual Practice in the Neurosciences', *Social Studies of Science*, 1988, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 265–289. doi: 10.1177/030631288018002004.
- McClaurin I. (ed.), *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*. New York: Routledge, 2001, 290 pp.
- McWeeny J., 'Sounding Depth with the North Atlantic Right Whale and Merleau-Ponty: An Exercise in Comparative Phenomenology', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 2011, vol. 9, no. 1–2, pp. 144–166.
- Merz A., 'Hand-Raising a Rhino in the Wild', Armstrong S. J., Botzler R. G. (eds), *The Animal Ethics Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 554–556.
- Painter C., Lotz C. (eds), *Phenomenology and the Non-Human Animal: At the Limits of Experience*. New York: Springer, 2007, 172 pp.
- Pepperberg I., *Alex & Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Discovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence — and Formed a Deep Bond in the Process*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009, 232 pp.
- Robinson D. G., Draguhn A., 'Plants Have Neither Synapses Nor a Nervous System', *Journal of Plant Physiology*, 2021, vol. 263, article 153467. doi: 10.1016/j.jplph.2021.153467.
- Rogers L., *Minds of Their Own: Thinking and Awareness in Animals*. New York; London: Routledge, 1998, 222 pp.
- Sanbonmatsu J., 'Introduction', Sanbonmatsu J. (ed.), *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011, pp. 1–32.
- Shaw D. M., Wangmo T., Elger B. S., 'Conducting Ethics Research in Prison: Why, Who, and What?', *Bioethical Inquiry*, 2014, vol. 11, pp. 275–278. doi: 10.1007/s11673-014-9559-7.
- Smuts B., 'Reflections', Armstrong S. J., Botzler R. G. (eds), *The Animal Ethics Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 84–87.
- Sorenson J., *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2014, 346 pp.

- Weisberg Z., 'The Broken Promises of Monsters: Haraway, Animals, and the Humanist Legacy', *Journal of Critical Animal Studies*, 2009, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 22–62.
- Whitehead H., Rendell L., Osborne R. W., Würsig B., 'Culture and Conservation of Non-Humans with Reference to Whales and Dolphins: Review and New Directions', Armstrong S. J., Botzler R. G. (eds), *The Animal Ethics Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 180–192.
- Zola E., *Germinal*, trans. by H. Ellis. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925, 472 pp.

JULIA SHANINA

For the banyan trees, sequoias, cephalopods, capybara, tanukis, tardigrades, microbes, viruses, Amazonian rain forests, coral reefs, and hitherto yet unimagined technologies.

Levi R. Bryant

1

For my master's degree I chose the topic of the Khanty Bear Festival, later to be joined by the Day of the Crow and the Day of the Wagtail in Yugra. But I cannot say that I am engaged in ethnozoology, for example, because the focus of my research is not on people's relationships with the bear or the wagtail. The "distant" interaction of the Khanty with animals, veiled to the spectator, around which the public manifestations of Khanty culture are constructed, is more important to me. This last is my key interest, but it is not possible to ignore the interrelationships of people and animals. An orientation towards multi-species interaction, or a constant awareness that there is something else besides people, is, of course, more noticeable in people who dwell in territories where the traditional interaction with nature continues, but it does not disappear in the towns or larger rural settlements. The connection of Khanty communities with animals and spirits (or gods), or some ideas of such a connection, can be seen when in contact not only with the Khanty themselves, but with officials and townsfolk, at photographic exhibitions at the Russian Ethnographic Museum or at a concert at the VDNKh¹.

Julia Shanina
Karelian Scientific Centre,
Petrozavodsk, Russia
ishanina@eu.spb.ru

¹ "Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy". [Eds].

An extended understanding of relations, including *non-human relations*, is a distinguishing marker of the indigenous inhabitants from the point of view of the non-indigenous, particularly townfolk. And exclusion from these interrelationships often led my Khanty informants to speak of their relatives or acquaintances as “Russified”, and of the Khanty Baptists, who publicly break off those relationships, as dangerous.

On the whole, if you are making a serious study of the Khanty community or of other indigenous cultures, it is hard to do without some attention to the *non-human*. The field itself impels you to do so. One way or another you will encounter, if not observation of multi-species interaction, then the symbols that remain after it, the rules of etiquette and the ideas of what may and may not be done. Moreover, the *non-human* includes not only animals, but also a number of plants (for example, the cloudberry, the pine, and the birch), spirits, gods and other supernatural beings. And this is not only extended social interaction. In the minds of many Khanty, animals (and certain plants) and otherworldly beings have their own complicated interrelationships.

In studies of the Arctic and Siberia by far the most has been written about bears and reindeer, and much about dogs and predatory mammals. There are works about animals that are hunted (usually from the point of view of the hunt), animal husbandry and so-called totem animals. These last usually include complicated links with people and otherworldly beings, families, kinships, all under the same heading and left without any analysis. These interrelationships are still often labelled as “cultic” or “totemic” and are rarely examined as social relationships between humans and non-humans. This, in my view, is a great omission, and still very little work has been done to elucidate the complex interrelationships between people, gods, plants and animals among the inhabitants of Siberia and the North. There are few works on small animals, non-mammals, insects, or domestic animals in indigenous communities [Matusovskiy 2018]. Equally out of sight are the urban animals of the Arctic and the relationships of non-indigenous inhabitants with the flora and fauna. There are few works describing not particular animals or trades, but interrelationships with animals/plants as a whole, including fishes, insects and parasites. I can only call to mind one such work in Russian, Irina Yu. Vinokurova’s monograph, written, admittedly, more with the methods of folklore studies and ethnolinguistics than anthropology [Vinokurova 2006].

2

3

I regard as very productive an acquaintance with the works of ethologists, biologists and the current philosophical discussion in the direction of post-humanism, the new ethics, anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. This knowledge helps to maintain and

reinterpret the differences and similarities between humans and other species, and the fragile borders of the cultural, social, political and biological; to understand what makes others different, where we try to project ourselves onto other objects and subjects. Nor should we forget the value of the arts for inspiring science: after all, anti-anthropocentrism appeared in American and European literature in the middle of the twentieth century, long before the wave of ontologies.

It still seems to me that we should not forget about the limitations of our disciplinary method or try to solve the problems of other fields of scholarship with its tools. In works orientated towards the *species turn* I sometimes observe a certain disciplinary egotism: the researcher's interest is constantly expanding, he or she has a growing curiosity about other disciplines, the classic objects of other disciplines become his or her objects of research, but the analytical tools do not change. In the end someone might try to invent the bicycle or even some false knowledge like the mathematician Fomenko or a neo-pagan physicist, who try to work with the humanities without any understanding of the method or a critical interpretation of the material, and end up with an alternative history or a scheme of the wavelengths of peasant rituals. An anthropologist works primarily with human behaviour, with other people through their views and values. The tools of anthropology are designed precisely for the mental processes of human beings, and not of animals or AI. In *human — non-human* interaction we are equipped to describe one side, the *human*, and the interaction itself. We cannot answer for our interpretation of *non-human* behaviour, if there is any and it is visible. However, it can be interpreted and analysed by our colleagues from other disciplines, biology, ethology, computer science, geology. An analysis of the entire interaction including both sides is a task for an interdisciplinary team. For an anthropologist working with other species the methods of critical anthropomorphism [Wróblewski 2016] and Viveiros de Castro's *controlled equivocation* [Viveiros de Castro 2004] could be useful. They will help him or her not to miss differences between species.

4

1

I see here two reasons, arising from the Soviet school of science.

1. Separating out the subject. Whereas in the Soviet tradition plants and gods or spirits became independent objects of study and had their own disciplines — ethnobotany and the study of religion/spiritual culture, animals were split up amongst economic activity, spiritual culture and material culture. Animals that were somehow connected with the other world (or else when such a connection was found in mentions of the animals) were studied separately. Result: animals are interpreted in the framework of cults (reli-

gious, zoomorphic, ancestral or professional) and their veneration, practically the only possible kind of relationship with animals and gods/spirits, *non-humans*, can still be found mainly in the anthropology of religion. Depictions of the same animals, directly or in the abstract (in decoration) are described separately, as material culture. The hunting of the same animals, as economic activity. The reason why an animal is depicted, or not made use of, is explained by the cult. In such conditions, and when English-language literature is hard to come by, it is not easy to imagine the animal as a self-sufficient object, the diversity of interrelationships with non-humans, or the social nature of those relationships.

2. The limitations of the method. In the late Soviet period, the basic method of analysis was semiotics, and sociological and philosophical approaches remained outside Soviet scholarship [Zhivov 2009; Kalinin 2009]. Therefore, the objects of analysis were often not the interrelationships between humans and non-humans, groups and individuals, but lexis, images, metaphors, texts, and rituals as texts. Such an analysis makes the works not so much anthropological as folkloristic or ethnolinguistic, because there is no participant observation, and interviews are used as illustrations, models of text. This sort of approach to the study of plants, animals and gods/spirits is still common, and it serves to limit the inclusion of other objects in human — non-human relations, like reason 1.

Fortunately, with the development of sociology and philosophy in Russia, and with access to foreign literature, the situation has been changing. Object-oriented ontologies (Agamben, Bryant, Latour) and the anthropologists who took them up (Viveiros de Castro, Descola), the new ethics, which extends the field of its objects beyond human beings, the problem of consciousness and the new discoveries of the ethologists, and the zoo- and evolutionary psychologists, and the Anthropocene, which was recently added to this cocktail, have changed the field of discussion, especially over the last ten years. The category of the *non-human* has been extended to viruses, bacteria (partly thanks to Covid-19) and technologies (thanks to Russian-language STS). This is well illustrated by two recent issues of *Etnograficheskoye obozreniye* with discussions about animals. In 2018 there was a discussion of plants and animals becoming self-sufficient objects in Russian science, ethnobotany and ethnozoology. There were articles inspired by ontologies, including Descola [Gvozdikov 2018], and more attention to interaction as such [Vorobyev 2018]. The 2021 issue was entirely about inter-species interaction and the *animal turn*. The group of authors was interdisciplinary: a biologist, philosophers, a literary scholar, a sociologist. There were, however, no anthropologists as such. Critical anthropomorphism, post-humanism and the new ethics were discussed as methods, and there

are references to ethologists [Kozhevnikova 2021]. Even the Institute of Slavonic Studies, devoted as it is to the semiotic approach, in 2017 published a collection of articles on anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism [Tolstaya 2017], albeit without changing its usual methods. The field of research is being actively formed, and its framework expanded. I expect waves of directly anthropological works using the methods of *Etnograficheskoye obozrenie* 2021, and collections that will bring together spirits, microbes, animals, technologies, atoms... But I do not think that this sphere will be widely popular in Russia.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for funding from the Federal Budget routed through monies to support the Government-Sponsored Project of the Karelian Scientific Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences (no. 24022000029-0).

References

- Gvozdkov D. S., 'My alfa: k modeli sotsialnoy organizatsii sobak i cheloveka' [We are Alpha: Towards a Model of Social Organization of the Dog and Human], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2018, no. 4, pp. 44–56. (In Russian).
- Kalinin I., 'Tartusko-Moskovskaya semioticheskaya shkola: semioticheskaya model kulturey' [The Tartu-Moscow Semiotic Model of Culture/the Cultural Model of Semiotics], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2009, no. 4 (98), pp. 27–55. (In Russian).
- Kozhevnikova M. (ed.), 'Spetsvypusk: Zoo-povorot v antropologii' [Special Issue: The Animal Turn in Anthropology], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021, no. 1, pp. 5–75. (In Russian).
- Matusovskiy A. A., 'Pitomtsey indigennykh grupp Amazonii i Oriinokii: otnosheniya mezhdu lyudmi i zhivotnymi' [Pets among the Indigenous Groups of the Amazon and Orinoco: The Relations of People and Animals], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2018, no. 4, pp. 26–43. (In Russian).
- Tolstaya S. M. (ed.), *Antropotsentrizm v yazyke i kulture* [Anthropocentrism in Language and Culture]. Moscow: Indrik, 2017, 264 pp. (In Russian).
- Vinokurova I. Yu., *Zhivotnye v traditsionnom mire vepsov (opyt rekonstruktsii)* [Animals in the Traditional World of the Veps (An Attempt at a Reconstruction)]. Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press, 2006, 447 pp. (In Russian).
- Viveiros de Castro E., 'Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation', *Tipiti*, 2004, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 3–22.
- Vorobyev D. V. (ed.), 'Spetsvypusk: Chelovek i mir fauny v antropologicheskoy kontekste' [Special Issue: Human and the World of Fauna in Anthropological Context], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2018, no. 4, pp. 5–56. (In Russian).
- Wróblewski Z., 'Umysł zwierząt: między naiwnym antropomorfizmem a dogmatycznym antroponegacjonizmem', *Zoophilologica. Polish Journal of Animal Studies*, 2016, no. 2, pp. 83–95.

Zhivov V., ‘Moskovsko-Tartuskaya semiotika: ee dostizheniya i ee ogranicheniya’ [Moscow-Tartu Semiotics: Its Achievements and Its Limitations], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2009, no. 4 (98), pp. 11–26. (In Russian).

DREW SWANSON

“A Window or a Mirror?”

I will open with a disclaimer. I am not an anthropologist, but rather a historian. More specifically I think of myself as an environmental and agricultural historian. Although there is no doubt substantial overlap with the methods and intellectual exercises of anthropology and these historical fields, I also realise that there is a great deal of difference, not least in history’s lack of rigorous theorisation. I didn’t train as an “animal historian” or a “plant historian,” nor did I study under anyone who might identify or label themselves as such. So, forgive me if I suffer from a bit of imposter syndrome as I respond to these questions, being neither an anthropologist nor an animal/plant historian in the truest senses of the terms. Nevertheless, I’m intensely interested in “more-than-human histories,” to borrow a term from an article in an issue of the journal *Environmental History* [O’Gorman, Gaynor 2020].

1

As a farm child, a wildlife biology major, and then a natural resource manager, the more-than-human world has always fascinated me, and I carried that interest into the graduate study of history. I have written or am currently undertaking histories of a range of species. These include scholarship on the relationship between an invasive insect pest, hemlock woolly adelgid, and an endangered salamander, discussing how actor-network theory might be incorporated into stories of animals embedded within ecosystems. I have studied livestock management in the nineteenth-century American South, and how human actions, ecology, and animal mobility challenged commons regimes. I’ve explored the anthropogenic landscapes that foster certain endangered plant species, studied farm-raised Chinese pheasants,

Drew Swanson

Georgia Southern University,
Statesboro, GA, USA
dswanson@georgiasouthern.edu

and written a book about a tobacco varietal. And I am in the midst of a *longue durée* history of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in North America, tracing the economic exploitation, near extirpation, and dramatic population recovery of one of the continent's most important mammals. Although I'll note plants in the comments that follow, I'll primarily speak to animal history in this Forum, as that is where my current work is going.

Animal history has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years. As this Forum's prompt notes is the case for anthropology, thoughtful histories of animals also stretch back decades, with more self-consciously animal-centred histories emerging in the 1980s [Thomas 1983; Ritvo 1987]. Subsequent histories have steadily progressed from incorporating animals as serious subjects of inquiry, to exploring the question of animal agency, to decentering human narratives in favour of foci on other species. So much scholarship is currently emerging, in fact, that it is nearly impossible to stay abreast of the subfield, although abundant edited collections and historiographical essays provide some assistance [Nance 2015; Asdal et al. 2016; Kean, Howell 2019; O'Gorman, Gaynor 2020].

This work has often been tied to the allied field of environmental history, but its practitioners are increasingly identifying the subfield as distinct. This parsing of the discipline can be seen in the creation of a new journal — *Animal History* — scheduled to begin publication in 2025. As I draft this response, I am attending the annual meeting of the Agricultural History Society in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and the program is replete with histories of plants and animals, even if many of the scholars might not think of their work as more-than-human history. There are papers on insects, alfalfa, feral hogs, chilis, cattle, ramie, and deer, among other species. The society's book prize for US history went to an animal history focused on cattle ranching, and a dissertation on bees in the Yucatan won another award [Berry 2023; Márquez-Osuna 2023].

All this is to say that there has never been more interest in thoughtful and theorised histories of other species and their intersections with humans. Approaches to these studies have certainly evolved, if not radically, in the past decade. Histories that center singular species have proliferated, theories like actor-network theory and biopolitical frameworks have gained some traction, and the increased digitisation of primary sources through initiatives like HathiTrust Digital Library and the Biodiversity Heritage Library have radically expanded access to scientific materials.

2

The insights of these new animal and plant histories offers two things especially intriguing to me. First, they speak to environmental history's long drive to make history more ecological. Since the field's origins in the 1970s, environmental historians have not just

incorporated the scientific discoveries of ecology and allied sciences to offer deeper understandings about how nature's workings affected historical people, but also tried to view the world as an ecologist might. Taking plants and animals seriously, sometimes even centering them in our narratives, encourages us to think of history as both process and web, networks that involved more than just human input and affected every living thing in turn. There is a humility and open-mindedness in this approach that is refreshing and helps avoid teleological framings of the past.

Second, this in turn offers the potential to help us rethink big stories we've long told about the past. For example, it might shift our histories of enslaved people and their relationships with the natural world, whether through discussion of their daily interactions with other species, or the role of particular plant varieties in spreading enslavement. This has the potential to decenter planters and commodity trade structures in ways that might help us better explore power, agency, and environmental knowledge [Olmstead, Rhode 2008; Beckert 2014; Silkenat 2022; Blakely 2023]. Another example can be found in the utility of animal history to elucidate the organic elements of cities, breaking down artificial barriers between urban and rural histories [Biehler 2013; McNeur 2014; Robichaud 2019].

These studies explicitly benefit from being interdisciplinary in nature, first and foremost for opening access to new and diverse source material, but also in readings and approaches. Environmental history as a subfield began with an explicit assumption that scientific disciplines like ecology and biology should better inform historians interested in the natural world, and has also been influenced by allied social sciences, such as geography and anthropology. The field has taken something of a cultural turn in the past decade, but there are still a number of practitioners wedded to the older, more "material" views.

3

Despite other plans and intentions, I have come to accept that I write explicitly anthropocentric histories of other species. That feels a little illicit to write, at least that bluntly, but it is true. I write in that way because to me it is the only honest way to approach more-than-human history.

I should provide a few caveats to this declaration. I do believe the actions of historical animals and plants mattered. They acted for their own interests, as creatures with lives and — in the case of animals — wills independent of those of humans. Those actions produced (and it continues to work) a sort of agency. And the conditions of other species, the quality of their lives, their survival as species, etc., matter as subjects of study and as subjects of human ethical concerns. In sum, I think it is worth knowing more about

animal and plant pasts, for their own sakes as well as what they might offer to advance our understanding of the human condition.

That being said, I'm not convinced we can write histories "from the perspectives" of animals or plants, as it is somewhat fashionable to state, or even "lend a voice," as it is framed in the question for this forum. We cannot truly imagine a "plant's-eye view of the world," to draw on Michael Pollan's famous phrasing [Pollan 2001]. In fact, I think that's the most anthropocentric conceit of all — the notion that we as clever humans can step outside of our own biological and cultural constraints, alter our consciousness, even, and see the past and present from the perspective of another species. I'm not even completely sold that historians, as individuals, can truly place themselves in another human's perspective in more than a mildly speculative way. I should note this is not really a new argument. It is one side in a long-running debate in environmental history over telling stories about "nature" more broadly [White 1990; Worster 1990; Cronon 1992; Sutter 2013].

So, animal history matters. I'd like to see more of it. And I appreciate the intellectual work that animal historians have put into thinking about the barriers and boundaries of species, the agency of animals, and the importance of perspectives in understanding the past. But I remain convinced that those animal histories in the end will likely still tell us more about people than about other animals. Animal history is as much a mirror as a window into the past.

5

This question also reverberates with early debates in environmental history. In the United States, the field began in the West, centred on ideas about "wilderness" and nonhuman nature, and had substantial ties to the burgeoning environmental movement. As a consequence, there has been ongoing discussion of the appropriate level of activism for a historian and what the end products of our histories ought to be [Opie 1983; Cronon 1993; Sörlin 2011; Walker 2011].

To some extent environmental history made its peace with that tension, and even embraced the relevance of participating in a field that offers something to present debates. Animal history seems to be following that same trajectory on an accelerated arc. I think the connections between animal and plant studies and activism are inevitable, and perhaps can even be welcome. We should be passionate about our subjects, whether people, animals, plants, or even bacteria, and that interest is bound to extend from the past into our contemporary lives. To the extent we can "speak for" other species, it is in our ability to connect their situations now to historical actions. The key to thoughtfully and carefully doing this, I would argue, is in being transparent with our audiences. I thus appreciate scholarship that reveals its biases, grapples with them, and is still

bold enough to take a stance. If environmental history is a social science, I think its methodological emphasis must remain on the word “social” rather than “science,” acknowledging the (dare I say “animal”?) limitations of the human condition.

References

- Asdal K., Druglitrø T., Hinchliffe S. (eds), *Humans, Animals and Biopolitics: The More-Than-Human Condition*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 197 pp.
- Beckert S., *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Knopf, 2014, XXII+615 pp.
- Berry M. K., *Cow Talk: Work, Ecology, and Range Cattle Ranchers in the Postwar Mountain West*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023, XI+291 pp.
- Biehler D. D., *Pests in the City: Flies, Bedbugs, Cockroaches, and Rats*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2013, 336 pp.
- Blakely C. M., *Empire of Brutality: Enslaved People and Animals in the British Atlantic World*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2023, 256 pp.
- Cronon W., ‘A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative’, *Journal of American History*, 1992, vol. 78, no. 4, pp. 1347–1376.
- Cronon W., ‘The Uses of Environmental History’, *Environmental History Review*, 1993, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 1–22. doi: 10.2307/3984602.
- Kean H., Howell P. (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*. London: Routledge, 2019, 560 pp.
- Márquez-Osuna A., *Innovation in the Tropics: The Persistence of Beekeeping Knowledge in the Yucatán Peninsula, 1780–1950*: PhD diss., Harvard University. Cambridge, MA, 2023, 248 pp.
- McNeur C., *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, 312 pp.
- Nance S. (ed.), *The Historical Animal*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015, IX+405 pp.
- O’Gorman E., Gaynor A., ‘More-Than-Human Histories’, *Environmental History*, 2020, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 711–735. doi: 10.1093/envhis/ema027.
- Olmstead A. L., Rhode P. W., *Creating Abundance: Biological Innovation and American Agricultural Development*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 467 pp.
- Opie J., ‘Environmental History: Pitfalls and Opportunities’, *Environmental Review*, 1983, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 8–16. doi: 10.2307/envrev/7.1.8.
- Pollan M., *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s-Eye View of the World*. New York: Random House, 2001, 271 pp.
- Ritvo H., *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. London; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987, 368 pp.
- Robichaud A. A., *Animal City: The Domestication of America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019, 352 pp.

- Silkenat D., *Scars on the Land: An Environmental History of Slavery in the American South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, 272 pp.
- Sörlin S., 'The Contemporaneity of Environmental History: Negotiating Scholarship, Useful History, and the New Human Condition', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2011, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 610–630.
- Sutter P., 'The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History', *Journal of American History*, 2013, vol. 100, no. 1, pp. 94–119.
- Thomas K., *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility*. New York: Pantheon, 1983, 425 pp.
- Walker R., 'On the Edge of Environmental History', *RCC Perspectives*, 2011, no. 3, pp. 48–52.
- White R., 'Environmental History, Ecology, and Meaning', *Journal of American History*, 1990, no. 76, pp. 1111–1116. doi: 10.2307/2936588.
- Worster D., 'Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History', *Journal of American History*, 1990, vol. 76, no. 4, pp. 1087–1106. doi: 10.2307/2936586.

**ALEXANDRA TEREKHINA,
ALEXANDR VOLKOVITSKIY**

We wrote this short answer in the tundra of Yamal, while we were at an ecological field station with our biologist colleagues. During the past five years the topic of humans' relationships with other living creatures has been particularly relevant to us thanks to our work in the interdisciplinary laboratory of the Arctic Research Station, a branch of the Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology based in Labytnangi. This is a rare occasion for Russian science, since biologists and social anthropologists are gathered together in a single academic department. Our text has no pretensions to a theoretical interpretation of the multi-species turn, but is, rather, an attempt to share our experience.

According to the conceptual principles of our team, based on the traditions of European ecological research, the tundra is viewed as a socio-ecological system [Berkes et al. 2003; Cumming 2014], in which there exist and interact with each other as parts of a complex world animals, plants, lichens, indigenous peoples, their reindeer herds and even industrial objects. The biologists' work assumes many years of uninterrupted field observations of various Arctic species, which allows a view of the dynamics

Alexandra Terekhina

Arctic Research Station
of Institute of Plant and Animal
Ecology, Ural Branch of RAS,
Labytnangi, Russia
terekhina.yamal@gmail.com

Alexandr Volkovitskiy

Arctic Research Station
of Institute of Plant and Animal
Ecology, Ural Branch of RAS,
Labytnangi, Russia
alvolkovitskiy@gmail.com

of the ecosystems in conditions of the rapidly changing Arctic climate and active industrialisation of Yamal, two factors which are powerful drivers of transformation in the tundra. Our activities are organised so that in summer we go out together with the biologists to the ecological field station in South Yamal, where we take part in the collection of biological data and conduct ethnographical research. On the extensive territory around the station, where the ecological monitoring is taking place, there live Nenets families of reindeer herders and fishermen, with whom we are constantly in conversation.

The research questions in which we are interested within the overall programme of the laboratory include the impressions of people who live in the tundra about the changes in the environment (the weather, the behaviour of species, the appearance of new animals and plants) and the dynamics of the presence of species, the practice of modern reindeer herding and a whole complex of problems of interaction of “man — reindeer — pasture — climate”. In other words, our present scholarly interests are in the fields of ethnoecology, ethnobotany, ethnozoology, ethnoentomology, ethno-landscape-science and other “ethno-”, though our circle of informants is not confined to Nentsy, since while we are in the tundra we are in contact with fly-in fly-out workers, drivers on the ice roads, and hunters and fishermen from the towns. We draw up our interview questions together with our natural scientist colleagues, and compare the ethnographic material that we get with the results of the ecological monitoring. The further writing of interdisciplinary articles, the search for a common scholarly language and mutual understanding between disciplines is a separate, and complex stage in the work, and, perhaps, another potential topic for the Forum. In addition, we cannot help reflecting along the way on questions from the sphere of anthropology of science, observing the conduct of biological research (and taking a direct part in it) and the analysis of data that follows.

Interaction between humans and animals is a key topic for anthropologists who work in communities of indigenous peoples, especially pastoralists [Mullin 1999; Anderson 2000; Beach, Stammer 2006; Davydov 2013; Oehler 2020]. Projects taking place in the Circumpolar regions are focused on discussions of domestication, questions of inter-species coexistence, communication and hybridity (for example, the “Arctic Domus: Humans and Animals across the North” project, led by D. Anderson, or F. Stammer’s “WIRE: Fluid Realities of the Wild” group). It is quite hard to imagine such collaboration in present-day Russia because of institutional difficulties and funding problems. In Russian reality there are no grant competitions with relevant opportunities: within the only funding body there is a large competition for interdisciplinary research which presupposes the participation of two or more academic organisations

with the prospect of large-scale results. This is hardly suitable for a project focused on anthropology. In an application to the standard grant competitions for large or small groups, when the scholarly discipline is to be indicated, there is no option to put down two or more of them.

In order to expand Western/European/Christian ideas of the relationship between man and the environment, and to change the optics of research, Tim Ingold has proposed having recourse to the world picture of indigenous peoples who live their everyday lives with wild nature and their domestic animals [Ingold 2000]. Over years of work with the people who live in the Yamal tundra we have noticed, through nuances that seem insignificant at first sight, how the Nentsy interact with their reindeer, dogs and other living creatures, and how they speak about them. The tundra dwellers endow them with the same agency as humans, which is, for example, manifested in the formulation *harta tarcja* — “he/she is like that in him/herself”, when talking about the behaviour both of reindeer and dogs and of people. That is, all categories of “living creatures” are born with a particular set of qualities which cannot be seriously influenced, but only slightly corrected.

Paradoxically, after we had started to work with the biologists (monitoring Arctic foxes’ dens, the nests of birds of prey, the relative number of rodents and, finally, discussing ecological questions with them), we were able more accurately to assess the view of the tundra as a home, in the broad sense of the word, that is typical of Yamal nomads. The reindeer herders domesticate the space that their routes cross, not only by the places where they stop every year, the sledges that they leave, and their seasonal pastures, but also through their knowledge of where the wild animals live on these territories. Since the Arctic foxes’ dens and the nests of the falcons or geese are found in the same locations year after year, and may be occupied for years by the same individuals, they also mark out the cultural landscape for the people who live in the tundra.

The domestication of a particular area of tundra is also expressed by the Nentsy in their narratives of “their own” and “alien” predators, which we recorded when collecting material on the problem of the more frequent attacks by Arctic foxes on newborn reindeer calves [Terekhina et al. 2021]. The foxes that the reindeer herders call “their own” are those whose dens are not far from the herders’ camps, and those do not attack the calves. Extra-predation is a feature of the “aliens”, those that have come from elsewhere or are migrating. In the past the Nentsy had an analogous view of the wolves which until the beginning of this century represented the “chief” danger for the herd in the tundra. According to the Nentsy, the wolves would not touch “their own” herd. Mention of “their own” and

“alien” animals, who either live along the routes of the nomadic family or have come from elsewhere, can also be encountered in what they say about other species. Particular individuals of a particular species may be perceived as good neighbours, others as a source of danger. The agency of non-human beings in proximity to humans is in particular manifested in their use of food subsidies at the reindeer herders’ camps or in their search for a safe place. For example, geese, ducks and partridges may build their nests under a sledge near the tent, where they will not be troubled by predators. Reindeer herders maintain that their dogs “won’t hurt their own fledglings” whereas in the tundra far from where they live they might tear a nest to pieces. In this case the birds are practising a model of interaction that is well known in ecology as “the umbrella effect”. For example, geese in the tundra often nest immediately beneath the nests of peregrine falcons placed in elevated spots. These apex predators defend their individual nesting territories and practically do not prey on “their own” geese. The Nentsy too are aware of this phenomenon: they call such geese *pjara* “mada” (“protected”/“subordinate”).

The whole territory of the tundra which is crossed by nomadic routes or where the tents of settled fishermen stand may be called a big hybrid community of the people and animals who populate a common living space (*domus*) [Stépanoff, Vigne 2019]. So that this system of ideas should be complete, it must be added that this space is also populated by gods and spirits who influence the well-being of all living creatures. For the reindeer herders, the health and increase of the herd are indicators of “right” living and divine approval. If the spirits want to punish somebody, they send misfortunes upon his herd, manifested as attacks by wolves or losses due to black ice or disease [Stammler, Ivanova 2020]. The interconnectedness of a multitude of worlds in Nenets cosmology is also expressed through non-human beings. According to Nenets beliefs, dead people are reborn after a certain time as the black beetles that crawl across the tundra, and therefore they must not be killed — it might be a kinsman who has appeared in insect form.

The examples given above are separate subjects that have occurred in our research, and illustrate the views of the people who live in the Yamal tundra on their network of interactions with other creatures. For us the study of these ideas and the interactions themselves is not only the monitoring of the socio-ecological system of the tundra, but even wider, of its socio-eco-cosmological system. The tasks of research into the relationships between people and other living creatures are, in our opinion, very important for the interdisciplinary understanding of the transformation of that system. The people who live all the time in the tundra are the first to notice any changes that all the inhabitants of the tundra need to adapt to.

In our opinion, it is important to develop interdisciplinary research in this area, and for representatives of the social and natural sciences to become acquainted with each other's works. It seems at times that the ethnographic studies that interpret the behaviour of living creatures completely ignore the biological element and anthropomorphise the behaviour of animals, and at the same time call this the "voice" of non-human beings.

Acknowledgements

The research for this publication was carried out with support from the state-funded project of the Institute of Plant And Animal Ecology of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences no. 122021000089-9.

References

- Anderson D. G., *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia: The Number One Reindeer Brigade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 270 pp.
- Beach H., Stammler F., 'Human-Animal Relations in Pastoralism', *Nomadic Peoples*, 2006, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 6–30.
doi: 10.3167/np.2006.100202.
- Berkes F., Colding J., Folke C., *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 393 pp.
- Cumming G. S., 'Theoretical Frameworks for the Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems', Sakai S., Umetsu C. (eds), *Social-Ecological Systems in Transition*. Tokyo: Springer, 2014, pp. 3–24.
- Davydov V. N., 'Borba s khishchnikami i povsednevnye praktiki sovremennykh olenovodov: otnosheniya cheloveka i zhivotnykh na Severnom Baykale (po rezul'tatam polevykh issledovaniy 2007–2012 gg.)' [The Fight with Predators and the Everyday Practices of Modern Reindeer Herders: the Relations of Humans and Animals in Northern Baikal (From the Results of Fieldwork in 2007–2012)], Fedorova E. G. (ed.), *Materialy polevykh issledovaniy MAE RAN*, 2013, iss. 12, pp. 23–42. (In Russian).
- Ingold T., *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge, 2000, 465 pp.
- Mullin M., 'Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationships', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1999, vol. 28, pp. 201–224.
- Oehler A., *Beyond Wild and Tame: Soiot Encounters in a Sentient Landscape*. New York: Berghahn, 2020, 214 pp.
- Stammler F. M., Ivanova A., 'From Spirits to Conspiracy? Nomadic Perceptions of Climate Change, Pandemics and Disease', *Anthropology Today*, 2020, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 8–12.
doi: 10.1111/1467-8322.12589.
- Stépanoff C., Vigne J.-D., 'Introduction', *Hybrid Communities: Biosocial Approaches to Domestication and Other Trans-species Relationships*. London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 1–20.

Terekhina A., Volkovitskiy A., Sokolova N., Ehrich D., Fufachev I., Sokolov A., 'The Context of an Emerging Predation Problem: Nenets Reindeer Herders and Arctic Foxes in Yamal', *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, 2021, vol. 67, no. 3, article 52.
doi: 10.1007/s10344-021-01497-z.

MAXIM VINARSKI

1

In my speciality, malacology, I deal with a group of animals which are traditionally, and not very “politically correctly”, called “lower animals”. This evaluation, although frankly anthropocentric, does to a certain extent reflect the objective reality that there are many levels of organisation (or grades) in the animal world, which can be arranged along a “scale of perfection” constructed by us. Though highly artificial from an evolutionary point of view, this gradation has a right to exist as a heuristic model that allows us to arrange the structure of natural communities hierarchically and answer certain practical questions (such as those connected with problems of bioethics). At the level of relationships between people and other species, “higher” and “lower” reflect the degree of immediacy in interaction, the possibility or impossibility of domestication, cooperation, symbiosis, etc. The “lower” a particular species is in relation to humanity, the greater the number of intermediate links that separate us and the greater the effort needed to perceive its members as components of a single interactive system. Many representatives of the “lower” animals are simply outside our everyday field of vision and are not included in ethnobiological classifications (except for a very small number that are specially important to humanity by reason of their properties, being edible, venomous, parasitic, etc.), which is reflected in their lack of “popular” names. Someone who coexists with them in a single ecosystem (even an urban or agrarian ecosystem) may not have the slightest idea of their presence in his or her immediate environment. This is why the work of the entomologist Fabre became famous all over Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, “disclosing” to the educated reader the invisible

Maxim Vinarski

St Petersburg State University /
St Petersburg branch
of the Institute for the History
of Science and Technology, RAS,
St Petersburg, Russia
radix.vinarski@gmail.com

world of insects, complex, dramatic, but scarcely represented in an “ordinary” person’s field of consciousness. This, of course, was less true of professional naturalists, for whom a completely insignificant, nameless creature could be of great interest. In other words, humanity was traditionally connected to the world of “lower” animals via a large number of transmission links that practically excluded direct contact and interaction. Nevertheless, from the biologist’s point of view both man and everything else represented in his environment form a single ecosystem, of which no component is uninteresting or insignificant. Ideally, man should not be studied in isolation, not only from the species in which he has an immediate interest (useful species, sources of bioresources, potential predators and pests), but from the entire flora and fauna taken together. Naturally, such research requires vast efforts and in many cases cannot be undertaken in practice. However, over recent decades interest in these previously despised “lower” creatures has been growing, which to a large extent is connected with the phenomenon of globalisation and the ensuing problem of “biotic homogenisation”. The point is that man and the “lower” animals are entering into a relationship which could be defined as phoretic. People, usually unconsciously and unintentionally, act as agents of dispersal for plants and invertebrates, relocating them or their dispersal stages (eggs, larvae, spores) over long distances and sometimes to new continents. This produces a tendency towards an equalisation of the species make-up of different continents: the endemics die out, and the proportion of common species in the composition of the biota increases.

In a number of cases, such dispersal leads to conditions of “biological invasion”, when an alien species finds favourable conditions in a new habitat and not only displaces native species from the ecosystem, but becomes a significant component of the human environment. Some such cases have been known from as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, and have become classics (*Elodea*, Colorado beetle), but in our times the flow of undesirable invasive species has increased many times over. In many countries there are programmes monitoring such alien species, actively involving so-called *citizen scientists*, who are specially trained to discover the invaders at an early stage, trace their dispersal, gauge their numbers, etc. The problem of biological invasion thereby ceases to be of purely academic interest and acquires a new social dimension, which in my view is also interesting for the anthropologist. Biotic homogenisation, which is taking place before the very eyes of ordinary people, can evidently change their understanding of the processes occurring in the biosphere and perhaps make them re-think the relationship between them and “nature”.

2

From a biologist’s point of view anthropological research is interdisciplinary by definition, since humanity does not exist in isolation

from the ecosystem that it inhabits, and its human essence is itself not reducible solely to the dimension of the “humanities”. A human being is real only as a part of a natural community, and cannot exist as an organism without interaction with it, without an exchange of substance and energy. “Pure” anthropology is possible only as a consequence of methodological limitation and a lack of resources. Without an adequate inclusion of the biotic component in the analysis, anthropological studies are doomed to incompleteness and a shift of accents. It is another matter that animals are not all the same. I mean that a significant part of the real biodiversity lies outside actual human experience and exists, as it were, in parallel. Therefore, one task of multi-species ethnography might be to establish the nature of the interconnections between the human population and species that co-exist with it in the same ecosystem, to determine the hierarchy and specifics of interrelations with different species (and other ranks of taxonomic group), and to understand how and why people “construct” their perception of living nature. In this respect an anthropologist without any training in biology or professional consultation might find him- or herself helpless. However specific a representative of the fauna *Homo sapiens* might be, he should not be viewed as “the crown of creation”, but as yet, another component of the ecosystem, even if he is one that possesses a degree of power, but nevertheless subject to many laws of nature. I see ideal multi-species research as constructed not vertically (the “king of nature” and all the others dejectedly scrabbling about on different steps below him) but horizontally. In the latter case the accent is transferred from a component of the ecosystem (i.e. man) to the interconnections within its structure, where there are no outstanding elements, primary or secondary, and the only possible “inequality” is determined by the objective position of a particular species in the food chain (man, say, is a top rank predator, and this position of his in the hierarchy cannot be altered).

3

“Giving a voice” to creatures that have no articulate speech or consciousness can only be done by human beings speaking in their name. I see no other possibilities at present. *Non-humans* are not equal participants in the dialogue, and even in the case of hominids that have been taught sign language, it is clear that one party leads, and the other is led. Science, in the end, is a purely human invention, and it is *humans* who write the rules of the game. Humans “construct” their natural environment and create that space with bias and selectively, practically ignoring a huge part of the biological diversity, usually designated as “lower” or even “useless”. So this might be an interesting question: Whom do people exclude from their consideration and why; what are the criteria and methods of selection? I suppose that those species that are not included in ethnic classifications, and not represented in folklore and beliefs or in the

practices of present-day society, can only be significant to professional biologists, who are interested in all living organisms and not only in those that are immediately represented in human experience. Evidently further study of different kinds of folk biology, including different systems of folk taxonomy, will be the most effective way in this direction.

5

I suppose that it is quite possible in respect of the “lower” animals that I referred to above, which still do not appear charismatic in the eyes of political or ecological activists and are therefore not perceived by them as an object of sympathetic attention. But the higher we go up the “scale of perfection” (I put that in inverted commas deliberately, and the problem of drawing the line between “higher” and “lower” is far from trivial, but I cannot discuss it here), the harder it is to tell the one from the other. I suggest that when one studies the higher levels of this progressivist hierarchy it is not possible at all. The reason is simple: in a phylogenetic sense there is no clear line between humans and the “higher” animals, and even the extinction of practically all the anthropoids that in the geological past formed a complete continuum between *Homo* and not-*Homo* does not save us — though it is quite possible that in certain narrowly specialised aspects of the study of *human-animal relations* even the study of the anthropoids might be free from any manifestation of “activism”.

**OKSANA ZAPOROZHETS,
ELENA BOGDANOVA,
ELENA NIKIFOROVA**

1

In answering the Forum questions we rely on our experience of participating in the project “Sloenny pirog sosiedstva” (“The Millefeuille of Neighbourhood”), devoted to the study of contemporary neighbourliness in Russia and Finland, which took place in 2017–2022.¹ At a certain stage of the project, representatives of other species, which had previously appeared in our field of vision as go-betweens in relations between people, came forward as independent neighbours possessing an agency of their own. The expansion of the outlook of our research was connected with the renewal of the agenda of the Kone Foundation (Finland), which funded our project, and which announced an ecological

Oksana Zaporozhets

The Georg-Simmel Center
for Urban Studies,
Humboldt University,
Berlin, Germany
oksana.zaporozhetc@hu-berlin.de

Elena Bogdanova

Independent researcher,
Helsinki, Finland
bogdanova.nova@gmail.com

Elena Nikiforova

Independent researcher,
Helsinki, Finland
elenikifor@gmail.com

¹ <<https://privetsosed.org/>>. See also the special issue of “Laboratorium” (2021, vol. 13): <<https://www.soclabo.org/index.php/laboratorium/issue/view/39>>.

theme and research into interaction with *non-humans* as its priorities. We took this as an intellectual challenge and an opportunity to look at neighbourhood from the less familiar perspective of multi-species studies. Thus, a project that originally examined various scales of human neighbourliness, from that of living on the same staircase to the neighbourliness of border regions, acquired a global scale, and our understanding of neighbourhood relations a new theoretical framework in the form of the concept of the Anthropocene [Crutzen 2006; Lewis, Maslin 2015; Haraway 2016; Latour 2017] and of the field of the proximate and connected with it theoretical ideas and approaches, like the *more-than-human* and flat and network ontologies [Sturgeon 1953; DeLanda 2006; Holbraad et al. 2014; Kohn 2015], multi-species studies [Haraway 2013; 2016], the new materialism and post-humanism [Braidotti 2013; Braidotti et al. 2022]. In that sense, to answer the question that has been asked, one can indeed see changes in our research into neighbourhood which we have made in response to an innovative funding body.

It is hard to answer the question of which living creatures are already included in the research experience, and even harder to provide a list of the objects and organisms that remain unnoticed. It is worth remembering the existence of epistemological fields outside our own multi-species studies, in which the interaction of different species is being studied. The actor-network theory, the foundations of which were laid by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, gave a qualitatively new significance to non-humans in the construction of society, concentrating its attention on technologies and the material environment. *Laboratory Life* [Latour, Woolgar 1979] and *Pandora's Hope* [Latour 1999] are closer to multi-species studies, and in them the authors have created an ontological relativism that provides an image of the world as a “building site” on which human and non-human agents are collectively producing sociality. Mary Douglas's famous *Purity and Danger* [Douglas 1966] is relevant for its propositions regarding the meaning of “pure” and “impure”, “order” and “disorder” in the milieu surrounding humanity. In *Phénoménologie de la perception* Maurice Merleau-Ponty showed that subjectivity and the meanings of the real worlds in its specificity are constructed by means of the human body, which possesses senses and is capable of perceiving the world about it, full of other living creatures, things, smells and sounds [Merleau-Ponty 1945].

Each of the theoretical constructions proposed by these authors is sufficiently universal and broad to spawn a practically infinite diversity of research objects. The main prompt to researchers amid this diversity of approaches and methodologies is that the social should be sought not only in human beings, but in the complicated and diverse conscious and unconscious interactions with everything that surrounds them.

Speaking of multi-species studies, we see today that the choice of objects of study is limited only by the inclinations and research imagination of scholars. The study of animals and their coexistence with people has become an independent, complex and rapidly developing field with its own theoreticians, educational programmes and specialised journals. We know of research into insects [Raffles 2010], bacteria and viruses. Objects of study include plants, stones [Lindstrøm 2015], water, the air in hospitals [Brown et al. 2020], laundries as places of the production of cleanliness [Pink 2011] and much else.

As for our own experience, the original perspective of the project, domiciliary neighbourhood, concentrated our attention on the most common “neighbours” of human beings in the urban milieu. Our field of interest included house plants and plants growing in the city, insects [Brednikova 2021], and birds within the city limits. We also looked at the coexistence of species (humans and their “pets”) inside a particular city flat. Among the non-humans that cannot be exactly classified as living organisms, we turned our attention to dust as possessing a particular agency in neighbourhood, and the beginning of the pandemic prompted us to study neighbourhood with a new, influential non-human actant, the virus. In this way, the spectrum of non-human beings that attracted the attention of the project, was extensive, but at the same time limited to urban neighbourhood. In connection with this, the answer to the question which living creatures could productively be included in research is, in our opinion, directly connected with the statement of the research problems in each particular project and the corresponding choice of non-human *vis-à-vis*.

Despite the impressive list of objects in which we are interested, we still feel that the more important question is not “*which* species should be included in the research?” but “*how* should it be done?” A means of solving this problem might be the cultivation of important research skills — *the art of noticing* [Tsing 2012], which implies the noticing of various creatures and the developing of interest in their worlds, and also *the art of attentiveness* [van Dooren et al. 2016], which reminds us of the researcher’s responsibility and that people should give a conscious reply to the voices of their non-human neighbours for an mutually beneficial coexistence of species.

2

Our answers to the Forum questions are to a large extent conditioned by the outlook and aims of our project. As we worked on it, we tried to correlate our work with the overall condition of multi-species studies, so as to have at least a few ready-made answers to constantly multiplying questions. Multi-species ethnography, or, more precisely, multi-species studies, of which it is

a part, is an umbrella concept. It brings together a multitude of different subject fields, which makes it impossible to talk of a single basic task. We have identified several priorities that in one degree or another share the perspectives that make up multi-species studies.

Firstly, an active development of a new understanding of the social space. It should be based either on a complete rejection of anthropocentricity, or a development of human sensitivities toward the multitude of living organisms and their relationships by means of those very “arts” of noticing and attentiveness that we mentioned above. Whereas in the first case the significance of the human being is radically redefined (it is declared to be only one of a multitude of living creatures, and its exclusive role in the organisation of the world order, and, accordingly, its special importance as an object of study are denied), in the second there is no radical revision of the role of humanity, which retains its significance as a collection point, a participant and a connecting link in the relationships between organisms, or as an analyst whose “art of noticing” allows the multitude of living organisms to be noticed and acknowledged and, therefore, included in the orbit of new relationships.

Secondly, the analytical priority of a large number of tendencies within multi-species studies is the study of the mutual influence and coexistence of people and other living organisms, which researchers have tried to grasp with the concepts of *becoming-with* [Haraway 2013], *mutual domestication* [Swanson et al. 2018] and *conviviality* [Donati 2019] and analogous ideas. The accent on joint existence is partly the result of a conscious choice on the part of social scientists, and partly out of necessity, since the majority of them do not have the specialised knowledge that would allow them to study living organisms or people as living organisms. Focusing on *being together* is absolutely justified, because it is the mutual changes that take place as a result of interaction between people and living organisms that are interesting, as it was in the encounter between man and virus in the Covid-19 pandemic, when the virus radically changed the life of millions of people, but the actions of people (making vaccines, taking precautions, and much else) changed the virus too, and its distribution.

Thirdly, paradoxically, with its more or less radical rejection of anthropocentricity, multi-species studies “puts the burden back on humans” [van Dooren, Rose 2012: 19]. That is, by weakening epistemological anthropocentrism, multi-species studies strengthen ethical human-centeredness. The development of the ethics of sensitivity towards living organisms, and the recognition of the need to understand their interests in practice means a close interweaving of multi-species studies with the ethics of protecting living organisms

and the ideas of a mutually beneficial coexistence of species [van Dooren et al. 2016], which means a more or less close interaction with ecological or other activism.

Fourthly, scaling plays a special role in multi-species studies, the demonstration of the close link between micro- and macro-processes, their causal dependency. Alex Nading's book *Mosquito Trails* [Nading 2014], which is about the mosquitoes that spread dengue fever in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, shows the close links between apparently unconnected phenomena — the development of the secondary market in automobiles in the USA, the global interests and investments of the European Union, the crisis of the socialist system in Nicaragua and an outbreak of dengue fever in a small suburb of the Nicaraguan capital that spread from there to other cities and countries. The demonstration of a connection and causal dependency between micro- and macro-processes makes a substantial contribution to the formation of an art of noticing and responsibility. Similarly, placing the process in wider social contexts and demonstrating the large-scale consequences of small actions is an important analytical skill and a political declaration in countries (among which we might also include Russia) in which the overall institutional and social organisation supports individualism and an idea that individual actions have only a small radius of influence. However, the other side of the process (the idea that causal dependencies must inevitably exist, and that everything is connected with everything) might be a backward step for the social sciences, because that is precisely what some of the social theories of the twentieth century, with their ideas of emergence and the significance of voids and gaps, were opposed to.

And, finally, the last but no less important task of multi-species studies is the creation of a new language, which will allow the recording of the complexity of the relationships between living organisms. The new language will include borrowings from the natural sciences and the creation of new concepts or redefinitions of those that already exist in the social sciences. Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties in creating a vocabulary sensitive to multi-species coexistence is the translation of existing terms into different languages. Whereas the *lingua franca* for classical scholarship was Latin, for contemporary multi-species ethnography (and for the social sciences as a whole) the language of discussion is English, which demands additional efforts from all who aim to discuss multi-species interaction in translating concepts and linguistic sensitivity.

Multi-species studies obviously require social scientists to acquire new knowledge in the field to which the non-humans that are the object of our interest belong. Can we study them when we are not biologists, zoologists or virologists? How can social scientists

overcome their “impostor syndrome”? In our opinion, the best way out of the existing situation is the formulation by social scientists of a research problem appropriate to their toolkit. Whereas focusing on the non-human actors themselves presupposes special professional knowledge, the social science viewpoint allows networks and connections to be identified, and a concentration on the interrelations between people and non-human actors and on the social significance of the actors and their relationships. We think that sociologists and anthropologists should simply accept that in multi-species studies a complete retreat from the anthropocentric perspective is impossible.

Acknowledging the limitations of the social sciences in studying non-humans does not mean the triumph or monopoly of the natural sciences. It seems much more productive to develop an interdisciplinary approach, which, however, requires time, and a readiness on the part of social and natural scientists to meet each other half-way. Such a readiness would include a recognition by the social and natural sciences of the importance of each other’s analytical perspective and the formation of a language of discussion and of spaces in which that discussion can take place. Does such a “movement toward each other” exist in reality? Certainly, and not only on the part of the social sciences. The current intellectual fashion and appetite for the popularisation of science favours the appearance if not of “public” natural science, at least of individual specialists orientated towards discourse accessible to the wider public and able to bring the objects of their research closer to man and society, to socialise the natural. In conditions of anthropocentric culture, the noticing of non-human beings, let alone their recognition as in any way equal partners in interaction, demands considerable intellectual effort and a readiness to expand the framework of perception and imagination. It is no accident that modern art has become an important space for reflexive dialogue, and the initiators of interdisciplinary discussion have been artists and curators. One could provide many examples of works of this kind, and of those brought to fruition in Russia during the time of our project it is worth recalling the large-scale exhibition “The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics, 2020–2100” at the “Garage” museum in 2019, which discussed the Anthropocene and its effects in the course of the global ecological agenda and was a significant cultural and academic event. The concept of the exhibition was based on the wider understanding of ecology as the uninterrupted interaction of humans, inert nature and other biological species (which is relevant for inter-species studies), and an understanding of the close connection between biological, technological, social and political ecosystems. Another interdisciplinary project that brought together scholars and artists and was directly aimed at studying neighbourhood and the coexistence of people and living organisms in the urban

milieu was the project “Nature in the City: Non-Human Heterotopies”, put on in 2021 at the Museum of the History of St Petersburg. Directing its gaze at non-humans in the urban milieu (plants, rivers, lichens, birds, insects) the project examined “non-human heterotopies” — waste ground and abandoned territories in the city, where these organisms live and work. The outcome of the project was the creation of a space for interdisciplinary discussion, the formation of an offline and online exhibition, and active attempts to develop a common language of discussion that would be embodied both in artistic products and academic texts.

3

Social studies at present possess a wide spectrum of methods. However, when we try to apply the usual social science methods to inter-species studies, we encounter a number of difficulties. The usual social science methods of collecting and analysing data are for the most part anthropocentric. They were invented by people to study people who have a human consciousness. We cannot interview an animal, cannot ask it to keep a diary or draw a mental map. Attempts directly to repeat the algorithms implicit in the usual methods of social studies often lead to non-humans being “humanised”, starting to speak in the researcher’s voice, and acquiring characteristics and properties that belong to human beings.

Here there might be a future in developing methods and approaches that diminish the significance of the human investigator as the author of the research questions and interpretations, and turn him or her into an observer, at least at the stage of data collection. In such a case the ethnographical methods that presuppose long contact with the object of study would be in demand, giving the key role to observation and profound reflexion on how the researcher is positioned relative to the field. If non-humans enter the social scientist’s field of vision, an acquaintance with the laboratory methods used in the natural sciences might be useful. Besides the immediate methods of study of the organisation of the life of viruses, bacteria and insects, it is important to look at the role that is assigned to the investigator in such research, and what is expected as a final outcome.

Among the methods that are gaining in popularity one that seems interesting is that of visualisations accompanying observation — drawings, sketches and illustrations, that are now in demand in other disciplines too. Hugh Raffles’s book *Insectopedia* [Raffles 2010] gives an example of research in which the artist Cornelia Hesse-Honegger drew the eyes of *Drosophila* that had been exposed to radiation. Her illustrations showed something that passes unnoticed to the naked human eye, deformity and mutation in living creatures. The research resulted in an exhibition of the illustrations. This work is an excellent example of how methodological experiments can give a voice

to living creatures and be a powerful statement at the meeting-point of science, art, activism and politics.

At the same time, the usual methods of social studies should hardly be discounted. If the question is correctly posed, and the researchers inventive and reflexive, they remain in demand and effective. Thus, in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic our research group managed to study the change in practices of neighbourhood when all face-to-face contact was marked as dangerous and highly undesirable. Using the diary method, we asked people living in Moscow and St Petersburg to keep diaries in which we proposed that they should write down their everyday life. Thanks to these diaries we were able to find out how neighbourhood had changed not only with people, but also with the virus — how it became a significant agent of interaction, radically redefining everyday life [Bogdanova 2020; Zaporozhets, Tkach 2020]. It may be supposed that the anthropocentricity of the methods of social studies, for all their obvious shortcomings, will allow the social sciences' niche in inter-species studies to be kept clear and specific.

4

It is important to take account of the peculiarities and differences of the social and national contexts in which scholarship exists. The stimulus for us to extend our viewpoint to neighbourhood with non-human beings was the Finnish Kone Foundation's grant competition, which actively promoted interdisciplinary research and collaboration between scholars and artists on relevant topics, including ecology. The recognition of the social significance of the ecological agenda and the normalisation of ecological consciousness and practices in Finland are well-known facts. But in other countries and contexts focusing on the non-human optics might be completely irrelevant to the current social agenda, and attention to non-human beings, let alone a recognition of their agency, might be incomprehensible to the public. We suppose that in Russia, as a result of the weakness and limited reach of the ecological agenda, attentiveness to inter-species relationships will remain fairly modest.

5

Research into micro-organisms and animals may both favour politicisation, demanding changes to the existing position because of the many natural and climatic problems and contradictions, and also favour depoliticisation, shifting attention to non-humans detached from their social context, thereby creating a "science for science's sake".

At the level of setting research tasks, it is not hard to separate science and political activism. The sphere of multi-species studies reveals a large number of topics not directly connected with political activism: companion animals, care and assistance, animal and human health, different kinds of safety, travel, humanities questions. All this is already packed into separate segments of scholarly research

and can exist independently of activism. It is another matter that the fields of scientific research and activism have long been closely linked in relations of borrowings and the exchange of ideas. It seems much harder to disentangle the disciplines and fields at the intersection of which multi-species studies are evolving than science and political activism. Multi-species studies are also closely linked with art and voluntary work. The result of collaborations that break through the usual borders is always unexpected and therefore most important for the development of the art of noticing and the future of multi-species studies.

References

- Bogdanova E., 'Sosedstvo kak sotsialnye kostyli samoizolyanta' [Neighbourship as Social Crunches for a Self-isolating Person], *Sosedstvo*, 2020. <<https://privetsosed.org/kostyli-samoizolyanta>>. (In Russian).
- Braidotti R., *The Posthuman*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, 237 pp.
- Braidotti R., Jones E., Klumbyte G. (eds), *More Posthuman Glossary (Theory in the New Humanities)*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022, 224 pp.
- Brednikova O., 'Salfetochkoy ili tapkom? Ili kak klopy svyazany s beznravstvennostyu' [With a Napkin or a Slipper? Or How Bedbugs Are Connected with Immorality], Podcast "Bespresedlnaya sotsiologiya" [Sociology Unbound], 2021. <<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/cisr-podcast/episodes/ep-e10s2p7>>. (In Russian).
- Brown N., Buse C., Lewis A., Martin D., Nettleton S., 'Air Care: An "Aerography" of Breath, Buildings and Bugs in the Cystic Fibrosis Clinic', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 2020, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 972–986. doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.13104.
- Crutzen P. J., "The "Anthropocene"", Ehlers E., Krafft T. (eds), *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*. Berlin; Heidelberg: Springer, 2006, pp. 13–18. doi: 10.1007/3-540-26590-2_3.
- DeLanda M., *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006, 160 pp.
- Donati K., "Herding Is His Favourite Thing in the World": Convivial World-making on a Multispecies Farm', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 2019, vol. 66, pp. 119–129. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.12.008.
- Douglas M., *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge; Kegan Paul, 1966, 196 pp.
- Haraway D., *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 423 pp.
- Haraway D., *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2016, XV+296 pp.
- Holbraad M., Pedersen M. A., Viveiros de Castro E., "The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions", *Theorizing the Contemporary*, *Fieldsights*, 2014, 13 Jan. <<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions>>.

- Kohn E., 'Anthropology of Ontologies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2015, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 311–327.
doi: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-014127.
- Latour B., *Pandora's Hope: Essay on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1999, 324 pp.
- Latour B., 'Anthropology at the Time of the Anthropocene: A Personal View of What Is to Be Studied', Brightman M., Lewis J. (eds), *The Anthropology of Sustainability. Palgrave Studies in Anthropology of Sustainability*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 35–49.
doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-56636-2_2.
- Latour B., Woolgar S., *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979, 272 pp.
- Lewis S. L., Maslin M. A., 'Defining the Anthropocene', *Nature*, 2015, vol. 519 (7542), pp. 171–180. doi: 10.1038/nature14258.
- Lindstrøm T., 'Agency "in Itself". A Discussion of Inanimate, Animal and Human Agency', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 2015, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 207–238. doi: 10.1017/S1380203815000264.
- Merleau-Ponty M., *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard, 1945, XVI+531 pp.
- Nading A. M., *Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014, 288 pp.
- Pink S., 'Dirty Laundry. Everyday Practice, Sensory Engagement and the Constitution of Identity', *Social Anthropology*, 2011, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 275–290. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-8676.2005.tb00391.x.
- Raffles H., *Insectopedia*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010, 480 pp.
- Sturgeon T., *More Than Human*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1953, 233 pp.
- Swanson H. A., Lien M. E., Ween G. (eds), *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, 272 pp.
- Tsing A. L., 'Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species: For Donna Haraway', *Environmental Humanities*, 2012, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 141–154. doi: 10.1215/22011919-3610012.
- van Dooren T., Kirksey E., Münster U., 'Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness', *Environmental Humanities*, 2016, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 1–23. doi: 10.1215/22011919-3527695.
- van Dooren T., Rose D. B., 'Storied-places in a Multispecies City', *Humanimalia*, 2012, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 1–27.
doi: 10.52537/humanimalia.10046.
- Zaporozhets O., Tkach O., 'Sosedstvo na karantine (po materialam dnevnikov moskvichey i peterburzhtsev)' [Neighbours under COVID-19 Quarantine (based on diaries of Moscovites and St Petersburgers)], *Sosedstvo*, 2020. <<https://privetsosed.org/covid2020>>. (In Russian).

LOST MULTITUDES: AFTERWORD

Den Weg auf seinen Wartturm findet das augenlose Tier mit Hilfe eines allgemeinen Lichtsinnes der Haut. Die Annäherung der Beute wird dem blinden und tauben Wegelagerer durch seinen Geruchssinn offenbar. Der Duft der Buttersäure, die den Hautdrüsen aller Säugetiere entströmt, wirkt auf die Zecke als Signal, um ihren Wachtposten zu verlassen und sich herabzustürzen. Fällt sie dabei auf etwas Warmes, was ihr ein feiner Temperatursinn verrät — dann hat sie ihre Beute, den Warmblüter, erreicht und braucht nur noch mit Hilfe ihres Tastsinnes eine möglichst haarfreie Stelle zu finden, um sich bis über den Kopf in das Hautgewebe ihrer Beute einzubohren. Nur pumpt sie langsam einen Strom warmen Blutes in sich hinein [von Uexküll, Kriszat 1956 (1934): 23–24].¹

Aussi proches de moi qu'une image dans le miroir, je pouvais les toucher, non les comprendre [Lévi-Strauss 1955: 356].²

Before, after and beside the Anthropocene

Although questions about the relationship between people and other living creatures are by no means alien to Russian scholarship today, the institutional and publicational density of that field is clearly insufficient. Many Russian-speaking respondents, such as Sergei Sokolovskiy, wrote to us how glad they were that this topic had at last been broached, lamenting previous not too successful attempts to attract their Russian colleagues' attention to the *bio-turn/zoo-turn* and Latourian principles of symmetrical anthropology.

Maria Pirogovskaya
Munich, Germany
adeyanova@gmail.com

Aleksandra Zakharova
European University
at St Petersburg,
St Petersburg, Russia
azakharova@eu.spb.ru

¹ "The eyeless tick is directed to this watchtower by a general photosensitivity of her skin. The approaching prey is revealed to the blind and deaf highway woman by her sense of smell. The odor of butyric acid, that emanates from the skin glands of all mammals, acts on the tick as a signal to leave her watchtower and hurl herself downwards. If, in so doing, she lands on something warm — a fine sense of temperature betrays this to her — she has reached her prey, the warm-blooded creature. It only remains for her to find a hairless spot. There she burrows deep into the skin of her prey, and slowly pumps herself full of warm blood" [von Uexküll 1957 (1934): 7].

² "They were as close to me as an image seen in a looking-glass: I could touch, but not understand them" [Lévi-Strauss 1961: 326].

There may be a number of reasons for the cautious attitude towards animal studies and multi-species ethnography in Russia. Among these are conservatism (mentioned by many respondents) towards tendencies that are too “fashionable” and too “Western” (and therefore perceived as politically coloured, about which, for example John Sanbonmatsu and Anastasia Fedotova write); the high degree of regimentation of science and the rigidity of disciplinary boundaries, and a greater attention to human “intraspecies conflicts” (Varvara Baholdina); the fragmentation of the object of study (Julia Shanina); the historical conflict between scientific positivism and answering universalist conceptions (Sergei Sokolovskiy, Grigorij Vinokurov), and the poor development of the ecological agenda (Oksana Zaporozhets, Elena Bogdanova and Elena Nikiforova). Altogether these factors lead to an insufficient institutionalisation of research into the relationship between people and animals, despite the socially conditioned demand for it (Olga Korovkina).¹

We should nevertheless, perhaps, not draw the simple conclusion of the lamentable state of research into people and animals in Russian anthropology and the humanities. If we are speaking of the popularity of new directions within the country, then, from an institutional point of view, Russia has nothing to boast about. There are no research centres like the NZCHAS (New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies) or the Catalan UPF-CAE (Universitat Pompeu Fabra-Centre for Animal Ethics), nor periodicals like “Anthropozoologica” (since 1984), “Anthrozoös” (since 1987), “Society & Animals” (since 1993) or “Humanimalia” (since 2009), nor major research grants for interdisciplinary projects analogous to the Matsutake Worlds Research Group. But that does not mean that it is impossible to research and publish in ecological anthropology, environmental history, STS or the history of science, creating, as it were, enclaves of *human-animal studies* within the existing institutions, or putting out themed collections of articles in wide-profile journals [Vorobyev 2018; Kozhevnikova 2021; Fais-Leutskaya, Novik 2021]. One can indeed create micro-communities of enthusiasts at the grass-roots level — through independent seminars, private grant initiatives, sections at conferences, web publications and Telegram channels that bring together researchers and animal rights campaigners, who are often the same person.² This network

¹ See also the popular scientific course “What’s the Point of Animals?” uploaded in 2017 on the Arzamas. Academy portal: <<https://arzamas.academy/courses/1064>>.

² See: “Beast and Man: the Reciprocal, the Different, the Shared” conferences (EUSPb, 2023); Yana Fishova’s “Vegan Studies and Critical Animal Studies” Telegram channel with 369 subscribers <<https://t.me/veganstudies>> (02.08.2024); texts on this subject on the blocked Syg.ma platform for independent authors <<https://syg.ma/veganstudies>> and in the Gorky web publications <<https://gorky.media/autor/mefyod/>>. The close relations between such research and animal ethics is also characteristic of Western science (in particular, animal rights have been actively defended by the major primatologists who practiced a sort of “participant observation” among chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans, Jane

of enclaves, or rather the rhizome, on the one hand, means that the relevant problems are extremely unevenly studied. This sometimes forces scholars (especially environmental historians) to an “artisanal” production of science, because there are as yet neither processed data nor extant works that might be cited in support of their hypotheses. But on the other hand, it makes up for the rigidity of the official structures and creates opportunities for discoveries and unexpected ideas.

If it is a matter of interpreting Russian material and problems in their historical, geographical or socio-political redactions, it is not the regional node as such that is critical for their discussion in global science, but access to the materials and how much the research is “read”. Being read is determined, to a large extent, by the language of the publication and the authority of the edition or publisher. To orientate oneself solely on publications in Russian [Utekhin 2015; Tolstaya 2017; Davydov 2017; Utekhin 2019; Korshunkov 2022; Krylova 2023] and draw conclusions about the meagreness of Russian research against the background of the abundance of English-language publications would be artificially to narrow one’s viewpoint. To avoid this distortion, Vladimir Korshunkov suggests looking at countries that find themselves in a similar position within the field of world science.

However, once we begin to compile a polyglot bibliography about the region transcending affiliations and the borders of national academies, we obtain a rich, intensively evolving field, which brings together scholars with varied backgrounds and interests, which is natural, considering the importance of Russia for interpreting the ecological, epidemiological, social and political processes taking place in Eurasia and in the world as a whole, as Frédéric Keck remarks.¹ Furthermore, how the Russian history of *human-animal studies* and the *more-than-human approach* is conceived depends to a large extent on the determination of an authoritative position, point of view and depth of field. Shall we include in their genealogy semiotic studies of inter-species communication, the classic ethnographies of the exploitation of nature, ethnobotany, ethnoecology and other studies of local knowledge, the cultural historical study of the involvement of human/animal bodies with the technologies

Goodall, Dian Fossey and Birutė Galdikas; all three were protégées of the palaeoanthropologist and archaeologist Louis Leakey). It is no accident that the lion’s share of Western journals and publications about animals have the words *law* or *policy* in their titles and have applied purposes. On the social and epistemological context of the passing of one of the first laws to protect animals see in particular: [Shmueli 2023].

¹ Besides the collective and individual projects already mentioned by contributors to our Forum, see, for example: [Brandišauskas 2019; Oehler, Varfolomeyeva 2019; Tarasova 2020; Evtuhov et al. 2023; Peemot 2024]. Collecting on regional principles, going beyond the frontiers of a particular country, will extend the bibliography even further (see, for example: [Marchina 2021]).

of power, works on shamanic rituals, the early Soviet ethnology dealing with the problem of the boundary between man and animal, etc. [Morar 2017; Rossiyanov 2021; Baranov et al. 2021]?

As Carole Ferret reminds us in her reply, the understanding and remembrance of the beginnings are important both at the level of the national academy, and at that of global science. The turn to animals and the living world did not come about as the sudden intuition of a few brilliant scholars, but was prepared for by a critical mass of research in various disciplines. It is quite natural to construe it as a discontinuity, like many other turns, but it would be more honest to recognise the continuity. More productive, too, as that prompts us to reread and reinterpret not only acknowledged classics like Morgan and Bogoraz, but also those authors whose ideas were ignored in their own time. From this point of view, the intensity and diversity of the discussions in contemporary social studies should not make us forget about our heritage.

The holistic approach in anthropology has made a multitude of actors visible, from pangolins among the Lele and Balinese fighting cocks to wet rice, from the spirit-owners of Buryat healing springs (*arshaan*) to moving stones in the Australian desert. This approach invited interdisciplinarity, which could be reflected in university programmes — Irina Podgorny recalls Argentine experience of this sort. As Stefan Helmreich and Eben Kirksey, editors of a special volume on multi-species ethnography in 2010, remarked, the mutual links between nature and culture have concerned anthropology ever since Boas. The fresh discussions about the Anthropocene (the term was invented in 2000) only give the wider spectrum of creatures “whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds” their due, acknowledge their subjectivity and agency and concentrate on the processual nature of these entanglements [Kirksey, Helmreich 2010: 545].

The interdisciplinary field of multi-species research, which arose at the intersection of research into the environment by social sciences and humanities, research into animals and research into science and technology has not only different sources of inspiration, but variable density; so, although animals began to be discussed in American ecological history in the 1970s, the specialised journal *Animal History* appeared only in 2025. Looking at discontinuities, or, by contrast, continuity, will give different visions of the field, with their own problems, methodologies and selection of cited (or contested) authorities.

But discontinuities arise not only as a performative assertion of one’s own originality. They are evidence of tension, for example between the ontological approach, which follows the style of thinking of indigenous cultures and shows an “enchanted picture of multispecies

entanglements”, and economic anthropology, which considers the consequences of contemporary capitalism for people and animals, for their lives and deaths.¹ Or of the tension between the different variants of positivism — the Marxist anthropology of labour, including “animal labour”, and Latourian materialism, which in the course of *symmetrical anthropology* does away with the division into subject and object, thereby making a mystification of power relations (mentioned by Frédéric Keck, Carole Ferret, and Grigorij Vinokurov), if not entirely blurring the distinction between sentient beings and actors without any sensory organs — protein compounds, spirits or industrial objects (John Sanbonmatsu).

It is hard to bring together works that proceed from conflicting interpretations of agency or intentionality, immanent in all living creatures or ascribed to them by man, etc.² It is another question what should be understood as “living”, and how life and action are correlated [Reno 2014; de Wolff 2017]. These disagreements are quite to be expected: if the classical research object of anthropology, human experience — for example, the experience of those whom Lévi-Strauss called “les indigènes”, is not so easy to study, what can be said of the lived experience of an animal, a plant, a fungus or a virus, and their perspectives?³ And do they all have lived experience?

Sub specie speciei: on the multiplicity of species in/of multi-species ethnography

The basic line of criticism of multi-species ethnography concerns in the first place the vagueness of the method itself and the interpretations of species with which the method works.

Depending on disciplinary boundaries and identities, everyone puts something of their own into the concept of *species* and, consequently, *multi-species ethnography*. Not all species of living creatures possess, in principle, sociality that, according to the methodology, can be studied (Vladimir Korshunkov, John Sanbonmatsu). Following the logic of the natural sciences leads to doubts both about the meaningfulness of the very concept of *species*, and about the adequacy of the interpretation of their multiplicity (Irina Podgorny).

¹ See, for example the analysis of the effect of industrial technologies on the death and afterlife of the northern reindeer: [Rakhmanova et al. 2022].

² Noteworthy in this respect are the discussions about the agency of plants and their products (food, cloth, etc.), and of materials of organic origin. Compare, for example: [Pollan 2006: 15–119; Onaga, Douny 2023]. Compare also the discussion of Sergei V. Maksimov’s ethnographic study “A Load of Grain and its Journey” (1873) in [Baranov et al. 2021: 92–93]. One could imagine a similar study devoted, say, to Sosnowsky’s hogweed.

³ Once it is a matter of creatures that communicate with the world by chemical or temperature signals, the expression “point of view” itself becomes meaningless. See the description of the world of the female field tick in the epigraph.

An account of the multifarious relationships of human beings with one particular *species*, a sort of analysis of the social roles that a living creature can play, could be more significant (Anastasia Fedotova). And the biological anthropologist Varvara Baholdina stresses that “the term ‘multi-species anthropology’ would not in principle have raised any objections, but only for the genus *Homo* and for research into the interactions between the species of that genus. [...] But what does ‘multi-species ethnography’ mean? [...] Is there some tacit agreement about it within the community of social and cultural anthropologists that is still unknown to any wider circle of specialists?” The fact that there are such questions is evidently a signal that the concept is somewhat hermetic.

The dialogue with the history of science and STS, which deconstruct the apparatus of the natural sciences and examine the processes whereby scientific truths are produced, influences scholars’ readiness to make unqualified use of the biological concept of *species* (Tamar Novick, Mark Hersey, Grigorij Vinokurov). “Ethnographers should be as sceptical of the idea of ‘species’ as many are of simplified ideas of ‘the human,’” writes Alex Blanchette, reminding us that this umbrella term covers a heterogeneous multitude: breeds and sorts with their history, hybrids, and “social demographic groups” that in turn consist of individuals with their intellects and characters. Critical animal studies also use the problematics of *species* for their own ends, attacking *speciesism* as an ideology of exclusivity and defending the personal approach. True, the boundary between those whom they recognise as *persons* and all the rest is very flexible.

Finally, the most widespread is the tradition of interpretation according to which *species* in multi-species ethnography has nothing to do with *species* in the natural sciences — they are homonyms that should be separated to avoid confusion and disputes. In its most economical variant this *species* may be identified with an emic view of a group of animals that is distinguished in indigenous cultures, which inevitably leads to a discussion of the selectivity of beholding and a comparison of scientific and vernacular classifications and the signs that are used in them. (Maxim Vinarski writes of how the “lower” animals make this selectivity visible.)

In a wider reading *species* are understood as a whole spectrum of actors, including not only non-human animals, but also the elements, physical objects and supernatural beings, who are united only by their agency: “We define ‘multispecies ethnography’ as ethnographic research and writing that is attuned to life’s emergence within a shifting assemblage of agentive beings. By ‘beings’ we are suggesting both biophysical entities as well as the magical ways objects animate life itself” [Ogden et al. 2013: 6]. This produces an approximation of the etic and emic perspectives, if not their entire overlapping and

amalgamation. This may be taken for an indisputable enrichment of anthropological knowledge, or a reductionist replacement of academic representation with vernacular self-representation.

By blurring the boundaries between humans and other living creatures, multi-species ethnography, which in a certain sense follows biological research into ecosystems, reveals, like litmus, hitherto unnoticed relationships (Anna Varfolomeeva, Maxim Vinarski, Alexandra Terekhina and Alexandr Volkovitskiy). The indigenous communities and anthropologists who are sensitive to local systems of knowledge and “other anthropologies” [Baranov et al. 2021: 88–97] may refer at least some of the actors (and authors) of social processes to several *species* at the same time, as *human* and *non-human* as well as *superhuman*. This classification is again not straightforward: the division into *human animals* vs. *non-human animals*, intended to recall human beings’ animal nature and remove the human-animal dichotomy, turns out to reproduce it again (Milena Pugina, Carole Ferret). It is proposed to solve the problem by introducing the term *humanimal*, for which there is still no accepted Russian equivalent.

Unquiet subjectivity

The various fields of anthropology contain in their names an indication of their object of study — the anthropology of labour, the anthropology of religion, the anthropology of migration, etc. However, multi-species ethnography is an exception to this logic. It ought to have non-human beings and *more-than-human (collective) sociality* at its centre, but in fact it is a matter of the ethnography of human interaction with different species, in the broad sense. Practically all the Forum respondents assert that multi-species ethnographies are still ethnographies about people, even if they include them in a wider natural context. But is there a chance of writing about this in any other way, not simply removing man from the foreground, but placing non-human animals at the centre?

The most radical is Eva Meijer, who not only postulates the necessity of acknowledging the subjectivity of non-human beings, but also proposes creating political representation for *non-humans* and seeking non-exploitative research methods that take account of their interests. That it is time for people to recognise the materiality and polyphony of the environment and write history starting from there, both Mark Hersey and Drew Swanson agree, calling for the “humbling” of anthropocentric arrogance, but recognising the difficulties that this entails. Such humility in anthropology would mean both a search for more exact coordinates for the human perspective, and a “constant refocusing” (Lidiya Rakhmanova, Mark Mefed).

The chief stumbling block is the problem of the subject and access to his or her perspective/voice/point of view. Is any being subjective? Do they all have behaviour, and if so, from whose point of view? How are different subjects correlated with human beings and with each other? What are we guided by when we discover these subjects? Do culturally specific configurations of ethics direct our gaze towards them? Can it be that the discussion of another subjectivity is itself a means of coping with anxiety in an investigative encounter with other creatures (Lidiya Rakhmanova)?

Considering this, Carole Ferret proposes a grammatical approach, according to which a living creature may be subject and object simultaneously. For this another grammatical category, predication, needs to be introduced. In this way “the anthropology of action” obviates the problem of anthropocentricity, recognising the subjectivity of other animals.

The call to “give a voice” to other living creatures can thus turn into an exercise in ventriloquism (Alex Blanchette, Mark Hersey, Stepan Kalinin). The Forum participants not only remind us of the impossibility of “a complete departure from the anthropocentric perspective” (Oksana Zaporozhets, Elena Bogdanova and Elena Nikiforova), but also express doubt about whether there is any point to this enterprise. As Drew Swanson remarks, it is “the most anthropocentric conceit of all — the notion that we as clever humans can step outside of our own biological and cultural constraints, alter our consciousness, even, and see the past and present from the perspective of another species”. He is seconded by Ian Helfant: “We humans can deploy our evolving epistemologies to grasp at and advance interpretations of the non-humans with whom we coexist, but our interpretive gaze is inevitably rooted in our own subjectivities.” Indeed, can we assert that we really understand other creatures, relay their experience adequately and defend their interests, and not someone else’s? The answer to these questions does not lie on the surface, at the very least because the traditional methods of anthropological research, participant observation and interviews, are hardly applicable to this case (Milena Pugina, Carole Ferret).

Vladimir Korshunkov also considers this problem, and suggests separating the different spheres of competence: despite the fact that multi-species ethnography is aimed at studying both sides of the interaction, “for ethnographers, anthropologists, historians and sociologists this is still only a declaration of intent, because the way in which animals perceive humans and adapt to them is studied by biologists.” Does that mean that it remains for humanities scholars only to imagine the experience of the others on the basis of what biologists and ethologists tell us?

Multi-species ethnography is probably like a thought experiment, and by changing our perspective gives us a chance to reinterpret both our own experience and that which we share with other species. In that case its speculative nature is not a drawback but the essence of the method. Thus, Laura Ogden and her co-authors indicate that multi-species ethnography “allows for speculative modes of writing”; it is compared to a miracle [Ogden et al. 2013: 17]. This means that the desire to understand another point of view and system of coordinates, underpinned by the researcher’s creative imagination and/or knowledge of the natural sciences, is quite sufficient for anthropology. On this road, as Grigorij Vinokurov, John Sanbonmatsu and Milena Pugina remind us, one must beware of anthropological bias and our habitual sympathy for members of our own kin and a few charismatic species. This does not mean that we must give up our human subjectivity, but rather temper it, in order to learn to notice the *more-than-human world* about us in a new way.

Such reorganised attention is not easily attained by any scholar, but it is a particular problem for historians. The search for traces of non-human beings is limited to documents created by humans or to the natural clues that are to be discovered (Ian Helfant, Mark Hersey, Anastasia Fedotova, Olga Kosheleva). Such factors as the visibility or charisma of a living creature, or how publicly its life is lived, do play a substantial role: this question is very familiar to researchers into sensitive subjects such as the history of sexuality. Another problem is how to balance authoritative discourse and its ethos of exploitation, about which Anna Mazanik writes. Finally, the ability to expand the base of sources, which is important for *more-than-human history*, for example, when working with materials from the Soviet period, often dispersed not only among different archives, but even among different countries, depends on a whole series of external circumstances which have nothing to do with academic logic.

The art of writing and the shoals of interdisciplinarity

Almost all the Forum participants speak of the need to put the results of the natural sciences, primarily ethology and ecology, into action in research on *more-than-human sociality* and *more-than-human history* (Tamar Novick, Drew Swanson), and likewise those of research into reason and phenomenological studies in philosophy, which would serve as theoretical equipment for autoethnography (John Sanbonmatsu, Sergei Sokolovskiy).

The arts — literature, cinema, experimental projects — have proved a less obvious source of the creative discoveries essential to multi-species ethnography, but one that is frequently mentioned.

For example, Tolstoy's story *Kholstomer*¹ is that radical experiment in a shift of viewpoint that might prompt researchers both to call the existing order of things into question, and towards developing a way of writing that would allow us to get closer to the life experience of other species. The Forum participants recall the experiment in combining ethnography and literature and mimetic reproduction in a text of the objects of study (Stepan Petryakov); the manifesto genre, a guerrilla incursion into the scholarly article as a means of speaking together with the Other (Lidiya Rakhmanova); the anticlassist viewpoint, which might make visible forms of inter-species solidarity that are not obvious (Alex Blanchette). Finally, they themselves demonstrate an example of work with a modernist "stream of consciousness" liberated from (anthropomorphising?) punctuation marks (Mark Mefed). *Animal biography* is an unexpected academic genre which questions the boundary between the human and the non-human, concentrating on an individual life (Tamar Novick) and taking us back to the experiments of the modernists.

The visual and multimodal forms of art can also be of assistance. Does this mean that multi-species ethnography requires an expansion of its arsenal of means of expression, since it is attempting to take account of another perception of the world and forms of non-verbal interaction (Anna Varfolomeeva)? Or are we faced with echoes of the *writing culture* [Kirksey, Helmreich 2010: 549], and the public mode of existence of science, which is interested in more open, accessible and immediate formats of self-presentation?

In any case, the question arises of where the boundaries between science and art lie, and how much today's anthropology needs them. Can the visual language of ethnographical cinema or a photo-essay fully satisfy the needs of the multi-species approach? What sort of anthropological description is considered sufficiently scientific, and what would be a balanced correlation of artistic sketches and scholarly analysis? It is remarkable that the topic of the Forum itself inspired Olga Kosheleva, Sergei Sokolovskiy and Lidiya Rakhmanova to poetical descriptions of their experience of interactions with non-human animals, which call into question the ready-made ideas of mutuality and perception. (Ian Helfant also mentions the importance of such experience.)

Nonetheless, we are faced with a paradox. On the one hand, it seems that in the conversation about relations with other animals, anthropology should enter more actively into dialogue with art, thereby becoming more "artistic", and on the other, it is expected that it should interact more closely with the natural sciences. As if in answer to the imperatives of neoliberalism, anthropology must demonstrate

¹ For the meaning of the title, see above. [Eds].

its universal competence, in the same way as modern man is supposed to be constantly “working on himself”, developing in various spheres, and to be reflecting on that work. Is it a post-modern hybridisation of genres and ideas that is behind this drive for versatility, or is it a reincarnation of the old holistic approach? One way or another, one gets the feeling that “anthropology” *per se* is less interesting to funding bodies or to readers than inter- and trans-disciplinary projects, which are harder to discuss, fund or bring to fruition. Still, many respondents already have positive experience of such projects: Alexandra Terekhina, Alexandr Volkovitskiy, Julia Shanina, Anastasia Fedotova, Henrietta Mondry and Anna Mazanik all write about this.

Multi-species ethnography must evidently adopt the advantages of the most diverse areas of knowledge. This will give researchers creative freedom and allow disciplinary and institutional borders to be crossed and even suspended, as Irina Podgorny and Sergei Sokolovskiy say.

At the same time, complex organisation and trans-disciplinarity entail new problems. Firstly, there arises the question of expertise. When one trespasses on the foreign territory, how can one avoid the reputation of an impostor? “Sometimes you have to tell yourself ‘Stop!’, and honestly admit that ‘I am not a specialist in this field or on this subject’, and humbly seek for help from zoologists, for example, or ethologists, or geneticists,” reasons Stepan Kalinin. The majority of authors see the interdisciplinarity of multi-species ethnography embodied not in the figure of a single researcher with an exceptional field of vision and endeavouring to use the methods of various sciences in his or her work (though of course there are such works), but in a collaboration, where anthropology is responsible for the interpretation of human behaviour (Julia Shanina). Sometimes previous experience or an education in the natural sciences are of assistance. Among the Forum participants, Anastasia Fedotova, a botanist by education, and Drew Swanson, who studied ecology, are “ambidextrous” in this way, while Maxim Vinarski combines the personae of a zoologist and a historian of zoology. In the worst case, natural scientists act as magical helpers, always ready to give while remaining in the shadows.

If one shares one’s project with professionals from the natural sciences, one can also share responsibility and avoid potential accusations of incompetence. Another way out is to follow Clifford Geertz and acknowledge that “we only write” and do not pretend to objectivity. This conceals another challenge: how to combine collective projects and collaborations with the “solitary field”, a classic of anthropology ever since Malinowski, and total immersion.

Secondly, one of the essential tasks of multi-species ethnography is the search for a suitable language for professional communication, including sorting out the far from simple dialogue between the humanities and the natural sciences (Alexandra Terekhina and Alexandr Volkovitskiy, Anna Mazanik, Anastasia Fedotova). A more open science, which counts on being read and understood not only by a narrow circle of like-minded individuals, but by a wide public, must develop a *lingua franca* by combining concepts from the humanities and natural sciences (Oksana Zaporozhets, Elena Bogdanova and Elena Nikiforova), or by rejecting jargon in favour of comprehensibility (Mark Hersey).

On the whole, in most of the respondents' opinion, multi-species ethnography has great potential both for Russian and for world-wide scholarship. Like other instruments of defamiliarisation, multi-species ethnography denaturalise the habits of common sense and of ideological settings, thereby pushing anthropology towards theoretical and methodological discussions (Stepan Petryakov, Alex Blanchette). Frédéric Keck, in turn, speaks of the role of animals as "sentinels for threats affecting humans". Consequently, multi-species ethnographies may have the power of foretelling, and, therefore, a political significance.

"Trojan horses"

The turn towards animals, as Carole Ferret and Tamar Novick point out, should not be taken in isolation, but as part of a wider decolonial movement. In this sense those who see it as politically charged are right. The study of animals has not only a heuristic value, but frequently contains a political message connected with the protection of animals and the ecological agenda and endowing animals with the same status of "subjects with rights" as other subalterns [Ogden et al. 2013: 8].

In this connection two groups of questions arise. Firstly, is the turn towards animals possible outside the decolonial context, and also, does the configuration of this turn depend on the historical and social circumstances of colonialism and, correspondingly, the decolonial movement? What can an account of the local specifics of these processes give to theory without an attempt to fit the Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet material into models grown on other substrates, and what will be the consequences of a refusal of a universalising conceptual apparatus? There may be advantages to the fact that Russian science has come a little late to these problems, such as the creation of a critical distance from "fashionable" concepts, as Stepan Petryakov writes.

Secondly, the extent to which the politicisation of scholarly research is possible and acceptable is discussed. The relationships of science

and activism, as the Forum shows, are a delicate topic. For some participants a clear distinction between them, as between scientific and political ideologies, is taken for granted (Stepan Kalinin, Sergei Sokolovskiy). Others, by contrast, would like to see political results from research that reveals climatic and ecological problems, the damage caused by industry, the suffering of sentient and conscious beings and their exploitation under cover of common sense (Alex Blanchette, Oksana Zaporozhets, Elena Bogdanova and Elena Nikiforova, Katya Krylova, Mark Mefed, John Sanbonmatsu). It seems that the “lower” animals, which humans seldom notice and for which they even more seldom feel sympathy, emerge as unpoliticised objects of study (Maxim Vinarski). However, technologies and globalisation are becoming another force of nature and are changing their life trajectories, including them in new social worlds.¹

“The question is not how to separate [science and activism], but which political project to choose,” writes Denis Sivkov. For example, with a semiotic approach to the living world, scholars will be interested not only in rational (and sympathetic) creatures that possess experience, but also in bacteria, viruses, mould, and everything that happens to them, since the aims of the social sciences are to analyse the signals that proceed from these creatures, and the corresponding social consequences (Frédéric Keck).

However, as Mark Hersey observes, agreeing in this with Henrietta Mondry, “connecting scholarship and political activism is quite different from *conflating* activism and scholarship, and it is with the latter that the trouble lies.” Activism dismantles certain hierarchies and constructs others in their place. Consequently, scholarship can (and some would say, must) be politically charged only if it preserves all its procedures of verification and pursues above all directly scholarly goals. Here there arises the old question of what objectivity is, how it is produced and whether it is possible in principle.

It is telling that the *more-than-human world* may be perceived simultaneously as a politically fraught field for research demanding delicacy, solidarity and participation in activism from the researcher, and as a refuge from the *only-human* sociality that is torn apart by conflicts and as the abode of pure science. Animals are not only an extremely ambivalent object of study, but also a method: for their seemingly apolitical nature Tamar Novick calls them “Trojan horses” that provide access to sensitive topics in those cases when it is impossible or difficult to approach them directly.

It is probably for this reason that our respondents’ opinions about the future of multi-species research in Russia are radically divergent.

¹ See in particular the classic work on the creation of an actor network situated between the social and natural worlds, which included scholars, fishermen and scallops: [Callon 1984].

Some foresee a growth in attention to “apolitical” multi-species topics and “problematic” forms of interaction under conditions of various crises (Anna Mazanik). Another impulse may be care for the environment, its safety and security, even to the resurrection of extinct species (Anna Varfolomeeva, Henrietta Mondry). Some, by contrast, doubt that topics and methods linked to the ecological and animal protection agenda will become any more popular in future (John Sanbonmatsu, Eva Meijer, Julia Shanina).

Be that as it may, we hope that the multiplicity of according or conflicting points of view and positions will stimulate interest to the abundance of ideas connected with the relationships of people and living creatures. Seventy years ago Claude Lévi-Strauss ended his *Tristes Tropiques* with a passage which could be read as a statement to which Jacques Derrida and his cat Logos would respond in 2006, and as a context for future discussions of multi-species ethnography: “[S]uspendre la marche, retenir l’impulsion qui l’astreint à obturer l’une après l’autre les fissures ouvertes au mur de la nécessité et à parachever son œuvre en même temps qu’il clôt sa prison; cette faveur que toute société convoite, quels que soient ses croyances, son régime politique et son niveau de civilisation; où elle place son loisir, son plaisir, son repos et sa liberté; chance, vitale pour la vie, de se *déprendre* et qui consiste [...] à saisir l’essence de ce qu’elle fut et continue d’être, en deçà de la pensée et au-delà de la société: dans la contemplation d’un minéral plus beau que toutes nos œuvres; dans le parfum, plus savant que nos livres, respiré au creux d’un lis; ou dans le clin d’œil alourdi de patience, de sérénité et de pardon réciproque, qu’une entente involontaire permet parfois d’échanger avec un chat” [Lévi-Strauss 1955: 449]¹. Multi-species research calls upon us to be more careful and not to identify interaction with mutual comprehension, but the *bewilderment* that it offers in exchange will allow us to take other creatures and the worlds they live in seriously and not to lose sight of them.

Maria Pirogovskaya, Aleksandra Zakharova

¹ “[T]o call a halt, that is to say: to check the impulse which prompts Man always to block up, one after another, such fissures as may be open in the blank wall of necessity and to round off his achievement by slamming shut the doors of his own prison. This is the grace for which every society longs, irrespective of its beliefs, its political regime, its level of civilization. It stands, in every case, for leisure, and recreation, and freedom, and peace of body and mind. On this opportunity, this chance of for once detaching oneself from the implacable process, life itself depends. [...] let us grasp the essence of what our species has been and still is, beyond thought and beneath society: an essence that may be vouchsafed to us in a mineral more beautiful than any work of Man; in the scent, more subtly evolved than our books, that lingers in the heart of a lily; or in the wink of an eye, heavy with patience, serenity, and mutual forgiveness, that sometimes, through an involuntary understanding, one can exchange with a cat” [Lévi-Strauss 1961: 398].

References

- Baranov D. A., Arzyutov D. V., Petriashin S. S., 'Diskussiya: Lokalnoe znanie i "drugie antropologii"' [Discussion: Local Knowledge and "Other Anthropologies"], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021, no. 5, pp. 84–112. (In Russian). doi: 10.31857/S086954150017416-7.
- Brandišauskas D., *Leaving Footprints in the Taiga: Luck, Spirits and Ambivalence among the Siberian Oroche Reindeer Herders and Hunters*. New York: Berghahn, 2019, XIII+291 pp.
- Callon M., 'Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', *The Sociological Review*, 1984, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 196–233.
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.1984.tb00113.x.
- De Wolff K., 'Plastic Naturecultures: Multispecies Ethnography and the Dangers of Separating Living from Nonliving Bodies', *Body and Society*, 2017, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 23–47.
doi: 10.1177/1357034X17715074.
- Davydov V. N., 'Borba s khishchnikami i povsednevnye praktiki sovremennykh olenevodov: otnosheniya cheloveka i zhivotnykh na Severnom Baikale (po rezul'tatam polevykh issledovaniy 2007–2012 gg.)' [The Fight with Predators and the Everyday Practices of Modern Reindeer Herders: the Relations of Humans and Animals in Northern Baikal (From the Results of Fieldwork in 2007–2012)], Fedorova E. G. (ed.), *Materialy polevykh issledovaniy MAE RAN*, 2013, iss. 12, pp. 23–42.
- Evtuhov C., Lajus J., Moon D. (eds), *Thinking Russia's History Environmentally*. New York: Berghahn, 2023, 344 pp.
- Fais-Leutskaiia O. D., Novik A. A. (eds), 'Spetsvypusk: Rasteniya v culture narodov Yevrazii: ot magii k resursu' [Special Theme of the Issue: Plants in the Culture of Peoples of Eurasia: From Magic to Resource], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021, no. 5, pp. 5–83. (In Russian).
- Kirksey S. E., Helmreich S., 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, 2010, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 545–576.
doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x.
- Kozhevnikova M. (ed.), 'Spetsvypusk: Zoo-povorot v antropologii' [Special Theme of the Issue: "Animal Turn" in Anthropology], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021, no. 1, pp. 5–75. (In Russian).
- Korshunkov V. A., *Anima: otnoshenie k domashnim zhivotnyim v Rossii* [Anima: Attitudes towards Pets in Russia]. Moscow: Neolit, 2022, 360 pp. (In Russian).
- Krylova K., *Rynok udobnykh zhivotnykh* [The Handy Animal Market]. Moscow: NLO, 2023, 408 pp. (In Russian).
- Lévi-Strauss C., *Tristes Tropiques*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1955, 381 pp.
- Lévi-Strauss C., *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. by J. Russell. London; New York: Hutchinson & Co; Criterion Books, 1961, 404 pp.
- Marchina C., *Nomadic Pastoralism among the Mongol Herders: Multispecies and Spatial Ethnography in Mongolia and Transbaikalia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, XX+178 pp.

- Morar A. [=Morard A.], 'Odomashnit Inogo: pokaz monstrov v Rossii' [Domesticating the Other: Monster Shows in Russia], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2017, no. 143 (1), pp. 215–232. (In Russian).
- Oehler A., Varfolomeeva A. (eds), *Multispecies Households in the Saian Mountains: Ecology at the Russia-Mongolia Border*. Cheltenham: Lexington Books, 2019, 296 pp.
- Ogden L. A., Hall B., Tanita K., 'Animals, Plants, People, and Things. A Review of Multispecies Ethnography', *Environment and Society*, 2013. vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 5–24. doi: 10.3167/ares.2013.040102.
- Onaga L., Douny L. (eds), 'Special Issue: Making Animal Materials in Time', *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences*, 2023, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 197–348.
- Peemot V. S., *The Horse in My Blood: Multispecies Kinship in the Altai and Saian Mountains*. New York: Berghahn, 2024, 210 pp.
- Pollan M., *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006, 450 pp.
- Rakhmanova L. Ya., Davydova E. A., Davydov V. N., 'Novye tekhnologii zaboya i ikh "poslevkusie": biografii oleney, myasa i krovi v Arktike' [New Slaughter Technologies and Their "Aftertaste": Biographies of Reindeer, Meat and Blood in the Arctic], *Siberian Historical Research — Sibirskie istoricheskie issledovaniya*, 2022, no. 2, pp. 181–206. (In Russian). doi: 10.17223/2312461X/36/10.
- Reno J., 'Toward a New Theory of Waste: From "Matter Out of Place" to Signs of Life', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2014, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 3–27. doi: 10.1177/0263276413500999.
- Rossiyanov K. O., 'V poiskakh obyektivnosti: issledovaniya N. N. Ladyginoy-Kots i problema razgranicheniya lyudey i zhivotnykh' [In Search of Objectivity: The Work of N. N. Ladygina-Kohts and the Problem of the Human-Animal Boundary], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2021, no. 1, pp. 13–29. (In Russian). doi: 10.31857/S086954150013591-0.
- Shmueli S., *The Bureaucracy of Empathy: Law, Vivisection, and Animal Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023, 270 pp.
- Tarasova Z., *Human Anxieties, Bovine Solutions: Political Subtexts of Native Cattle Conservation in North-Eastern Siberia*: PhD diss. University of Cambridge, 2020, 241 pp.
- Tolstaya S. M. (ed.), *Antropotsentrizm v yazyke i kulture* [Anthropocentrism in Language and Culture]. Moscow: Indrik, 2017, 264 pp. (In Russian).
- Utekhin I. V., 'Na korotkom povodke: domashniye khozyaeva' [On a Short Leash: Owners of Domestic Animals], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2015, no. 132 (2), pp. 32–38. (In Russian).
- Utekhin I. V., 'Chelovek i obezyana: k kontekstualizatsii rannikh eksperimentov v oblasti Ape Language Research' [The Human and the Ape: The Contextualisation of Early Experiments in Ape Language Research], *Sociology of Power*, 2019, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 75–99. (In Russian). doi: 10.22394/2074-0492-2019-3-75-99.
- von Uexküll J., 'A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds', Schiller C. H. (ed.), *Instinctive Behavior*:

The Development of a Modern Concept. New York: International Universities Press, 1957, pp. 5–80.

von Uexküll J., Kriszat G., *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen: Ein Bilderbuch unsichtbarer Welten. Bedeutungslehre.* Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1956, 181 S.

Vorobyev D. V. (ed.), 'Spetsvypusk: Chelovek i mir fauny v antropologicheskoy kontekste' [Special Issue: Human and the World of Fauna in Anthropological Context], *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 2018, no. 4, pp. 5–56. (In Russian).

*The responses originally written in Russian
were translated by Ralph Cleminson*