

FOREWORD

A number of years ago I wrote about the need for a history of animals that would allow us to comprehend more fully how far we humans were “embedded within and reliant upon the natural order.”¹ Since that essay was published, the field of the history of animals has grown exponentially. No longer regarded as marginal or perceived as eccentric or even semiserious, the history of animals has, in the past ten years, gained a status far beyond what might have been imagined back in 2002. As this volume’s title proclaims, there has been a “centering” of animals in history during this decade, and the essays brought together here add to that movement.

Historical work on animals is invaluable for numerous reasons, as *Centering Animals in Latin American History* makes clear. It is leading us to new insights about human-animal relations, and thus, in this collection alone, we encounter the significance of colonial practices; indigenous beliefs; scientific and medical ideas; conceptions of blasphemy, pollution, and masculinity; and perceptions and representations of animals in Latin America from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. But what we also come to see—in this collection and elsewhere—goes beyond this.

Histories have shown us how far humans and animals were not simply cohabiting, whether deliberately or accidentally, but how *significant* animals were to human culture, to the extent that I now think of human culture as “so-called human culture.” It is not simply that animals were (and are) used in the production of vellum, parchment, and glue, all things on which writing and publishing have relied, which historians have rarely acknowledged fully.² It is also that animals were present as foci for human attention in ways that changed human worlds—in films, zoos, and photography, for example, and in science, pet-keeping, and sport, to name but a few of the topics covered in monographs published in the past decade.³ In engaging with such issues, and in recognizing the role that animals have had in them, historians have expanded our understanding of the places and the periods they research.

But histories of animals are also going further than this. Some works have begun to outline the leading roles that animals have played in the making of so-called human history. One implication of such works is that if the roles of animals were not so addressed, our historical understanding would remain limited: there would be aspects that we would never fully explore and, moreover, that we would never be *able* to fully explore. This is not to suggest that animals were knowingly engaged in transforming the worlds around them. Actor network theory, as outlined by Bruno Latour, and so usefully introduced into animal studies by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, offers us a way of thinking about animals not just as the passive recipients of human actions but as active presences in the world, yet without anthropomorphizing them.⁴ On a beautifully prosaic level, and as an illustration of such a conception of animal agency, cow manure was vital to agricultural improvement and hence to urbanization and industrialization in England, a fact that puts cattle at the center of that country's historical development.⁵

Not only is a new acknowledgment of the role that animals have played in transforming the past becoming evident, but the focus on animals brings into view issues previously ignored by historians. Sometimes these issues concern the history of the emotional and domestic life, as in studies of pet-keeping, for example. But on other occasions historical work returns us to the familiar places of our pasts and finds them to be somewhat different once animals are recognized as central. Thus, Virginia DeJohn Anderson's study of the relationships between the indigenous peoples and the English settlers in Chesapeake and New England is a history of cattle farming, not only because it was an economic factor in people's lives at that time but also because, she argues persuasively, the relationships between the native people and the settlers were forged through misunderstandings and negotiations over livestock.⁶ Cows, once again, were agents.

The work that has emerged in the field of the history of animals in the past decade has reached beyond my idea that we must understand more fully how far humans are embedded within and reliant on the natural order. It is beginning to show us that the human world is not only, or simply, human at all. The world—as *Centering Animals in Latin American History* shows so well—is full of other beings: locusts, cattle, dogs (baptized or otherwise), monkeys, seals, birds, and goats. What it also shows us is that it is with animals that history is made.

ERICA FUDGE
UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Notes

1. Erica Fudge, "A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals," in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 13.
2. For a study that does pay attention to the animal source of documents, see Sarah Kay, "Legible Skins: Animals and the Ethics of Medieval Reading," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 2.1 (2011): 13–32.
3. See, in order, Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion, 2002); Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Matthew Brower, *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Anita Guerrini, *Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Katherine C. Greer, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010).
4. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001 [1991]); Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, "Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: An Introduction," in *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, ed. Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–36, especially 17.
5. See David Stone, "Medieval Farm Management and Technological Mentalities: Hinderclay before the Black Death," *Economic History Review* 54.4 (2001): 612–38, especially 625; and Liam Brunt, "Where There's Muck, There's Brass: The Market for Manure in the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* 60.2 (2007): 333–72.
6. Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).