

# HUMANIMALIA

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Special Issue:  
*Life with and  
without Animals*

Guest edited by  
Angela Bartram,  
Johanna Hällsten,  
and Christine Parker



*Humanimalia* is a biannual journal devoted to the study of human–animal relations. It is interdisciplinary, open-access, and peer-reviewed, publishing original articles from a wide range of cultural, historical, philosophical, political, and aesthetic perspectives.

*Humanimalia* has three aims: to explore and advance the vast range of scholarship on human–animal relations, to encourage exchange among scholars working from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and to promote dialogue between the academic community and those working closely with animals in non-academic fields.

We invite innovative works that situate these topics within contemporary culture via a variety of critical approaches. Ideally, we seek papers that combine approaches, or at the very least draw upon research in other disciplines to contextualize their arguments.

As much as possible, we seek papers that acknowledge and seek to advance a more-than-human conception of aesthetics, culture, and society.

<https://humanimalia.org>

Cover: Lee Deigaard, *Quarantine*  
*Drawing 04.02 No. 3* (2020)

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**W**hen the term “animal studies” was coined in the early 1990s it was initially envisaged rather narrowly as a subfield of the social sciences, but by the time of two large and ground-breaking international conferences in 2000 — *Representing Animals* in Milwaukee and *Millennial Animals* in Sheffield — it was clear that the arts and humanities were at least as important to this nascent field as the social sciences. The cross-disciplinary emphasis in turn has led to new lines of enquiry regarding what exactly the arts and humanities contribute separately and together to life with and without animals. Since then, the creative arts specifically have analysed the subject of the animal, and what marks it, thus, with rigorous criticality, probing enquiry, and poignant and provocative analysis.

Some of the concerns of those early debates remain as important as ever: the avoidance of anthropocentrism, an attention to the lives and experience of nonhuman animals that does not reduce them to symbolic representations of human values, and a recognition of the contested, but necessary role of animal advocacy within the field of animal studies. Other priorities have shifted, perhaps most importantly in recognition of the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and species extinctions, and the changes these have brought about to our understanding of, and engagement with the more-than-human world. Issues of negotiation, agency, communication and language beyond (human) words inform the interspecies critical debate, a terrain that is now firmly embedded in the arts and culture. This special issue pays attention to and gives detail to these contemporary considerations and their renewed potential for guiding human animal relations toward rising to these contemporary considerations of sustainable futures.

Our aim with this special issue is to convey a sense of what the interdisciplinary field of animal studies looks like now from a culturally significant and visual perspective, to give contemporary critical appraisal through a discussion of varying related concerns. This gives attention to the significance the arts and culture bring to the field of animal studies and the pasts, presents, and futures of shared

human–animal lives. The articles focus on different aspects of life with and without animals, the domestic, the wild, the tame and the trained, the climate-reduced and adapted, and the lost. The issue contains a mixture of traditional academic articles and more creative or artistic contributions that combine visual and textual elements and artistic research.

This special issue grew out of a conference organized by the animal research group within the Digital and Material Artistic Research Centre at the University of Derby. The second in a series of three conferences on the theme of “(Un)Common Worlds”, *Life with and without Animals* took place in November 2020.<sup>1</sup> The conference and its companion exhibition, *Antonym*, were initiated, curated, and led by Steve Baker and Angela Bartram. *Life with and without Animals* was originally scheduled as an in-person event to be held at the University of Derby over three days in July of 2020. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, this was not possible; participants were unable to travel by air or overland to attend, and we were advised to consider altering the format and dates, or even to cancel the event all together. After strenuous attempts to make this happen in its intended format, delivery was finally modified to ensure it could go ahead. In the end, the conference took place online over the course of one day in November 2020, with keynotes by Susan McHugh and the artist duo Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson. The companion exhibition, *Antonym*, which had originally been planned to be installed at Artcore Gallery in Derby to coincide with the conference, also had to be converted to an online format.

The aim of the conference, and the companion exhibition, was to convey a sense of what the interdisciplinary field of animal studies looked like in 2020. We welcomed contributions in support of this proposal, across many formats and disciplines, offering readings and insight into various subjects. Different approaches and types of voice were important to offer a multi-disciplinary insight from the

1 The first *(Un)Common Worlds* conference, entitled “Contesting the Limits of Human–Animal Communities”, was held in Turku, Finland in 2018. The third, “Navigating and Inhabiting Biodiverse Anthropocenes”, was held at Oulu University, Finland and in partnership with the University of Derby, in October 2023.

cultural to the scientific. Particularly, contributions responded to the spotlight themes, which we felt were of interest at that time: “Encounters and interventions”; “Spaces of empathy and loss”; “In and out of sight”; and “Shared environments”. These themes were deliberately open-ended and were intended primarily as prompts for thought. We received more than eighty proposals covering a range of disciplines and subjects concerning the theme and selected a third of these for our conference. Some presentations chose to address priorities that have shifted over the past twenty years, while others sought to drill into the subject specifically. Eight of the presenters of artistic research were also selected for the online exhibition representing Sweden, Ireland, the USA, Iceland, and the UK. The *Antonym* artists were Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson (who, with Susan McHugh, were also keynotes for the conference), Andrea Roe and Cath Keay, Angela Bartram, Johanna Hällsten, Julia Schlosser, Lee Deigaard, Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy, and Steve Baker and Cath Clover.

The contributions to this Special Issue of *Humanimalia* follow an open call to participants of the second conference of the trilogy, *Life with and without Animals*, by guest editors Angela Bartram, Christine Parker, and Johanna Hällsten. The contributions respond to the theme and offer a range of approaches from the historical to the artistic to reflect the conference’s remit. A few years have passed since the conference in 2020, and the authors contributing to this special issue were asked to consider this within their articles, and to develop their contributions accordingly. The seven contributions therefore offer a collective insight into the nuances within the field now.

The online conference opened with a keynote by Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson. Their imaginative contribution to this issue, “Passing—Captive—Still”, intersperses contextual commentary with images of chickens and humans at a bird auction. The text and the images within their article explore the prioritizing of the physical and imagined privileged perspective of the chickens.

The second keynote by Susan McHugh closed the online conference, and her poetic contribution to this issue, “Apace: Dogwalking,

Kinaesthetic Empathy, and Posthuman Ethos in the Great North Woods”, seeks to inspire extensions of empathy towards the inef-fable relations that structure nature–culture borderlands. This is done by writing about close range encounters with wildlife experi-enced on her daily dog walks across the seasons. Meanwhile, Darren O’Brien’s article, “Embracing the Radical Cartographies of the Doggy-*Dérive*: A Walk in Three Acts”, situated at the intersection of “fine art walking practice”, psychogeography, and critical animal studies, proposes the term Deep Canine Topography, which seeks to reframe the humble act of “walkies” as a multi-species co-authored act of making and performing together.

Lee Deigaard’s emotive article “Horse/Horizon: On Photography and Multispecies Bonding” explores multi-species empathy and loss. In the images within the article the body of the horse is discussed as becoming landscape imagined and embodied. Importantly, the text derives from writings made in the horse’s presence. Who bodies are, where and how they occupy the landscape—itself a body—defines the relationships discussed. Their histories and memories, yearn-ings, inform the through-lines of synchronous connection within this contribution. Jane Flynn’s touching historical analysis, “Good-bye Old Man? The Evolution of the Soldier–Horse Relationship in Myth and Memory, 1880–1939”, explores the discourse surrounding soldier–horse relationships and their impact on public perceptions of warfare. Flynn discusses how popular images, such as Fortunino Matania’s “Good-Bye Old Man!”, allowed those at home to imagine soldiers’ compassion for their horses’ plight, and how they proved to be valuable when the process of national mourning and reconcilia-tion began.

In Andrew Craig’s granular text, “Bigfoot Swims in the Garden of Eden: Hellbenders and Identity Formation in American History”, hid-den animals, unsettling and unexplainable things experienced by American white men in the wilderness are considered from an his-torical perspective, and in relation to aspects of male identity for-mation. Finally, Angela Bartram’s article “Older Humans and Their Dogs: Interspecies Companionship and Anticipating Loss”, uses the

concept of performative identity as an exploration of becoming of that which we do in her artistic research project, “Dogs and the Elderly”. The article discusses the sensitive and sympathetic methodologies used within the initial stages of the project to capture personal stories on the significance and benefit of interspecies human–canine companionship.

The guest editors would like to thank the editorial team at *Humanimalia* for their guidance and assistance throughout the process of bringing this special issue to fruition, as well as extending our very grateful thanks to our wonderful contributors. Special thanks also to Lee Deigaard for providing the image that adorns the cover of this issue.

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