HUMANIMALIA

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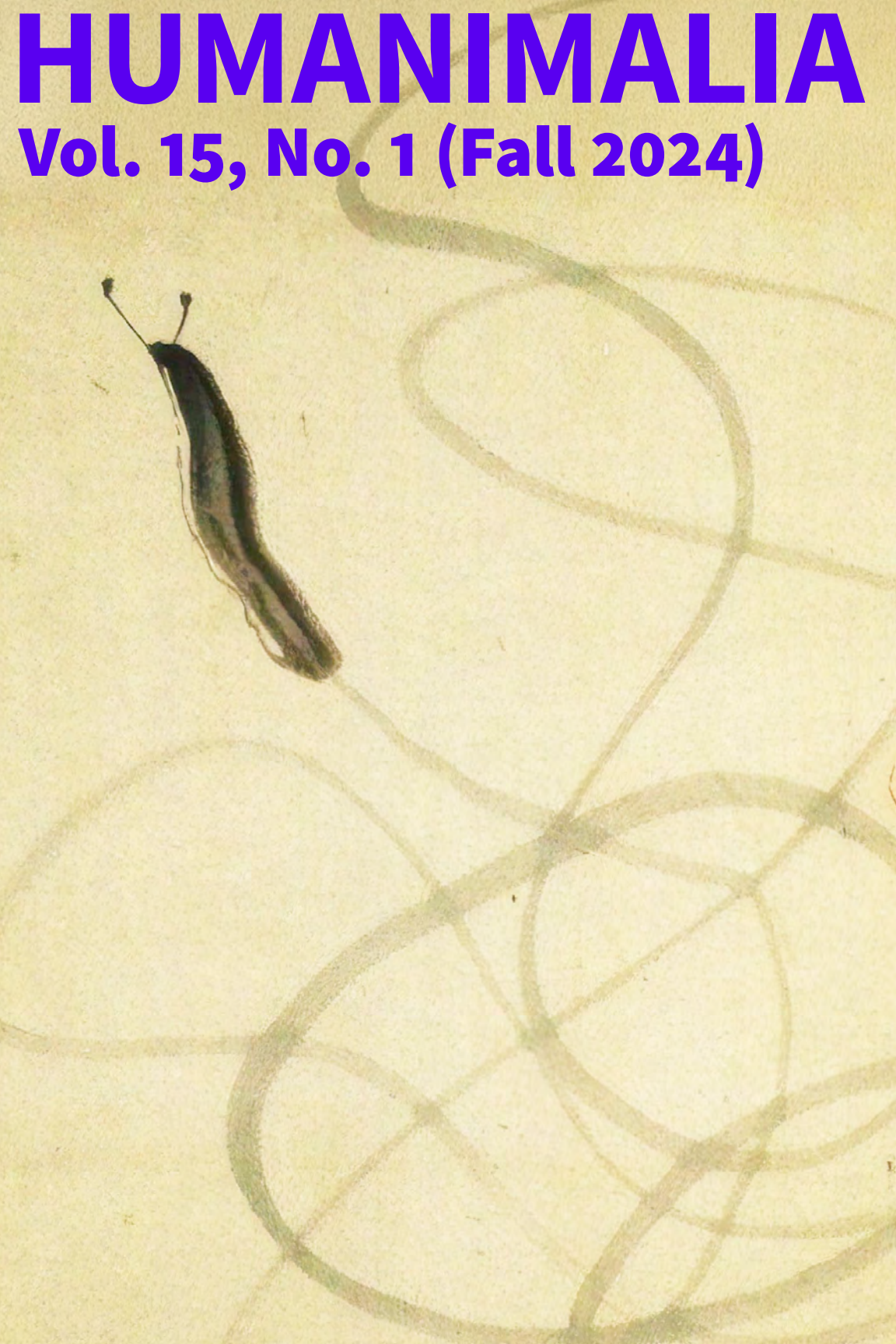

HUMANIMALIA

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: *Slug*, Nagasawa Rosetsu.
Ink on paper, Edo Period

As we near the end of what has in many respects been a difficult, dispiriting, and exhausting year, I find myself thinking of a famous haiku by Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828), one of the great masters of the form. The poem is addressed to a snail making its way up the side of Mount Fuji:

> 蝸牛 / そろそろ登れ / 富士の山
> *katatsumuri* / *sorosoro nobore* / *Fuji no yama*
> [snail / slowly slowly climb / Mt. Fuji]

R.H. Blyth, whose influential four-volume collection of haiku, published in the immediate aftermath of World War II, was largely responsible for introducing Western readers to Japanese poetry, categorizes this poem as an example of "dry humour".[1] Certainly, the contrast between the snail's tiny progress and the sheer immensity of the iconic mountain gives rise to a sense of incommensurability which can be interpreted as irony or even satire. Particularly, perhaps, if this slow ascent is read as a mock-heroic send-up of human striving—though this would no doubt be to impose a moral framework on the text that is peculiarly Western, not to mention anthropocentric; a reading which, needless to say, a journal such as *Humanimalia* would hesitate to endorse. This is not, however, to deny that the poem establishes a connection between the snail and the human observer, and, in turn, the reader, who through the initial apostrophe may also feel addressed and invited to ponder their relation to the snail and the mountain. To the contrary, the poem is arguably all about establishing connections between the seemingly disparate and incommensurable. The question, rather, is how to interpret these relations, and how to understand our position in relation to the situation described in the poem.

According to the definition proposed in 1973 by the Haiku Society of America, haiku is "an unrhymed Japanese poem recording the essence of a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature." The definition has since been updated to say that it is the "essence of an experience of nature" that is "intuitively linked

1 R.H. Blyth, *Haiku*, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1949–1952), 1:221.

to the human condition."[2] Haiku, and Issa's poem is no exception, is rooted in the precise observation of nature and careful attention to nonhuman life, which even in its minutest form is taken to be significant and meaningful in itself and for understanding human existence. As such, one might regard this as an instance of what Anna Tsing, in her multispecies ethnography of matsutake, calls the "arts of noticing", predicated on slowing down and paying attention to alternative temporalities and modes of inhabiting the world that have been rendered illegible and irrelevant within the progress-oriented logic of capitalist modernity.[3] If Issa's poem seems to invite us to empathize with the snail, or to hear the imperative to climb — but slowly, slowly — as directed at ourselves, this has less to do with the dreaded *reductio ad figuram* that inscribes animals within a purely anthropomorphic schema of signification, and more to do with a fundamental sense that "human nature" is itself "an interspecies relation",[4] and that this is in fact the reason why the experience of nature can be "intuitively linked" to the human condition in the first place, as the HSA's updated definition has it.

As a poetic form, haiku is characterized by its economy of expression: seventeen *morae* or, technically, *on* [音], arranged in three phrases of five, seven, and five, respectively. *On*, meaning "sound", denotes a minimal phonetic unit, a specific duration.[5] The prescribed length of a haiku is thus a measure of the time it takes to recite it out loud. The two central figures of the poem, the snail and Mt. Fuji, each occupy a single five-*on* line. In other words, while the two may be radically

2 Haiku Society of America, "Definitions of Haiku & Related Terms", 18 September 2004, https://www.hsa-haiku.org/hsa-definitions.html.

3 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 17–38 passim; cf. Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster, "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness", *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2016): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3527695.

4 Anna Tsing, "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species", *Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2012): 144. https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3610012.

5 In English it is common to refer to the number of syllables, but a single syllable may consist of several *on*, depending on the length of the vowel sounds: "Some translators of Japanese poetry have noted that about twelve syllables in English approximates the duration of seventeen Japanese *on*." Haiku Society of America, "Definitions".

incommensurate in size in the physical world, within the poem's sonic landscape, "*katatsumuri*" and "*Fuji no yama*" are of equal magnitude. The relation between the two is marked by the longer middle phrase, "*sorosoro nobore*", which takes slightly longer to say and thus introduces a delay, an intervening caesura that mediates between snail and summit. The reduplicant phrase "*sorosoro*" そろそろ, meaning gradually, slowly, also carries the implication that it is getting late, that it is time to go. As such, it serves as both a description of the snail's pace and an exhortation to get going, to hurry up—but at the same time also to take it slow. The implication is not necessarily that the snail—or, by extension, we ourselves—will have achieved something by reaching the summit; rather, the climb itself, the prolonged physical relation to the mountain, is the goal. The haiku, this most diminutive and self-contained of poetic forms, thus encompasses multiple, divergent scales, both temporal and spatial, projecting beyond itself into unimaginable heights and distant futures, while remaining grounded in the slow, careful attention to the small and apparently insignificant, and, perhaps, in a nonlinear and nonteleological conception of progress.

Snails and slugs hold a special significance for *Humanimalia*. The image that adorns the cover of this issue, an ink painting by Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–1799), a contemporary of Issa's, depicts a slug's meandering journey across the page, the lingering slime trail forming a nonhuman calligraphy of its own, an inscrutable signature that ironically echoes and encircles that of the artist. The image recalls our journal's logo, which is the choreographic record of an interspecies collaboration between two snails and a digital haptic interface designed by Mari Bastashevski as part of her interspecies art practice. In both cases, the gastropods' unpredictable, nonlinear trajectories and nonhuman temporalities invite contemplation and deceleration, a shift in perspective and an alternative conception of time and action. Such contemplation takes time, and may result in unforeseen delays and detours, which may in turn mean that the "fall" issue doesn't come out till December. So it goes.

The poetics of relation and the cultivation of arts of noticing are a central concern in the five research articles contained in this issue of *Humanimalia*. We begin in the eastern Himalayas, or what historian Willem van Schendel refers to as "mithun country": mithun (*Bos frontalis*) are a species of semi-domestic cattle endemic to the region, whose cultural significance for the peoples of the region attests to a long history of interspecies interaction that transcends national geographic boundaries and challenges "the human-derived spatial and temporal constructs that underpin most historical narratives". Focusing on the mithun, van Schendel argues for an "interspecies periodization" that takes "human-nonhuman temporalities seriously".

Next we have a pair of articles investigating interspecies collaboration and joint meaning-making between humans and cats, and humans and dogs, respectively. In her article, anthrozoologist Kristine Hill explores how domestic cats and their human guardians communicate and form multispecies communities and families. Meanwhile, criminologist Bettina Paul reports on fieldwork and interviews she conducted with airport security sniffer-dog teams in Germany, and how the handlers interpret and understand their dogs' sense perception and the forms of knowledge that arise from their collaboration.

In his article, literary scholar and novelist Sergio Gutierrez Negrón explores the political implications of a seemingly inconsequential vignette in a novel by the Mexican author Daniel Sada, in which one of the characters is absorbed in contemplating the inscrutable activities of a colony of ants, while a political protest rages in the background. Gutierrez Negrón reads this scene as a political fable inserted into the flow of the narrative, a critical "refabulation" that simultaneously acknowledges the ants' radical alterity while also deploying them as "the axis for the articulation of a utopian desire for the potential of a collective life organized beyond scarcity, labour, and capitalism".

Finally, continuing the investigation into the possibilities of interspecies solidarity in anti-capitalist resistance, photographer and media scholar Deborah Hardt explores the recent spate of orca attacks on yachts and other vessels in the Strait of Gibraltar. On social media,

and in the popular imagination, these orcas have been conscripted as heroes and nonhuman allies in a political struggle against the one-percent, whereas marine biologists have argued that the orcas' aberrant behaviour is neither political nor intentionally destructive but rather a form of play. In contrast, Hardt argues that these Iberian orcas are indeed practicing intentional and creative resistance. Specifically, she argues, their actions can be interpreted as an example of *mêtis*, an ancient Greek term that denotes a form of "crafty resourcefulness" or "cunning intelligence" employed by underdogs to outwit stronger opponents. Such a conceptual framework, as Hardt shows, may have far-reaching implications for theorizing the politics of nonhuman resistance.

The issue concludes with no fewer than seven reviews of recent books that run the gamut of the field of human–animal studies: Nathaniel Otjen on *The Promise of Multispecies Justice*, edited by Sophie Chao, Karin Bolender, and Eben Kirksey (2022); Laura Gelfland on *Myth and Menagerie: Seeing Lions in the Nineteenth Century* by Katie Hornstein (2024); Maura Beste on *Cat People: Human–Cat Interrelatedness in the Cat Fancy* by Emily Stone (2023); Angie Pepper on *What We Owe to Nonhuman Animals* by Gary Steiner (2024); Marissa Crannell-Ash on *The Medieval Pig* by Dolly Jørgensen (2024); Kristen Guest on *The Tame and the Wild: People and Animals after 1492* by Marcy Norton (2024); and Jishnu Guha-Majumdar on *Animals and Capital* by Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel (2023).

As always, I would like to thank the authors and peer reviewers, as well as my co-editors, copyeditors, interns, and production assistants for their hard work in making this issue a reality. Together, we got there in the end, but slowly, slowly.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Kári Driscoll